WOMEN TRAFFICKING WOMEN AND CHILDREN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF WOMEN SEX TRAFFICKERS

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree with a concentration in Health Education

Department of Health and Recreation
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

DAWN M. ZYWIEC, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Health Education, presented on March 26, 2012 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: WOMEN TRAFFICKING WOMEN AND CHILDREN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF WOMEN SEX TRAFFICKERS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Roberta Ogletree

Introduction: There is little published literature on female sex traffickers in the United States. The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of women sex traffickers.

Method: This qualitative study primarily drew on in-depth, interpretive feminist methodology. Seven women offenders were interviewed twice for 90 minutes, from three different prisons. Six of the women were sex offenders. Narratives were analyzed and themes constructed. Through ongoing dialogue, the researcher was able to find meaning in, and to describe the women’s experiences. Although each woman’s experience was unique, there were commonalities in their narratives.

Findings: Four themes emerged from the data analysis: pathways to prison, prison culture and experience, views towards victims, and giving back. The co-offender typology was the primary theme that emerged from the analysis of the transcripts. Fearing abandonment, most of the participants felt pressured by male partners to traffic children and commit other sexual offenses, often against their own children.

Conclusion: Grounded in participants’ experiences, this study contributes to defining sex trafficking in a broader network and structure of oppression. The in-depth, descriptive findings of this research will hopefully expand anti-sex trafficking campaign prevention, and awareness knowledge.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Debates Regarding Trafficking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearheading Feminist Researchers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance to Health Education</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Lens</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms and Definitions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview .................................................................................................................. 33

Risk Factors for Domestic Sex Trafficking Victims ............................................ 41

Domestic Sex Traffickers ......................................................................................... 47

Trauma Bonds ........................................................................................................ 55

Feminist Frameworks: Pathways to Crime ............................................................. 59

Demand in Sex Trafficking ..................................................................................... 62

Services for Survivors ............................................................................................ 66

Outreach and Education ......................................................................................... 66

Prevention ................................................................................................................ 70

Gaps in Research .................................................................................................... 71

Summary ................................................................................................................ 74

CHAPTER 3 – METHODS

Purpose of Study ..................................................................................................... 75

Research Questions ................................................................................................. 75

Research Design ...................................................................................................... 75

Methods ................................................................................................................... 77

Constructing Questions ........................................................................................... 81

The Art of Listening ................................................................................................. 84

Research Measures ................................................................................................. 85

Participants ............................................................................................................. 88

Theoretical Lens: Feminist Methodology ............................................................... 90

Researcher’s Reflexivity with Inmates ................................................................. 91
APPENDICIES

Appendix A Internal Review Board Approval ...........................................217
Appendix B Consent to Take Part in Research...............................................218
Appendix C Interview Protocol .................................................................223
Appendix D Questions and Prompts...........................................................228
Appendix E Copyright Permission .............................................................233
Appendix F Vita.........................................................................................234
Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants .............................................. 158
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1 Anti-sex trafficking Poster from the United Kingdom</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2 United Nations Definition of Severe Trafficking in Persons</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3 Warning Signs of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4 Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Power and Control Wheel</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5 Pimp-Control Hierarchy</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6 Pimping: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7 Secondary Trauma</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8 Ad hoc Techniques of Interview Analysis</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9 Annie’s Artwork</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10 Roxy’s Poster Idea</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11 Roxy’s Second Poster Idea</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12 Carmen’s Poster Idea</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13 Carmen’s Second Poster Idea</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14 Carmen’s Third Poster Idea</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15 Luisa’s Poster Idea</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16 Annie’s Poster Idea</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17 Kathy’s Poster Idea</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Preface

Most Americans tend to see all sex traffickers as male criminals. In this study, I draw attention to how female traffickers in America are both victimizers and victims, and show how their crimes, while reprehensible, are part of a larger structure of sexual exploitation, domination, and abuse. Women are vastly underrepresented as criminal offenders. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of the woman sex trafficker. The main research question posed: What is the lived experience of the woman sex trafficker?

I became interested in this topic when I first laid eyes on an anti-sex trafficking poster in the Dusseldorf International Airport in Germany. I was on a mission trip to Austria to assist Eastern European graduate students in planting parachurch organizations in their perspective countries. The advertisement depicted a porcelain doll’s head cracked on the floor with blood splattered everywhere. The bold text, written in German and English, warned women about holding their passports near, and not trusting men with job offers too good to be true.

When I arrived at the seminary, which serves students in Europe and Central Asia, I was surprised to discover that most of my students were in human rights’ and anti-sex trafficking ministries. Their testimonies and stories of rescuing sexually battered women and children from the grips of sex traffickers were traumatic and harrowing. God broke my heart. What shocked me most were the stories the women students shared with me in the evening hours. They seemed relieved to be able to talk with someone. With the help of multiple translators, the women confessed to sending risqué and racy pictures of themselves to American men over the Internet in
the hopes of finding husbands and financial security. Of the school’s 800 students, most lived and served in countries where the average income was less than $500 per month. Tearfully, one woman said, “I am so ashamed. I was deceived just like the girls I help. I compromised my beliefs. Who knows who is looking at my body now?”

When I returned to the states, I sadly learned that my mentee’s mother had prostituted her out throughout her childhood. With an urgency to learn more, I began reading voraciously, studying sex trafficking in a broader network, researching anti-sex trafficking campaigns, attending conferences on modern day slavery, and viewing sex trafficking through a contemporary, feminist lens. To date, I have yet to see an anti-sex trafficking poster hanging anywhere in America’s Heartland.

Modern day slavery should not exist. Providentially moved to action, I contemplated and pondered: How could I contribute to awareness-to-action, anti-sex trafficking campaigns, and help keep women and children safe? What is my piece? Because of these experiences, I chose this topic. I dedicate my research to my mentee and friend who died of a drug overdose in 2011.

**Vignette**

A student from a rural Midwestern law school thought he was being inconspicuous by using the Internet to hook up with a minor. Little did he know that the father, seemingly willing to pimp out his 15-year old daughter, was really an undercover police officer. Police arrested the law student after he went to a local mall intending to finalize the transaction with the fictive girl’s father. This was not the first time this law school student had come to the police’s attention. Earlier, the unsuspecting law student electronically contacted another undercover officer who was posing as a 14-year old girl (WSIL-TV, 2011).
In this true vignette, the medium for sex trafficking was an online community of johns supporting each others’ predatory behaviors, and exchanging information regarding where and how women or children can be bought. The enforcement intelligence was a Cyberspace investigation, and the unsuspecting student was a john arrested for solicitation of a child, and traveling to meet a minor. The father would have been the “trafficker” and the daughter, a “victim,” or child prostitute. The clandestine incident of posed domestic minor sex trafficking all ensued in our university’s backyard.

**Background of the Problem**

The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (VTVPA) of 2000, a federal statute, (P.L. 106-386) defined human trafficking as follows:

(a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or

(b) the recruitment, harbor, 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. (p. 8)

The VTVPA stated that sex trafficking means the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (p. 8) and that a commercial sex act is "any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person” (p. 7). It is important to note that with these definitions, any minor, including a U.S. citizen, under the age of 18 who is used in a commercial sex act is a trafficking victim (Hughes, 2007). It is critical to understand that this includes the "pimping" or "prostituting" of a child or youth, which, beginning with the VTVPA, became synonymous with sex trafficking of a
minor, thereby equating a pimp (who prostitutes minors or adults with force, fraud, or coercion) with a trafficker (Hughes, 2008; Kotrla, 2010).

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) is modern-day slavery of children, and those most vulnerable to becoming victims in this country are American children. According to Shared Hope International (2007), founded by former U.S. Congresswoman Linda Smith, which conducted research on this topic during 2008 in 10 U.S. cities, DMST is "the commercial sexual abuse of children through buying, selling, or trading their sexual services" (p. 1). Forms of DMST include prostitution, pornography, stripping, escort services, and other sexual services. In terms of prevalence, most experts suggest there are currently at least 100,000 DMST victims in the United States (Estes & Weiner, 2002; Smith, 2008), with up to 325,000 more at risk for becoming such victims (Estes & Weiner, 2002; Hughes, 2007; U.S. Department of Justice, 2007a); however, others have suggested that due to the hidden nature of the problem, the questionable methodologies of prior studies, and a lack of sufficient attention to the issue, there are no reliable estimates of the extent of the problem (Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008; Kotrla, 2010).

Although more accurate approximations of this phenomenon are expected, data on the age of entry into commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, do exist. On the basis of research from two studies, at least 70 percent of women involved in prostitution were introduced into the commercial sex industry before reaching 18 years of age (Hughes, 2007). The average age at which children are being lured into commercial sexual exploitation is between 11 and 14, although some are as young as five (Smith, 2008; U.S. Department of Justice, 2007b). In a videotaped interview, one former DMST victim (Shared Hope International, 2009) stated:

We’re all under 18. We’re all the same age. There would be a few girls
I knew who were in their 20s or whatever, but they were doing it since they were our age anyways. I did wait till 12, and these girls had been doing it since they were eight or nine and now they are like 23.

Finally, in the first ever available national-level data on human trafficking investigations, 83 percent of the 1,229 investigations were sex trafficking cases (Kyckelhahn, Beck, & Cohen, 2009); of those, 63 percent involved U.S. citizens, and almost one-third (32 percent) involved minors.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children and youths in this country is certainly not a new phenomenon, but it has been suggested that industries such as prostitution have generally been viewed as "moral or ethical" problems, with little attention paid to the age of those involved until recent years (Halter, 2007). Because of this long-standing perspective that activities such as prostitution are unacceptable per societal norms, one of the greatest challenges in working with DMST victims may be changing the perception of these minors, not only by others, but also by themselves, from "criminals" to "victims" (Clawson & Goldblatt Grace, 2007). Despite this difficulty, the fact remains that currently, U.S. children are being sold for sex not only on the streets, by pimps, but via Craigslist and at truck stops across the country (Smith, 2008; Kotrla, 2010).

DMST is child sex slavery, child sex trafficking, prostitution of children, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and rape of a child (Shared Hope International, 2009a). The age of the victim is the critical issue—there is no requirement to prove force, fraud, or coercion was used to secure the victim’s actions. In fact, the law recognizes the effect of psychological manipulation by the trafficker, as well as the effect of threat of harm, which traffickers use to maintain control over their young victims. Children can be commercially sexually exploited
through prostitution, pornography, and/or erotic entertainment (Shared Hope International, 2009a).

Pimps are individuals, usually males, who promote and/or profit from the sale and/or abuse of another person’s body or sexuality for sexual purposes, or the production and/or sale of images made of that person, e.g., trafficker, pornographer, brothel, madam, third party manager, talent director, mail-order bride agent, prostitution tour agent (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Not surprisingly, many pimps are psychopathic (Greaves, Spidel, Kendrick, Cooper, & Herve, 2004) and psychopathy is strongly associated with all types of violence (Hare, 2003). Many pimps beat “their” women regularly, often without any precipitating factors, to show them who is in control and to keep them so scared that they do not think of attempting to exit the trade (Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, Cooper, & Yuille, 2007).

Traffickers are local pimps, family members, or other small-time criminals involved in human trafficking. In the USA, gangs and larger organized crime networks are significantly involved in the sale and distribution of humans for exploitation. Traffickers may be male or female, family members or trusted associates, and affluent and seemingly upstanding members of the community. Recruiters and traffickers are often women and sometimes relatives, usually known and trusted by targeted victims. Traffickers use various methods to trap victims and exploit vulnerable persons for profit or personal gain (Salvation Army, 2006). Victims are recruited through fraudulent employment offers posted in newspapers, by acquaintances promising opportunity abroad, through mail-order bride and other marriage arrangements and by the promise of the chance to earn large sums of money. Parents are tricked into relinquishing their child with a promise the child will be schooled, employed, or otherwise cared for by the recruiter (Trafficking Victim’s Protection Act [TVPA], 2000).
Minors are deceived, manipulated, forced, or coerced into prostitution every day. Nationally, the average age at which girls first become exploited through prostitution is 12–14 years old, but agencies providing services to victims around the country report they have been encountering increasingly younger victims over the past decade (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Lloyd, 2005; Spangenberg, 2001). According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2007a), involvement in prostitution is at “epidemic proportions” among youths on the streets, and at least 75 percent of those involved in formal prostitution are controlled by a pimp, which can mean exploitation at “escort and massage services, private dancing, drinking and photographic clubs, major sporting and recreational events, major cultural events, conventions, and tourist destinations” (p.1).

According to a U.S. Department of Justice report, traffickers target children and youths at “bus stations, arcades, and malls, focusing on girls who appear to be runaways or without money or job skills” (Albanese, 2007, p.3). Some girls report being groomed by traffickers while they are still living at home and attending school (Smith, 2008). This period of grooming usually involves the pimp assuming the role of the potential victim’s boyfriend, including giving her gifts and compliments, all of which serve to gain her initial loyalty and trust. Others have been forced to perform sexual acts in exchange for drugs or money by parents or relatives, a practice dubbed “familial prostitution” (Smith, 2008; U.S. Department of Justice, 2007a; Kotrla, 2010). In other words, some youths are becoming DMST victims in places that, and through the actions of people who, are generally considered “safe.”

Teens and women are recruited into the pornography industry with fraudulent promises of legitimate jobs at exaggerated pay rates. Once these victims are recruited and arrive at the trafficking destination they are held there by means of debt bondage, physical force, and psychological coercion (Lederer, 2010). Pornography is also used in sex trafficking to train
women and children on what to do. In the process of grooming, the perpetrators use pornography to create the conditions which allow them to abuse women and children (Lederer, 2010).

A staff member at WestCare Nevada, a shelter for at-risk youth in Las Vegas, suggested that statistics underestimate the number of familial traffickers; potentially as many as 30 percent of domestically trafficked minors who receive services through WestCare Nevada are exploited by family members. Interviewees from 10 locations (Kennedy & Pucci, 2008) recounted cases in which parents or guardians have acted as traffickers/pimps; however, there was a stated reluctance and/or lack of awareness to view such exploitation as sex trafficking. This was particularly true when there was a non-monetary exchange as part of the transaction, such as a mother allowing a person to have sex with her daughter for drugs or rent (Kennedy & Pucci, 2008).

**Feminist Debates Regarding Trafficking**

While feminists agree on the necessity to protect the human rights of trafficked persons, especially children, they disagree on who should be considered a victim of trafficking and what precisely should be done to protect victims’ rights. Feminist abolitionists focus primarily on women trafficked for sexual exploitation, advocating the abolition of prostitution and enhanced protections for sex trafficking victims (Lobasz, 2009). From this perspective, prostitution is antithetical to women’s human rights, and all prostitutes are victims of trafficking.

Prostitution abolitionists such as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) consider all forms of trafficking for sex work to be exploitive and a form of violence against women (Cwikel & Hoban, 2005). This abolitionist framework views consenting sex workers as victims and that a woman’s voluntary entry into sex work is propelled through social, cultural and economic factors (e.g. economic impoverishment of the family, domestic violence and/of
sexual abuse in childhood. Raymond et al (2002) in their Comparative Study of Women Trafficked in the Migration Process, found that young women circumscribed by structural factors are compelled to make final straw survival strategies. These are not real choices, rather they are taken in the face of severe constraints and lack or absence of actual or perceived alternatives. This approach calls for the criminalization of traffickers, brothel owners, pimps and clients.

Feminist critics of the abolitionist approach take issue with the notion that prostitution is inherently harmful. They support the decriminalization or legalization of prostitution and argue that current anti-trafficking activities rely upon and contribute to counterproductive if not harmful stereotypes of trafficking victims (Lobasz, 2009).

Heated debate among feminists regarding prostitution threatened to derail UN Trafficking Protocol negotiations for nearly a year. As Jo Doezema described it, “In effect, the lobby was split into two ‘camps,’ both framing their approaches to trafficking in feminist terms, in agreement about the size and scope of the problem, and univocal in demanding an international response. Both groups were made up of feminists and human rights activists from the developing world and the developed world” (Doezema, 2009, p. 67). Unsurprisingly, members of each camp are loath to accept the feminist credentials of the other camp. Abolitionists’ critics remain suspicious of the feminist abolitionist alliance with pro-life evangelical Christians, while abolitionists claim that sex workers’ rights advocates are in the pay of pimps and traffickers. These debates set up what appears to be an impasse between abolitionist feminists and those who argue for an alternative view of sex work and human trafficking (Lobasz, 2009).

Sex worker rights organizations are flourishing all over the third world (Doezma, 2001). In 1991 an informal alliance of sex workers and organizations that provide services to sex workers, formed as the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP). As of 2005, NSWP is a legally
constituted international organization for promoting sex workers’ health and human rights. With member organizations in more than 40 countries, the Network develops partnerships with technical support agencies to work on independently-financed projects. NSWP is currently in the process of establishing a new official board of directors, made up of regional representatives from Asia, Pacific, Africa, Latin American, Europe, and North America (Sex Workers Rights Project). Many of the sex workers belonging to these organizations do not see themselves as, “objects of pity . . . powerless, abused victims with no resources.” They do not experience prostitution as “violence against women” (Doezma, 2001).

Concurring with Melissa Farley, a feminist research psychologist and leading proponent of the abolitionist view of prostitution, and other feminist scholars, I began this work from the perspective that prostitution itself is violence against women. Farley, Cotton, Lynne, Zumbeck, Spiwak, Reyes, Alvarez, & Sezgin (2003) stated:

Prostitution “dehumanizes, commodifies and fetishizes women, in contrast to non-commercial casual sex where both people act on the basis of sexual desire and both people are free to retract without economic consequences. In prostitution, there is always a power imbalance, where the john has the social and economic power to hire her/him to act like a sexualized puppet (p. 34)

Prostitution excludes any mutuality of privilege or pleasure: Its goal is to ensure that one person does not use her personal desire to determine which sexual acts to and do not occur, while the other person acts on the basis of his personal desire (Davidson, 1998). Prostituted women are unrecognized victims of intimate partner violence by pimps as well as johns (Stark & Hodgson, 2003). Although there is little research available, agencies serving prostituted women observe that a majority (90 percent) of prostitution is pimp-controlled (Farley, Barel, Kiremire, &
Sezquin, 1998). The systematic violence of pimps against prostituted women is aimed not only at control, but also emphasizes the victim’s powerlessness, worthlessness and invisibility except in her role as prostitute (Farley et al., 2003).

A qualitative distinction between prostitution of children and prostitution of adults is arbitrary and it obscures the lengthy and extensive history of trauma that is commonplace in prostitution. For example, the 5-year-old incested by her father and used in child prostitution and pornography may become partially amnesic for these traumas and at adolescence may find herself drifting into prostitution and other destructive relationships, or as an easy target for traffickers. The 14-year-old in prostitution eventually turns 18 but she has not suddenly made a new “vocational choice.” The abuse and reenactment of abuse simply continue (Farley et al., 2003). I believe all prostitution is reprehensible.

**Spearheading Feminist Researchers: The Quest to “Know”**

Thirty years ago, rape, domestic violence, and incest were similarly invisible as prostitution is today, despite their high prevalence. A mass movement was required to bring these abuses into public awareness. In the social analysis developed by feminists, these crimes were understood as intrinsic features of a system of male dominance. It was recognized that the purpose of these crimes is to impose power (Farley, 2006).

In the late 1960s and 1970s, feminists spearheaded the domestic violence and rape-reform movements and described gendered crimes as manifestations of larger patriarchal attitudes and policies infecting society in general (Gruber, 2007). Feminists directed their initial efforts at equalizing and civilizing the criminal justice system’s treatment of female victims, providing access and resources to such victims, and creating programs to address the economical
and social realities that kept women in abusive relationships or led them to remain silent about rape (Gruber, 2007).

There is an economic motive to hiding the violence in prostitution and trafficking. Although other types of gender-based violence such as incest, rape and domestic violence are similarly hidden and their prevalence denied, they are not sources of mass revenue (Farley, 2006). Prostitution is sexual violence that results in massive economic profit for some of its perpetrators. Trafficking is the third largest criminal industry in the world with revenues totaling 9.5 billion dollars annually and is expected to soon surpass the two largest criminal industries, narcotics and firearms (Harvard Law Review, 2006).

The billion-dollar sex trafficking industry (Yen, 2008) is based on one unspoken assumption: Purchasing commercial sex acts from females should be tolerated, accepted, and legitimized as a “necessary evil” because the biological male need for sexual intercourse is potent and uncontrollable. Trumpeting the unquestioned justification that “men will be men” has too often allowed johns to escape critical examination, censure, and penalties from scholars, legislators, and law enforcement (Yen, 2008).

In the sex trafficking business model, the victims are merely expendable, reusable, and resalable cheap commodities (Harvard Law Review, 2006) to be exploited for the sole profit of their owner (Nagan & deMedeiros, 2006). Sex trafficking is the perfect criminal business. Unlike drugs or guns, which can only be sold once to any particular party (Yen, 2008), the sexual services of trafficked victims can be sold again and again (Tiefenbrun, 2002). Depending on the demands of the local market and her individual characteristics, a trafficked woman can cost anywhere from $14,000 to $40,000. However, the financial return for purchasing her body is very lucrative; she can earn $75,000 to $250,000 or more each year for her pimp (Hughes, 2005).
The value depends on factors like freshness (i.e. age) and physical beauty. Country of origin can also be an element for costing, as some sex markets pay more for what is considered exotic cuisine in their part of the world. It all depends on demand (Thompson, 2004).

The sex industry, like other global enterprises, has domestic and international sectors, marketing sectors, a range of physical locations out of which it operates in each community, is controlled by many different owners and managers, and is constantly expanding as technology, law, and public opinion permit (Farley, 2006). Many governments protect commercial sex businesses because of profits. Like slavery, prostitution is a lucrative form of oppression (Farley, 2006). Both slavery and prostitution are rife with every imaginable type of physical and sexual violence. Feminist scholar, Melissa Farley, in her article titled, “Prostitution, Trafficking, and Cultural Amnesia: What We Must Not Know In Order To Keep The Business Of Sexual Exploitation Running Smoothly,” stated “Our goal is to abolish the institution of prostitution while at the same time standing in solidarity with sisters who are currently prostituted” (Farley, 2006, p.135).

The institutions of prostitution and slavery have existed for thousands of years, and are so deeply embedded in cultures that they are invisible to some (Farley, 2006). Utilizing feminist scholarship, the overarching purpose of this study is to expose the grim realities of sex trafficking, and to contribute to the abolition of this modern day slavery. The specific purpose is to explore the lived experiences of female traffickers, many of whom have been trafficked themselves.

**Need for Study**

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in the tenth annual Trafficking in Persons Report, described modern-day slavery as a “global problem” and called on every government “to join in
on working to build consensus, and leverage resources to eliminate all forms of human trafficking” (U.S. Dept. of State, 2009). Cases of international sex trafficking have increased public awareness about human trafficking in the U.S., yet many people remain unaware that more U.S. citizens are victims of sex trafficking than are foreign nationals (Hughes, 2007). Despite a growing interest of scholars studying sex trafficking, the body of academic research on trafficking in persons in North American is still very small (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005). Data on the complex profile of trafficking perpetrators is even more difficult to obtain than the victims (Calundruccio, 2005), and there has been little published literature that directly examines the organization of sex traffickers from the standpoint of their personal, lived realities (Troshynski & Blank, 2007).

The character of the male pimp/trafficker has often provoked political, legal, and media interest (Gleeson, 2004), but what about the female pimp/trafficker? Many times, female traffickers are either former sex workers or victims of trafficking who are trying to get money in order to pay off their “debts” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009; Cummings, 2008). Women offenders have in general, a more prominent role in human trafficking than in any other crime (Edwards, 2009). Janice Shaw Crouse (2009), an anti-sex trafficking advocate who has spent over a decade working to combat trafficking, stated:

What is not surprising is that most female traffickers are former victims of trafficking or former prostituted girls or women. For some victims, rescue and restoration means having an opportunity to help others caught in the same crime. Another route—a very tragic and sad one—is for girls and women to turn from victim to victimizer. (p.1)

In February 2010, a widely-publicized case in Phoenix, Arizona brought to light two teenage girls who were indicted for child prostitution and other felony crimes. One of the things
that came out in interviews was that the girls had “a pimp in the past.” The two teens had rented an apartment and used it for pimping at least five other teenage girls between the ages of 14 and 17 years old. The recruits told police that the two girls assured them that they would be “better off working for [girl pimps] as opposed to male pimps because they would not get beat up” (Crouse, 2010).

However, those who actually know what female pimps are like would disagree. According to a story in the Saudi-based Arab News, over 107 female pimps were arrested in Dubai this spring as part of an ongoing campaign against vice. The head of the vice unit said the women pimps run the brothels with an iron fist (Crouse, 2100). “It is shocking that victims become traffickers,” stated Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the United Nations’ Office of Drugs and Crime. “We need to understand the psychological, financial, and coercive reasons why women recruit other women into slavery” (Edwards, 2009).

According to the United Nations’ Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, there are now more female traffickers than males (United Nations’ Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). The number of women involved as pimps in sex trafficking is disproportionate to the number of female perpetrators in other criminal activity. The statistical contents of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, agrees with previous estimates from the U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Office (TIP) that sex trafficking accounts for the majority, nearly 80 percent, of human trafficking, with the victims overwhelmingly women and girls. Women are the majority of traffickers in almost a third of the 155 nations the U.N. surveyed (United Nations’ Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). Women accounted for more than 60 percent of the trafficking convictions in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (United Nations’ Office on Drugs and Crime,
2009). A scant amount of research on female sex traffickers as co-conspirators, or independent traffickers, exists.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of the woman sex trafficker. The main research question posed: What is the lived experience of the woman sex trafficker? The three research questions are:

1. What are the pathways and structures into sex trafficking?
2. How does the participant view the women and children she has trafficked?
3. How might we prevent sex trafficking?

The specific aims were to: (a) elicit thick descriptions, (b) identify shared practices and common meanings among those who have actually lived the experience; and (c) describe relationships among emergent patterns and themes. Troshynski and Blank (2008) did a similar study with male human traffickers in London, England in 2003. They interviewed their participants in public venues. To date, their results were not published. The thematic, theoretical and sample participant questions are located in Appendix D of this study.

**Significance to Health Education**

The national anti-trafficking plan of the United States recommended prevention, protection and assistance for victims of trafficking, and prosecution of traffickers for change. These three elements are interconnected and involve both general approaches and very particular strategies. Social marketing campaigns are needed to (1) promote better awareness-to-action in both sending and receiving countries (2) promote efforts to end demand, and (3) empower adults and children to speak up and counter, confront, stop or report incidents of normalization of sexual harm sexual abuse or exploitation (National Plan to Prevent the Sexual Exploitation of
Children, 2008). For these campaigns to be successful, they will require global coordination, implementation at national, regional, and community levels, research, and the leadership of many health professionals (Wills & Levy, 2002).

Children are being trafficked in and into the United States, and it behooves health educators to name the issue and respond to it acknowledging the serious criminal nature of sexual violence (FitzRoy, 1998). Prostitution can cause tremendous harm and pain. Health educators must analyze and understand prostitution’s internal ravages across different cultures (Farley, 2003), in order to develop appropriate assistance and treatment programs. Lack of research-based knowledge may inadvertently “deepen rather than loosen the factors that make trafficking both so profitable and difficult to address” (Kelly, 2002, p. 60).

Children who have been trafficked into prostitution often experience mental health problems, suffer physical and sexual assaults, have low self-esteem, sexually transmitted infections, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and are put at risk for HIV/AIDS and other health problems (Williamson & Prior, 2009). Many experience deep psychic pain. Most trafficked victims only survive for two to four years before they die as a result of homicide, suicide, HIV/AIDS, or other factors (Landesman, 2004). Prolonged and repeated trauma usually precedes entry into prostitution. From 55 percent to 90 percent of prostitutes report a childhood sexual abuse history. Violence is the norm for women in prostitution. Incest, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, stalking, rape, battering, and torture are points on a continuum of violence, all of which occur regularly in prostitution (Farley, Cotton, Lynne, Zumbeck, Spiwak, Reyes, Alvarez, & Sezgin, 2003).

Because young women are without resources, and because they are paid more for not using condoms, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are the rule rather than the exception
(Ugarte, Zarate, & Farley, 2003). In addition to hepatitis C and HIV, poverty-related diseases such as tuberculosis are common but rarely assessed in medical examinations of prostituted/trafficked girls. Sensitively delivered sex education should be standard practice when working with survivors of prostitution and trafficking. It should not be assumed that because women or adolescents are performing sex acts, they therefore understand STI and pregnancy prevention (Freed, 2003). Those who have received education about sex and STIs may later become sources of information, referral and support for others (Ugarte, Zarate, & Farley, 2003).

Trafficking and prostitution survivors experience multiple layers of trauma. The healing process is lengthy since survivors suffer psychological damage from captivity, terrorization, physical violence, and brainwashing and in many cases a long history of family and community violence (Stark & Hodgson, 2003; Ugarte, Zarte & Farley, 2003). Survivors often feel indebted to pimps/traffickers for not killing them, in psychological dynamic which has been described as the Stockholm Syndrome (Graham, 1994). Drug and alcohol detoxification and mood stabilization require medical management. Dissociative disorders are common since hiding or forgetting one’s real self makes it possible to survive atrocities (Ross, Farley, & Schwartz, 2003).

The average age a woman enters prostitution is between 12 -14 years. Although schools now offer programs that teach children about drug abuse and contraception, there are few prostitution prevention programs in U.S. schools, and none in Las Vegas. Health educators need to teach children the dangers of prostitution; common methods pimps use to lure them into hostage prostitution, as well as programs or alternatives they might access rather than turning to prostitution if they feel it is the only way to support themselves. They also need to know where they might go to find help should they need help in getting themselves, or someone they care about, out of prostitution (Farley, 2007).
Recruitment: Relevance to Social Marketing Campaigns

When speaking of international trafficking there are recruitment countries, where victims are manipulated or forced into trafficking, destination countries, where victims are sent to work in the sex trade, and bidirectional countries where victims are both recruited and working (Farr, 2005). Similarly, in the United States there are recruitment cities, destination cities, and bidirectional cities. While recruitment of victims and selling of sexual services can take place in any city in America, smaller cities in the Midwest have been identified as recruitment areas (Davis, 2006), both manipulating and forcing youth into prostitution and then moving them around to various destination and bidirectional cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Las Vegas (Wilson & Dalton, 2008; Williamson & Prior, 2009). Through a content analysis of newspaper accounts and interviews with criminal justice officials and social service providers in each city, the authors of “Human Trafficking in the Heartland,” (2008) identified 10 cases of juvenile sex trafficking and forced prostitution in Toledo, Ohio, and 5 cases of trafficking for the forced labor of noncitizens in Columbus, Ohio. The offenders and victims involved in the sex trafficking cases were largely from the local area, whereas those involved in the labor trafficking cases primarily involved foreign nationals, thereby illustrating at least one role the heartland plays in transnational crimes (Wilson & Dalton, 2008). In a 2003 article, The New York Times labeled Chicago-land as a national hub for trafficking. Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport’s multifaceted transportation infrastructure and central geographic location make it an ideal location for traffickers to transport victims and disperse them as needed to other cities and states (Cook County Commission on Women’s Issues, 2006).

With American children being recruited right here in the cornfields of the Midwest, one would think a plethora of audience-diverse, anti-sex trafficking advertisements depicting both
male and female perpetrators (see Figure 1) would be seen in places such as: airports, shopping malls, campuses, newspapers, subways, Amtrak train stations, health departments, bars, sport centers, schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), immigrant communities, sheriffs’ departments, church bulletin boards, Cyberspace airwaves, etc., but they are not.

Figure 1. Operation Pentameter campaign, United Kingdom

This study contributes to defining sex trafficking in a broader network and structure of oppression. The in-depth, descriptive findings of this research will hopefully expand anti-sex trafficking campaign prevention and awareness knowledge.

Research Design

Qualitative research methods were used to explore the lived experiences of female traffickers. Face-to-face interviews were conducted. Questions were open-ended and participants were encouraged to talk as long as they wanted about each of the three thematic question areas until they believed they described the subject in all the ways they felt necessary. Participants had access to art supplies. The purpose of the supplies was to elicit creative processing. Art and narrative expression serve as a potent way for participants to communicate conflicting emotions and confusing questions of identity, to tap natural creative potentials to problem solve, to restore
and repair the self, and to forge meaningful connections with their images (Malchiodi, 1997). Participants were encouraged to journal their feelings.

**Theoretical Lens: Feminist Epistemology**

In an attempt to explore and understand the experiences of women who traffic, a feminist epistemology was utilized in both the research design and data analysis. Too often women involved in trafficking remain one-dimensional figures whose stories are condensed and simplified (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005). Exploring women’s use of criminal violence, coercion, and/or force leads researchers to ask very different questions as to the impact of a dominant patriarchal ideology on our community and on the ways in which men and women learn to use and abuse power (FitzRoy, 1998).

Epistemology addresses such questions as who can be a knower, what can be known and what constitutes and validates knowledge. Philosophical debates on epistemology have focused on analyzing the nature and variety of knowledge and how it relates to similar notions such as truth and beliefs. Much of this discussion concerns justification. That is, epistemologists will analyze the standards of justification for knowledge claims, for instance, the grounds on which one can claim to know a particular fact (Tanesini, 1990).

Feminist epistemology refers to women’s experiences as a legitimate source of knowledge and that women can be knowers (Alcoff & Potter, 1993). Feminist epistemology aims to see those who have been oppressed and objectified in society “now be able to define themselves, to tell their own stories” (Stivers, 1993, p. 411).

The purpose of research conducted from a feminist epistemology is to place women at center stage, thus making them visible and empowering them. King (1995) suggested the processes of feminist research are emancipating as they give voice to women, thereby enabling
them to overcome oppression resulting from unequal social relations. While King acknowledged society influences all individuals in the ways in which they speak, she claimed, “women’s voices are particularly vulnerable to suppression and silencing” (p. 228). Fahy (1997) avowed that feminist research fosters respect and trust and promotes mutuality, equality, and sharing. By identifying ways in which patriarchal conceptions and practices of knowledge acquisition and justification tend to disadvantage women, feminist research strives to advance women’s rights in society and promote empowerment to serve the interests of women.

Feminist epistemology provides a useful framework for studying trafficking, as the women trafficking other women are the “knowers” for the experience. Feminist research is, by definition, research that utilizes feminist concerns and beliefs to ground the research process. Feminism takes women as its starting point, seeking to explore and uncover patriarchal social dynamics and relationships from the perspective of women. Feminism is also a commitment to social change, arising from the actions of women to refuse the patriarchal social structure as it stands in favor of a more egalitarian society. Feminism also addresses the power imbalances between women and men and between women as active agents in the world. Feminist research seeks to include feminism within the process, to focus on the meaning women give to their world while recognizing that research as a process is contained within the same patriarchal relations. Feminist research is research that uses feminist principles throughout all stages of research, from choice of topic to presentation of data. These feminist principles also inform and act as the framework guiding the decisions being made by the researcher (Brayton, 1997).

**Participants**

I interviewed seven female inmates in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). Purposeful sampling was used. Per IDOC’s dissertation policy, the coordinator from the Women
and Family Services Department of the Illinois Department of Corrections scanned IDOC’s database system for female offenders meeting the following criteria:

- Women who were involved in the pipeline of (domestic or international) sex trafficking through recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a woman or child for the purposes of a commercial sex act.
- Women who have pimped out their own children or other family members (familial prostitution).

The assistant warden of programs from the women’s prisons reviewed their populations to look for women on their caseloads who fit my criteria. An individual counselor may have a caseload of about 200 women. The mental health professionals were responsible for reviewing the criteria and talking to the inmates to see if they would be interested in volunteering. If interested, the women signed an IDOC release of information form.

After approval of my dissertation committee, an application for research approval was submitted to the Southern Illinois University Internal Review Board, and to the Illinois Department of Corrections’ Legal Department. I interviewed seven women from three prisons twice, for 90 minutes. As noted by Sandelowski (1995), sample sizes in qualitative research should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy. At the same time, the sample should not be so large that it is difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis. The repetitive nature of data is the point at which the researcher determines that saturation has been achieved (Creswell, 1998). Morse (1989) warned, however, that saturation may be a myth. She believes that if another group of individuals were observed or interviewed at another time new data might be revealed. The best that a qualitative
researcher can hope for, in terms of saturation, is to saturate the specific culture or phenomenon at a particular time (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

**Assumptions**

1. Participants will be honest in their responses to interview questions.

2. The truth is the subjective experience of each participant.

3. The interview questions will be clear and comprehensible to elicit responses to each research question.

4. Qualitative research is not value-free. My sex, culture, upbringing, religion, position, language, etc. will influence my research.

5. The researcher “is an active presence, an agent, in research, and she constructs what is actually a viewpoint, a point of view that is both a construction or version and is consequently and necessarily partial in its understanding” (Stanley & Wise, 1993, pp.6-7).

6. Research based on feminist epistemology empowers participants and recognizes their knowledge is developed in a social, political, and cultural context.

**Limitations**

1. I was dependent on informants and gatekeepers from the Illinois Department of Corrections for interviewees. Interviewees were petitioned via a scanning process involving correctional mental health care professionals and assistant wardens.

2. Participants must understand and be willing to express their inner feelings and describe any physiological experiences that occur with their feelings.

3. Participants were self-selected and may not fully represent my criterion
4. Participants may be reluctant to discuss any information regarding abuse, illegal behavior or other negative information for fear of incrimination.

**Delimitations**

This study will be delimited to:

1. Women who speak English.
2. Women over the age of 18.
3. Incarcerated women in the state of Illinois.
4. Women who were involved in the pipeline of (domestic or international) sex trafficking through recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a woman or child (person under the age of 18), for the purposes of a commercial sex act.
5. Women who have pimped out their own children or other family members (familial prostitution).

**Terms and Definitions**

**Accountability Theory:** Illinois law provides several ways that allow a defendant to be held criminally culpable for the conduct of another. Criminal Code of 1961, Illinois Compiled Statutes, 720 ILCS 5/5-1 (2011). One way is when a defendant, who intends for a specific crime to be committed, causes another who does not intend for that crime to be committed, to assist in the commission of the crime. Criminal Code of 1961, Illinois Compiled Statutes, 720 ILCS 5/5-2(a) (2011). An example would be when a defendant calls for a cab to pick her up from her friend’s home. When the cab driver arrives, the defendant, who intends to steal her friend’s purse from inside the friend’s home, asks to cab driver to get the defendant’s purse off the table just inside the front door. The cab driver, innocently believing he is helping his customer, grabs the friend’s purse and gives it to the defendant. Under the accountability theory, the defendant is
criminally liable for the cab driver’s conduct of entering the home and removing the friend’s purse.

Illinois law also provides that a defendant, who intends to promote or facilitate the commission of a crime, either before or during the commission of that crime, in some way aids or abets another in the commission of that crime. Criminal Code of 1961, Illinois Compiled Statutes, 720 ILCS 5/5-2(c) (2011). An example would be when a jewelry store employee, intending to assist in the burglary of his employer’s store, provides a burglar with the combination to the jewelry store’s safe.

**Child Sexual Abuse**: Sexual activity involving persons younger than 18 years of age. Most often perpetrated by an adult, such activities include rape and molestation, pornography, and exposure of children to the sexual acts of others (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

**Child Sex Exploitation**: Practice by which a person, usually an adult, achieves sexual gratification, financial gain or advancement through the abuse or exploitation of a child’s sexuality by abrogating that child’s human right to dignity, equality, autonomy, and physical and mental well-being, i.e., trafficking, prostitution, prostitution tourism, mail-order-bride trade, pornography, stripping, battering, incest, rape and sexual harassment (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

**Coercion**: Under the TVPA, coercion means: a) threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; b) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or c) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal system (TVPA, 2000).

Examples of coercion include debt bondage, threats against family members, photographing or videotaping the victim in compromising or illegal situations, then threatening to turn over the
video to authorities or loved ones, punishment of another victim in front of another person to instill fear, all money is controlled by the trafficker, all identity or immigration papers are controlled by the trafficker, threats of deportation or psychological abuse that intimidates and frightens the victim (Wisconsin Department of Justice, n.d.).

**Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:** The sexual exploitation of children entirely, or at least primarily, for financial or other economic reasons. The economic exchanges may be either monetary or non-monetary (i.e., for food, shelter, drugs), but in every case, involve maximum benefits to the exploiter and an abrogation of the basic rights, dignity, autonomy, physical and mental well-being of the child (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

**Felony:** A crime that has a greater punishment imposed by statute than that imposed on a misdemeanor; *specific* a federal crime for which the punishment may be death or imprisonment for more than a year (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary of law, 1996, p. 191).

**Fraud:** Examples of fraud include false promises for specific employment, being promised a certain amount of money that is never paid, working conditions are not as promised, being told he or she would receive legitimate immigration papers or a green card to work but the documents are not obtained (TVPA, 2000).

**Force:** Physical restraint or causing serious harm Examples of force include kidnapping, battering, kicking, pushing, denial of food or water, denial of medical care, forced use of drugs or denial of drugs once a victim is addicted, forced to lie to friends and family about their whereabouts, being held in locked rooms or bound (TVPA, 2000).

**Indictment:** A formal written statement framed by a prosecuting authority and found by a grand jury that charges a person or persons with an offense (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary of law, 1996, p. 241).
**John:** Slang term for a man who is a prostitute’s customer (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

**Link between sex-trafficking and prostitution:** Sex-trafficking and prostitution are extremely similar except in rare cases where a woman willingly chooses to pimp herself to clients for money. The reality, though, is that most prostituted persons (over 90 percent) do not want to be involved in prostitution but feel that they are trapped by their pimps or their dire financial situation. Sex-trafficked persons are not willing to prostitute themselves and have been either forced or manipulated into prostitution. It is also important to note that all prostituted minors are automatically defined federally by the TVPA as sex-trafficked victims (Pacific Alliance to Stop Slavery, 2010).

**Madam:** A woman who runs or manages a brother; she also may “recruit” persons into prostitution work (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

**Parole:** A conditional release of a prisoner who has served part of a sentence and who remains under the control of, and in the legal custody of a parole authority (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary of law, 1996, p. 351).

**Pimp:** An individual, usually, a male, who promotes and/or profits from the sale and/or abuse of another person’s body or sexuality for sexual purposes, or the production and/or sale of images made of that person, e.g., trafficker, pornographer, brothel, madam, third party manager, talent director, mail-order bride agent, prostitution tour agent (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

**Plea bargaining:** The negotiation of an agreement between the prosecution and the defense whereby the defendant pleads guilty to a lesser offense or to one or some of multiple offenses
usually in exchange for more lenient sentencing recommendations, a specific sentence, or dismissal of other charges (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary of law, 1996, p. 366).

**Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault of a Child:** A person commits predatory criminal sexual assault of a child if that person commits an act of sexual penetration, is 17 years of age or older, and:

1. the victim is under 13 years of age; or
2. the victim is under 13 years of age and that person:
   a. is armed with a firearm;
   b. personally discharges a firearm during the commission of the offense;
   c. causes great bodily harm to the victim that:
      i. results in permanent disability; or
      ii. is life threatening; or
      iii. delivers (by injection, inhalation, ingestion, transfer of possession or any other means) any controlled substance to the victim without the victim’s consent or by threat or deception, for other than medical purposes.


**Recruitment:** Victims are recruited through fraudulent employment offers posted in newspapers, by acquaintances promising opportunity abroad, through mail-order bride and other marriage arrangements and by the promise of the chance to earn large sums of money. Parents are tricked into relinquishing their child with a promise the child will be schooled, employed or otherwise cared for by the recruiter (Torrey & Dubin, 2003).

**Sex Trafficking:** Recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act [VTVPA] of 2000)
**Severe Trafficking in Persons**: The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, is a supplement to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (article 3a). It defines severe trafficking as having the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trafficking is the...</th>
<th>By means of...</th>
<th>For the purpose of exploitation...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Recruitment</td>
<td>• Threat</td>
<td>Exploitation shall include, at minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transportation</td>
<td>• Force</td>
<td>• The prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transfer</td>
<td>• Coercion</td>
<td>• Forced labor or services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Harboring</td>
<td>• Abduction</td>
<td>• Slavery or practices similar to slavery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--OR--</td>
<td>• Fraud</td>
<td>• Servitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Receipt</td>
<td>• abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability</td>
<td>• The removal of organs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Or attempt to do so)</td>
<td>• Giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Figure 2.** United Nations Definition of Severe Trafficking in Persons (VTVPAs, 2000)

**Difference between the two definitions**: Only “severe” sex trafficking requires the trafficked person to have been forced or defrauded or coerced in some way. The non-severe sex trafficking, or just plain “Sex Trafficking” requires no force or trickery or pressure of any kind, all it requires is that there be a “commercial sex act” involved.

**Sexual Predator**: A “sexual predator” is defined for purposes of the Sex Offender Registration Act, Illinois Compiled Statutes, 730 ILCS 150/1 - 12 (2011) as any person who has been convicted of a violation or attempted violation of the following crimes and that conviction occurred after July 1, 1999.

- Keeping a Place of Juvenile Prostitution
- Juvenile Pimping
- Exploitation of a Child
- Child Pornography
- Aggravated Child Pornography
- Criminal Sexual Assault, if the victim is under age 12
- Criminal Sexual Assault, regardless of the victim's age
- Aggravated Criminal Sexual Assault
- Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault
- Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse
- Ritualized Abuse of a Child
- Sexual misconduct with a person with a disability (if convicted on or after January 1, 2011)
- Kidnapping (if convicted on or after January 1, 2011)
- Aggravated Kidnapping (if convicted on or after January 1, 2011)
- Unlawful Restraint (if convicted on or after January 1, 2011)
- Aggravated Unlawful Restraint (if convicted on or after January 1, 2011)
- Child Abduction (if convicted on or after January 1, 2011)
- Conviction of first degree murder, when the victim was a person under 18 years of age and the defendant was at least 17 years of age at the time of the commission of the offense and the offense was sexually motivated as defined in Section 10 of the Sex Offender Management Board Act
- Conviction for an offense of federal law, Uniform Code of Military Justice, law of another state or foreign country that is substantially equivalent to any of the these offenses listed above.

A person is also a “sexual predator” if he or she has been:
- Certified as a Sexually Dangerous Person pursuant to the Sexually Dangerous Persons Act or any substantially similar federal, sister state, or foreign country law
- Found to be Sexually Violent pursuant to the Sexually Violent Commitment Act or any substantially similar federal, sister state, or foreign country law
- Convicted of a 2nd or subsequent offense, after July 1, 1999 which would require registration pursuant to the Sex Offender Registration Act

Sexual predators are required to register annually for the rest of their natural life.

**Traffickers:** Local pimps, family members or other small-time criminals can be involved in human trafficking. In the USA, gangs and larger organized crime networks are significantly involved in the sale and distribution of humans for exploitation. Traffickers may be male or female, family members or trusted associates, and affluent and seemingly upstanding members of the community. Recruiters and traffickers are often women and sometimes relatives; almost always known and trusted by targeted victims. Traffickers use various methods to trap victims and exploit vulnerable persons for profit or personal gain (U.S. Department of State, 2010; Salvation Army, 2010).

**Summary**

In this chapter, an overview was presented to introduce this study aimed at exploring the lived experience of the female sex trafficker. The purpose, background, and definitions of terms pertaining to the study were identified. The researcher’s assumptions and importance of the study to health education were addressed. Finally, an overview of the theoretical framework, feminist epistemology, was discussed.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Sex trafficking of children is one of the most violent and unconscionable crimes committed in this country.” FBI Deputy Director John S. Pistole

Several bodies of research are relevant to this in-depth review of literature concerning human trafficking: research on sex trafficking, trauma bonding, pathways to female offending, demand, and prevention. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of the woman sex trafficker. The main research question posed: What is the lived experience of the woman sex trafficker? The three research questions are:

1. What are the pathways and structures into sex trafficking?
2. How does the participant view the women and children she has trafficked?
3. How might we prevent sex trafficking?

The specific aims are to: (a) elicit thick descriptions, (b) identify shared practices and common meanings among those who have actually lived the experience; and (c) describe relationships among emergent patterns and themes.

Overview: What is Human Trafficking?

The literature on trafficking of human beings is vast and often confusing. One study (Damone, 2010) consisted of an analysis of 223 publications, selected and studied according to specific criteria: period, topic, type of publication and geographic relevance. The relevant studies in Damone’s study were published between the late nineties until 2010. The literature for my study’s review was largely taken from an exhaustive study funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (2009), numerous studies conducted by Shared Hope International on Domestic Minor Sex

Trafficking in persons is often referred to as a form of slavery because it involves the deprivation of liberty of a person in order to exploit the victim through labor services and/or commercial sex trade (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Slavery was abolished in the U.S. in 1863 with the Emancipation Proclamation and in 1865 under the Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution (Shared Hope International, 2009). The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA, 2000), passed on October 28, 2000, is the first federal law specifically enacted to prevent victimization, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking (Shared Hope International, 2009).

The crime of human trafficking affects virtually every country in the world (Europol, 2005; Miko, 2000) and has been associated with transnational criminal organizations, small criminal networks, and local gangs, violations of labor and immigration codes, and government corruption (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006). Historically, trafficking has been defined most often as the trade in women and children for prostitution or other immoral purposes (Europol, 2005). More recently trafficking has been defined to include other types of force, fraud, or coercion beyond sexual exploitation. It has been further clarified that victims do not need to be transported across international or other boundaries in order for trafficking to exist. In 2000, the international community developed and agreed to a definition for trafficking in persons that can be found in Article 3 of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children:
Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, 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 (Europol, 2005, p.10).

At the same time, the U.S. Congress defined and classified human trafficking into two categories—sex trafficking and labor trafficking—in the TVPA. As stated previously, sex trafficking involves the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is younger than age 18. A commercial sex act means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person. Types of sex trafficking include prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution, and sex tourism. Labor trafficking is defined in the TVPA as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Labor trafficking situations may arise in domestic servitude, restaurant work, janitorial work, sweatshop factory work, migrant agricultural work, construction, and peddling (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).
Trafficking into the United States

Under the U.S. definition, transportation or physical movement of the victim does not necessarily need to be present in order for the crime to occur; instead, it is the presence of exploitation (force, fraud, or coercion) that indicates whether a trafficking crime has occurred. The TVPA and subsequent reauthorizations not only provide a standard legal definition of the crime of human trafficking but also offer a framework for current and future U.S. anti-trafficking efforts. It addresses the prevention of trafficking, protection and assistance for victims of trafficking, and prosecution and punishment of traffickers (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006). While most of the anti-trafficking efforts within the United States have historically focused on trafficking of foreign nationals into the country, the 2005 reauthorization of the TVPA highlighted the need to address the trafficking of U.S. citizens and permanent residents, in particular minor victims of sex trafficking or the prostitution of minors, within U.S. borders (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

The data and methodologies for estimating the prevalence of human trafficking globally and nationally are not well developed, and therefore estimates have varied widely and changed significantly over time. The U.S. State Department has estimated that approximately 600,000 to 800,000 victims are trafficked annually across international borders worldwide and approximately half of these victims are younger than age 18 (U.S. Department of State, 2005, 2006, 2007). Additionally, the U.S. State Department has estimated that 80 percent of internationally trafficked victims are female and 70 percent are trafficked into the sex industry (U.S. Department of State, 2005). In comparison, the International Labor Organization has estimated that at any given time, 12.3 million people are in forced labor, bonded labor, forced child labor, sexual servitude, and involuntary servitude (International Labor Organization, 2008).
Other estimates of global labor exploitation range from 4 million to 27 million (U.S. Department of State, 2006, 2007).

Initial estimates cited in the TVPA suggested that approximately 50,000 individuals were trafficked into the United States each year. This estimate was subsequently reduced to 18,000–20,000 in the U.S. Department of State’s June 2003 * Trafficking in Persons Report*, and in its 2005 and 2006 reports, altered again to an estimate of 14,500–17,500 individuals trafficked annually into the United States. According to official administrative data, since 2001, the U.S. Department of Justice has prosecuted 360 defendants in human trafficking cases, and secured 238 convictions (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007).

Additionally, as of June 2007, 1,264 foreign nationals (adults and children) were certified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as victims of human trafficking, eligible to receive public benefits. Of these, 1,153 are adults, with 69 percent female victims. Of the 111 minor victims certified, 82 percent were female. For some victim service providers and NGOs, these figures are not considered representative of the actual number of human trafficking victims in the country. They believe that many victims go unreported (and uncounted) because they do not want to cooperate with law enforcement and, therefore, are never reported to authorities or receive Federal assistance (Caliber Associates, 2007; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2009).

**Trafficking within the United States**

To date, estimates of human trafficking have focused almost exclusively on international trafficking victims (Laczko & Gozdzia, 2005), and this holds true for the U.S. as well. Only a recent estimate of minors at risk for sexual exploitation comes close to estimating U.S. domestic trafficking. Between 244,000 and 325,000 American youth are considered at risk for sexual
exploitation, and an estimated 199,000 incidents of sexual exploitation of minors occur each year in the United States (Estes & Weiner, 2001). These figures, however, are limited estimates of youth at risk for human trafficking and do not address adult U.S. citizens trafficked into the sex industry or American children and adults trafficked for labor. We can, however, turn to estimates of other at-risk populations, such as runaway/throwaway youth, youth exploited through prostitution, and child labor, to gain a better sense of the potential prevalence of domestic trafficking, or at least the numbers of people at high risk of trafficking (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

A throwaway child is a child who has been kicked out or locked out of home and told not to return. The term also refers to a runaway child who is not actively sought by parent(s) after the child has run away (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Given the correlations between runaway/throwaway youth and minors exploited through prostitution (Estes & Weiner, 2001), findings from the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children can offer additional information about the possible prevalence of minors trafficked or at risk of being trafficked domestically into the commercial sex industry (Hammer, Finkelhor, & Sedlak, 2002). For example, in 1999, 1,682,900 youth had a period of time in which they could be characterized as a runaway or throwaway youth; 71 percent of these youth were considered at risk for prostitution (Estes & Weiner, 2001).

Notwithstanding these general data, there is no clear consensus on the numbers of girls versus boys exploited through prostitution nationwide. The differential treatment of boys and girls, coupled with the differences in the circumstances under which they prostitute (including location), make these statistics extremely difficult to interpret.
As with most other data related to human trafficking, there are huge gaps between estimates of “prevalence” or populations “at risk” and individuals actually identified as trafficking victims or enrolled in government programs. Better data and research are needed to begin distinguishing among possible reasons for the gaps between prevalence estimates and administrative data (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

In addition to domestic sex trafficking, American minors and adults are likely trafficked for forced labor; however, children are generally preferred to adults in the labor world as they are more easily controlled, cheaper, and less likely to demand better working conditions (Herzfeld, 2002). Unfortunately, we know even less about labor trafficking, both into and within the United States, than we do about sex trafficking. There is evidence that forced child labor exists in the African and Latin American regions and also in more developed countries such as the United States (International Labor Organization, 2002). An International Labor Organization study indicated that girls are more likely to be trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic services, and boys tend to be trafficked for forced labor in commercial farming, petty crimes, and the drug trade (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

Who are the Victims?

While current stereotypes often depict the victims of human trafficking as innocent young girls who are seduced or kidnapped from their home countries and forced into the sex industry (Bruckert & Parent, 2002), it is not just young girls who are trafficked. Men, women, and children of all ages can fall prey to traffickers for purposes of sex and/or labor. Victims may be trafficked into the United States from other countries or may be foreign citizens already in the United States (legally or illegally) who are desperate to make a living to support themselves and
their families in the United States or in their home countries (Florida University Center for Advancement of Human Rights, 2003).

Regardless of sex, age, immigration status, or citizenship, certain commonalities exist among victims of trafficking (for both sex and labor), such as their vulnerability to force, fraud, or coercion (Protection Project, 2002). Traffickers prey on those with few economic opportunities and those struggling to meet basic needs. Traffickers take advantage of the unequal status of women and girls in disadvantaged countries and communities, and capitalize on the demand for cheap, unprotected labor and the promotion of sex tourism in some countries (Aronowitz, 2001; Miller & Stewart, 1998). Victims of human trafficking, both international and domestic, share other characteristics that place them at risk for being trafficked. These include poverty, young age, limited education, lack of work opportunities, lack of family support (e.g., orphaned, runaway/throwaway, homeless, family members collaborating with traffickers), history of previous sexual abuse, health or mental health challenges, and living in vulnerable areas (e.g., areas with police corruption and high crime) (Salvation Army, 2006).

Victims of international trafficking may be trying to escape from internal strife such as civil war and economic crises (Aiko, 2002). Many international trafficking victims originate from poor countries where human trafficking has become a significant source of income (Newman, 2006). Traffickers exploit conditions in impoverished countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America that offer few employment opportunities and are characterized by high rates of organized crime and violence against women and children, discrimination against women, government corruption, political instability, and armed conflict (Bell, 2001; U.S. Department of State, 2005). Many trafficking victims are merely trying to remove themselves from unstable or unsatisfactory living conditions. According to the latest
figures from HHS (as reported in the DoJ Annual Report to Congress), of those certified as victims of human trafficking in 2006, the countries of origin with the highest populations of victims were El Salvador (28 percent) and Mexico (20 percent) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007).

**Risk Factors for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victims**

In terms of race and ethnicity, all subgroups of adolescents are at risk for prostitution. The vast majority of male and female adolescents arrested for prostitution are White or Black (Flowers, 2001). The only specific research conducted on a subpopulation of exploited minors shows that African-American girls and women are arrested in prostitution at a far higher rate than girls and women of other races involved in the same activity (Flowers, 2001; MacKinnon & Dworkin, 1997). Although it appears that no socioeconomic class is immune to domestic trafficking, Estes and Weiner (2001) acknowledge that poverty (as noted previously for victims of trafficking in general) places adolescents at increased risk of exploitation. Though their sample was small (10 boys), Lankenau, Clatts, Welle, Goldsamt, and Gwadz (2005) found that 100 percent of a study’s subjects were born into homes characterized as poor or working class. The correlation between poverty and trafficking has been corroborated by qualitative reports from law enforcement, social service providers, and others working in the anti-trafficking movements (Clawson & Dutch, 2008). Further, Lloyd (2005) states that low-income girls are at greater risk of recruitment and may find it harder to exit (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

One common characteristic or risk factor for prostituted girls is a history of childhood sexual abuse, "Incest is boot camp for prostitution" (Dworkin, 1997). In 20 recent studies of adult women who were sexually exploited through prostitution, the percentage of those who had
been abused as children ranged from 33 percent to 84 percent (Raphael, 2004). For example, a study of 106 adult women in Boston who were incarcerated for prostitution-related offenses or had ever been arrested for prostitution-related offenses found that 68 of the women reported having been sexually abused before the age of 10 and almost half reported being raped before the age of 10 (Norton-Hawk, 2002). Other smaller studies of prostituted girls affirm these figures. For example, the Huckleberry House Project in San Francisco reported that 90 percent of the girls involved in prostitution had been sexually molested (Harlan, Rodgers, & Slattery, 1981). Two other studies of juveniles estimated the percentage of girls engaged in prostitution who had a history of sexual abuse to be between 70 percent and 80 (Bagley & Young, 1987; Silbert & Pines, 1982).

Research has demonstrated that the younger a girl is when she first becomes involved in prostitution, the greater the likelihood that she has a history of childhood sexual abuse and the greater the extent of the abuse (Council for Prostitution Alternatives, 1991). Further, the history of childhood trauma experienced by most girls involved in prostitution includes abuse that is chronic in nature and takes the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and/or sexual abuse by multiple perpetrators (Farley & Kelly, 2000). A 1994 National Institute of Justice report (as cited in Spangenberg, 2001) stated that minors who were sexually abused were 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution at some point in their lives than minors who were not sexually abused.

In addition to a history of childhood abuse, prostituted girls are likely to have experienced other forms of family disruption. Multiple studies suggest that girls involved in prostitution are more likely to come from homes where addiction was present (Raphael, 2004). For example, one study of 222 women in Chicago involved in prostitution found 83 percent had
grown up in a home where one or both parents were involved in substance abuse (Center for Impact Research, 2001). Further, prostituted girls are more likely to have witnessed domestic violence in their home; specifically, girls are likely to have seen their mother beaten by an intimate partner (Raphael, 2004).

Another risk factor that emerges for youth at risk for exploitation through prostitution is the loss of a parent through death, divorce, or abandonment. For example, in two separate studies of adolescent girls involved in prostitution, a third of the sample had a deceased mother (Norton-Hawk, 2002; Raphael & Shapiro, 2002). This familial disruption often results in the child’s involvement in the child welfare system, involving placement in foster care or group homes. One study in Canada of 47 women in prostitution found that 64 percent had been involved in the child welfare system, and of these, 78 percent had entered foster care or group homes (Nixon, Tutty, Downe, Gorkoff, & Ursel, 2002). The themes of trauma, abandonment, and disruption, begun in childhood, are central to the narratives of adolescent girls trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation. Girls describe having had a profound sense of being alone without resources: “They [the women and girls] described their isolation, lack of connectedness, and feelings of separation as the single most important factor in making them vulnerable to prostitution to begin with…” (Rabinovitch, 2003; Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

The prostitution of boys is not as visible as that of young girls (McKnight, 2006). According to Flowers (1998), boys primarily sell their bodies to “survive financially, explore their sexuality, and/or make contact with gay men,” with money a major motivator to continue prostituting. Young prostituted males are also more likely to be involved in criminal or delinquent behaviors in addition to prostitution (Flowers, 1998); however, they are arrested much less frequently (McKnight, 2006). McKnight also states that boys are more likely than girls to
leave home due to a feeling of being unwanted or misunderstood regarding their sexual orientation. Similar to girls, however, most boys exploited through prostitution come from dysfunctional homes and a large percentage have been the victim of some kind of abuse in the past (Flowers, 1998). My research will only focus on females.

**Misidentification Leads to Different Labels for Victims**

Trafficking victims may be mislabeled as victims of sexual abuse, rape, or domestic violence. Though these crimes are a part of a trafficking situation, they do not encompass the extent and complexity of the exploitation that has occurred in sex trafficking. When mislabeled, victims do not receive the entire range of services or victim rights that are necessary for restoration. Further, perpetrators are not held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. Although domestic minor sex trafficking victims are abuse victims, they represent a distinct group that is many times overlooked or misidentified. Site assessments found some service providers were reluctant to label certain scenarios of domestic trafficking as such. This was particularly evident in cases of prostitution of a child in which in-kind exchange rather than cash was received, such as a parent exchanging sex with their child for rent or drugs. Instead, social service providers preferred to label trafficking victims as sexual abuse victims or another general victim group (Shared Hope International, 2009).

Domestic minor sex trafficking victims are abuse victims, but they represent a distinct group that is many times overlooked or misidentified. While child abuse victims have an established path to services and shelter, domestic minor sex trafficking victims are, at best, provided a patchwork of services and shelter that often do not meet their unique psychological and physical needs. The multitude of labels result in incomplete treatment plans. With this difficulty in identifying victims, the community and professionals likely to come in contact with
victims need to look for indicators of vulnerability to trafficking or indicators that a child might be currently victimized (Shared Hope International, 2009). To avoid the misidentifications of victims, service providers should look for signs of vulnerability that could indicate exploitation (see Figure 3).

### Warning Signs of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homelessness</th>
<th>Chronic running away (three or more times)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence of an older boyfriend</td>
<td>Tattoos often serve to mark a victim as the property of a particular pimp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs of violence &amp;/or psychological trauma</td>
<td>Multiple sexually transmitted diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masking charges such as curfew violations, truancy, &amp; other status offenses</td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel with an older male who is not a guardian</td>
<td>Access to material things the youth cannot afford</td>
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*Figure 3. Warning Signs of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (Shared Hope International, 2009)*

### Other Forms of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

Another form of DMST is “survival sex.” This describes the situation of children exchanging sex acts for something the child needs to survive, such as food, water, or clothing. Runaway and homeless youth are at extremely high risk for this type of exploitation. Though some argue that there is a mutual benefit inherent in this type of commercial sexual exploitation, the fact that an adult is exercising control over a vulnerable youth to secure a sex act makes it a crime. In fact, a survey of runaway and homeless youth in Salt Lake City in February 2008 found that of the 32 percent of youth who had been victimized through “survival sex,” 50 percent indicated that they had been sought out and solicited by the adult perpetrator (Snow, 2009).

In New Orleans, groups of nomadic homeless youths know as “gutter punks” gather regularly at “the wall” located at the end of Elysian Fields by the Mississippi River on Thursday through Saturday nights. In the winter, about 30 of the average 100 people at “the wall” include
vulnerable runaway girls who have aligned with a gang of tough guys to feel protected. Reportedly, the gutter punk groups will sexually exploit these girls through prostitution for money and basic needs (Shared Hope International, 2010).

Closely related to survival sex is the situation of “couch surfing” which is the term used for a homeless or runaway youth’s temporary utilization of the apartment or home of a friend, family member, or acquaintance for a place to sleep. Couch surfing occurs when the resident of the apartment or home requires the child to engage in a sex act in order to stay. For instance, Buffalo assessment participants cited “couch surfing” as the most common situation in which minors are commercially exploited (Shared Hope International, 2010).

In addition to those on the streets, America’s youngest also become victims through the Internet. Not only do traffickers advertise children online for sexual purposes through hundreds of Web sites, but they search for victims through social networking site such as Facebook and MySpace (Oosterbaan, 2008). In addition, traffickers publish legitimate-appearing advertisements for employment or other opportunities as a means to lure victims into what, in reality, are commercial sex businesses. Adolescents who surf the Internet can be tricked into sharing personal information or pictures that put them at an increased risk for becoming DMST victims. Recent research by Shared Hope International conducted across 10 cities in the United States found that the Internet was used in all 10 locations as a means for selling children for sexual purposes (Kotrla, 2010).

Domestic child victims tend to be easy targets and carry less risk for the traffickers and buyers than adults and foreign nationals. For example, in San Antonio, Texas, a human trafficker named Timothy Gereb had an order for 10 female sex slaves to sell to a brothel in Louisiana. Gereb and his accomplices were only able to traffic two girls from Mexico, so he began to recruit
local girls from San Antonio to fill his quota. He was apprehended, pled guilty, and was sentenced to 10 years. This case demonstrates a potential trend of traffickers to view local youth as viable product in the criminal market of commercial sexual exploitation as the recruitment and transportation of human trafficking victims across borders increasingly difficult and dangerous (Shared Hope International, 2009).

**Domestic Sex Traffickers: The Pimps, Madams, and Mama-sans**

Domestic sex trafficking is more commonly known as “pimping,” though that term is often used only to those who profit from street prostitution. The local exploiters are also called “madams,” “mama-sans,” and brothel keepers. The money from the sale of commercial sex acts enriches pimps and traffickers at the cost of the freedom, health, and well-being of victims. Victims are often compelled to earn money by force, fraud, and coercion. In addition to physical and sexual abuse, psychological control methods include the manipulation of emotionally vulnerable teen girls, threats and withholding of identification papers of undocumented immigrants, and the use of debts, drug, and alcohol dependence (Hughes, 2005).

Researchers and experts in the field report that trafficking of U.S. children is a well-established business. High demand for the commercial sexual exploitation of children created by buyers equates to large profit margins. It is not surprising then that as the trafficking of children becomes more profitable sophisticated rules, culture, and a hierarchy surrounding the crime would emerge (Shared Hope International, 2010).

Once a trafficker or pimp identifies the physical and psychological needs of a child, s/he seeks to fill them. If the child lacks a loving parental presence, the trafficker/pimp morphs his/her tactics to become the parent figure. If a youth needs a safe place to sleep, the trafficker/pimp provides housing. In this way, traffickers/pimps work to create a dependency
between the minor and themselves (Shared Hope International, 2010). Traffickers and pimps utilize grooming and recruitment practices (see Figure 4).

A trafficker’s process of recruitment and control are sophisticated. There is a calculated method to preying on youth, and the traffickers/pimps share tactics with each other, assist one another, and craft their techniques together. Experts and survivors refer to these methods as “brainwashing.” One survivor expert noted commonalities between the tactics traffickers use and those utilized by cult leaders (Shared Hope International, 2009).

Traffickers/pimps make it their business to understand the psychology of youth and to practice and hone their tactics of manipulation. The trafficker’s goal is to exploit and create vulnerabilities, and remove the credibility the minor holds in the eyes of their families, the public, and law enforcement. The trafficker’s ultimate goal is profit.

“**The Game**”

“The Game,” which is slang for the environment and established rule of trafficking/pimping, is handed down to traffickers/pimps through various means. Several books written by self-proclaimed pimps with criminal records are available describing how to manipulate and traffic women and children. “The Pimp Game: An Instructional Guide,” is one such book that can be purchased online at Amazon.com for the price of $280.00 (Royal, 1998). “The Pimp Game” teaches aspiring traffickers how to successfully groom a child for commercial sexual exploitation:

You’ll start to dress her, think for her, own her. If you and your victim are sexually active, slow it down. After sex, take her shopping for one item. Hair and/or nails is fine. She’ll develop a feeling of accomplishment. The shopping after a month will be replaced with cash. The love making turns into raw sex. She’ll start to crave the intimacy and be willing to get back
into your good graces. After you have broken her spirit, she has no sense of self value. Now pimp, put a price tag on the item you manufactured. (pgs. 64-65)

Figure 4. Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Power and Control Wheel (Shared Hope International)

The language and rules of pimping recaptures the debilitating psychological and physical manipulation used by slave masters. Organized and sophisticated teaching methods are used to pass down the culture and “rules of the game,” which are rules created by traffickers/pimps in order to best work together in an illegal business venture and avoid arrest by law enforcement. An example of one such rule is called “choosing up.” This rule dictates that a prostituted person
who makes eye contact with another pimp becomes “owned” by that pimp. If the original pimp wants his slave back, then he must pay a fee to the new pimp. This fee is imposed ultimately on the errant prostituted girl who is then required to compensate her original pimp for the money he paid for her return—usually, a penalty charge is added to the fee for the disrespect she showed to the pimp by looking at another pimp (Royal, 1998).

 Traffickers employ a common language to provide a basis of understanding and to facilitate transactions between traffickers/pimps. Below is a sampling of terms used by pimps in the sex trafficking of children (Shared Hope International, 2008):

- A “circuit” or “track” is defined area known for prostitution activity. This can be the area around a group of strip clubs and pornography stores, or a particular stretch of street. Within a country, it can be a series of cities that the traffickers move the exploited minors. It can also be a chain of states, such as the “Minnesota Pipeline” in which victims are moved through a series of states from Minnesota to markets in New York.
- A “ho line” is a loose network of communication between pimps, chiefly by phone, inter-city and interstate. The traffickers often use changing slang and code words to confound law enforcement along the “circuit.” The “ho line” or network is used to trade, buy, and sell women and children for sex.
- The “kiddie stroll” or “runaway” is an area of the track featuring kids under 16, and often much younger.
- The process of “seasoning” involves the combination of psychological manipulation, intimidation, gang rape and sodomy, beatings or deprivation of food and sleep, cutting off from family, friends, and other sources of support, and threatening or holding hostage of
victims’ children. The purpose is to break down a victim’s resistance and ensure that she will do anything she is told.

- A “stable” is a group of prostituted girls under the control of a single trafficker or pimp.
- “Bottom girl”: The girl in a stable who is tasked by the pimp with supervising the others, reporting rule violations, and often helping to impose punishment on them (Shared Hope International, 2010, pgs.23-24).

One of the interviews in the study conducted by Ramond (2002), reported, “Our regular supply of drugs came from the mama-san and was added to our debt.” In addition to the aforementioned techniques, victims of trafficking also rely heavily on one another to cope (Davidson, 1999).

However, despite various coping mechanisms employed by women, Raymond and Hughes note that compliance was the most commonly used survival technique (Cummings, 2008). Traffic victims often live in confinement and physical and emotional abuse are both common tactics used to control them (Davidson, 1999). For instance, one Russian woman who had been trafficked to New York said, “I don’t resist because I saw others mutilated” (Cummings, 2008, p. 44). Therefore, in most cases, trafficked women comply with demands out of fear of further emotional and physical abuse.

Although trafficked women rely on one another for emotional support, the literature notes that the traffickers, brothel owners and pimps often force women to participate in violence against other women as a control mechanism. For instance in Raymond and Hughes’ survey (2001), one respondent trafficked from Asia reported that she was forced to help keep down other women as their trafficker raped them. Furthermore, exploited women are often times used
as watch guards. One interview stated that pimps “kept surveillance over ‘their’ women, using other women to monitor their movements and behavior” (Raymond & Hughes, 2001, p. 59).

Not only are some women enlisted for control and surveillance purposes, but they also are involved in the recruiting, transporting, and managing of traffic victims on a daily basis. Based on the existing literature, it appears that female traffickers are either former sex workers or victims of trafficking who are trying to get money in order to pay off their “debts” (Cummings, 2008).

Facilitators, or accomplices, avoid direct responsibility for sex trafficking crimes by creating distance from the immediate criminal activity but they profit from and make possible the sex trafficking of children. Some common facilitators in the crime of DMST include taxi drivers, hotel workers, and owners of adult sexual entertainment venues. Taxi drivers in Las Vegas receive commissions for bringing buyers to illegal suburban house brothels. The commission reportedly is one third of the $300 charged to the buyer by the brothel. Traffickers pay premiums to facilitators for locating underage girls for their customers (Kennedy & Pucci, 2008).

Traffickers systematically utilize recruitment tactics that distance them from the risk of detection and prosecution by law enforcement. Traffickers use “bottom girls,” who manage the details of the other girls’ exploitation (see Figure 5). The process of “sending girls on automatic” allows the trafficker/pimp to keep distant from the crime being committed. Traffickers maintain a careful distance even from their victims using street names to the girls never know their real names. A victim’s arrest reinforces what the pimp has taught her about distrusting authorities, and due to the pimp’s careful secrecy and anonymity, she is both unable and unwilling to provide the level of information law enforcement requires to pursue an investigation (Shared Hope
International, 2009). These same tactics exacerbate a potential victim’s vulnerable state and protect the trafficker.

Traffickers use and encourage cultural attitudes which view prostituted children not as victims but as delinquents. This serves to isolate the victim as traffickers tell them that seeking help is a waste of time because no one would believe them since they are “just prostitutes.” A study on the demand for sex trafficking conducted by Shared Hope International (2009) found that traffickers often provided drugs to their victims to both sell and take, further marginalizing and criminalizing the minor. The goals of traffickers are three-fold: Keep the victim under control; make money; and lower the child’s credibility in the eyes of law enforcement and the community so she is not believed when disclosing information about the exploitation.

Figure 5. Pimp-Control Hierarchy (Shared Hope International)

Law enforcement agents report that the youth they see victimized through DMST are usually exceptionally vulnerable and have low-self-esteem. Though traffickers seek out youth with existing gaps in their support network or low self-esteem, they also create and expand these vulnerabilities. There are certain common tactics that traffickers employ in order to breakdown
child’s sense of control. One tactic is manipulation. Traffickers commonly use emotional manipulation, such as favoring one girl over the others with frequent changes to the favored position, as a way of preventing collusion for escape or disobedience. This method establishes hierarchy and ensures constant competition with each other for rewards and promotions to the girls who produce the most money and follow the “rules of the game.” It also keeps the victims divided and ensures that they remain focused on pleasing the trafficker/pimp rather than creating an escape strategy (Shared Hope International, 2009).

One self-proclaimed pimp and author of “How to be a Pimp Using Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs to Make the Most Money,” explained how to apply the recognized Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs for the manipulation and control of a person in prostitution (see Figure 6). Referred to as the “Pyramid,” this approach systematically addresses foundational human needs such as safety, security, love, and belonging. The concept discusses how past sexual abuse, family dysfunction, societal judgment, and systemic failure leave gaps into which traffickers and pimps insert themselves as providers. By offering a false sense of security, respect, and love, a trafficker can establish a trauma bond that will keep the victim vulnerable, completely subject to the trafficker, and the source of profits through her exploitation (Martin, 2006).
Figure 6. Pimping: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

**Trauma Bonds**

According to Shared Hope International’s DMST Practitioner Manual & Intake Guide (2009), the psychological and physical ramifications of “pimp control” are extensive. Some of the many issues stemming from the trauma that a trafficked youth may face are listed as following:

- Anxiety and Stress Disorder
- Attachment Disorder
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Major Depression
- Developmental Disorders
- Eating Disorders
Acute Stress Disorder
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Dissociative Disorder
Impulse Control Disorder
Mood Disorder
Personality Disorders
Self-harming Disorders
Sleeping Disorders
Somatic Disorders
Substance Abuse Disorders

The bond between a victim and her trafficker/pimp is referred to as a “trauma bond.” Trauma bonds are a major hurdle to the identification, rescue, and restoration of the DMST victim as the symptoms include failure to self-identify, returning the trafficker/pimp and other discouraging reactions. Dr. Patrick Carnes, an expert on trauma bonds, explains, “This (trauma bonding) means that the victims have a certain dysfunctional attachment that occurs in the presence of danger, shame, or exploitation. There is often seduction, deception, or betrayal. There is always some form of danger or risk” (Kennedy & Pucci, 2008). The extent and level of control exerted by a trafficker through trauma bonds is not yet totally understood and more research on trauma bonds is needed as it pertains to DMST” (Kennedy & Pucci, 2008). What is know, however, is that there are both biological and psychological reasons that trauma bonds exist.

Traumatic events have a profound effect on both the psychological state and the neurological state of an individual. The behaviors of DMST that often bewilder and frustrate
firest responders, such as refusing help, running away from shelters, unclear or disjointed memories, lack of self-identification, aggression, protection of the identity of their trafficker/pimp, and others, are symptomatic of biological processes that occur when chronic traumatic experiences occur in a young person’s life (Kennedy & Pucci, 2008).

Trafficked children have two types of trauma as a result of severe, chronic abuse: developmental trauma and shock trauma. Due to the chronic nature of violence found in DMST, as well as any history of abuse the child might have, a youth’s neurological system is disrupted and not allowed to return to a state of equilibrium. The child instead remains in a constant state of arousal. The result is dysregulation of the nervous system and a battery of physical and psychological effects. The two main psychological states that a trafficked minor may experience are:

**Hyperarousal** - Symptoms can include: anger, panic and phobias, irritability, hyperactivity, frequent crying and temper tantrums, nightmares and night terrors, regressive behavior, increase in clinging behavior, running away.

**Hypoarousal** - Responses can include: daydreaming, inability to bond with others, inattention, forgetfulness, shyness. Physical symptoms can include: eyes widen, pale skin, complaints of being cold, flat affect (Shared Hope International, 2009).

Furthermore, trauma, particularly prolonged trauma, that first occurs at an early age and that is of an interpersonal nature can have significant effects on psychological functioning above and beyond PTSD symptoms. As a result, DMST victims often experience Disorders of Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified (DENOS) which creates a higher level of biological and cognitive impairments. These effects include problems with affect dysregulation, aggression
against self and others, dissociative symptoms, somatization, and character pathology (Carnes, 1997).

Trauma bonds are often compared to Stockholm Syndrome, a psychological response where hostages become attached to the perpetrators and later come to their defense. The powerful mix of loving care alternated with violence, threats, and dehumanizing behavior has led one expert to apply this type of bonding with the relationship between a trafficker/pimp and his/her victim. Carnes draws a parallel between the dynamics of a trafficking victim who stays with her trafficker and a domestic abuse victim who stays with a violent partner. A person can be “extremely gifted and a strong person . . . and still, in the context of terror and violence, become traumatically bonded” (Carnes, 1997, p. 36).

The effects of trauma bonds are felt both by the victim and those trying to assist. Words such as “programmed,” “brainwashing,” and other descriptors are used to capture the effect of trauma bonds. Another important descriptor for the bond between a victim and trafficker used by social service providers is “family.” Many victims come from dysfunctional families or have run away from destructive homes, therefore the promise of a family and a future with the trafficker is powerful—even if that future is violent.

Another important aspect to trauma bonds is the victim’s loss of identity (Carnes, 1997). Survivors of DMST recall doubting themselves and believing that the demands issued by the trafficker/pimp were natural (Shared Hope International, 2009). Traffickers/pimps create a false sense of choice for the child. The perception that they are “choosing” to prostitute establishes a new set of norms as well as successes and achievements for youth. Accordingly, the child’s own perceived value becomes more established in the lifestyle that she now feels she has chose. This
system of presenting an apparently willing prostitute works to further protect the trafficker/pimp from detection by law enforcement (Shared Hope International, 2009).

To reinforce this view, as well as to continue manipulating the victim’s reality, traffickers/pimps usually give minors a new name; brand them with their own symbol or name (e.g. tattoos), hold “family meetings,” and make the victims call them “mommy or daddy.” This verbal manipulation is compounded with physical violence and while many victims are told that they have the option to leave, they are too scared and dependent--psychologically, physically, emotionally, and financially--on the trafficker/pimp to venture from his/her control (Shared Hope International, 2009).

Rachel Lloyd, Founder and Executive Director of Girls Empowering and Mentoring Services, stated, “And so as you see, these are incredibly powerful needs—these that most of us would like right? Control, pride, respect, sense of accomplishment, sense of belonging—these are not bizarre, crazy needs. These are very natural human needs that are being met in a very distorted way, and yet in a very, very real way (Shared Hope International, 2009, p. 45).”

**Feminist Frameworks: Pathways to Crime**

By far the most common pathway of female lawbreaking is the so-called Street Woman scenario (Daly, 1992; Miller, 1986):

Whether they were pushed out or ran away from abusive homes, or became part of deviant milieu, young women begin to engage in petty hustles or prostitution. Life on the street leads to drug use and addiction, which in turn leads to more frequent lawbreaking to support a drug habit. Meanwhile, young women drop out of high school because of pregnancy, boredom, or disinterest in school, or both. Their paid employment record is negligible because they lack interest to work in low-paid or unskilled jobs. Having a child
may facilitate entry to adult women’s networks and allow a woman to support herself in part, by state aid. A woman may continue lawbreaking as a result or relationships with men who may also be involved in crime. Women are on a revolving criminal justice door, moving between incarceration and time on the streets (Daly, 1992, pp. 13-14).

Although this scenario has dominated most feminist discussions of offending onset and persistence for female juveniles, researchers began to clarify other pathways to crime among juveniles and adults (Simpson, Yahner, & Dugan, 2008). A number of insightful qualitative studies grounded in feminist criminology have produced compelling biographies and case narratives of women offenders. First, they have identified many key psychosocial risks and needs of women offenders that are substantively different from men offenders (e.g., Belknap, 2007; Daly, 1992, Owen, 1998). Second, they have proposed several “typified pathways” to crime among women, as follows: (1) Childhood victimization path that was linked such abuse to a pattern of mental illness, substance abuse, depression/anxiety and other consequences (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Covington, 1998; Daly 1992); and (2) A pathway of extreme poverty, homelessness and educational/vocational problems that is found in many women offenders (Holtfreter et al., 2004; Reisig et al., 2002). This pinpoints the complex intersection of gender, race and class with extreme marginalization (Richie 1996; Owen & Bloom, 2003). (3) A relational pathway has been proposed that links dysfunctional abusive intimate relationships to an erosion of the woman’s self-efficacy with on-going victimization, depression/anxiety and substance abuse (Brennan, Breitenbach, & Dieterich, 2010).

Kathleen Daly has offered perhaps the most influential statement on the diversity of women’s pathways to crime (DeHart, 2008; Daly, 1992). These pathways were qualitatively developed from a sample of thirty-four women offenders. Briefly, they are as follows:
• **Street Women – Escape and Survival**: This involves women or girls fleeing abuse and violence and entering street life, where they may become drug addicted and/or rely on prostitution, drug dealing or theft to survive.

• **Drug-connected Women**: This reflects women who become users, or are co-opted into trafficking drugs, often in collaboration with intimate partners or family members.

• **Harmed and Harming Women**: This path involves serious child abuse (physical and sexual) and neglect, leading to adolescent school and family problems, delinquency; a hostile aggressive or a withdrawn demeanor and ultimately chronic adult criminality.

• **Battered Women—Situational Offenders**: This path emphasizes violent abusive intimate partners. Criminal behavior by the woman is seen as unlikely except for her involvement in this relationship. She may escape and/or exhibit retaliative violence. Her subsequent criminal behavior is linked to basic coping and survival.

• **Economic Offending**: This path reflects instrumental or economic crimes (fraud, theft and embezzlement). Two sub-types were offered: poor women coping with poverty, and women motivated by greed or social aspiration-who themselves may not be marginalized or have any history of abuse, addiction or violence.

As noted, Daly’s pathways emerged from a small sample qualitative research and very few replication studies have as yet tested this system (for example see: Reisig, Holtfreter, & Morash 2006; Simpson, Yahner & Dugan, 2009; Brennan, Breitenbach, & Dieterich, 2008). Thus, there is little firm knowledge of the replicability, reliability of identification and particularly a lack statistical characterization of each pathway. In this study, participants’ pathway risk factors will be looked at, not rigorously analyzed.
Demand in Sex Trafficking

The billion-dollar sex trafficking industry is based on one unspoken assumption: purchasing commercial sex acts from females should be tolerated, accepted, and legitimized as a “necessary evil” because the biological male need for sexual intercourse is potent and uncontainable (Samarasinghe, 2003). Trumpeting the unquestioned justification that “men will be men” has too often allowed johns to escape critical examination, censure, and penalties from scholars, legislators, and law enforcement (Yen, 2008).

Contrary to the defeatist attitude that “men will be men,” the truth is that the supposed male “need” for commercial sexual services is a malleable and socialized concept (Anderson & Davidson, 2003). While men’s (and women’s) biological need for sexual intimacy is innate, buying sex from strangers to fulfill their needs is not (Anderson & Davidson, 2003). Societal notions about masculinity and strong peer pressure result in the acceptance of purchasing sex acts as normal male behavior (Hughes, 2005). Similarly, a study of migrant Mexican male workers in the U.S. found that only 5 percent of them had ever bought sex when they were living in Mexico. However, because the migrant workers were now surrounded by other men and isolated from their wives and girlfriends back home in Mexico, 40 percent to 46 percent of these workers had resorted to purchasing sex in the U.S. (Torrey & Dubin, 2003). For Thai men, using prostitutes has become a culturally accepted rite of passage and male bonding ritual (Torrey & Dubin, 2003). As seen in these examples, the purchase of commercial sexual services is largely motivated by societal expectations of what “real men” do and peer pressure to conform to these norms (Torrey & Dubin, 2003).

While the desire for sexual intimacy in both men and women is a biological imperative, johns confuse the need for sexual intimacy with the need to purchase commercial sexual acts,
and they rationalize buying sexual services as a natural activity (Malarek, 2003). Johns feel their gender and money entitle them to have sex whenever, wherever, however, and with whomever they wish (Malerek, 2003). Johns often justify their actions by trivializing prostitution as a mere commodity of exchange and dehumanizing prostitutes as “sluts” and “whores” who deserve degrading treatment since the women’s only purpose is to satisfy the johns’ sexual demands (Torry & Dubin, 2003).

The combination of cultural socialization and personal rationalization thus engenders an environment where sex trafficking and prostitution becomes acceptable and even deemed inevitable (Malerek, 2003). However, since the male demand for commercial sex is a malleable and socialized concept, theoretically re-education of more positive male norms (e.g., norms that do not consider purchasing commercial sex acts acceptable or desirable) and appropriate punitive measures should persuade johns to stop patronizing the commercial industry. Before one can begin the process of re-educating johns and reshaping male norms, however, it is necessary to understand the motivations, characteristics, and behaviors of the heterogeneous john population (Yen, 2008).

Unveiling the faces and names of the johns reveals that most are surprisingly ordinary men. One British study found that the typical john is around thirty years old, married, and employed full-time with no previous criminal record (Yen, 2008). Interviews with forty domestic and foreign prostitutes revealed more information about the johns. First, johns come from all nationalities and races, Johns also come from all age groups; the age of buyers ranged from fifteen to ninety. A significant proportion—about 70 percent to 90 percent were married. Buyers also came from all occupational backgrounds, ranging from working class to professional men, and included prominent community members such as politicians and doctors (Yen, 2008).
Despite their diverse backgrounds, johns tend to share similar perceptions about prostitution. Many johns also believe common myths about prostitutes such as “she does it because she likes it,” “she chooses to do it,” and “prostitutes make a lot of money” (Torrey & Dubin, 2003). Johns also feel entitled to any sexual service they desire because they dehumanize the prostitutes, and instead view them as cheap sex objects (Farley, 2008). Some johns refuse to take responsibility for their own actions even if they know that the prostitute was forced into commercial sexual exploitation. In particular, one john commented:

If (the prostitute) takes money and does not perform what she is expected to, then the customer will get angry . . . I understand that the prostitute is there in the first place because she has no choice or is forced there. I feel bad about this, especially if she is forced or sold. But the fact is she is in the flesh market. The rules of the market apply to her as well as to one who has come out of her own choice . . . The fact is she is a commodity offering a service and she should accept that. We all should. (Anderson & Davidson, 2003, pgs. 24-25)

However, johns are not homogeneous in their attitudes, motivations, and behaviors. For example, johns are often believed to lonely, shy and socially inept bachelors who are sexually frustrated (Hughes, 2004). In truth, johns seek prostitutes for a multitude of reasons, including the desire to have a certain type of sexual activity which they are unable to have with their primary partner, the thrill of the illicit adventure, the desire to realize a sexual fantasy or to unleash their anger and misogynistic beliefs, and the need to have ultimate power and control over another person (Hughes, 2004). By understanding the unique beliefs and motivations of the diverse segments within the heterogeneous john population, one can gain insight into effect give
ways to address male demand based on their differential segments (Yen, 2008).

The Internet: Law Enforcement Challenge

“Driven by demand and fueled by the ease and secrecy of the Internet, we are facing a crisis of child exploitation in this nation,” Congressman Chris Smith (R-N.J.) co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking, told the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security (Smith, 2011).

One of the greatest challenges for law enforcement in identifying victims of sex trafficking is the use of technology—most notably the Internet—in marketing the victims of commercial sexual exploitation of all ages. Traffickers/pimps will small and large operations are now accessing larger, more complex networks. Prostitution is steadily moving off the streets making it increasingly difficult to find the perpetrators. In addition, images in the advertisements are difficult to identify as minors (Shared Hope International, 2009).

As the criminal market of sex trafficking becomes more sophisticated, the less readily visible it becomes. With the increases in demand and usage of the Internet, increasingly younger children can be sold on the Internet without attracting the attention of authorities. An officer with the Boston Police Department noted that traffickers/pimps will "groom girls and put them (on the street) to train them . . . but our intelligence is showing it is more Internet. And so that’s a trend that we had to go reduce, do our investigations through the Internet investigations” (Shared Hope International, 2009, p.29). Sexual services are not the only thing advertised online, as pimps, madams, and escort agencies recruit new members, through their own websites, MySpace accounts, and Facebook accounts. Furthermore, nine of ten assessments completed by Shared Hope International document the use of Craigslist to facilitate DMST, with just the
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands not reporting cases in which this great facilitator is involved (Shared Hope International, 2009).

Services for Survivors

On rescue or escape from their slavery, human trafficking victims, including DMST victims, need appropriate housing, physical and mental health care, legal services, and other basic necessities such as food and clothing. Although such services are readily available in some communities for victims of trafficking from other countries, it is much more difficult to secure them for individuals from the U.S. (Hughes, 2007). One of the most obvious necessities, and a struggle encountered by victim service providers across the country, if finding appropriate, safe housing for victims (Rocke, 2008; Smith, Smolenski, & Mattar, 2006), because simply too few protective shelters exist to fully meet the needs of this population (Smith, 2008). According to Jones, program specialist with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Trafficking in Persons Program (Kotrla, 2010), the end result is that the “best among worst choices” is often being made when it comes to placement. Young victims are held in juvenile detention centers, returned to the homes from which they fled, or placed in nonsecure facilities, choices that can mean increased risk of a repeat episode of running away, revictimization of the minor, or interference with a law enforcement investigation (Kotrla, 2010; Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

Outreach and Education

Outreach and education to communities about the crime of human trafficking and the needs of victims are important when it comes to identifying victims. The most significant outreach campaign associated with human trafficking is the Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking public awareness campaign supported by Health and Human Services. As a
result of this nationwide campaign, local coalitions have been established, local and national
media coverage of human trafficking is taking place, and national partnerships are being formed. Campaign materials have been distributed, particularly to intermediaries or first responders most likely to come into contact with victims. These include law enforcement agencies, social service providers, health care professionals, faith-based organizations, domestic violence prevention groups, homeless assistance professionals, and child protective services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). However, the impact of this nationwide campaign has not been formally assessed (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

Other examples exist of promising outreach activities being conducted by NGOs and local programs. These strategies include conducting global television campaigns to combat human trafficking (Vital Voices, 2003); developing public service announcements for ethnic radio, television, and newspapers; posting billboards in ethnic communities and garment districts; and distributing flyers (in multiple languages) and other items (e.g., Band Aids, matchbooks) at laundromats, ethnic supermarkets, beauty parlors, and other establishments that victims may be allowed to visit (Clawson et al., 2004; Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Victim service providers report increases in calls to crisis hotlines and referrals from community-based organizations and good Samaritans following such outreach efforts (Caliber Associates, 2007).

Countries around the world also are conducting outreach to increase public awareness of human trafficking. Colombia and Ecuador are relying on the entertainment industry for delivering anti-trafficking messages. In Colombia, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime worked with the producer of the popular soap opera “Everybody Loves Marilyn” to incorporate a storyline that dramatized the plight of a trafficking victim. The widely viewed Spanish language television series, broadcast throughout Colombia and exported to Venezuela, Ecuador, and the
United States, is being used to educate a large segment of the population. It is also intended to attract the attention of potential victims and educate them about the methods used to deceive victims and the abuse they could face from a trafficker (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

In Ecuador, volunteers from the National Institute for Children and Family worked with visiting international musician Ricky Martin, his charitable foundation, and Colombian entertainer Carlos Vives to disseminate anti-trafficking messages and information that reached approximately 24,000 people attending their concerts in Quito and Guayaquil (U.S. Department of State, 2006). These represent innovative ideas for outreach to a wide audience.

Other “street outreach” efforts are also underway. Outreach workers should be well-trained and understand the inherent safety concerns. Further, they must be willing to build a relationship with a victim repeatedly, for as long as necessary (MacInness, 1998). Relevant to domestic sex trafficking, many agencies provide drop-in centers, as part of their continuum of care efforts, to meet the short-term needs of exploited youth (e.g., food, hygiene products) and to build relationships aimed at long-term change (Girls Educational & Mentoring Services, 2006; Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009; Priebe & Suhr, 2005). Outreach services must be offered in a non-judgmental, careful way so trust can begin to be built. As previously stated, developing a trusting relationship with a victim of human trafficking can be extremely difficult for a variety of reasons, including the victim’s trauma history, threats to safety from the trafficker (pimp), distrust, and possibly prior negative experiences with authorities or “the system.”

These same recommendations for effective and appropriate outreach are highlighted in the literature related to runaway and homeless youth. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration’s *Treatment Improvement Protocol 32: Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment* suggests that outreach is a primary intervention strategy for engaging homeless youth (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Youth workers should meet young people on the street, developing trusting relationships over time and encouraging and facilitating youth access to treatment. In a 1998 survey of health providers for homeless Australian youth, outreach workers highlighted the importance of a non-judgmental approach as well as the importance of maintaining client confidentiality and anonymity, noting that youth would go without treatment if they suspected that outreach workers were connected to police or protective services (Harrison & Dempsey, 1998; Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

In addition, Slesnick, Meyers, Meade, and Segelken (2000) describe an engagement process specifically for substance abusing runaways that draws upon the success of the Szapocznik et al. (1988) and Szapocznik, Kurtines, Santisteban, and Rio (1990) Strategic Structural Systems Engagement (SSSE) approach and the Meyers and Smith (1997) Community Reinforcement and Family Therapy (CRAFT) intervention. Both models engage a client in treatment through a family member or significant other. Using the SSSE model, Szapocznik et al. found that 93 percent of substance abusers and their families became engaged in treatment, compared to 42 percent of those entering treatment without families. Primary components of the combined SSSE and CRAFT intervention include approaching the runaway youth and engaging him or her in a non-threatening manner, identifying and addressing his or her treatment motivators and barriers, and negotiating with the counselor about treatment. Additionally, the intervention involves contacting parents to gain their approval, informing them about the treatment, engaging them in treatment, addressing their treatment motivators and concerns, and negotiating with them about treatment. Each stage in the engagement process includes
developmentally appropriate and motivational techniques specific to the population. Components of these approaches may be more applicable for victims of domestic trafficking than international trafficking given the need to involve a family member or significant other.

**Prevention**

To date, there is no documented best practices research related to the prevention of human trafficking (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009). However, the incorporation of a prevention component into the TVPA suggests the importance of this element of service. Additionally, the literature on treatment of domestic sex trafficking victims consistently points to the importance of prevention education (Girls Educational & Mentoring Services, 2006; National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2002; Priebe & Suhr, 2005). The Paul & Lisa Program, The Center to End Adolescent Sexual Exploitation (CEASE), and Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS) use a well-constructed prevention program for middle school and/or high school youth. The Alternative for Girls, an agency in Detroit, has several components, including a prevention program that involves weekly meetings and activities for at-risk girls. Nationwide, most agencies such as schools and child welfare agencies are not engaging in such primary prevention, and those engaged in secondary and tertiary prevention lack an evidence-based curriculum to meet their goals (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, Grace, 2009).

The My Life, My Choice Project in Massachusetts is an example of a program designed to offer primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention to a population of particularly vulnerable girls, those in group care settings. Co-written by a clinician and a survivor, the group work component of the My Life, My Choice Project of the Home for Little Wanderers uses a 10-session curriculum presented in weekly 1.25-hour modules. The sessions include material on dispelling myths and stereotypes about prostitution, awareness of recruitment tactics by pimps,
information on sexual health, understanding the link between substance use and prostitution, resource lists, strategies for increasing safety in the Life, and an overarching emphasis on improving self-esteem. In addition, throughout the 10 weeks, participants hear both written and live testimony by women who have been in the Life. The sessions include interactive activities (e.g., games, role plays), art, music, reading, and journaling. Initial participant feedback on the My Life, My Choice group work component has shown a positive impact on the young women involved (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

Gaps in Research

Despite increased attention to the problem of human trafficking into, and most recently, within the United States, knowledge and understanding of the issue remains fairly limited (Albanese, Donnelly, & Kelegian, 2004; Derks, Henke, & Vanna, 2006). Research on trafficking has focused primarily on estimating the scale of the problem, mapping routes, and reviewing policies and legal frameworks (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005).

Very little is known about the prevalence of trafficking and the number of victims; characteristics of the victims and perpetrators; the long-term impacts of human trafficking on victims, their families, and communities; the effectiveness of anti-trafficking programs; and best practices in meeting the complex needs of victims. More specifically:

- There is little literature on effective programs and services designed specifically for victims of human trafficking. Information from more than a decade of work with victims of domestic violence, prostitution, homeless and runaway youth, and victims experiencing trauma in general provide most of the general groundwork summarized here, and there is a need for research that explores the applicability and effectiveness of these approaches with victims of human trafficking.
• While there is little hard evidence to support the effectiveness of specific interventions or services for victims of human trafficking, it is possible to identify components or characteristics that seem promising in services and strategies for trafficking victims and similar populations based upon the limited information available.

• In looking at promising models to assist victims in their recovery, indications are that survivors may be in the best position to assist peers, working in collaboration with clinicians. However, there is limited research evidence about the impact of peer models on recovery.

• With limited research, more needs to be learned about the health implications of human trafficking and the medical needs of all types of victims—males, females, adults, and children.

• Trauma treatment research and studies of manualized treatment options, especially those programs working at the intersection of trauma and co-occurring disorders in adolescents, are quite limited. While the literature is extensive on PTSD in children and youth, no published literature is available on controlled studies of adolescent interventions.

• Limited information is available regarding substance abuse treatment for adult victims of human trafficking.

• Research specific to substance abuse in minor trafficking victims is also extremely limited.

What is known about victims of human trafficking is focused primarily on the trafficking of international women into the United States for sexual exploitation, with little attention to domestic trafficking, minor victims, and in particular, male victims of sex and labor trafficking (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).
However, a richer source of information based on more rigorous research studies can be found in related fields, as demonstrated in the current literature review. Inferences can reasonably be made from what is known about victims of domestic violence, torture victims, child sexual exploitation and prostitution, and runaway and homeless youth, and what we expect to find from similar studies of international and domestic victims of human trafficking. In the absence of existing studies, conclusions can be drawn only from overviews, commentaries, and anecdotal observations and experiences of providers and others in the field (Gozdziak & Collet, 2005).

The challenges associated with combating human trafficking and protecting victims are overwhelming but manageable. Many NGOs feel that a multi-dimensional approach to addressing trafficking should include not only legislative initiatives and crime prevention, but also social welfare, job training, rights protection, and development initiatives in the source, transit, and destination countries and locales (Caliber Associates, 2007; Richard, 1999). Effective strategies should be comprehensive and provide for collaboration among governments, governmental agencies, NGOs, advocacy groups, service providers, survivors, and affected communities (Miller & Stewart, 1998). Intensive case management, comprehensive services provided through partnerships, and ongoing outreach and education most likely will produce an effective response to the needs of victims.

Ongoing communication with existing programs and documentation and assessment of their activities will offer valuable lessons for the field. NGOs working with different groups of trafficking victims (e.g., sex trafficking or labor trafficking, males or females, adults or minors) and populations with similar needs (e.g., torture victims, refugees, minor prostitutes, runaway and homeless youth, victims of domestic violence) represent an untapped wealth of practical
knowledge and expertise on how to develop appropriate assistance and treatment programs for trafficking victims and survivors. More research is needed to document these evolving approaches and strategies, provide results that will inform and strengthen the response by sectors already involved in combating trafficking, and serve as best practices for those communities wanting to replicate this work (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009).

Summary

This review of current literature reveals a need for the development of knowledge related to the sex trafficking experience. Discussion included an overview of human trafficking: Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking, trauma bonding, pathways to female offending, challenges to law enforcement, demand, prevention, outreach and education needs, and gaps in literature.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the woman sex trafficker.

Research Questions

The main research question posed: What is the lived experience of the woman sex trafficker? The three research questions are:

1. What are the pathways and structures into sex trafficking?
2. How does the participant view the women and children she has trafficked?
3. How might we prevent sex trafficking?

Research Design

Qualitative research was used to explore the lived experiences of the woman sex trafficker. Qualitative research involves broadly stated questions about human experiences and realities, studied through sustained contact with persons in their natural environments, and producing rich, descriptive data that help us to understand those person’s experiences (Munhill, 2001). Qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) is characterized as:

A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This
means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(p.3)

Prison is often too restricted an environment to warrant the ethnographies or participant observations prevalent in much of the contemporary empirical work using qualitative methods. However, what emerges from an all-too-brief encounter with an interviewee through the medium of the narrative can provide data just as rich as that from any other methodological enterprise (Schlosser, 2008).

The writing of a qualitative research report demands the creation of a narrative (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991). The definition of narrative, from the position of the teller, includes three parts. First, the selection of events, moments, actors, and consequences must be made in retrospect; second, the events within the narrative must be represented on a historical timeline of temporal relevance; third, “the events and characters must be related to one another and to some overarching structure, often in the context of some opposition or struggle” (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p.220). Simply asking a female inmate to “tell her life story” would leave me at an analytical disadvantage because layers of other stories remain embedded within the main tale. Some stories may overlap or may not conceptually exist at the same time as others (Scholosser, 2008). In first-order study narratives, individuals tell stories about themselves and their own experiences, while in second-order narratives, researchers construct a narrative about other people’s experiences or present a collective story that represents the lives of many (Creswell, 2007). This study is a second-order narrative.

Jennifer Scholosser (2008), author of “Issues in Interviewing Inmates: Navigating the Methodological Landmines of Prison Research,” stated, “When we (as researchers) recognize
our own parts in the construction of the narrative, the process of pulling apart those layers of story during the act of information exchange may reveal the multiple depths embedded in a seemingly routine recounting. What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (p. 1513).

**Methods**

I used data triangulation via partially-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews, indictments, newspaper articles, some court documents, participant’s artwork, and participant’s journal entries, to gain a better understanding of women’s experiences as traffickers. I was not allowed access to prison medical records. The protocol (DeHart, 2008) and interviewing guide are located in Appendix C of this study.

I interviewed participants in three penitentiaries. Two were moderate-security prisons, and one was a maximum-security prison. The warden at the maximum-security prison did allow me to bring in a tape recorder. I was granted permission to audiotape two women twice in the moderate-security prison. Later, I transcribed and analyzed the audio recorded verbatim line by line. In the maximum-security prison, I interviewed five women twice, and immediately converted my handwritten notes into themes. Questions were open-ended. I was given a time limitation of 90 minutes per interview.

Participants were encouraged to talk as long as they wanted about each thematic area until they believed they described the subject in all the ways they felt necessary. I wrote out my impressions of each interview in field notes written immediately after each interview noting type of rapport established during interviews, and factors that encouraged the participant to be more/less forthcoming (Rose, 2001).
In-depth interviews, if done well, can sometimes capture an individual’s lived experiences. Feminist researchers often bring a unique perspective to the practice of in-depth interviewing, for they are often cognizant of issue of power and authority that might affect the research process. Feminist researchers must be able to discern how their own values and biases affect their research at all points along the research continuum (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Throughout this study, I tried to me mindful of my own values, biases and worldview, and journal.

Denzin’s Concept of Triangulation

Triangulation is a process by which the researcher can guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's biases. The function of triangulation is to locate and reveal the understanding of the object under investigation from "different aspects of empirical reality" (Denzin, 2000). Denzin (2000) has identified four basic types of triangulation:

1. **Data triangulation**: Checking out the consistency of different data sources, i.e. comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative methods. For example, compare observational data with the interview data; compare what people say in public with what they say in private; check for consistency of what people say about the same thing over time; compare the perspectives of people from different points of view. However, such comparison does not always mean to find the consistency. Instead, sometimes it helps to study and to understand when and why there are differences.

2. **Investigator triangulation**: Using several different researchers or evaluators to review the findings in order to reduce potential bias.
3. **Theory triangulation**: Using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data, i.e.
   examining the data from the perspectives of different stakeholder positions with different
   theories of actions.

4. **Methodological triangulation**: Checking out the consistency of findings generated by
   different data-collection method

   The issues for qualitative research are more about *transferability, faithfulness, and
   dependability* rather than reliability and validity. As a qualitative researcher, I gave thick
descriptions so that my readers would able to make decisions to see whether the results of the
inquiries are transferable. My conceptual analysis was derived from the data, and checked out
against the consistency of different data sources. Because the meaning of communication
depends on knowing the relevant context, and contexts are consciously designed to evoke
multiple meanings (Denzin, 2000), qualitative research must develop thorough and
comprehensive descriptions of the context.

**Art in Prison**

Artistic expression is a fundamental component of prison. This is evidenced through
crafts shops, inmate-painted wall murals, decorative envelopes that inmates use to send letters to
loved ones, and intricate tattoos designed and displayed with pride. The ability to create “good
art” is a status builder and can earn respect and friendship for the artist for his or her peers
(Gussak & Ploumis-Devick, 2004: Kornfield, 1997). Such creative expression may originate
through the sublimation of aggressive and libidinal impulses (Dissanayake, 1992; Kramer, 1993)
and may provide the artistic inmate an acceptable “escape” (Gussak & Cohen-Liebman, 2001).

There are many advantages of art therapy in correctional settings. Art therapy can be
defined as the “therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who
experience illness, trauma, or challenges in living (American Art Therapy Association, 2005, p.1). In 1997, Gussak delineated eight benefits that art therapy may have in prison:

1. Art is helpful in the prison environment, given the disabilities extant in this population, contributed to by organicity, a low educational level, illiteracy, and other obstacles to verbal communication and cognitive development.

2. Art allows the expression of complex material in a simpler manner.

3. Art does not require the inmate to know, admit, or discuss what he has disclosed.

4. Art promotes disclosure, even while the inmate is not compelled to discuss feelings and ideas that might leave him or her vulnerable.

5. Art has the advantage of bypassing unconscious and conscious defenses, including pervasive dishonesty.

6. Art can diminish pathological symptoms without verbal interpretation.

7. Art supports creative activity in prison and provides necessary diversion and emotional escape.

8. Art permits the inmate to express himself or herself in a manner acceptable to the inside and outside culture.

Much of the literature supports such benefits through case vignettes (Gussak, 2007). These outcome studies reported here verify some of the advantages of art therapy with correctional populations. Though I did not do “art therapy” with my participants, I encouraged artistic expression and had art supplies available during the interviewing process. I also encouraged artistic expression following each interview, and ask each participant if she would share her artwork with me, if she chose. Only one woman illustrated a picture, and her artwork was analyzed.
Journaling

Over the past 25 years, a growing body of literature has demonstrated the beneficial effects that writing about traumatic or stressful events has on physical and emotional health (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005). In the first study on expressive writing (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986), college students wrote for 15 minutes on four consecutive days about “the most traumatic or upsetting experiences” of their entire lives, while controls wrote about superficial topics (such as their room or their shoes). Participants who wrote about their deepest thoughts and feelings reported significant benefits in both objectively assessed and self-reported physical health 4 months later, with less frequent visits to the health center and a trend towards fewer days out of role owing to illness. The authors concluded that “writing about earlier traumatic experience was associated with both short-term increases in physiological arousal and long-term decreases in health problems” (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986, p. 280).

The therapeutic value of emotional expression through journaling appears to a viable for a range of settings and populations (Chan & Horneffer, 2006). Through the course of interviewing, I encouraged my participants to journal their feelings, and ask them to share their entries with me, if they wished. Only two women journaled, and their entries were analyzed.

Constructing Questions to “Story” the Trafficker

In qualitative research, the thematic research questions are usually formulated in a theoretical language, whereas, the interviewer questions should be expressed in the everyday language of the participants/interviewees (Kvale, 2007). Thematically, the questions relate to the “what” of an interview, to the theoretical conceptions of the research topic, and to the subsequent analysis of the interview. The questions will differ when interviewing for spontaneous descriptions of the lived world, interviewing for coherent narratives, or interviewing for a
conceptual analysis of the person’s understanding of a topic. The more spontaneous the interview procedure, the more likely one is to obtain spontaneous, lively and unexpected answers from the interviewees. On the other hand, the more structured the interview situation is, the easier the later conceptual structuring of the interview by analysis will be (Kvale, 2007). The interviews in this study were partially-structured. In a partially-structured interview, the area of interest is chosen and questions are formulated, but order is up to the interviewer. The interviewer may add questions or modify them as deemed appropriate. Questions were open-ended and responses were recorded nearly verbatim, or audio taped.

Dynamically, the interviewee questions pertain to the “how” of an interview; they should promote a positive interaction, keep the flow of the conversation going, and stimulate the subjects to talk about their experiences and feelings. The questions should be easy to understand, short, and devoid of academic language. A conceptually good thematic research question need not be a good dynamic interview question. Interviewers who know what they are asking about and why they are asking, will attempt to clarify the meanings relevant to the project during the interview. Such attempts at disambiguation of interviewees’ statements will provide a more secure ground for the later analysis (Kvale, 2007). My thematic, theoretical and sample participant questions are located in Appendix D of this study.

I was the research tool. “Just as the artist is the primary instrument in painting, the researcher is the primary research instrument in qualitative investigation” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p.453). Therefore, it is no small matter for the reader to have an understanding of the relationship the researcher has with the subject. The researcher must identify and describe her perspective and recognize and deal with the biases she might hold on the subject (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p.453). The interviewer’s ability to sense the immediate meaning of an answer, and
the horizons of possible meanings that it opens up, is decisive. This, again, requires a knowledge of and interest in the research theme and the human interaction of the interview, as well as familiarity with modes of questioning, so that the interviewer can devote his or her attention to the interview subject and the interview topic (Kvale, 2007). Interview questions should be brief and simple. I used a combination of introductory, follow-up, probing, specifying, indirect and linguistic forms of questioning. The examples I used in my study are located in Appendix C of this manuscript. After completing the confidentiality formalities, I began each interview stating, “I am not here to judge you in anyway. I am here to learn. You are the teacher, I am the student.” All my participants responded favorably. One woman said, “That’s some shit! ‘Cause everyone judges everyone in here!”

Interviewing is powerful in part because it involves relatively direct exchanges of views and perspectives among researchers, participants, and readers. Because those exchanges are mediated by language and discourses that shape experience and knowledge, interviews can also be seen as occasions that put those discursive operations in view (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007).

**Journaling Emotions in Fieldwork**

A qualitative consciousness implies that emotions emerging in the field serve to strengthen the research process because feeling is a way of knowing (Ferrel, 2005). A continuing dialogue on the intense emotions associated with researching persons and groups impacted by incarceration is warranted because of the incapacitation and emotional pain that is hallmark of the prison experience (Arditti, Joest, Lambert-Shute, & Walker, 2010). Prisons and jail tend not be happy places, rather they contain a great deal of human suffering. Feminist researchers, Arditti, Joest, Lambert-Shute, & Walker (2010) recommended that fieldworkers process emotions connected to conducting research in corrections setting by keeping careful progress
notes written up after each interview (some of the information may be the same for all interviews and pertain to a full session of data collection on a particular day). I wrote up my notes in seven discrete sections recommended by Arditti, Joest, Lambert-Shute, & Walker:

1. Summary of interview experience
2. Description of interview/prison setting
3. Observations of prison personnel/participants/other people
4. Interruptions
5. Methodological observations/theoretical notes (focused on interview process, participant)
6. Overall, gut level impressions (not mentioned above)
7. Self-reflection (information pertaining to how interview felt, emotions that crop up while conducting interview, self-exploration relative to data collection; creative ways to externalize pain such as through poetry or free-writing)

**The Art of Listening**

My ability to listen affected the data and knowledge I produced. Full listening means listening actively, listening accurately, and listening for meaning (Egan, 2007). Effective listening can be a radical experience (Gordon, 1997). Carl Rogers (1980) talked passionately about basic empathic listening, being with and understanding the other, even calling it “an unappreciated way of being” (p. 137). He used the word unappreciated because in his view few people develop this “deep listening” ability. Here is his description of empathic listening, or “being with”:

It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment-by-moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion
or whatever that he or she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in the other’s life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments. (p. 142)

When I listen well and actively process what I hear, the information I assimilate may baffle me, haunt me, make me feel uncomfortable, and take me to unexpected detours, “away from abstract . . . bloodless, professionalized questions,” (Gordon, 1997, p.40) toward people, knowledge, and experiences that have been disavowed, overlooked, and forgotten, thus, strengthening my study in compelling ways (DeVault & Gross, 2007).

The feminist researcher who takes the work of active listening for granted risks producing data, writing up her or his findings, and responding in ways that are colonizing rather than liberating because they reproduce dominant perspectives (DeVault & Gross, 2007). For instance, a researcher who enters a research encounter assuming she or he is a naturally good listener, without consciously acknowledging the work that active listening entails, may end up hearing only what she or he wants to expects to hear. I tried to be cognizant of the fact that feminists may be divided by relations of power and privilege, and that listening may require that we acknowledge the ignorance our own privileges may have produced before we can hear what others wish to tell us (DeVault & Gross, 2007). I had a heightened awareness of the fact that just because I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) does not make me a seamless listener. Listening takes work, patience, a teachable spirit, and humility, especially in an unfamiliar environment with many distractions.

**Research Measures**

Once I received my participants’ names, I had access to electronic information containing demographic and sentencing data. This information was located on the Illinois Department of Corrections’ (IDOC) web page, and is available to the public. Indictments were solicited and
paid for (by me), and received from the country courthouses the inmates were from. Interview measures consisted of participant responses to open-ended questions and prompts centered around three research questions:

1. What are the pathways and structures into sex trafficking?
2. How does the participant view the women and children she has trafficked?
3. How might we prevent sex trafficking?

The timing and length of interviews were based on the IDOC’s research department’s regulations and guidelines. Two interviews were audio taped. Audio taping was voluntary, participants could refuse if they wished. I was not allowed to audiotape the other five participants because they were incarcerated in a maximum-security prison. I still interviewed them, but took notes during the interview and converted them into themes afterwards. Incentives were not provided to inmates for their participation. The Illinois Department of Corrections does not allow inmates to receive compensation of any sort for their involvement in research. Although an Internal Review Board (IRB) might require researchers to outline both the potential harm and potential benefit to the participant, often the only incentive to offer is that there are no punishments for what the inmates say and that talking with someone other than an institutional authority can be to their benefit (Noakes & Wincup, 2004). Providing an outlet in which the inmates can speak candidly about their lives or experiences can quite often be more beneficial than some tangible reward. Although some IRB members will likely express concern that the benefits to the participants are largely intangible, providing an open and honest venue for the participants to express themselves can be more rewarding than the IRB, or even researchers, may anticipate (Schlosser, 2008).
Participants were encouraged to journal their feelings throughout the interviewing process. They had art supplies to assist them in communicating and processing potential conflicting emotions, and to offer anti-sex trafficking campaign ideas, such as poster design images, if they chose. Their decision to share journal entries or artwork was completely up to them. If they decided to release their artwork to me, they signed an artwork release form (see Appendix B). Prior to the interviewing process, participants were given a confidentiality consent form to sign (see Appendix B).

In this study, I informed my participants that (1) participation was voluntary, (2) that the interview may trigger conflicting emotions that they may wish to talk about with their assigned counselor or chaplain, and (3) that they may freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study (Diener & Crandall, 1978). I also informed each participant before the interview that should she disclose intent to harm herself or someone else, or that someone was harming her, I would inform the proper authorities. Each participant must also understand before agreeing to interview, that I would report any crime or threat to the personal safety of a person to the Illinois Department of Corrections (see Appendix B).

The protection of the inmates, as well as mine, was paramount at all times during my research project. Thus, care was important when constructing the written consent forms participants were required to sign. Generally, the IRB requires such forms composed at a sixth-grade reading level. Some inmates incarcerated for trafficking might not have completed high school or function at a level consistent with adult literacy. To include all potential interviewees equally, consent forms should be written as simply and clearly as possible, allowing for an open and honest research process (Schlosser, 2008). Delivering and explaining the consent form is
also the first chance to build rapport with the inmate, so this component of the interview process is particularly important (see Appendix B for consent form).

Within the written consent form, I noted that the contents of the interview would not be revealed to any institutional authority (barring the disclosure of harmful intent), that pseudonyms would be assigned and inmate numbers omitted to ensure confidentiality, and that the results of the interview may be published, artwork included. All my data will remain in a locked or protected area after the interview to maintain confidentiality and to ensure that the data is not disturbed. It is usually acceptable to keep data on a password-protected computer and this stipulation should be noted to the participant before the interview begins (Schlosser, 2008).

Participants

In order to produce rich, in-depth descriptions, the sampling used was purposeful, criterion sampling. I interviewed seven women twice. In purposeful sampling, the researcher applies his or her own discretion based on prior knowledge and experience to select the respondents who best meet the purpose of the study (Neutens & Rubison, 2002). This sampling technique is often used in hidden populations which are difficult for researchers to access (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004).

As a new and unfamiliar face on prison grounds, it was inevitable that the inmates would be aware of my presence in the prison. Being able to safeguard against widespread awareness was nearly impossible, and could affect the outcome of my interviews both positively and negatively. The participants interviewed first were likely tell others what they experienced; it was beneficial, then, that my participants have positive interview experiences. What subsequent interviewees hear from others could make them more or less likely to participate. Inmates did not know the nature of my research unless the participant shared her experience. I did not solicit for
participants. No advertisements were posted anywhere. I explained to the participants early on, that I had no affiliation with any federal, state, or local correctional or justice system (Schlosser, 2008).

Per IDOC’s dissertation policy, my gatekeeper, the coordinator from the Acting Chief of Programs and Support Services of the Illinois Department of Corrections, initially scanned IDOC’s database system for female offenders meeting the following criteria.

- Women who were involved in the pipeline of (domestic or international) sex trafficking through recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a woman or child for the purposes of a commercial sex act.
- Women who have pimped out their own children or other family members (familial prostitution).

The assistant wardens of programs from the women’s prisons then reviewed their populations to look for women on their caseloads that fit my criteria. An individual counselor may have a caseload of about 200 women. The mental health professionals were responsible for reviewing the criteria and talking to the inmates to see if they would be interested in volunteering. If interested, the women signed an IDOC release of information form.

My gatekeeper was a 26-year veteran with the IDOC, and a certified substance abuse counselor. A colleague of mine referred her to me. Her scope of responsibilities included the Office of Adult Education and Vocational Services, Addiction Recovery Management Services Unit, Health Services, Mental Health and Psychiatric Services, Placement Resource Unit, Volunteer Services, Office of Chaplain, and Women and Family Services. She provided a wealth of information. As an outsider looking in, she helped me negotiate many of the technical issues I encountered when I began my research, such as, instruction on staff hierarchy, where to
park my car, and who to contact for a background investigation. She answered all of my many emails lickety-split. Her ability to follow through was outstanding.

My gatekeeper assured me that participants would be carefully and confidentially selected. Participants were incarcerated for offenses associated with sex trafficking such as: sexual solicitation of a minor, pornography, felonious restraint of a child, promoting prostitution, child sexual assault, etc. Women who were in the mental health unit, who had severe mental health histories, or who were taking major psychotropic drugs were excluded from this study. An onsite mental health professional screened potential participants to ensure that damage was not be inflicted by participation in this study.

**Theoretical Lens: Feminist Methodology**

Feminist research is primarily “connected in principle to feminist struggles” (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993, p.266). By documenting my participants’ lives, experiences, and concerns, illuminating gender-based stereotypes and biases, and unearthing their subjugated knowledge, this research will hopefully challenge the basic structure and ideologies that oppress women. Feminist research goals foster empowerment and emancipation for women and other marginalized groups, and feminist researchers often apply their findings in the service of promoting social change and social justice for women (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). My participants’ stories and multiple social realities, put them on “center stage,” empowered them, and promoted social change by exposing “their” truths: Grim truths that many people just do not want to “know,” and possible unforeseen truths that health educators and others would want to know. An epistemology is “a theory of knowledge about the social world and about who can be a knower and what can be known (Harding, 1987, p.3). Fusing knowledge with practice, the
contributions my participants made to the pool of anti-sex trafficking knowledge and awareness resources can possibly save one girl’s life. Saving one life promotes positive social change.

**Researcher’s Reflexivity with Inmates**

Reflexivity is the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process. Like the researched or respondent, the researcher is a product of his or her society’s social structures and institutions. To practice reflexivity means to acknowledge that “all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced and that it is grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer and observed” (Mann & Kelley, 1997, p.32).

Jill McCorkel (2003), in her article titled, “What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field,” poignantly described her struggle at bridging the divide between freedom and incarceration:

One day after a large group of university students had taken a tour through the prison, Ann, who was serving her third term in prison for drug trafficking and prostitution, called me over to her: Did you see them, them kids, students whatever they are from that university of yours? They came through here and I felt like a zoo, like an animal. They looked at me like I was a goddamned animal. Nobody’s ever looked at me like that before. Not all the men, those fucking pricks, that I sold my butt to, no one of them ever looked at me like that. You know, you know what I mean? No, you can’t know what I mean ‘cause you ain’t in here, you’ll never be looked at like that—no one will ever see you in some pen somewhere and ask theirselfs what caused that animal over there to be
like that. Was it cause she’s some dope-fiend addict, was it cause her mommy’s old man got off on her when she was some kid? No, no way—they’ll never ask that about you.

She’s right, they never will. (p. 216)

As I interviewed prison inmates and struggled to bridge the divide between my participants’ incarceration and my own freedom, I put forth great effort at being cognizant of my whiteness, education, class position, position as a counselor, and status as a “free person.” I also implemented safeguards to combat secondary trauma (see Figure 7). Receiving adequate personal and professional support in which ethical, reflexive, and emotional issues can be addressed, lowers the exposure to adverse risk(s) for both the research participants and the researcher (Bond, 2004). I processed my thoughts and feelings via journal writing, and talking aloud with a peer counselor after each interview. I sought out supervision from my ex-professor-mentor to process boundary struggles (described in chapter four of this study).

Researchers have recorded their experiences of emotional and physical distress as a result of conducting in-depth interviews, and as Sanders (2005) notes, one cannot hope to learn the ropes of being a field research without suffering from rope burns (cited in Lee, 1993).
• **Empathy** – Researcher is vulnerable to internalizing some of the trauma related pain

• **Insufficient Recovery Time** – Researcher exposed to participants’ experiences with little recovery time

• **Unresolved Personal Trauma** – Researcher’s painful experiences can be ‘re-activated’

• **Vulnerable Members of Society** – Researcher’s sense of morality and decency shaken

• **Isolation and Systemic Fragmentation** – Group cohesiveness regulates individual stress reactions, therefore individual researchers less able to tolerate stress

• **Lack of Systemic Resources** – Lack of economic and personnel investment in services for participants may exacerbate the above problems (Perry, 2003)

*Figure 7. Secondary Trauma*

**Researcher’s Relationship with Topic**

Feminist researchers contend that the researcher’s positionality affects all aspects of the research process, from the articulation of a research questions to the analysis and presentation of the data (McCorkel & Meyers, 2003). Feminist researchers have an obligation to disclose a brief personal biography including why they have chosen to research a given topic, the vantage point from which they will begin inquiry and the way in which they will gather, analyze and report the knowledge they have produced (Leavy, 2000). One of my dreams is to creatively raise public awareness about sex trafficking, shift attitudes, give women voice, and use their power in progressive ways.

As a feminist health educator, counselor, and nurse who specializes in sexual abuse recovery, I am also interested in the abused to abuser paradigm. I am also a strong proponent of Cognitive Processing Therapy. Women who have been raped or sexually abused may reduce risk of revictimization by coping with trauma symptoms (Fortier, DiLillo, Messman-Moore, Peugh,
DeNardi, & Gaffey, 2009). I believe in restorative justice. Healed female traffickers can become powerful anti-trafficking advocates and educators.

Prior to the interview stage, I explored my personal and professional biases regarding the experience of sex trafficking. As a faith-based, Caucasian, privileged feminist researcher, I realized my biases can affect my research, especially if I should get lax in my reflexivity process. The need to suspend preconceptions helped me as a researcher look beyond myself. Some qualitative researchers speak of the “Martial role” attempting to take the view of the ultimate outsider, the alien from another world. This openness seems implied in the biblical content that suggests I humbly stay open before God (Ratcliff, 1998). Ratcliff, author and qualitative researcher, summed up bracketing self out well, “There is something noble and virtuous about attempting to suspend our biases, however limited we are in that ability, holding our biases at a distance and testing biases against the world. That virtue is the ability to admit I can be wrong, and I want to find out if I am wrong, and will admit if I am wrong. It is the genuine quest for truth” (Ratcliff, 1998). I tried to be thorough and conscientious as I collected my data, used feminist principles, and weaved self-reflexivity into my thick descriptions. My positionality and reflexive reflections are weaved throughout the results chapter of this manuscript.

**Thick Descriptions**

Qualitative research articles rely on words drawn from a mass of textual data. Qualitative research reports require “thick description” of context, methodology, and phenomena (Bowen, 2010). Thick description results from the researchers’ task of both describing and interpreting observed social behavior within its particular context. Participants’ attitudes and experiences are at the heart of thick description (Bowen, 2010). As explained by Denzin (1989):
A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and webs of social relationships that join persons to one another . . . It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p.83)

Unlike “thin” description, which is devoid of context or meaning, thick description is balanced by analysis and interpretation (Patton, 2002).

Further, thick description helps to show that the research was rigorous, reflecting thoroughness and appropriateness of methodology. This technique contributes to the trustworthiness of the research. In particular, it supports transferability, the degree to which findings can be applied to other settings, contexts, or populations. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

**Feminist Ethics**

**Reciprocity**

Reciprocity includes an open and conscious negotiation of the power structures reproduced during the give-and-take interactions of the people involved in both side of the [research] relationship. A theory of reciprocity, then, frames the feminist agenda with a self-critical, conscious navigation of this intervention (Cushman, 1996).

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) question whether non-hierarchical relations can ever be truly present in interviews rather at best the participant/researcher can be involved in merely seeking reciprocity. They argue that reciprocity rarely involves equality since the collected data will
inevitably remain the intellectual property of the researcher/research community regardless of the level of collaboration in its design and collection.

To ignore issues of my participants’ status and powerlessness is to deny their frame of reference and the resulting power dynamics that may potentially arise within our relationship (van den Hoonaaard, 2005). Since I was not given permission from the IDOC to give gifts to my participants for volunteering to interview (thought I really wanted to), I demonstrated my gratitude by writing my participants thank-you notes, and by donating books to the library. To show my appreciation to my gatekeeper, I shared a verbal summary of my research with her over coffee, and put a gift certificate in her a thank-you note. I also wrote thank-you notes to the assistant wardens and mental health professionals that assisted me.

Trauma/PTSD

The degree and duration of the physical danger and psychological trauma to an individual is not always evident. In some cases risks may not be obvious to the interviewer. In other cases, the dangers may not by apparent to the woman (Zimmerman & Watts, 2003).

Dual time awareness (Rothschild, 2003) enables an individual to separate the sense that the trauma occurred in the past despite experiencing it in the present. Participants suffering from PTSD may be unable to distinguish the past from the present and so therefore find it difficult to contain the trauma process. Hence research with inmates suffering from PTSD can be uncertain and potentially volatile. Rothschild (2003) explains:

You never really know how a client will react to an intervention, or, for that matter, to a simple question, the color of your shirt, or the smell of your office. One of the features of PTSD is that the traumatic memory can be easily triggered. When that happens, hyper arousal accelerates out of control causing intense physical symptoms and/or flashbacks.
Until triggers are identified, they are unpredictable, and literally anything can be a trigger . . . they need to be equipped with tools to help them contain reactions . . . and to halt the out-of-control acceleration of hyperarousal. Being able to “put on the brakes” will aid clients in their daily life, as well as give them courage to address difficult issues. (p. 19)

It may not always be possible to identify participants suffering from PTSD due to their development of complex psychological defensive systems. This may include the hardened inmate who tries to prove that she enjoys prostitution, and is the toughest in the street is no less a victim. Her reactions are a defense and survival mechanism, a crutch to her ego and self-worth.

Girls often become desensitized, reports Patricia Green. They say things like “I no longer care what happens to me, or nothing worse can happen to me now.” They talk only about what happens to others. Many girls who are out of prostitution are often unable to recall their life in prostitution or particular events at that time. (Raymond et al, 2002)

**Researcher Competence and PTSD**

What passes muster as ethically responsible research is down to the individual researcher and no one else. Judgment has to be exercised when deciding how the researcher ought to conduct him or herself if faced with significant moral choices during the research process. Judgments made are inescapably personal if moral in kind. (Gregory, 2003, p.3)

Researcher competence is essential in the planning, design and implementation of ethical feminist research and requires consideration in the initial risk assessment phase. Research with inmates requires similar skills to those used in psychotherapy. When participants are encouraged to tell their story the research process can be similar to a therapeutic session (Gale, 1992).
The research interview is different from the therapeutic session in that while some catharsis and empowerment, even self-awareness, may take place, therapy is the by-product of the research process, rather than its object. Tee & Lathlean’s (2004) research on the ethics of co-operative inquiry with vulnerable people suggest the need for researchers to have developed high levels of personal awareness and skill to navigate the interpersonal relational dynamics that may arise. This could include proven ability to make ongoing assessments of vulnerability, sensitivity to changes in decision-making capacity, and transparency (Tee & Lathlean, 2004, p.8).

As a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor specializing in PTSD and sexual abuse recovery since 1999, I have the skills Tee and Lathlean (2004) suggested, training, and experience to help my participants in the event they should experience symptoms of PTSD during interviewing. If a participant experienced anxiety and/or PTSD symptoms after interviewing, she would inform her caseworker who would then notify her counselor. Every inmate has her own counselor and access to a chaplain. A staff member was aware of every interview I did, and was available to me in the event my participant needed assistance. The IDOC staff was very attentive.

Before participants began responding to questions, I helped them devise a strategy for how they should proceed as a variety of possible scenarios develop. For example, I asked:

- If you feel like you do not want to answer a question, how will you let me know?
- What will you do if tomorrow you decide that you wish you had not participated?
- What do you now, when you get upset? Who do you talk to? What brings you comfort?

I also gave my participants a number of clear decision points during the course of an interview when they could decide whether to go on. For instance, I asked, “The next few questions concern your childhood and possible violent incidences, do you want to continue?”
Stressing the voluntary nature of the participation throughout the study may ultimately be more important than the informed consent forms provided at the beginning (Ford & Reutter, 1990). Explicitly including decision points for continuing or ending participation or refusing certain questions or topics may make it less likely that women will be seduced into participating beyond their comfort zone because of factors including the demand characteristics of the situation, an empathic connection with the researcher, or a possible altered state of awareness in the participants due to reawakening prior to trauma (Fontes, 2004). My participants tolerated the interviewing process well. No trauma or anxiety was noted.

**Data Collection**

Gaining access to the prison required significant tenacity, persistence, and patience. Processes of access to do research in a prison can take several months, and it did. Pre-existing relationships with prison administrators can significantly accelerate subsequent review processes (Schlosser, 2008). The Illinois State Department of Correction’s Website lists prison personnel, job titles, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Often, persistence is vital, as many prison research administrators are overburdened in their daily jobs and lack the time or resources to respond to all inquiries. Tactful, yet repeated phone calls or e-mails may be necessary to establish a relationship with the persons in charge of admission and to ensure the continuing efforts of the administrators toward the ultimate goal of gaining access to the prison (Schlosser, 2008). For unknown or inexperienced researchers, the problem of access lies primarily in establishing connections and relationships with the “gatekeepers,” or those individuals in charge of allowing or denying access to the target population (Goode, 2000; Noakes & Wincup, 2004).

After I received approval from both Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s Internal Review Board, (see Appendix A), and the IDOC’s Legal Department, data collection began. It
took approximately five months to receive approval from SIUC’s IRB department. My gatekeeper scanned the IDOC’s data base for female offenders meeting the following criteria:

- Women who were involved in the pipeline of (domestic or international) sex trafficking through recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a woman or person under the age of 18 for the purposes of a commercial sex act.
- Women who have pimped out their own children or other family members (familial prostitution)

After she completed the scanning process, she informed me of the participants willing to be interviewed. Once the list of participants was obtained, the staff psychologist shared the legal department’s research protocol, rules and regulations with me. I then learned how many times I could see each inmate, what the interview/visiting timeframe was, where I would interview (there were three female prisons), what the security protocol was, and what cultural and ethical concerns I needed to be aware of. It took several months to interview participants.

Upon meeting with each study participant, a description of the purpose of the research was provided, written informed consent was obtained, and a demographic information form was completed. Gaining informed consent of participants is crucial for the ethical conduct of research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.74).

**Data Analysis**

Following the interviews with each participant, I transcribed the audiotapes verbatim, typed out my handwritten notes, and then read the transcripts and notes through from beginning to end. I did this several times focusing on the “plot” of each interview. During this process, a list of possible thematic categories emerged from the data. For qualitative researchers, analyzing data is the process of identifying themes (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995). A theme is a recurring
issue or an idea or concept either derived from prior theory or from respondents’ lived experience that emerges during the analysis of qualitative data.

I then created sub-categories that could be later merged together to create larger themes. I immersed myself in the process of reading through the data several times frequently making refinements in theme determination (Popadiuk, 2004), making charts, and highlighting quotes. I used a dry erase board to organize my thoughts. Printed versions of the interviews were created, each color-coded according to participant, and then quotations were physically cut from the transcripts for placement into newly created categories. This physical “cut and paste” method facilitated another review of the emergent themes to verify the fit of each quotation to category. Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Bowen, 2005), whereby line, sentence, and paragraph segments of the transcribed interviews and field notes were reviewed to decide what themes fit the concepts suggested by the data. The interview data was given more weight in the analysis than the non-participant observation. Each theme was constantly compared to all other themes to identify similarities, difference, and general patterns (Bowen, 2005).

Pattern or thematic analysis refers to the process of identifying how similar processes or worldviews recur repeatedly in the data. Karp underscored the importance of purposely seeking “negative cases” that do not fit cohesively or create problems in research. Throughout my analysis I asked, “What doesn’t support my interpretation?” (Creswell, 1998).

After developing categories for the familial relational experiences, I moved on to organize the material about the women’s motivations behind their decisions to traffic, structures, and views of the women and children they trafficked. I also analyzed their journal entries and artwork.
The second level of analysis examined the women’s perceptions, knowledge, and beliefs about issues such as gender role expectations, women’s issues, pathways to crime, and cultural influence. This approach provided an opportunity to examine sociological issues that impacted the women’s lives, rather than remain narrowly focused on the individual (Popadiuk, 2004). I also examined how the women’s lived experiences could contribute to sex trafficking prevention.

Interpreting the collected data is an ongoing, circular activity that involves identifying themes and patterns through the process and theory of hermeneutics. It is through hermeneutics that the analysis of interpreting and understanding human experience comes alive (Popadiuk, 2004). It is a way of opening up the richness, relationships, ancestries, and interdependency of human life in all its messiness, in the context of life, in all its ambiguities (Jardine, 1998). Hermeneutics focuses on understanding and interpreting human actions and expressions, and uses the metaphor of the hermeneutic circle to compare part to whole and whole to part (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). This circle simply means that individual stories are understood and interpreted in relation to the larger context of being a human in this world, and likewise, being human in our world compels us to pay attention to individual stories (Popadiuk, 2004).

**Bricolage Interview Analysis**

I used a bricolage approach to analyzing my data in order to write thick descriptions. Bricolage refers to mixed technical discourses where the interpreter moves freely between different analytic techniques. This eclectic form of generating meaning, through a multiplicity of ad hoc methods and conceptual approaches, is a common mode of interview analysis. In contrast to rigid systematic analytic modes such as categorization and conversation analysis, bricolage implies a free interplay of techniques during the analysis (Kvale, 2007).
I read the interviews through and got an overall impression, then went back to specific interesting passages, counted statements indicating different attitudes to a phenomenon, casted parts of the interview into a narrative, worked out metaphors to capture key understandings, attempted to visualize findings in flow diagrams, and so on. Such tactics of meaning generation may, for interviews lacking an overall sense at the first reading, bring out connections and structures significant to a research project. The outcome of this form of meaning generation can be in words, numbers, pictures and flow charts, and in a combination of these (Kvale, 2007).

| Noting patterns, themes (1), seeing plausibility (2) and clustering (3) help the researcher see “what goes with what.” Making metaphors (4), like the preceding three tactics, is a way to achieve more integration among diverse piece of data. Counting (5) is also a familiar way to see “what is there.” Making contrasts/comparisons (6) is a pervasive tactic that sharpens understanding. Differentiation sometimes is needed, too, as in partitioning variables (7). We also need tactics for seeing things and their relationships more abstractly. These include subsuming particulars under the general (8), factoring (9), an analogue to a familiar quantitative technique: noting relations between variable (10) and finding intervening variables (11). Finally, how can we systematically assemble a coherent understanding of data? The tactics, discussed are building a logical chain of evidence (12) and making conceptual/theoretical coherence (13). |

(Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 245-6) |
In line with a bricolage approach, Figure 8 presents useful ad hoc tactics for generating meaning in qualitative texts, arranged roughly from the descriptive to the explanatory, and from the concrete to the more conceptual and abstract. The box brings a summary from the book Qualitative Data Analysis by Miles and Huerman (1994), who also outlined a variety of analytic techniques.

**Feminist Interpretation**

Feminist researchers recognize the general power dilemmas in the research process as a whole, and they specifically address issues of power and authority in the interpretation of women’s voices, especially those who have experienced oppression in terms of gender, race, class, age, and so on (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Lina Leavy, 2007). The connection between writing and interpretation is important, but these elements can also be considered one and the same process (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Lina Leavy, 2007).

When beginning the writing phase of my dissertation, I was mindful of the intimate connection between my writing and the process of interpretation that will guide my research studies. Issues of interpretation and representation are particularly salient in feminist research. In addition to the routine ethical and pragmatic considerations I must confront, I also thought about how I will negotiate my activist intentions, my epistemological commitments, my desire to unearth and make available subjugated knowledge, and my obligation to empower and not oppress (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Lina Leavy, 2007).

**Methodological Rigor**

The question of rigor in qualitative research differs from that of quantitative research because rather than measuring the distribution of a characteristic within a population, one is concerned with discovering meaning and gaining a deeper understanding of a phenomenon
within an individual (Field & Morse, 1992). Establishing trustworthiness that the findings are accurate and worthy of attention is of paramount importance in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability will be used to evaluate the quality of this study.

**Credibility**

Credibility relates to the “truth value” of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Credibility was assured during data collection by purposeful sampling, prolonged engagement with the phenomenon, persistent observation, and referential adequacy. Credibility was assured during analysis by peer debriefing. Member checking was only done after the first interview. I could not mail transcripts or summaries after the second interview because the correction officers read all inmate mail, hindering confidentiality.

Prolonged engagement was met by investing sufficient time with each participant and the transcripts. Persistent observation of this topic was maintained by purposive sampling of seven women and pursuing interpretations in different ways in conjunction with a process of continuous analysis. Twenty years as a practicing nurse and eleven years as a practicing counselor enabled me to know and appreciate the context of this study. A colleague functioned as a peer debriefer. As another method to ensure credibility, referential adequacy was maintained by comparing each transcript with audiotape, and written notes.

**Transferability**

Transferability, the second trustworthiness criterion, describes the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability is enhanced by activities that contribute to the formation of thick, rich description and purposive sampling. For thick, rich descriptions, the demographic and descriptive
information of each woman, along with ample supporting evidence in the form of narrative excerpts, was extracted from the data to substantiate interpretations. In addition, journal entries added a full description of the data to allow the reader to come as close as possible to understanding the actual experience.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability and confirmability are closely linked and contribute to the demonstration of trustworthiness. Both rely on the researcher making it possible for an external audit to be performed on the processes by which the study was performed. Dependability relates to the ability of an inquiry to produce the same findings with similar participants in a similar context. Confirmability relates to tracking data to ensure findings are due to the inquiry and not the researcher’s biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail including documentation (interview notes/transcripts) and a running account of the process (reflexive journal) of the inquiry was maintained. Descriptions of the interview setting, participants, and nonverbal responses of each participant were documented. A reflexive journal included my thoughts, interpretations, and any changes required during the interview process. To illustrate dependability and confirmability, a record of the inquiry process and all transcriptions were maintained for an external audit.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the nuances of qualitative research design were explained. The differences between thematic and interviewee research questions, examples of good interview questions, importance of active listening, reflexivity, and researcher’s relationship with the topic were identified. I reviewed specifics regarding selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and the bricolage approach to analyzing my data. The elements of
qualitative methodological rigor, and protection of human subjects were discussed. Fusing knowledge with practice, the application of feminist epistemology, was explained.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the woman sex trafficker. This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, including a brief description of each individual participant (pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality), and the patterns and themes that portray the lived experiences of the women. In addition, this chapter includes answers to the three research questions that guided this study:

1. What are the pathways and structures into sex trafficking?
2. How does the participant view the women and children she has trafficked?
3. How might we prevent sex trafficking?

Demographics

Seven women participated in this study. The median age of the women at the time of interviewing was 36 years (range 29-44). Four women were Caucasian, one was African American, and two were Hispanic. Three were never married, two were married, and two were divorced. Six of the women were mothers. Children’s ages ranged from 10 months to 23 years. Five of the mothers signed their rights away to some of their children. All admitted to be addicted to drugs or alcohol prior to incarceration. None of the participants completed secondary high school prior to their first incarceration. Six women received their General Education Development certificate (GED) while in prison, and one is currently taking classes. This is the first incarceration for five of the women, the seventh for one, and the third for another. Six of the women were sex offenders, six were Christians, and six women’s offenses involved a male co-offender (see Table 1).
Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th># of Kids</th>
<th>Drug(s) of Choice</th>
<th>Child Sexual Abuse</th>
<th>Involvement of Co-offender</th>
<th>Offense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Retail Theft, History of Pimping &amp; Prostitution, Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marijuana &amp; Cocaine</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault, Child Pornography Solicitation of a Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luisa</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Alcohol &amp; Marijuana</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault, Child Pornography Solicitation of a Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alcohol, Morphine, Cocaine, Meth</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault, Child Pornography Solicitation of a Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxy</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Marijuana, Crack, Cocaine, Meth</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault, Pimping, Child Pornography Solicitation of a Child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Profiles of Participants

The assistant wardens of each prison helped me set up my interviews. Some were more helpful than others were. Numerous emails were sent off, and phone calls made before each scheduled interview. My persistence eventually paid off, but it was not without frustration and disgruntlement. Interestingly enough, my gatekeeper never tired of my tenacity and doggedness. She just kept on encouraging me. During the time I hoped to begin interviewing, the prison staff were taking furloughs and vacations, and units were bogged down with impending audit preparations. Because of the numerous delays, three additional women, who initially volunteered to interview with me were released, so I was unable to interview them.

Seven participants were interviewed twice from three different prisons, for 90 minutes each time. Interviews were completed over two-month duration. Interviews took place in private rooms. I had to have three separate background investigations before setting foot on prison grounds. I also had to be body scanned and patted down each time I entered a prison. All of my belongings, including lunch, had to be in a see through bag. In the maximum-security prison, five interviews convened in a large windowed office, inside the dayroom of the mental health unit. Correctional officers were able to see in, but not hear the conversations. My last interview was held in the protective custody cottage, a cellblock for women who needed extra protection. We interviewed in the dayroom (in private) while the other women were in their cells. I was not allowed to audiotape interviews in the maximum-security prison. I was able to audiotape interviews in the minimum-security prisons. The women received passes to attend the interviews. No one refused or stopped the interviewing process. All were compliant, cooperative, and engaging, and verbalized their understanding of the consent form.
A Glimpse of Fieldwork at the Maximum Security Prison

As I sat in the dayroom office in the mental health unit waiting for my second interviewee, I heard the inmate in the cellblock down the hall screaming through her opened window, “Help me! Help me! Get me out of this goddamned place. Oh, won’t you please help me?” She pleaded for rescuing, and seemed to ricochet between mania and depression. A crumbled piece of white paper hung over her cell with the inked black words: Assaults officers. I later learned that the woman was psychotic and assaulted officers in all sorts of bizarre and peculiar ways.

The raging woman, named Nora, was locked in her cell 23 hours a day. I saw her when the correctional officer gave me a quick tour of the grounds. Our eyes met. They were hollowed and piercing. I only had a split second to decide how to respectfully acknowledge her. Should I smile, nod, look down, say hello? I did not want to come across insensitive, saccharine, or indifferent, but I so wanted to uphold her personhood. I ended up quietly smiling, nodding, and slowly walking on. She just stared. One the way back down the hall, I saw her again. Her frail body leaned against the small window to the side of the cellblock door. This time, she cursed me, pounded on the thick glass, cried, and spewed out profanities, pain, and despair. I sorrowfully looked down.

My iron grilled office window was opened too. I needed fresh air. Lots of it. The smell of urine, feces, body odor, menses, and stale sauerkraut permeated the dayroom. During my interviews I had to take slow, deep breaths to keep my nausea at bay. After my second day of interviewing, I put Vicks VapoRub under my nose (an old nursing trick), to help with the putrid, stagnant odors. The women I interviewed, my gracious participants, were nonplussed with the smells, screaming, cracked and wobbly plastic chairs, childlike-glitter drawings taped to the
walls (created by staff), and everyday distractions of regimented, communal living. The television, protectively encased, droned on. Women dressed in dull grey sweat suits, sat in the dayroom watching TV for hours upon hours. While waiting for an interviewee to show up, an inmate in the dayroom asked me if I wanted to join in with the other women and braid hair. She complimented me on my “pretty, straight teeth.” I couldn’t help but notice the worm-like movements of her tongue, and other uncontrolled movements of her mouth and cheek, classic symptoms of tardive dyskinesia, a side effect of anti-psychotic medication.

My last interview was held in the protective custody cottage, a cellblock for women who needed extra protection. We interviewed in the dayroom (in private) while the other women were in their cells. Afterwards, Roxy took me to see her “room.” I was only allowed to look through the door window (correction officers were in the hallway.) Roxy’s three roommates were packed in a very cramped cell. Limbs hung off the bunk beds, underwear, personal belongings, papers, and books were strewn all over the floor, and the cell door was closed. Being claustrophobic, the site triggered some anxiety for me just looking in the tiny place! Prison is an odd mix of crippling isolation and overcrowding.

Of the seven women listed below, Carmen and Noel were interviewed at the moderate security prison, and Kathy, Luisa, Annie, Ada, and Roxy were interviewed at the maximum-security prison. Graphic details of crimes were left out because I was not granted access to confidential prison documents, and a simple Internet search of specific criminal details could reveal the identity of my participants.

Carmen

Carmen was the oldest of the women (44 years-old) incarcerated for retail theft. Her projected parole year is 2012. This is her seventh incarceration. Carmen is Hispanic and has been
involved in prostitution and crime for most of her life. She has five children. Carmen described herself as being an outlaw, a woman who sells sex without a pimp. She also confessed to spending many years on the streets of Chicago and St. Louis as a pimp. To my eye, Carmen seemed to have soft motherly instincts that transcended her toughness. Though she was never incarcerated for prostitution, she has had over “60 prostitution cases.” Since the birth of her 17-year-old son, Carmen identified as being lesbian. She has a long complex history of drug and familial abuse, and was crestfallen over her past.

I can recognize some bullshit ‘cause game is bullshit. I can recognize bullshit from a mile away, so, I’ve always been game conscious because of the people that I come from. Like my mom and dad were the Bonnie and Cycle of Indiana. They robbed….my dad was in the penitentiary doing 30 years by the time he was 17 or 18 years old, so I was bred from that kind of family. You know… before I could even think about getting high when I was like 12 or 13 years old, I knew about pimps, drug dealers, dope fiends and the shit they would pull. I started shooting heroin at the age of 16. I led a very lonely childhood. I was always alone. When I started prostituting, I rented rooms. I was always by myself. I wasn’t your regular teenager. All of that puppy love and having a boyfriend, I didn’t have none of that because I started getting high.

Carmen was gritty, colorfully expressive, and very insightful, and at the same time, world-weary. She expressed a fiery determination to make this prison stay her last. Of all the women, she was the most introspective. When discussing her present incarceration, she did not make excuses, “I am here this time, because I wanted to get high. I had picked up (used drugs) and was still making money. Now, who in the hell does that? It was like I had a good and bad spirit tugging at me and I wasn’t satisfied.” I thoroughly enjoyed Carmen’s sense of humor, wit, and
snappish sayings. When the topic of raising sassy, saucy adolescent daughters and their
“shameless sexin’” came up, we had more in common than not. Carmen did a stellar job teaching
me the lingo and culture of the streets. When I didn’t understand something, she patiently and
tolerantly educated me. At the end of our time together, I thanked Carmen for not judging me.

Noel

Noel was the youngest of the women (29 years-old). She has doe-like brown eyes,
Dippitee-do spiked, black hair, snowflake tattoos down her arm, and violin curves. During the
first interview, Noel seemed somewhat shy and evasive, especially when talking about her case.
She was most eager to discuss her conflicting relationship with her mother. Often times, Noel’s
story did not match up with the information in her indictment.

Noel was raised in a small, quaint, rural town. She is Caucasian. At the time of her
parent’s divorce, she spent some time in Georgia with her “real dad.” Her projected parole year
is 2015. Noel has served four years, and in that time “detoxed from a three year binge of drugs
and ‘no good’ men.” She is serving time for two counts of predatory criminal sexual assault.
According to her indictment, she permitted her boyfriend and his friend to sexually assault her
daughter (under the age of 13). Noel was guilty of accountability. She also sexually abused her
daughter. Noel stated that she “took the case” (blame) for her boyfriend, and is innocent. Noel’s
mother has custody of her children.

I had a public defender. She really didn’t say too much. I always said I wanted to see
everything. I fault myself because I jumped into pleading guilty without seeing all facts,
all the evidence. I was scared. It was my first time ever being in trouble. My kind of
case, a kid case, can get you life, so when the state’s attorney offered the lowest of
sentencing in my case, I took it.
Noel strip danced at a popular club for several years. Her boyfriend suggested that she audition because “working the club” was “fast easy money.” She also used cocaine. She said, “I did what I could do to keep him to love me. I hated that I subjected myself to that stuff. Now I realize that my boyfriend mentally, sexually, and emotionally abused me.” Of all the participants, Noel seemed to embrace her prison experience instead of thrashing it, “I can say the most things that I am proud of are the things that I have accomplished while I’ve been prison. I mean I have really learned a lot being here. I would have never gotten my education like I did.” Noel beamed when she told me about all the golden-trimmed certificates she received in prison.

**Kathy**

Kathy is a Caucasian, 47 years-old woman who has been married four times. Most of her marriages have been abusive and chaotic. Kathy has been incarcerated for six years, and will be eligible for parole in 2059. She was charged with three counts of predatory criminal sexual assault. Count One alleged that she was accountable for her husband sexually assaulting her daughter. The other two counts alleged that she engaged in oral sex with her daughter. Kathy allowed her husband to videotape sex acts performed on her nine-year-old daughter (his step-daughter), and sell them on the Internet. The judge, after viewing some of the tapes, said the facts of the case had been one of the most difficult experiences he has ever had on the bench (documented in a court form).

I had access to one of Kathy’s court documents: the Psychological Maltreatment of Woman Inventory (PMWI). The PMWI was designed to look at the nature and extent of psychological maltreatment that women experience in intimate relationships (Tolman, 1999). The inventory indicated a significant degree of isolation, domination, verbal abuse, and degradation in Kathy’s relationship with her husband and three previous husbands. Kathy
summed up her struggles more succinctly than any psychological instrument could have. She stated, “I don’t have self-esteem, I have others’-esteem. I have to stop looking at other people to be ‘me.’”

Kathy is a talkative, calm, tall woman with sleepy, sapphire blue eyes. She was very proud of the fact that she was chosen to be the Chaplain’s assistant. She stated that she enjoys ministering to the women in the prison community, and tries to give her anger and rage at herself and the “system” to God. Though she said she was angry on numerous occasions, I never sensed or felt it from her.

In a trance-like state, Kathy told me that her daughter had been hospitalized for depression on numerous occasions, and is living states away with family. She also stated that her daughter is “heavily medicated.” Kathy did not seem to absorb the magnitude of the abuse her daughter endured. In a blasé fashion, she spoke of her daughter’s victimization as if she were reading a grocery list (most likely dissociating.) Kathy strongly believes that she was a battered woman, and did not prey on her daughter. When I saw Kathy in the outside courtyard (while walking to the mental health unit to interview another inmate), she gave me a warm smile, and introduced me to one of her friends.

Luisa

Luisa is a 34 year-old, single, Hispanic woman who has spent the last 12 years of her life in prison. She is currently serving her parole in prison because she has nowhere to live. Since she is a registered sex offender, she must follow registered sex offender regulations. There are no residential shelters for female sex offenders in Illinois. Luisa pled guilty to two counts of predatory criminal sexual assault of a child. Luisa and her live-in boyfriend offered their services as babysitters, often advertising on supermarket and chain store bulletin boards. Her
boyfriend was arrested on child pornography charges in the early nineties, and released. The babysitting job was a ruse to gain control of their young victims, bring them into their home, and then victimize them. Evidence obtained by the police contained sexually explicit images of the couple and ten children ranging in age from 3-13. Over 100 videotapes and 100 still photographs were removed from their home.

Luisa was raised Catholic in an urban neighborhood peppered with large Mexican American families. Her parents divorced when she was in elementary school.

Because I had a learning disability, my mother tried controlling and protecting me. She wouldn’t let me be. She wouldn’t even let me go to prom. I never got to wear the dress. She wanted me to live with her until I got married. That wasn’t gonna happen! My dad owned a bar, I wanted to spend every minute there just so I could get out of the house. I started drinking at a very young age. I abused it way too much. I rebelled, in a big way.

Luisa has a seemingly strong desire to turn her life around, and advocate for “troubled girls,” who seem “hell bent” on navigating through the messes of their own making without calling family. When we discussed the dark world of child pornography, she was most straightforward and knowledgeable. Many child victims exhibit a combination of indicators reflecting their particular experience. When I asked her what the indicators were in child pornography victims, she gently wept, and said, “I am sad that I know how to answer that.” She then seemed shocked that she cried. “I don’t normally show much emotion here,” she said. One indicator she explained was a child who “sexualizes candy, like licking popsicles.”

Roxy

Roxy was sentenced to two years in prison for failure to register as a sex offender. Like Luisa, she is currently completing her parole in prison because she has nowhere to live. She
previously served four years for two counts of child pornography. At that time, she knowingly solicited a child under the age of 18 years to appear in a photograph unclothed and lewdly depicted. Roxy’s co-offender engaged in an act of sexual penetration with a teen-ager and depicted it by computer. Roxy once described herself as a “seasoned hustler.”

Roxy is a well-spoken, single, bi-sexual, 29-year-old African American woman. She is athletic and works out daily. Roxy has three children. She gave up custody of her two oldest children. A mentor is raising her youngest son who is 10 months old. Roxy’s face radiated when she showed me pictures of him. Roxy was an only child, raised in a small suburb. She attended private school until junior high. She described herself as “spoiled” until her dad started using cocaine, “My family fell apart when my dad started using. My mother didn’t know what to do, so she start using too. If you can’t beat them, join them, I guess.”

Roxy spent several years in the foster care system, eventually ending up back with her mother. Her mother is currently incarcerated for drug trafficking. On the streets, Roxy was befriended by an older man who gave her all the “drugs, cigarettes, and food she wanted,” groomed her for child pornography, and impregnated her. She also admitted to pimping, and had much to say about the “business.” Roxy is very articulate, engaging, and politically savvy. She wrote several articles for a popular prison newsletter on prison reform. The older man (co-offender) was arrested on 106 counts of child pornography and other offenses; he has since been released. When I showed Roxy a picture of him from the registered sex offender list, she said, “Well, I see that he moved from his home town. He doesn’t look the same either. That is some beard! He’s changing it all up to get a whole new set of victims.”
Annie is a Caucasian, 35 year-old divorced woman who has served four years of her 18-year sentence for three counts of predatory criminal sexual assault. She permitted her boyfriend to sexually assault her developmentally disabled eight-year-old son. Her indictment stated that she also sexually assaulted her son, but she vehemently denied it. Her boyfriend committed many sexual acts on her son, including sexual penetration using sexual devices. He also forced him to perform oral sexual acts. Many of the acts were videotaped. The victim was hospitalized for suicidal ideation. Annie lost custody of her two children.

Annie experienced a tragic childhood. Her mother and siblings were killed in an automobile accident when she was around 13 years-old. A man seeking revenge for sleeping with his wife murdered her father. Her mentally ill grandmother raised her in poverty. Annie was treated for gonorrhea of the throat when she was only 6 years-old. Due to uncontrolled diabetes, substance abuse, and periodontal disease, she lost all of her teeth. She does not wear her dentures because they are ill-fitting and painful, but not having any teeth did not stop her from smiling and laughing out loud.

Annie is loquacious, effusive, and has a childlike exuberance about her. She is soft and doughy, and talks with her hands flying in the air, upper arms swaying to and fro. At times, she was difficult to track. Of all the participants, Annie was the one who enjoyed journaling and illustrating the most. She enjoyed doodling with colored pencils. She is currently putting all of her energy into proving her innocence. She filed a motion to withdraw her guilty plea and vacate her sentence.
Ada

Ada is a 32 year-old, Caucasian, married woman with two children, charged with two counts of predatory criminal sexual assault of a child. Before our first interview, Ada had spent time visiting with her mother during visiting hours. She was nicely groomed sporting iced-blue eye shadow, pale pink lipstick, and dark, black mascara. Her straight blonde hair was carefully styled, and she wore cheerful colors. She said she liked to look good for her mom so she did not leave the prison grounds sad and worrisome. “My mom always asks if I am sick. I hate seeing her so sad-looking,” she said.

After a plea agreement, Ada was sentenced to eight years, she has served two. Her husband is also incarcerated for predatory criminal sexual assault and cocaine possession. After a jury trial, he was sentenced to 30 years. Ada permitted her husband of seven years to partake in sex games with her 11-year-old, stepsister. Ada received custody of her stepsister and brother when she turned 18 years-old because her mother was addicted to prescription drugs and alcohol. She spoke of her own addiction with poignancy, “We lost it all, everything, because of drugs. I did everything I told myself I would never do.” She added,” Of course, my husband and I are straight now. I saw him in court. I just wanted to give him a big hug, but we were both cuffed.” At the end of our second interview she said, “You know, at first, I was going to walk in here and tell you I wasn’t gonna do it. The interview, you know?” When I asked her why she changed her mind she said, “You were so bubbly and positive. It’s hard to find positive people around here.”

Themes

An expansive review of the data, including interviews, my reflective journal and field notes, participant court documents and indictments, newspaper articles, and participant journal entries and artwork, was performed to identify and analyze themes noted in the lives of women
sex traffickers. In regards to inmate journaling and artwork, every participant was encouraged to journal and illustrate, but only two women shared their journal entries with me, and one illustrated. The court documents, newspaper articles, and indictments informed my research by enhancing my ability to triangulate. Four themes emerged from the data: pathways to prison, prison culture and experience, views towards victims, and giving back.

**Pathways to Prison**

This theme is organized into four sub-themes that emerged from the interviews and from other forms of data collection. The participants came to their crimes through drug and alcohol abuse, victimization, relationships with co-perpetrators (and threesomes), and the escalating impact of new media (pornography and the Internet). Many similarities occurred across the sample. When the participants described what they considered to be the heart of their struggles, they spoke of their experiences with drugs and alcohol, and co-offenders.

**Drug and Alcohol Abuse: “Oh, thou Failure!” said the Voice**

Consistent with feminist discussion, substance abuse was a typified pathway among the women (Daly, 1992: Miller, 1986). I was not surprised to discover that overwhelmingly all seven participants described being addicted to drugs or alcohol, and six had drug-connected family systems. Some might ask in a ho hum fashion, “Isn’t this pathway the whole story, don’t we know all of this already?” It does not matter. What matters as a feminist researcher is staying “connected in principle to feminist struggles” (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993, p. 266.), and staying connected to participants’ lives, experiences and concerns, whether their stories are provocative or not. If I interviewed the women only focusing on what might be seductive in the world of research, I would have failed miserably as an empathic listener and researcher,
squashing any chance at rapport building. My participants were “knowing” and streetwise, if they sensed any insincerity or double-dealing, they would have found me out, and shut me out.

I listened for the women’s meaning. Every story and conversation has a beginning. For most of the women I interviewed, drug and alcohol abuse surfaced in the first few chapters of their lives. Carmen’s story is typical of the drug-connected family system pattern. She described witnessing generational substance abuse:

My kid’s father raised all my kids because I seen so much in shooting galleries where you just go and get high, and mothers are in there with their kids, and I’m like wow, this shit is deep. This shit is deeper than what I’m doing and I just don’t want to take my daughters and my kids to my addiction because that is what my mom did to me. I remember coming up as a kid being in a shooting gallery where people were shooting T’s and Blues. I mean, you know, I remember, she never got to the point where she prostituted me out, but just being in that life! For a long time when I got clean, I was thinking, my mom is a drug addict, I’m a drug addict, will my daughter be one too? I still haven’t gotten the answer to that question. Is it hereditary? Does it run in the bloodline? Does it? It was like a good and a bad spirit tugging at me and I wasn’t satisfied.

The other participants had “good and bad” spirits tugging at them as well. Noel, the youngest participant, never used drugs until she “got up” with her ex-boyfriend. Highly vulnerable to the “inner yes” of temptation, Roxy managed to find “older men” to give her drugs and Annie described herself as a “wild child, teen-aged alcoholic,” who drank “Jack in her thermos.” Ada and her husband lost their kids, four-bedroom house, car, and “everything,” because of cocaine.
The presence of drugs and alcohol in the lives of the women affected how they viewed themselves. Many felt a deep sense of shame, especially after failing at many attempts to stay clean. They lived the besotted addict’s mantra: Do not trust, talk or feel. Their heavy sense of “not-okayness” and self-loathing perpetuated their using. They became their own worst jailers.

Five of the women mentioned a shortage of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services within the prison system. Most of the prison wardens and mental health professionals I spoke with expressed a “dire” need for an expansion of drug and alcohol services. Sadly, when the women were ready to get help with their addictions, services were not available. Luisa lamented on how frustrating it was for her and other inmates to see newly released women turn around and come back, “When inmates come back after being released, it makes it hard on us. Most women come back because they violate their paroles. They use. They need to get more help in here with drugs. They break the regulations rules. Makes it hard to get a step out of the door. They are set up for failure.”

Victimization: Handled Not Touched

Across the sample, six participants reported histories of victimization. The women in this sample were victimized in a range of ways. This included, as children, witnessing extreme violence, being neglected, or experiencing physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Women in this sample were physically and sexually assaulted by strangers and acquaintances. They were beaten, raped, and controlled by relationship partners. As a counselor specializing in sexual abuse recovery, I have witnessed great pain. Sitting with incest survivors has brought me face-to-face with some of the most evil and twisted things human beings do to each other. I have had to examine my own attitudes towards God. Coming alongside survivors of sexual abuse forced me to face my own perceptions about sexual abuse, pain, good and evil, justice and injustice,
males and females. I believe that not knowing the women’s victims or the vile details of their crimes enabled me to bond easier with them, than with the sex offenders I counseled in the past. I did however; hear how worthless, unredeemable, and damaged my participants felt in the hands of their abusers. After some of my interviews, the counselor in me felt “bystanders guilt,” shame and inadequacy for not counseling and helping them. Emotional boundary negotiations were exhausting. I had to keep reminding myself that I was there to research, not create therapeutic alliances. I owned my countertransference feelings, and processed them with a colleague and mentor.

Most of the women were able to articulate how “soiled and spoiled” and “contaminated” they felt as children, double-crossed and betrayed by adults. In naming their experiences of abuse, the women I met with were involved in the act of breaking the silence around abuse, in “speaking the unspeakable.” It also connotes one source of their authority in the research process.

Carmen and Noel were sexually assaulted by family members as children. Annie was diagnosed with gonorrhea of the throat when she was six years old, and Roxy spent years in the foster care system after her father was incarcerated for cocaine possession. Kathy reported severe domestic violence in her marriage:

I had sex with my daughter because I was afraid of my husband. He wanted to videotape us doin’ it. I told my daughter (his step-daughter) to just fake it with me. To get it over with so we didn’t make him mad. He wouldn’t take no for answer. He once held a gun to my head, choked my younger daughter with a nightstick, threatened to slit his daughters’ throats, threatened to kill me by shooting me, raped me, and put objects in me. He was a cop, he had weapons all over the house. One day, he locked me in the bedroom. He was
crazy. He once tied me to a tree naked. I admitted on the stand that I wanted to kill him. When I confided in our preacher, she didn’t call DCFS (Department of Children and Family Services). I finally took the memory card (with the sex acts enclosed), to the police. The judge said that it was all a scheme . . . that I turned him in because I was jealous and felt left out because my husband would rather have sex with my daughter than me. He said I pimped her out, and regretted it. That is some shit!

As evident in Roxy’s case, sometimes the women ran from one abuser only to be abused or exploited by others. For others in this sample, victimization was associated with a loss of trust, and relationships were viewed through a lens of suspicion. The psychological effects of fear, shame, and low self-worth have potential to reach the very core of women as they interact in the world. It is thereby not surprising that some women began to avoid places and things, restricting their range of activity in the world. Often, this was a means of protecting themselves from further victimization. Carmen “gave up” on men altogether. She explained, “Me and my kids’ father are out, because I could never really trust him, and, now, I’m gay. My son is 17 and I haven’t messed with a man since I had him. So, I mean, I had this thing about men . . .”

Co-offenders and Threesomes: Stand by Your Man

Females described as co-perpetrators of child sexual abuse (CSA) usually offend in collusion with a male co-offender. In the majority of cases, men are seen as the primary instigators of such abuse however, some have shown that women also may initiate this abuse, particularly in cases involving female adolescents (Bexson, 2011). The issue of male-coercion is often discussed synonymously with female co-perpetrators of abuse.

In the seminal work of Mathews and her colleagues, which remains the most influential and commonly cited framework for male sex offender typologies, three primary subtypes
emerged (Mathews, Mathews, & Speltz, 1989; Nathan & Ward, 2002; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004).

**Male-coerced**: These women tended to be passive and dependent individuals with histories of sexual abuse and relationship difficulties. Fearing abandonment, they were pressured by male partners to commit sex offenses, often against their own children.

**Predisposed**: Histories of incestuous sexual victimization, psychological difficulties, and deviant sexual fantasies were common many these women, who generally acted alone in their offending. They tended to victimize their own children or to her young children within their families.

**Teacher/lover**: At the time of their offending, women in this subtype were often struggling with peer relationships, seemed to regress and perceive themselves as having romantic or sexually mentoring ‘relationships’ with under-aged adolescent victims of their sexual preference, and, therefore, did not consider their acts to be criminal in nature.

Co-offending women were more likely than female solo offenders to:

- Have multiple young victims
- Victimize females-or both females and males-as opposed to males only
- Target family members including their own children, versus solo offenders, who often target acquaintances; and
- Have been charged with non-sex crimes at the same time the sex offense charge occurred (Center for Sex Offender Management, 2007).

In this study, six of the women’s narratives fit the male co-offender typology. Carmen’s was a combination of both the predisposed and teacher/lover. At some point in the interviewing process, a “threesome,” (group sex of any gender), was mentioned in all of the participants’
stories. When Carmen was pimping, she victimized her girls for her own pleasure. In the following quotation, she explained why female pimps have sex with the women working for them, many of them minors:

A famous female pimp is from Chicago. She looks just like a man, but she is a woman. A female pimp… a straight female is not going to work for her. It would have to be…because, there is uh, first of all, as far as I know, most of the females that I know that have worked for pimps weren’t there because of the pimps. They were there because of the other women. It is a bond thing. It is like a family, and sometimes there is lesbian activity there, but as far as a female pimp, it is all lesbian activity. Everybody is fucking everybody in that little thing, sometimes three at a time. (The “little thing” is a stable. A stable is a group of prostitutes.) Because if I were working for a female, we would have to be fucking, because, I mean, the male, now you see these untrue stories on television where the pimp is not fucking none of the hookers. Are you serious? What do you think they are staying for? They are not just being brainwashed and strung-out on drugs. He is having sex with these females. So, it is the same with the female pimps because every female pimp I have ever seen has been a stud which is a female that dresses like men and look good as men.

Many of the women felt it was their “job” to keep their co-offenders sexually satiated. Kathy stated, “I had to keep him (husband) ‘fixed.” Ada found female friends and under-aged girls for her husband. “The more coke he used, the more sex he wanted, until he couldn’t do it anymore.” Ada’s husband videotaped her having sex with her friends at a carnival. Noel and Luisa did threesomes to please their boyfriends. Noel confessed, “I did it to feel loved, wanted and needed. Of course, those were the wrong ways, but that’s not something I recognized then.”
Women’s criminality is often directly tied to a “bad” man. Romantic partnerships with criminally involved men increase the risk of “exposure to criminal values, potential criminal opportunities, and victimization” (Simpson, Yahner, & Dugan, 2008). In this study, the women’s unquenchable desire to Please Their men, coupled with drugs and alcohol, caused helter-skelter in their lawless lives. Carmen, in a mother-knows-best tone, keenly summed up the research on women’s pathways to crime:

If you survey this penitentiary, 90 percent of the women that are here are some kind of way drug-related or men-related. They are either here for drugs or they are here for a no good motherfucker that, “Oh, he loves me, so I took the case for him, and gave him pussy.” It is crazy. Many of the women here need approval like oxygen.

Escalating Impact of New Media: A Click Away

Officials believe that the Internet is facilitating the growth in the number of sex abusers of children (Breenan, 2006). This may be one of the reasons which explain why police believe that the number of female sex abusers of children is increasing (Bexson, 2011). One of the most documented ways sex offenders misuse the Internet is to access and download child pornography. Accessing child pornography is argued to be a key factor in the development of sexual offending, with 40 percent of those arrested for accessing pornographic images of children also found to have sexually abused children (Jewkes, 2007). Using the Internet to access pornography leads to an escalation in accessing, collecting, and using pornography (Farley, 2003).

Not all child pornography users are pedophiles. Many have sexual addictions. Dr. Laaser (2011) in a conference presentation titled, “Cyberporn: Sexual Addiction and the Male Brain,” stated, “Many men who look at child pornography and are even arrested for it are
not ephebophiles (sexual preference of adults for mid-to-late adolescents, generally ages 15 to 19), or pedophiles. Sex addition is about neurochemical tolerance in the brain. When ‘normal’ pornography becomes boring, i.e. they are satiated; they turn to other kinds of pornography, especially those that have higher levels of danger (and produce more norepinephrine). They can therefore be lured into it because of the anticipation of that adrenaline ‘hit.’”

In this study, every participant mentioned the Internet and/or pornography as part of her and/or her co-offender’s story. In fact, during the course of the interview study, it became clear that Internet criminality paid the bills for many of these women. Women mentored others less experienced than them. Their nonchalant accounts of aiding and abetting child pornography jolted me. With forthrightness and candor, Luisa and Roxy, who made and sold sexually explicit movies of children, explained how easy it was to recruit teens and children. Roxy stated, “In their (teen girls) heads, they aren’t doing anything wrong. We gave them cigarettes, drugs, money, whatever it took. They brought more girls to us, we didn’t even have to work that hard to get them. They just Facebooked their friends. They all love the camera.” Luisa and her co-offender bribed children and teens with whatever they liked: Alcohol, drugs, money, cigarettes, Red Bull, candy, video games, and toys. They gave children alcohol mixed with pop and fruit drinks to “relax them.”

Annie’s husband used his elementary-aged nephews and nieces to take sexually inappropriate pictures and videos (from their cell phones), of their unsuspecting school and neighborhood friends. He taught his child accomplices the art of persuasion and bribery. Annie explained, “He’d role play with them, coaching them on how to work their friends over, ‘Hey Heidi, if you let me take a picture of you touching Nathan’s private parts, I’ll give you this money. It’s not like you’re hurting him or anything. You won’t get in any trouble. If you don’t
want to, it’s okay. Just take off your shirt.” He bribed them with whatever they wanted.

“Dawn,” Luisa emphatically said, “There is a huge market out there for kiddie porn, you wouldn’t believe it.” Carmen spoke of how “gullible” and unaware young teens are:

That shit starts with their boyfriends. Letting them videotape them on their phones. They (the girls) get caught up in the moment. You don’t see too many girls that were born with a silver spoon in their mouth that turn into hookers, unless they were tricked, and believe me, it is easy to trick girls these days. I want to be a model or because most of these human trafficking things that is how they start off. They don’t start off with, “You are going to be a hooker and sell pussy.” You are going to the big city. You are going to be famous. You are going to be in videos. Everyone will download you. But who the fuck is that gullible that believes that kind of shit? You think someone just steps out of nowhere, you meet them in a bar, and he is going to make you a superstar overnight? You have to be really gullible.

Interestingly, my participants were able to see how “gullible” their victims were, but were not able to see how easily taken in they were. From my external, academically privileged vantage point, it was clear that sexism and coercion pervaded their worlds. These women, on the other hand, did not generally view their interactions in terms of gendered social systems.

**Prison Culture and Experience**

For most women, prison is just a chapter in their life, but for some, it’s the whole damn book. Freedom is a complex issue. No matter how long you must remain in prison, there will be only two things you truly own: the power of your will and the quality of your mind. A woman doing days counts hours, a woman doing months counts days, a woman doing a year counts months, a woman doing life counts breaths (Zautzow, 2003).
Although this theme did not answer any of my research questions per se, it was an important one to include in this research. I met the women where they were at: in a place of long-standing sobriety and structure, many for the first time ever. The socio-cultural framework and experience upon the time of interviewing, greatly affects feminist research. This project also bears the influence of “bricolage,” a strategy that builds by examining pieces of cultural life, not to provide a single and cogent picture of what culture “is,” but to make visible the multifarious and contradictory processes through which meanings of cultural life are made and shared. This approach to studying culture is guided by the understanding that the process of “meaning making” occur within a place of forces, patterned by social structures but not fully determined by them (Best, 2000).

Addiction could lead to and exacerbate some truly rotten behavior. Sobriety is a very positive state to be. The women in this study were not only clean and sober, but also well fed, safe, and free from the influences of their addicted, surly co-offenders. The women were God-seeking, hopeful, and yearning to connect with others. They were practicing relational boundaries with the other inmates, learning to ask for help, and grieve. Most were achieving educational goals, feeling less like damaged goods (a term Roxy used), than ever before, receiving medical care, and working a schedule. Some were even able to tune into energy, passion, and powerful and unique ideas. None was disrespectful, bad-mannered, or churlish. Though some of the women lied to me, I was deeply honored and appreciative for the truths and stories they did share. I respected their need to self-preserve; after all, I was interviewing them, not counseling them. It was not my place to call them out on lies.

Had I interviewed the women amongst their tortured victims on trash-strewn streets or in their haphazard homes, using, abusing, pimping, stealing, succumbing to their co-offenders, and
drinking, I would have had a very different experience with profoundly different results. I did not interview the women when the razor-sharp, barbed wires of their addictions actively jailed them.

From this theme, four sub-themes emerged: segregation, dyads and drama, education classes and chaplaincy, and the sex offender registry.

**Segregation: Thirty Days in the Hole**

Women quickly learn to adopt certain inmate identities and lifestyles as ways of adjusting to life behind bars. Female inmates, like their male counterparts, make adjustments to prison life. For many, faced with years behind walls, life becomes a strategy of survival (Zaitzow, 2003). Their attempts at survival often means that, compared to male inmates, women are more likely to be rule-breakers. Carmen articulated a common experience amongst the women, she said, “I’m tired of being treated like a kid because I don’t know how to follow the rules. It is like a big ass daycare. This is like one big ass daycare with a bunch of overpriced babysitters. This is like a senior citizen home.” The women prisoners, like children, and the elderly in nursing homes, are told when to get up, how to dress, what to eat, where to go, how to spend their time, in short, what to do and what not to do.

Correctional officers describe female inmates as more emotional and manipulative. They are perceived by guards to be more difficult to supervise than men because they are seen as less respectful to authority and more willing to argue (Pollock, 1986). They are written up for twice as many infractions as men, but usually the infractions are less serious than those committed in men’s prisons (McClellan, 1994; Zaitzow, 2003). Noel described the relationship between correctional officers and inmates as the “top dogs verses the underdogs.”

During my conversations with the women, the word “seg” came up numerous times (I did not specifically ask about it.) Seg is slang for segregation. Segregation is a separate housing unit
in which prisoners are confined to their cells at all times except for limited outdoor exercise, showers and specific needs such as a medical visit. Segregation is used to manage offenders who have violated prison rules. One of the correctional officers allowed me to walk into one of the empty segregation cells. When she shut the door (at my request), I got all panicky. Just being in the cell for three minutes was unnerving. My participants experienced segregation as being very shaming and “inhumane,” especially when they were assigned to segregation for “inane things.”

In this study, five of the women spent time in segregation for infractions such as making hootch (from fruit, juice, bread and sugar), “mouthing off” to correctional officers, and pill hoarding. A clear sense of resentment emerged in Ada’s narrative as we discussed rule breaking. Ada got ten days for refusing to put a mattress over her head during a tornado. She said, “Seg? Really? Like what was that gonna do? If a tornado ripped through here, a mattress sure in the hell isn’t gonna save me!” Implicit was the idea that time spent in segregation did not always fit the infraction, and that some rules were not always based on common sense.

One of the biggest reasons inmates go to segregation is for making stingers out of extension cords and paper clips. A stinger is a device used to heat water. Since hot water can be used as a weapon, it is not allowed in many prison settings. Some prisons may have hot water in the day-room but it is not allowed in the cells. Inmates will connect two wires from any source, TV plugs headphones or even handmade wire from aluminum foil to any two separated metal objects, usually metal-plates. By connecting the two wires to the outlet and submerging the stinger in the water the AC current will pass through the water heating it up. It is possible to boil water and with some practice inmates can even make candy with ingredients smuggled out of the kitchen. Sometimes, a poorly made stinger will trip the circuit breaker for an entire tier or block
causing discontent for both inmates as well as correctional officers. Stingers are considered contraband in the prison system.

**Dyads and Drama: De facto Prison Families**

Women are more likely to form dyads (two-person groups) and pseudo-families than men. Surrogate or make-believe families form groups in which inmates play the roles of father, mother, brother, and sister. Others may attach themselves to the family as aunts, uncles, and cousins. Sometimes inmates “marry” or “divorce” each other. Most homosexual relationships in women’s prisons appear to be voluntary and are not present in all kinship families. The woman playing the role of father or husband is referred to as the “stud,” and the wife is the “femme.” Women who assume the male role and characteristics, sometimes referred to as “butches” or “dykes,” may do so because of the associated power and status. This transformation is created by how they dress, style their hair, adopt nicknames, and display toughness (Zaitzow, 2003). Yet, as noted by Superintendent McLaughlin of the Federal Reformatory for Women at Alderson, Virginia:

> Who knows how much of it is real homosexuality? Or how much of what seems to be homosexuality is actually consummated?...in our culture, if you ain’t got a man, you ain’t got nothing. And that model from the outside carries into this institution. People play roles, but a lot of it is just to fill out the public image the culture says women are supposed to project. And a lot of it just has to do with people needing to be close to another human being. (Watterson, 1996:297)

Whether as lovers and/or as “family” members, these kinship groups provide stability, warmth, security, and social bonding for women seeking primary group relationships (Propper, 1982). Having a prison family means that when a woman is sick, she has someone to mother her.
If a woman is being bullied or threatened by someone outside of the family, she has family members who will come to her defense. If she receives bad news from the outside, she has people to confide in. Women rely and depend on their family members to varying degrees. Some of the relationships are healthy, some are abusive, others are matters of convenience. And although it may sound peculiar, this world of prison families is extremely natural, somehow, in the unnatural world of prison. Recent research suggests that these pseudo-families are a logical extension for incarcerated women, who like most women have been socialized to concentrate their energies on family relationships, women presumably miss these relationships more than men do and therefore create pseudo-families to replace lost familial relationships (Zaitzow, 2003).

There was a clear sense that many of the women in this study longed for just “one person to trust.” All of the participants reported having a friend in prison that “had her back.” Five of the women expressed their frustration with the “drama” imported into the prison. Ada said, “I don’t like dealing with the general population. They are just looking for girlfriends.” In spite of the dramaturgy, the women seemed eager to share tidbits of prison gossip with me, especially at the maximum-security prison. Roxy was frustrated with the lack of unity among the women:

There is no “stick together factor” here. See it more with the men. You are made to feel bad about yourself here. Men win letter-writing appeals. The women do not. Women don’t band together. Can’t get them to back anything . . . they are more worried about who stole whose girlfriend. We should be complaining about the holes in the walls (had to cut holes in order to get water), the black mold, the number of women packed into cells like animals, visiting hours, and the food. The minute we do try to talk about
changing things around here, we get a ticket. Congregating or organizing for any purpose is banned. They consider it gang activity. It sucks.

Of the women interviewed, Roxy seemed to be the most politically perceptive and knowing. Unfortunately, the criminal justice system is designed in such a way as to discourage women from coming together, trusting, speaking about personal issues, forming bonds of relationship or becoming politically involved. Women who leave prison are often discouraged from associating with other women who have been incarcerated (Covington, 2002).

**Education Classes and Chaplaincy: God and the GED**

Although it may seem an odd juxtaposition to discuss trouble with the law in the same context as “finding religion,” (DeHart, 2004) the two topics were often mentioned in conjunction with one another as women described turning points in their lives. All of the women in this study reported having positive educational and chaplaincy experiences while being in prison. Inmates have available the services of a trained chaplain in each facility. This profession serves as a catalyst for change in the life of the offender by helping to coordinate the accommodated religious needs of the offender by using volunteers from the community. Treatment and services for women are based on women's competencies and strengths and promote self-reliance. Women focus groups are offered such as healing from trauma, domestic violence, sexual assault survivor and grief understanding groups and relationship building.

Some women mentioned skills developed during their period of incarceration. This included cognitive and social skills learned through formal programs as well as through informed interaction and individual contemplation. Ada said that she had a history of making one excuse after another. Prison “forced her to get her GED.” Luisa became an apprentice cook and trained peer educator, teaching her peers about HIV and sexually transmitted infections. All of the
women appreciated their classes on boundaries, identifying red flags in dangerous relationships (*Seeking Safety*), and Life Skills. Carmen, Luisa, Kathy and Roxy all eagerly shared their spiritual pilgrimages. Kathy stated, “I am not a monster. My chaplain helped me understand that.”

A few women discussed their incarceration as if it were an act of God. Roxy said, “Dawn, God asked me to sit down and listen to Him for years, but I told him to fuck off. He sure got my attention when I ended up in here. Now I am listening . . . it took prison to wake me up. Now, I could hear God whispering, really. I caught up with my education here. I learned how to dog groom. Got a food service certificate. Gave me time to think. Stopped me from using. No way am I ever coming back.”

**Positionality Checkpoint: Pathways to Empowerment**

During my short time interviewing in the prisons, I saw, smelled, heard, and encountered some unpleasant things, but I would not call the prison I experienced a “god damned place,” as Nora lamented. If anything, I saw much more of God’s grace, than hell. When my participants and I talked about God, we shared the same language and bond. We joined together naming a part of the world the same (Freire, 1970). It was here, in this “sacred place,” that I was most congruent. Congruence (borrowed from the field of counseling), means that the interviewer was authentic and genuine. I did not present an aloof professional façade, but was present and transparent. There was no air of authority or hidden knowledge, and my participants did not have to speculate about what I was really like. I was cognizant of my vocabulary, timing and body language. Because I experienced the women through the eyes of God (informed by scripture), I was able to honor their stories, as well as attend to the circumstances that helped shape their crimes, without excusing their guilt. I tried to live out Micah 6:8: He has showed
you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (New International Version).

Feminists have long recognized that it is when women recognize their “power within” and act together with other women to exercise “power with,” that they gain “power to” act as agents (Reed, 2007). Feminist experience has shown that this is a process that may take a diversity of pathways, but for which there are rarely any short cuts. This calls for seeing empowerment less as a destination that as Naila Kabeer puts it, a “journey without maps.” Each “journey without maps” is also one of discovery, one on which horizons shift as the terrain changes. Tracing these journeys, as they take place in different contexts (even prison) at different times, can help to provide new insights into what it takes to bring about the kind of change that can advance social and gender justice (Reed, 2007). I believe my participants were empowered because they found the “power within,” supernatural and otherwise, “to exercise” with me (a merciful woman), to gain “power to,” courageously share their stories and contribute to research that will hopefully lead to the increased safety for women and children.

The Sex Offender Registry: What’s in a Name?

Upon release, six of the participants in this study are required to register as sex offenders. All of women expressed fear and trepidation about their newfound societal identity, and a strong desire for guidance, knowledge, and mentoring from women who are “making it on the outside” as registered sex offenders. During interviewing, two of the women were doing their parole time in prison because they had “no place to go.” Sex offenders have to follow very strict residency restrictions when released. For example, it is unlawful for a child sex offender to knowingly reside within 500 feet of a playground, child care institution, day care center, part day child care facility, day care home, group day care home, or a facility providing programs or services
exclusively directed toward persons under 18 (Illinois Sex Offender Information, 2005). To date, in the state of Illinois, there is only one halfway house for men licensed by the state. According to my gatekeeper, the facility in East St. Louis has a long waiting list. None exists for women. Noel summed up what most of the women had expressed:

There is nothing in the penitentiary system that helps sex offenders or women with any kind of kid case. There is nothing for us. Nothing. We have to pretty much just deal with it all ourselves, and learn to cope with it ourselves. The one thing that I am coming to learn is that when I do go out into society, I am on a website for the rest of my life that labels me as a sex offender, and not just any sex offender, a pedophile (tearful).

All of the participants believed that lawmakers should incorporate a tier system that would categorize offenders based on the severity of the crime. Ada asked, “How am I going to get a job when I get out of here? The label isn’t fair. It should be graded. According to my label, I am not just a sex offender, I am a predatory sex offender. I did not prey. It is all bad. Sex offenders are the first ones blamed in a neighborhood crisis.” Conceptualizing gender inequality, Roxy exasperatingly said, “There is a half-way home for the guys, built and designed for them. There is nothin’ for us.” Kathy tearfully communicated her anger, “Accountability theory for mothers needs to be changed. Why should I be branded for the rest of my life for something he did? Laws need to be changed.” The complexity of sex offender reintegration and legislature was not lost on the women, or on me.

**Views of Women and Children Trafficked**

From this theme, views of women and children trafficked, two sub-themes emerged: women as mothers, and denial and minimization. Four women in this study incarcerated for sexually assaulting their own children denied their part in the abuse. According to their
indictments, Annie, Noel, Kathy, and Ada victimized their own children and/or family members, but denied or minimized their part in the crime (during interviewing). Two women, incarcerated for sexually abusing non-family members, owned their parts in their crimes. Luisa was the only participant who was not a mother.

**Women as Mothers, and Denial and Minimization**

The mothers in this study had much to say about their children. Some of them showed me baby pictures or shared touching memories. At one point, all of them fervidly expressed their grief. Annie drew a picture (the names of her children were altered to protect her confidentiality). Only two of her sons are living. Two were miscarriages, and one was stillbirth (see Figure 9).

![Figure 9. Annie’s Artwork: “I Died the Day I Lost my Right to my Boys.”](image)

The journal entry accompanying this picture read:

I died the day I was sentenced to eighteen years in prison for something I did not do.

They’ve made me out to be a sick, twisted person that would hurt my child in that way.
My children are my life, heart, and world, my everything that keeps me breathing every
day. I would die for the loves of my life (listed her sons’ names).

During the interview she added, “When my heart hurts, I hurt myself (self-harms by
cutting). Sucks the pain from my heart. My kids are hurting, why shouldn’t I?” Although
Annie’s parental rights were terminated, she vehemently denied harming her children in any
way. Analyzing the picture, I noted the tombstone. Although she was married to a very
maladjusted and wounded man, she valued being a “wife.” The word “wife” is written in the cup
to the right of the tombstone along with a picture of conjoined wedding rings.

When the women shared their stories about losing their children, they went to great
lengths to convince me of their innocence. Ada stated, “My mom believes me, that my husband
and I didn’t abuse my stepsister. My stepsister made the whole story up. I didn’t pimp her out. I
signed my children over. I will never get them back.” Kathy denied any ownership in her crime,
she said, “I did not rape my daughter. She is my whole world. I did what my husband forced me
to do.” Noel implored, “Dawn, I couldn’t think of harming a child. My mom wanted my
daughter. I would never harm my daughter, and only when my daughter was with my mom did
she ever make accusations like that. So, I feel like my mom set me up for my case because my
mom has wanted my daughter since my daughter was eight months old.”

If I did not have the women’s indictments and other incriminating documents, I think I
would have believed some of the women’s stories. They were that moving and persuasive. In the
corner of my field journal, I wrote a quote from The Shawshank Redemption, a movie about two
imprisoned men who bond over a number of years, finding solace and eventual redemption
through acts of common decency. “Everyone in here is innocent, you know that?” In another
paragraph I wrote, “The women have gone to great lengths to convince themselves of their
innocence, why not? Dealing with what they did in a sober state would be very painful, excruciatingly so. How does one enter into that suffering, and sorrow deeply without the consistent help of professionals? Will they ever experience redemption or reconciliation?”

One of the greatest differences in stresses for women and men serving time is that the separation from children in generally a much greater hardship for women that for men (Belknap, 1996). For many incarcerated mothers, their relationship, or lack thereof, with their children can have a profound effect on how they function in the criminal justice system. Often, the “bad” behaviors (e.g., negativism, manipulation, rule-breaking, fighting) of incarcerated women are signs of what Coll et al., have described as “resistance for survival” in response to grief, loss, shame, and guilt these women feel about their roles as mothers (Coll et al. 1998; Covington, 2002).

For many women, the only source of hope and motivation they have while involved in the criminal justice system and while in transition back to the community is the connection with their children. When asked why women come back to prison after being released, one mother said:

Many women that fall back into prison have the problem that their children have been taken away. When they go out to the streets, they don’t have anything, they have nothing inside. Because they say, “I don’t have my children, what will I do? I’ll go back to the drug again. I will go back to prostitution again. And I’ll go back to prison again. Why fight? Why fight if I have nothing? (Coll et al. 1998, 266)

Though some of the mothers shared their dreams of reuniting with their children one day, none of them mentioned transcending tragedy by asking their children for forgiveness. Ada said she dreams of reuniting with her husband, who will not be released from prison until 2030.
Luisa and Roxy owned their crimes of sexually abusing non-family members. They both demonstrated some affect, remorse, and compassion towards their victims. Roxy sorrowfully said, “I will carry what I did to those girls to my grave (another death description). I deserve to be here for what I did. I hope they turn out fine. I think about them a lot.” Luisa admitted that her crimes were a “big deal.” She was the only one that used the word “traumatize.” “I regret what happened so much,” she said. “They are probably traumatized. I messed up. I messed up their emotions and their upbringings. Sometimes I wonder, ‘Man what’s going on? Are they okay?’ It is hard to think about sometimes.”

Though Carmen was incarceratated for stealing, she took responsibility for her history of pimping and pandering minors, and not “being there” for her children and grandchildren. Carmen tearfully broke down the multi-faceted complexity of maternal-child pimping and the “drug scene” on the streets:

Crack cocaine took down the price of pussy, that is why I stopped selling pussy. I used to…when I first started. I was 16. I had hair down to my ass. I was beautiful. When I would go on a date, I could get $100 or $150 for a blowjob, but when crack cocaine hit the scene, it took blowjobs down from $150.00 down to $10.00. Hookers now….you need to go to Chicago. I need to take you to the south side of Chicago. And there are hookers out there literally doing blowjobs for bags of crack, not even money. It is that and when the crack cocaine hit the scene, now you see more women prostituting their kids, their daughters out. The drug scene . . . it makes me want to cry because it is really, really bad (crying). It is bringing all the young mothers here, and it is just leaving the kids to fend for their selves.
Giving Back

This section revealed two sub-themes: prevention reflections, and anti-sex trafficking campaign awareness ideas and recommendations. “Making good,” was a need many of the women seemed to covet. My participants were inspired to take action to prevent the next generation of girls and women from being “taken in by the hustles of the streets.” One of the most important pieces of my research has been the notion of voice, the heart of feminist inquiry. This section gave the women opportunity to analyze, form opinions, develop hunches, explore creative ideas, and “give back.” Exploring a topic by relating it to art and imagery, not the participant, reinforces the comfort of distance and safety. Some of the women revealed more of their narratives “behind” the guise of the “other.” For example, when discussing how to help the girl most vulnerable to trafficking, Carmen shared more details of her sexual abuse history.

Prevention Reflections

All of the women were able to articulate on some level what they believed could have prevented them from being incarcerated. I was grateful that they were so open and transparent. Shy, but hardheaded Noel, said she should have listened to her mother. Luisa said she should have gone to her family for help to “get out.” Ada believed that her life would have turned out differently if she did not use coke. “Drugs and hustles” destroyed Roxy and her family, and Carmen said she desperately needed someone to show her how to “do” life. Kathy said she should have “left the relationship, and not gotten married so many times. She added, “I shouldn’t have gotten high so much. I should have saved my daughter.” Despite their processing, only Kathy mentioned regret over not leaving her co-offender. Understanding why most of the women did not mention leaving their co-offenders is central to understanding how gender related social roles continues to operate as a pervasive force in our society.
Anti-sex trafficking Campaign Awareness Ideas

The participants did not mince words or ideas when discussing sex trafficking prevention suggestions. All of them were eager to brainstorm, cogitate, and mull over ideas. The women demonstrated genuine interest and curiosity being creative copywriters (see Figures 10-17). With the help of a graphic artist, five of the women’s ideas were generated into an anti-sex trafficking informative poster campaign. All of the posters embodied a powerful, direct quote or idea from the women, the human trafficking hotline number, and a similar background design. Human trafficking was type set instead of sex trafficking because the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a national, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Sex trafficking is a subset of human trafficking.

Putting the women’s ideas on paper verified that their art was unique communication. So valuable, it was preserved. I hope to present the posters to a domestic anti-sex trafficking organization, and send the women copies of the posters when my dissertation process is completed.

Roxy: Keeping it Real

Roxy had much to say about educational programming and parenting.

Keep it real. Give it to them the way it is. Men take advantage of you. Period. They need the information verified by someone they trust. Sometimes they won’t listen, but still give it to them. Be as graphic as possible. Throats get strangled on the streets, especially in prostitution. There was a serial killer in a nearby city. He killed prostitutes. Well-known guy. He was local. He was trusted. Just like that . . . your life could be snuffed out. Don’t use sunny pictures. Show the drugged out girl in the abandoned building throwing up all
over. Prostitution is risky and dangerous. So are drugs. Give them real life. Show them.

Your life could be snuffed out like a Marlboro cigarette. Straight up.

Roxy’s first poster (Figure 10) zeros in on girls and women familiar with urban street hustling, her second one (Figure 11) targets a general audience.

![Figure 10. Roxy’s Poster Idea](image-url)
Carmen expressed a strong desire to advocate for sexual abuse awareness. She said, “You see how many times I have been sent to the penitentiary? No one has ever asked me to expound on the shit I’ve been through as a kid . . . maybe this is my calling.” She believed that girls with sexual abuse histories are “sitting ducks” for pimps.

You need to connect the dots from my shit to your shit and these are all signs. Like I would wake up in the morning time and my nightgown would be stuck to my back cause he would have came in my room, lifted my nightgown up, shot cum on my back, and then
put it back down. You know, I tell my daughters...I got four girls. They all know the abuse I went through when I was a kid. And, if anything similar like this is happening to you, you need to tell somebody. You need to tell somebody. They are playing mind games with you. If they say they are gonna kill your mom, OK, you let the person know that he said he is gonna kill your mom and they will get your mom out of there. You know, before you know it, he will be locked up. They just need to connect the dots and all they can do is...they have to hear, true life, it can’t be made up. You won’t reach an individual if it is made up. They need to hear from women like me... I’ve been through a lot of shit in my lifetime, and it is like it is a waste to hold onto it. I can give it to somebody else because it may save someone. If I talked to 50 people, if I save one life, then my job is done.

Carmen recommended that more “camper” ministries and outreach services be placed around the city (Chicago). She said, “Sometimes, in order to reach the girls wanting to escape their traffickers or prostitution, we have to come to them. They are too afraid.”

The bus people feed the homeless. Give out the condoms. I live realistically. So, I want to do something to ease the blow. Cut down the HIV and the AIDS... they used to have like four buses, these big long buses and campers, like little soup kitchens on wheels that would be at different parts of the city on different nights. They would take hookers to shelters or missions if they wanted, give out clean needles, condoms, water, cotton, and cookers. They don’t have enough of those. But when I was hooking, there were four places, uh, and this is what I said I wanted to do when I got home. There is just not enough of them.

When I asked Carmen where anti-sex trafficking awareness posters should be placed, she
said, “You need to post them everywhere, just like posters for missing persons. There are johns everywhere. Traffickers are everywhere” (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Carmen’s Poster Idea
By offering a false sense of security, respect, and love, a trafficker can establish a pseudo-family trauma bond that will keep a victim vulnerable, and completely subject to the trafficker. The text in Carmen’s second poster (Figure 13) warns those being abused, and girls and women caught up in a trafficker’s hold, to recognize the deception in a trafficker or abuser’s false claims of caring for them, and report the abuse. The text in her third poster (Figure 14) encourages a general audience to report sex traffickers to the authorities.
Luisa commented on parental fear:

Parents and older people aren’t blunt enough. They twist stuff. They don’t tell it how it is. Many moms just aren’t streetwise. My mom tried controlling me by not allowing me to do anything because she was afraid, but she didn’t help me deal with what she was afraid of. Parents need to use control settings, check histories (on the Internet and phones). They need to learn. Check pics, know if they are sexting.
She added, “Some parents run their kids off (pimp) for drugs, food, or money. That ain’t right. Kids need to know who they could talk to. They obviously can’t trust their parents.” Luisa’s poster (Figure 15) targets parents.

Figure 15. Luisa’s Poster Idea

Annie: Pictures

Annie recommended that social marketers target picture-taking boundaries to children and their parents. She stated, “Kids learn stranger danger, but they don’t learn about the dangers of pictures and videos. Older kids, recruited by perps, take pictures of younger kids. Most of the
time, the children know the kids taking their pictures. They think it is innocent because no one is touching them. It could be just as dangerous.”

Don’t let people take pictures of the parts the stork gave you (blur the private parts out on the poster). If someone does, tell an adult you trust like a teacher, pastor, or friend’s parent, it is okay not to tell your parents, as long as you tell another adult (not all parents are trustworthy/parents may be offenders).

Figure 16. Annie’s Poster Idea

Kathy: Discernment

Kathy emphasized the importance of young women exercising discernment when forging relationships. She said, “My husband didn’t have a wife abuser, sex-offender label on his
forehead. Sex traffickers don’t wear neon signs. Women really do need to look deeper and pay attention. Are their boyfriends forcing them to do things they don’t want to do? If so, are they doing them? Why? Women are perpetrators too. People would be shocked if they knew all of the perpetrators in here. They don’t wear signs either.”

Figure 17. Kathy’s Poster Idea

Reflecting Back on Nora’s Pleas: “Oh, Won’t You Please Help Me?”

“Help me! Help me! Get me out of this goddamned place.”

While prodding though the laborious writing part of my dissertation, I allowed a few of my colleagues and friends to read the gobbledygook drafts of my results’ chapter. One friend said, “The reasons they were in jail made me queasy. I felt so torn.” My daughter said, “I felt
sorry for them. They seemed so likeable, like my friends. It is hard for me to imagine what they did.” The predominant comment was, “You made them sound so positive.” After hearing those particular words, I scrutinized my work, reviewed my journaling, took my armor off, and asked myself the hard question, “Did I? Did I unconsciously make them positive?

Women’s skill at expressing and reading emotion is important, because emotion serves several instrumental functions: “Emotion is necessary for human survival. Emotions prompt us to act appropriately, to approach some people and situations and to avoid others, to caress or cuddle, flight or flee. Without emotion, human life would be unthinkable” (Jaggar, 1997, pp.190-192). Chewing on Jaggar’s words, I did a personal emotional inventory. After some soul-searching, I concluded, the answer was no. Reviewing my journal entries, I noted my reflective thoughts on my interviews written on the final day:

I was wrong. The experience was not traumatizing. In my efforts at “studying up,” most of the narrative writers in the journals said prison would be a horrible place (except for a few of the feminist authors). Some warned I could develop PTSD symptoms. I truly thought my participants would be dangerous, indifferent, depressed, apathetic, secretive, distrustful, and nonplussed with my research. They were not! I found that most were open, and willing to share their stories, prison gossip, and family pictures with me, especially Roxy. I thought my ivory skin would be a barrier. As far as I am aware, it was not. Carmen was the only woman that commented on my race. “I thought you were gonna be like those White bitch state workers,” she said with a mischievous grin. Ada’s words of resilience humbled me, “One day my friend asked me how I wake up in a good mood. It is a choice. Every day I wake up, I try not to let things get to me. If I choose to feel sorry for myself, I will.” Points of connection came most easily with God talk (our
commonalities). Most of the women I interviewed found some sort of peace in chaos. Inside the concrete walls, they had some community, hope, and grace. I drove away with a newfound appreciation for the things Amanda said she desperately missed, “family, taking long baths, food with flavor and taste, vacuuming, walks, and the little things” . . . in essence, freedom.

No one was more shocked than I was, to have walked away from this journey of discovery more scathed and traumatized from the IRB process than the prison experience! I felt like the IRB committee members were more interested in hindering my research than in helping me. They made what could have been a very simple process, unnecessarily prolonged, shaming, onerous and complex. The IDOC’s IRB members were much more accommodating and encouraging than the university’s.

I cannot scoop up Nora, make her take her medications, and carry her to a premier mental health facility with pastoral rolling hills, and no locked gates, and I cannot rescue the women that I interviewed. I can’t make some of my participant’s come to grips with the terror and pain they’ve caused their child victims, make them work through their own victimization, stay clean and sober, and avoid “catching cases” when they get out. What I can do is pass on a legacy of kindness and compassion, and use something from my research to help them and others find their way, and “do life,” better. I heard Nora’s pleas loud and clear, and my answer is yes . . .

Summary

In summation, the women’s pathways and structures into sex trafficking included: drug and alcohol abuse, victimization, relationships with co-offenders, and the escalating impact of new media. The participants viewed the women and children they trafficked through the lenses of mothering, denial, and minimization. They contributed to the essence of sex trafficking
prevention by offering up personal reflections, anti-sex trafficking campaign awareness ideas targeting diverse audiences, and recommendations.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the outcomes of the research. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the woman sex trafficker. Seven women offenders were interviewed twice from three different prisons, for 90 minutes each time. The main research question posed: What is the lived experience of the woman sex trafficker? Three research questions guided the study:

1. What are the pathways and structures into sex trafficking?
2. How does the participant view the women and children she has trafficked?
3. How might we prevent sex trafficking?

Summary

I designed this qualitative study primarily drawing on feminist methodology. Interviews were completed over two-month duration. Through ongoing dialogue, I was able to find meaning in, and to describe the women’s experiences. Although each woman’s experience was unique, there were commonalities in their narratives. Thorough evaluation of each woman’s insightful narrative led to identification of four constitutive themes including: pathways to prison, prison culture and experience, views towards victims, and giving back. These themes and their sub-themes illuminate a deeper understanding of the life world of these women who have been incarcerated for sex trafficking crimes.

Conclusions

(Luisa) I am not the person I am labeled. I hope that others get insight from my story.

Grasp the “other side.” I am not a one-sided story. There are many chapters to my life.
In looking at the overarching themes and issues affecting women sex traffickers and women in the criminal justice system, there is no escaping the fact that “women’s issues” are also society’s issues: sexism, racism, poverty, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and substance abuse. While the impact of incarceration and reentry (as registered sex offenders) sets the stage and defines the individual experiences of women, their children and families, and their communities, what is required is a social response. Agencies and actions are not only about the individual; they are also, unavoidably, about family, society and institutions (Covington, 2002). “Each of us is inextricably bound to others--in relationship. All human action (even the act of a single individual) is relational” (Gilligan, 1996).

True to feminist research, this research study aimed to expose the structures and conditions that contribute to women trafficking children and women, propose ways that can help alleviate the problem, empower women and give them a voice to speak about social life from their perspective, and ultimately contribute towards social change and reconstruction (Oakley, 2000).

Women’s Issues

The structures and conditions that contributed to the present situation of the participants in this study were the pathways to prison: drug and alcohol abuse, drug connected families, victimization, dysfunctional relationships with co-perpetrators, and the role of the Internet. Other conditions included lack of secondary education, (most received their GEDs in prison), poor self-esteem, fear of abandonment, and poor inter-relational discernment.

Consistent with Mathews and her colleagues’ work (1989), the majority of participants were passive and dependent individuals with histories of sexual abuse and relationship difficulties. Fearing abandonment, they were pressured by male partners to commit sex offenses,
often against their own children. Kathy’s words validated Mathews’ work, “I don’t have self-esteem, I have others’-esteem. I have to stop looking at other people to be ‘me.’”

Victimization had implications for the women’s performance in school. Most of the women discussed poor academic performance as a byproduct of their parents’ lack of interest in their behavior. Failure to encourage or assist children in doing well at school and failure to ensure school attendance are routinely classified as forms of cognitive, emotional, or supervision neglect (DeHart, 2004). The women were often facets of broader patterns of neglect or abuse in the women’s homes, and were often associated with the caregivers’ own alcohol or drug addiction. Neglect, as well as more severe emotional or physical abuse, undermined motivation and impaired the women’s abilities to concentrate on school activities. Roxy had to drop out of private school when her father began abusing cocaine.

The women in this study were confined by social conditions, and forced to make hard choices with very few options (Richie, 1996). Many of the women were, throughout their lifetimes, pushed away from pathways of legitimacy such as school and work. Their family and social networks often tended more toward perpetration or collusion with victimization than providing positive support. Their role models were often corrupt, and their living contexts permeated with poverty, addiction, and violence. When Harden and Hill (1998) noted that women offenders were “us-minus privilege, caution, luck,” they identified what could be a byproduct of victimization in these women’s lives—a lack of caution that we might expect to arise if the women resign to abuse as normal and assessing their current status as “having nothing left to lose” (DeHart, 2004). Given the restricted options and negative influence illustrated in these women’s stories, failure to choose a pathway involving criminal behavior seems more remarkable than having chosen such a pathway. This is not to excuse or justify their criminal
behavior, for most of the women in this sample did possess a component to choice in committing their crimes. However, these findings place a frame of life circumstances around such choices, helping us to understand the crossroads at which choices were made and the types of things may have helped the women to make different choices (DeHart, 2004).

**Reentry: Transitioning Crossroads**

There is a critical need to develop a system of support within our communities that provides assistance to women transitioning from jail, prison, or community corrections and supervision to the community. Navigation of a myriad of systems that often provide fragmented services can pose a barrier to successful reintegration (Covington, 2002). If we expect the women of this study to successfully return to their communities and avoid rearrest, the social response needed is a change in community conditions. The following is what Richie concluded from a series of in-depth interviews with women:

They need families that are not divided by public policy, streets and homes that are safe from violence and abuse, and health and mental health services that are accessible. The challenges women face must be met with expanded opportunity and a more thoughtful criminal justice policy. This would require a plan for reinvestment in low-income communities in this country that centers around women’s needs for safety and self sufficiency. (Richie, 2001, p. 386)

From my own study, I concluded that there is an acute need for safe, drug-free, half-way homes for women registered sex offenders transitioning into the community, and caring persons to provide guidance, knowledge, supervision, and mentoring. Incarcerated women also need creative educational instruction, empathy, hope, and pearls-of-wisdom from women who are “making it on the outside” as registered sex offenders.
Recognizing the centrality of women’s roles as mothers provides an opportunity for criminal justice, medical, mental health, legal, and social service agencies to develop this role as an integral part of the program and treatment interventions for women. Many women sex offenders are released in their child-bearing years, and a higher percentage of female than male offenders are the primary caregivers of young children. Support for parenting, safe housing, and appropriate family wage level are crucial when the welfare of children is at stake (Covington, 2002).

**The Dance of Denial: “Catching a Case”**

A common phraseology noted during my interviews with the women, and conversations with the other inmates in the dayroom, was, “I caught a case.” At first, I was perplexed. “What are they catching?” I thought to myself, “influenza?” “Catching a case” means:

To be arrested and ultimately convicted and subsequently serve time for an alleged crime.

A popular phrase in a certain ethnic/socioeconomic demographic when trying to explain their misfortune of being at the wrong place at the wrong time, and how “this” isn’t what it seems. A defense mechanism similar to denial when being caught red handed.

*Lashauwn was walking around the hood looking in a parked car when he "caught a case" as the police observed him smashing window with his fist to borrow an ipod to listen to.*

*When asked by his associates how he got the bloody knuckles, Lashauwn explains he was borrowing an ipod when he "caught a case” (Urbandictionary.com).*

Noel (on finding out her ex-boyfriend had a history of abusing children) stated:

I did try to go against him after I caught my case. The FBI was involved, everything.

That is where I found out about his background. Because they just happened to…say this was their folder, when they came and saw me that day, it just happened to be open right
here, and I just happened to ….1999, a ten year old little boy, what? And they would never tell me anything more than that. I just knew that back in 1999, he tried to do something with a little boy. What exactly, I don’t know.

Men and women sex offenders do the “dance of denial” (Cooper, 2005). Denial is often thought of as an all-or-nothing, binary phenomenon in which an offender either is or is not in denial. The implication is that sexual offenders either deny or admit everything. Salter (1988) argued that this is not the case, stating that denial falls on a continuum with varying degrees and type of denial ranging from admission with justification to full admission with acceptance or responsibility and guilt. An offender typically progresses through states of denial as she admits the extent of her sexual offending. Sgroi (1989) also described denial as a continuum with complete denial of abusive behavior at one end and owning up to every incident of abuse (reported and unreported) as the other end. Similarly, Happel, Joseph, and Auffrey (1995) refer to the “dance of denial” as having 12 steps, including denial of the behavior itself, denial of intent, planning and premeditation, and denial of relapse potential and possible recidivism (Cooper, 2005).

Four women in this study incarcerated for sexually assaulting their own children denied their part in the abuse. One of those women minimized her offending by justification. Two women, incarcerated for sexually abusing non-family members, owned their part in their crime. There has been relatively little empirical research on the evaluation of treatment approaches to reduce denial of offenses yet denial and minimization represent significant challenges to treatment providers. Some treatment programs exclude many, if not all, individuals from treatment based on denial. Other researchers have devised specific programs for sexual offenders who are in denial (Abracen & Looman, 2004). The women in this study, many of
whom denied sexually abusing their own children, need extensive treatment. Unfortunately, they
are not getting it in prison, and most likely will not receive it after they are released.

Social Response: Voices Giving Back

The women in this study demonstrated eagerness, vulnerability, courage, creativity,
experiential knowledge, and enthusiasm in “giving back,” and using their voices. I do believe
many appreciated the opportunity to “connect the dots,” and share the chapters and sequels of
their lives with someone who had a genuine interest in their lives. All of them thanked me for
giving them an opportunity to tell their stories. Noel stated, “You are actually the second person
that I have come out honestly about everything. It is not something that I ever really talk about.
It is weird to actually get it out.” During our second interview, Carmen stated:

Because when I left you before, it was like something was lifted off me. Maybe that was
a part of my life that I needed to talk about…there is so….like here, I was afraid to talk to
anybody, because if I talked to anybody, then they would use that as a reason not to give
me work release. I’m not suicidal. I’m not homicidal. I’m just realizing all the mistakes
that I have made in my life. And, I’m realizing now that I’m tired of making mistakes.

I tried to put my participants on “center stage,” empower them, and come alongside them
as they exposed “their” truths, and generated ideas to promote social change. I hope that their
social marketing ideas will be actualized in an anti-sex trafficking awareness or prevention
campaign. Several of the women expressed interest in reading my dissertation, and gave me
special pseudonyms to use in place of their names. Annie asked me if she could see “her” poster
if it ever came to fruition. I told all my participants that I would mail them copies of the graphic
designs and illustrations they inspired.
By drawing pictures, birthing poster images, brainstorming tag lines, journaling, and sharing their personal stories, the women resisted the narrative that society has scripted for them, and claimed and proclaimed that they are not simply statistics, predators, loose-women, nameless women, poor women, sex objects, battered and raped women, monsters, and trash. Instead, they constructed selves that are rooted in their deepest beliefs and desires about who they are—strong, beautiful, angry, expressive, and full women eager and capable of giving back and making a difference in someone’s life. Some of them also constructed worlds, better, and more hopeful ones than they experienced prior to being booked (Standford, 2005). As Carmen stated earlier, “I’ve been through a lot of shit in my lifetime, and it is like it is a waste to hold onto it. And, I can give to somebody else because it may save someone . . . If I talked to 50 people, if I save one life, then my job is done.”

In conclusion, the true experts in understanding women’s experiences as sex traffickers are the women themselves. In the end, each of us must ask ourselves this question: of the work to be done to expand anti-sex trafficking campaign prevention and awareness knowledge, eradicate sex trafficking, and achieve truly gender-responsive services for women, what is my piece to do?

**Discussion**

The phenomenon of women sex traffickers and female perpetrators of child sexual abuse (CSA) has been relatively neglected in comparison to the number of studies and theories published exploring male perpetrators of such abuse (Bexson, 2011). In the United States, virtually all research has focused on individuals who have been officially identified as victims of severe forms of trafficking (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005). Both societal and professional denial of this phenomenon may go some way to explaining the lack of research into this issue. The
gender-role expectations of women being maternal and caring are possibly one of the reasons for this and explain the extreme emotive reaction from members of the public to cases of such abuse perpetrated by women (Bexson, 2011).

When I told my colleagues, family, and friends of my research topic, they tilted their heads, looked at me quizzingly, and said, “But sex trafficking isn’t going on here! Women sex traffickers? Mothers pimping out their kids? Really?” Most of my friends envisioned a “trafficker” to be a European White male, with greased back hair, a Signet ring, and a gold tooth. They visualized a “pimp” to be an African American male wearing flamboyant clothes, furry trench coats, sunglasses, and thick gold necklaces. Luisa, a sex trafficker and sex offender in this study, looked liked the “girl next door,” with dimples, freckles, and a ponytail. She literally could have been my neighbor whom I would have trusted to get my mail and newspaper, water my plants, and watch my home when I was on vacation.

**Societal Denial**

Although society has slowly begun to recognize the existence of female child-sex offenders there has been both an historical, societal, and professional denial of this issue. This will no doubt have contributed to the fact there is less research on the topic compared to other issues within criminology. The denial of the existence of female, child-sex offenders has been evidenced in a number of studies. Elliott (2004) for example stated that 86 percent of victims who tried to tell someone were not believed the first time they disclosed that they were being abused by a woman. This may have extremely damaging psychological implications for victims who have summoned up the courage to tell someone only to be told that they must be lying. This societal denial may well explain the lack of reporting of female-perpetrated sexual abuse issues by victims in the past (Bexson, 2011). In order to encourage more victims to come forward and
report their abuse from females, we need to acknowledge both professionally and culturally that women do commit CSA, and sometimes deny it (Bexson, 2011).

**Male Co-offenders**

The findings of this study brought two issues to my attention. One was the frequency in which a male co-offender was involved in cases of child sexual abuse. Six of the women’s narratives fit the male co-offender typology. None of the women confessed to having a prior existing deviant sexual interest in children that their male co-offenders encouraged or acted upon. Most stated that they went along with the requests of their male counterparts for other reasons such as fear of losing their partner, desire to “fix” their partner’s sexual addiction, belief that they could biologically “fix” their partner’s addiction, drugs, or fear of violence against themselves. Roxy stated, “I did have a moral compass. Somewhere along the way, I lost it. The drugs didn’t help one bit.”

The women who submitted to threesomes to “please” their partners were initially not eager to participate. Annie stated, “I wanted to fulfill his fantasies. It is what he always wanted. We went to strip clubs in MO, landed up in a motel, and did it (threesome). I didn’t like it.” Eventually, threesomes became a part of Annie’s sexual repertoire. When her co-offender partner got bored, she recruited other men, women and minors for him, eventually sacrificing her own child. Annie videotaped her partner sexually assaulting her son, and then joined in herself. Luisa physically and emotionally threatened her younger victims not to tell their parents about the lewd pictures she and her co-offender took of them. The second key finding was the link between sex trafficking and illegal pornography. This finding emulated the research done by Laura Lederer (2010). She concluded:
1. Some perpetrators are trafficking and/or exploiting women and children and recording the acts they perform.

2. Some forms of pornography actually are sex trafficking.

3. Pornography creates and provides rationalizations for exploiters as to how and why their sexually exploitive behaviors are acceptable.

The women in this study compromised their sexual boundaries to the point that they performed sexual acts they once thought were abhorrent, in order to satisfy their partners’ escalating sexual appetites. The late Norma Hotaling, a survivor of child sex trafficking in the United States, and the founder of Standing against Global Exploitation believed that pornography and other sexually explicit materials normalize prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation of women and children, allowing men to more freely engage in the criminal activities. In the words of Dr. Mary Anne Layden, pornography creates “permission giving beliefs” that illegal and abhorrent sexual behavior is not harmful (Lederer, 2010).

The culture, particular mass media and pornography, is playing a large role in normalizing prostitution by portraying prostitution as glamorous, empowering, or a fast, easy way to make money (Hughes, 2005). Noel stated, “I did it (stripped) because I got into a car accident and we needed fast cash because I damaged his car. I didn’t want to do those things.” The Internet and other types of new information and communications technologies are increasing the global sexual exploitation of women and children. Sex industry sites on the Internet are popular and highly profitable (Hughes, 2005). The growth and expansion of the sex industry is closely intertwined with new technologies. Although trafficking for prostitution is widely recognized, trafficking or women and children for the production of pornography receives less attention. Increasingly, the pornographers are traveling to poor countries where they can abuse
and exploit women and children with fewer risks. They use information technologies to transmit
the live images around the world (Hughes, 2005).

Roxy and Luisa, both incarcerated on pornography charges, gave frank, haunting
testimonies on the ease of recruiting young girls. Roxy stated, “They love the camera. They all
want to be models and TV reality stars. Recruiting was easy. They plaster their slutty pictures
everywhere. Some of them are space cadets. They trust the wrong people.” Her observation begs
the three following questions:

1. Are American girls and young women aware of how susceptible they are to sexual
   objectification and exploitation?
2. If so, why do not many of them seem to care?
3. What is the normalization of pornography doing to our children?

In summation, this study explored a dark reality of domestic minor sex trafficking. Women
are capable of sexual violence, with or without the involvement of co-offenders. They sexually
offend, exploit, traffic, solicit children, and use the Internet to perpetuate their crimes. The
challenge for us as health educators and health professionals is not to pathologize and blame
women, but to hear and see their violence, respond appropriately to protect vulnerable children,
and to deconstruct long held myths, beliefs and ideologies that underpin oppressive social,
cultural and familial systems (FitzRoy, 1998). We must interrupt the dance of denial.

**Recommendations**

There are multiple components that make up the “demand” side of sex trafficking. In
addition to the purchasers of sex acts who create a demand for victims, the culture, the
exploiters, and the state also create or facilitate the demand for victims. The exploiters use
victims as the commodities in their money making criminal enterprises. States develop
approaches to the buying and sell of sex which legitimize or suppress the markets for sex. Even when states oppose the trafficking of women, their immigration and asylum policies may facilitate traffickers’ movement of victims into a destination country (Hughes, 2005).

**Recommendations to Combat Demand**

Recommendations to combat the demand for victims revealed in my study include:

1. Redefine prevention. If the demand for victims is one of the reasons that trafficking occurs, then shutting down the markets and putting prostitution establishments out of business is part of prevention. Demand reduction is part of prevention of sex trafficking.

2. End tolerance for the illegal sex trade, including open advertising of criminal activity, such as Internet sites, escort services, massage parlors, spas, etc, which are well known fronts for prostitution.

3. Increase resources so that sustained effort can be made to combat sex trafficking and prostitution.

4. Design comprehensive programs with sustained effort to eliminate sex trafficking and prostitution by arresting and prosecuting purchasers of sex acts and exploiters, and providing services to victims. Design law enforcement strategies to eliminate the markets for victims (Hughes, 2005).

An important demand reduction strategy is an education and awareness campaign aimed at boys and young men. Campaigns should focus on the negative consequences of purchasing sex, from the public and private health problems like the spread of HIV and other STIs, to the grim facts about who runs the sex trade and how customers are helping traffickers flourish and hurting those who have been trafficked. The purpose is to make the harm visible. The messaging needs to be carefully developed to reach the target audience (young males before they have
become users/customers). While this seems like an overwhelming task (given the ubiquitous cultural messages glorifying sex and glamorizing prostitution), we should take heart from other social marketing campaigns that have targeted intractable or entrenched social practices. Two come to mind: the campaign against cigarette smoking, and a similar campaign to combat domestic violence (Lederer, 2010).

**Treatment Recommendations for Incarcerated Women Sex Offenders**

Initially, many treatment programs for female sex offenders mirrored programs for males and, in some instances, female sex offenders were placed in treatment groups with males (Mathews et al., 1989). Over time, however, the field began to witness a gradual movement away from exclusively male-modeled programs (and placement in treatment programs with males) in favor of more gender-responsive sex offender treatment. And particularly in the past few years, the need for such tailoring has been emphasized in the literature pertaining to sexually abusive women (Center for Sex Offender Management, 2007).

Based on their unique needs and differing typologies, the following treatment goals are particularly salient for female sex offenders: Establishing and maintaining trusting, supportive, and equitable intimate relationships, promoting autonomy and self sufficiency, developing a positive self-concept, enhancing assertiveness and social competency, reducing self-destructive/self-injurious behaviors, and ensuring healthy sexual development, expression, and boundaries.

The comparatively high rates of sexual victimization and trauma that are common to both adolescent and adult female sex offenders also suggest that treatment will often need to include an emphasis on addressing trauma and its impact on emotional, social, psychological, and sexual adjustment. For example, identifying and treating co-morbid
psychiatric conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is critical for female sex offenders who have experienced significant trauma, especially given the higher prevalence of this disorder among women and adolescent girls (Bloom et al., 2003). But as always, practitioners must take great care to effectively and compassionately address victimization issues without minimizing or justifying sexually abusive behaviors (see, e.g., Denov & Cortoni, 2006; Hislop, 2001; Nathan & Ward, 2001).

These gender-responsive targets and considerations, together with the more “traditional” expectations of sex offender treatment, such as accepting responsibility, modifying cognitive distortions, enhancing empathy, identifying risk factors and triggers, and developing effective coping responses, are consistent with the overarching goal of ensuring that these women and girls are able to lead productive, meaningful, and satisfying lives without compromising the safety and wellness of others (Nathan & Ward, 2001).

**Recommendation: Plan Reentry from the Beginning**

If women are to be successfully reintegrated back into the community after serving their sentences, there must be a continuum of care that can connect them to a community following their release. In addition, the planning process must begin as soon as the woman begins serving her sentence, not conducted in just the final 30 to 60 days. There is often no pre-release planning of any kind in prisons and jails. Women reentering the community after incarceration require transitional services from the institution to help them reestablish themselves and their families. They also need transitional services from community corrections and supervision to assist them as they begin living on their own again (Covington, 2002). My gatekeeper stated that support services were greatly lacking in Illinois’ communities.
Following their release, women must comply with conditions of probation or parole, achieve financial stability, access health care, locate housing, and attempt to reunite with their families (Bloom and Covington 2000). They must obtain employment (often with few skills and a sporadic work history), find safe and drug-free housing, and, in many cases, maintain recovery from addiction. However, many women find themselves either homeless or in environments that do not support sober living, especially when community safe half-way houses do not existent. Without strong support in the community to help them navigate the multiple systems and agencies, many offenders fall back into a life of substance abuse and criminal activity (just as Roxy did). The majority of women in the correctional system are mothers, and a major consideration for these women is reunification with their children (if able or possible). This adds what Brown, Melchoir, and Huba (1999) identify as an additional level of burden, with requirements for safe housing, economic support, medical services, and so on including the children. Because the children have needs of their own, being the custodial parent potentially brings re-entry women into contact with more agencies, which may have conflicting or otherwise incompatible goals and values.

The Institute for Relational Development has recommended many principles intended for the development of gender responsive programs for women (Bloom and Covington 1998). Of the twelve listed, my study concluded that the following five would be most helpful to the women I interviewed:

1. The theoretical perspectives used consider women’s particular pathways into the criminal justice system, fit the psychological and social needs of women, and reflect the realities of their lives (e.g., stages of denial, relational theory, trauma theory).
2. Treatment and services are based on women’s competencies and strengths and promote self-reliance.

3. Services/treatment address women’s practical needs, such as housing, transportation, child care, and vocational training and job placement.

4. Staff members reflect the client population in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, language (bilingual), and ex-offender and recovery status.

5. Female role models and mentors are provided who reflect the racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds of the clients.

Galbraith (1998) interviewed women who had successfully transitioned from correctional settings to their communities. What Galbraith’s participants said helped them were all the same things the women in this study articulated they wanted, to help them transition: relationships with trusted people who cared and listened, a well-trained staff, especially female staff, and relationships with other women who were supportive and who were role models. They also added: proper medication, programs such as job training, education, substance-abuse and mental health treatment, and parenting, efforts to reduce trauma and revictimization through alternatives to seclusion and restraint, financial resources, safe environments, and legislature to help victims of sex trafficking.

**Recommendations for Health Educators and Health Care Professionals: What is Our Role?**

Our responsibility as health educators is to construct opportunities for learning involving some form of communication designed to improve health literacy, including improving knowledge, and developing skills which are conducive to individuals and community health.
Human trafficking is a crime that affects individuals, groups of individuals, and communities in which the crime is occurring. However, neighbors, customers, and citizens may be the ones needed to respond to victims, given the hidden and clandestine nature of the crime, and this may be more effective than placing the entire burden for identifying victims of trafficking on the police and service agencies. Public awareness campaigns on the rights of victims of trafficking, the laws protecting victims, the conduct of traffickers, and services available must be broadcast widely in a variety of languages. Public awareness campaigns should also target members of the community who may spot a possible trafficking situation (Logan, Walker, & Hung, 2009).

Recommendations for health educators and care professionals include:

1. Professional preparation for health educators should include readings (outreach material included), projects, papers, workshops, conferences, multimedia, and governmental and non-governmental curriculum on human trafficking.

2. Health educators and students can serve by doing internships in prisons, appropriate community outreaches, residential homes, shelters, social media agencies, coalitions, non-governmental organizations and various missions. Health educators and interns could also get involved with networks and organizations such as End Internet Trafficking Coalition, Initiative against Sexual Trafficking, the International Justice Mission, World Vision, and the Polaris Project. Educators can host briefings (on campus) or training on the topic of human trafficking by bringing together local community leaders as well as anti-trafficking experts. They could strategize creative ways to do outreach to the women on the street or in the strip clubs, and volunteer their time to do website development, graphic design and volunteer coordination.
3. Assume their responsibilities and skills as advocates by communicating with members of Congress in support of legislation to protect victims, prosecute traffickers, provide traffickers gender-responsive treatment and transitional services, and stop the demand for human trafficking.


5. Serve as a human trafficking resource person in their communities, churches, civic organizations, schools, and charity groups.

6. Teach community members about prevention and modern day slavery by implementing prevention networks. Collaboration is one of the key elements that will see the end of child sex slavery and exploitation. These networks build community-based awareness, skills training, resource development, and capacity building (Love146, 2012).

7. Assess the community for its ability to assist children in crisis. Urgent intervention is needed when a child is in crisis or living in a particularly vulnerable situation. These projects protect children while also supporting the needs of their families.

8. Create and evaluate press kits, tool kits, documentaries, parenting curriculum, public service announcements, and other educational resources.

9. Assist individuals and communities in identifying human trafficking victims and the resources available to them (safe housing, health, immigration, food, income, employment, legal and interpretation services and counseling).

10. Train grassroots caregivers in the community. The training program will aim at developing participants’ knowledge and skills in working with victims and survivors of child sex slavery and exploitation.
11. Write educational articles around the threat of human trafficking and underlying cultural issues affecting at-risk young people.

12. Participate in U.S. advocacy initiatives including organizing and participating in national conferences, engaging and collaborating with existing anti-trafficking councils, and legislative action to address both the demand and effects of child sex slavery and exploitation in the U.S. (Love146, 2012).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future researchers may consider examining and/or exploring:

1. The attitudes, beliefs and perceptions incarcerated women sex offenders have of their co-offenders (one year after their sentencing).
2. The role the Internet plays in CSA perpetrated by women
3. The effectiveness of programs designed to prevent at-risk youths from becoming DMST victims

**Overall Summary of Research**

Sex trafficking is a significant and growing problem in the United States and the larger global community (Hodge, 2008). One of the distinguishing features of the health education profession and feminism is their commitment to social justice on behalf of vulnerable populations. In concert with its ethical principles, health educators and feminists are called to advocate on behalf of the young women and children who are trafficked into the sex industry, and to craft audience appropriate, creative awareness-to-action social marketing campaigns. Combating sex trafficking requires efforts at the grassroots, academic, and national levels (Zoba, 2003).
Grounded in participants’ experiences, this study contributes to defining sex trafficking in a broader network and structure of oppression. The in-depth, descriptive findings of this research will hopefully expand anti-sex trafficking campaign prevention, and awareness knowledge, and spread the news that . . .

(Source: GEMS: Girls Educational and Mentoring Services)
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

SIUC HSC FORM A
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

By making this application, I certify that I have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research activities involving human subjects. I agree to comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I acknowledge my obligation to:

1. Accept responsibility for the research described, including work by students under my direction.

2. Obtain written approval from the Human Subjects Committee of any changes from the originally approved protocol BEFORE implementing those changes.

3. Retain signed consent forms in a secure location separate from the data for at least three years after the completion of the research.

4. Immediately report any adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Chairperson of the Human Subjects Committee, SIUC, Carbondale, Illinois - 618-453-4533 and to the Director of the Office of Research Development and Administration, SIUC. Phone 618-453-4531. E-mail: siuhsc@siu.edu

Project Title
WOMEN TRAFFICKING WOMEN AND CHILDREN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FEMALE SEX TRAFFICKERS

RESEARCH ADVISOR’S ASSURANCE: My signature on this application certifies that the student is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects. I am aware of my obligations stated on Form A and will be available to supervise the research. When on sabbatical leave or vacation, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence. I will advise the Human Subjects Committee by letter of such arrangements.

Researcher(s) or Project Director(s) Dawn M. Zywiec

Please print or type name below signature.

Date 01-10-10

Researcher’s Advisor (required for all student projects) Dr. Roberta Ogletree

Please print or type name below signature.

Date 01-10-10

The request submitted by the above-named researcher(s) was approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee.

This approval is valid for one year from the review date. Researchers must request an extension to continue the research after that date. This approval form must be included in all Master’s theses/research papers and Doctoral dissertations involving human subjects that are submitted to the Graduate School.

Chairperson, Southern Illinois University Human Subjects Committee

Date 06-08-11
APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Signed copy to be provided to subject or authorized representative

This is a research study for subjects who choose to voluntarily take part. Please take your time to make a decision.

STUDY TITLE: Women Trafficking Women and Children: An Exploratory Study of Female Sex Traffickers

RESEARCHER: Dawn M. Zywiec, Ph. D. Candidate

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Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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COMMITTEE CHAIR: Dr. Roberta Ogletree

CONTACT INFORMATION for Dr. Roberta Ogletree:
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Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Pulliam 307 Mailcode 4532
Carbondale, Illinois 62901-4632

INSTITUTION: Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois

1. What is the purpose of the study?

I am interested in learning about the lives and experiences of women who have trafficked/recruited/pimped out women and children into prostitution. I hope that the knowledge learned can be used to develop informational programs to educate the public on sex trafficking, to create anti-sex trafficking campaigns, and to help women and children at risk of being trafficked.
2. **Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as a woman who has trafficked/recruited/pimped women or children into prostitution, and volunteered (by telling your caseworker or counselor) to talk to a student researcher.

3. **What will happen during this study?**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will first sign this informed consent form, then, you will be asked questions about the following areas:

- Background information
- Family background
- How you relate to others, both family and peers
- Perceptions of the girls/family members you have trafficked/recruited/pimped out
- Social history
- Attitudes towards prostitution
- Anti-sex trafficking ideas you may have

4. **Will my responses be audio taped?**

Yes, unless you refuse. I will shut the audio tape off at any time you request. Audio tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study. No one will listen to them but me.

5. **How long will I be in this study? How much of my time will this take?**

The timing and length of interviews will be based on the IDOC’s research department’s regulations and guidelines, of which I am unaware at this time.

This might read . . .

The first interview will last between 45-90 minutes and the second interview will last approximately 30 minutes. Therefore, I anticipate that you will spend a total of one hour and 15 minutes to two hours completing both interviews.

Some of the interview questions are personal and it is possible that they may make you feel uncomfortable or upset. There are no right or wrong answers. You can skip any questions you do not want to answer. If you become upset for any reason, you can ask me to stop the interview. If you want to take a break at any time during the interview, please tell me. If you find questions to be upsetting for any reason, I encourage you to talk with your counselor or chaplain. I anticipate no physical risks or discomfort as a result of this study.
6. **Are there any benefits to me if I take part in this study?**

There is no guarantee that you will benefit by participating in this study; however, you may help me understand women’s emotional experiences and motivations behind trafficking/recruiting/pimping women and children into prostitution. Your ideas and input may contribute to anti-sex trafficking campaign material. Sometimes it is liberating and healing to just talk to someone who is truly interested in what you have to say.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your release date or parole eligibility.

7. **What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this study?**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

8. **What about confidentiality and the privacy of my records?**

I will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity. I will keep your involvement in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Study results that are used in publications or presentations will not use your name.

The IDOC’s Director will review my research findings.

No information that would identify you will be published or made available to the Director or to the Corrections Department staff. There are no tricks or deceptions in this study.

I must report the following:

1) if you seem suicidal,
2) if you say you want to hurt yourself or someone else
3) if you tell me someone under the age of 18 is currently being abused

9. **Will it cost me anything to take part in this research study?**

No, it will not cost you anything to participate in this study.

10. **Will I receive anything for taking part in this research study?**

IDOC’s policy does not allow inmates to receive compensation of any sort for their involvement in research.

11. **Does anyone at Southern Illinois University Carbondale have a personal financial interest in this study?**

No.

12. **What are my rights as a voluntary participant?**
Taking part in this study is your choice. You may choose not to be in it. If you decide not to be in the study, it will not affect any medical care, benefits or rights to which you are entitled.

If you sign this form, it means you choose to be in the study. If new information becomes available during the study that may affect your willingness to take part in the study, you will be told.

13. Can I stop this study?

You may leave the study at any time. While you are in the study, some information may be collected without being identified as belonging to you. I cannot remove this information if you drop out of the study. Information that is identified as yours can be removed if you submit a request in writing.

14. What if I have questions?

Dawn M. Zywiec will answer any question you have about the study. She can be reached at the following telephone number: (618) 453-2777. The rest of her contact information is on page 1 of this consent form.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533, E-mail: siuhsc@siu.edu.

“I agree _____ I disagree _____ to have my responses recorded on audio tape.”

“I agree_____ I disagree ____ that Dawn Zywiec may quote me in her paper.”

I understand that by agreeing to take part in this study, any crime or potential threat to the personal safety of any person that I disclose during this interview will be reported to the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that you have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will be given a signed copy of this form.

____________________________________
Printed name of Participant
Artwork Release Form

I hereby grant Dawn Zywiec the right to use, reproduce, and publish my artwork for educational, promotional and/or other uses, and release Dawn Zywiec from any and all claims, actions, and liability relating to her use of said artwork.

Artist Name (Print): ____________________________________________

Name (Signature) ________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________
APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Format style borrowed from DeHart (2008)

Project Description

I am interested in learning about the lives and experiences of women who have trafficked/recruited/pimped out women and children into prostitution. I hope that the knowledge learned can be used to develop informational programs to educate the public on sex trafficking, to create anti-sex trafficking campaigns, and to help girls and women at risk of being trafficked.

Informed Consent

(I will read the consent form aloud, explain terms, clarify, ask if there are any questions, and invite participation.)

You will have to sign my consent form before we start the interview. Our conversation will be audio taped. I will shut the audio recording off at any time you wish. You may refuse to be audio taped.

**Reminder:** By agreeing to take part in this study, any crime or potential threat to the personal safety of any person that you disclose during this interview will be reported to the Illinois Department of Corrections. I will also report:

4) if you seem suicidal,
5) if you say you want to hurt yourself or someone else
6) if you tell me someone under the age of 18 is currently being abused

Verbalize Understanding: Could you please tell me what I reminded you about in your own words?

Art Supplies

You have art supplies in front of you. Feel free to doodle, write down your answers, or draw as we chat.

Demographic Information

1. Confidential I.D. ________________________

2. Age ________
3. **Race or Ethnicity**

   - White (not of Hispanic Origin)
   - Black or African American (not of Hispanic Origin)
   - American Indian & Alaska Native
   - Asian
   - Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic or Latino or any race
   - Some other race

4. **Education Completed**

   - Less than High School Graduation
   - High School Graduation or GED
   - One Year Post-High School Education
   - Vocational degree
   - Two years of college or Associates Degree
   - Four years of college or Bachelor’s Degree
   - Post-Bachelor’s work
   - Graduate degree

5. **Relationship Status**

   - Never married
   - Married
   - Divorced/separated
   - Living together

6. **Children (adopted or natural -- whether in your custody or not)**

   Yes______  No______  Number_______  Ages ______________

7. **Where are you from originally?** _______________________

8. **How long have you been in prison?** ________________________
Setting up safety and control

Before we begin interviewing, I would like to ask you a few questions.

- If you feel like you do not want to answer a question, how will you let me know?
- What will you do if tomorrow you decide that you wish you had not participated?
- When you start to get upset or anxious what is the first thing that happens?
- What do you now, when you get upset? Who do you talk to? What brings you comfort?

Prompts

I would like to learn about your life. I hope you will tell me about your experiences so that you can help me understand, as best I can, what it was like to grow up in your shoes. Then we will work our way up to the present.

DECISION POINT: The next few questions concern your childhood and possible incidences that might bring up bad memories. Do you want to continue?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*Questions will be tailored to each woman. Not all questions will be applicable. Not all questions will be asked.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Where did you grow up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Family constellation (You may draw out your family if you wish.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What was it like for you in your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did you ever run away?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How old were you when you first left home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tell me about your mom and dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did you ever experience any sexual force (unwanted sex, control, refuse condom use)? Affects of this? Outcomes? Impact on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Were you ever hit, threatened, cut or shot at … or anything else like that while growing up? Can you tell me what happened (who, context, age)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What was the impact on your life? Then? Later?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DECISION POINTS will be integrated throughout the entire interview. I will be very aware and cognizant of my participants’ histories, body language, facial expressions and verbal cues while interviewing.

The next section will be about “this” chapter in your life. How did you get here? It will also be about your feelings and perceptions about prostitution. Do you have any questions? Are you okay to go on?

- Tell me the reasons you are here—the charges, the sentence, and why you think it happened (immediate circumstances, over a life span) What was your first
arrest?
- How did you first get involved in prostitution (if applicable)?
- Who got you in?
- Were drugs involved?
- What were the first weeks like?
- Did you have a pimp? Talk to me about that relationship.
- What do you feel are the differences between male and female pimps?
- How did you deal with working as a prostitute and being a wife/mother?
- What were your thoughts the first time you recruited a minor into prostitution? Tell me about that experience.
- How do you think your involvement in trafficking might be connected to other significant events in your life (what events, how)?
- How did you groom the girls and women?

**DECISION POINT:** You are doing great (or some other encouraging support). We are almost done with the hard questions. The rest of the questions have to do with recruiting. Still okay?

- What feelings do you have for the girls and women you have trafficked?
- How were you recruited (if applicable)?
- What recruitment methods were you taught?
- What do you remember most about the first girl or woman you turned out?
- If you could write her a letter, what would you say?
- Who were you most protective of?

**DECISION POINT:** Ready to move on? If the participant is not okay to move on, I will immediately stop the interviewing process. If she is anxious, I will use my counseling skills to help her relax, feel safe, and take control.

I am so grateful that you have taken the time to help me. The next section is about your ideas. About helping and teaching others. Let your creative juices flow . . . Feel free to draw. Take your time answering.

- Have you ever seen an anti-sex trafficking poster, documentary, Internet warning, hotline number, or brochure? What did you think of it? How would you improve it?
- What could have prevented you from being here? Prostitution? Recruiting others?
- What do you want the community and your loved ones to know about prostitution?
- What do you believe is the best way to educate people on sex-trafficking?
- Do you have any poster or image ideas that you would care to draw?
- How can trafficked girls get help, especially when they are scared to death to leave?
- Who is “that girl,” the girl most at risk of being trafficked?
Could you draw her? What does she look like? What does she need most?

What trait “gives her away,” (that she has been trafficked)?

Open-ended: Is there anything else that you want to tell me that you think is important about the things we have discussed?

Support and Coping

We have talked about some tough issues today, is there someone around you can talk to if you need to work some stuff out in your mind after I leave? Are there things you do on your own when you need to wind down, to help you get through tough stuff in here? If you should feel any anxiety, sadness, or disturbing feelings I encourage you to tell your counselor, chaplain or caseworker.

Feel free to journal your thoughts or draw to express yourself. I will be back one more time on _________. You are more than welcomed to share your thoughts with me at that time. If any anti-sex trafficking ideas “come to you” over the next week, capture them on paper. I look forward to chatting with you again.

Thank you so much for you time.
Questions and Prompts to “Story” the Trafficker

- Questions will be tailored to each woman
- Not all questions are applicable. Not all questions will be asked.
- Researcher will be cognizant of participant’s word choices for terms such as “trafficking,” and use of slang

Background: History and Family-of-Origin Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Questions</th>
<th>Sample of Some Participant Questions /Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What was the participant’s significant developmental milestones?</td>
<td>• Where did you grow up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Who else was involved in her story?</td>
<td>• Family constellation (You may draw out your family if you wish.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o What was the physical setting?</td>
<td>• What was it like for you in your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o What was the plot?</td>
<td>• Did you ever run away?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How did she construct her experience?</td>
<td>• How old were you when you first left home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was sexual abuse, violence, and/or poverty a part of her story?</td>
<td>• Tell me about your mom and dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was the participant exploited by her own mother?</td>
<td>• Did you ever experience any sexual force (unwanted sex, control, refuse condom use)? Affects of this? Outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How did her spouse or significant other (if applicable) shape her experience?</td>
<td>• Impact on you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Were you ever hit, threatened, cut or shot at … or anything else like that while growing up? Can you tell me</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Research Questions</th>
<th>Theoretical Questions</th>
<th>Sample of Some Participant Questions /Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What are the pathways and structures into sex trafficking? | • How did the participant negotiate her social identity?  
• How did the participant enter the world of sex trafficking? (How does she describe the events?)  
• What was her pathway to crime?  
• What role did drugs and alcohol play in her decision to traffic?  
• How did her gender affect her motivations?  
• How does motherhood and poverty factor into her motivations to traffic?  
• What boundaries did the participant draw for herself?  
• If she was trafficked herself, how does she describe her relationship with her pimp? | • Tell me the reasons you are here-the charges, the sentence, and why you think it happened (immediate circumstances, over a life span)  
What was your first arrest?  
• How did you first get involved in prostitution (if applicable)?  
• Who got you in?  
• Were drugs involved?  
• What were the first weeks like?  
• Did you have a pimp? Talk to me about that relationship.  
• What do feel are the differences between male and female pimps?  
• How did you deal with working as a prostitute and being a wife/mother?  
• What were your thoughts the first time you recruited a minor into prostitution? Tell me about that experience.  
• How do you think your involvement in trafficking might be connected to other significant events in your life (what events, how)?  
• How did you groom the girls and women? |
2. How does the participant view the women and children she has trafficked?

- In what ways did the participant see herself as a maternal figure?
- What are the dynamics of traumatic bonding between the participant and her victims?
- How did the participant exploit emotional dependence?
- What feelings did the participant have the first time she “turned out” a minor?
- Did she feel bonded to some women and children more than others? If so, why?
- How did the participant recruit? Through force (Guerilla pimping), Finesse pimping (manipulating young girls into situation where they seemingly make their own decisions to ender), Bait and Switch techniques (exploit the dreams of victims-place girls in situations in which they feel obligated to pay back kindness), etc.? (Williamson & Prior, 2009).
- What feelings do you have for the girls and women you have trafficked?
- How were you recruited (if applicable)?
- What recruitment methods were you taught?
- What do remember most about the first girl or woman you turned out?
- If you could write her a letter, what would you say?
- Who were you most protective of, why?
| 3. **How might we prevent sex trafficking?** | • How would she educate, empower and/or warn young girls of the complex world of sex trafficking?  
• What does she wish someone would have told her about sex trafficking?  
• Is she familiar with any anti-sex trafficking campaign material? If so, what are her thoughts, critiques, and suggestions?  
• What anti-sex trafficking images speak to her?  
• What does she believe is the best way to reach trafficked women?  
• Would she be willing to create/illustrate anti-sex trafficking print material herself? | • What could have prevented you from being here? Prostitution? Recruiting others?  
• What do you want the community and your loved ones to know about prostitution?  
• Have you ever seen an anti-sex trafficking poster, documentary, Internet warning, hotline number, or brochure? What did you think of it?  
• What do you believe is the best way to educate people on sex-trafficking?  
• Do you have any poster or image ideas that you would care to draw?  
• How can trafficked girls get help, especially when they are scared to death to leave?  
• Who is “that girl,” the girl most at risk of being trafficked?  
• Could you draw her? What does she look like? What does she need most?  
• What trait “gives her away,”(that she has been trafficked)? |
APPENDIX E

Copyright Permission Email

Hello Dawn,

Yes, you may have permission to use the diagrams in your dissertation.

Thanks!
Randee

Randee Doe | Awareness Resources Coordinator | Shared Hope International
P. O. Box 85337 | Vancouver, WA 98685 | P: 360.803.8100 | Fx: 360.695.8488 | www.shorthope.org


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From: Dawn Zywiec [mailto:zywiec2@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 01, 2012 7:36 PM
To: Randee
Subject: Copyright Permission

Greetings from Bloomington, Illinois,


May I please have permission to use the following diagrams in my dissertation: The Pimp Control Wheel, Pimp-control Hierarchy, and Pimping: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs?

Thank you so much for your time.

Appreciatively,

Dawn Zywiec, Doctoral Candidate, UCPC, RN
APPENDIX F
VITA

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Southern Illinois University

Dawn M. Zywiec
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Northwestern University
Bachelor of Science, Nursing, May 1986

Lincoln Christian Seminary
Master of Arts, Counseling, May 1999

Dissertation Title:
Women Trafficking Women and Children: An Exploratory Study of Women Sex Traffickers

Major Professor: Dr. Ogletree