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The Commonalities and Shared Experiences of Female Prostitutes Who Were Sexually Exploited as Children: The Perspectives of Clinical Social Workers

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The Commonalities and Shared Experiences of Female Prostitutes Who Were Sexually
Exploited as Children: The Perspectives of Clinical Social Workers

by

Heather Wilmes

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the
School of Social Work
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota
In Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) provide services to vulnerable populations. As the number of sexually exploited women in Minnesota and the United States grows, so does the number of women needing services from social workers. It is important that LCSWs understand the population of women who have engaged in prostitution that were victims of sexual exploitation as children. If LCSWs are knowledgeable about the commonalities and shared experiences of the women they serve, they may be able to identify common risk factors and provide appropriate services. This research study sought to identify the commonalities and shared experiences of female prostitutes that were sexually exploited as children. The major themes that emerged from this data were: 1) females who engage in prostitution are often victims of child sexual exploitation; 2) common risk factors exist; 3) family dysfunction leads to survival sex; 4) poor self-esteem; 5) barriers to receiving service exist; 6) technology has increased the invisibility of victims; 7) the definition of sexual exploitation is too broad and hard to understand; 8) mentors are important, and 9) group therapy can be effective in helping victims to heal. Implications for social worker practice and future research are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual exploitation of children is a worldwide problem that is estimated to be on the rise, with more young adults becoming victims of sexual exploitation through prostitution and human trafficking (Willis & Levy, 2002). The estimated number of children sexually exploited worldwide is between 100,000 to 2.4 million. According to Zurita (2012), “The United States Department of Justice uses the number 293,000 as the estimate for youth that are at risk of being currently sexually exploited within the United States and worldwide” (p. 3). However, the total number of sexually exploited children worldwide and within the United States is highly contested. Laczko and Gozdzik (2005) found that that the total number of sexually exploited children may be inaccurate because of the lack of empirical research on children that are victims and the differing policies on sexual exploitation between the United States and developing countries.

In the state of Minnesota the number of sexually exploited victims continue to rise. According to a recent study by Zurita (2012) it was found that the state of Minnesota ranks 11th in the country for total number of sexual exploitation victims. Unfortunately, the literature (Zurita, 2012; Cutting Them Free, 2012) is not able to provide an accurate number of sexual exploitation victims within Minnesota. The Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers that participated in this study indicated that they are seeing an increased number of female sexual exploitation victims at their current place of employment.

According to Cutting Them Free (2012), “Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the manipulation and or coercion of young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for things such as money, gifts, accommodation, affection or status” (p. 4). The child who falls prey to a sexual exploiter often develops a dependent

relationship with their victimizer, and in many instances, views their sexual exploitation as consensual. The child victim eventually loses their voice, falls into a cycle of sexual exploitation, and becomes entrapped in the clutches of illegal prostitution (Cutting Them Free, 2012; Carrie, 2011). A large number of the victims of sexual exploitation are female. For example, in 2011, the Bureau of Justice Statistics released a report that found that of the reported incidents of sexual exploitation victims, 95% were female and 54% were between the ages of 12 to 14. (Cutting Them Free, 2012). However, research (Banks & Kycklelahn, 2011) also suggests that some female victims are being sexually exploited as early as age six.

Technological advances, access to computers, and social media have allowed the trade of sexual exploitation to flourish (Quayle & Taylor). For example, young female victims are lured into creating erotic videos and forced into providing sexual services for a clientele that is seeking to accommodate erotic sexual fantasies (Quayle & Taylor). In order to accommodate their sexual exploiters, female child exploitation victims must learn survival skills and how to adapt to please their sexual exploiter (Snyder, 2000).

Sexual exploitation leads vulnerable female children into criminal prostitution as adults, because they have no means of escape; no one is there to provide the victimized child with the needed resources to help the child escape from the cycle of sexual exploitation (Brown, 2011). Clinical social workers come in contact with victims of sexual exploitation through numerous clinical services such as child protection, family counseling, and educational settings (Brown, 2011). Clinical social workers gain the unique perspective of the child's family, cultural background, socio-environmental stressors, physical illnesses, cognitive impairment, poverty and experienced sexual and physical trauma within the home. Through this unique perspective they are able to gain a better understanding of the risk factors that increase a female child's

vulnerability to sexual exploitation (Woodall & Murphy, 2008). Therefore, this research study is seeking to answer the following question: What are clinical social workers' perceptions on the commonalities and shared experiences of female childhood victims of sexual exploitation that engage in prostitution as adults?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prevalence of Child Sexual Exploitation in the United States

The United States does not have a system for identifying victims of sexual exploitation, prior to being incarcerated, or before the victim comes in contact with law enforcement (Institute of Medicine, 2013; Human Trafficking in Minnesota, 2012; Rand, 2009). For this reason the exact number of victims of childhood sexual exploitation is not attainable (Institute of Medicine, 2013). Puzzanchera & Adams (2011) found that 1,400 youth under the age of 18 had been arrested for prostitution in the United States. Of the 1,400 youth arrested, 78% were female and 12% of arrests involved a youth under the age of 14.

The arrest records provided by the FBI provide a glimpse of a larger problem (Institute of Medicine, 2013). Institute of Medicine (2013) discusses the Innocence Lost National Initiative program established by the FBI to track child victims of sexual exploitation and to arrest child sexual exploiters. Through the Innocence Lost National Initiative, "...2,100 children being prostituted have been recovered" (p. 50). One downside of this study is that it only includes child sexual exploitation victims that are arrested for prostitution. Moreover, the study does not determine whether or not the same child was arrested more than once. In the final analysis, it appears that the study performed by Innocence Lost Nation Initiative depicts a very conservative number of victims (Institute of Medicine, 2013).

Estes and Weiner (2012) performed another study on the total number of children at risk for sexual exploitation through data research. This 27-month study gathered data in 17 cities from important stakeholders, child sexual exploitation customers, law enforcement personnel and human service agencies from January 1, 1999 to March 31, 2001. Vulnerable homeless children and child victims of sexual exploitation under the care of law enforcement also took part in this

study. The results of this study found that “244,000 to 325,000 children are at risk of being sexually exploited throughout the United States.” (p. 46)

Prevalence of Sexual Exploitation in Minnesota

The exact number of female children that are victims of sexual exploitation in Minnesota is undetermined because sexual exploiters are able to hide their victims (Human Trafficking in Minnesota, 2012). As previously stated, female children that are sexually exploited remain unidentified until they are identified by human service agencies or law enforcement (Human Trafficking in Minnesota, 2012). The Human Trafficking in Minnesota Report (2012) conducted an online survey with representatives from human service agencies and law enforcement agencies throughout Minnesota for the purpose of understanding how often the respondents encountered victims of sexual exploitation. This survey found that 61% of human service agencies reported working with at least one victim of sexual exploitation. The survey also found that 6% of law enforcement respondents have encountered a victim of sexual exploitation through an arrest or an investigation.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) ranks the twin cities in Minnesota among the top 13 metropolitan areas in the United States with the highest rate of childhood prostitution (The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Efforts to Combat Crimes Against Children, 2009). A study conducted by The Schapiro Group (2010) found that on any night of the week, 45 girls under the age of eighteen are sold for prostitution on one of many Internet dating websites in Minnesota. The Prostitution Project: Community-Based Research on Sex Trading in North Minneapolis (2010) found that “50 percent of female adults interviewed in North Minneapolis stated they had traded sex when they were under 18” (p. 12).

An Increase in the Demand for Child Pornography

Child pornography has increased in popularity and demand. Access to child pornography has been made easier to obtain with the creation of the Internet and the use of Internet relay chat (IRC). The availability of IRC has opened the door to easier file sharing of child pornography and has made it easier to access files and share and upload child pornographic images. The Internet Watch Foundation found in 2011 that there were 12,966 web addresses that hosted pornographic material depicting children from infancy to early adolescents (Beech, Elliot, Birgden & Findlater, 2008; The Department of Justice and Equality, 2013). The rate of child pornography access was 4% in 2000, 28% in 2006, and 61% in 2009 (Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2008). These statistics suggest a rise in demand for child pornography.

The increase in demand for child pornography puts placed vulnerable children at greater risk for becoming sexually exploited (Wolak et. al, 2008). According to Roos (2014) child pornography "...encourages the equalization of children" (p. 148). The accessibility of child pornography has fueled the demand for vulnerable children to be victimized. Furthermore, easier access to child pornography encourages those with pedophilic desires to act on their sexual desires and seek further sexual gratification, which may lead to children being sexually assaulted and sexual molested by perpetrators (Roos, 2014).

Various Forms Child Sexual Exploitation

Sexual Abuse of a Child

The literature (Modelli, Galvao and Pratesi, 2012) defines sexual abuse_ "...as any sexual activity that the child cannot understand or give consent or that violates the law. Sexual activity may include fondling, oral-genital contact, rape, penetration genital or anal, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and exposure to pornography" (p. 1). Child sexual abuse does not discriminate

against children of any age, socioeconomic background or ethnicity (Modelli et al., 2012). Additionally, researcher Johnson (2004) found that children that were very young or have a physical or developmental disability are more likely to experience sexual abuse . Very young children and those with disabilities are targeted because they may be non-verbal. Researchers Johnson (2012) and Modelli and colleagues (2012) report that the prevalence of child sexual abuse is unknown, because most incidents occur within the home and are perpetrated by a person the child is familiar with.

Child Sex Tourism and Child Sex Trafficking

Newman and colleagues (2011) define child sex tourism as “the act of traveling to engage in sexual acts with minors” (p. 116). Child sex tourism has become an increasing problem, placing vulnerable children from developed countries at risk of being sexually trafficked to the United States to be purchased for the purpose of sex (David, 2000; Feingold, 2005). Hobson & Heung (1998) found that child sex tourist victims are often purchased and sold as property by family in exchange for accommodations, clothing and travels costs. The child sex tourist victim is held as a prisoner and is unable to escape because they fear the repercussions that may occur if they are exposed to law enforcement (Newman et al., 2011). Many child sex tourist victims live in fear that their family may be arrested, or the exploiter provides the family with additional compensation for the child to remain quiet (Newman et al., 2011).

Research (Panko, 2012) suggests that young children from Asia, Africa and Central and South America are being purchased and trafficked to North America. These children are often placed in a home with a pedophile that sexually objectifies them for their own pleasure (Newman et al., 1993). To satisfy the criteria for Pedophilic Disorder according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM–5; American Psychiatric Association,

2013), an individual must have had in “over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children...acted on these sexual urges, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulty” (p.697). Sex tourism allows for a person with Pedophilic Disorder to gain access to vulnerable children for purposes of fulfilling their sexual fantasies and desires (Panko, 2012).

Survival Sex

Watson (2011) defines survival sex as “transactional sex for favors or opportunistic prostitution” (p. 644). Survival sex is different than sex tourism, because the child is forced into prostitution by homelessness and materialistic needs (Watson, 2011; Rodriguez, 2006). Watson (2011) studied the variables of why homeless youth engaged in survival sex. The respondents were asked why they engaged in survival sex and the themes that emerged from their study were “emotional security, management of homelessness, material support, physical protection, emotional love, and stability” (p. 644).

Child Pornography and Child Sexual Exploitation on the Internet

Federal law in the United States defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually exploitive content of a sexual nature involving a minor (Seto, 2013). The United States defines a minor as 17 years of age and younger (Seto, 2013). Any person that has sexual visual depictions of a minor is subject to prosecution. Visual depictions include photographs, camera recordings and audio tape recordings (Seto, 2013; *Illegal and Harmful Use of the Internet*, n.d). It is difficult for the federal government to implement policies and procedures to prevent child pornography from being purchased or uploaded online, because they are unable to track and locate the sexual exploiters that make child pornography available (Seto, 2013). Additionally, Seto

(2013) and *Illegal and Harmful Use of the Internet* (n.d) found that the world wide web access has limited the federal government from implementing policies, because web-site addresses may exist outside of the United States and there is not an international agreement on the definition of child pornography.

Risk Factors that Increase a Female Child's Vulnerability to Sexual Exploitation

Missing and Runaway Children

The estimated total of youth who are homeless in the United States is widely debated due to the nature of homelessness, e.g., the desire to remain anonymous, the fear of being returned home, or fear of being placed in foster care (Henry, Cortes & Morris, 2013). Henry and colleagues (2013) reported in the 2013 Annual Assessment report to Congress that 23% of all homeless people were under the age of 18.

The literature (Hyatt, Spuur & Sciupac, 2012; Zurita, 2012) suggests that children who become homeless fall prey to sexual exploitation. Estes & Weiner (2013) found that 1.6 million youth experience one episode of homelessness each year. Furthermore, they found of the 1.6 million homeless youth, it is estimated that approximately 60% become victims of sexual exploitation. Green, Ennett & Ringwalt (1999) found that once the homeless youth becomes victim to the streets, they engage in survival sex. Additionally, Green and colleagues (2013) found through a comparative study of street youth that identified as homeless without shelter. Through this study the research (Green et al., 2013) found that survival sex was three times more prevalent amongst street youth that identified as homeless than their peers that were homeless living in shelters. For example, of the youth interviewed in this study, 28% reported engaging in survival sex to meet their individual basic needs, whereas 10% of youth identified as homeless with shelter engaging in survival sex to meet basic needs (Green et al., 2013). This study

suggests that youth who are homeless without immediate shelter are at a higher risk for becoming engaged in survival sex and being sexually exploited.

Gender

The literature (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Fong & Cardoso, 2010) found that female children living in the United States are at higher risk for sexual exploitation, child pornography and sex trafficking than male children. There has been much effort in literature to understand why female children are more likely to be exploited (Bang et al., 2013). One possible reason is that female children are more identifiable as victims, because female children and female adults are more likely to be arrested for engaging in sexual acts like prostitution. McKim and Bottari from the New England Center for Investigative Reporting (2014) researched the number of women in Massachusetts arrested for prostitution, and found that 70% of 920 arrests made for prostitution in 2013 were female. Efforts have been made to identify potential sexual exploitation victims, and law enforcement agencies are more likely to target and identify women and female children that are involved in sexual exploitation (McKim & Bottari, 2014).

Nevertheless, research (Chin, 2014) shows that there is an increase in the number of male children entering the world of sexual exploitation. Furthermore, some researchers (Bang, et al., 2013) suggest that male children are being subjected to sex trafficking younger than female children. Palmer & Stacey (2002) found that boys are being recruited as young as six to be sex trafficked.

Investigative journalist Yu Sun Chin (2014) in the article “Trafficked Boys Overlooked” points to additional research on victims that are recovered from sex trafficking crime rings and arrested for prostitution. In addition, the article suggests that males are often viewed as the perpetrators of violence and are otherwise not seen as victims. He also opined that people

presume male children being sexually trafficked are involved in homosexual acts and are victims of their own circumstance.

Children Living in Poverty

Children living below the poverty line are especially vulnerable to becoming victims of child sexual exploitation (Bang et al., 2013). The literature (Bang et al., 2013; Chase & Statham, 2004; Pearce, 2003) found that a child's economic status is a potential predictor of child sexual exploitation. Additionally Bang and colleagues (2013) found that children living in poverty were more willing than others to voluntarily join the commercial sex industry in order to gain economic independence from an unstable home life, or to afford the necessities otherwise not provided by their caregivers. Sex traffickers lure children into sexual exploitation by promising them their needs will be provided and fulfilling their childhood dreams (Bang et al., 2013).

Similar to children who are homeless, children that live in poverty are often sexually exploited for survival sex (Bang, et al., 2013). The literature (Bang et al., 2013, Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004) found that children living in poverty will engage in survival sex in order to provide themselves, and their family, with food and shelter. Additionally, researchers (Taylor-Brown, Broadfood, Broadhead, Downie & McKetty-Campbell, 2002) found that many sexually exploited children have chosen to engage in survival sex in order to obtain material possessions that would not be obtainable under their own economic status. Essentially, the child may willingly engage in sexually exploitative acts searching to fulfill some aspect of materialistic desires (Bang, et al., 2013).

Children with Substance Abuse Disorder

The literature (Cutting Them Free, 2012) found that sexually exploited children are at increased risk for substance abuse disorder. Additionally, Cutting Them Free, 2012) also found

that children who entered residential facilities were more likely to be recruited for childhood sexual exploitation. Children with substance abuse disorder will agree to engage in sex acts if they are provided with the chemical they are currently addicted to (Cutting Them Free, 2012; Carrie, 2013).

Researchers Roxburgh, Degenhardt, Larance & Copeland (2013) performed a qualitative study on women currently engaged in prostitution in Sydney, Australia. Roxburgh and colleagues (2005) found through their research the percentage of sex workers currently with a substance abuse disorder. The participants in the study were asked what drugs they were currently using the researchers found of the sample that received the questionnaire, 81 percent of respondents reported current drug use. Additionally, they found that 56 percent of female street-based sex worker respondents admitted to starting drugs before being sexually exploited. The literature (Roxburgh et al., 2005) found that more than half of the sample of participants admitted to leaving their home before the age of 16 and becoming involved in child sex exploitation. Of the respondents, 53 percent responded that they engaged in sex work to continue their substance use. The research (Roxburgh et al., 2005) found that heroin was the most common drug, with 57 percent of the respondents admitting to being dependent on it. Substance abuse disorder is a risk factor for sexual exploitation. Many childhood victims of sexual exploitation become dependent on a substance and are unable to escape their exploiters and turn to survival sex for continuation of their substance abuse (Roxburgh et al., 2005). The substance abuse disorder works in favor for the sexual exploiter, as the victim has no means to escape (Bang, et al., 2013).

Children in Foster Care

In California, state advocates have found that children in foster care are at high risk of becoming sexually exploited. According to the Foster Care & Human Trafficking (n.d) in Alameda County, California, 41 percent of 267 children living in foster care under the age of 18 reported being sexually exploited. They also found that 58 percent of 72 girls in Los Angeles County courts were victims of sexual exploitation. In addition, the literature (Foster Care & Human Trafficking, n.d) found that foster children are targeted for their vulnerabilities. This may be because Foster children are searching for love and protection and the exploiter often takes advantage of the child's need for family. Victims are groomed to call their exploiter "daddies" and to refer to themselves as "wifies." The exploiter grooms the child victim to be dependent on their life and affection, even when the affection is cold, calculated and violent. (Foster Care & Human Trafficking, n.d)

Youth in foster care are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to their lack of familial support (Bang, et al., 2013). Researchers Bang and colleagues (2013) found that child sex exploiters take over the role of the absent father or mother and also become the child's loving partner. The child victim is lured to the sexual exploiter with the promise of love and stability and often victimized by their exploiter through forced prostitution, sexual abuse and physical violence (Bang, et al., 2013). A foster child that has never experienced a traditional, stable family environment may fail to recognize their exploiter's abusive behavior. Children in foster care experience high levels of homelessness and practice survival sex for shelter, food and clothing (Bang, et al., 2013).

Children Who Identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning

Children who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) are at high risk of sexual exploitation and chronic homelessness (Gates & Newport, 2013; Hyatt, n.d). The LGBTQ population is lacking in available resources and the number of the homeless population continues to grow (Durso & Gates, 2012; Hyatt, n.d). Irvine (2010) found that there are an increased number of youth in detention centers throughout the United States. Furthermore, Irvine (2010) found that 15 percent of youth in detention centers identified as LGBTQ. Irvine (2010) also found that lesbian, bisexual and transgender female youth were twice as likely to be held for prostitution than their heterosexual peers. It also found that only one percent of heterosexual boys are detained for prostitution, compared to 10 percent of their gay, bisexual and transgender peers (Irvine, 2010).

Durso and Gates (2012) performed a web-based study, where participants filled out an online survey about the youth client population they currently serve. The respondents that participated in this study were from organizations that provide services for LGBTQ youth. Durso and Gates (2010) found that 40 percent of homeless youth that received services from the participating agencies identified as LGBTQ (p. 5). This is an alarmingly high rate, considering a 2013 Gallup Poll found that rates of LGBTQ adults ranges from 1.7 to 10 percent nationwide (Gates & Newport, 2013). It appears LGBTQ peers are facing homelessness at higher rates than their peers.

LGBTQ youth that are shunned from their family because of their sexual identity are at high risk for becoming homeless and sexually exploited (Gates & Newport, 2013; Durso & Gates (2010). Because of homelessness, LGBTQ youth have few options for resources and will often find a new home on the streets and become vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Durso &

Gates, 2012). Of the respondents Durso and Gates (2012) interviewed it was found that “...four out of ten LGBTQ homeless youth have been subjected to child sexual exploitation” (p. 10). Furthermore, researchers Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler & Johnson (2004) found that LGBTQ youth are more likely to engage in life-sustaining activities that have substantial risks to their physical or psychological health. Additionally, researchers Rabinovitz, Desai, Schneier & Clerk (2010) found that LGBTQ are more than three times more likely than their peers to be involved in survival sex as their non-LGBTQ peers. Bang and colleagues (2013) found that LGBTQ youth may become involved with survival sex in order to provide themselves with food, shelter, clothing, drugs and alcohol. Survival sex, homelessness and drugs increase the risk factors for youth to be sexually exploited (Bang et al., 2013; Hyatt n.d).

Sexually Exploited Female Children Who Engage in Prostitution as Adults

According to Snyder (2012), from the years 1990 through 2010 there have been 62,670 arrests for prostitution in the United States. Of the 62,670 arrests, 42,190 were female. In our modern society, prostitution has been depicted as glamorous and has been romanticized by several Hollywood movies: *Pretty Woman*, *Milk Money*, *Leaving Las Vegas* and *Risky Business* (Farley & Kelly, 2000; Banks & Kycklelahn, 2011). In reality, prostitution is not a glamorous profession and many of its victims are not consensual adults (Weisber, 1984). Hollywood depicts prostitution as an economic opportunity for women that are single mothers in need of additional money to support their lifestyles. They are depicted as having turned to prostitution as a way to support their needs or satisfy their sexual promiscuity (Farley & Kelly, 2000). Gilfus (2012) found that the average age for a female working as a prostitute is 14 and is unable to legally consent to sex (Gilfus, 2002).

Women in prostitution are often not able to earn an income and must report to their exploiter with the wages they have earned (Farley & Kelly, 2000). For many women it is impossible to leave a life of prostitution and there is no escape from their exploiter (Farley & Kelly, 2000; Banks & Kycklelahn, 2011). Farley & Kelly (2000) found that some women engaged in prostitution feel they have an emotional connection to their sexual exploiter and because of this connection they feel they cannot leave their exploiters and the life their exploiters have promised them. Additionally, the researchers found that sexually exploited children find a role model or family figure within their exploiter, which makes it harder for the victimized child to escape. Furthermore, female sexually exploited children fear rejection, which may also explain why they are unable to leave prostitution when they become adults (Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, Cooper & Yuille, 2007; Farley & Kelly, 2000; Gilfus, 2002).

Farley & Kelly (2000) found that sexual exploiters provide their victims with a sense of family, belonging and the promise of a better life. Children that are unable to escape sexual exploitation by the age of 18 become adult victims of prostitution. Researchers Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, Cooper & Yuille (2007) summarized how a sexual exploiter lures a female child into prostitution through song lyrics by the artist Coleman that depict how a pimp identifies and exploits their victims:

Don't take much to turn a no into a maybe. Not with all the charm and cunning I possess. Don't take much to turn a no into a maybe. And, it don't take long until a maybe turns to yes. Wave your magic wand. Weave your magic spell. Promise her a piece of heaven and she'll follow you to hell. Don't take much. (p. 1)

Consequences of Engaging In Prostitution as Adults

As previously stated, female childhood sexual exploitation victims are often not able to escape the life of sexual exploitation and are forced to remain with their sexual exploiter (Melrose & Pearce, 2013). Consequently, female child sexual exploitation victims engage in prostitution as adults (Melrose & Pearce, 2013). An arrest for prostitution can further limit the ability of a victim to flee their exploiter (Broughton, 2013). This is due to the negative social and legal consequences of a prostitution arrest (Broughton, 2013). When law enforcement encounters a victim over the age of 18 they are arrested and treated as a criminal. The California Child Welfare Council (2012) reports that “Children who experienced sexual exploitation are 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution at some point in their lives than children who did not” (p. 2).

According to the United States Department of Justice (2010), “Child victims of prostitution—the victims of commercial sexual exploitation—are more likely to be arrested than are the child sex traffickers” (p. 34). Additionally, the United States Department of Justice (2010) found in a 2005 report to Congress that “...in Boston, 11 female prostitutes (adults and child) were arrested for each male client arrest; in Chicago, the ratio was 9 to 1; and, in New York City, the ratio was 6 to 1” (p. 34). This study suggests that female child and adult exploitation victims are more likely to be arrested than the customers of sexual exploitation (US Department of Justice, 2010).

Summary

The research that is cited in this literature review indicates that female children are being sexually exploited at alarming rates within the United States and within Minnesota. The research shows that female children are being sexually exploited through sex tourism and sex trafficking.

Through sex tourism and sex trafficking, female children are being forced into prostitution and are sold into sexual slavery. Not only are female children victimized by forced prostitution, they are exploited through child pornography. Female children that are vulnerable, chemically dependent, living in foster care, or homeless are being sexually exploited through survival sex, because of their vulnerabilities and need for emotional attachments.

The literature also indicates that there are several risk factors that increase a female child's vulnerability to becoming sexually exploited. Female children that are missing or are runaways, living in poverty, living in foster care, chemically dependent or identify part of the GLBTQ community are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation than their peers. The literature also found that because of these risk factors and vulnerabilities female children that are sexually exploited might engage in prostitution as an adult, because they have no other means for survival. In addition, the literature found that sexual exploiters prey on female children's vulnerabilities and develop an emotional and physical attachment, which increases the child's risk of engaging in prostitution as an adult.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The ecological model was chosen for this clinical research paper because it reflects the person in the environment perspective. The ecological model focuses on the individual at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and it seeks to understand how these systems interact with one another, and whether the interaction is positive or negative (Forte, 2007; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010). Charles Zastrow, a leading educator in social work, believes that the ecological model integrates both the treatment of the individual, and the reform that takes place within the community. Through the ecological model, we are able to conceptualize the dysfunctional relationships and exchanges that occur between people in their social and physical environments. This model helps us explore the internal and external factors that may be impacting an individual's life. It allows us to view the individual not as passive, but as an integrative recipient of the micro, mezzo and macro systems (Forte, 2007; Zastrow, 2010 & Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010; Zastrow, 2010).

The micro level consists of individuals and their family, their intimate surrounds and current environment, and the relationships the individual develops. The micro level focuses on the interactions that the individual has with institutions such as, schools, clinics, neighborhoods, place of employment, friendships and family (Zastrow, 2010).

The mezzo system moves beyond the two-party relationships and explores the connection between the individuals and the people and/or systems they interact with, e.g., teachers, counselors, doctors, and social workers (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010). This study will focus on the clinical social workers' perspective of individual experiences of sexually exploited female children, who later engage in prostitution and their interaction with the mezzo system. Through their work, clinical social workers are in a position to provide knowledge surrounding the

commonalities and shared experiences of female adult prostitutes, who were sexually exploited as children (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010).

The macro system determines governmental roles, political ideologies and policies that impact the individual (Zastrow, 2010). The macro system has the ability to evolve and adapt to societal changes and environmental influences (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010). The policies and programs that are implemented by clinical social workers are constructed from our society's values and policies (Forte, 2007). As society has evolved, so has the profession of clinical social work and the awareness of sexually exploited female children. Our societal norms have determined our understanding of prostitution and those who are victimized. As our understanding of sexual exploitation and prostitution grows, so does our awareness and perspective (Zastrow, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Patton and Cochran (2002) state that “qualitative research is characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words rather than numbers, as data for analysis” (p. 2). Patton and Cochran (2002) found that the qualitative method helps the researcher understand the experiences and the issues within a specific population. This study will utilize the qualitative method to explore the commonalities and shared experiences of female adult prostitutes who were sexually exploited as children as viewed through the lens of clinical social workers. Through the use of qualitative interviews, this study will help us understand common experiences amongst females that were sexually exploited as children and gain a better understanding of the extent of the issue and the children that are at risk for victimization. Additionally, this study will help us understand commonalities among those who engage in prostitution that were victimized as children.

Sample

The sample for this study will include eight to ten licensed clinical social workers who have at least five years of experience working with women that have been engaged in prostitution that were sexually exploited as a child. The researcher will target the desired population of clinical social workers by sending out an informative flyer through email to clinical social workers that our known to the researcher and fit the criteria for the study. The email will inform clinical social workers of this research study and ask for their participation. Additionally, the researcher will request through the use of snowball sampling that the email flyer be sent to other known qualifying clinical social workers that may be interested in taking part in the study (Royse, 2011)

Data Collection

According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2009) “qualitative methods, such as interviews, are believed to provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena...” (p. 292). In addition, Gill and colleagues (2009) found that performing individual interviews would increase the ability for the respondent to discuss the sensitive topics. In this research the data will be collected from clinical social workers. Interviewing clinical social workers will help us gain a better understanding of the variables that may put female sexually exploited children at risk for engaging in prostitution as an adult (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

The clinical social workers selected will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview, using a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix B), and they will have the opportunity to discuss their perspectives on the commonalities and shared experiences of women engaged in prostitution that were victims of childhood sexual exploitation. The interview will be tape-recorded through the researcher’s personal laptop, which will remain password-protected. The transcripts and notes will remain in a locked file box and the key will remain with the researcher at all times.

Data Analysis

The audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher and a research assistant to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data analysis. Prior to transcribing the research, the research assistant will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement form (Appendix C), Additionally, the researcher will utilize open coding when transcribing data. According to Khandkar (n.d), “Open coding includes labeling concepts, defining and developing categories based on their properties and dimensions” (p. 1). The researcher and research assistant will transcribe tape-recordings to find similar concepts and develop common themes and

subcategories from the semi-structured interviews (Khandkar, n.d. Upon completion of this study, the tape-recordings and the transcripts from the tape-recordings will be destroyed as required by the policy of the University of St. Thomas School of Social Work.

Protection of Human Participants

Prior to conducting this study, approval will be sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The participants will receive a consent form, and the researcher will review it with each participant. The participants and the researcher will sign the consent form (Appendix D). The participants will be given a copy of the consent form for their records.

FINDINGS

Sample

The sample for this study included eight Clinical Social Workers with a master degree in social work. Thirty-five participants were invited to participate in this study; however, only eight were selected to participate. All eight respondents indicated that they had provided services for the population under review in this study for five years or more.

The respondents for this study were selected for their experience working with sexually exploited women for more than five years. Respondent 2 and Respondent 4 work for a county agency where they provide case management services to sexually exploited women and supervision to other social workers. Respondent 1, Respondent 5, Respondent 6, Respondent 7, and Respondent 8 work within agencies that provide clinical services for women who have been sexually exploited. Respondent 3 works within an educational setting and has previous experience working with sexually exploited women within a county agency .

Themes

The purpose of this research study was to explore the question: “What are the commonalities and shared experiences of female prostitutes who were sexually exploited as children from the perspectives of clinical social workers?” The questions were created to discover themes that were related to the purpose of the study, and to understand the interaction between the micro, mezzo and macro level systems. Following the interviews the data was transcribed and coded. Themes emerged from all eight participants. Themes that emerged can be found below in italics. Each theme has a description provided.

Females who engage in prostitution are often victims of child sexual exploitation.

The connection between female prostitutes who engage in prostitution and children that are sexually exploited was explored by asking the respondents the following question: *“Do you believe there is a connection between females engaged in prostitution and children that have been sexually exploited? If so, what do you believe those connections are?”* Eight of the participants responded that they believed there was a connection. Six of the respondents indicated that early childhood sexual exploitation placed females at higher risk for engaging in prostitution. One of the respondents indicated that they did not feel there was a difference between the populations. Three of the respondents provided statistics on clients they previously and currently serve. Respondent 5 provided the following information on the clients she serves who engage in prostitution: *“Yes, I would say almost every single one I’ve worked with, probably. I would say at least 90 percent of my clients or more within the last year have been sexually exploited as a child.”* (Respondent 5, p. 4, lines 133-135).

Respondent 3 provided similar data on her clientele:

“In 2014, 84 different female adult sexual exploitation victims received services from our agency. 47 of the women were survivors of child sexual abuse. 21 of the clients seen for sex trafficking, all but 2 reported being survivors of child sexual abuse. The one girl who said she wasn’t abused didn’t remember her childhood. She doesn’t remember a thing before 15. The other girl was adopted as an infant and sexual abuse was suspected.”
(Respondent, p. 8, lines 128-136).

One respondent provided a different opinion when asked about her view on the connection between females engaged in prostitution and children that have been sexually

exploited. Respondent 1 discussed her perspective after working with victims of sexual exploitation for over 20 years:

To me they're [the relationship between female children that are sexual exploited and women who engage in prostitution] interchangeable. The definition. How do you perceive them as different? You know the most common age of entering prostitution is 14. What you never find, at least I never have after years of doing this work is a 25-year-old woman that goes, 'You know what, I think it's time for me to earn some more money and start dancing.' It never happens." (Respondent 1, p.4, lines 133-135).

Common risk factors exist

The respondents all identified that there were common risk factors that placed a child at greater risk for being sexually exploited. Respondent 7 identified the following for victims that she worked with:

"Yes, there are a lot of common risk factors between women who have been sexually exploited. You know, I have been thinking about it a lot more often. I think the biggest risk factor is family. It all depends on the family. Everything does. If the family has difficulty functioning, so does the kid. I see it all the time (Respondent 7 p. 3, lines 54-57).

Respondent 8 discussed her perspective on risk factors:

"Family...Family is a risk factor, but so is poverty. There are several risk factors. If mom has prostituted I think it's more likely the daughter does. If it's normal in that family. I struggle with risk factors all the time, because what do I do with them. I see risk factors all the time. We need to give better care to women who fall under these risk factors (Respondent 8 p. 3, lines 62-64).

Family dysfunction leads to survival sex

Seven of the respondents identified family dysfunction as a common risk factor for child sexual exploitation. The theme emerged when the question “*What are the risk factors of female child sexual exploitation?*” was asked. Four of the respondents identified that family dysfunction places children who are sexually exploited at greater risk of engaging in prostitution as an adult. Three respondents reported that family dysfunction leads to children becoming dependent on survival sex. Respondent 7 addressed risk factors:

“A youth that is constantly on the run. Often time this is a theme and often it’s for survival sex. Usually there is something going on in the home and that is why they are running.” (Respondent 7, p. 3, lines 67-70).

Respondent 7 discussed their experience working with a client that had grown up in a dysfunctional family. Respondent 7 believes that the dysfunction her client was raised in impacted the future and life decisions her client made. Respondent 7 stated this about her perspective on a client she worked with:

“I worked with a client for two years. At just a very young age her dad would prep her to throw a fit and lie so he could steal merchandise. So she was trained in her mind: ‘This is what I got to do to get what I want.’ So by the time she was 14 she was on a roll thinking, ‘To get what I want this is what I need to do.’ Whether that was throwing a fit or engaging in the exchange of sex for the things she needed.” (Respondent 7, p. 3, lines 117-119).

Respondent 2 discussed family court records of her clients and she found the following:

“I’ve noticed we have access to the court systems. In the criminal records I have noticed that their [sexually exploited adolescents] parents have been arrested for prostitution. I

think a lot of times it's a family secret. It's just how you make extra money."

(Respondent 2, p. 3, lines 117-119).

Respondent 3 provided an example of a client that she is currently working with that grew up with family dysfunction and turned to survival sex to support herself:

"One woman who tells her story so far that it started at the age of 12. After being sexually abused from 9 months to the age of 12, she ran off to voluntarily join a prostitution ring and was sexually trafficked across the North West. It was a form of survival for her. 'Do this at home or get some goodies for it.'" (Respondent 3, p. 10, lines 199-203).

Poor self-esteem

The theme of poor self-esteem emerged throughout the respondent interviews. Four of the respondents indicated that poor self-esteem was a commonality and shared experience between sexually exploited children. Four of the respondents who indicated poor self-esteem was a commonality also indicated that poor self-esteem was a common risk factor for becoming sexually exploited. Two of eight respondents discussed the impact of poor self-esteem on boundary issues that arise as an adult and how that may contribute to women engaging in prostitution. Respondent 5 discussed her perspective on the impact of poor self-esteem on the clients that she had provided services to: *"It's the feeling that people cannot love me for me. I have to do something to earn that love. I think a person starts to believe that they are nothing. They don't see themselves deserving of a different life."* (Respondent 5, pg. 5, lines 87-88; p. 6 109-112).

Two of the respondents discussed how poor self-esteem might contribute to a sense of not belonging. Respondent 5 discussed her perspective:

“They struggle with a sense of belonging. And since they don’t feel like they have a sense of purpose or sense of direction they continue to remain in prostitution. They don’t have any other identity and believe this is how everyone sees them anyway.”

(Respondent 5, pg. 2, lines 68-70).

Respondent 6 discussed how shame contributes to poor self-esteem:

“...I think that they carry some level of shame and they carry that into adulthood. I don’t know if they are able to articulate it as shame. I think they carry shame, it harms their self-esteem. Poor self-esteem impacts their mental health.” (Respondent 6, pg. 1, 37-39).

Barriers to receiving services exist

All respondents identified common barriers for victims of sexual exploitation. Four of the respondents discussed how barriers impact the development of a therapeutic relationship. Three respondents identified barriers to receiving services that need to be addressed in order to provide all victims of sexual exploitation with equal access to services. Two respondents indicated that barriers to care disrupt the therapy sessions because the client is only able to focus on housing resources. Additional barriers were identified by the respondents: access to health care services, mental health services, dental care services, family planning services, legal services, transportation and access to food.

Technology has increased invisibility of victims

Four of the respondents discussed how technological advances have increased the invisibility of victims of sexual exploitation. Three of the respondents discussed how technology has created a barrier to finding victims. One of the respondents discussed how her agency

suffered due to lack of technological advances. Respondent 5 discussed her experience on how technology has made it harder to provide services for victims without appropriate training:

“...Many of the women I worked with didn’t call me within specific times or [his/her clients did not contact him/her through traditional methods] at my office on my phone. They would call me at late hours of the night or text me and because they were on the move so much I had to be able to respond immediately. I wasn’t always available when they need me to be. I didn’t know how to Facebook, but I had to learn how to use Facebook in order to find them.” (Respondent 5, p. 2, Lines 34-38).

Respondent 5 discussed the importance of agencies being trained on new technology:

“We had to use forensic investigators that track the Facebook and that’s how I tracked a lot of my kids who would otherwise be invisible. They would post what they trying to do on Facebook or Craigslist or Back Door Page. If I hadn’t figured how to do it they would have been lost to me.” (Respondent 5, p. 3, lines 51-53).

Two respondents identified that technology has made it harder for outreach workers to identify possible victims. Respondent 1 discussed her perspective on how technology has increased the invisibility of victims:

“Sexual exploitation has changed. Prostitution has changed. When I started this work in the 80s I worked with kids involved in prostitution. I worked with street outreach programs. You could find kids on the street because they were standing on the street. That’s not where they are anymore. I believe it’s the Internet. It’s made it harder and harder to find victims. It’s made it easier for predators to hunt girls.” (Respondent 1, pg. 1, lines 26-30).

The definition of sexual exploitation is too broad and hard to understand

This theme emerged when the respondents were asked: *“How do you define sexual exploitation?”* Six of the respondents stated that they believed the definition of sexual exploitation was too broad and hard to understand. Two of the respondents indicated they were having difficulty answering the question. One respondent discussed how the definition needed to be expanded to include all sex workers. Two respondents identified that the definition is a barrier to receiving services, because each agency defines it differently. One respondent stated that they believed the definition is always changing and hard to follow. Respondent 2 identified their experience with the definition of sexual exploitation within their agency: *“...That is one of the problems we have. We all define sexual exploitation slightly different per agency.”* (Respondent 1, p. 1, lines 8-10).

Respondent 3 discussed her experiences with her clientele and how the definition of sexual exploitation has impacted the services provided. Respondent 3 has experienced victims unable to receive services because they did not fit under specific sexual exploitation criteria: *“Since January 1st, I’ve seen 35 individuals and I think we are up to 12 now that have identified as sexual exploitation victims and cannot receive services because they were harmed by their own families. It’s terrible.”* (Respondent 3, p. 11, lines 209-211).

Respondent 3 identified a client who was unable to receive services for victims of sexual exploitation because she had not been a victim of human trafficking and was unwilling to move into a homeless shelter, because she did not want to move away from her boyfriend:

“She had to go back to stripping and I never saw her again. She could not go to the Catholic house here because it was for women only and the pimps of course made sure

she had a record, so any place she applied would do a background check and would not hire her. She was stuck with no options.” (Participant 3, p. 13, lines 250-253).

Mentors are important

Five respondents identified that providing mentor services for clients has been successful and would be beneficial to victims of sexual exploitation. The themes were discovered by asking the questions, “What services do you believe female children that were sexually exploited would benefit from?” and “What services do you believe women engaged in prostitution would benefit from?” Respondent 8 discussed her experience working within an agency that offers mentor support for their clients:

“I really think the clients that are the most successful are the ones that work with other women who have been victims. They need someone they can relate to. They need someone who has got their back. To be able to see everything can be okay. To learn boundaries. Clients do better working in groups with mentors.” (Participant 8, pg. 5, line 88-91).

Participant 5 and Participant 6 discussed beneficial aftercare services for clients transitioning back to the community:

“Lots of community support in terms of positive social environments. A survivor mentor is beneficial.” (Respondent 5, p. 4, lines 146-148). “The best mentors are the ones that have been in it [world of sexual exploitation] themselves. Survivor advocates. A lot of women benefit from hooking up with these women.” (Participant 2, p. 7, lines 132-134).

Group therapy can be effective in helping victims to heal

Five of the respondents to this study identified that trauma therapy in a group setting is essential to working with women engaged in prostitution who were victims of sexual exploitation. This theme was discovered when asking the question, “*What services do you provide for women engaged in prostitution?*” Respondent 8 discussed her experience working in group therapy: “*Group therapy is essential for the healing process for these girls. They can relate to one another. She doesn’t have to be concerned whether or not someone understands her when she is amongst other survivors.*” (Respondent 8, p. 3, line 50-53).

Respondent 7 identified her preferred methods of therapy with the clients she works with:

“I have had sexual exploited youth that have said they are therapied out. One thing I have heard from numerous girls is that they love being in a circle group with a bunch of other girls that have had similar experiences that they had. The circle heart group in Hennepin County through the YMCA [is a] sexual abuse forum and [was beneficial for] some of the trauma these girls have gone through. Just opening up and talking about their experiences with one another is really helpful, rather than regular therapy.”
(Respondent 7, p. 4, lines 146-149).

DISCUSSION

Sample

This study had a strong response rate. Eight of the 35 Licensed Clinical Social Workers that were invited to participate in the study responded. Two of them had more than 20 years of experience working with women engaged in prostitution that were a child victim of sexual exploitation. All eight had more than five years of experience working with the study's targeted population. Additional characteristics of the respondents that participated in this study may influence the responses received. All eight practiced under the social worker licensing board and followed the social work code of ethics. This may have impacted the perspective of similarities and shared experiences. Eight of the respondents stated that they had received additional training on sexual exploitation. In addition, three of the eight respondents stated that they taught education classes on sexual exploitation. One of the eight respondents participated in legislative action. One of the eight respondents identified themselves as a victim of sexual exploitation.

Themes

The following is a discussion of the similarities and the differences between the findings from the studies cited in the Literature Review and from this study.

Prevalence of child sexual exploitation in the United States. The findings from this research are consistent with the findings from other studies. Similar to the findings of Estes and Weiner (2012), Institute of Medicine (2013) and Puzanchera & Adams (2012) this study found that the number of children within the United States that are sexually exploited increased.

Prevalence of sexual exploitation in Minnesota. The study's findings are consistent with previous literature. Human Trafficking Minnesota (2012), The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Efforts to Combat Crimes Against Children (2009) and The Schapiro Group

(2010) found that there is a prevalence of sexual exploitation in Minnesota. This study indicated that there is an increase in the amount of women and children receiving services that are victims of sexual exploitation.

An increase in the demand for child pornography. While this study did not specifically discuss child pornography, the findings were consistent with previous literature by Beech et al. (2008) and The Department of Justice and Equality (2013). This study and the literature found that children were being sexually targeted by predators for the purposes of child pornography. Additionally, the prior literature and this study found that access to private Internet servers increased the risk for children to become sexually exploited.

An increase in access to the internet. This study found that Internet access has increased the invisibility of sexual exploitation victims. Additionally, this study found that victims of sexual exploitation were being exploited on websites they were not able to access, which increased difficulty to identify and provide services. These findings are consistent with literature by Beech et al. (2008) and The Department of Justice and Equality (2013). The literature and the research findings suggest that access to the internet may increase the invisibility of sexual exploitation victims.

Child Sex Tourism and Child Sex Trafficking. This study's findings are consistent with previous literature by Newman et al. (2011), Hobson & Heung (1998), David (2000) and Feingold (2005). This study and the previous literature identified sex trafficking as an increasing problem that put vulnerable children at risk of being sexually trafficked to the United States. Furthermore, this study's findings were consistent with the previous literature by Newman et al. (2011) who found that women and children are often unable to leave sex trafficking because they

fear the repercussions for themselves and for their family. The respondents discussed how sex trafficking is often a form of survival amongst vulnerable families.

Survival Sex. The largest theme that emerged from this study was that family dysfunction was a risk factor for survival sex. This is consistent with prior literature by Watson (2011) and Rodriguez (2006) that found victims of sexual exploitation engage in survival sex for the return of favors and substances. Additionally, this study and Rodriguez (2006) found that children that are from dysfunctional homes are more likely to engage in survival sex for emotional security, to end chronic homelessness, for independence, to escape sexual or physical abuse at home and for a sense of stability.

Child Pornography and Child Sexual Exploitation on the Internet. This study did not have findings on child pornography. The respondents discussed child sexual exploitation on the Internet. The study's findings were consistent with previous literature by Seto (2013) and Illegal and Harmful use of the Internet (n.d), which found that the Internet has increased the risk of children being sold and purchased for sex trafficking. Additionally, this study revealed that the Internet was a barrier for social workers to provide services to victims.

Missing and runaway children. This study revealed that family dysfunction was a major risk factor for children running away from home. This study identified homelessness as one of the reasons children engage in survival sex. These findings are consistent with prior literature by Henry et al. (2013), Hyatt et al. (2012), Zurita (2012) and Estes & Weiner (2013) that found that children experiencing homelessness were more likely to be victims of sexual exploitation. The literature by Green et al. (2013) was consistent with the findings of this study that children who were not receiving services were more often engaged in survival sex.

Gender. The topic of gender was implied through the questions asked in this study. The respondents provided data on gender statistics at their agency. Their findings were consistent with the literature by Estes & Weiner (2001), Fang & Cardoso, 2010 and Bang et al. (2013) that found that gender is a risk factor for becoming victimized by sexual exploitation.

Children living in poverty. This study found that poverty often leads to family dysfunction and survival sex. This was consistent with previous literature by Bang et al. (2013), Chase & Statham (2004) and Pearce (2003). This study also found that children living in poverty might be a predictor of sexual exploitation. This is also consistent with the previous literature. This study found that children in poverty engage in survival sex to provide for their basic needs and their family's basic needs.

Substance abuse in children. This study found that children that were chemically dependent were more likely to become victims of sexual exploitation because they engaged in survival sex. This is consistent with previous literature by Cutting them Free (2013), Roxburgh et al. (2013) and Bang et al. (2013) that found children who have a substance abuse disorder are more likely to engage in sexual exploitation to maintain their use. This study and the previous literature found that sexual exploiters trap their victims in a cycle of sexual exploitation by providing them with substances.

Sexually exploited female children who engage in prostitution as adults. A major theme was discovered in this study that women who engaged in prostitution were victims of sexual exploitation as children. This is consistent with previous literature done by Farley & Kelly (2000), Banks & Kycklelhelrn (2011), Weisber (1984) and Gilfus (2002) that studied women receiving services through county agencies and law enforcement.

Consequences of engaging in prostitution of adults. This study did not discover a theme of incarceration amongst women engaged in prostitution. This may have been the result of not asking a question related to the consequences or that the respondents were not involved in law enforcement.

Researcher Reactions

This researcher observed that several of the respondents had a difficult time providing a definition for sexual exploitation. The researcher discovered that many of the Licensed Independent Clinical Workers that were asked to participate in this study were unaware of what sexual exploitation was. Additionally, they were unsure if they had worked with clients that had been sexually exploited. During the recruitment process this researcher also discovered that many of the persons invited for this study defined sexual exploitation as sexual trafficking. This researcher was directed by LICSWs to recruit other participants from other fields, because they perceived they had more experience with this population. This researcher was approached by more participants to take part in this study that did not fit the criteria than participants who did. The researcher turned away willing participants that held degrees in Human Services, Drug and Alcohol Counseling, various counseling degrees and Criminal Justice Fields.

This researcher did not expect as many commonalities and shared experiences. This researcher was surprised by boundaries that prevented women that were sexually exploited from receiving service. Additionally, the researcher did expect to find mentoring as a theme.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

The findings from this study were difficult to generalize because each respondent had different experiences working with this population. The experiences reported from a LICSW who provided case management were very different from a LICSW that provided clinical

services. A recommendation for future research is that the respondents provide a specific service to this population.

Additionally, the study's findings may have been difficult to generalize because of the different locations each respondent provided services for. This researcher interviewed LICSWs from Northern Minnesota, The Twin Cities and Southern Minnesota. A recommendation for future research is to localize the research to a specific part of Minnesota. The ethnic population varied per the location of the state, which may result in different ethnic experiences.

This researcher discovered that each agency had their own definition of sexual exploitation. A recommendation for future research is to identify whether or not LICSWs are able to define sexual exploitation.

This researcher found out that many of the respondents were not able to identify sexual exploitation. A recommendation for future research is to make sure that the participants are able to appropriately identify victims of sexual exploitation.

This research was limited to female victims of sexual exploitation. For future research the study could focus on males that engage in prostitution who were sexually exploited as children.

Implications for social work practice

This study revealed several implications for social workers and the profession. All eight respondents identified that there were barriers that prevented victims of sexual exploitation from receiving appropriate services. The respondents also discussed the increasing invisibility of victims because of the Internet. This study reveals that social workers need to advance their technological skills and be more active on the Internet to identify victims of sexual exploitation.

The findings also revealed that the definition of sexual exploitation varied by LICSW. Additionally, the definition has become a barrier for victims to receive services. The implications for this finding suggest that social workers need to receive more appropriate identification on what sexual exploitation is and how a victim could be identified. The findings also suggest that social workers need to be able to identify sexual exploitation victims to provide them with victim-centered services.

The major theme that was revealed from this study is that many women engaged in prostitution had been victims of sexual exploitation as children. This indicates that preventative services are not being provided to victimized children to prevent later engagement in prostitution. At risk children are not being provided with the services to deal with trauma that arises from family dysfunction. The profession of social work is not providing these victims with the necessary tools and services to leave their sexual exploiters.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand LICSW' perceptions of the commonalities and shared experiences of female prostitutes who were sexually exploited as children. While there is current literature that addresses several aspects of sexual exploitation, there is a gap in the literature as to the connection between women who engage in prostitution and those who were sexually exploited as children. There is very little literature on the implications for social work for this selected population. This study also explored LICSWs' perception on common barriers in receiving services and the perception on beneficial services.

The strongest themes that emerged from this study are that women who engage in prostitution are often victims of sexual exploitation as children and that family dysfunction leads to survival sex. Eight respondents described their perceptions from their experiences working with victims of sexual exploitation from a micro, mezzo, and macro perspective. Overall, the study found that there is a connection between women who engage in prostitution that were victims of sexual exploitation as children and that there are risk factors that increase a child's vulnerability to becoming sexually exploited.

The LICSWs described the possible barriers that exist for sexually exploited women and children to receive appropriate services. This study identified technology being a barrier because it increases the invisibility of the victims and it makes it harder for social workers to provide intervention services. The study also identified the definition of sexual exploitation being a barrier to receiving care. This study revealed that there are beneficial services that LICSWs can provide that would be of assistance to their clients. The study found that victims of sexual exploitation work more successfully with mentors that have experienced sexual exploitation.

Additionally, the study revealed that group intervention is extremely successful and helps connect victims with other victims and helps create a safe and non-judgmental environment.

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APPENDIX A

Flyer

Are you a licensed clinical social worker that has provided at least five years of experience providing therapeutic services for women who are currently, or who previously engaged in prostitution, and were victims of child sexual exploitation population? If so, this is an exciting opportunity to take part in a research study that will help to add to the body of literature on this topic, that could prove invaluable to individuals (social workers, legislators, etc.), who serve this population.

An interview will be conducted at your convenience. The interview will consist of 12 questions, and will last for approximately 45-60 minutes. Please forward this flyer to anyone that might be interested in participating in this study.

To participate in this study, please contact:

Heather Wilmes

Master of Social Work Student

University of St. Thomas

(Email address omitted for publication)

(Phone number omitted for publication)

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule

1. How do you define sexual exploitation?
2. From your experience, have you found that there has been a change in the number of sexually exploited female children receiving services from you and if so what are some changes you have observed?
3. When you come in contact with female children that have been sexually exploited, what services do you provide for them?
4. When working with sexually exploited female children do you find commonalities or shared experiences between the victims?
5. What risk factors do you believe put children at risk of being sexually exploited?
6. What services do you believe female children that are sexually exploited would benefit from?
7. When working with women that are currently engaged in prostitution, is the topic of childhood sexual exploitation addressed and if so how is it discussed? If not discussed, do you believe it would benefit your clients if you were aware that they had been a victim?
8. Do you believe there is a connection between females that engage in prostitution and children that have been sexually exploited and what are those connections?
9. What services do you currently provide for women engaged in prostitution?
10. What services do you believe women engaged in prostitution that were sexually exploited as a child would benefit from?

APPENDIX C

Transcriber and Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement

The data you will be transcribing is to remain confidential in order to protect those who have participated in this study. By signing this confidentiality agreement, you agree to maintain this confidentiality by not disclosing or discussing the participants' identifying information and the data collected from the research with anyone other than this researcher. The researcher will provide the tape recordings to you, and upon completion of the data analysis all materials including transcribed material and notes taken must be returned to the researcher. There is no expiration on this confidentiality agreement.

By signing this you are acknowledging that you have had an opportunity to review this confidentiality agreement and have asked any questions that you may have.

I understand this confidentiality agreement

Transcriber Printed Name

Date

Transcriber Signature

Researcher Printed Name

Date

Researcher Signature

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

The Commonalities and Shared Experiences of Female Prostitutes Who Were Sexually Exploited as Children: The Perspectives of Clinical Social Workers

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigation of the commonalities and shared experiences of female prostitutes who were sexually exploited as children. This study is being conducted by Heather Wilmes, a graduate student at Saint Catherine University and the University of Saint Thomas under the supervision of Dr. Rosella Collins-Puoch., a faculty member of the University of Saint Thomas, Saint Paul, Minnesota in the School of Social Work. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because of your experiences working with this vulnerable population for at least five years as a clinical social worker. Please read the form and prior to signing the agreement ask any questions that may arise.

Background information:

The purpose of this study is to explore clinical social workers' perceptions on the commonalities and shared experiences of female prostitutes who were sexually exploited as children.

Approximately 10 participants will be selected and will participate in this study.

Procedures:

If you choose to participate and you fit the researcher's criteria for the research you will be interviewed by the researcher for approximately 90 minutes.

Risk and Benefits of being in this study:

This study has minimal risks. Discussing your perceptions of the commonalities and shared experiences of female prostitutes who were sexually exploited as children may become

emotionally upsetting for you and could potential trigger a personal event that you have experienced in your own life. The participants will have the opportunity to discuss any negative emotions that arise and have the right to stop the interview. You may voluntary withdraw from this study at any point in time without repercussion.

Confidentiality:

Any information that is obtained throughout the research in this study will remain confidential. Identifying personal information will only be used in this study with the participant's approval. In the written research reports, transcribed notes or publication of research will not include identifying information. All recorded data from the interviews and the electronic and paper data from the transcripts from the interview will remain in a locked box within my home. I, the researcher, will be the only one that can access the video recordings and the locked box. The video recordings will remain on my personal computer that is password protected and I, the researcher, will only have access to the password. If the interviews are transcribed with the help of a research assistant, the research assistant will sign a confidentiality agreement. My committee chair and my research committee members will have access to the data as I complete this research project. The data will be analyzed by May 30, 2015. I, the researcher, will destroy all collected and identifying information by shredding data notes and transcribed data and permanently deleting data files and video recordings from my personal computer.

Voluntary nature of this study:

Participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You, as the participant, can choose to discontinue participation at any point during the research and it will not harm your relationship with Saint Catherine University and the University of Saint Thomas.

Contacts and questions:

If you have any questions at any point during the research or thereafter, please contact me, Heather Wilmes at 612-990-3714 or heatherwilmes@gmail.com. If you have additional questions that cannot be answered please contact my research committee chair Dr. Rosella Collins-Puoch at 612-669-9202, or rosella1056@aol.com.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the above statements and questions have been answered. After you have signed this consent form, you may still withdraw from participating in this study.

I consent to participate in the study. I agree to be tape-recorded.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date