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Police Perceptions and Decision Making Related to Domestic Minors Trafficked Through Prostitution

Donna Sue Belin
Walden University

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Walden University

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Donna Belin

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Police Perceptions and Decision Making Related to Domestic Minors Trafficked Through

Prostitution

by

Donna Belin

MEd, Seattle University, 1991

BS, University of Wisconsin, 1972

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

May 2015

Abstract

In spite of a paradigm shift redefining domestic minors trafficked through prostitution as victims instead of criminal offenders, many police officers experience uncertainty in the way they evaluate the nature of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) and assess the culpability status of prostituted minors. This problem often results in revictimizing children and hindering their ability to access needed services. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore police officers' perceptions of minors engaged in prostitution and derive an understanding of the experiences, beliefs, and values that underlie these perceptions. The study also focused on how these factors influence police decision making regarding DMST. Attribution theory provided the framework.

Participants included 4 police detectives assigned to a youth sex trafficking unit in a large city in the western region of the United States. Data were derived from individual interviews and significant documents. Coding and category construction were utilized to analyze single cases, and content analysis was used to analyze documents. Through cross-case analysis, data from all cases and sources were examined for common themes and discrepancies. The study's findings indicated all respondents perceived minors involved in prostitution as victims and that police empathy influenced perceptions and police decision making. The results of the study will potentially facilitate positive social change through advancing a deeper awareness of the nature of DMST and informing law enforcement policy and practices.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my beloved husband, Richard Elliot Belin (1946-1999). His profound love is my anchor, and his enduring belief in my ability to reach beyond my boundaries has been my major source of inspiration throughout this personal and academic odyssey. Ric continues to illuminate my life and the lives of our children, and in this regard, I am so very grateful.

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answers, and dedicating your life to helping vulnerable and damaged young women and children. You are truly amazing professionals who are contributing to positive social change on both an individual and societal level. I am honored to have met you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The sexual victimization of children involved in prostitution is regarded as one of the most concerning and injurious forms of child sexual abuse and maltreatment in the United States (Clayton, Krugman, & Simon, 2013; Estes & Weiner, 2005; Williams & Frederick, 2009). Considered one of a number of crimes (e.g., pornography, internet offenses, sex tourism, erotic entertainment, and other types of sexual performance) under the umbrella of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), this highly clandestine criminal activity presents a considerable challenge for law enforcement in the areas of detection, investigation, classification, and the treatment of its young victims (Ferguson et al., 2009; Halter, 2010; Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009). Due in part to a gradual paradigm shift from conceptualizing domestic minors involved in prostitution as juvenile offenders to viewing them as victims, law enforcement has experienced conflicting perceptions regarding the complex nature of DMST and the culpability status of prostituted children (Halter, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2010; Rand, 2009; Reid, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). Although studies have explored how this problem leads to ambiguity and unpredictability regarding the way law enforcement defines, manages, and processes domestic children, defined in this narrative as U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents under the age of 18 years old, through the criminal justice and child protection systems (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Rand, 2010), I found less research on the underlying reasons why police officers are equivocal in their beliefs about children engaged in prostitution.

The current study was needed because it provided an in-depth understanding of why many police officers are conflicted regarding DMST and how this problem directly translates to their response to the crime of DMST and its victims. In the current study, I disclosed data about how police who encounter DMST on a regular basis perceived youth exploited through prostitution. Furthermore, I revealed the police officers' attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and values that motivated these perceptions, as well as provided an understanding of the impact these factors had on decision making regarding the classification, treatment, and processing of commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC). The insights of individual police officers may provide valuable data for augmenting the development of professional practices for law enforcement and assisting police officers in improving their response to CSEC.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the current study. The major sections of the chapter include an explanation of why the study is needed, a discussion of the gap in the research that the study addresses, and a cursory overview of the research literature related to the study. I also provide a statement of the research problem, the purpose of the study, the central research questions, and the theoretical framework that underlies the study. I discuss the nature of the study, including my rationale for selecting the research design and the methodology, in addition to the key definitions, assumptions, limitations, biases, and significance of the study. Finally, I address the potential contributions of the study and its relevance in effecting positive social change.

Background

There is a body of knowledge examining how police officers perceive sexually exploited and trafficked children—as juvenile offenders or victims (Farrell et al., 2012; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Rand, 2009). There is also research on the contentious and inconsistent ways police treat and refer this victim population. For example, how police respond to DMST often further marginalizes children (e.g., by making them feel they are not believed, trusted or respected) and can thwart or delay their ability to access necessary services, treatment and recovery programs, funding, and secure and safe shelter, away from their pimps and traffickers (Clayton et al., 2013; Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Reid, 2010). Additional studies explore the prevalence, scope, and nature of DMST, including the precipitating factors that may increase young people’s initial vulnerability to involvement in DMST, the dynamics of recruitment and pimp control over victims, and the adverse consequences of being involved in prostitution or being “in the life” (Rand, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). The extant research also includes studies on recent legislation and newly endorsed policies and procedures within the context of law enforcement that legitimize the culpability status of children involved in DMST as victims, and how this has or has not influenced responses to DMST (Adams, Owens, & Small, 2010; Clawson et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2010). Furthermore, there is research on various explanations of police behaviors and decision making from psychological, sociological, and organizational perspectives (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010; Twersky-Glasner, 2005).

Despite this research, there remains a significant gap in the existing knowledge base that explains the reasons why many police officers are personally conflicted regarding DMST and how this ambivalence translates to their response to this crime and its victims. This study is distinctive because it addressed this gap by exploring individual police officer's fundamental beliefs, values, attitudes, and experiences, and it provided insight into how these factors contributed to decision-making behavior and responses to DMST cases. Information derived from the study may benefit law enforcement and other professionals who work with DMST (e.g., Child Protective Services workers, probation officers, and service providers) by contributing to professional practices (e.g., CSEC-specific education and training opportunities and revised departmental policies, procedures, and protocols) and improving police officers' abilities to classify, care for, and appropriately refer sexually exploited and trafficked children.

Problem Statement

Law enforcement officers have contradictory and unpredictable perceptions regarding how domestic minors trafficked through prostitution are defined, managed, and processed through the criminal justice and child protection systems (Clawson et al., 2009; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Rand, 2010). This may be partially attributed to the fact that police officers have traditionally viewed children involved in prostitution on a continuum of juvenile offenses and processed them through the criminal justice system. However, a recent paradigm shift, advocated by the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as a number of nongovernmental agencies that work with DMST, have encouraged law enforcement to redefine these minors as victims, specifically defined in the field as CSEC

(Clawson et al., 2009; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Rand, 2010). Other factors have also contributed to the equivocal perceptions and decision-making behaviors demonstrated by law enforcement, such as the conflicting and overlapping federal and state sex trafficking and prostitution laws, as well as the personality traits (i.e., attitudes, biases, and predispositions) of individual police officers (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010; Bieneck & Krahe, 2011; Clayton et al., 2013; Farrell et al., 2012; Grub & Turner, 2012; Menaker & Miller, 2012). The disagreement and ambiguity regarding the nature of DMST and the blameworthiness of minors trafficked through prostitution oftentimes further results in concerns such as the revictimization (e.g., through arrest and prosecution) and marginalization of minor trafficking victims and their inability to access appropriate resources, participate in trauma-specific treatment, procure needed funding, and maintain a safe and secure living arrangement away from the pimps and traffickers (Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Reid, 2010).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore police officers' perceptions of domestic minors engaged in prostitution and derive an in-depth understanding of the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values that underlie these perceptions. The present study also attempted to discover to what extent these factors influence police decision making in relation to the classification, treatment, and referral of CSEC.

Research Questions

The central research questions, guided by attribution theory, included the following:

1. How do police officers who work with DMST on a regular basis perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution?
2. What are the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that contribute to these perceptions? To what extent do all these factors influence police decision making in relation to how domestic minors who are trafficked through prostitution are identified, categorized, treated, and referred?

Theoretical Framework

Heider's (1958) attribution theory, along with other models (Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1995), provided a useful framework for addressing police officers' perceptions of and decisions about DMST. The theory explains an individual's natural inclination to (a) interpret the cause of behaviors or occurrences, (b) comprehend whether the action or outcome is a result of the environment or the unique character of the person, and (c) predict the possibility of the conduct or event happening again (Heider, 1958; Ross, 1977; Shaver, 1975).

In this study, law enforcement's construal of the meaning, causes, and future implications of the behaviors of children engaged in prostitution provided insight into how police form judgments, assign responsibility and blame, and make decisions regarding the appropriate disposition (e.g., arrest, detention, or referral to a child protection or social services agency) of DMSTs. The literature review included a number

of studies that demonstrated the key tenets of attribution processes and how they present in the professional work of police officers. Attribution theory also provided a framework for the study's approach and the central research questions. Attributions and attribution theory have been used in prior studies to explain law enforcement's decision-making processes in regard to vulnerable populations (Daniel, 2004; Foley & Terrill, 2008; Watson, Corrigan, & Ottati, 2004a, 2005b).

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative approach for this study, employing a multiple-case study research design to explore the perceptions, attitudes, values, and experiences of a selected sample of police officers in a western state regarding juveniles involved in prostitution. Additionally, I attempted to gain insight into how these factors influence law enforcement's decision-making processes and response to DMST cases. Qualitative inquiry is an appropriate approach for the current study, as it strives for depth, understanding, and underlying meaning from the perspective of the participants within a naturalistic context. Its design is emergent, evolving, and responsive to the varying conditions that take place during the research process. The mode of the qualitative paradigm is inductive, and the outcomes are rich, thorough, holistic, and descriptive. The nature of the case study tradition aligns well with the research study. According to Yin (2009), case study research examines the unique aspects of contemporary occurrences, addresses research questions that ask how and why, investigating situations over which the researcher has little control. In the present study, each of the four police detectives represented a single case. The study was bound geographically by the selection of police

officers located on the West Coast of the United States, assigned to a police department's youth sex trafficking unit. It was also bound by time, taking place within a 1-month period. I utilized multiple data sources, such as in-depth interviews and documents. The overall intent of this multiple-case narrative, guided by attribution theory, was to gain insight into the reasons why police officers are ambivalent regarding juveniles involved in prostitution and how officers' underlying values, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences influence decision making, response, and case progression in DMST cases.

Definition of Terms

The crime of human trafficking: The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act characterizes human trafficking as the following:

A. The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age, **or** B. The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p. 4)

Given that persons under the age of 18 cannot give consent, the acts of coercion, force, or fraud do not need to be established in DMST cases.

Bottom girl: The most trusted girl in the stable assigned to supervise the others, report back to the pimp, and impose penalties on girls who break the rules (Smith et al., 2009).

Buyer: Also referred to as a john, client, purchaser, or customer, a buyer is a criminal offender who purchases sexual services from a minor in exchange for something of value (Shared Hope International, 2008).

Commercial sex act: “The giving or receiving of anything of value (money, drugs, shelter, food, clothes, etc.) to any person in exchange for a sex act” (Trafficking Victims and Protection Act as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p. 5). The financial component associated with DMST distinguishes it from other crimes against children such as sexual abuse and rape.

Culpability attribution: Assignment of causality, responsibility, and blame to a juvenile involved in prostitution.

Domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST): “Obtaining, recruiting, harboring, transporting or providing a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18 for a commercial sex act” (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 as cited by Shared Hope International, 2008, p. 7). Variant forms of this crime include juvenile prostitution, pornography, sex tourism, erotic entertainment, internet sex offenses, mail-order bride trade, and other types of sexual performance. The term *commercial sexual exploitation of children* (CSEC) is used interchangeably with DMST.

The life: The subculture of prostitution. “*In the life*” is the period of time that a woman, adolescent, or child is involved in prostitution.

Law enforcement: “Officers of the law who exercise police powers, especially the powers of arrest or detention, and who serve the community protecting all persons against illegal acts, consistent with the high degree of responsibility required by their profession” (United National Code of Conduct Resolution 34/169, as cited in Clawson, Dutch, & Cummings, 2006).

Personality: “The unique organization of characteristics that defines an individual and determine that person’s pattern of interaction with the environment” (Kleinmuntz, 1982, p. 7).

Pimp/trafficker: A criminal perpetrator who profits by receiving money or other benefits in exchange for the sexual use of a minor (under his control) by another person (Shared Hope International, 2008). The minor may perceive the pimp as a protector or boyfriend, while in reality, he controls her life and profits by her sexual exploitation.

Protective shelter: A protected facility that provides commercially sexually exploited children a safe refuge in which to heal, stabilize, and advance toward independence (Territo & Glover, 2014).

Recruiter: A girl closely linked to the pimp who is assigned to find “new faces” for recruitment purposes (Williamson & Prior, 2009).

Safe harbor laws: Laws “designed to redirect young victims of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking away from the criminal or juvenile justice system and into the child welfare system or to other agencies to receive supportive services” (Clayton, 2013, p. 171).

Stable: “A group of prostituted girls under the control of a single trafficker or pimp” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 24).

Status offenses: Offenses that only apply to children (e.g., running away, truancy, child in need of supervision).

Survival sex: The selling of sex for subsistence.

Throwaway youth: Children who have been thrown out of their home.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000: The first comprehensive federal legislation enacted to address national and international contemporary slavery, including the trafficking in persons into forced labor and the sex trade. The TVPA utilizes a three-prong approach to combating human trafficking: prevention, prosecution, and protection (Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking, 2014).

Third-party exploiter: Perpetrators who profit financially from selling the sexual services of minors (e.g., pimp or trafficker; (Mitchell et al., 2009).

Track or circuit: An area of prostitution activity.

Trafficker or pimp: A criminal whose singular purpose is to commercially sexually exploit others for profit (Williamson & Prior, 2009). Pimps refer to themselves as *players*, and describe their profession as *the game* (Smith et al., 2009).

Trauma bond: “Often compared to Stockholm Syndrome, a psychological response where hostages become attached to the perpetrators and later come to their defense” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 44).

Wife-in-law: Girls partnered or housed with other girls from the same stable whose bills are paid for by the pimp in exchange for their loyalty and hard work in advancing the pimp's economic status (Williamson & Prior, 2009).

Assumptions

The study was based on several assumptions. The first assumption was that the sworn police officers who participated in this study experienced the phenomenon of domestic minors involved in prostitution on a regular basis. The second assumption was that the respondents were open and truthful in describing their perceptions of this population and the underlying experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values that influenced their decision making in DMST cases. A third assumption was that the documents I assembled were accurate and current.

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of this research was a selected sample of police officers in a western state assigned to working with DMST cases. These participants represented a rich source of data about children involved in prostitution. Given the narrow sample population and the nature of a qualitative study, the findings of the study were not intended to be generalized to other police officers or used to predict patterns across other jurisdictions.

Limitations

The study examined the perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and decision-making processes of a selected, small sample of four police detectives in a western state who were assigned to DMST cases. This purposeful sampling strategy provided rich, substantive, interpretive data that may appear biased to readers not familiar with

qualitative research. It was important, therefore, to place the approach in perspective and justify my rationale. Given that the respondents may not have been representative of police officers, nor have processed the same number of cases as did other departments, the findings were limited to the current study. Additionally, since police conceptualizations of children involved in prostitution have been particularly controversial, the self-reports of the respondents may have been biased in order to reflect greater insight and sensitivity toward the issue. Although detecting respondent bias is difficult, it was my responsibility to consistently reexamine responses, make comparisons, and use triangulation to help evaluate my results. Finally, due to the fact that I was the only individual accountable for the study's data collection and analysis, the study was susceptible to researcher bias. In order to offset this possibility, I employed the specific strategies discussed in Chapter 3 (e.g., peer review and reflexivity).

Significance of Study

The knowledge garnered from the current study may enhance understanding of law enforcement's attitudes and beliefs about juveniles involved in prostitution and the impact these factors have on decision-making and attributions of culpability in handling DMST cases. In addition to contributing to the literature, new insights from the study may benefit law enforcement as well as other professionals who work with DMST by supporting professional practices such as the enhancement or creation of CSEC-specific education and training programs and implementing revised, victim-centered, trauma-informed police policies, procedures, and protocols. The research has shown that CSEC-specific education and practices for police officers are advantageous in helping police

officers and other first responders better comprehend the nature of DMST and its cultural context, and improving their abilities to classify, care for, and appropriately refer sexually exploited and trafficked children (Ferguson et al., 2009; McMahon-Howard & Reimers, 2013). The study's findings have the potential to facilitate positive social change through the augmentation or creation of cross-disciplinary CSEC-specific training programs and improved accessibility for DMST crime victims to needed services. These services range from trauma-specific mental health and treatment programs to safe housing, legal assistance, and educational opportunities.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced this study on law enforcement's ambiguous and inconsistent conceptualizations of domestic minors involved in prostitution, a problem that has resulted in uncertainty regarding how children are defined, managed, and processed through the criminal justice and child protection and welfare systems. I also stated that the purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study (as reflected in the central research questions) was to address the gap in the literature by exploring these conflicting perceptions and gaining an appreciation of the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that influence police decision-making and responses to DMST. Additionally, I briefly summarized the study's theoretical framework and the nature of the study (e.g., research design and methodology) as well as key definitions and concepts, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations. The significance of the research was also addressed and included the study's potential contributions to the existing knowledge base, professional practice and policy, and positive social change.

In Chapter 2, I review and synthesize the research literature related to the key concepts and constructs, including the major theoretical propositions of the study and their alignment with the research questions, methodology, and analysis. I place the study within the context of prior research in order to delineate its relevance, timeliness, and ability to fill a gap in the knowledge base (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Chapter 2 proceeds with the following: (a) a restatement of the problem and its relevance; (b) the purpose of the study; (c) a preview of the major sections of the chapter; (d) a description of the iterative research process; (e) an analysis of the theoretical framework; (f) a review, analysis, and synthesis of the current research literature associated with the key concepts of the study; and (g) a summary of the major themes, including what is known and not known about the topic of study, how the present study fills a gap in the literature, and a transition to Chapter 3. Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, and Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of the findings and a dialogue regarding the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications for effecting positive social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The incongruous and unpredictable conceptualizations of domestic minors trafficked through prostitution by law enforcement has led to ambiguity regarding how these children are defined, managed, and processed through the various systems (Clawson et al., 2009; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Rand, 2010). This problem has further resulted in concerns such as the revictimization of trafficking victims and their inability to access the appropriate resources necessary for rehabilitation, recovery, and posttraumatic growth (Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Reid, 2010).

Law enforcement officers are frequently the first to respond to domestic minors involved in prostitution. Their role is to identify, investigate, process, and refer these children appropriately. Police officers' perceptions of juveniles engaged in prostitution (i.e., as criminal offenders or victims) and the subsequent decisions regarding the arrest or detention of individuals associated with the crime significantly influence the progression of the case. Police officers' understanding of the nature of DMST and their knowledge of the related psychological, physical, social, and legal sequelae relative to CSEC is critical to the criminal justice and child welfare systems' general response to this crime.

The purpose of this study was to explore police officers' perceptions of domestic minors engaged in prostitution and derive an in-depth understanding of the values, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences that underlie these perceptions. In addition, I explored to what extent these underlying factors influenced police decision-making, behavior, and

response to the crime of DMST. In conducting a review of the literature addressing the key constructs of DMST and police attributes, as well as decision-making within the theoretical framework, I endeavored to provide a context within which to understand the stated problem. This exhaustive examination of the existing knowledge base provided the foundation for developing a unique and valuable contribution to the research literature. In addition, it is hoped that the insights garnered from this study inform law enforcement practices and expand police officers' knowledge about the nature and complexities of DMST and the level of responsibility that should be attributed to children (mostly girls) engaged in prostitution. The following section represents a synopsis of the current literature that established the relevance of the problem cited above, followed by a preview of the major sections of the chapter.

At the onset, I examined research on attribution theory, the framework that guided and informed my study. The theory is based on the premise that humans have a natural curiosity about their own behavior and the behaviors of others. In attempting to find the meaning of specific events or actions, people make attributions regarding the cause and controllability of the actions or occurrence (Heider, 1958; Shaver, 1975). For example, if the observers or perceivers consider the cause or explanation of the action or event to be within the control of the individual they observed, then that person may be deemed responsible. If, however, the observers believe that the cause of the event was due to situational factors outside the control of the individual, the person in question might be judged as not responsible.

In working with DMST cases, police officers consistently make attributions and judgments about children involved in prostitution in areas such as credibility and culpability status. These attributions affect law enforcement's perceptions of and responses to these youth. Attribution theory helps to explain police officers' abilities to work with domestic minors involved in prostitution and offers insight into how these encounters influence whether a juvenile will be cycled through the criminal justice system or be referred to the child welfare system or social services agencies that will address their immediate and long-term needs (e.g., trauma-specific treatment, safe shelter, legal assistance, and educational resources). In the current study, I discuss the origin of attribution theory, its seminal contributors, and major theoretical propositions. Individual factors related to police officers' causal inferences, judgments, attributions of responsibility and blame, and decision-making processes are presented within the context of attribution theory and discussed more thoroughly later in the review. In addition, errors and biases found in attribution theory are examined.

There is a confluence of factors that helps explain how police officers perceive and make decisions about domestic minors involved in prostitution, as well as influences that obscure law enforcement's response to this crime. Therefore, it is important to provide a contextual understanding of the nature and complexity of domestic minor sex trafficking in a range of areas. After presenting my theoretical framework, I examine the existing research on the prevalence and scope of DMST. Establishing this type of data accomplishes several functions. It underscores the importance of properly identifying domestic minors involved in sex trafficking by law enforcement and other first

responders. It also informs the extent, relevance, and implications of the crime and provides a baseline for policy and law (Clayton et al., 2013). In addition it assists in determining a clear definition of CSEC and generates information about needed services and funding sources for victim prevention and intervention strategies. Finally, the data aid law enforcement in keeping up with the latest methods of exploitation (e.g., internet recruitment) and capture a comprehensive depiction of DMST (Smith et al., 2009). The extant research demonstrated, however, that there are intrinsic challenges in quantifying this type of crime, and as a result, there are no reliable data on prevalence and no consensus relative to the characterizations of the problem. These factors contribute to law enforcement's inconsistent perceptions and responses to the crime of DMST.

Another area I examined encompassed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 and its reauthorizations. The TVPA is the cornerstone legislation that helped motivate the change of paradigm from perceiving juveniles involved in prostitution as criminal offenders to viewing them as victims. However, the law, which underscores the prosecution of offenders and the protection of victims, does little to address prevention of DMST. It also fails to directly prohibit prostitution, which has traditionally been regulated by the states. The confusion and contradictions related to the discrepancies between federal and state law likely have a direct influence on law enforcement's conflicting conceptualizations of domestic minors involved in prostitution.

Another focus of this chapter comprised the childhood risk factors for and consequences of recruitment into the life by pimps and traffickers. The delineation of both personal and environmental or situational risk factors for CSEC is essential in

comprehending the etiology of these problems, their impact, and the means and methods of prevention and intervention for this vulnerable population. Knowledge of the short- and long-term consequences of commercial sexual exploitation provides insight into the challenges that police officers and other service providers confront, and contributes to an understanding of the psychological effects of intimidation, manipulation, and trauma (e.g., the psychological attachment or trauma bond between the victim and the trafficker or pimp) to which these children are exposed. It is critical that police officers recognize these issues as well as comprehend the nature of the underground commercial sex market. A more profound understanding of the nature of DMST may assist police officers and other first responders in conceptualizing domestic minors involved in prostitution as victims. Additionally, it may help law enforcement become more sensitive to the needs of victims, more apt to communicate with youth in a way that fosters trust and mutual respect, and more likely to properly question them in an empathic and insightful manner.

The literature review proceeds with the examination of the extant literature on explanations of police behavior and decision-making in response to DMST. In as much as police are generally the first professionals to address domestic minors involved in prostitution, their perceptions of the legitimacy, credibility, and blameworthiness of these youth have direct consequences on the initial investigative interview questions, the level of response, and the subsequent progression of the case (Farrell et al., 2012).

Misperceptions and stereotypes regarding victims of crime pervade society and are likely reflected in the attitudes of police officers as well (Page, 2008). Although there is a dearth of information on police misperceptions and stereotypes specifically related to

domestic minors trafficked through prostitution, beliefs and stereotypes about sexual assault and rape victims may offer insight into the attributions of juveniles involved in prostitution (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011; Brown & Testa, 2007; Grubb & Turner, 2012). Police perceptions and behavior were explored from three perspectives: (a) the psychological perspective, which is concerned with the personal characteristics of individual police officer; (b) situational factors or the social context in which police officers work and interact with the public (e.g., victims and offenders involved with DMST); and (c) the organizational perspective, which is concerned with the values and beliefs drawn from the police culture, including colleagues, police administrators, and police policies and procedures.

A preview of the major sections of Chapter 2 reflects the following organizational format: (a) the literature search; (b) applications of the theoretical framework; (c) the prevalence and scope of domestic minor sex trafficking; (d) the legal context of DMST; (e) risk factors for involvement in prostitution; (f) the business of the sex industry and recruitment strategies; (g) the consequences of life on the streets and involvement in prostitution; (h) current police perceptions and practices in DMST cases; (i) explanations of police behavior; and (j) the conclusion (i.e., a summary of themes, addressing the gap in the existing literature, and the transition to Chapter 3).

Literature Search Strategies

In researching the topic of interest, I searched multiple databases and employed many key search terms to find peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles. Within the Walden University library, I utilized the following multidisciplinary databases: Academic

Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and ScienceDirect. I also searched the following individual databases: Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), LexisNexis Academic, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Taylor and Francis Online, Sage Premier, and SocINDEX. To maximize my search, I used Thoreau as a tool to search multiple databases at one time. I also researched Dissertations and Theses, Dissertation and Theses at Walden University, and Google Scholar. If I was unable to find a specific journal article, I contacted a librarian or utilized the document delivery service. I also derived information from books, technical and research reports published by government and nongovernmental agencies, archival documents (e.g., unpublished lectures and reports from educational institutions), and work that was submitted for publication.

Within the previously mentioned databases, I utilized the following search terms (with Boolean identifiers) and combinations of these search terms to identify relevant articles: *juvenile prostitution, human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, law enforcement, police, police officers, child sexual abuse, sex offenders, domestic minor sex trafficking, victims of trafficking, victims, victimization, policing child protection, police decision making, police attitudes, sex trafficking, sexual assault, sex abuse victims, attributions, prostitution, child maltreatment, modern day slavery, police discretion, mental illness, computer crime, preparedness, culpability attributions, child protection, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, rape, rape myths, child trafficking, sexual assault, mental illness, police personality, police discretion, police attributions, race stereotypes, blame, blameworthiness, victim blame, juvenile justice system, and criminal justice system*. In addition, I searched my topic using the seminal authors' last names. In

as much as there was a paucity of information on police attitudes and decision-making in relation to DMST, I researched police attitudes, discretion, decision-making, and responses in relation to the crimes of sexual assault and child abuse and neglect.

Theoretical Foundation: Attribution Theory

Attribution theory offered a beneficial framework for examining police officers' perceptions of children involved in prostitution and explaining their attitudes and reactions to DMST. The theory sustained and informed my research study. It also aligned with my research problem, research questions, and multiple-case study research, the approach to inquiry that I selected to investigate the phenomenon of interest. The attribution process addresses how individuals construe the meaning, causes, and future implications of the behaviors of others and the experiences and occurrences that transpire within their social environment, and how these explanations account for and influence their thoughts and actions (Heider, 1958). Heider (1958) is known to have first conceived of the attribution process, a perspective that was later expanded upon and honed by influential theorists such as Jones and Davis (1965), Kelley (1973), and Weiner (1995), among others. Their approaches addressed two interrelated concepts or tasks: causal judgment and social inference. Later on, a third task was introduced, that of predicting future outcomes or actions (Ross, 1977). These three interrelated dimensions of the attribution perspective concern the perceiver's natural attempt to delineate and explain the cause or causes of a particular behavior or outcome; formulate inferences regarding the nature of the effect (whether the action is attributed to the personal disposition of the individual or the environment or situation to which a person has responded); and forecast

the likelihood of the reoccurrence of the action or outcome (Ross, 1977; Shaver, 1975). Heider (1958) considered the attribution process “naive psychology” (p. 5), a common-sense approach that guides the layman in trying to make sense about why things happen and why people act the way they do. In understanding how people explicate behaviors or events that take place in the world, researchers gain insight into their thought processes and social functioning.

Shaver (1975) outlined the following stages of the attribution process: (a) the direct observation (or conveyance of information through an intermediary) of an action or occurrence; (b) a judgment about the intentionality of the action (e.g., to be attributionally significant, an action must be conceptualized as being intentional); and (c) the formulation of a dispositional attribution (e.g., attributing the behavior or event to personal disposition or environmental reasons). Ross (1977) referred to the distinction between personal versus situational explanations as internal attributions (e.g., explications that lie within the individual) versus external attributions (e.g., explications that lie outside the person). In order to ascertain whether a behavior or action is intentional, the perceiver must vigilantly evaluate the situation, consider what is known about the actor, and reflect on personal experiences in similar circumstances (Thomas, 1997). In attributing a person's behavior or actions to personal determinants, the perceiver identifies influential characteristics such as the individual's skills, intellect, experience, attitudes, values, incentives, and capacity for compassion. On the other hand, in attributing actions or occurrences to situational or environmental influences, the perceiver

explores factors such as opportunities and barriers, the difficulty of the undertaking, external pressures and coercion, and role expectations (Thomas, 1997).

Underlying Heider's (1958) concept of causal attribution was his conviction that when making attributions, perceivers strive to retain a steady, harmonious, and balanced state in regard to interrelated elements. In other words, if a perceiver discovers that another person committed an act that is disagreeable or unexpected, he or she will be inclined to change the situation to a more agreeable, balanced, and consistent state, one that is conducive to expectations. Heider believed that in social interactions, people consistently strive to preserve a constant, unwavering representation of others.

Many of the most significant attributions that people make are associated with moral judgments about others (Heider, 1958; Thomas, 1997). Conceptualizations of a person, whether he or she is good or bad, affect judgments of the individual as well as penchant for making inferences and attributions about all aspects of his or her life, including the determination of culpability. Weiner (1995) postulated that human beings are "moral vigilantes" (p. 2) because of their propensity for making judgments of responsibility on a consistent basis. In describing the responsibility process, he explicated that after an event or action takes place, an individual interprets the occurrence, making a causal determination followed by a judgment of responsibility. The responsibility process involves the determination of personal versus impersonal causality, controllable versus uncontrollable causes, the existence or lack of mitigating circumstances, and the degree to which the act was intentional or due to inattention or carelessness. All of these elements impact emotional and behavioral sequelae. If there is personal causality,

controllability of the behavior or event, and lack of mitigating conditions, a judgment of responsibility can be made. These circumstances provide the basis for blame, which subsequently impacts social responses to the individual deemed as responsible. In Weiner's (1995) view, responsibility is emotionally impartial, while blame transmits affective negativity (e.g., anger) and is determined by the extent of the consequences of the behavior or occurrence.

As one of the first professionals likely to have contact with a child engaged in prostitution, a police officer makes inferences about the cause of the crime, the extent that the juvenile contributed to or controlled the situation, and the child's responsibility or culpability. For example, if the officer perceives the situation outside the control of the juvenile (e.g., due to situational coercion or power and control exerted by a third-party exploiter), the youth will likely be viewed as a victim. In some cases, the police might choose to arrest or detain juveniles for their protection from pimps or traffickers. If, however, a juvenile is recognized as independent and street savvy, with the ability to change the situation or behavior, the youth may be perceived as responsible and blameworthy and subsequently detained or arrested (Ainsworth, 2002; Halter, 2010; Menaker & Miller, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2010). Ainsworth (2002), a seminal author on police psychology, proposed that another factor of law enforcement might consider the stability or instability of the juvenile's actions—whether the behavior reflected a typical, consistent pattern or seemed out of character. If the incident appeared out of character, the law enforcement officer might treat the youth more sympathetically than if the occurrence was part of a pattern of delinquent behavior.

Contemplation of the inferences and attributional dimensions examined above provided some insight into the way police officers perceived the personal characteristics of prostituted children and the environmental or situational circumstances of the crime of DMST in the current study. Additionally, it illuminated how police formed judgments and made decisions relative to responsibility and blame. The fact that police officers vary in their judgments and attributions, a principal concern of this study, further mandates an examination of the different perspectives individual police officers bring to the table. These include their personal characteristics (e.g., attitudes, biases, perceptions; (Caldero & Crank, 2011); the social context in which law enforcement works and interacts with citizens (Caldero & Crank, 2011); the influence of the police subculture (Caldero & Crank, 2011); and perceptions of victim characteristics and attributions of responsibility and blame (Grubb & Turner, 2012). These perspectives are specifically addressed later in the literature review.

The proposed theoretical assumptions of attribution theory purport that individuals, or naive psychologists, in attempting to make sense of events and the behaviors of others, make logical, realistic, and reasonably accurate attributions. However, the seminal researchers in attribution theory have indicated that in some cases, individuals will arrive at incorrect, inappropriate, or biased attributions (Ainsworth, 2002; Ross, 1977; Shaver, 1975). For example, critics of attribution theory inform that one of the most consistent biases in the attribution process is *fundamental attribution error* (Ross, 1977; Shaver, 1985). This bias involves the perceiver's propensity to overvalue the influence of internal factors and underestimate the influence of situational factors in

attempting to explain the behavior of others. In other words, people are more likely to blame the individual for the unfortunate occurrence instead of considering the external or situational circumstances. This tendency often directly relates to police officers working with DMST cases. For example, if a police officer conceptualizes a child engaged in prostitution as partially or entirely responsible for an illegal act, the officer might be less sympathetic to the youth's situation and likely choose to detain or make an arrest rather than immediately refer the child for assistance.

Another bias in attribution found in the research is *actor-observer bias* (Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Ross, 1977). This type of error addresses the fact that while perceivers or observers are inclined to attribute other people's behavior to personal or internal factors, individuals (actors) are less predisposed to the fundamental attribution error and frequently explain their own similar behavior in terms of situational influences. Jones and Nesbitt (1971) cited the following considerations to account for the differentiation between actors and observers: the actor's justification of his or her actions; knowledge of contextual information; and cognitive and perceptual processes. Daniel (2004) suggested that frontline police officers intercede at a time of crisis (e.g., responding to a child engaged in prostitution), and initially must address the legal aspects of the situation, as well as protective issues. At the time of a first contact, the officer does not have the advantage of knowing the history of the youth, contextual information, or relationship factors. Therefore, a first responder without training in DMST might be inclined to initially attribute responsibility, or partial responsibility, to personal disposition. In contrast, the decision-making processes conducted by psychologists, clinicians, or other

child welfare specialists, entail extensive data collection including socio-psychological assessment, background history, contextual information, and relationship factors. With the advantage of time, extensive information, and a long term therapeutic relationship, decisions made by these service providers are based on the totality and thoroughness of all aspects of the case, including the context of survival sex, trauma bonds, violence, and continual victimization (Rand, 2009). As a result, these specialists are more likely to assign behavior or events to situational or environmental influences.

According to Ainsworth (2002), the research literature also speaks to *self-serving attributional bias*, or the tendency for individuals to take credit for successes and deny accountability for failures, perhaps attributing poor outcomes to external causes. By responding in this way, a person is able to maintain their feelings of self-worth, and at the same time, admit a deficiency or failure. Ainsworth, in addressing the imprecise, biased, and subjective attributions that people often make, projected that if law enforcement officers derived greater insight into these processes, they would be more inclined to consider more complex factors in assigning causality, judgments, and attributions of blame to the individuals with whom they interact in the performance of their job. In his book, *Psychology and Policing*, Ainsworth discussed how attribution processes influence police decision-making and judgments within the context of the multifaceted, complex work of law enforcement. He also spoke to the common human characteristics of prejudice, stereotyping, and ethnocentricity within the police culture, which if not challenged through education and training, become objectionable characteristics for those whose job it is to protect and serve all segments of the population.

There is a dearth of empirical research that specifically applies the attributional framework to police perceptions, attitudes, and decision making relative to juveniles engaged in prostitution, although a few studies have examined society's attitudes and victim blameworthiness relative to this population set (Menaker & Miller, 2012; Menaker & Franklin, 2013). Given that DMST has yet to be a strong target of investigation, prior studies on police decision-making relative to other vulnerable people may be helpful. For example, the treatment of victims and arrest and case progression relative to offenses involving sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, and mentally ill individuals (Cohn, Dupruis, & Brown, 2009; Page, 2008; Watson et al., 2004b) reveal what factors may be relevant in determining attributions and the assignment of responsibility and blame toward juveniles involved in prostitution. The proposed study benefited significantly from this framework. (See section on Explanations of Police Behavior for a delineation of research studies.)

Key Concepts

The Prevalence and Scope of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

DMST consists of a constellation of crimes against children for economic gain. Forms of DMST include street-based prostitution, erotic entertainment, child sex tourism, phone sex, escort services, stripping, message services, pornography, internet sex crimes, and other forms of sexual performance (Clawson et al., 2009; Holger-Ambrose, Langmade, Edinburgh, & Saewyc, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). Estimations of children involved in prostitution and those at high risk for commercial sexual exploitation, as well as yearly incidents of actual child trafficking offenses, vary anywhere from several

thousand to 2.4 million (Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008), with an estimated 300,000 to 600,000 domestic minors involved in prostitution cited most frequently (Adams, Owens, & Small, 2010; Estes & Weiner, 2005) However, there are no credible approximations about the pervasiveness of the problem (Clayton et al., 2013; Fedina, 2014; Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008).

The inability to provide accurate estimates of domestic minor sex trafficking, one of the country's most damaging forms of child maltreatment, is due, in part, to factors such as the following: (a) the illegal and covert nature of the sexual exchanges between children and their pimps and johns (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Logan, Walker, & Hunt, 2009; Williams & Frederick, 2009); (b) the misidentification of DMST victims by law enforcement, the child welfare system, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and other service providers (Adelson, 2008; Logan et al., 2009; Rand, 2009; Smith et al., 2009); (c) lack of CSEC-specific training for law enforcement and other professionals (Clayton et al., 2013; Rand, 2009); (d) the reluctance or incapacity of victims to self-identify (Reid, 2010); (e) deficiencies and inconsistencies in reporting, documenting, tracking, and sharing information relative to DMST cases within and across systems (Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Rand, 2009; Reid, 2010); and (f) questionable methodologies in the conduct of research studies (Fedina, 2014; Rand, 2009; Stansky & Finkelhor, 2008). Further, the official sources that analyze crime statistics, such as the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), measure the number of arrests and detentions related to DMST based on police and witness reports. These statistics likely underestimate actual occurrences given significant DMST activity is not consistently identified by or reported

to police (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2013; Reid, 2010). Even if the activity is known to police, a particular officer may decide not to make an arrest due to a lack of evidence, or choose to use his or her discretion and not pursue the case for any number of reasons (Mitchell et al., 2013).

The research literature also disclosed that cases involving minors engaged in prostitution were not a priority for most large metropolitan police departments. This finding was reflected in several national studies and demonstrated police leadership did not believe human trafficking was a significant problem in their jurisdiction (Clawson, Dutch, Lopez, & Tiapula, 2008; Farrell et al., 2010; Farrell, McDeitt, & Fahy, 2012). As a result of this perception, there was a lack of institutional commitment to prioritizing the problem, allocating resources for CSEC-specific training, and implementing specialized task forces to identify and investigate DMST cases.

Based on the above cited limitations, approximations of DMST occurrences differ significantly, although the continued debate has generated a consensus among researchers that the systemic, administrative deficiencies (e.g., inadequate and inconsistent identification and reporting procedures; improper documentation; and lack of communication and collaboration within and across agencies and systems) must be addressed before verifiable estimations of prevalence can be grounded in the actual number of documented cases (Clawson et al., 2009; Clayton et al., 2013; Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2013; Rand, 2009). Estes and Weiner (2005) conjectured that although the estimations are inadequate, it is clear that the sexual exploitation and

trafficking of children presents an ongoing, extensive, and costly concern for children and families in the United States.

The Legal Context of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

Law enforcement is guided by a combination of federal, state, and local laws and policies in addressing juveniles involved in prostitution and other forms of domestic minor sex trafficking. The TVPA, the seminal U.S. federal legislation that addresses the problem of human trafficking, was signed into law by President Clinton on October 28, 2000 (Smith et al., 2009). The legislation was implemented to support the international community's efforts to end trafficking in persons and address the gaps in U.S. policy. The TVPA addresses both labor trafficking and sex trafficking. The TVPA incorporates methodologies to prosecute traffickers, prevent human trafficking, and protect victims and survivors (Territo & Kirkham, 2010). The subsequent TVPA reauthorizations in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2013 expanded the reach of the original law on multiple levels, emphasizing, among other issues, a victim-centered approach to addressing the needs of victims, extending protection and holistic services to victims who are U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents, and enhancing collaboration between state and local law enforcement (Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking, 2014). The federal TVPA of 2000 defined the crime of human sex trafficking as:

the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age. (as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p. 4)

DMST is defined as “obtaining, recruiting, harboring, transporting or providing a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18 for a commercial sex act” (Snow, 2008, p. 7). In reference to the definition of the crime of trafficking, substantiation of “force, fraud, or coercion” relative to minors is not required, as an underage victim is not able to consent to the act. Further, under the TVPA, trafficking does not necessitate the physical transport of an individual, but can be established through the other elements of the crime, as cited above. The TVPA clarifies that a child who is the recipient of food, shelter, money, or anything else of value in exchange for sexual performance is defined as a victim of DMST. This applies to children who engage in survival sex, defined as the selling of sex to secure life necessities. In other words, although there may not be pimp or third party exploiter associated with the commercial exploitation of a child, the perpetrator purchasing sex for the exchange of these items may be considered the trafficker (Smith et al., 2009).

The TVPA of 2000 (and its reauthorizations), as well as other legislation such as the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, unmistakably delineated the responsibility status of minors involved in domestic sex trafficking as victims (Friedman, 2005; Halter, 2010). This status has been advocated since the late 1900s by organizations such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC; (Bilchik, 1997). These laws also increased the penalties for the exploitation of minors (Motivans & Kyckelhahn, 2007). In addition, newly implemented CSEC-specific law enforcement policies and procedures have helped to legitimize the paradigm shift from viewing

children involved in domestic sex trafficking as criminal offenders to perceiving them as victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

While federal laws, such as the TVPA and its reauthorizations, have clearly defined domestic minors involved in prostitution as victims, they do not exercise authority over the prohibition of prostitution, which has been historically regulated by the states (Clayton et al., 2013). Consequently, although state and federal laws attempt to address the protection of children, the reality is that frequently, the processing of DMST cases is guided by local or state prostitution laws which may allow the treatment (e.g., arrest or detention) of minors as criminal offenders instead of victims of commercial sexual exploitation (Clayton et al., 2013). This incongruous perception of CSEC does not align with federal legislation such as the TVPA, and may be a contributing factor to law enforcements conflicting perceptions of juveniles involved in prostitution. In order to address this issue, a number of states (e.g., Connecticut, Illinois, Vermont, Massachusetts, Florida, New York, and Washington State) enacted safe harbor laws, as mandated for establishing an exemplar state law by the TVPA reauthorization of 2013 (Clayton et al., 2013). Project Polaris (2013) is one of several organizations that established guidelines for safe harbor laws, specifying that this type of law should adhere to the following: " (a) prevent minor victims of commercial sexual exploitation from being prosecuted for prostitution, (b) ensure that knowledge of age and coercion are not required to prosecute sex trafficking of children, and (c) protect child victims of sex trafficking by providing them with specialized services." Many of the safe harbor laws still need to be honed in order to generate the necessary changes. For example, the New

York Safe Harbor Act of 2008 still allows for the court's discretion in determining whether a trafficked minor is in need of rehabilitative supervision or juvenile detention (Chaloner, 2010).

In spite of the significant strides relative to the passage and implementation of relevant state and federal laws that address DMST (e.g., the TVPA of 2000 and its reauthorizations, safe harbor laws), many law enforcement and service provider officials, as well as frontline first responders, continue to misunderstand the definition of DMST and its legal implications for underage individuals involved in sex trafficking (Clayton et al., 2013; Halter, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). There are a number of factors that may contribute to this misunderstanding. A primary source of confusion may stem from law enforcement's unfamiliarity with the content of the TVPA and its reauthorizations, as well as the confusing, overlapping, and contradictory nature of other federal and state laws. For example, the implementation of some interventions, such as the safe harbor laws, are comparatively new and not as yet well-understood, tested, or evaluated. Another factor may be police resistance to redefining past criminal behavior (e.g., juveniles involved in prostitution) within a new framework that advances the perception of these youth as victims of commercial sexual exploitation instead of criminal offenders. Jurisdictional decisions (e.g., should a case be prosecuted under state or federal law) and diverse interpretations of the laws may also contribute to misunderstanding. Additionally, police may experience uncertainty regarding the nature of DMST and its legal aspects for reasons such as the absence of consistent monitoring and assessment of DMST laws, policies, and training across disciplines. The measured development of a national strategy

to address the legal framework for DMST, and law enforcement's failure to advance an institutional response to DMST, also may add to the confusion (Clayton et al., 2013; Farrell et al., 2012). Further, there appears to be no central source of information regarding the provision of state or federal resources to meet the specialized needs (e.g., trauma-specific treatment, mentoring, medical assistance, educational programs, safe shelters away from traffickers) of sexually exploited and trafficked domestic minors (Clawson et al., 2006; Clawson, Salomon, & Grace, 2008; Clayton et al., 2013; Farrell et al., 2008; Polaris Project, 2013; Reid, 2010). Clayton et al. (2013) noted that if their committee (The Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States) struggled to locate the specific legislation that addresses the above mentioned CSEC-dedicated services, how could victims of child trafficking and their advocates be expected to discover these resources on their own?

Risk Factors for Involvement in Prostitution

The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the United States traverses all economic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, races, faiths, geographic areas, and cultures (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). The existing research, however, indicates that a number of precipitating factors contribute to the vulnerability of children, leaving them highly susceptible to the exploitation of pimps and traffickers and the resulting psychological, emotional, physical, societal, and legal consequences of involvement in the life (Clayton, et al., 2013; Estes & Weiner, 2005; Friedman, 2005; Rand, 2009). Without knowledge regarding the nature of DMST and the multifaceted factors that precipitate, perpetuate, and result from commercial sexual exploitation

through prostitution, law enforcement may have difficulty in identifying, investigating, and processing cases, as well as extricating youth from involvement in this crime.

The extant literature is replete with studies that demonstrate a noteworthy association between children who experience physical, emotional, sexual, or the co-occurrence of multiple forms of abuse (within and outside of the home) and children and adolescents who later become involved in prostitution (Clayton et al., 2013; Grace, 2009; Holger-Ambrose et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2009; Williams & Frederick, 2009; Wilson & Widom, 2010). In their study, Wilson and Widom (2010) found that adolescent victims of child maltreatment (e.g., physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect) compared to non-abused youth, were at higher risk for problem behaviors (e.g., academic disengagement, criminal conduct, running away, and early commencement of sexual activity) often associated with involvement in prostitution. Of these behaviors, sexual initiation before the age of 15 was found to be the single most significant forecaster of later engagement in prostitution. Along the same thread, Steel and Herlitz (2005) studied the sexual risk behaviors of 2810 randomly selected participants in Sweden, and found a likely linkage between childhood sexual abuse and high-risk sexual behavior, including vulnerability to sexual exploitation and prostitution. In another study that examined 361 drug-using youth living on the streets in Canada, Stoltz, et al. (2007) noted a significant association between various forms of child maltreatment (e.g., sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect) and engagement in prostitution.

Children who experience maltreatment often exhibit psychological deficits such as the deterioration of self-worth, self-esteem, and confidence in their ability to self-

protect (Friedman, 2005; Williams & Frederick, 2009). When a child is sexually violated early in life, the hidden nature of the mistreatment and the child's perception that his or her value is only that of a sexual object, results in a profound distrust of adults (Friedman, 2005; Rand, 2009). The trauma brought on by the abuse can result in emotional stress and psychological sequelae such as posttraumatic stress disorder, which presents with symptomatology such as depression, anger, rage, anxiety, flashbacks, deadened emotions, nightmares, insomnia and hyper-arousal (Clawson et al., 2008). In addition, trauma can produce other symptoms that place youth further at risk for behaviors such as running away, disengagement from school, and substance abuse, each of which has been linked with the commercial sexual exploitation of minors (Clayton et al., 2013; Wilson & Widom, 2010). Although the above cited studies suggest that child maltreatment, especially child sexual abuse, may be a strong predictor of later involvement in prostitution, it is important to note that only a minimal number of children exposed to sexual victimization ultimately become involved in the sex industry (Lalor & McElvancy, 2010).

A second factor that contributes to children's susceptibility to commercial sexual exploitation is age (Reid, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). Pimps target young children whose maturity levels, coping and decision-making skills, and social networks are still in the early stages of development. These qualities work to the advantage of exploiters in their mission to recruit, manipulate, and control minors. Further, due to the fear of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, the buyers' preferences for virgins have increased. It is estimated that domestic girls initially become exploited through prostitution between the

ages of 12 and 14, whereas the average age for boys is younger (Clawson et al., 2009; Reid, 2010). Some studies indicate that four times as many females as males are sexually exploited, although this number may be skewed because of identification and reporting deficiencies on the part of victims, law enforcement, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations (Beckett & Schubotz, 2014).

Chronic family-of-origin dysfunction (e.g., parental instability, mental health problems, familial violence, and parental drug and alcohol abuse) represents another risk factor associated with children's susceptibility to prostitution (Smith et al., 2009; Williamson & Prior, 2009). Youth who are unable to endure their family environment are apt to runaway or be thrown out of the home by their parents (Clayton et al., 2013; Tyler & Johnson, 2006; Smith et al., 2009; Wilson & Widom, 2010). For example, studies have shown that that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are often rejected by their family and friends or are exposed to emotional and physical abuse after disclosing their sexual orientation. This, in turn, frequently leads to running away or being thrown out of the home (Institute of Medicine, 2011). Youth who experience runaway or throwaway episodes, and who are exposed to other high risk factors (e.g., unstable living arrangements, mental health and substance dependency problems, association with dangerous third party exploiters) are at an elevated risk for commercial sexual exploitation through prostitution, for reasons such as the need for social and emotional support as well as life-sustaining necessities (Clayton et al., 2013; Lebloch & King, 2006; Rand, 2009). Whether they fall prey to a pimp or engage in survival sex, these children are exposed to substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, arrest, suicide, sexual

assault, rape, and life-threatening violence. Further, they are not only vulnerable to victimization, but to victimizing others (e.g., engaging in drug dealing or theft to support their habits and survival needs (Mitchell et al., 2010).

Research findings are varied regarding the influence of poverty on CSEC. Some studies show that a family's financial status does not appear to be a contributing risk factor and that numerous sexually exploited and trafficked children come from middle-class families (Clayton et al., 2013). However, other studies maintain that children from low-income families are especially susceptible to involvement in high-risk sexual behaviors including minor trafficking through prostitution, possibly due to their economic vulnerabilities (Leventhal, Dupere, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; McClain & Garrety, 2011). For example, Smith et al. (2009) found that family members may intentionally sexually exploit children in exchange for financial profits, drugs, food, or other items of value. While living in disadvantaged conditions may not be a risk factor in itself, the research indicates that a combination of co-occurring factors, such neighborhood violence, risky sexual behaviors, access to alcohol and drugs, and the temptation of potential material gains, are associated with the commercial sexual exploitation of children (Clayton et al., 2013; McClain & Garrety, 2011; Smith et al., 2009).

A factor that puts youth at risk for a number of negative outcomes is substance abuse (Clayton et al., 2013; Chen, Tyler, Whitback, & Hoyt, 2004; Williamson & Prior, 2009). Many children use alcohol or drugs as a way of coping with family conflict and adversity, some becoming drug dependent before leaving home to live on the streets (Clayton et al., 2013). Drug and alcohol dependency is significantly intertwined

throughout all aspects of the sex industry. It is a major factor for minors in their initial involvement in prostitution and has been shown to be used as a tool by pimps to control the juveniles in their stable through the management of each minor's drug supply (Barnardo's, 2012). The research literature is not clear about whether substance use and abuse is a cause or effect of involvement in prostitution. However, studies have indicated that CSEC use alcohol and drugs at a higher rate than youth who are not involved in prostitution (Clayton et al., 2013). Additional factors that contribute to the domestic trafficking of minors through prostitution include the introduction to the sex industry by peers, as well as societal or environmental factors. These factors include a youth's proximity to preexisting areas of adult prostitution; transient populations such as military personnel, truckers, conventioners, and tourists; and organized crime and gangs (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Williamson & Prior, 2009).

The Business of the Sex Industry and Recruitment Strategies

The commercial sexual exploitation of minors through prostitution is driven by supply and demand. Within the subculture of the sex industry, purchasers or buyers of sexual services create the demand and pimps/traffickers satisfy the demand through prostituting minors for personal profit (Smith et al., 2009). An estimated 50 to 90 percent of children engaged in prostitution are controlled by pimps or traffickers (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Reid, 2010; U.S. Department of Justice, 2007).

Any number or combinations of risk factors mentioned above may serve as a precursor(s) to a domestic minor's involvement in prostitution and recruitment by a pimp or trafficker into the life. The underground subculture of sex trafficking exists to make a

profit for the traffickers. Its sophisticated, multi-leveled hierarchy incorporates multiple players (e.g., traffickers, recruiters, bottoms, wife-in-laws), a trafficking-specific language (e.g., use of terms such as track, circuit, stable), and cultural protocols for establishing power and control (Smith et al., 2009; Williamson & Prior, 2009). The ultimate mission of traffickers is threefold: control and maintain power over the minor; make a profit; and decrease the child's credibility with police officers and others in the community so the youth is viewed as untrustworthy and complicit in the exploitation (Smith et al., 2009).

The initial recruitment of domestic minors for prostitution occurs in a variety of situations and locations (e.g., at bus stops, train stations, on the street, at shopping malls, outside of the courthouse, and any place youth congregate, as well as through websites such as Craigslist, Eros.om, and Adultfriendfiner.com). It is initiated by individuals referred to as recruiters (e.g., peers, women, young and older men) who know the minor or are acquainted with one of their friends (Williamson & Prior, 2009). After examining the experiences of 13 trafficked juveniles from the Midwest, Williamson and Prior (2009) delineated two of the predominant forms of calculated recruitment used by pimps/traffickers once they make a connection with a minor: finesse pimping and guerilla pimping. Finesse pimping involves the manipulation of minors so that they believe they are making their own decisions to become involved in the sex industry (Williamson & Prior, p. 50). In this type of recruitment, a pimp employs charm, words of love and affection, hope of a romantic relationship, false concern, and generosity to seduce and manipulate his prey (Lloyd, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). In guerilla pimping, force (e.g.,

intimidation, threats, and physical violence) is used as a strategy to compel the juvenile to work for the trafficker (Smith et al., 2009; Williamson & Prior, 2009). The recruited minors are often forced to change their identities, acquire a tattoo to indicate they are a member of a pimp's "family," and bring in a minimal sum of money (Rand, 2009).

Traffickers are well-versed in youth psychology and use it to manipulate, coerce, and control, as well as exploit the minor's vulnerabilities and cast doubt and suspicion on the girl's family, peers, and helping professionals. Additionally, the sex traffickers use psychology to enhance a minor's low self-esteem to foster insecurities related to the juvenile's personal power and sense of purpose, all for the purpose of personal profit (Smith et al., 2009). Once a sexually exploited minor finally recognizes the true value of the alliance with the pimp, the youth has likely suffered psychological, emotional, verbal, spiritual, and sexual abuse, and has experienced or has been placed at risk for beatings, disfigurement, torture, and rape from her pimp or buyer (Clawson & Grace, 2007; Clawson, Salomon, & Grace, 2008; Rand, 2009). Unpredictably, in research conducted by Chicago's Center for Impact Research, it was found that the buyers (johns or customers) who purchased sexual services in Chicago actually levied the most severe violence against women and girls involved in prostitution (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). Not surprisingly, these perpetrators were often not held responsible. In fact, Durchslag and Goswami found that of the 4,500 individuals arrested on prostitution-related charges in Chicago annually, less than one-third were buyers and at least two-thirds were women and girls. The buyers who purchase sex from minors represent a diverse group of predators (e.g., professionals, students, military, family members, men at all levels of

economic status) with varied reasons for buying sex (e.g., an attempt to obtain unusual sex acts, companionship, avoidance of commitment, sex addiction, re-enactment of pornography, and as an outlet for frustration and anger; (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008; Smith et al., 2009).

The Consequences of Life on the Streets and Involvement in Prostitution

Minors who are sexually exploited through prostitution, as stated above, are repeatedly exposed to multiple levels of trauma caused by the sexual and physical violence perpetrated by traffickers and buyers (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, they are psychologically harmed by isolation and imprisonment, humiliation and shame, fear of retaliation if they consider escaping, programming or brainwashing, and a history of damaging childhood disruptions and victimizations prior to engaging in prostitution. They are also susceptible to trauma bonds, a dysfunctional psychological, physical, and financial dependency on the trafficker similar to Stockholm Syndrome. Within this powerful relationship, the trafficker expresses love, respect, and concern for the victim one minute, and then alternates with responses of threats, humiliation, and violence. This type of interaction has an intense impact on the child victim, including an incomprehensible sense of attachment and loyalty to the trafficker. Additionally, sexually exploited children trust that their pimps will be life-long protectors, similar to a family member. These beliefs, and the minors' perceptions that they are freely choosing the lifestyle, are understood within the context of severe, physical and sexual violence (Friedman, 2005; Lloyd, 2011; Rand, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). Trauma bonds represent a major impediment for law enforcement, as they facilitate the inability or refusal for

minors exploited through prostitution to self-identify as victims, seek help, accurately recall past events, and betray or show disloyalty for the trafficker and the set of norms required of existence in the life (Smith et al., 2009).

Given that prostituted children have endured overwhelming and repeated episodes of brutal physical, psychological, and emotional abuse, as indicated above, they are likely to experience multiple levels of trauma. Researchers place this population at the high end of a complexity continuum of traumatic disorders, as, in addition to suffering from insidious, multiple occurrences of interpersonal trauma, they are often scarred by stigma and shame (Briere and Spinazzola, 2005; Herman, 2004).

Children exploited through prostitution are susceptible to both short and protracted post-traumatic symptomatology. A few of the physical health concerns they face include broken bones, soft-tissue injuries, and chronic pain, incurred during the beatings at the hands of their traffickers and johns. In addition, sexually exploited and trafficked girls often experience reproductive problems, gynecological disorders, and premature births due to the impact of violence and their exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (Clayton et al., 2013; Clawson & Grace, 2007; McClain & Garrity, 2011). Sex trafficking victims may also experience a number of developmental and social functioning sequelae such as difficulty concentrating, inadequate decision-making abilities, and compromised relationships within the context of their educational and work environments and social interactions with peers and colleagues (Clayton et al., 2013; Schilling, Aseltine Jr., & Gore, 2007). In addition, financial issues and self-destructive and high-risk behaviors may be evidenced.

A number of studies have documented the complicated mental health consequences for trafficking victims, problems stemming from repeated episodes of violence and threats of death to self or close friends or family or the witnessing of the actual deaths of others (Williamson, Dutch, & Clawson, 2010). Response to this type of severe trauma is generally profound fear and helplessness, two of the prominent criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), experienced by some sexually exploited and trafficked youth. PTSD-related symptoms are numerous and include recurrent thoughts of the violent episodes, nightmares, feelings of detachment, and lack of emotion. Other mental health problems endured by CSEC include depression, shame, guilt, suicide ideation, and anxiety, mood, and personality disorders, some of which continue through adulthood (Trickett, Noll, & Putnam, 2011).

Prostituted youth also experience long and short-term legal consequences. Although the recent paradigm shift from perceiving children involved in prostitution as criminal offenders to viewing them as victims of commercial sexual exploitation has been advocated by the U.S. Department of Justice and other governmental and non-governmental entities, these youth continue to be charged for offenses related to prostitution (Adelson, 2008; Clawson et al., 2009). Charges handled by the juvenile court system may subsequently be transferred to adult court and result in permanent records which may hinder a youth's ability to access needed resources under both state and local programs, as well as prevent a minor's ability to return to normal adolescent activities (Briere & Spinazzola, 2005; Clawson & Grace, 2007; Clawson, Salomon, & Grace, 2008; Clayton et al., 2013; Herman, 2004; McGrath, Nilsen, & Kerley, 2011).

Based on the above mentioned multiple risk factors, and the extreme psychological, physical, developmental, societal, and legal damage inflicted on domestic minors involved in prostitution, this vulnerable population requires specialized, trauma-specific recovery services, including medical care, counseling, safe housing, and legal representation (McMahon-Howard & Reimers, 2013; Mir, 2013; Clayton et al., 2013, Okech, Morreau, & Benson, 2012; Rand, 2009; Smith et al., 2009).

Existing Studies on Police Conceptualizations and Practices in DMST Cases

Law enforcement plays an essential role in responding to DMST, investigating and apprehending offenders, protecting the community, and identifying, processing, and referring domestic minors involved in the case. At least three variables significantly impact the performance of these responsibilities. The first factor involves whether police officers perceive a juvenile involved in prostitution as a criminal offender or a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. A second variable accounts for the decision by law enforcement to cycle domestic minors involved in prostitution through the criminal justice system or refer them to the child protection or child welfare systems. Finally, law enforcement plays a significant role in determining which treatment resources will be offered to this population. These include protected shelters and safe, long-term housing, as well as trauma-informed treatment facilities, medical and legal services, and case management (Halter, 2010; Clayton et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2009; Territo & Glover, 2014).

As discussed earlier in this narrative, the passage of federal and state laws (e.g., the Trafficking Victim Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations, the

Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, safe harbor laws), and newly developed U.S. Department of Justice and police department policies, clearly delineate and legitimize the culpability status of domestic minors involved in prostitution as victims and encourage the prioritization of this crime (Ashley, 2008; Clayton et al., 2013; Motivans & Kyckelhahn, 2007; Territo & Glover, 2014). To advance this orientation, CSEC-specific education programs and specialized police task forces have been established throughout the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). However, the existing research literature indicates that many law enforcement officers still perceive minors involved in prostitution as juvenile offenders, or may struggle with conflicting state law or with redefining what was traditionally considered a criminal offense with what is now considered commercial sexual exploitation.

In examining the police case files of 126 juveniles (most of whom were girls) involved in prostitution in six major U.S. police departments, Halter (2010) found that 60% of the youth were conceptualized as victims and 40% were categorized as criminal offenders. Halter defined five criteria that persuaded police to regard the youth as victims: (a) the involvement of a third party exploiter (e.g., pimp or trafficker); (b) referral or report of a juvenile with victim status from an agency outside of the police; (c) significant level of cooperation from the youth; (d) the absence of a prior criminal history; and (e) local residency. Based on her research, Halter conjectured that police in her study engaged in informally assessing juveniles using these criteria in order to determine the likelihood of them returning to prostitution. If the probability was strong, and a youth was resistant to receiving help, the officers used their arrest powers and the

referral to a secure detention facility as a paternalistic way to protect the youth from returning to the streets.

Mitchell et al. (2010) conducted another seminal study on law enforcement's perception of children involved in prostitution (as victims or criminal offenders). The researchers studied a sample of 132 juvenile prostitution cases from police records that involved both third-party exploiters (e.g., pimps or other individuals who profit from selling minors for sexual services) and solo juveniles (e.g., transient youth or those living at home or at an institution), who operate alone and offer themselves for money or items of value out of need, for monetary gain, or for the mere excitement of the lifestyle. Police perceived 69% of the juveniles as victims, and 31% as juvenile offenders. Mitchell et al. found that police were more likely to view juveniles as victims if they were female, came to their attention through an outside report, were younger (under 15 years of age), had a runaway history, were frightened, and demonstrated poor hygiene (e.g., were dirty or had body odor) or illness at the initial encounter. Although the study seemed to reflect some progress toward perceiving children engaged in prostitution as victims, it highlighted law enforcement's continued struggle with using stereotypes or predetermined characteristics in classifying minors, a situation that contributes to the ambiguity of conceptualizing minors involved in commercial sexual exploitation.

Similar findings were suggested in Boyer's (2008) ethnographic assessment of youth sexual exploitation in Seattle. Boyer found that although federal and state law mandate that juveniles involved in prostitution be considered victims, minor youth were consistently arrested and detained for prostitution and loitering. Data derived from the

King County Prosecuting Attorney indicated, in fact, that the number of juveniles arrested on prostitution charges increased 40% between 2006 and 2007. This number did not include related charges such as drug or theft offenses. Whether the increase in arrests reflected more youth involved in prostitution, or a change in police policies or arrest patterns, was not assessed. However, the data clearly demonstrated the contradictory legal status of children engaged in prostitution and the intersection of victimization and criminalization that these children must face.

In another study related to victim access to CSEC services in a Southern U.S. urban community, Reid (2010) discussed the significance of inconsistent labeling of children exploited through prostitution (e.g., the use of terms such as *child prostitute*, *juvenile delinquent* versus *prostituted youth*, *sexually exploited juvenile*, *victim of sex trafficking*). The culpability status assigned to the youth, as reflected in the terminology, often affected how law enforcement perceived the youth (as a criminal or victim), the officer's decision to arrest or refer the youth to specialized rehabilitative services, and for which restorative programs the child was qualified. For example, if a juvenile was found guilty of the crime of prostitution or was persuaded to plead guilty, she may not meet the criteria for federal program funding or state-sponsored victim compensation. Reid's findings demonstrated the key role that law enforcement plays in determining the treatment and resource opportunities for child trafficking victims.

Williamson and Prior's (2009) qualitative research study examined sexually exploited children in the Midwest. They found that law enforcement's most frequent response to domestic sex trafficking through prostitution was the apprehension and

incarceration of minor victims. The researchers attributed this pattern to the confusion on the part of first responders to establish whether the juvenile was a victim of sexual exploitation and in need of protection and a comprehensive strategy for restoration and healing, or a juvenile offender, in need of incarceration and supervision by the court and probation systems. Williamson and Prior accentuated the dual victimization experienced by children involved in prostitution, initially by their trafficker or pimp, and again from the professionals whose job it is to protect and care for them.

Other research studies demonstrate that one of the most difficult challenges for law enforcement is that many non-protective shelters are ill-equipped to respond to the unique, trauma-specific needs of commercially sexually exploited children (e.g., dealing with trauma bonds, threats to the juvenile and her family, multiple victimizations, pimp control), and the likelihood of escape is strong. Although secure detention facilities may not offer adequate resources, police often view this as the only viable option for protection and keeping the youth out of the reach and influence of the trafficker (Clayton et al., 2013; Farrell et al, 2012; Territo & Glover, 2014). While the intent of this action may be to prevent further exploitation and harm, arrest and detention can further exacerbate the situation by re-traumatizing the juvenile and causing added distrust for law enforcement and official services and institutions (Clayton et al., 2013).

Explanations of Police Behavior: Cultural, Sociological, and Organizational

There are a number of factors that come into play when a police officer determines what is an appropriate disposition (e.g., arrest, detention, and/or referral to the child welfare system or a social service provider) relative to a domestic minor involved in

prostitution. A few of these aspects, such as knowledge of and adherence to state and federal laws, the attitude and demeanor of the youth, and availability and access to needed services, have already been discussed in this narrative. Other important determinants of police behavior may be derived from the criminal justice literature, which offers insight into the police culture, its shared occupational perspectives and values, and the individual variation that exists among police officers.

Police culture. Crank (1998), a seminal author on the behavior of police, maintained that the police culture incorporates a number of characteristic themes, such as unpredictability, personal autonomy, morality, authority, solidarity, and common sense. In addition, police culture incorporates unique institutional approaches to preserving societal values (e.g., through formal policy, departmental structure, supervision, and scrutiny). Drawing from their professional environment, police officers share with their peers similar ways of thinking about and accomplishing objectives, and the meanings and feelings the work holds for them. The noble cause, or the moral obligation of all police officers to keep the world safe from harm, underlies and motivates law enforcement's daily operations and interactions with the environment. Inherently tied to the noble cause is a police officer's commitment to victims, and a willingness to put one's life in harms way for the benefit of strangers in need (Caldero & Crank, 2011).

Paoline (2003), another influential author in the area of police culture, also proposed a conceptual model that contributes to the understanding of the causes and influences of the police occupational culture. Paoline described two working environments. The first is the occupational environment, which constitutes the

relationship between police officers and citizens, involving the potential for danger and the use of coercive authority over citizens (Crank, 1998; Caldero & Crank, 2011). The second is the organizational culture, which entails police officers' relationships with the institutional organization. This environment is marked by administrative scrutiny and role uncertainty. It is within the context of these two environments that one gains insight into the following areas that affect law enforcement's response to domestic minors involved in prostitution: coping mechanisms utilized by police officers to address the stresses and challenges of the job (e.g., observance of the crime fighter orientation, categorizing people, suspiciousness); constrictive CSEC-specific administrative policies and procedures; and the shared norms, biases, and perceptions relative to the decision-making process (Paoline, 2003). For example, police may categorize minors who are involved in prostitution, and in doing so, make certain attributions and decisions regarding the aptness of arrest or referral to a child protection agency. In addition, if the departmental policy is to consider DMST cases a low priority, police officers will limit their pro-active pursuit of CSEC, which will have a substantially negative impact on victims. Alpert, MacDonald, & Dunham (2005) posited that the nature of the police bureaucracy is a major force in shaping police perceptions and behavior, as well as influencing law enforcement's amenability to the arrest and detention of citizens. There is a paucity of research on the influences of organizational factors relative to domestic minor sex trafficking.

Individual personality characteristics. In addition to recognizing the organizational and occupational environments within the police culture, the individual

personality characteristics (e.g., beliefs, values, attitudes) of police officers come into play and may influence attributions about the minor engaged in prostitution, as well as subsequent decisions regarding problem solving strategies and what course of action to take in response to a sex trafficking incident. The research literature has generally focused on defining the notion of police personality and determining how it develops (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010). One of the questions the research addresses is whether police officers represent a homogeneous group and share common personality traits that differ, psychologically, from the general public. The development of the police personality, as a second area of investigation, addresses whether individuals who become police officers share similar characteristics pre-employment (e.g., referred to as the psychological paradigm) or whether the police personality is a result of occupational socialization (e.g., the sociological paradigm; (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010). In either case, there are researchers who believe that a general orientation exists that reflects the shared attributes of police officers. The constellations of personality traits that contribute to this orientation include attitudes such as bravery, conservatism, authoritarianism, cynicism, loyalty, secretiveness, and self-assertiveness (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010; Twersky-Glasner, 2005). Seminal authors Paoline, Myers, and Worden (2000) proposed that many of these traits represent occupational attitudes, produced within the context of a work environment exemplified by ambiguity, substantial risk, and authoritative pressure.

Some scholars have identified the existence of a police personality and others have found substantiation of a police personality inconclusive (Abrahamsin & Strype, 2010; Twersky-Glasner, 2005). Caldero and Crank (2011) posited that the individual

predispositions of police officers, and all other human beings for that matter, are imported early on (e.g., employing the psychological paradigm) from what the researchers refer to as one's cultural heritage. Cultural heritage consists of "givens," or expected ways a person acts, thinks through problems, processes what is right and wrong, morally responds, and identifies what makes common sense. These givens, including non-verbal cues and communications, emotions, and feelings about others, are drawn from a police officer's upbringing and early socialization. They also stem from the specific segments of the general population from which he comes, prior experiences, and learned values and perceptions relative to how others should be cared for and treated. These perspectives are deeply embedded and are extremely difficult to change. They make up what gives meaning to a police officer's job, and it is through the organizational structure of the law enforcement agency that police are able to demonstrate their value and beliefs within the context of helping members of society (Caldero & Crank, 2011). In contrast, some researchers employ the socialization paradigm, contending that while there is a distinct police personality, it is shaped solely by work-related socialization (Caldero & Crank, 2011).

Research on the relationship of police personality characteristics (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, values) and behavior is inconsistent. Intuitively, one might assume a strong correlation between police attitudes and behavior. However, although some historical studies have indicated that police officers vary in their attitudes and perceptions (e.g., in regard to their professional role, citizens, community policing, use of force), resulting in correspondingly different behaviors, in general, more recent, empirical studies have

found nominal relationships between police officer attitudes and perceptions and behavior (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010). In attempting to explain these weak relationships, Abrahamsen and Strype (2010), in their study relative to whether personality differences among individual police officers were associated with the manner in which they handled conflict situations, posited that the relationship between attitudes and behavior is often diminished by forces such as situational influences (e.g., social and group norms) and the conduct and actions of others. With the recent recruitment of more educated and diverse police candidates, and the implementation of new, creative departmental policies, one might expect more variation in police personality traits.

Based on the above findings, one may surmise that, for the most part, police attitudes, beliefs, and values do little to affect police behavior, such as the treatment and care of commercially sexually exploited children, or the decision-making process relative to DMST. However, even a nominal correlation between personality traits and behavior is significant. One of the predominant elements of the attributional perspective is the perceiver's ability to make accurate interpersonal judgments. This process is reliant on the personality constructs that a perceiver holds (Shaver, 1975). For the purposes of the current study, for example, if a police officer encounters a minor involved in prostitution, the resulting response will be based, in part, on the officer's personal constructs or personality traits which contribute to the assigning of an attribution.

The research demonstrates that in addition to individual police personality characteristics and organizational determinants, extralegal factors may also influence police perceptions and attitudes relative to minors involved in prostitution. These

elements contribute to a more expansive understanding of police decision-making beyond the legal aspects of police responses to this population set. Some of these extralegal factors include variables such as: victim blaming; perceptions and myths related to prostitution and sexual assault and rape; victim characteristics (e.g., age, race, deportment, attire, and behaviors such as substance abuse); victim credibility issues; and situational features of the DMST occurrence.

Extralegal Factors

In as much as police are generally the first professionals to address domestic minors involved in prostitution, their perceptions of the legitimacy, credibility, and blameworthiness of these youth have direct consequences on decision-making relative to the initial investigative interview questions, the level of response, and the subsequent progression of the case (Farrell et al., 2012). Although some researchers have proposed that police do not discriminate between cases involving sexual assault and make decisions based on strict adherence to the law, others have asserted that police, in using their discretion, do differentiate between sexual assault cases based on situational factors and victim characteristics and behaviors (Tasca, Rodriguez, Spohn & Koss, 2013). For example, variables such as the level of cooperativeness from the victim, the severity of the offense (whether the perpetrator used a weapon), and the credibility of the victim (e.g., the level of victim intoxication, whether the victim's attire is provocative) have been shown to have an influence on police perceptions of sexual assault and rape cases (Grubb & Harrower, 2008; Schneider, Mori, Lambert, & Wong, 2009). In addition, generalized beliefs, negative social reactions, misperceptions, myths, stereotypes, and attributions of

blame regarding victims of crime pervade our society, and are likely reflected in the attitudes of police officers as well (Page, 2008). While there is a paucity of information on these factors relating specifically to domestic minor sex trafficking (excluding Cotton, Farley, & Baron, 2002; Farley & Kelly, 2000; Menaker & Franklin, 2013; Menaker & Miller, 2012; Miller & Schwartz, 1995), there are studies that have focused on these factors for other victim populations (e.g., sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, and persons with mental illnesses) that may offer insight into the attributions of juveniles involved in prostitution by law enforcement.

Rape and prostitution myth. There are a substantial number of empirical studies on society's attitudes about rape and violent sexual offenses and the level of responsibility and blame assigned to the victim and perpetrator (Brown & Testa, 2007; Cohn et al., 2009; Grubb & Harrower, 2008; Grubb & Turner, 2012; Mason, Riger, & Foley, 2004; Mauer & Robinson, 2008; Miller, Amacker, & King, 2011; Miller, Markman, Amacker, & Menaker, 2012; Schneider et al., 2009; Stromwall, Alfredsson, & Landstrom, 2013). The research indicates that myths and stereotypes regarding victims frequently result in perceivers holding them blameworthy for their fate within the context of a violent sexual assault (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Page (2008) posited that most often, the findings of these studies generalize to professional groups such as police officers. The extant literature demonstrates that police officers believe some rape myths and refute others (Davies, Smith, & Rogers, 2009; Page, 2010; Wenz & Archbold, 2012).

Rape myths, which are inextricably linked to victim blaming, consist of false beliefs about rape and rape victims that are generally accepted by the members of society

(Grubb & Turner, 2012). Rape myths serve to exonerate the rapist and justify the sexual aggression against women (Tasca et al., 2013; Page, 2010). Examples of rape myths include, but are not limited to beliefs that suggest only a certain type of woman gets raped, woman really want to be raped, and that in a true rape, the victim doesn't know the perpetrator (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Wenz & Archbold, 2012). A few studies have compared the acceptance of rape myths with prostitution myths, and found them to be comparable on a number of levels. For example, in one of the few historical studies specifically addressing the association between rape myths and prostitution, Miller & Schwartz (1995) examined the perspectives of 16 females engaged in prostitution and found that rape myths generally parallel those of prostitutes, reflecting extreme violence toward and devaluation of victims. The themes that emerged from the study were that prostitution is a victimless crime, all prostitutes are cut from the same cloth and are deserving of violent assault, and that prostitutes, in essence, are unrapeable. The general consequence of prostitution and rape myths is the transference of blame for the offense from the offender to the victim.

Victim blaming. Bieneck and Krahe (2011) found there is a propensity to blame the victim for certain crimes (e.g., sexual assault, rape, prostitution), more than other types of offenses, such as robbery. The researchers referred to this dynamic as "a special leniency bias" (p. 1785), a bias that is especially accurate in cases that deviate from the stereotypical "true rape;" that is, an unexpected, vicious attack on a credulous woman or girl by a complete stranger. This is the situation in many rapes as well as cases involving

domestic minors involved in prostitution in which the minor is often acquainted with the perpetrator and is savvy about the consistent violence inherent in the life.

The extant literature reveals that the lay population, as well as criminal justice professionals such as law enforcement, detects the phenomenon of victim blaming on a consistent basis within the context of violent crimes against women. Grubb and Turner (2012) posited that victim blaming is closely associated with rape myth acceptance. The literature offers several theories that explain the phenomenon of victim blaming, including defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1975) and the just world theory (Lerner & Miller, 1978).

Defensive attribution theory proposes that the extent to which victims will be assigned culpability is dependent upon observers' perceptions of how similar their personal attributes are compared to those of victims. In other words, if individuals perceive themselves akin to victims, with the prospect of experiencing a misfortune similar to the victims, they will take steps to be self-protective, defending against being blamed in a similar circumstance. To accomplish this, they may deny personal similarity to the victims, or if this is not possible, blame the misfortunate on the victims' personal attributes, or attribute the entire incident to chance. In such a situation, the attributions of perceivers would not be objective or accurate, but distorted for self-serving purposes (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Shaver, 1975).

Another theory often associated with victim blaming in sexual assault offenses is the just world theory (Lerner & Miller, 1978). This perspective proposes that the world is a fair place and people get what they deserve (Grubb & Turner, 2012). This perspective

provides an individual with an acceptable justification for sexual victimization, as well as a sense of control, power, and certainty over potential future adversities.

Rape myths and victim blaming are pervasive throughout our society, so much so, that they have a significant influence on law enforcement's judgments in regard to the treatment and caring of victims, the decision to investigate and arrest, and the subsequent case progression (Grubb & Turner, 2012). The linking of the two concepts was underscored by Ben-David and Schneider (2005), who proposed in their study that rape myth acceptance feeds into victim blaming through the assertions that: women have an underlying desire to get raped; women are complicit in their victimization; and women are inclined to lie about these violent sexual acts. The myths related to rape and the phenomenon of victim blaming both serve to reinforce each other and perpetuate biases and stereotypes that influence attributions of culpability and blame relative to the victim. Directly related to the blameworthiness of domestic minors trafficked through prostitution, one of the few studies on the topic found that the general public, and most likely criminal justice professionals such as police officers, often hold these girls responsible for their own behavior and circumstance (Menaker & Miller, 2013).

Victim credibility. A number of studies have examined police judgments regarding victim credibility based on a victim's personal characteristics. The victim's appearance, demeanor, and compliance with appropriate sex role norms appear to influence police perceptions of victim credibility, as do the victim's moral character and behavior prior to the violent incident (Mitchell et al., 2010; Taska et al., 2012). For example, Bollingmo, Wessel, Eilertsen, & Magnussen (2008) examined the credibility

judgments of 69 experienced police investigators in relation to victims of rape. The researchers found that the officers were influenced by the emotions expressed by the victims, in that victims who cried or demonstrated anguish were perceived as more credible than those who remained more passive or affirmative. This finding paralleled that of Mitchell et al. (2010), whose study demonstrated that minors involved in prostitution were more likely to be perceived by police as victims if they displayed fear or anxiety. Jordan's (2004) research focused on police officers' skepticism of victim credibility, victim's overstated estimation of false rape reports, and the continuance of police decision-making based on myths and stereotypes in addressing sexual violence. The orientation of some officers was clearly delineated by Firth (as cited in Jordan, 2004), who, in an article on rape investigations, quoted a police detective as saying, "Women and children complainants in sexual matters are notorious for embroidery or complete fabrication of complaints...if a woman walks into a police station and complains of rape with no such signs of violence...it is always advisable if there is any doubt of the truthfulness of her allegations to call her an outright liar" (p. 31).

In relation to domestic minor sex trafficking through prostitution, Farrell et al. (2012) found that some police officers held stereotypical views of individuals involved in prostitution, using terms such as "whore" when referring to victims. In commenting about the lack of victim credibility relative to this population set and how law enforcement and prosecutors sometimes perceive minors involved in prostitution, a police official posited:

The media and the movies have made it so they [prostituted girls] are just the scum of the earth. But once you learn about them, that their backgrounds

are...they're horrible. These girls have had horrible lives and they really don't have any choice but to ...to do this. So we have a hard time understanding them because automatically they think the prostitutes are just scrum. They're worse than dope dealers. (Farrell et al., 2012, p. 126)

Another officer spoke to the diminished credibility of minor sex trafficking victims:

People seem to think that even when dealing with minors, it's the classic pimp and ho type of investigation. Why should I care about some pimp beating a ho or why should I care about some pimp putting a girl on the streets? She could have made another choice...to hell with them. I mean they get what they get. (Farrell et al., 2012, p. 126)

Victim substance abuse. Attributions differ in relation to the use of alcohol during a sexual assault or rape. Some people place more blame on the offender for taking advantage of an intoxicated victim, while others blame the victim for placing themselves in jeopardy by drinking too much (Grubb & Turner, 2012). However, the preponderance of empirical studies appear to sustain the later contention, that alcohol and/or drug consumption by the victim has been found to have an influential effect on societal and law enforcement's perceptions of sexual assault cases more frequently (Jordan, 2004; Mauer & Robinson, 2008; Sims, Noel, & Maisto, 2007). In their study of 213 undergraduate students, Sims et al. (2007) sought to evaluate participants' attributions of responsibility in sexual assault cases relative to the use of alcohol through the utilization of written scenarios. The researchers found that if the woman or girl presented as intoxicated, there was a tendency for the participant to view this type of behavior as a

discrediting factor. As a result, the victim was held more responsible for a sexual assault or rape than if she were not using substances. Bieneck and Krahe (2011) also found that the victim was perceived as culpable when she was intoxicated during the incident.

In one of the few studies that specifically addressed police officers' perceptions of blameworthiness when a victim is under the influence of alcohol, Schuller and Stewart (2000) found that police officers were more inclined to judge the victim, rather than the perpetrator, based on alcohol consumption during the incident. Farrell et al.'s (2012) research on sex trafficking was comparable in that some police officers perceived girls involved in prostitution who used drugs in a more negative light and found them to be less credible witnesses to the DMST incident. For example, one detective in the study commented, "Victims are often unreliable, often addicted to drugs. It's probably easier to prosecute homicides because the victims are dead" (Farrell et al., p. 125).

Victim race and disclosure history. The existing research literature consists of a number of studies relating to the influence of race on sexual assault and DMST cases (Chaloner, 2010; Menaker & Franklin, 2013). For example, the depiction of African-American women and girls as hypersexual and promiscuous is one example of a racial stereotype that often results in the perception of the African-American domestic minor involved in prostitution as complicit in her own victimization and, therefore, less likely to be viewed as a victim (Chaloner, 2010; Menaker & Franklin, 2013). Relative to this situation, Menaker and Franklin posited that sexually victimized women who were less conventional in their sex roles (e.g., sexually assertive) were blamed more for the assault than more compliant, moral, traditional women. This was applicable for all races.

Viewing racial disparity from another perspective, the research also shows that racial minority youth often distrust police officers and feel they will be disrespected and treated unjustly (Halter, 2010; National Research Council, 2013). As a result, these youth often employ calculated responses, such as aversion and confrontation for self-protection (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009; Woolard, Harvell, & Graham, 2008). In other words, they may avoid police interactions, hesitate to report sexual offenses, or refuse to disclose to police the identity of the pimp or perpetrator in DMST cases. Since police officers have to rely on the cooperation of these juveniles to proceed with a case, the lack of a minor's cooperation represents a significant barrier. Furthermore, this type of response may reduce the likelihood that the police will perceive the juvenile as a victim. As discussed in a previous section, Halter's (2010) study addressing law enforcement's perceptions of children engaged in prostitution (e.g., whether they are viewed as juvenile offenders or victims), found that police officers were more apt to view a minor as a victim if the youth was cooperative, was able to name the perpetrator, and was referred through an outside agency instead of by police action. The perception that the police officer holds is critical, as it has a direct impact on how the minor is classified, treated, and referred.

Menaker and Franklin (2013) also examined the effect that a study participant's knowledge of a prostituted minor's victimization history (for both Caucasians and African American girls) had on perceptions of the youth's blameworthiness. The researchers found that the disclosure of prior victimization and trauma significantly reduced culpability attributions for both Caucasian and African American girls.

Stereotypes based on race impact not only the perceptions and behaviors of the members of the stereotypical group (e.g., in this case, children of color), but also the perceptions, behaviors, and decision-making processes of the perceivers (e.g., police officers; (Chaloner, 2010; Menaker & Franklin, 2013). Consequently, a great deal of thought and reflection regarding the influence of racial stereotypes and how they influence the perceptions of domestic minors involved in prostitution and attributions of blame is essential to understanding police attitudes and decision making processes.

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I provided an exhaustive review of the current literature relative to the key concepts and constructs of the phenomenon of interest (e.g., police perceptions and decision-making related to domestic minors trafficked through prostitution). I reviewed and synthesized studies on the prevalence and scope of domestic minor sex trafficking and its legal context. Additionally, I described the business of the sex industry, including the risk factors for children's involvement in prostitution and the consequences of life on the streets. Existing studies on police conceptualizations and practices in DMST cases, and explanations of police behavior (e.g., the impact of the police culture, individual personality traits, and extralegal factors) that influence police decision-making, were discussed. The literature review also included a description of my literature search strategy as well as an analysis of the study's theoretical foundation.

A number of themes emerged from the literature review. The first theme was that there is no national consensus relative to the prevalence and scope of domestic minor sex trafficking (Clayton et al., 2013; Fedina, 2014; Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008).

Ascertaining an estimate of any social problem is significant. It provides information to professionals and interested parties regarding the breath and depth of the problem, draws attention to the reasons why the issue should be addressed, and delineates a baseline from which to evaluate policy and law. In addition, reliable estimates assist professionals in allocating funding and generating and directing assistance to providers and designated victim populations. Unfortunately, there are inherent challenges to estimating the extent of minor sex trafficking in the United States. Definitional discrepancies within and across disciplines hinder the measurement of the problem. Secondly, the clandestine nature of DMST; the misidentification of trafficking victims; and the deficiencies in reporting, documenting, and sharing cases among law enforcement and other agencies contribute to unreliable numbers. In addition, the lack of CSEC-specific training for law enforcement and other professionals and questionable methodologies relative to research studies obstruct our understanding of the nature of DMST and the development of appropriate responses to the problem (Clayton et al., 2013; Farrell et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2013; Rand, 2009; Smith et al., 2009).

Research and practices associated with domestic minor sex trafficking are in their early stages of development, very much like domestic violence and child abuse and neglect were several decades ago. Although there is much dispute regarding the incidences of DMST at this point, I suspect that greater insight into the nature of the phenomenon, its recognition as a legitimate concern, and its increased level of priority for law enforcement and other professionals, will eventually advance as it did relative to the other fields mentioned above. Progress in these areas resulting in enhanced public and

professional interest, increased allocation of funds, and additional empirical studies, will most likely produce more accurate estimations of prevalence and scope in relation to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (Clayton et al., 2013).

A second theme that surfaced was that the legal interventions addressing DMST are also in their early stages of development, and as a result, are frequently ambiguous and conflicting (Clayton et al., 2013). Further, many of the gaps and deficiencies in state and federal law, an area that should be better researched in the future, directly impact the availability and access to needed services for CSEC. The challenges and contradictions within the context of the legal framework of DMST appear to significantly impact the perceptions, responses, and decisions of law enforcement in relation to the identification, classification, treatment, and referral of domestic minors involved in prostitution (Halter, 2010; Smith et al., 2009).

Another theme was that despite the paucity of studies relative to the exact causes of domestic minor sex trafficking, there are a number of associated factors that seem to facilitate and perpetuate children's involvement in prostitution (Holger-Ambrose et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2009; Williams & Frederick, 2009). These include childhood maltreatment, chronic family-of-origin dysfunction; runaway patterns and homelessness; poverty; and substance abuse problems. In addition a lack of academic engagement was found to be associated with involvement in prostitution, as was situational or environmental factors such as proximity to transient populations (Clayton et al., 2013; Friedman, 2005; Rand, 2009; Smith et al., 2009; Steel & Herlitz, 2005).

In regard to the business of the sex industry, the review of the literature revealed another theme; that of the driving force of supply and demand and the significance of the underground subculture that exists to make a profit for the pimps and traffickers in the United States (Smith et al., 2009). Closely associated with recruitment into the life, are the consequences for juveniles involved in prostitution. The literature review indicated that minors who are sexually exploited through prostitution are repeatedly exposed to multiple levels of trauma that result in possible developmental, psychological, physical, medical, vocational, social functioning, and legal consequences (Clawson & Grace, 2007; Clawson et al., 2008). Based on these short and long-term sequelae, sexually exploited and trafficked children require specialized, trauma-specific recovery and rehabilitation services in addition to safe housing, medical and educational resources, and legal representation (Clayton et al., 2013; Okech et al., 2012; Rand, 2009; Smith et al., 2009).

A prominent theme was the dual status of children involved in prostitution; that of victim and offender. The intersection of victimization and criminality directly relates to the how police accomplish the following: perceive the children involved in prostitution; identify, classify, and treat this population set; and make decisions regarding arrest, detention, and/or referral through the criminal justice or child protection systems (Boyer, 2008; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Reid, 2010; Williamson & Prior, 2009).

A consistent subject of thought woven throughout the entire literature review addressed challenges faced by police officers who work with DMST cases, and the possible explanations of law enforcement's equivocal perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making processes relative to juveniles engaged in prostitution. This subject

was explored through the lenses of the law (e.g., confusing and inconsistent federal and state legislation regarding prostitution and DMST), the individual characteristics of victims (e.g., lack of cooperation with police officers), organizational factors (e.g., institutional barriers), and police personality traits (e.g., predisposed attitudes, biases, beliefs in myths, victim blaming; (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010; Bieneck & Krahe, 2011; Farrell et al., 2012; Grubb & Turner, 2012; Menaker & Miller, 2012; Page, 2008).

Empirical studies in these areas have traditionally been conducted through the perspective of graduate students, laypersons, victims, and victim advocates. Other studies have spoken to police behavior and decision-making through the retrospective study of police case files. Only very few studies offer qualitative methods to gain insight into the actual lived experiences of police officers relative to DMST. The current study filled the gap in understanding police officers' perceptions regarding juveniles involved in prostitution. Additionally, it addressed what the underlying attitudes, beliefs, and experiences were that contributed to these perceptions, and to what extent these factors influenced police decision-making relative to the response to DMST and its victims. I selected the tradition of multiple-case study research to frame my investigation of the phenomenon being studied, as it afforded me the opportunity to explore and analyze a multifaceted, contemporary phenomenon within bounded systems (cases) over a specific period of time. It also allowed me to focus on the meaning and richness of singular cases (e.g., individual police detectives), as well as further analyze across cases while still maintaining the integrity of each case. Document review and analysis provided

contextual sustenance, and situated the research in the context of the phenomenon of interest.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore police officers' conceptualizations of domestic minors engaged in prostitution. Additionally, the intent was to gain a comprehensive appreciation of the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values that underlie these perceptions and to discover what extent these factors influence police officers' decision making and responses to DMST. This chapter includes a synopsis of the study's research design and its rationale. In addition, I discuss the role of the qualitative researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and address my own perspectives and biases relative to the proposed study, as well as my interactions with the study's participants. The chapter also encompasses a description of the study's methodology. This incorporates an overview of the study's participant selection, sampling strategy, and instrumentation. Further, the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection and analysis are also included. Finally, I address the strategies I used to enhance the trustworthiness of the current study and discuss ethical concerns and related practices that were followed.

Research Design and Rationale

The central research questions that guided the current study are as follows:

1. How do police officers, who work with DMST on a regular basis, perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution?
2. What are the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that contribute to these perceptions? To what extent do all these factors influence police decision-

making in relation to how domestic minors who are trafficked through prostitution are identified, categorized, treated, and referred?

In addressing these research questions, I utilized a qualitative approach to inquiry. Drawing from the seminal writings in the field (Creswell, 2013; Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2007), there are a number of characteristics relative to this interpretive, emergent strategy. First, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing the data. In this role, I designed the instruments that were used in the study, reviewed all of the documents, and observed and interacted personally with the participants. Secondly, the researcher collects the data within the context of the participants' naturally occurring setting. This allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intrinsic complexity of the environment. Third, qualitative researchers generally draw their data from multiple sources. In the current study, I used interviews and significant documents (e.g., laws related to DMST, police procedures and protocols) to obtain my data which I synthesized and organized into categories and emerging themes. Fourth, qualitative researchers utilize inductive-deductive logic and analysis. This process afforded me the opportunity to build my categories and themes inductively, moving alternately from the data to the themes and back in an iterative manner, then using a deductive process to check against the data to formulate my final set of themes. Qualitative researchers provide a holistic portrayal of the problem. Again, the utilization of multiple sources and the nature of naturalistic inquiry facilitated a broad, complex perspective. Finally, my voice as a qualitative researcher was demonstrated

through the manner in which I situated myself in the data and used my own perspectives, experiences, reflections, biases, and sense of self-awareness to inform the study.

Qualitative research employs methodologies that are often diametrically opposed to those utilized by more traditional approaches to inquiry. For example, in selecting participants for a research study, a researcher conducting a quantitative study typically advocates random selection or random sampling to give each person an equal chance of being chosen from the population. This helps ensure that the study's sample is representative of the population. In contrast, the qualitative researcher is more concerned with deriving an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and, therefore, is more likely to purposely select participants who are familiar with the phenomenon who will provide rich, substantial, reflective information about the concerns of central significance. Along the same thread, Maxwell (2013) posited that although a study may contemplate some degree of representativeness, the principal focus is on providing a profound, substantial description and interpretation of the case. Therefore, in evaluating research studies, it is essential to recognize the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods. For the purposes of the current study, it was important to understand that the eventual results would not generalize to all police officers throughout the country, nor would the findings necessarily provide an understanding or a prediction of national patterns.

The research tradition I selected to frame my investigation of the topic of interest was a multiple-case study research design, an approach that focuses on the unique aspects of a multifaceted, contemporary phenomenon within an intrinsically bounded system (case) or bounded systems over a specific time period. In addition, the tradition utilizes

research questions that ask "how" and "why," and addresses behaviors or situations over which the researcher has minimal control (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). The approach draws on multiple sources of data and numerous perspectives to generate profound, meaningful, descriptive, and contextual data for interpretation and analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). In the current study, each of 4 participants (police detectives) represented a single case. The study was bound geographically by the selection of police detectives located in a western state who were assigned to the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit. The study was also bound by time, taking place within a one-month period. I utilized multiple data sources and the perspectives of faculty reviewers to triangulate and substantiate the data, thus augmenting the study's validity.

I selected a multiple-case study design for a number of reasons. This approach provided the wherewithal to examine a bounded, complex phenomenon (police perceptions and decision-making relative to domestic minor sex trafficking) with multiple variables of potential relevance. The design also necessitated the collection of extensive data from multiple sources, or the use of triangulation, in order to offer the reader a rich, substantive, and contextual depiction of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). The data for the study was extracted from sources such as in-depth interviews and historical and germane documents. Interpretative and thematic analysis focused on the contextual richness of each specific case as well as across cases. The insights derived from the study will potentially inform law enforcement policy, education, and practice.

Before deciding to employ multiple-case study research, I considered several other approaches for the current study: phenomenology and narrative research.

Phenomenological research focuses on the common meaning of individuals who experience the same phenomenon. After taking a fresh perspective of the phenomenon (e.g., setting aside one's own experiences or bracketing), the phenomenological researcher collects the data (e.g., the participants' thoughts, experiences, perceptions, values) from individuals who experienced the same phenomenon, analyzes and synthesizes the data, categorizes the material into statements and quotations, and combines these segments, reducing them to essential themes. Drawing from this material, the researcher develops a textural description of what the participants experienced and a structural description explaining how the phenomenon was experienced within context. From the amalgamation of the two perspectives, the researcher derives a composite description of the universal essence of the phenomenon as experienced by all of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Given that the phenomenological strategy focuses more on the universal meaning or essence of the phenomenon, as interpreted through the participants lived experiences rather than on the specific contextual significance of an individual case, I deemed the approach unsuitable for my particular study.

A second alternative I considered for my research study was narrative research. The intention of this qualitative research is to draw from the participants' own stories about life experiences, and the meaning of those experiences, often within a personal context. The stories are frequently retold through the lens of the researcher and organized as a chronology. Narrative research is a concentrated and collaborative endeavor between the participant and the researcher. The execution of this strategy involves extensive data

collection about the participant and the context of his or her life. In addition to spending an extended period of time with the participant, assembling the stories and life experiences from multiple sources, the researcher serves as an integral, interactive participant whose personal stories and perspectives contribute to shaping the narrative and giving it meaning (Creswell, 2013). In as much as narrative research focuses on how one or several individuals develop a narrative of their lives, rather than developing an in-depth understanding of a bounded phenomenon, the approach was deemed incompatible relative to the purpose of the proposed study.

Role of the Researcher

The qualitative researcher has the responsibility to present research that merits investigation and a commitment to provide conclusions that are consequential to the reader (Stake, 1995). In addition to designing every aspect of the research study, the qualitative researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. There are a number of personal attributes that served me well in this unique position. In addition to demonstrating perseverance in addressing the challenges of developing the current research project, the ability to establish my credibility was critical. Communicating to the reader what I brought to the study in terms of experience and expertise, as well as revealing my own perspective, assumptions, and biases and using them in a productive way throughout the study, were paramount. Adaptability was also vitally important. For example, in working with the unpredictable, constantly changing context of natural inquiry, oftentimes data collection and data analysis take the researcher down a different, unexpected path. New dimensions of the study may emerge, and

favorite theories may prove unjustifiable. My role as the researcher required that I be flexible, and strive to go with the tide instead of attempting to control the direction of the study. Finally, my ability to perform multiple tasks simultaneously (e.g., collect and analyze the data, maintain technical rigor, continue to compose relevant analytic memos, remain amenable to new directions and ideas) was required (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Janesick, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Padgett, 2008).

In gathering the data from multiple sources, I personally engaged with the respondents, gatekeepers, other police officers, and civil employees in the police department. I endeavored to establish positive, trusting connections, while maintaining impartiality. I conducted in-depth interviews and investigated and assessed documents having to do with the phenomenon of interest such as the following: police department policies, procedures, and protocols; laws; and partnerships with other governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations. In performing these endeavors, as well as attending to all aspects of the research process, the potential for researcher bias existed. One of the ways I addressed this issue was to position myself within the context of the study through the process of reflexivity (Creswell, 2013; Padgett, 2008). Later in the narrative, I discuss other strategies used to manage my personal biases and ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Reflexivity, as previously noted, is the process of exploring my subjectivity and the origins of my ever-changing perspectives, actions, values, predilections, and biases, relative to the phenomenon of interest, and examining how they influence the course and outcomes of the current research study (Creswell, 2013; Simmons, 2009) This was

especially important in choosing multiple-case study research, as I re-presented the views and experiences of the respondents (police detectives), structuring the meaning of their reality through my own voice and perspective. In attempting to make my position in this study as explicit as possible, it was essential that I reflect on my own values and experiences.

Coming from a family that venerated priority of family, scholarship, social and individual responsibility, and commitment to improving people's quality of life, I found myself attracted to the fields of criminal justice and education early in my professional career. These were disciplines that offered multidimensional pathways toward actualizing my passion for helping others. For the past 30 plus years, I have derived great satisfaction from working with two divergent populations, victims and offenders, assisting them in navigating their way from unhealthy and damaging life situations toward making positive, healthy life decisions. Both populations have in common the fact that they are generally underserved and that they often need to surmount challenging obstacles such as a lack of purpose, negative view of the future, stigma, and shame.

As the founder and executive director of two best practice, county-wide criminal justice and educational programs for young misdemeanor offenders, high risk children and teens, and sexually abused and exploited children, I worked in collaboration with state and local government, including law enforcement. Our principal objective was to facilitate children and teens in building a strong foundation of developmental assets to help them adapt; grow up healthy, confident, compassionate and responsible; and thrive. Perhaps our most significant contribution over the past 35 plus years was motivating

positive social change through a gradual paradigm shift from utilizing a medical/deficit/vulnerability approach to employing a wellness/strength-based strategy within the criminal justice, youth development, and educational fields. The two programs, with which I was passionately involved for nearly three decades, among other professional pursuits, served as a chronicle of my vision, leadership, proficiencies, values, and love for creating new ideas and structures, and strong desire to foster a sense of self-efficacy in young people. It is clear to me that my research topic grew out of the context of my work with child sexual assault victim/witnesses and my extended, positive relationship with the law enforcement community.

Given my extensive experience working with the police, and the fact that I have conducted prior research on this population, I was aware of the sensitivity of this study. I was also cognizant of the many sources of pressure police encounter, such as the unpredictability of the job, involvement in stressful and/or threatening situations, and the potential for secondary trauma. In order to address the possibility of researcher bias, I acknowledged my technical awareness, research history, and personal interactions with law enforcement, and used these areas of subjectivity to inform the study (Peshkin as cited in Maxwell, 2013). I also utilized analytic memos to document my experiential knowledge and assumptions as a way of accounting for my own perspectives and realizing how they influenced the study.

As I engaged in the lengthy, intensive interviews to gain insight into each participant's underlying beliefs, values, and experiences relative to domestic minor sex trafficking, I attempted to approach the topics with compassion, empathy, and respect.

Further, in order to address the possibility of researcher bias, I called on my committee members to review the raw data and evaluate my results to determine their plausibility.

Methodology

Participant Selection, Site, and Sampling Size

The population of interest consisted of sworn police detectives assigned to the vice and youth sex trafficking unit in a metropolitan police department situated on the west coast of the United States. This geographic area, known as the West Coast Trafficking Circuit, serves as a gateway and destination for juveniles involved in prostitution, given that the international seaports, airports, and interstate highways provide copious opportunities for traffickers and pimps to transport, seduce, coerce, and recruit vulnerable youth into the commercial sex industry.

In intentionally selecting the participants, who serve as the units of analysis for this multiple-case study, the essential criterion was that they experience the phenomenon of investigating and processing domestic minors involved in prostitution as a part of their regular, assigned responsibilities. This purposive sampling approach, which draws from information-rich cases that best manifest the phenomenon, incorporated the following: criterion sampling (e.g., choosing cases that meet the decisive factors listed above); time and setting-specific parameters (e.g., the collection of data within a bounded sampling period), and triangulation (e.g., mixing diverse sampling types; Patton, 2002). My population of interest, police detectives assigned to the vice and youth sex trafficking unit in a large city, represented a rich, substantive source of information that afforded me the opportunity to garner a thorough, in-depth understanding of the experiences, values, and

decision-making processes of officers who work with DMST cases. The time-specific parameters required that I conduct my participant recruitment and data collection (e.g., using multiple sources of data including in-depth interviews and significant documents) within a four-week period of time. Additionally, the employment of criterion sampling, a specific type of purposeful sampling strengthened the study and increased its validity.

In establishing the initial sample size of the current study, I looked to existing case studies in the research base. Additionally, I reviewed the perspectives of the seminal authors on qualitative research, explicitly case study research (e.g., Merriam, 1998; 2009; Patton, 2002; Simmons, 2009; Yin, 2009). Patton (2002) asserted that there is no template to follow when conducting qualitative research; that the richness of the data is far more relevant than the size of the sample, which is emergent and open to change. However, he did propose that a minimum sample size be specified for planning and funding reasons, based on the study's purpose and the researcher's anticipated requirements for adequate coverage. Creswell (2013) suggested that not more than 4 or 5 individual cases be investigated in a single study, informing that this quantity should prove adequate for deriving rich data to support the study, identifying meaningful themes, and conducting cross-case analysis. Wolcott (2008) took a more conservative view, suggesting that more than one well-defined case weakens the important features of a study. Based on the research, the existing studies with a similar design and methodology as mine, and the measure of information needed to comprehensively explore and gain an in-depth, detailed understanding of the phenomenon, I decided to use a sample consisting of 4 cases. This number of cases afforded me the opportunity to conduct a richly

descriptive, exhaustive, and robust study, allowing for the delineation of patterns and themes within and across cases, as well as cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009). The inclusion criterion required that selected sworn police officers were assigned to a unit that specifically works with DMST cases. In addition, they needed to have a sincere interest in the nature and meaning of the phenomenon and express amenability to participating in a lengthy, tape-recorded interview (approximately 60 minutes). Finally, participants needed to express their consent to having the research study published in a dissertation or other publication (see Appendix A).

Instrumentation

In order to address my research problem adequately, I attempted to provide an appreciation of the cases in their totality, from a holistic point of view. This required that the data reflect both intensity and breadth. To accomplish this, I collected data from two sources: in-depth interviews and relevant documents.

I designed and implemented a semi-structured interview guide to elicit specific information about the phenomenon of interest and the emergent thoughts and perceptions of the respondents. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of this instrument and determine if it aligned with my central research questions, I consulted with a panel of experts. The panel consisted of colleagues with advanced degrees in psychology and social work, practitioners who work with victims of child sexual abuse and other types of trauma within and outside of the criminal justice system.

The self-designed interview guide, accompanied by a face sheet, was comprised of prepared, semi-structured, open-ended questions that enabled me to capture each

respondent's unique descriptions and explanations of beliefs, values, and experiences related to the phenomenon of interest. I constructed this tool based on (a) Janesick (2011) and Rubin and Rubin's (2012) typologies, which included basic, broad, descriptive questions; follow-up and amplification inquiries; probing; and comparison and contrast questions, and (b) Strauss, Schtzman, Bucher, and Sabshin's suggested structural types entailing "hypothetical, devil's advocate, ideal position, and interpretive questions" (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 76). Merriam informed that hypothetical questions ask the respondent to speculate about a particular circumstance or issue, an approach that often garners the interviewee's accounts of real-life experiences. Devil's advocate questions ask the respondent to consider a conflicting viewpoint. Posed in an impersonal, non-threatening manner (e.g., "Some people might think"), they draw out the personal beliefs, values, and opinions of the participant. In asking respondents to describe an ideal situation, both information and attitudes are elicited. Interpretive questions serve several purposes. They confirm the investigator's understanding of the respondent's experiences and interpretations, and they extract additional information, ideas, and views. By incorporating the above mentioned strategies into the design of my interview guide, I felt confident in my ability to get to the core issues relative to the phenomenon and my research questions. I also benefited from the inherent flexibility of the design that enabled me to change direction at any time and pursue evolving issues (see Appendix B).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The implementation of a pilot study before the commencement of a study is often beneficial to the researcher in addressing the substance of the data, as well as refining

various aspects of the research process (e.g., the development of interview questions, concept clarification, elements of data collection and analysis, the honing of procedures; (Janesick, 2011). Given the small number of respondents, I decided not to conduct a pilot study. As previously mentioned, however, I did enlist a panel of advanced-level experts to assess my interview questions for their appropriateness and to determine if there was any bias embedded in the questions.

In the current study, the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection are discussed in relation to the protocols that were used for each data source. The data sources included the individual interviews with police detectives and significant documents related to domestic minor sex trafficking, including internal correspondence and text from the vice and youth sex trafficking unit.

Recruitment and interview protocol. The relationships I fostered with police officials who facilitated the implementation of my research project at the police department, in addition to the four police detectives who participated in the current study, were the essential elements in my methodology. Initially, I perceived gaining access to the police department a definite challenge, as the police culture is a closed entity, often difficult to penetrate. Cognizant of the sensitive nature of the topic of interest, and the fact that I was asking permission to temporarily intrude, albeit, in a small way, in the lives of the participants, my approach to both the officials who served as the gatekeepers, and the authorized representatives in charge of the furtherance of the current study, was measured. I felt it was critical that I present myself as a competent, credible professional with extensive experience working and collaborating with law enforcement. I also

thought it was necessary to convey that in my role as the primary investigator, I would be a neutral observer, respectful of the potential respondents' perceptions and grateful for their valuable contributions and collaborative efforts. Additionally, as my interactions with the four participants continually changed throughout the recruitment and data collection process (e.g., negotiating and re-negotiating meeting dates, extending the length of interviews), it was important for me to maintain their trust and confidence, preserve credibility, and strive for mutual understanding and connection (Maxwell, 2013).

I initially emailed the police lieutenant in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit of the Pacifica City Police Department in order to procure authorization for conducting my dissertation research project at the organizational site as well as obtain permission to invite police officers in the unit to take part in the study. This electronic correspondence included the following: a personal introduction; the title of my research study; a brief report regarding my status in the dissertation process; a request for permission to invite sworn officers in the unit to take part in the study; a brief description of the study; specific procedures involved relative to the potential participants; an explanation of privacy and confidentiality issues; the voluntary nature of participating in the study; the opportunity for participants to review the study's findings; and the potential benefits of the research. I also attached a Sample Letter of Cooperation, the Invitation and Consent Form, and my Curriculum Vitae. The lieutenant gave me preliminary approval to conduct my research and recruit officers within his unit, and then directed me to the audit, policy,

and research division for formal vetting by the legal department, grant and contract unit, and the Office of the Chief of Police.

I received formal approval, in the form of a signed Letter of Cooperation, from the appointed designee in the Office of the Police Chief to conduct the dissertation research study and recruit police officers to take part in the project. I also signed a Research Agreement with the police department that delineated the terms and conditions relative to departmental employees in the furtherance of the proposed research study. Subsequently, upon receiving approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (# 11-11-14-0186499), I began the data collection process.

I re-contacted the lieutenant from the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit to identify potential participants who met my inclusion criteria. Instead of providing these names to me, he chose to present the research project to eligible participants himself. He provided them with my Invitation and Consent Form (see Appendix A), and requested that the interested police detectives contact me directly. Four qualified police detectives independently responded to my invitation via email. They all communicated an interest in my topic, expressed a willingness to partake in a personal interview, and signed the consent form.

Accommodating each police detective's personal calendar, I scheduled the one-to-one interviews at various coffee shops and eateries, locations that were well situated, comfortable, and ensured the privacy of the respondents. The sites were also conducive to audio taping our confidential meetings. Prior to commencing the interviews, I reiterated the intent of the study and reviewed the anticipated length of the interview with the

participants. I promised to inform the respondents if we reached the 60-minute limit and asked if they would consider negotiating an extended interview if deemed necessary. In the end, each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. To protect the respondents' privacy and confidentiality, the detectives selected pseudonyms to be used during the interview and throughout the course of the study. All of the interviews were conducted within a one-month period of time.

I recorded all four interviews with a digital voice-recording device to ensure clarity and provide the means to transfer the recorded file to my personal computer if I chose to do so. I also took copious, handwritten notes in case a problem occurred with the recording equipment. I recorded my thoughts, impressions, and reflections in the margins of my interview guide for future reference, and performed member checking during the interviews by oftentimes repeating the participant's ideas for clarification and by rephrasing and reframing concepts to ensure that my interpretations were accurate. I utilized an interview face sheet to record the date, time, and setting of the interviews as well as information regarding the detectives' current assignments at the police department (see Appendix B). After completing the interview questions, I expressed my sincere appreciation to the detectives for contributing to my research study.

Document protocol. Merriam (1998) noted that data derived from documents provide contextual sustenance and position the research in the context of the phenomenon being studied. I requested documents from the police lieutenant in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit in an emailed addendum to the Letter of Cooperation. They included official departmental policies, procedures, and protocols relative to DMST, as well as

professional development materials and curricula related to human trafficking and the sexual commercial exploitation of children. I also asked for any other data that were deemed relevant. I researched the public domain and found relevant federal and state laws on prostitution and numerous press releases and newspaper articles about minor sex trafficking in the state. Additionally, I found the state model protocol for commercially sexually exploited children and the related, updated report to the legislature prepared by the Office of the Attorney General. In conducting online research, significant information on regional anti-trafficking task forces was also located in addition to best practice guidelines for law enforcement from sources such as nonprofit organizations (e.g., BEST (Businesses Ending Slavery & Trafficking); Washington Engage; The Polaris Project). As the sole investigator, it was important for me to establish the legitimacy, accuracy, history, and potential bias of the information derived from the documents. I recorded the data collected from the documents that I selected to include in the current study on a Document Retrieval Form (see Appendix F). The collection of documents took place within the bounded case study time parameters.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative analysis began when I commenced to engage with the data (Patton, 2002). The process was emergent and dynamic, as I was never quite certain how many participants I could recruit or how much thick, rich data would be garnered from the interviews. Further, I was uncertain when a new insight would emerge or what new information would need to be mined after the data was amassed and analyzed.

My data analysis strategy entailed simultaneous data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). Given that the study's sample consisted of multiple cases, I conducted a within-case analysis for each of the four cases and a cross-case analysis. In addressing data preparation, I personally transcribed the four audio-recorded interviews verbatim immediately after the respective sessions, a process that allowed me to immerse myself in the data. I organized the documents using the Document Retrieval Form (see Appendix D). My raw data also included my analytic memos (e.g., personal thoughts, insights, hunches) and the information derived from my research journal. All of this data created the database from which I drew for the current study. Based on my study's small sample size, and the time and skill needed to learn a new qualitative software program, I organized and managed my data manually with the assistance of Microsoft Word.

I analyzed the data on a number of levels, transitioning from the raw data to identifying codes and categories that were responsive to my research questions, to making connections and identifying relationships, to developing larger themes within and across cases. The initial level of analysis consisted of organizing and preparing the data and re-reading the interview transcripts, analytic memos, and significant documents. In order to get a broad sense of the data, I wrote down my initial thoughts and impressions of the themes that emerged from the interview data using a continuous, free-flowing method, not unlike a stream of consciousness activity. In addition, I also generated a word cloud using Wordle (Feinberg, 2013), a web-based tool that gave me a visual representation of the points of interest in the text by displaying, in a random manner, the most frequently used words using font size. The more the words appeared in the text, the

greater prominence or size they had in the visual image. Through the use of this tool, I was able to validate my own initial sense of the data, including possible themes, as well as form a foundation for more intensive analysis (McNaught & Lam, 2010).

At the second level of analysis, I used open coding (Merriam, 2009) to identify meaningful segments (e.g., words, phrases, and concepts) within the text of the interview transcripts and relative to my analytic memos. I tried to be as expansive as possible at this stage of the analysis. To assist me in this endeavor, I wrote in the margins of the transcripts, underlined words and phrases, and used colored highlighters to emphasize relevant portions of the data. I repeated this undertaking for each individual transcript and, subsequently, transferred this information to a separate master list, delineating the codes from each participant by color. In analyzing the significant documents that I retrieved from the public domain and the police department, I used content analysis. Merriam (2009) described this process as a methodical way of relating the nature and content of the communications. Drawing from the various documents, I represented the data in terms of intent, contents, historical understanding, authenticity, and potential bias. In addition, I scanned the data for new insights pertinent to my research questions and emerging themes.

At the next level of analysis, I applied axial coding, sometimes referred to as analytic coding (Merriam, 2009). I reflected on the meaning of the data and grouped similar words and concepts (codes) into categories or themes, developing a rough outline comprised of categories and associated concepts. In developing my themes, I analyzed the participants' responses to the interview questions within the framework of attribution

theory, focusing on its three dimensions: causal judgment, social inference, and predicting future outcomes (Heider, 1958; Ross, 1977). I considered how the police detectives explained the causes of why children become involved in prostitution and how police formulated their inferences regarding the culpability of the juveniles and the nature of the situations or environment. I also analyzed the participants' predictions of the likelihood of juveniles continuing their involvement in prostitution or taking steps to get out of the life.

I continuously compared the categories and concepts derived from the interview manuscripts and the germane aspects of the documents. I also factored in my personal analytical observations and impressions. I verified that the concepts and categories or themes were a true reflection of the participants' responses to the interview questions, and also confirmed the associations or relationships between the concepts and categories.

After implementing the inductive process of generating numerous categories and associated concepts, I endeavored to reduce their number and simplify the data in order to better facilitate exploration and the development of relationships. I combined similar concepts and eliminated others that did not appear to have significant dimensions. In relation to the categories, I went about decreasing their number based on their relevance to the research questions. In addition, I considered if all of the significant data fit into every category and if each category was mutually exclusive and distinct. I also endeavored to develop a reasonable number of categories based on the amount of my data (Merriam, 2009). I then used connecting strategies to find contextual relationships, emergent themes, and interpretive constructs for the data garnered from each case and the

relevant documents. The final listing of categories and associated concepts extracted from the data sources can be found in Chapter 4.

In order to help corroborate my interpretation of meaningful relationships relative to the themes and concepts that emerged from the interviews, I utilized another web-based analytic tool called "Text is Beautiful" (Kapiche, 2014). This instrument gave me a visual demonstration (e.g., in the form of a topic cloud) of both concepts (a collection of words) and themes. More advanced than Wordle, which focused on word counting, "Text is Beautiful" also color-coded the concepts, conveying relationships and themes through color (see Figure 1.0). The tool was beneficial in roughly validating my sense of the data and highlighting many important concepts. However, the concepts and themes produced by the tool were derived in the absence of context and, therefore, did not reflect their origins or meanings as they related to my particular study. Still, the process of creating the analytical configurations, and the ability to study them and compare the concepts and patterns with the ones that emerged from my own coding system, assisted me in further analytic thinking. I felt this process was constructive. In addition, the analytic tool helped me to find both similarities and differences between the participants' responses.

A visualization of the research questions, emergent themes, and the respondents' representative examples, can be found in Chapter 4.

As part of the analysis process, I made a concerted effort to search for data that exhibited rival propositions or discrepancies. I felt the acknowledgement of alternative perspectives would offer me the opportunity to give an explanation of their rejection or present them as viable alternative interpretations within my case study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In conducting my research, I endeavored to stimulate confidence in my investigation and arrive at outcomes that were ethical and trustworthy. Grounded in the qualitative inquiry paradigm, the trustworthiness of a research study is reliant on the following constructs: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba as cited in Patton, 2002). discrepancies in Chapter 4.

Credibility

The concept of credibility, considered one of the most important factors in ascertaining trustworthiness, addresses the compatibility of the findings with reality (Merriam, 1998). Merriam delineated the following strategies for increasing the credibility of a study: triangulation; member checks; sufficient engagement with the data; peer review; and reflexivity. In order to enhance the credibility of my study, I immersed myself in the existing research literature in order to frame my study and its conclusions. I employed triangulation by using multiple data sources, including interviews with police detectives and document review, and cross-checked the data to obtain my results. I used multiple peer reviewers to validate case study instruments and materials, provide

alternative perspectives, and scrutinize the data to reduce potential bias. In addition, I performed member checking during the interview to ensure the accuracy of my interpretations. I used sufficient engagement during the data collection and analysis process by reviewing the data until it felt saturated, and the same patterns and themes repeated themselves with no new information emerging. I also engaged in a thorough, prolonged study of the participants' culture and environment to achieve a rich, comprehensive, contextual understanding of the data. Finally, I demonstrated reflexivity through reflective commentary (e.g., recording my ongoing impressions of the research process) and the examination and documentation of my own experiences, background, qualifications, beliefs, and biases.

Transferability

Transferability addresses the generalizability of the study's findings. Although qualitative research emphasizes the exclusivity, particularization, and profound understanding of a singular case(s), there are some researchers who feel that it is feasible that a study's conclusions be applicable to other situations. Stake, one of the seminal contributors to case study research, took this stance (Shenton, 2004). One of the strategies that enhance the transferability of a qualitative study is the use of rich, thick, description to establish context and relevance, and allow the reader to make comparisons to other situations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Merriam, 1998). In the current study, I used rich, substantial, exacting description in depicting the natural setting, participants, analytic memos, and documents relative to the study. In addition, I provided in-depth explanations of all aspects of the research process, including data collection and analysis.

Dependability

The construct of dependability refers to the extent to which the results of a study are consistent with the data collected. Dependability, sometimes referred to as auditability (Padgett, 2008), signifies that the research processes and procedures are documented, detailed, and comprehensive, affording future researchers the ability to replicate the work, albeit not necessarily to obtain identical findings. I endeavored to enhance the dependability of the current study by facilitating the reader's capacity to make sense of the data and gain a thorough knowledge of the study's methodologies and effectiveness. I presented in-depth descriptions of my research design, methodologies, reflections on the study's effectiveness, and the minutiae involved in all aspects of the ongoing project. I also employed triangulation by using multiple sources and methods of data collection. I used a panel of experts to review my research design and methodology (e.g., interview protocol) and provide alternative perspectives. Additionally, I asked Walden faculty members to comment on the plausibility of my findings and help ensure the quality and accuracy of my data collection and analysis. In addition, I maintained a journal that served as an audit trail, documenting my experiences, the decisions I made throughout the research process, and data collection and analysis procedures. I also included other facets of my research project as part of the audit history including my self-designed data collection tool and letters of consent and cooperation. The inclusion of this data served to verify the rigor and precision of the current study (Merriam, 2009; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Confirmability

Confirmability is comparable to the concept of objectivity, and is attained by demonstrating that the study's findings are a result of the research (e.g., the experiences and perceptions of the participants) as opposed to the subjective predilections and interpretations of the researcher (Padgett, 2008; Shenton, 2004). I employed several strategies to address this construct including reflexivity, to help me clarify my own biases and preferences, and triangulation, to help diminish the potential effects of these biases. Additionally, the audit trail used to trace the research process and my decision-making processes, in addition to my thorough description of the methodologies used in the study, served to enhance the study's objectivity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Procedures

As a qualitative researcher, one of my principal responsibilities was to conduct my research in an ethical manner. This involved adhering to the ethical standards set forth by the Independent Review Board (IRB) and submitting my paper to their review and approval process to ensure that my research study complied with U.S. federal regulations and Walden University's ethical standards. The IRB's principal concerns included "ensuring ethical practice and protection of participants...particularly those involving protected classes; potential challenges identifying subjects or obtaining informed consent; deception of subjects; potential coercion; or personality, attitude, and gender preference measurements" (Walden University, 2012).

After receiving a formal approval notice of my proposal from the Office of Student Research Administration (OSRA), and prior to beginning my data collection, I submitted my application to Walden University's IRB. They approved my research proposal (approval # 11-11-14-0186499) based on the above mentioned ethical standards. I obtained a letter of cooperation from the Office of the Chief of Police, as well as signed consent forms from all of the study's participants. I ensured the ethical treatment and protection of the study's participants by executing a number of specific protocols. I informed the participants of the purpose of the study and my role as the sole researcher. I described the required procedures for the participants and the expected duration of the interviews and any follow-up communications. I notified the participants that the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Additionally, I provided a description of reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts and anticipated benefits to the participants and others. I explained how the confidentiality of the participant's personal information and data collected during the interview process and the briefing would be maintained, and provided information regarding who to contact for questions regarding the research or questions about their rights as participants. I requested that the informed consent form be signed and provided a copy to the participant (Walden University, n. d.). To further protect the participants, I provided pseudonyms for the study's participants, the police department, and several agencies and task forces named in the significant documents. I secured all of my data in a locked file drawer and password-protected computers. As the sole researcher, I was, and continue to be, the only person who has access to the data. Data will be kept for a period

of at least 5 years, as required by Walden University. The practices mentioned above gave me confidence regarding the security of the data and the protection, privacy, and confidentiality of all of the participants.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I provided an account of the research methodology of my study, including the research design and its justification. I utilized a qualitative approach to inquiry, employing a multiple-case study research design to investigate police officers' perceptions of domestic minors involved in prostitution and the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that influence police decision-making regarding DMST cases. Relative to the methodology, I described my role as a researcher and disclosed my personal experiences and perspectives with law enforcement and victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. I identified purposeful sampling as my sampling strategy and described my rationale in regard to participant selection, the organizational site, and sampling size. I also discussed data collection instrumentation, recruitment, participation, and data collection protocols. For this study, I derived my data from multiple sources including interviews with police detectives who work on a regular basis with minors involved in prostitution, and important documents related to DMST. I self-designed a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide, and presented the protocols for obtaining and reviewing documents. In addition I described my data analysis strategies, within each case and across cases and all data sources, in relation to determining the emergent themes and the non-conforming data. In this chapter, I also addressed issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 4 focuses on the key results of the current research study. It consists of a review of the intent of the study and the research questions, as well as a preview of the chapter organization. The chapter also includes the study's setting, the data collection protocols, and the individual case bibliographies. Additionally, a description of the methods used for data analysis, relative to the police interviews and the review of the significant documents, is discussed and reflected in visual displays. Theme analysis and discussion of non-conforming data are explained. The themes and discrepant data constitute the findings or results of the current study, and are presented within the context of the research questions. The chapter also contains a description of the strategies I employed to provide evidence of trustworthiness. Finally, a summary of the answers to the research questions is presented.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore police officers' conceptualizations of domestic minors engaged in prostitution, and gain a comprehensive appreciation of the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values that underlie these perceptions. In addition, I attempted to ascertain to what extent these factors influence police officers' decision-making and responses relative to domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) cases. In order to achieve this purpose, I described the perceptions, experiences, and beliefs of four police detectives assigned to the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit at the Pacifika City Police Department (a pseudonym created to protect the confidentiality of the participants). I also reviewed and analyzed significant documents related to DMST within the context of the study.

The central research questions that guided the current study were as follows:

1. How do police officers, who work with DMST on a regular basis, perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution?
2. What are the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that contribute to these perceptions? To what extent do all these factors influence police decision-making in relation to how domestic minors who are trafficked through prostitution are identified, categorized, treated, and referred?

This chapter includes the results of the current study. It encompasses a description of the setting or the natural environment within which the police detectives work. In addition, it includes the case bibliographies of the study's participants, including

demographics. This chapter provides an explanation of how the data were collected and analyzed within and across cases and data sources. It also demonstrates, using tables, how I constructed the major categories that emerged from the interviews and relevant documents. Additionally, the chapter incorporates a presentation of how I established the themes and non-conforming data from each data source. Relative to the evidence of trustworthiness, I discuss the strategies I used to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Finally, I present the results of the study and a summary of the answers to the research questions.

Setting

This multiple-case study focused on the Pacifika City Police Department, an organization situated in a large metropolitan area in the western region of the United States. According to the city website, Pacifika City had an estimated population of over 600,000 in 2014. The state in which Pacifika City is located was considered a major gateway and destination for the trafficking of children. This status was attributed to several factors, including the area's close proximity to multiple seaports, some of which were international ports; international airports; and a system of interstate highways. Additionally, societal and environmental factors in Pacifika City created an enhanced demand for prostitution. These factors included an established area of adult prostitution, crime organizations and gangs, and transient populations such as truckers, military personnel, conventioners, and tourists. Additionally, Pacifika City was considered part of the West Coast circuit, along which traffickers seduced, coerced, and recruited domestic minors into the commercial sex industry.

The Pacifika City Police Department was comprised of approximately 1350 sworn police officers, according to a city official. The four detectives who took part in this study were assigned to the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit, a section that specialized in domestic minor sex trafficking, among other prostitution-related offenses. According to the detectives, the commercial sex trafficking of minors in Pacifika City was a well-established industry. The business was primarily run by the traffickers and pimps, and financially supported by the buyers' demands for young victims. It was within this context that much of the work performed by the detectives took place.

The study's four participants were assigned to one of two squads: Street Vice and General Investigations. The detectives reported that Street Vice was comprised of police detectives whose major role was to combat street crime related to prostitution. This included undercover work (e.g., offer and agree to an act of prostitution) and prostitution-related offenses. Another focus of Street Vice was the targeting of buyers (johns) who solicited juveniles or women for prostitution, and the investigation of adult entertainment establishments, such as strip clubs and escort services, where a significant amount of prostitution takes place. According to the Pacifika City Police Department website, the detectives also investigated gambling and liquor violations, and assisted with foreign victims of commercial sexual exploitation involved in organized crime activity, escort services, and brothels. The four police detectives reported that the overarching mission of this squad was to rescue children and women from the life (the period of time that a woman or child is involved in prostitution) and assist in their safe recovery and restoration.

The detectives assigned to General Investigations carried out a number of tasks. According to an updated police department website, the detectives were cross-deputized with the FBI's Child Exploitation Task Force and worked on cases in which juveniles were being targeted and exploited by traffickers or pimps through prostitution. Additionally, the detectives were responsible for rescuing and restoring minors who were already being victimized. Other criminal activity within the purview of General Investigations, according to the police department website, included sexual assault, prostitution-related robberies and theft, and offenses related to Pacifika City's Adult Entertainment Ordinance (e.g., illegal alcohol, tobacco, and gambling offenses). Referrals to General Investigations originated from a variety of sources. For example, according to one of the police detectives, a mother might call in with information that her child was being sexually exploited. Another situation might involve a proactive, police-generated activity, where the detectives ran an operation to attack an adult website posting the photographs of young children. Reportedly the lines of separation between the two squads were oftentimes obscure, as all of the detectives under the umbrella of the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit assisted one another and collaborated on cases and operations.

The study's participants worked a variety of venues in investigating and responding to juveniles involved in prostitution. The detectives were based out of a small basement office in a police support facility. One of the police detectives described the unit as "fluid," as each of the members of the two squads were rarely found in one place during their shift. Depending on where the cases or tips came from (e.g., a complaint of

prostitution, a police sting operation), the study's participants could be found in the following locations: on the streets or the track where minors involved in prostitution found buyers; at hotels; in the malls; at adult entertainment establishments; in massage parlors or strip clubs; in court; or basically, anywhere. Additionally, the detectives reported that they worked the Internet in search of the more veiled and sophisticated types of exploitive contacts. The parameters of the setting in which the detectives from the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit worked reached even beyond city and state limits in cases when a resident child needed to be rescued and was located in another municipality or state.

During the period of time in which I conducted the participant interviews, the detectives indicated they were involved with other work-related events and organizational conditions. This included at least one detective's additional assignment to protect the public during demonstrations taking place in Pacifika City's downtown district. Further, at the time of the study, the lieutenant of the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit reported that the entire Pacifika City Police Department was under scrutiny by the United States Department of Justice for deficiencies related to the use of excessive force and discriminatory practices, a situation that created some degree of pressure. In addition, the detectives were in the midst of transitioning to a new chief of police.

Participant Demographics

Four police detectives from the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit of the Pacifika City Police Department took part in this study. They all had extensive experience in law enforcement, as well as expertise in the field of domestic minor sex trafficking and

related crime. Their years of experience in policing ranged from 16-45 plus years, and their tenure in this particular unit averaged 11 1/2 years. The detectives experienced different socio-economic circumstances and had varied educational backgrounds. All four respondents attended universities and/or advanced, specialized seminars and courses in areas such as criminal justice, leadership, general and vice investigations, interrogation techniques, and different methodologies related to warrants, technology, among other subject areas. In addition to attending these trainings, the detectives facilitated and taught classes on prostitution-related topics to fellow police officers, other professionals in the field, and the public.

As part of their job, each participant had experience as an undercover buyer and took part in prostitution stings and other police-generated operations. They experienced a myriad of law enforcement contacts with children and women suspected of prostitution and related activities. In addition, they engaged in contacts with suspected buyers and pimps, many of which resulted in arrest and prosecution. Through these contacts, the detectives gained experience and knowledge regarding the underground subculture and related social norms associated with prostitution (e.g., recruitment techniques used by pimps, strategies of manipulation and control, consequences of violating a pimp's rules). In addition, they learned the vernacular used by the subculture's players (e.g., traffickers, johns, and prostituted girls), as well as became knowledgeable regarding the most popular areas in the city for prostitution and the ever-changing online marketplaces for recruiting and promoting minors.

The respondents supported the efforts of various regional, state, and federal task forces such as the FBI's Child Exploitation Task Force, Advisory Committee on Trafficking Task Force; the Human Trafficking Task Force; and other joint task forces affiliated with departments such as the State Attorney General's Office; the County Prosecuting Attorney's Office; Homeland Security; the Secret Service; and Customs and Border Protection, among others. The foremost objectives of these task forces were to ensure that all victims of human trafficking were informed and provided access to all available resources, and that the perpetrators (e.g., traffickers, pimps, johns) were held accountable and prosecuted to the greatest extent of the law.

Two of the participants, Detective Green and Detective Brown (pseudonyms) were assigned to Street Vice. They were both veteran police professionals with 46 years of combined experience with the Pacifica City Police Department. Before securing a position with the department, Detective Brown served in the military, gained proficiency in the field of electronics, and participated in specialized, advanced law enforcement trainings. Detective Brown grew up in a low-income area of town, where he attended the local high school. As a result of his childhood and young adult life experiences, he became exceedingly concerned and well-educated about the challenges and struggles experienced by people from the neighborhood. His interpretation of the saying, "there, but by the grace of God go I," and his deep religious belief and faith in his fellow man, inspired his empathic perspective toward troubled individuals and his eventual work in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit.

Detective Green was the senior member of his squad, and for that matter, the entire Vice and High Risk Victims Unit. With 25 years behind him at the Pacifica City Police Department, and an extensive history in law enforcement, Detective Green, according to his colleagues, served as an invaluable mentor. Initially attending school to become a professional in the field of forestry, Detective Green took a transitory job as a police cadet to fund his education, and unexpectedly, ended up becoming a police officer. His compassion for victims and passion for the job stemmed from viewing individuals who had been damaged by life's circumstances through the lens of a man who, himself, had experienced profound challenges in life. He informed that from day one in the Vice Unit, he perceived children and young girls involved in prostitution solely as victims. He ultimately spent over 20 years modeling, for his department, a victim-centered approach to working with this population. This pioneering perspective became what professionals in the field consider today a best practice (Snow, 2008).

Detective Blue and Detective Gray (pseudonyms) were assigned to General Investigations. Their collective experience in law enforcement totaled 46 years, with a combined 32 years at the Pacifica City Police Department, and 13 years assigned to the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit. Detective Blue grew up in a military family with whom he traveled the world, experiencing different parts of the United States, other countries, and diverse cultures and ethnicities. Early on, he gained wisdom and knowledge relative to the spectrum of social and economic problems endured by struggling families and communities, taking special note of the impact drugs and criminal activity, such as prostitution, had on children. He stated that he also derived rich life

experiences from his 8 years in the military and time with the federal service. His interest in the complex challenges people faced in life was heightened through coursework taken through air force, college, and FBI classes, all of which provided many of the skills and proficiencies he would eventually utilize in law enforcement. Detective Blue attributed his perspective, that damaged children need compassion and supportive environments to survive, and even thrive, to the context in which he was raised and the hierarchy of values he garnered from his developmental path through adulthood.

Detective Gray's world view and perspective about children involved in prostitution was formed by the variegated fabric of a close-knit family. Raised in the rural part of the state, Detective Gray grew up in a small town, surrounded by a large family that included two loving parents, caring siblings, and a foundation based on strong Christian values. After attending a state university, where he majored in criminal justice, he took a position at the Winshow Police Department (pseudonym). It was there that he acquired a fascination and proficiency in working with drug offenses. He was eventually drawn to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), where he worked for almost three years. He, subsequently, moved to Pacifika City as a lateral officer. Although Detective Gray admitted that he shared few commonalities with the victims of commercial sexual exploitation, perhaps the most direct thread to this type of work was his ability to make real contact, to connect, with these young people. His ability to express caring and concern for the children in this urban setting was enhanced by his previous rural experiences. He stated, "The biggest thing comes down to this. If you care about that

person, they see it and they feel it. And that's more important than anything that you can say."

Data Collection

For the current case study, I collected data from multiple sources. These included individual interviews with four police detectives assigned to the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit at the Pacifika City Police Department, and documents related to domestic minor sex trafficking. Data collection took place over a 30-day period in November and December, 2014.

Interviews

I conducted the individual interviews with the police detectives between November 18 and December 9, 2014 at well-located coffee shops and eateries in or near Pacifika City. I selected locations that were conducive to audio taping and ensuring the privacy of the participants. To further guarantee confidentiality, each detective selected a pseudonym which was used during the individual session and throughout the course of the study. The interviews, which averaged 90 minutes each, were guided by a self-designed interview protocol (see Appendix A). I used an interview face sheet (see Appendix B) to record the date, time, and setting of the interviews, as well as document information regarding each detective's rank and specific assignment.

Utilizing the same basic lines of inquiry for all of the respondents, I asked additional probing questions when necessary for clarification or to garner more detailed information. I also performed member checking intermittently within the context of the interviews. This was accomplished by repeating a respondent's ideas or rephrasing and

reframing concepts to ensure the accuracy of my interpretations. I recorded each of the four interviews using a digital voice recording device to guarantee clarity and provide a means to transfer the recorded material to my computer. In addition, I took copious, handwritten notes in case there was a problem with the recording device. To enhance my understanding of the data, I recorded my own thoughts and reflections in the margins of the interview guide for future reference.

One variation relative to the data collection plan I presented in chapter 3 was that each of the police detective interviews lasted longer than originally expected. I addressed this issue by informing each respondent when the anticipated interview time of 60 minutes was reached. I, subsequently, negotiated with each participant an extended period of time to complete the interview protocol. All four police detectives appeared extremely enthusiastic about the research project, and were more than willing to extend the interview session.

Documents

I collected a number of documents related to domestic minor sex trafficking. From the public domain, I was able to retrieve several relevant documents, including the 2013 State Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited children, the Statewide Coordinating Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: 2014 Initial Report to the Legislature; and a Trauma-Informed Services Guide. I collected from the Pacifica City Police Department internal correspondence relative to the hiring criteria for the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit. I was also provided some dated documents that were not utilized in this study.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data for this multiple-case study by staying close to the data and utilizing coding and theme development. I conducted an analysis of the interview data from each case using open and axial coding strategies, as well as constant comparative analysis (Padgett, 2008). Table 1 reflects the major results from the coding processes.

The analysis process proceeded as I scrutinized the categories derived from the coded data in order to formulate a unified conceptualization of the major, emerging themes, as well as determine the non-conforming data. The within-case and cross-case analyses and the study of the significant documents, all of which were aligned with the central research questions and framed within the context of the existing knowledge base, formed the basis for the study's key findings. This information is presented in Table 3, found later in this section.

Table 1

Major Categories from Open Coding of Police Detective Interviews

Major Categories	Associated Concepts
Police Personal Characteristics (Perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes) for victims;	Perceive CSEC as victims; feel empathy for victims; safety of victims a priority; prostitution is not a life choice or victimless crime; view victims as one's own daughter, sister, mother; working with CSEC is a mission or calling; against legalization
Police Detective Behaviors (Roles, strategies, activities)	Facilitate rescue and recovery; conduct trauma-informed evaluation; victim-centered approach; provide safety and resources through strategy of arrest and detainment; demonstrate comprehensive victim management; conduct investigations; gather forensic evidence; prepare cases for prosecution; hold perpetrators accountable; provide CSEC training; operate john school; serve on CSEC task forces; coordinate and collaborate within and across agencies
Conditions or Constraints Affecting Police	Life experience; ability to relate to CSEC; education and training; passion for job; access to CSEC resources and safe shelters; mentoring within police community; family and peer support; faith in God; personal mental health; state and federal laws; departmental policies; budget; sexually-charged culture; public perceptions
CSEC's Personal Characteristics (Perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes)	Low self-esteem and self-worth; hopelessness; distrust; fear; post-traumatic stress; desire to make money; do not see themselves as victims; loyalty and love for pimp; hate and love for police; rebellious; concern for family
CSEC's Behaviors	Prostitution and related crime; lie; steal; hurt people; alcohol and drug use; foul language; attempt to leave the life
Conditions or Constraints Affecting CSEC	Re-programming, coercion and control pimp; isolation; accountability to pimp for revenue; drugs and alcohol; inability to go home; sexually-focused culture; family dysfunction; mental health problems; access to resources and safe shelter; engagement in school; peer and family support; social media; involvement with law enforcement
Conditions or Constraints Affecting Traffickers	State law; arrest, prosecution, incarceration;

Analysis of the Interview Data

Interview Question 1: Describe your role in working with domestic minor sex trafficking cases.

Each of the study's participants explained that their role as a police detective in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit was to investigate and combat crimes that involved minors engaged in domestic sex trafficking. Although Detective Green and Detective Brown were assigned to Street Vice, and Detective Blue and Detective Gray worked General Investigations, all four indicated that their work focused on three populations: commercially sexually exploited children and young women; the pimps and traffickers; and the johns or buyers.

Regarding the investigation and arrest of predators, namely, the pimps, sex traffickers, and johns, Detective Gray drew a vivid analogy, stating, "It's [like] going out and finding the wolf and hunting [him] down and making [him] pay for what he's done." He added, "We want to find out who the promoters are, who the buyers are, and those are the guys we really want to get at." Detective Blue spoke to the demand side of the crime. He indicated that the detectives in the unit "target johns soliciting females...for prostitution," as well as use decoys, or female undercover officers to "draw in the customers, the johns." He cautioned, however, that:

Dealing with johns is [like] catching snowflakes in a snow storm. You move five over here, and five from another direction are coming. So it's a big thing to get the pimp or trafficker out of the way. It's really big.

Detective Green informed that his role was "pretty basic," as it entailed building a case against the pimps, traffickers, and johns, putting the offenders in jail, initially, filing charges with the prosecuting attorney's office, and testifying in court, with the ultimate goal of "making them accountable for what they've done to the girls."

In reference to working with the third population, commercially sexually exploited women and children, each of the four detectives emphasized the concepts of rescue and recovery. Detective Green affirmed:

My role is to rescue them. I sometimes say we're saving lives one girl at a time.

You might ask me what are the statistics on juvenile prostitution? I say, only one.

The only statistic is the one we're dealing with now. If we can save just one girl from this life, we've done our job.

Detective Brown offered his own interpretation:

If they are a juvenile, and we suspect prostitution, we're going to do further investigation. We're going to make sure that they are in a safe situation. We're going to offer them services, and contact their family. We're not just going to put them back on the street and say, ok, you don't want to cooperate with us, we don't have enough to charge you with a crime, so we're just going to throw you back out there. We're going to give them every opportunity available to ask for help and let us know what's going on in their lives.

In further explaining the concepts of rescue and recovery, Detective Blue posited, "Well, for us, most of them are not doing this from their own free will. Hence rescue. Recovery

is the operation to remove them from the track." Along the same thread, Detective Gray explicated:

Well, the purpose or priority for just about everything is the same. It's to save them. And if that means by arresting them and putting them in detention for some time to clear the fog in their head, then that's probably a good thing. But the goal is not to put a case on a girl, it's to identify her, get her plugged into resources, and get her help. Also, maybe, through her, we can identify other girls, young ones...the names of other girls to be pulled out of the life, too. That's the number one priority, to see that maybe, five years later, their life is a lot better than it is now. We understand that these girls aren't standing [around], waiving down patrol cars asking for help. You've got to go get them. And that's the only way of doing it.

Detective Gray also provided a litany of ways police in the General Investigations squad come in contact with minors engaged in prostitution;

They can come in through a tip from somebody, either through a school, through a hospital, or any type of counselor, or a family member or another agency. On the flip side, a way of getting cases is by [operating] stings. So we don't know who we're looking for but we're trying to--it's like throwing the net out there and hoping that we can find one of the young girls. We may do a sting where we're targeting and looking at ads [where] girls look kind of young. There are also some words, some of the wording, the way it's set up that [make you] believe there's going to be a juvenile involved.

Detective Brown from Street Vice explained that he and his team actively target girls walking the track to determine if they are under 18 years of age. He proposed:

Say I work undercover in a car, and I pick this girl up and start a conversation.

How many normal people will walk up to a car that pulls over and just get in

without saying anything? So that's the first clue that this is probably prostitution.

He went on to describe his further investigative procedures and the efforts made to immediately connect juveniles to the advocate and appropriate services.

Interview Question 2: How do you perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution (e.g., as offenders, victims, or both)?

The police detectives in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit at the Pacifica City Police Department indicated they considered all minors involved in prostitution as victims. They explained, however, that technically, according to state law, these juveniles committed the crime of prostitution. The detectives, therefore, also spoke to the culpability of CSEC in relation to the crime of prostitution and prostitution-related offenses.

Detective Green recalled that since his first day in Vice, in 1989, he viewed women involved in the sex trade, as victims. He recounted:

These girls didn't sit around the kitchen table at age 12 with their mom and dad, or whomever they were living with, and say, "You know, when I grow up, I want to be an IV drug-using, sex trade hooker on the street. That's what I want to be when I grow up, mom and dad." They didn't do that. They all got there somehow. Most people, they don't think of them that way. They think of it as a life choice. But

these girls didn't make this choice. This choice was made for them somehow.

Uncle Billy abused them when they were 10, or the pimp talked them into it, sweet talking them or whatever, or they ran away from home and realized they were going to starve to death if [they didn't] do something.

Detective Brown echoed the same thoughts as Detective Green regarding the hopes for the future that children had before they entered the life. He related:

I think most people don't know how bad it is. And that it's not Julia Roberts out here on the street. Nobody grows up and says that I want to be a crack addict. Nobody grows up and says I want to be a prostitute. How many of these children have you ever heard say that? And some of these girls who say, "I enjoy my job," I don't necessarily believe that.

The other detectives also spoke to some of the risk factors that may have influenced young people's involvement in the life. These included prior sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, in addition to family dysfunction, or even a parent's pimping out of their child. Poverty and disadvantaged conditions, school and peer situations, and substance abuse were also mentioned as precursors to entering the life. Detective Blue commented:

We get kids that are victimized that cross all economic lines, so we don't have a mold that fits for each one of them. Now we look at it from the psychological point that there are certain traits that we see over and over again...some abuse in the family, sexual abuse, some form of homelessness, being if it was their own

doing and/or some type of cause or factor that caused them to want to leave or have to leave.

Detective Brown added another perspective when he conjectured:

It doesn't matter what kind of childhood this kid has. I've rescued girls that were in an upper class home, the parents were very loving, non-abusive, and they [the child] got on social media. And all of a sudden, some silver-tongued pimp decides to chat them up. And the next thing you know, they're doing things they really don't want to do. Kids that age are very impressionable, and they're very easily manipulated.

Detective Blue expressed a similar thought when he explained what types of children and adolescents are recruited into the life:

I don't think the average person in the household knows what's going on, and that it could happen to anyone... And a lot of times when it happens to...a kid that they have, let's say, is a straight A student, never had any problems. You know they listen to their parents, they go to school, but sometimes they're just a victim of circumstance. We have to understand that these predators are out there and they're everywhere. They're in the schools, they're in the library, they're in the malls, they're in the community centers, they're in the churches. I mean they're in all the places that we go and that our families go. And so people have to be aware that...stay involved with the children in their lives. And the moment they think something like that is going on, they have to be involved right away and need to be aggressive about it.

Detective Gray characterized how young children and girls are drawn into the life by their sex traffickers. He informed:

The pimps are going to tell them whatever they want to hear [in order to] minimize what the prostitute's life is really like. They're just going to glamorize it and minimize all [of] the bad. Then you know, once they [the girls] get drawn in, it's one of those areas where it's hard to turn around and say no, this isn't what I wanted, I'm just going to walk away. And so they're victims in that regard.

The study's participants shared similar stances in regard to their perceptions of minors involved in prostitution as victims. Nevertheless, all of the detectives emphasized the importance of conveying to the minors some sense of answerability for participating in criminal behavior, especially those victims who were continuously involved in prostitution and related criminal offenses. For example, Detective Blue perceived all juveniles involved in the life as victims. At the same time, he affirmed that, according to state law, they committed crimes involving prostitution and prostitution-related offenses, albeit, on the behalf of the pimps and traffickers. He explained that "the child or the young woman has to know that there is some responsibility in it. That's the only way they are going to take some kind of ownership and change things." Detective Gray agreed with Detective Blue regarding accountability. He stated, "I think everyone needs to be held accountable for everything that they do. There's being held accountable, but then there's grace and mercy and understanding the bigger picture."

Detective Gray proposed that although most minors involved in prostitution are drawn into the life by circumstances such as manipulation and coercion, some of the girls "get used to [the life] and begin to like it. And you have to separate them from all that."

Detective Gray went on to say:

And girl after girl after girl that we've interviewed never look at themselves as a victim even after they've been raped, beaten, and robbed. After a while they're so re-programmed that they think they brought [the abuse] on themselves. That's what you do when you're in the life. They don't see themselves as victims...they know they are doing wrong. You know, it's that way with a lot of crimes. Maybe people can be...drawn to something they know is wrong but continue in it because at some point, that's an easier life than turning around and going back and fixing all the broken things that have happened. It takes a lot of work to do that and many of them won't have the support or the energy to do it.

Detective Gray depicted the struggle that takes place between the police and the pimps in the battle to keep children safe and out of the life:

Well, it's a tug-of-war that we deal with, [that] all the different services deal with. Life with the pimp and the pimp's friends, they're at one end of that rope tugging, and we're at the other end. And, so, if they [CSEC] were in a locked up area, away from that, we win that tug of war, probably. But we can't be there 24 hours a day when that life, and friends from school, that culture, hanging down in certain areas, starts pulling the other way. They get pulled back in. We

can go out there and we can follow that girl around 23 hours a day, every day.

And it's that one hour we're not there when they take off. And so, if they're not ready [to leave the life], all of this fails.

In as much as the state where the study took place still regarded all acts of prostitution as criminal, the police used the charge of prostitution as leverage to not only convince these minors to get out of the life, but also to protect them from the traffickers. The detectives indicated that most of the girls who are arrested are soon released to their parents, or held for a short period of time so that police can link them up with professionals who can assist them. Detective Brown commented, "Well, if I can find a parent, I'll take them home. There's still a charge over them. The juvenile detention center is the last place I really want to take them." Detective Green described one of the places where the girls are brought after an arrest:

We have a mobile precinct...a giant SUV... and there will be several counselors there, victim advocates...We put food, cookies in there...toiletries, socks for them. We take them there, they're not free to leave. They're pamphlets and things we offer them, services, whatever they need...And then we would I and R them, investigate and release them.

Detective Blue, warned, however, that although the minors are offered services, they may not choose to accept them:

The children or the young adult women who are offered these services seldom take it. And that is because it takes more than just the offering, for them do that. I mean, someone that is being abused in an abusive relationship or is

on substances, just because they come in contact with police and services...now they are mentally aware that services are there, but just like anyone who has an addiction, which I think a lot of the stuff they're involved with is going down that path of sexual addiction, it takes them to be willing to step forward and say they want the help. And so we're a part of that process, our showing them and saying, this is the way to go, and then getting them to talk to people who have walked a mile in their shoes and been there and done these sorts of things. But it's very seldom that you get a child or a young adult woman who's going to take those services right away. And it may be just that they get a warm place to stay, take a shower, get some medical screening, if they need that, and then they're back out the door doing what they did before. And it may take more than one time, and it may take 10-15 more times before they finally are fed up with the life and they're ready to change their life.

Detective Brown stressed the importance of using the tools of arrest and detention, not for punishment, but as an intervention to help exploited children stay safe, begin a dialogue with police and other providers, and gain accessibility to all available resources:

Let's say...you pick up a girl, you don't have a charge on her, and she's very uncooperative. She knows...you have nothing on her. And you can't do anything with her. She's thinking, "Ok, so I don't have a charge, I'm not going to go to jail. You can't really do anything to me. And if I do talk, my pimp's going to beat the snot out of me." So there's no real incentive for them to talk with us. But if they

think, "Hey, you know what, I don't really want to get in trouble. Maybe this is a way I can change my life." There's times where I've interviewed girls that were as hard as nails. I'm talking 12, 13 year old girls. I had one that was 15. And she was in jail already. Just by changing their perception of what their life could be if they put this life behind them, it totally changes their character. She said if she talked to me, she was going to be ridiculed by her friends, her friends were going to beat her up and she didn't want to risk that. Well, then I presented her with a light at the end of the tunnel. [I said], "Let's think about the future here. So, you're talking about your friends right now. Are they the kind of people that if you did something that was better for you, they would beat you up for it. Let's think about what can happen in the future. What can happen if we assist you in getting out of this life? You finish school. You go on and decide to go to college. And the next think you know, a few years from now, you have all these great friends that respect you as a human being. And you may, one of these days, decide to tell them what you're going through right now. And instead of beating you up for it, they're going to praise you for overcoming this big obstacle." You could see something snap in her eyes. She was like, ok, what do you want me to do? She went from "Fuck you officer," to "What can I do to do that?" So when you have these types of tools, and you have these goals, and you present these options to them, and you have somewhat of a captive audience, it helps.

Detective Blue defended the use of arrest and detention, in view of the fact that "unless the criminal behavior exists," there were no secure facilities within the state that provided CSEC services. He remarked:

When you're using tools and tactics and you're using everything you've got to try and turn a life around...if you're closing doors or you're handicapping yourself by tying one hand behind your back by not giving yourself all the options you can, then I think you're limiting yourself.

He went on to give an example of using the strategy of detention to help a young girl:

There are cases where they've [girls] have been involved in prostitution since the age of ten and the subject in this test case is 16, so they are very ingrained in the life. I come in contact with this person during an operation. I have a good relationship with them. I know that I have a choice that if I walk out of the door, that they're going to go back to this pimp or trafficker and they're going to be first disciplined for being in contact with the police. Secondly, put right back to work. If my choices are between that and putting them in juvenile custody and forcing services to be started, I tend to say that I will take the route of taking them away from the pimp or trafficker, maybe the substance abuse they go through, and getting them to a secure facility. At least I know where they're at, they're not being abused by this pimp or trafficker, and they're not being abused by these johns. So that's how I look at it. A lot of times we're able to talk them into going straight to services and getting that help, but you never want to close a door. I know what's going to happen if I let her go, and

I can't sleep very well with that.

Detective Gray took the discussion of using the tools of arrest and detention to a different level when he addressed some professionals' contentions that putting a charge of prostitution on a minor lowers the prostituted children's self-esteem. He countered with the following assertion:

You know what lowers their self-esteem more than anything else is being raped by another guy ten more times that day. We like to get them before the worse things you can imagine happen. Yah, a girl will talk when she's just about hit rock bottom, but do we have to let every kid get raped? And in between that time, they've had sex with 100 different guys. I'd rather put them in jail when it's only their first week out there, and maybe start getting into them. So it's one of those things where love without discipline is too weak, and discipline without love is too hard. And you've got to have both.

Addressing the very limited window of opportunity for reaching commercially sexually exploited children, Detective Blue explained:

A great part of the law enforcement aspect is both with the child and also with the johns, because if we can impact the trafficker or the pimp, then the girls, for some amount of time, don't have that person in their life that's controlling or abusing them and forcing them to work. That person being removed, then maybe they're off the streets. And the johns are not there at the moment seeing this particular person because now they're not working, they're not in the area, they're not at that hotel. They're not walking the track, as now the pimp or

trafficker is gone. After a while, they'll [the girls] get their bearings and try to do it on their own, but that's an opportunity for us, once we get the trafficker, to intervene. Along with being arrested that day, they might have been abused. They might have had a bad date that day. And they may be finally ready to open up and tell you that, ok, they want to cooperate. Go 24 hours beyond that, and you won't get that cooperation, so you've got to take that into account and use it in the moment.

Interview Question 3: In what ways, if any, are children involved in prostitution different than youth outside of the life?

The police detectives indicated that in many ways, the children and teenagers involved in the life were at one time no different than other youth. Detective Gray expressed his opinion on the subject:

Every young teenager is messed up the gills. Everything in their life is a total high or a total low. Even the good things. And then something happens, you know. They get cut from a team or something like that, and now everything is terrible and they want to die. It's so drama. So you take the highs and lows and throw them into this type of life, and it's like gas being thrown on a fire. And that is pretty much every teenager. And the other thing is that every kid is built with that feeling of wanting to be independent. I mean, we're raising our kids to be independent and so when that's fostered in a good way, and when that's really handled well, kids excel and they do great off of that, and they become strong, independent. But when it's either stomped down or not allowed, well then

rebellion is just around the corner. And for young kids, teenagers, what's the most adult, rebellious thing you can do...is out having sex. The pimps use it. You don't want to be a little kid, it's not big deal, it's sex...they don't want to look like a kid, they want to look like an adult. Well, they're not either. And that's the hard part. So that's why you need people in their lives fostering them and saying, "You don't need that." So in those regards, they're just like every teenager. They all have the same desires and hopes.

Detective Blue agreed, stating, "I don't think in many ways they're different other than their life experience." Detective Brown reiterated those sentiments, indicating:

I don't think they're any different than other kids. I think they're kids that are just in a bad situation that most other kids may not be in. They could feel that they're lacking something in their life, not enough attention from their parents, and then, all of a sudden, this guy comes out of nowhere and starts giving them attention.

What happens after minors become involved in the life may differentiate them from youth outside of this experience. For example, Detective Green portrayed commercially sexually exploited children in the following way:

The life of prostitution takes everything from them, and gives them very little in return. It takes their dignity, their self-esteem. It takes it all. It's like the most powerful vacuum cleaner in the world. It sucks the life right out of these women. And I don't care if they're 15 or 25. It takes everything from them. And they suffer from the same syndrome as the domestic violence victims. You always hear

that if a pimp takes all their money and beats them up, why don't they just leave him? Well, ok, I'll change that. If your husband beats you up and doesn't give you any money, and treats you like a slave, why don't you just leave? It's the same syndrome. They don't leave because they think they're not worth anything. They think their family won't take them back, society looks down on them. All they are is what the pimp or promoter calls them. You're a drug-addicted prostitute, that's what you are. So they come to believe this. And when they do, they can't get out. They think there's no way out for me. Our job is to show them that there is a way out. There is a way out...that's what we do.

Interview Question 4: How do you make decisions regarding the disposition of a juvenile involved in prostitution?

Working from a victim-centered, trauma-informed perspective, the four police detectives evaluated each commercially sexually exploited minor with whom they came in contact. Based on this assessment, and the further investigation of the case, the detectives determined the proper disposition and referral.

Detective Blue spoke to his decision-making process in relation to the minors involved in prostitution:

I think each individual is different. And you have to take into account their history and what they've been involved with, as far as their criminal history, even their background, their family history, and take it case by case. I don't think you can categorize anything. I see each individual kid. I've come up against some of the worst of the worst attitudes, and my attitude won't change. My approach won't

change. They'll use their guards, their shells, different things that have happened to them on the streets or at home and so that's what they're used to doing. I'm not saying that some people don't have a bad attitude. But I don't think you can take that into account as perceiving them as an offender type versus a victim type. I think if we're looking at it like that, we're not going to help too many people. Anyone who's being abused and is going through what these girls are going through, they're bound to have a bad attitude about their life and the way it's going. I just see that as something I have to take into account and then I'll change my style, my tactic talking to them and how I'm going to garner the information and build my relationship with that particular child or young adult woman, versus someone who might be more submissive, timid, or whatever the case might be. You've got to take each one of them [skills], your training, your background, that assessment. You're listening, you're talking, and then you kind of know who you're dealing with and how you can help. You've got to learn how you can help, how you can fit.

Detective Gray also discussed his experiences with difficult victims and his understanding of the trauma they have endured, as well as their state of mind:

So when you first meet these girls, they're out to rattle you. They're out to call you every name in the book. And if you take that stuff personally, you're not going to get anywhere. You're not going to help anyone. And that initial interview with a lot of girls is nothing but getting called every name in the book, being one swear word after another. But you can kind of feel that they're doing that to feel

you out, to see how you react. Are you [going] to quit on them like everybody else, or are you going to stay plugged in and still keep caring.

Detective Gray attributed many of his decisions regarding the disposition of DMST cases to not only his experience in assessment, but to the support and collaboration of the other professionals. He believed that the more involvement shown by individuals such as family members, case workers, probation counselors, and victim advocates, the higher the probability of making the correct dispositional decision regarding the minor. The saying, "It takes a village," summarized the detective's perspective: He remarked:

We do our part, we do lots of things. You know, we can kind of be the quarterback on stuff. We're calling the plays, snapping the ball, but if everyone else is not doing their thing, you get sacked. There's no way you're going to be able to throw it, catch it, and do all those things. And the more you do, you can get away with it once or twice, but it takes such a toll on you, after a while, you usually miss a lot more.

In assessing the individual children engaged in prostitution, Detective Gray emphasized the role that empathy and compassion played. Referring to a book he read on leadership, he reflected, "People respond more to how you feel about them than what you say." He went on to explain:

I build rapport with them and it's only because they can tell [I care], it's something you can't fake. So if you care about them, they'll see it. If that's the only thing I get out of that first interview, you've had a great interview.

The detective also noted that although the assessment and dispositional decision may be accurate, "If that girl's not ready, then all these things aren't going to work."

Detective Brown highlighted the importance of relating to or connecting with the exploited children and teenagers in arriving at the correct dispositional decision. He informed, "Treating these girls with respect is the most important thing because they're not going to respond to anybody who belittles them and makes them feel less than they do. So we give them all the courtesy we possibly can." He went on to say that, "I treat them the way...I [would] want my family members treated." The detective mirrored Detective Gray's contention regarding the readiness of a minor to make life changes.

Detective Brown remarked:

We can give all the options in the world, but that doesn't mean they're going to take them. But, yah, we try to get girls, it doesn't matter if they're juveniles or adults, but the juveniles are the ones. Personally, I think if we can get the juveniles and get them help, they've got a better chance of getting them out of the life than somebody who's already been in the life for 15 or 20 years.

Detective Green also shared similar viewpoints on victim readiness when he presented:

Have you even heard the saying, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink? Well I got one for you. You can lead a horse to water and maybe make them thirsty. So our job is to keep leading them to the water and then the victim advocates and the counselors, it's their job to get them thirsty enough to take that first drink.

Part of evaluating children involved in the life is also conducting family assessments. Detective Brown put forth his belief that parental guidance and discipline are needed elements in the child's recovery plan. He related the message he gives to parents:

Be a prison guard when it comes to your kids. Know what they're doing. There's programs out there that will help you know everything your child is doing on the computer. Don't be afraid to search their drawers to keep an eye on them.

Unfortunately, there's so many people with a sense of entitlement. These kids, they'll say, "Well it's my room, I can do what I want. You don't have the right to search it." Parents need to stand up and stop being friends with their kids. And say, "No, you're my kid, and it's my job to keep you safe until you know better and can do it yourself." Parenting, that's huge! Being friends with a kid, that's a big problem, instead of being the parent. It's my belief that you're friends with your kids when they're adults. If they don't hate you from time to time, you're not being a good parent. I think that's a huge issue.

In addition to describing how they determined case dispositions, the detectives expressed frustration with the limited options they had for protecting this vulnerable population, as well as providing them access to all available resources. For example, Detective Blue bemoaned:

It's kind of one of those things where I think the state is failing them [victims] in some ways. Because some of the help that they can get, they can get as a victim in the criminal justice system versus someone who calls and wants the help. Or

someone that we know who needs the help but we can't access the type of help that this child needs because they haven't exhibited any other criminal behavior besides maybe the prostitution or the trafficking. A lot of times we're told that the only thing we can do is if they commit a crime. We're not telling our kids to go out and do crimes. We don't want them to do things and make the problem worse. But, let's say...someone has a mental health issue and they're not safe for themselves or around others. Well, a lot of times that's the way I see our victims. They are at harm to themselves, but there's nothing for them. There's no secure facility within our state that we can say, "We see x, y, and z, they're at high risk to themselves so they need to be housed in a secure facility until they receive the proper services." That doesn't exist for us. Unless the criminal behavior exists, which takes a whole bunch of things to happen.

Interview Question 5: How do you think your personal background, professional experience, beliefs, and values have influenced the decisions you make regarding how you define, categorize, and manage minors engaged in prostitution?

Detective Brown attributed the empathic and compassionate way he defined, treated, and referred minors involved in prostitution, in part, to his childhood and adolescent experiences growing up in a disadvantaged neighborhood. He indicated that he had friends and acquaintances who had been involved in the criminal justice system for various offenses. He recollected:

I've got friends...that have been arrested. I've got friends that are convicts, recovering addicts. Half of the people I went to school with are probably dead or in jail. I don't know. I don't know if it's knowing that even though this guy's in jail, hey, I remember him being a good guy or gal when he was younger.

Knowing that these people are real people. I think that's a big part of it.

Detective Brown also talked about his family and spiritual background, stating:

I have good parents, not perfect, but good parents. I made a lot of mistakes when

I was younger, like most kids do. I think having a conscience is a big part of it.

I don't know, maybe it's my religious background. I have a strong faith in God.

Every day I thank him that my life is the way it is and not the way the people I

deal with on the street. You know, like the saying, "But by the grace of God go

I." And I know that any day that could change. And so, I treat them the way if my

family members ever ended up that way, how would I want my family members

treated.

Detective Brown shared that his mentor, another detective in Street Vice, had been a major influence in his life, especially in helping him to understand the children involved in prostitution as victims needing rescuing, and in teaching him to show the "utmost respect," and empathy for this population. Detective Green also spoke to the importance of showing the respect, courtesy, and compassion to exploited children when he explained:

These women on the street, and even the young girls, they acquire a skill that

most people don't have. They can read people very, very well. If they can't read

people, they end up getting hurt or killed. So they read a person to be compassionate, being honest, being caring. [They] also read people who talk down to them, that they are only speaking to them because it's their job. And I'm not just talking social workers. I'm talking police officers. I'm talking judges. I don't care who they are. These girls can read people like a book. They are BSers, but can also read BSers.

In clarifying how his personal background and values influenced his treatment of CSEC, in addition to his decision-making relative to managing DMST cases, Detective Gray highlighted the underlying values of caring and compassion. He declared:

I grew up in a small town, farms, right? What do I have in common with a young teenage girl who grows up in the big city of Pacifika. What do I have in common with her? So you think, well, how would I ever be able to establish rapport with that person. And so the biggest thing comes down to this. If you care about that person, they see it, and they feel it. And that's more important than anything that you say. I've seen people who have a lot more in common with a lot of these kids than I do, but they don't build that rapport because deep down the girl can read that they're just going through the motions.

Detective Gray went on to describe his family and faith:

I'm a strong Christian. I grew up in a Christian home. I think it was established [by] my parents and all of us kids, what kind of job you're going to get...the jobs where you're out helping people and doing good in society. That's a great thing, that's more important than what kind of money you're going to get.

I have one brother who's a doctor, a sister who is a principal, so it's just a big family. My personal Christian faith has been with me a long time, and it's grown. My faith grows more as I see lives change when a girl's life gets turned around and there's no other way to explain it than God came in and touched it. So that's the biggest one [influence]. I think, you know, just years of police work. Good versus evil. That's so ingrained inside of you that you can't help but see someone who's being taken advantage of and used and want to do something about it.

Drawing from his family upbringing and personal and professional experiences, Detective Blue derived the wherewithal for understanding the problems endured by many of the disadvantaged and damaged children in the life. He conveyed:

Prior to being with the Pacifika City Police Department, I was in the military for 8 years. Prior to that, I was in criminal investigations throughout my time with the federal service when I wasn't at war--federal service with the air force. So I would say I got a lot of life experience from serving abroad and seeing different communities and the way families are raised and the different social and economic problems that are not only in our country, but in other countries as far as prostitution, drugs, and how they impact children as they are growing up. So I got to see that on a broad scale, and understand it. I also come from a military family so we were the same way. We were not on one place. We grew up in a melting pot, in all different parts of the country and all different parts of the world. So I got to see, from a very young age, different groups, different ethnicities,

foreign countries, all those things and see the impact of even kids that I grew up with and the struggles they dealt with dealing with some of the same types of issues. And so, I had a little bit of understanding growing up.

In addition, Detective Blue attributed his ability to work with the victim population to the skills that he acquired and honed while he was in the air force, attending various courses and colleges. He also mentioned the guidance provided by the Pacifica City Police Department in terms of priorities, interpretations of the laws, and enforcement policy. He articulated his perspective about the job of working compassionately with children who are being exploited in the domestic sex trade:

I see each victim and their case as a challenge allowing me to use my knowledge and skills to solve the criminal issue and the social issue. I believe the two go hand in hand. We may not get the cooperation of a new victim every time we are called on, but we surely provide a spark that I hope will eventually lead to that success in future contacts with that victim. I see services as only a small portion of helping these children and women. The bigger goal is after justice is done or being sought for them, after we have gained their trust, after they are safe and secure, after they start to engage in abuse treatment and/or substance abuse treatment, that we return them to society with a chance for a better life. I tell each of my victims during my initial contact that, "Today I have walked into your life but I will never walk out of it." This is my statement of commitment to them and serves as a bond throughout the process and beyond the process.

Detective Blue's caring and empathetic commitment was mirrored by Detective Gray, who insisted, "You never close a case. You never close a case," and Detective Brown's dedication to his cases 24/7, when he admitted, "I'm probably always thinking about it [his cases]."

In analyzing his decision-making processes, and the underlying factors that influenced the way he viewed and treated prostituted children, Detective Green explained that he had experienced personal challenges and struggles himself, during childhood and later in life. He related that his ability to empathize with the CSEC's pain and trauma stemmed from these past experiences. He commented:

And the reasons I understood them was because I walked in their shoes. If you haven't walked in their shoes, you don't understand them. You can go to school, you can get a doctorate, get the right papers, do all those things, but here's the thing...[you need to] walk in their shoes.

Interview Question 5: Based on your work as a police detective, what are your biggest challenges in working with domestic minor sex trafficking cases?

The study's participants articulated a number of significant obstacles and barriers that challenged them as police detectives working in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit. Some of the challenges revolved around personal issues, while others focused on professional and societal concerns. Detective Brown took a macro-level perspective and focused on our sexually permissive culture. He spoke to the social norms that encourage the sexualization of children and the detrimental consequences of this type of sexual tolerance. He articulated:

I think our culture, our moral values are really deteriorating. You watch movies and listen to music and this lifestyle is glorified. These pimps are like super heroes to some of these kids. It's about making money, makin mo money, gettin what's mine. And this culture is just a breeding ground for this type of activity. And you have the social media [and] TV commercials. You can't sell orange juice without showing cleavage nowadays.

Detective Gray listed several major challenges. In the vein of Detective Brown, he also referred to society as a whole, and his ability to adjust to a dynamic, developing, technologically advanced culture that included Internet-facilitated domestic minor sex trafficking offenses. He stated:

It's an ever-changing kind of culture. When I just came into Vice, Backpage and Craigslist didn't even exist. Those weren't even things. You know, texting, that was nothing. You didn't have to deal with that. So if you figure that there's only one way to do work, you fail. So I think the challenge is that you have to constantly understand what's going on and adapt to that.

The detective also related that "at the work level, the challenge is just trying to plug the victims into the right resources." He also delineated "educating the public to know what the life is like" as one of his major concerns. Finally, Detective Gray spoke to an officer's personal obstacles:

I think first of all, you need to keep yourself in check. If your personal life is a mess, and you're dealing with a lot of problems yourself, you're not going to help anybody. And you can fake it for a while, but after a while, it starts coming out.

And you'll see it. You know, we can see that in partners...and so I think that's the biggest challenge, to always keep your priorities in line. And then, when you're on top of your game and at your best, then you can make a big differences in the cases.

Detective Green also particularized education as one of his primary challenges.

He stated:

I think the biggest challenge is education. Education not only of the general public, but of the officers. We're putting together some DVD's to educate our younger officers on what we do. A lot of them don't know what we do and why we do it.

Detective Green highlighted one of the areas which he felt was the most misunderstood in relation to his work-- the myth that prostitution was a life choice. He asserted:

And here's what I say to people when they say, "Well, it's a life choice. You're wasting money on this. Why aren't you out there catching criminals?" I say to them [that] every single girl on the street is somebody's daughter. Every single one of them. They've taken the wrong turn in life and gotten out there and bad things are happening. But they are always somebody's daughter, somebody's granddaughter. They're human beings, they're not throwaway individuals. They aren't people you can push aside and move on with your life. They're people who need help. And who's going to help them at 3:00 A.M. in the morning? And what will you be doing at 2:00 tomorrow morning? I know what I'll be doing. If there's a young girl out there, I'll find her. It doesn't mean I'm going to be successful. But,

I'll find her. And if I find her, I will arrest her, and then I'll bring her to someone who can help her, that's what I'll do. And you know what will happen when it's all done? I'll do it again. And that's the way it works. Because I want to save one more.

Detective Blue viewed relating to the victims (e.g., establishing rapport and trust, and maintaining a close alliance with them throughout the case, and even after the case was closed) as a major challenge. He proposed:

The biggest challenge with any of these cases, I think, is making that connection to the child and maintaining that connection throughout your case, which we refer to as victim management. You come in contact with a child sometimes and you, during an operation or if they self-report, and you don't see that case go to trial maybe until a year or a year and a half later. So the management of that particular person for that year and a half is very hard. And a lot of times some people want to push that off to services...but for me, it's very important to keep that relationship. And in all of my cases, I do it. For me, it's kind of like having a big, adopted family. I mean, they're all my kids and they know that they can call me 24/7 and if they need help they can call. If they need...just want a hamburger, they're hungry, they're about to make the wrong decision, or whatever it may be, they know they can call. So that victim management, to me, is probably the biggest challenge. You might save them from that one trafficker, but there's another person that's waiting to step in. So trying to keep them alive, free of substance abuse, and being abused at all, and keep them in placement as far as

back at home or at the youth shelter, keeping them in school, and just keeping them focused on trying to better themselves. That is my biggest role.

Interview Question 7: What do you think the ideal DMST-specific law enforcement training would be like?

In responding to this final question, the police detectives specified a number of foundational subjects that should be incorporated into the training curricula of law enforcement officers who are or will be working with commercially sexually exploited children. These included topics such as knowledge of the subculture of prostitution and an awareness of the minors involved in prostitution as victims. In addition, the detectives recommended instruction in the relevant state and federal laws and how to use them to the best advantage. Investigation and interview skills were also mentioned as significant subject matter, as were trends in new recruitment technologies (e.g., Internet-facilitated recruitment and advertisement of children involved in the sex industry). The police detectives also referred to specialized training in the trauma endured by CSEC, as well as the unit's victim-centered approach to working with trafficked minors. The study's participants also discussed some of the desired qualifications of new hires.

Detective Blue articulated the skill sets needed to be a detective in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit. These included knowledge of the different styles of investigation, excellent interview skills, extensive schooling and life experience, and an understanding of the world of prostitution. He stated:

A lot of the officers don't understand prostitution. They understand the laws. They have a deep sense of community. They want to do the right thing, but a lot of

them don't see the problem the way I see it, and that just comes with me having time in the position. A lot of my background comes from undercover work. I've been doing undercover work for over 14 years with the Pacifica City Police Department and through that type of work, I have been able to be in the criminal element, next to pimps, traffickers, prostitutes. I know the lingo. I know the substance abuse part of it. I know the mind of the pimp and the trafficker and what they're trying to portray, what feeds their emotional state, what feeds their physical state. Just being around this element in an undercover capacity gave me a whole other leaf of opportunity to be able to talk to the victims, talk to the traffickers. So if I'm trying to set officers up for more information, myself and other individuals in my unit...we do training like that. Basically, what we try to do is give them a look into the prostitution world beyond what they see on the street and how the individuals that are there, more than likely, don't want to be there. And that most of them started out when they were juveniles and were forced into it, and so we try to give them that aspect.

Detective Blue went on to explain what other areas should be covered in a DMST-specific training for police officers. These included the tools that are available through state and federal laws, strategies used to identify juveniles involved in prostitution, and contact information relative to service providers and other professionals in the field.

Detective Blue placed an emphasis on humanizing the victims to the officers in training.

He stated:

Sometimes we'll do a case study or we'll show them how a kid from any different

type of neighborhood we have around here in Pacifika City became a victim. A lot of times we highlight this in our operations. I won't just start an operation and say that here's my problem. I want to go out and get this particular girl, and here's her pimp, and let's go get them! A lot of times, I'll show them a picture and I'll put it up on the monitor and I'll talk about her, the personal side that I've gotten to know. And tell them where things went wrong and kind of get them on board with me emotionally. So I think each operation is a teachable moment for officers that are not detectives in our unit to kind of understand what we're doing and where we're coming from.

Detective Gray also discussed humanizing the victims in the john schools, court-mandated education for individuals convicted of purchasing sex from minors. He stated:

In the john school, they come in the last Tuesday of every month. And they come in, and it's a full day's training. So it's either that they pled guilty or they took a plea agreement, or hoping for a deferred sentence. So they're being forced to go to it. And every once in a while, they get attitudes. But we're pretty good at sopping them and getting into their heart a little bit. Cause like...what if this was your sister, your daughter, things like that. That's what we will put on them. And I take them through the whole thing, about what these girls are going through. Of course, they're not telling you when they're in your car what a horrible life... they got beat and raped and robbed. They're not telling you that. They're [CSEC] just trying to fake it for 10 or 15 minutes, get their money, and get on to the next things. Afterwards, there's been a few times when afterwards guys have

come up to me and said, you know, I never realized what a piece of shit I am.

But he got it, you know. My idea when I teach it, I'm not here to beat them up and rub it in their face. I want them to see what it is they're doing. Understand what they're dealing with...if they think that this is some victimless crime, that it's no big deal and nobody gets hurt. They get what they want and I get what I want. If they have that attitude, I make sure they see what's really going on.

Detective Gray accentuated many of the same skills that were addressed by Detective Blue and spoke to the importance of building rapport and trust with the victim. He stated:

I put on some of the trainings, so [these] are the things I think are important. First, I try to let them see who the victim is. What they're going through, what the real life looks like. Once they see that, then you'll start to figure out who has the right fit for it, who has the right tools to be able to stay in there and work cases. Then I think your interviewing is pretty high up there, too. Your ability to put cases together, to [tell] when a girl's lying. There's a way of acknowledging that lie, not to say, you're a liar and turn it into this name-calling thing. There's a way to say, you know, I don't believe that so let's move on to the next one. We'll come back and pick it up later. That happens a lot.

Detective Gray explained that the detectives in his unit often know the candidates who are applying for a position in Street Vice or General Investigations, and are acquainted with what they're like and what kind of team player they are. He remarked:

You don't want somebody whose personal life is a mess. I don't think that's a good fit, especially in Vice. You're around pornography, you're around a lot of bad things. If a person isn't rock-solid, he's going to mess up. And so, alcohol, we have a lot of leeway there. We do enforcement on that, too. And if you have a problem in those areas, you can't fit into this unit and you can't fake it. We can see it. We can figure it out...And you've got to be comfortable being uncomfortable, a phrase I always use. And if you're not uncomfortable going into strip clubs, there's something wrong with you. If that's something you really enjoy, and things like that, we'll see there's a problem. But if you can be comfortable being uncomfortable, you'll be perfect.

Detective Brown agreed with Detective Blue and Detective Gray's perspectives regarding relevant CSEC-specific subject matter, and further stressed the importance of individuals in the unit having extensive experience on the job so that they can mentor the new hires. He offered:

I appreciate the new people coming in. I appreciate somebody that's open-minded, somebody that's not full of himself or herself or has an attitude that I've been doing this 15 years--cause this is a different job. You may have been on the street, but this is a whole new world. This is a different thing you're dealing with out there. So there's right ways to deal with it and wrong ways. If you deal with it with the mindset of changing these girls lives, it makes your job easier. A lot of the time before somebody comes to the unit, they'll do a testing period, like a month or so. Well work with the guys to decide if this is the person that we're

looking for? There's not a lot of people who can do undercover work. There's people that have been cops for so long that they can't let that structure go.

In addition to enumerating the values and beliefs necessary to work in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit, Detective Green expanded on the importance of life experience for individuals applying for a position. He also asserted that police candidates "must have a passion for the job and must have compassion for the victims!"

Analysis of Documents

For the current study, I collected a number of documents that gave the study sustenance and positioned the research in the context of the phenomenon of interest. The documents I selected to use included the following: (a) The State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children; (b) The Statewide Coordinating Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2014 Initial Report to the Legislature; (c) Trauma-Informed Services Guide; and (d) the Pacifica City Police Department, Vice and High Risk Victims Unit, Hiring Qualifications and Responsibilities for the Position of Detective. I was unable to obtain the Pacifica City Police Department's professional development materials and curricula relative to handling DMST cases. Content analysis was used to describe these documents in relation to their intent, organization, content, and application.

The State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. In 2011, a two-year federal grant was awarded to a multi-disciplinary task force to create and develop a state protocol for responding to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The model also addressed the provision of technical support and

training to assist in adapting the protocol to different geographic areas in the state.

Additionally, a structured plan was incorporated to ensure ongoing enrichment to the protocol.

The intent of the CSEC Model was to encourage coordination and collaboration among government and non-governmental agencies that deal with domestic minor sex trafficking. Key areas of concern included improvement in the identification of CSEC, the provision of safety and accessibility to all available resources for sexually exploited children and their families or caregivers, and accountability of perpetrators. The state protocol was founded on the following core values:

- Viewing CSEC as victims, not criminals, and avoiding arrest and detention whenever possible;
- Providing CSEC with victim-centered services;
- Making CSEC safety a key concern;
- Treating CSEC with respect and taking into account their cultural and linguistic needs;
- Prosecuting those who exploit CSEC victims;
- Focusing on local, regional, and statewide collaboration and coordination; and
- Relying on data and research, as well as experience, to improve system response and to improve outcomes for CSEC victims (p. 4).

The model, which incorporated the contributions of a multitude of professionals and stakeholders, was guided by best practices and targeted the following participants: law enforcement officers; advocates; Child Protective Services; social service providers;

prosecutors; defense attorneys; federal law enforcement; probation counselors; health care providers; school personnel; and other individuals or organizations who may be involved in responding to CSEC. Each local community was encouraged to delineate the key responders to DMST cases and provide the appropriate level of CSEC-specific training to individuals working in the field. For example, first responders who worked in dedicated youth sex trafficking units would need comprehensive training, whereas all other law enforcement officers would be afforded a basic level of training so that they could identify trafficked minors or recognize the risk factors for a child susceptible or engaged in minor sex trafficking. The best practices approach recommended in the model was victim-centered and trauma-informed, as an understanding of the victimization of children through rape and other types of abuse was critical in responding to and working with this vulnerable population. A screening for CSEC of all juveniles entering any system (e.g., the court system, foster care system, youth services) was recommended, and if the youth was identified as being sexually exploited, referral to a safe location, to meet with an advocate or other service provider, would be expedited. Family members and caregivers were to be considered part of the rescue and recovery effort, if at all possible. The CSEC protocol promoted a collaborative response to prostituted children on the part of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals working on the case, with an emphasis on showing respect and compassion for the minor, even though inappropriate attitudes or behaviors were demonstrated. These multi-disciplinary teams (MDT) and the task forces were considered the core of the CSEC response. Transparency regarding what professionals could and could not offer was advocated in the model, as was explaining

the child's rights and responsibilities. The structure of the CSEC protocol, as well as the experiences of the participants in working the model, facilitated the continuance of building relationships, establishing standard practices and consistencies, and strengthening the response to CSEC within and across systems.

The State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children, in addition to delineating the core principles and prescribing the best practices for working with CSEC, particularized the role, protocols, and descriptions of the various response components including the CSEC Multi-Disciplinary Teams and Task Forces; the CSEC Coordinating Committee; CSEC Screening Tool; and the CSEC Reception Centers. In addition, the State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children included a two-level training curricula for key responders, comprised of a basic, 12 hour curriculum for all targeted participants and a four-hour specialized curriculum for individuals such as police assigned to dedicated youth sex trafficking units, direct service providers, and judges, prosecutors, and other professionals who worked on a one-to-one basis with children involved in prostitution.

Statewide Coordinating Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2014 Initial Report to the Legislature. Authored by The CSEC Coordinating Committee in the Attorney General's Office, this 2014 preliminary report addressed the areas relative to DMST that needed further attention by the state. In the Executive Summary, the report gave high praise to the state relative to its passing of CSEC and human trafficking legislation; the imposing of more severe criminal penalties for perpetrators; the creation of a State Model CSEC Protocol; and the establishment of

local and regional multi-disciplinary teams and task forces that coordinate and collaborate CSEC responses within and among agencies. Nonetheless, the State Coordinating Committee, instituted in 2013, found that additional steps need to be taken in relation to training task forces; establishing agency partnerships; improving data collection on CSEC; and identifying funding sources. Additionally, the Committee found that strategies to reduce the demand for prostituted children need to be implemented. It was the purpose of the CSEC Committee to continue collecting data on these issues throughout the next year, a process that will culminate in a final 2015 report with recommendations to advance the state's policies, laws, protocols, and practices in the pursuit of combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This initial report included an historical account of the Committee's efforts; feedback from task forces working on CSEC issues; major areas of concern; and preliminary recommendations.

The first section of the 2014 preliminary report to the legislature reviewed the mission, core values, and prominent response components of the State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children, as discussed previously in this paper. The next section presented the latest reports from the regional task forces. The task force that served Pacifica City and the surrounding area reported that through countywide partnerships, as of May, 2014, an estimated 450 individuals were trained on CSEC recognition. Additionally, through a partnership with a non-profit organization that works with businesses to end trafficking, an estimated 500 police officers and hoteliers were trained on CSEC identification and response. Other projects taken up by this regional task force included the creation of a school curriculum for fostering healthy development and

relationship building, and a support group for parents of CSEC. A committee was also formed to research funding options for additional projects. In addition, the task force began working with television networks to educate the public about CSEC through public service announcements. A webpage was also researched. Specified future challenges for this particular task force consisted of the collection of improved statistical and outcome data, and enhanced cross-jurisdictional communication and collaboration.

In the next section of the 2014 report, the problem of CSEC was thoroughly discussed, including definitions, statistics, the scope of CSEC, and data collection concerns. Additionally, identification challenges for professionals, signs and risk factors of child exploitation, and harm to victims (e.g., psychological, physical, and social damage and impairment) were reviewed. State policies, laws, procedures, and protocols were also explored. A special segment examined the influence of the Internet and other technologies, such as the use of smartphones, on the scope of the CSEC problem. In addition, demographic risk factors (e.g., age, gender, race, sexual orientation, homelessness) were presented. A brief historical account of state and federal anti-trafficking legislation was included in the report, as was the work conducted by government and non-governmental organizations (e.g., the State Anti-Trafficking Response Network, Shared Hope International).

Trauma-Informed Services. Referenced in the State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (see above), this document, written in 2012 by the Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, presented a framework within which law enforcement, others in the field of criminal justice, and non-governmental professionals

should approach individuals who have endured traumatic occurrence(s). The first section of the document provided a definition of this trauma-informed approach, emphasizing that the focus should be on "What has happened to you?" instead of "What is wrong with you." In dealing with individuals identified as having histories of trauma, the key tenet provided in the document was the professional's (or first responder's) recognition of trauma symptomatology, as well as an appreciation of the extent that trauma played in people's lives. It was also explained that individuals who have endured multiple traumatic events (e.g., commercially sexually exploited children) frequently experience complex trauma, which impacts a person's ability to function.

The next several sections addressed the barriers resulting from trauma, working to overcome these barriers, and the affect trauma has on teens. A few of the barriers mentioned included distrust, fear, and hostility toward the professional (e.g., law enforcement officer). For example, oftentimes, minors refuse to cooperate with authorities because their past experiences have taught them not to trust adults. Trauma also influences a youth's worldview, perceptions, and behaviors. Its impact often surfaces in the form of triggers that remind the individual of the terrifying feelings felt during the traumatic occurrence. Additionally, it was highlighted that juveniles commonly use drugs and alcohol to cope with their symptoms and numb their feelings about the traumatic occurrence.

The effects of trauma are long-lasting, and it was emphasized that professionals need to provide support beyond the instant repercussions of a traumatic incident. Compassion, honesty, and respect for the victim were underscored as qualities needed by

professionals, attributes that help reduce the chances of re-victimization and facilitate the processes of healing and empowerment.

Finally, the document summarized the core tenets of the trauma-informed approach. It focused on the importance of understanding the complex dynamic of trauma and the fact that it affects an individual's perceptions and behaviors. Responses by victims that appear to be inappropriate, hostile, or unhealthy may actually represent adaptive reactions to traumatic occurrences. The emotional and physical safety of the victim was discussed, as were the professional's ability to demonstrate cultural competency, empathy, and consistency within the context of an authentic, collaborative, relational alliance. Additionally, the infusion of hope and the fostering of victim empowerment and positive self-esteem were offered as critical elements in helping to establish a victim's skills, sense of independence, and positive view of their future.

Vice and High Risk Victims Unit Vacancy Announcement for the Position of Detective. This job announcement for the position of Detective in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit, Pacifika City Police Department, was written by Lieutenant White (pseudonym). The opening's anticipated closure was October 15, 2014. The notification indicated the position was undercover, performing street-level work investigating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The position also entailed enforcement of the Adult Entertainment Ordinance and Pacifika City's liquor and gambling laws. Case management, follow-up with vice-related investigations, and assistance with the Human Trafficking Detail were also involved.

The notice delineated the following primary responsibilities for the position of Detective:

- Work effectively and safely in close quarters with known or suspected criminals associated with prostitution and other vice-related crimes.
- Assist other Vice Unit squads as necessary with enforcement of street-level prostitution, adult entertainment, gambling, and liquor offenses, among others.
- Conduct lengthy, long-term collaborative investigations with other Local, State and Federal law enforcement agencies and State and Federal Prosecutors.

Qualifications for the position of Detective were listed as follows:

- Five years as a sworn Pacifica City Police Department employee
- Willingness and ability to work undercover
- Successful completion of Pacifica City Police Department Undercover School
- Able to conduct victim-centered, trauma-informed investigations
- Able to pass an FBI background check to obtain a security clearance
- Willingness to work varied and flexible hours due to needs of investigations
- Ability to work cohesively in a small unit
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills

- Proficient with Versadex, Department information systems, and MS Office
- Currently on the Detective Eligibility List or must successfully complete the next available Pacifika City Police Department Training Course

The job announcement specified that candidates submit a letter of interest and a resume to Lieutenant White on or before October 15, 2014.

I used content analysis to analyze the relevant documents. This involved representing the data in terms of intent, content, historical understanding, and utilization. I constructed a visual representation providing a summary of the categories derived from the documents. This information is presented in Table 2.

Theme Analysis

The subsequent list of themes emerged from the analysis of the data across all cases and sources of evidence. These themes reflect the similarities in perceptions and beliefs that I derived from all of the police detective interviews. The themes also reflect commonalities found in the significant documents related to domestic minor sex trafficking.

Theme 1: The police detectives perceived commercially sexually exploited children and young adult women as victims who, according to state law, committed the crime of prostitution.

Theme 2: The police detectives believed that their primary job was to facilitate the rescue and recovery of CSEC, and endeavor to hold accountable the perpetrators who exploited them.

Table 2

Categories Derived From Documents

Document	Categories
State Model Protocol for CSEC	View CSEC as victims, not criminals; Provide CSEC with victim-centered, trauma-informed services; Make safety a key concern; Treat CSEC with respect; Demonstrate cultural competency; Hold perpetrators accountable; Coordination and collaboration within and among regional, state, and federal agencies; Ongoing improvement of system response and outcomes; CSEC-specific training for all professionals; Use of multi-disciplinary task forces
Statewide Coordinating Committee on CSEC, 2014 Initial Report to the Legislature	Establish agency partnerships; Improve data collection; Identify and leverage funding sources; Reduce the demand for prostitution; Educate public on CSEC; Promote and support additional task forces; Utilize best practices; Designate a state government point of contact; Fund training for CSEC professionals
Trauma-informed Services	Recognize trauma symptomatology; Appreciate trauma's impact on peoples' lives; Trauma influences a person's world-view, perceptions, behaviors; Use of drugs and alcohol to cope and numb feelings; Compassion, honesty, respect help reduce re-victimization and facilitate recovery; Provide victims with emotional and physical safety; Demonstrate cultural competence; Foster hope, positive self-esteem, independence, empowerment
Anticipated Vacancy for the Position Detective	Enforcement of prostitution, adult entertainment, gambling, and liquor offenses; Conduct extensive, long-term collaborative investigations with other local, state, and federal agencies and prosecutors; Victim-centered, trauma-informed approach; Proficient at verbal and written communication skills; Ability to pass FBI background check; Successful completion of Pacifica City Police Department Undercover School; Five years as a sworn PCPD employee; On Detective Eligibility List or must complete the next PCPD Detective Training Course; Ability to work as a team member and work flexible hours; Proficiency with Versadex, Department information systems and MS Office

Theme 3: The police detectives viewed the safety of the victim as one of their most important and sustaining objectives.

Theme 4: The police detectives followed a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach in working with trafficking victims.

Theme 5: The police detectives treated CSEC with compassion, respect, and honesty, while taking into account the minors' cultural, psychological, emotional, and physical needs.

Theme 6: The police detectives viewed every girl involved in the life as someone's daughter, sister, or mother.

Theme 7: The police detectives perceived the strategies of arrest and detention as necessary tools to protect sexually exploited minors, as well as to connect them to community-based advocates and CSEC-appropriate services.

Theme 8: The police detectives' decision-making processes, relative to identifying, treating, and referring CSEC, were influenced by their underlying values, beliefs, and perceptions acquired from their cultural heritage, pre-employment.

Theme 9: The police detectives reported empathy for victims, life experience, skill proficiency, and passion for the job as necessary requirements for the position of detective in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit.

Theme 10: The police detectives provided CSEC-specific training to other law enforcement officers and individuals who came in contact with minors engaged in prostitution in order to enhance CSEC recognition and response, as well as help learners become knowledgeable about the sex trafficking industry.

Nonconforming Data

Nonconforming data represent variations found in the data relative to the cases or other data sources. In the current study, one area of discrepancy surfaced between the police detective interviews and the document data. According to the State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children, as well as the Statewide Coordinating Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2014 Initial Report to the Legislature, one of the core tenets of a victim-centered response protocol for law enforcement, in responding to commercially sexually exploited children, was to avoid the arrest or detention of the juvenile to the extent possible. This perspective stemmed from the point of view that treating victims as criminals, through the processes of arrest, detention, or incarceration, further victimizes and marginalizes the victim. The above mentioned documents put forth the belief that directing CSEC through the juvenile justice system, to any extent, is a form of punishment that can potentially increase their recidivism, slow down healthy adolescent development, and reduce a child's self-esteem and self-worth.

The police detectives interviewed in this study were diametrically opposed to the position taken by the professionals who wrote the State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and provided the Statewide Coordinating Committee's 2014 Initial Report to the Legislature. They viewed the strategies of arrest and detention as necessary tools, to not only immediately protect CSEC from the pimps and traffickers, but use as a window of opportunity to connect juveniles to community-based advocates and CSEC-appropriate service providers. Considering that Pacifika City is located in a

state where prostitution is a crime, the police detectives were able to use the charge of prostitution as leverage to motivate CSEC to accept treatment and services. Detective Brown posited, "If that charge helps us to convince them [CSEC] that we need to get them out of the life, then that helps us do that." Detective Gray agreed with Detective Brown, stating:

Well, the purpose or priority for just about everything is the same. It's to save them. And if that means by arresting them and putting them in detention for some time to clear the fog in their head, then that's probably a good thing. But the goal is not to put a case on a girl, it's to identify her, get her plugged into resources, and get her help. Maybe through her, maybe we can identify other girls, young ones, and that's usually what happens...that they can give you names of other girls to be pulled out of the life, too. That's the number one priority, to see that maybe 5 years later, their life is a lot better.

The discrepancy between the State Model Protocol and the police detective protocol relative to arrest and detention also surfaced within the context of the literature review, and will be further discussed in Chapter 5. No other discrepant data was found among the cases or data sources.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As discussed in depth in Chapter 3, I endeavored to inspire confidence in my research study, and derive outcomes that were ethical and trustworthy. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I used recommended strategies to address the following

constructs: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba as cited in Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

Credibility

The concept of credibility speaks to the extent to which the research results are compatible with reality. In order to enhance the credibility of my findings, I employed triangulation by using multiple data sources, including police detective interviews and significant documents relative to domestic minor sex trafficking. I cross-checked these data sources for similar themes and discrepancies and used multiple reviewers to validate my research instruments and examine the data to reduce potential researcher bias. In addition, I conducted member checking during the interviews to ensure the accuracy of my interpretations. During the data collection and analysis processes, I utilized sufficient engagement by going over the data until the same patterns and themes were replicated over and over, with no new information surfacing. Finally, I demonstrated reflexivity through reflective annotations and the documentation of my own life experiences, background, beliefs, and biases.

Transferability

In order to improve transferability, or the generalizability of the study's findings, I used rich, substantial, exacting description in depicting the study's natural setting, the participants, and significant documents. Additionally, I provided comprehensive explanations of all phases of the research process, including data collection and analysis. In contextualizing the study by providing this rich, thick description, I facilitated the

readers' ability to replicate the study, as well as make comparisons to their particular situations.

Dependability

To ensure the dependability of the study, I facilitated the reader's capacity to make sense of the data and derive a comprehensive knowledge of the study's methodologies and their effectiveness. I provided in-depth descriptions of my research design, methodologies, reflections, and the minutiae involved in all facets of the research project. I employed triangulation by using multiple data sources, and cross-checked these for commonalities and variations. I used a panel of experts to review my research design and interview protocol to assure quality and reduce the potential of researcher bias. Additionally, I asked Walden faculty members to review the plausibility of my findings relative to the data. I maintained a journal that served as an audit trail, documenting my experiences, reflections, how I made decisions during the research process, and data collection and analysis procedures. I also included other facets of my research project as part of the audit history, including my self-designed data collection instrument and letters of consent and cooperation. These strategies helped me to verify the rigor and precision of the study, and facilitated the process of replicating my work for other researchers.

Confirmability

To ensure objectivity or confirmability, I endeavored to demonstrate that the study's findings were a result of the participants' experiences and perceptions, as opposed to the subjective interpretations of the researcher (Padgett, 2008; Shenton, 2004). In addressing this construct, I employed reflexivity to help me clarify my own biases and

predilections. I also used triangulation to diminish the possible effects of these biases. Additionally, my audit trail, which was utilized to trace the research process and my decision-making, in addition to my rich, substantial descriptions of the methodologies used in the study, helped to enhance the objectivity of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Merriam, 2009).

Key Findings

The data disclosed consistency in themes and patterns among the four police detectives who participated in the study. In the subsequent paragraphs, I discuss each emergent theme or key finding in relation to the two research questions (see Table 3) and provide data to support the findings.

Research Question 1: How do police officers, who work with DMST on a regular basis, perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution?

A key finding that emerged relative to this research question was that the police detectives at the Pacifika City Police Department, Vice and High Risk Victims Unit, perceived all children and young women commercially sexually exploited through prostitution as victims, who at the same time, according to state law, committed the crime of prostitution. Throughout the interviews, the detectives demonstrated their understanding of why CSEC were considered victims, and articulated the diverse risk factors that determined both the initial and continued involvement of children in prostitution. The detectives also exhibited an understanding of the multiple levels of trauma experienced by CSEC and how trauma presented as psychological and physical symptomatology, as well behavior change. In viewing minors involved in prostitution as

victims, the police detectives comprehended the short and long-term effects of commercial sexual exploitation, and that CSEC-specific, trauma-informed resources were required to deal with the population's complex set of needs.

Although the detectives perceived all juveniles involved in prostitution as victims, the detectives also held victims accountable, to some extent, for their continued involvement in criminal activity, albeit they were most likely coerced by pimps and traffickers into prostitution through manipulation, control, intimidation, and violence.

Table 3

Summary of the Key Findings Relative to the Research Questions

Research Question	Key Findings
How do police officers, who work with DMST on a regular basis, perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution?	<p>Police detectives perceived all commercially sexually exploited children and young adult women trafficked through prostitution as victims who, according to state law, committed the crime of prostitution, despite the probability that they were coerced by pimps and traffickers through manipulation, control, intimidation, and violence.</p> <p>Police detectives facilitated the safe rescue and recovery of CSEC in order to return them to society for a chance for a better life, and at the same time, endeavored to hold accountable the perpetrators who exploited them.</p> <p>Police followed a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach in working with trafficking victims.</p>
What are the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that contribute to these perceptions? To what extent do all these factors influence decision-making in relation to how domestic minors, who are trafficked through prostitution, are identified, categorized, treated, and referred?	<p>Police empathy for victims, derived from factors such as family background religious underpinnings, and personal adversity, was the common thread that drove perception formation and decision-making relative to domestic minor sex trafficking cases.</p>

The detectives believed that unless the minors engaged in prostitution and related criminal activity took responsibility for sustained unlawful behavior, they would fail to view themselves as more than victims, and therefore would feel less empowered to change their behavior and get out of the life. Following the current laws of the state, the detectives oftentimes used their discretion in charging CSEC with the crime of prostitution, with the intended purpose of (a) protecting the juveniles from the brutality of their pimps, and (b) utilizing the strategies of arrest or detention as a tool or intervention to immediately connect youth to a community advocate and/or other CSEC-specific services. Still, the detectives reported that they would prefer not to formally charge children involved in prostitution with a crime and, instead, direct them towards a civil pathway for assistance. Unfortunately, this was not possible, as there were a lack of secured, trauma-informed rehabilitative facilities in Pacifika City to which the police could refer.

In explaining his perception of juveniles and young adult women involved in the sex trade, Detective Green maintained that he had always viewed this population as victims, and that he understood that they had not entered into the life enthusiastically or freely. He related:

These girls didn't sit around the kitchen table at age 12 with their mom and dad, or whomever they were living with, and say, "You know, when I grow up, I want to be an IV drug-using sex trade hooker on the street. That's what I want to be when I grow up, mom and dad." They didn't do that. They all got there somehow. Most people, they don't think of them that way. They think of it as a life choice. But

these girls didn't make this choice. This choice was made for them somehow. Uncle Billy abused them when they were 10, or the pimp talked them into it, sweet-talking them or whatever, or they ran away from home and realized they were going to starve to death if [they didn't] do something. So my view of these girls...is they're victims. They've always been victims. The trouble was convincing society and other officers that they were victims.

Detective Blue also deemed CSEC as victims, and added some qualifiers to this view:

I perceive them as victims. And knowing that, though, they are committing crimes as they go along, involving prostitution and other things that the pimps and traffickers might have them do on their behalf. The way I see approaching it [is] through a balanced approach between a victim and offender. And your tactics for doing that have got to be balanced because the child or the young adult woman has to know that there is some responsibility in it. That's the only way they are going to take some kind of ownership and change things.

Detective Gray also spoke to the theme of a victim culpability, stating "I think everyone needs to be held accountable for everything they do. There's being held accountable, but then there's grace and mercy and understanding the big picture."

Detective Brown viewed CSEC as victims, but placed an emphasis on the intervention tools of arrest and detention he used to connect with the girls and refer them to the services that would help them deal with trauma, loss, and other areas of concern. He remarked:

I obviously see them as victims, but it's a very strong tool to have if we can get a charge of prostitution on them. Like when we pick these girls up and talk with them, a lot of them don't want to admit they need help. They're afraid of their pimps. But if we have a charge on them, which, personally, I don't want to put them in jail, but if we have that charge, that's kind of leverage that we can use... If that charge helps us convince them that we need to get them out of that life, then that helps us do that.

Detective Blue expressed the same thoughts when he said, "Our main goal is not to put them in jail, but to remove them from the life and get them into some type of service that can try to change the tide of what's been going on."

A second key finding associated with this research question was that, based on their perception that juveniles involved in prostitution were victims, the police detectives saw their primary role as facilitating the safe rescue and recovery of prostituted children in order to give them a chance at a better life. At the same time, the detectives' other mission was to hold accountable the perpetrators who exploited them. Detective Green remarked, "My role is to rescue them. I sometimes say we're saving lives one girl at a time... If we can save just one girl from this life, we've done our job." Detective Blue added, "Well, for us, most of them are not doing this from their own free will. Hence rescue. Recovery is the operation to remove them from the track." Detective Gray explained that the purpose of his job was to save vulnerable and damaged children, and hoped that "maybe, five years later, their life is a lot better than it is now." In describing the police detectives focus on bringing the perpetrators to justice, Detective Gray

affirmed, "We want to find out who the perpetrators are, who the buyers are, and those are the guys we really want to get at." To the same end, Detective Green explained that his job entailed, "building a case against the pimps, traffickers, and johns, putting the offenders in jail, initially, or filing charges with the prosecuting attorney's office, and testifying in court," with the ultimate goal of holding the perpetrators accountable to the greatest extent of the law.

Another key finding was that the police detectives followed a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach in working with this victim population. Adherence to a victim-centered approach meant, in essence, that the detectives conducted their investigations and performed their job with sensitivity and respect, considering the feelings and goals of the victims, and remaining accountable to the victims' needs. In addition, the philosophy behind this approach also required the detectives to build the case around the juveniles, without depending on victim testimony. These strategies helped reduce re-victimization and retraumatization. Detective Blue gave an example of how he employed a victim-centered approach. He explained:

For me, the child or victim sits in the center. I build my case around them not on them. So what I tell each of them is I want to do this case and bring to justice the person who is responsible for harming you without putting you in front of a jury and a judge. But we might come to that, we might come to the point when you might have to testify. I would say that 99% of the cases I have done, and I can see

my unit has done, don't go to trial because the way we build the cases. It's embarrassing for these pimps and traffickers to go and the evidence is overwhelming. We do a really good job of basically painting a full picture of the case, from electronic evidence to other witnesses to support the victim, to looking at them beyond that victim and to other victims and their behavior and their contact with other individuals. So we try to make it as rock hard as possible with the victim being in the very center of it and everything around it supporting it, so we don't need to bring that person in. However, them being in the center, and them knowing what to say is a big part of it. Because they feel that, "I'm in the center of an investigation, I'm in the center of something that's much bigger than me." I try to get them to understand that it's much bigger than you and I don't want them to feel that they have to take that all on, but I want them to feel the power that they have.

In utilizing a trauma-informed approach in working with minors involved in prostitution, the detectives acknowledged they were well-versed in the types of abuse (e.g., physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual, psychological abuse and violence) endured by CSEC prior to and throughout their involvement in prostitution. Knowing that these juveniles were exposed to multiple levels of trauma, and had been abused, beaten, disfigured, tortured, raped, and robbed by sexual predators, the police detectives expressed an understanding that minors oftentimes disclose the aftereffects of trauma through inappropriate and problem behaviors, such as substance abuse, distrust, hostility toward authority, and refusal to cooperate with police or service providers. Detective

Blue, in adhering to a trauma-informed approach, explained his strategy in assessing CSEC and making decisions regarding their disposition. He remarked:

I see each individual kid. I've come up against some of the worst of the worst attitudes, and mine [attitude] won't change. My approach won't change. They'll use their guards, their shells, different things that have happened to them out on the streets or at home, and so that's what they're used to doing. I'm not saying that some people don't have a bad attitude. But I don't think you can take that into account as perceiving them as an offender type versus a victim type. I think if we're looking at it like that, we're not going to help too many people. Anyone who's being abused and is going through what these girls are going through, they're bound to have a bad attitude about their life and the way it's going. I just see that as something I have to take into account and then I'll change my style, my tactic talking to them and how I'm going to garner the information and build my relationship with that particular child or young adult woman, versus someone who might be more submissive, timid, or whatever the case might be. You've got to take each one of them [skills], your training, your background, that assessment. You're listening, you're talking, and then you kind of know who you're dealing with and how you can help. You've got to learn how you can help, how you can fit.

Detective Gray also spoke about his experiences with difficult victims and how his understanding of trauma influenced him to approach exploited minors with empathy and

respect. He also demonstrated his knowledge regarding the long-term consequences of trauma when he posited:

I've had girls, years later down the road, something will happen and will [seem] like it just happened yesterday, which is the same type of post traumatic a sexual assault victim will have, or extreme domestic violence cases. Just a word, or the way someone looks at them, a certain car that goes by, they go into panic. "That's the same car my pimp drove!" I get that stuff all the time. And that pimp's been in jail for five years...Even if our case is over, these girls still continue to keep in contact.

He went on to explain how he felt about caring for the victims on his caseload, relating, "I build rapport with them and it's only because they can tell [I care], it's something you can't fake. So if you care about them, they'll see it. He reflected, "People respond more to how you feel about them than what you say."

Document analysis disclosed that the statewide model protocol for working with commercially sexually exploited children supported the police detectives' view of CSEC as victims, as well as the police detective practice of using a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach. In particular, the Vacancy Announcement for the Position of Detective document specified, as a desired qualification, the ability to "conduct victim-centered, trauma-informed investigations," establishing a framework within which all detectives in the unit were required to perform their jobs.

Research Question 2: What are the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that contribute to these perceptions? To what extent do all these factors

influence decision-making in relation to how domestic minors, who are trafficked through prostitution, are identified, categorized, treated, and referred?

The key finding associated with this research question was that police empathy for victims, derived from factors such as family background, religious and spiritual underpinnings, and personal adversity, was the common thread that drove perception formation and decision-making relative to CSEC. In other words, the characteristic of empathy, as well as other learned values and beliefs, including the concepts of right and wrong, were imported from the detectives' cultural heritage, pre-employment. These underlying predispositions helped shape the detective's world view, including the ways they responded to situations, solved problems, and thought about human existence.

For example, Detective Brown explained that growing up in a lower-income neighborhood, developing relationships with friends who were involved in the criminal justice system, and experiencing his own personal struggles, amplified his capacity to empathize with CSEC and other populations. He recollected:

I've got friends... that have been arrested. I've got friends that are convicts, recovering addicts. Half of the people I went to school with are probably dead or in jail. I don't know. I don't know if it's knowing that even though this guy's in jail, hey, I remember him being a good guy or gal when he was younger.

Knowing that these people are real people. I think that's a big part of it.

Detective Brown also discussed the influences garnered from his family heritage and spiritual foundation:

I have good parents, not perfect but good parents. I made a lot of mistakes when

I was younger, like most kids do. I think having a conscience is a big part of it. I don't know, maybe it's my religious background. I have a strong faith in God. Every day I thank him that my life is the way it is and not the way the people I deal with on the street. You know, like saying, "But by the grace of God go I." And I know that any day that could change. And so, I treat them [victims] the way, if my family members ever ended up that way, how I would want my family members treated.

Detective Gray proposed that the strongest influences, in regard to perception formation and decision-making relative to CSEC, stemmed from his family's expectations of helping others and his religious foundation. Emphasizing the qualities of benevolence and altruism, he asserted:

I'm a strong Christian. I grew up in a Christian home. I think it was established [by] my parents and all of us kids, what kind of job you're going to get...the jobs where you're out helping people and doing good in society. That's a great thing, that's more important than what kind of money you're going to get. I have one brother who's a doctor, a sister who is a principal, so it's just a big family. My personal Christian faith has been with me a long time, and it's grown. My faith grows more as I see lives change when a girl's life gets turned around and there's no other way to explain it than God came in and touched it. So that's the biggest one [influence]. I think, you know, just years of police work. Good versus evil. That's so ingrained inside of you that you can't help but see someone who's being taken advantage of and used and want to do something about it.

In the vein of Detective Brown and Detective Gray's thoughts, Detective Blue reported that his strength was his empathy for CSEC. He stated that he acquired this attribute from his family of origin and nomadic childhood experiences. Additionally, his extensive exposure to other people's adversities accelerated his ability to find meaning in helping others. He posited:

So I would say I got a lot of life experience from serving abroad and seeing different communities and the way families are raised and the different social and economic problems that are not only in our country, but in other countries as far as prostitution, drugs, and how they impact children as they are growing up. So I got to see that on a broad scale, and understand it. I also come from a military family so we were the same way. We were not on one place. We grew up in a melting pot, in all different parts of the country and all different parts of the world. So I got to see, from a very young age, different groups, different ethnicities, foreign countries, all those things and see the impact of even kids that I grew up with and the struggles they dealt with dealing with some of the same types of issues. And so, I had a little bit of understanding growing up.

In addition to the values and beliefs drawn from his cultural heritage, Detective Blue explained that his competency values, which were learned during his tenure in the air force, participating in advanced courses and college programs, also helped to prepare him for working with CSEC.

Finally, Detective Green, the Vice and High Risk Victim Unit's senior detective and mentor for many of the current detectives, informed that he had a profound

understanding of the pain and trauma experienced by CSEC and young women. He reported that his insights were based on his own childhood adversity and the personal struggles he faced later in life. He commented:

And the reasons I understood them [CSEC] was because I walked in their shoes. If you haven't walked in their shoes, you don't understand them. You can go to school, you can get a doctorate, get the right papers, do all those things, but here's the thing...[you need to] walk in their shoes.

Detective Green's empathy for children involved in prostitution, and his astute understanding of the damage inflicted on them during childhood, from pimp enculturation through their involvement in the life, served as a direct thread to the decisions he made relative to how he classified, cared for, and referred the victims he rescued and helped to heal.

Document analysis informed that the Pacifica City Police Department's recruitment procedures, in selecting police officers for the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit, supported the police detectives' key tenet of accountability to the victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I provided the results of the current study. I included a description of the setting and the case bibliographies, including the participant demographics. I explained my data collection protocols relative to the two data sources, which included the police detective interviews and relevant documents. I presented my data analysis strategies, which consisted of analytic coding and category construction for each case. I

also used content analysis in reviewing and analyzing the documents. I, subsequently, examined the data across cases and data sources in order to ascertain the emerging themes and the non-conforming data. Based on this analysis, I determined the key findings of the study. Chapter 4 also included a review of the strategies I used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

In Chapter 5, I review the purpose and nature of the current study and summarize the key findings. I present an interpretation of the study's results relative to the literature review and within the context of the theoretical framework. Additionally, I include the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications for positive social change, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore police officers' perceptions of domestic minors engaged in prostitution and derive an in-depth understanding of the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values that underlie these perceptions. The study also attempted to discover to what extent these factors influence police decision-making in relation to the disposition of minor sex trafficking cases. To realize this purpose, I employed a multiple-case study research design in order to provide a rich, comprehensive, holistic description of the topic of interest. According to Yin (2009), this design, which depends on multiple sources of evidence, examines the unique aspects of contemporary occurrences, addresses research questions that ask "how" and "why," and explores situations over which the researcher has little control. The current study was bound geographically by the selection of four police detectives located on the west coast of the United States, and was also bound by time, taking place within a one-month period.

Prior research shows that individual police officers are oftentimes unsure about the blameworthiness of prostituted children (e.g., whether they should be considered criminals, victims, or both). This situation oftentimes results in the re-victimization of these children and their inability to access appropriate resources, procure needed funding, and maintain a safe living arrangement, away from the traffickers (Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Clayton et al., 2013; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010; Reid, 2010). I conducted this study because I found minimal research on why some police officers are conflicted about the culpability status of minors involved in prostitution and what factors provide a

foundation for these beliefs. There is also a gap in the literature regarding how police perceptions influence the way they make decisions in relation to the classification, treatment, and referral of CSEC through the various criminal justice and child protection systems. This study not only contributes to the existing knowledge base, but also represents one of very few qualitative studies on law enforcement officers' perceptions of and responses to domestic minor sex trafficking cases.

Summary of Findings

Several key findings emerged from the current study relative to my two research questions. The first research question asked, "How do police officers, who work with DMST on a regular basis, perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution?" The first key finding related to this research question was that the study's participants were consistent in their belief that all juveniles exploited through prostitution were victims, whether the youth's involvement was a one-time incident, or a continuing occurrence. The detectives substantiated this perception through their expressed understanding of the diverse risk factors and vulnerabilities that preceded a child's initial involvement in prostitution (e.g., dysfunctional family environments; child maltreatment; runaway patterns), as well as their knowledge regarding the potential impact of commercial sexual exploitation on children (e.g., psychological, physical, and social consequences; continued exploitation and re-victimization). The four detectives also expressed an understanding of the multiple levels of trauma experienced by CSEC. The participants understood that trauma presented itself as psychological and physical symptomatology, in addition to behavior change.

Along with viewing CSEC as victims, the detectives felt that unless these juveniles took responsibility for their sustained involvement in prostitution, which according to state law, was a crime, the minors would fail to view themselves as more than a victim. In other words, without some accountability, children who were sexually exploited through prostitution might feel less empowered to change their behavior. In adhering to state law, the detectives were able to utilize the strategies of arrest and detention as an intervention to inform the youth of services and immediately release or refer them to a community advocate or other CSEC-specific service provider. The detectives also had the option of formally charging the youth. Detective Blue posited, "More times than not, they [prostituted minors] are going to be released and we're going to get whatever information we can get from them, get them help...and basically, push them toward services." The detective also commented, "Now, do we have, every once in a while, a case where we have a chronic problem and the best scenario to keep this child safe is incarceration? Yes, we do that. We have our discretion and that's a case-by-case basis." Still, several of the police detectives stated that they would always prefer to direct children toward a civil pathway for assistance if there were secure, trauma-informed, rehabilitative facilities available to which they could refer. Unfortunately, such resources did not exist in the Pacifika City region.

A second key finding related to this research question was that, based on their perception that all commercially sexually exploited children were victims of multiple crimes, the detectives saw their primary role as facilitating the safe rescue and recovery of these young people in order to give them an opportunity for a better life. The

detectives' other priority was to arrest and prosecute the traffickers and buyers and hold them accountable.

The third key finding was that all of the police detectives who participated in the study adhered to a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach in working with CSEC. This approach aligned with the approach reflected in the relevant documents, including the State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children, the Vacancy Announcement for the Position of Detective in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit, the Trauma-informed Services Guide, and the 2014 Initial Report to the Legislature from the Statewide Coordinating Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Following a victim-centered approach, the police detectives acknowledged that they were attuned to the feelings, goals, and specialized needs of the victims, and conducted their investigations and performed their jobs with compassion, sensitivity and respect. Additionally, the philosophy behind this approach required that the criminal cases against the sexual perpetrators were built around the juveniles, without relying on victim testimony, whenever possible. In adhering to a trauma-informed approach, the police detectives confirmed that they were educated in the types of maltreatment (e.g., physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual) experienced by CSEC prior to and throughout their involvement in prostitution. Recognizing that these minors were exposed to multiple levels of trauma (e.g., from beatings, torture, rape, and other acts of violence and betrayal), the detectives reported that they understood the possible aftereffects of trauma, such as distrust of authority, refusal to cooperate with police, and inappropriate behaviors. They also stated they comprehended the victims' strong, dysfunctional

allegiances to their pimps, referred to in the research as trauma bonds (Smith et al., 2009). The various facets of the victim-centered, trauma-informed approach were interwoven throughout the detectives' practices and protocols relative to victim rescue and recovery. The goal of minimizing the retraumatization and re-victimization of CSEC and, at the same time, enhancing a positive, empowering recovery, underpinned the detectives' victim management strategy.

The second research question asked, "What are the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that contribute to these perceptions? To what extent do all these factors influence decision-making in relation to how domestic minors, who are trafficked through prostitution, are identified, categorized, treated, and referred? The key finding related to this question was that police empathy for victims, derived from factors such as family background, religious and spiritual underpinnings, and personal adversity, was the common thread that drove police perception formation and decision-making relative to DMST.

The theme of empathy, along with several other learned values such as the concepts of right and wrong, were imported from the four detectives' cultural heritage, long before they began working in law enforcement. The participants informed that these foundational predispositions helped shape their world view, including the ways they responded to situations, problem-solved, and thought about other people's behaviors and feelings. The detectives also mentioned several other factors that persuaded perception formation and decisions relative to DMST, including unit leadership and peer influences,

departmental policies and interpretations of the law, and CSEC-specific, trauma-informed training.

Detective Brown explained that growing up in a lower-income neighborhood, having friends who were involved in drug addiction and the criminal justice system, and experiencing his own personal struggles and mistakes, amplified his capacity to empathize with commercially sexually exploited children. He also indicated that his understanding of other people's feelings and behaviors was derived from good parents and a strong faith in God. He commented:

Every day, I thank him [God] that my life is the way it is and not the way the people I deal with on the street. You know, like saying, "But by the grace of God go I." And I know that any day that could change. And so, I treat them [victims] the way, if my family members ever ended up that way, how I would want my family members treated.

Detective Gray posited that the strongest influences relative to perception formation and decision-making within the context of CSEC stemmed from his family's altruistic expectations in always helping those in need, and profound belief in his Christian faith.

Detective Blue's thoughts regarding empathy were analogous to those of the other detectives. He stated that his strength was his ability to relate to others, a trait he acquired from his family of origin and his exposure to other people's cultures and personal adversities. Informing that he had a deep understanding of the pain and trauma experienced by the child victims of sexual exploitation, Detective Green posited that his insights were formed from early childhood adversity and the subsequent challenges he

faced later in life. He commented, "And the reasons I understood them [CSEC] was because I walked in their shoes." Detective Green and the other detectives' empathy for sexually exploited children and young adult women served as a direct thread to the detectives' perception of juveniles engaged in prostitution as victims. Additionally, the empathic component appears directly related to the decisions the police detectives made relative to how they cared for, protected, respected, and referred the individuals they rescued and helped to heal.

The remaining portion of this chapter is comprised of an interpretation of the findings within the context of the literature review and the theoretical framework. Additionally, this chapter includes an explanation of the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, implications for social change, and concluding remarks

Interpretation of Findings

In this section, I interpret the key findings of the study in relation to the literature review and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. The organizational structure of this interpretation is structured around the central research questions that guided the current study.

Connections to Literature Review

The first research question asked, "How do police officers, who work with DMST on a regular basis, perceive juveniles engaged in prostitution?" In the current study, a key outcome was that the participants viewed all children sexually exploited through prostitution as victims. This finding supported some of the existing research literature.

The status of victim for prostituted youth under the age of 18 was reflected in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, signed into law by President Clinton in 2000 (Smith et al., 2009). The subsequent TVPA reauthorizations, in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2013, extended the capacity of the law, emphasizing, among other issues, a victim-centered approach to addressing the complex needs of victims (Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking, 2014). Further, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 and more recent legislation, including individual state's safe harbor laws, clearly delineated the culpability status of prostituted minors as victims (Clayton et al., 2013; Halter, 2010; Project Polaris, 2013).

This key finding also supported a number of research studies that examined domestic minor sex trafficking in various geographic areas throughout the country. For example, Snow (2008), in her study addressing the identification of U.S. citizen CSEC, and their access to services, found that local police and prosecutors in Salt Lake City, Utah viewed prostituted children as victims as opposed to criminal offenders. Snow, Redington, and Russell (2011) also found that prostituted children in the State of Washington were conceptualized as victims by law enforcement and the court system. The Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States (Clayton et al., 2013), was convened by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council to address the problems associated with providing an appropriate response (e.g., by entities such as law enforcement, prosecutors, mental health providers, educational institutions, hospitals) to children trafficked through prostitution. In this landmark report, Clayton et al. posited that conceptualizing

prostituted children as victims, versus viewing them as criminals, served as the core principle underpinning the professional response to this vulnerable population.

Additionally, a significant number of research studies (Boyer, 2008; Clayton, 2013; Ferguson et al., 2009; Halter, 2010; Kotrla, 2010; McMahon-Howard & Reimers, 2013; Mir, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2009; Snow, 2008) also endorsed the reframing of CSEC as victims.

In contrast to the current study's findings, a number of seminal studies demonstrated a contrary perspective; that oftentimes many police officers still struggle with the conceptualization of sex trafficked minors as victims. For example, Halter (2010), in analyzing 126 case files of girls involved in prostitution, from six different police agencies, found that police conceptualized 60% of this sample as victims, and 40% as criminal offenders. Further, Halter suggested several factors that potentially explained this discrepancy in perception by police. She posited that minors involved in prostitution were more likely to be regarded as victims if the following were present: third-party exploiters (e.g., pimps); significant levels of victim cooperation; referrals originating from outside advocates or sources; absence of a prior record; and status as a local resident. Halter proposed that police utilized the above-mentioned categories in assessing youth to ascertain the likelihood of them returning to prostitution.

In a two-part study, Mitchell et al. (2010), examined police officers' perceptions of juveniles engaged in prostitution (e.g., as criminal offenders or victims), in addition to exploring the scope of the problem relative to law enforcement involvement. The data, which were derived from the police records of 132 cases, included juveniles associated

with third-party exploiters and juveniles who appeared to act alone. Police perceived 69% of the juveniles as victims and 31% as delinquents. The researchers found that police were more inclined to view juveniles as victims if they were female, came to police attention through an outside report, and were under 15 years of age. Additionally, if the youth had runaway histories, were fearful, and demonstrated poor hygiene, they, too, were more apt to be viewed as victims. Detective Blue, a participant in the current study, addressed the categorization of CSEC into victim or criminal types. He stated that when individuals demonstrate certain personality characteristics (e.g., a poor attitude, anxiety, hostility) or manifest inappropriate behaviors, he adjusts his own strategies in working the case, rather than categorizing the minor to fit a certain type. His response stemmed from having a trauma perspective and a philosophy that endorsed a victim-centered approach.

In a third significant study, Farrell et al. (2012) reviewed human trafficking records in selected areas across the country, focusing on the key aspects of the investigation and adjudication of cases. Additionally, the researchers enhanced their study by conducting qualitative, in-depth interviews with law enforcement officers in order to gain a richer understanding of the challenges that enhance or deter the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. In regard to police officer perceptions of victims involved in prostitution, Farrell et al. found that despite the passage of the TVPA, and its reauthorizations, as well as recent state anti-trafficking laws, some police officers continued to hold negative stereotypes. In addition, they

viewed victims as criminals, and deemed them to lack credibility. For example, one police official stated:

Yeah, I mean, I think there is a lot of people out there; prosecutors, law enforcement; period, that they just don't really believe a lot of these people are victims. I mean, they're just never going to believe it. They saw these girls and all they saw were stripper whores. (Farrell et al., 2012, p. 125)

Another law enforcement officer spoke to victim status and credibility of minor sex trafficking victims:

People seem to think that even when dealing with minors, it's the classic pimp and ho type of investigation. Why should I care about some pimp beating a ho or why should I care about some pimp putting a girl on the streets? She could have made another choice...to hell with them. I mean they get what they get. (Farrell et al., 2012, p. 126)

The above-mentioned studies highlighted law enforcement's continued struggle with using stereotypes or predetermined characteristics in conceptualizing minors involved in prostitution. In contrast, the participants in the current study demonstrated a profound understanding of the nature of CSEC and the dynamics of violence against women and children. The detectives, who perceived all minors involved in prostitution as victims, provided no evidence to suggest negative bias toward victims. Additionally, the data supported the detectives' hesitation in anticipating the attitudes and behaviors of victims in the aftermath of trauma, a strong indication that the participants conducted their

investigations and made decisions regarding the disposition of cases based on trauma-informed practices.

Another finding in the current study was that, based on the fact that the crime of prostitution was technically a violation against state law, the police detectives were able to employ the tools of arrest and detention as an intervention in order to build rapport with the victims, persuade them to cooperate in an investigation, and attempt to connect them with appropriate resources. In some instances, the detectives pressed formal charges and referred minors to a secured youth facility if other options to stop chronic involvement in prostitution had failed. The detectives also utilized incarceration, on occasion, to protect the victims from further exploitation or imminent danger from their traffickers. The detectives reported that in the absence of protective shelters, these methodologies were the only alternative.

This key finding supported the research conducted by Halter (2010), who found that police were apt to process prostituted minors as offenders in an attempt to leverage criminal charges. This was done in order to obtain detailed information about the trafficker and other potential victims, refer minors to services, and provide them with protection from additional exploitation and harm. The current study also supported Boyer's (2008) results which indicated that prostituted youth were oftentimes cycled through the criminal justice system. Upon their release, however, required prostitution-specific recovery resources and protective trauma-informed safe housing were not available to the victims. Likewise, in her investigation of domestic minor sex trafficking in the Clearwater, Florida area, Reid (2008) found that commercially sexually exploited

minors, though perceived as victims by law enforcement, were treated as criminal offenders and detained because of a deficiency in CSEC-specialized services and safe shelter alternatives, a finding supported by the current study. Finally, in their comprehensive report addressing the investigation and adjudication of human trafficking offenses, submitted to the National Institute of Justice, Farrell et al. (2012) posited that law enforcement, across their various study sites, often used arrest and detention to protect victims of sexual exploitation from their predators, a finding also supported by the current study.

The second research question asked, "What are the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences that contribute to these perceptions? To what extent do all these factors influence police decision-making in relation to how domestic minors who are trafficked through prostitution are identified, categorized, treated, and referred?" In the literature review in Chapter 2, I discussed a number of possible factors that might sway police perception formation and decision-making relative to DMST. These included, among others, confusing, inconsistent, and contradictory federal and state laws (Clayton et al., 2013; Project Polaris, 2013; Snow, 2008), as well as elements and patterns related to police culture (e.g., police policies, interpretations of the law, enforcement procedures, leadership, peer influence, and training; (Caldero & Crank, 2011; MacDonald & Dunham, 2005). Additionally, I explored the individual personality and behavioral characteristics of victims as possible persuasive factors (Farrell et al., 2012; Grubb & Turner, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2010; Taska et al., 2012). Finally, I examined police personality traits (Abrahamson & Strype, 2010; Caldero & Crank, 2011). Although all of

these factors, to some degree, were mentioned by the study's participants as having an influence on their perceptions and decision-making, the theme that surfaced during the interviews of the four police detectives was the importance of police empathy.

The data revealed that the police detectives felt that their ability to identify and understand the experiences, feelings, and fears of these children, and frame their response to them in consideration of these factors, were the most critical elements of good policing within the context of the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit. The study's participants spoke to how their empathic stance assisted them in establishing rapport with minors involved in prostitution, which, in turn, helped the detectives elicit valuable information regarding the traffickers and other potential victims. Additionally, the police detectives explained how the expression of empathy toward victims helped them to obtain victim cooperation in taking the perpetrators to court. The participants also emphasized the importance of police empathy as a requirement for employment in this specialized unit, in addition to the importance of the concept in training new detectives. The current study found that empathetic concern, an individual personality trait, was, for the most part, acquired from each of the four detective's cultural heritage (e.g., family backgrounds, strong religious foundations, personal adversity). It was this common thread that appeared to drive the police detectives' perceptions and decision-making processes relative to DMST cases.

A number of studies have explored the role of police personality characteristics in relation to behavior in the workplace (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010; Caldero & Crank, 2011; Twersky-Glasner, 2005). Areas of research have included defining the police personality and its development, determining if police share similar personality traits with

the general public, and establishing whether the police personality, if it actually does exist, is a result of occupational socialization or has pre-employment origins. In addition, some studies have shown that the varying attitudes and perceptions held by individual police officers result in correspondingly different behaviors, while other researchers found nominal relationships between police officer attitudes and behavior (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010). Caldero and Crank's (2011) work in the field, in particular, was consistent with the current study's key finding, in that the researchers gave credence to the notion that the individual predispositions of police officers (and everyone else, for that matter), which are imported early on from their cultural heritage, account for how police think through problems, morally respond, process situations, determine what is right and wrong, and make decisions. These values and beliefs are deeply embedded in an officer's psyche and are difficult to change.

There is a significant volume of research on the construct of empathy within the context of law enforcement (Birzer, 2008; Cohen & Shamai, 2010; Inzunza, 2014; Lila, Gracia, & Garcia, 2013; Maddox, Lee, & Barker, 2011; Posick, Rocque, & Rafter, 2014; Sanders, 2010; Wasilewski & Olson, 2012; Wright & Powell, 2007). These studies have focused on the role of empathy in areas such as police hiring selection; police knowledge and attitudes regarding violence against women; disclosure during victim and suspect interviews; the correlation of perceived empathy by victims and their cooperation with police in testifying in court; the reduction of victim retraumatization; victims' perceptions and behaviors toward the criminal justice system; and empathy as a central component of other personal police traits (e.g., truthfulness and moral behavior).

For example, the study's key finding on police empathy supported research conducted by Inzunza (2014), which noted the significant influence empathy has on police officers' ability to perform their jobs. He also highlighted the fundamental correlation between empathy and other personal qualities found to be beneficial for professionals who deal with complex situations and difficult interpersonal exchanges; qualities such as trustworthiness and fairness. In designing a conceptual model of empathy from a law enforcement perspective, Inzunza (2014) demonstrated the complexity of the construct of empathy. He suggested that empathy involves a number of interpersonal components that are evidenced in the police officer's interactions with community members and victims. These components include a police officer's capacity to recognize another individual's emotional state. Further, it involves a police officer's ability to identify with another person without infusing one's own emotions or thoughts. Another key component is the ability to understand how a situation might seem to someone else, and to recognize how this person might respond affectively and cognitively. The last component is the police officer's skill in emotionally responding to the demands of a situation without giving in to impulsive or inappropriate reactions (Lietz et al., 2011). Inzunza noted that perspective taking can be challenging when the occurrence requires the officer to set aside personally held values or biases and take on the point of view of the victim who may have a different background or has experienced dissimilar adversities than those of the officer. Consequently, Inzunza added to his model an element that addressed the social context of the situation, augmenting the interpersonal components.

The study's key finding on empathy also supported the research conducted by Sanders (2010), Maddox, Lee and Barker (2011), Wright and Powell (2007), and Birzer (2008). Sanders explored the value of personality traits in ascertaining the qualities of high-performing police officers. The researcher interviewed police chiefs from four different police departments and found that these executives considered the quality of empathy as one of the six essential characteristics in police officer selection. The other critical personality traits found to be desirable were common sense, good judgment, technical proficiency, emotional acumen, and the ability to connect with the public. Maddox, Lee, and Barker studied the responses of 22 rape victims in relation to the connection between PTSD, humiliation and self-blame, police empathy and the victims' willingness to testify in court against the perpetrators. The researchers found that police empathy was positively associated with the probability that victims would proceed with the prosecution of the case, and negatively associated with the severity of PTSD and self-blame. In another study, Wright and Powell examined the perceptions of police officers and child eyewitness memory specialists regarding good interview skills in the area of child abuse investigation. The researchers found that police empathy, and the ability to attend to the needs of the children, were viewed as the most prominent themes expressed by the respondents. Birzer, in his phenomenological study of 32 African-Americans who had personally experienced contact with police, examined two issues: The participants' perceptions of police subsequent to their contact with a law enforcement officer; and the participants' thoughts regarding the necessary qualities a good officer should possess. Birzer found that African-Americans considered a positive police experience when an

police officer exhibited attributes such as empathy, a non-judgmental attitude, and cultural competency, among other related interpersonal skills.

Numerous definitions of empathy have been proposed in the research literature. However, the following definition seemed most appropriate, as it was offered from the viewpoint of two law enforcement professionals, and closely aligned with the perspectives of the four police detectives and the key findings in this study:

It's all about empathy, the capacity to identify and understand someone else's feelings, fears, or difficulties, and framing your own emotional reaction accordingly. Having empathy does not mean you don't hold people accountable...you must and you do, that's your job. It does mean you recognize why they do what they do and never lose sight of your own capacity to fall short. It means you allow yourself a different and more adaptable perspective that allows for both creative policing and a less fatalistic point-of-view. (Wasilewski & Olson, 2012)

Connections to Theoretical Framework

Attribution theory, or the attribution process, is considered "naive psychology" (Heider, 1958, p. 5), a common-sense approach that guides the individual in trying to make sense about why things occur, why people behave the way they do, and if the behavior or situation is likely to reoccur. In the current study, the attribution process was used as a framework for examining police perceptions about domestic minors involved in prostitution and explaining police attitudes and responses regarding DMST cases.

As described in detail in Chapter 2, the attribution process is a cognitive and emotional process that addresses three dimensions: the perceiver's natural attempt to identify and explain the cause or causes of a particular behavior or outcome; the perceiver's inferences regarding the nature of the effect (e.g., whether the action was attributed to the personal disposition of the individual(s) or the environment or situation to which the person responded); and the perceiver's forecast of the probability that the behavior or event will reoccur (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Ross, 1977; Weiner, 1995). In describing his perspective of the attribution process, Weiner posited that after a behavior or event has occurred, the perceiver interprets the occurrence, establishing the cause and making a judgment of responsibility. The responsibility process involves a determination of personal versus impersonal causality, controllable versus uncontrollable causes, the existence or lack of mitigating circumstances, and the degree to which the act was intentional or due to inattention or carelessness. If there is personal causality, controllability of the event or behavior, and lack of extenuating circumstances, a judgment of responsibility can be made. These factors, in turn, provide the foundation for blame, which influences the social response to the action or occurrence, such as some form of punishment. In the normal course of their work, police officers are confronted with criminal behavior and unlawful situations, and it is their job to find out who is responsible and take appropriate action. In doing so, they make attributions regarding the cause and controllability of the action or situation and inferences that lead to assumptions about culpability and assignment of blame.

As reflected in the data derived from the police interviews, the detectives in this study were oftentimes the first professionals to have contact with minors engaged in prostitution. In their role of first responder, the detectives made inferences regarding the cause of the offense, basing their perceptions on an initial investigation of the crime to ascertain if, indeed, there was prostitution involved, and if the individual was a minor. After identifying a minor as a victim of sexual exploitation, the police detectives drew from their extensive experience on the job, and their understanding of the risk factors for and the effects of CSEC in determining the nature of the minor's involvement. The detectives' predisposed values, beliefs, and attitudes also influenced their conclusions (Caldero & Crank, 2011). In this study, one of the key findings was that the respondents were consistent in their conceptualization of all juveniles involved in prostitution as victims; victims who were most likely coerced, manipulated, and controlled by sex traffickers.

In attempting to address the nature of the minor's involvement with prostitution, the detectives stated they conducted thorough assessments of the individual victims, gathering information about their family background and arrest history. They attempted to establish a good rapport with the youth, and treated them with respect, dignity, and compassion. The detectives posited that in most cases, they believed that the situation was out of the control of the juveniles, who were most likely under the power and control of pimps or third-party exploiters. In some instances, however, juveniles were found to be chronically involved in prostitution, having incurred numerous arrests. This circumstance led some detectives to consider these particular victims more culpable for sustained

involvement in criminal activity, and, as a result, the minors were formally charged for a criminal offense. The study's participants posited that their primary job as a detective in the Vice and High Risk Victims Unit was to rescue and facilitate the recovery of children involved in prostitution. The detectives emphasized that it often took numerous contacts with police before juveniles consented to receiving the services needed to assist them in exiting the life, a statement that aligned with the attributional dimension of predicting the reoccurrence of the behavior. In summary, consideration of the inferences and attributions about cause, controllability, and culpability provided by the participants offered an explanation of how the detectives formed judgments related to the behavior of domestic sex trafficking victims.

Limitations

Limitations of trustworthiness frequently arise from the research design of a study. One of the limitations of the current study was the limited sample size, purposely selected because of the police detectives' specialized knowledge of and assignment to DMST cases. In order to inform readers who were not familiar with qualitative research design, and perhaps found this sampling strategy biased, an attempt was made to place the approach in perspective and justify its rationale. Further, the relatively small sample of 4 police detectives, who may not have been representative of other police officers, nor have processed the same number of cases as did officers in other departments, limited the transferability of the study's findings to similar youth sex trafficking units in other police departments.

Another limitation was that the study involved the self-reports of the respondents, which may have been biased in order to reflect greater insight and sensitivity toward the controversial issue of law enforcement's conceptualizations and responses to commercially sexually exploited children. An attempt was made to minimize participant bias through the re-examination of the interview responses, member checking, and the use of multiple sources and methods of data collection and analysis.

Finally, due to the fact that I was the sole investigator, accountable for the study's research design and data collection and analysis, there was the potential for researcher bias. In order to offset this possibility, I employed strategies to improve the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative research study, including reflexivity and triangulation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the review of the research literature, the first recommendation is to conduct additional research on other law enforcement officers' perceptions of and responses to domestic minor sex trafficking, especially those assigned to specialized youth sex trafficking units. This type of research will assist in building an evidence base for best practices in law enforcement policy, procedures, and protocols.

As evidenced in the current study, the absence of protective, emergency, and long-term CSEC-specific housing and rehabilitative facilities in the Pacifika City region resulted in the sustained practice of cycling sex trafficking victims through the juvenile justice system. When youth were released from detention, many did not have a safe place to go, away from the influences of their sex traffickers. Further research is needed to

develop alternative CSEC-specific, trauma-informed placements, outside of the juvenile justice system, that are equipped to meet the complex needs of victims.

The study provided valuable insights relative to police empathy in responding to victims of domestic minor sex trafficking. Further exploration of the relationship between police empathy and the performance of law enforcement officers who work specifically in dedicated youth sex trafficking units is worthy of further examination. Several areas of focus might include the role of police empathy in the following areas: victim management; disclosure during victim interviews; and victim cooperation in prosecuting pimps and buyers.

As new studies on law enforcement's response to domestic minor sex trafficking are added to the knowledge base, fresh areas of focus will emerge. Therefore, continuing research is needed to evaluate the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of law enforcement training programs, such as those offered by the International Association of Police Chiefs (International Association of Police Chiefs, 2015), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2015), among others.

There have been a number of studies on the preferred qualities of police officers (Birzer, 2008; Sanders, 2008, 2012). However, I found minimal research on this subject in relation to police who work on a regular basis with commercially sexually exploited minors. Further examination in this area is warranted. Additionally, research on the hiring criteria of police interested in applying for positions in specialized youth sex trafficking units would be a valuable contribution to the knowledge base.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Domestic minor sex trafficking is a relatively new field of study, in the early stages of being adequately addressed by local law enforcement, as well as prosecutors, advocates, core service providers, Child Protective Services, and other professionals and stakeholders that support and serve commercially sexually exploited children. As a consequence, the current study's capacity for facilitating positive social change relative to domestic minors trafficked through prostitution has the potential for being realized in a number of ways, with implications impacting law enforcement and other multiple systems, as well as the crime victims themselves.

The first way this qualitative, multiple-case study has the potential to facilitate positive social change is by contributing to the knowledge base a deeper understanding of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and law enforcement's role in identifying and responding to these victims within the context of prostitution, and in the aftermath of trauma. The respondents' adherence to best practices for CSEC response, delineated in documents such as the State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children, provides a template for other first responders and professionals that encompasses elements such as the following: measures to provide essential services and safe shelter for prostituted children, away from their traffickers, pimps, and johns; a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach to assisting these minors; an integrated community response committed to the well-being of trafficking victims; and a dedicated effort to hold perpetrators accountable.

The existing research shows that CSEC-specific training is advantageous in helping police and other first responders better comprehend the nature of DMST and its cultural context and improving law enforcement's abilities to classify, care for, and appropriately refer sexually exploited and trafficked children (Clayton et al., 2013; McMahon-Howard & Reimers, 2013). Therefore, in addition to adding to the literature, the current study provides valuable data for augmenting the development of professional policies and practices for law enforcement and other professionals who investigate and/or prosecute DMST cases.

For example, the findings from this study indicated the significance of knowing how to identify children engaged in prostitution and correctly define these children as victims instead of criminal offenders. This distinction alone can impact law enforcement policy and practices relative to the way minors engaged in prostitution are cared for by police in diverse regions of the United States, and cycled through the various juvenile justice and child protection systems. The study also brought to light the importance of law enforcement's understanding of the nature of DMST, as well as the often contradictory and confusing state and federal laws pertaining to the crime of prostitution. Training in this area can enhance police officers' confidence in the commencement of investigations and the preparation of cases for prosecution. Additionally, the key findings of the study focused on an investigative approach that addressed the complex, specialized needs of the victims and the multiple levels of trauma and resulting sequelae experienced by these children. The role that police empathy played in the application of this approach, through the fostering of nonjudgmental perspectives and qualities such as mutual trust

and respect, was shown to enhance child interviews and assessments, interpersonal exchanges between police and victims, and successful interventions and referrals. Additionally, the study demonstrated the positive consequence of implementing an integrated community approach in rescuing and facilitating the recovery of prostituted children. CSEC-specific training, in all of the above-mentioned areas, has the potential to advance law enforcement's priorities, policies, philosophies, and specialized protocols relative to domestic minors trafficked through prostitution. Furthermore, the enhancement of knowledge and skills required to work with CSEC, within the context of a collaborative, integrated community response, can assist police and other professionals and stakeholders in encouraging these young crime victims to reach out, accept, and access essential services and resources, with the ultimate goal of permanently leaving prostitution and beginning a new life outside of the sex industry.

Conclusion

The commercial sexual exploitation of domestic children through prostitution is recognized as one of America's most complex and serious offenses (Clayton et al., 2013; Polaris Project, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). It is a crime that damages our most vulnerable citizens, and its aftermath results in both short and long-term adverse psychological, physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences (Clayton et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2009). As a first responder, law enforcement plays a pivotal role in identifying and responding to domestic minor sex trafficking victims. The current study explored how detectives from a dedicated youth sex trafficking unit, in the western part of the United States, perceived children involved in prostitution. The study also revealed the experiences,

values, and beliefs that formed the basis for these perceptions and the decisions made by police relative to how prostituted children were classified, cared for, and referred on to the various systems.

The current study demonstrated that the police detectives in the Pacifika City Police Department's Vice and High Risk Victims Unit established a strong and viable response to domestic minor sex trafficking victims. The unit adhered to a victim-centered, trauma-informed investigation approach, a strategy considered a best practice by professionals in the field (Snow, 2008). The study's participants exhibited extensive experience working with victims sexually exploited through prostitution. Additionally, they demonstrated knowledge about the risk factors for and the effects of sex trafficking. They also articulated a total commitment to rescuing and helping youth obtain appropriate CSEC-specific services and permanently exit the life of prostitution and involvement in the sex industry. The detectives' dedication to their work, in part, stemmed from their personal values, including their empathic response to this young population. Although the detectives perceived all juveniles involved in prostitution as victims, the lack of secure, safe, trauma-informed placement was blamed for referring youth to detention for the crime of prostitution or related offenses.

The police detectives collaborated with community advocates and service providers on individual cases. Additionally, they worked closely with Child Protective Services, probation services, and the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney. They also coordinated and partnered with multi-disciplinary task forces, non-governmental anti-trafficking organizations, and other agencies and professionals who worked with

commercially sexually exploited children. The detectives' perceptions and empathetic responses to these high risk victims served as a key component, within the context of the community's comprehensive approach, in addressing the complex needs of commercially sexually exploited children.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children through prostitution, as well as sexual exploitation through other means (e.g., child pornography) is a complex problem, and one that is in the early stages of being sufficiently addressed by law enforcement, as well as multiple other systems (e.g., the judicial system, the prosecutor's office, Child Protective Services, advocacy and service providers) within the context of an integrated community approach. The paradigm shift from perceiving juveniles involved in prostitution as criminal offenders and cycling them through the juvenile justice system, to viewing and treating them as victims of severe child abuse, is yet to be realized by law enforcement officers and related systems in many areas across the county. It is hoped that this study's call to action will help motivate this paradigm change and advance new awareness, understanding, and professional practices.

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Appendix A: Invitation and Informed Consent Form

Dear Officer _____

My name is Donna Belin and I'm a doctoral candidate at Walden University, a North Central Association accredited institution of higher learning. With Chief _____ and the Department's permission, I am working with the support of _____ to conduct a research study about how police officers view and make decisions about domestic minors involved in prostitution.

If you are a sworn police officer assigned to a unit that works on a regular basis with domestic minor sex trafficking, and have a sincere interest in the nature and meaning of the topic, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. The department has given approval for you to take part in a 45-60 minute individual interview. However, please note that your participation is completely voluntary and the department will not know whether or not you decide to participate. This also means that your responses will remain completely confidential and will never be linked to your name. My hope is that this research will help us better understand the reality and complexity of your important work in the city of _____. I also hope the insights derived from this research will inform training and police department policies and procedures that support officers in responding to DMST cases.

This form is a part of a process called "informed consent." I would like you to read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research study.

Background Information:

The purpose of the study is to explore police officers' views about domestic minors involved in prostitution and gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, beliefs, and values that underlie their views and discover to what extent they influence law enforcement's decision making and response to the crime of domestic minor sex trafficking. The following are examples of questions that may be asked during the interview: (a) Please explain your role as a first responder in domestic minor sex trafficking cases; (b) Describe what you perceive as life on the streets for youth who are involved in prostitution; (c) What are your biggest challenges in working with domestic minor sex trafficking cases? The results of this study will be published in a dissertation and possibly, other publications.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Review the letter and the Informed Consent Form and reply to the email, "I consent." I anticipate this process taking no longer than 10 minutes.

- Participate in an individual interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. This interview will take place in a conference or meeting room in the police department, or at another approved location, to ensure privacy. With your permission, I would like to tape-record the session.
- It is estimated that the above procedures, in their entirety, will take no longer than 1 hour and 10 minutes.
- As part of your routine activities, participate in a Youth Sex Trafficking Unit briefing or training (if this type of session is held during the study's data collection period). With your permission I would also like to tape-record this activity.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will be respected and will not affect your employment relationship with the Police Department. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

Potential Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

I do not anticipate your participation in the study to cause you any discomfort. You are free, however, to pass over a question or suspend the interview at any time. Participating in this type of study may involve minor risk, as some questions about your work may be challenging or stressful.

Publication of the study's results will potentially inform professional practices and enhance training curricula that address the different aspects of working with domestic minor sex trafficking cases.

Compensation:

No compensation will be provided for your participation in this study.

Privacy:

The only person who will know that you are a research participant is the principal researcher. Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project.

All participants will use pseudonyms in order to insure confidentiality. The researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study's report. If you include identifying information during the interview or unit briefing, it will be eliminated from the transcription of the audiotape. In addition, the audiotapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed and determined to be accurate. There will be nothing that connects your name or other identifying information to any of the data. Further, no one besides the principal researcher will have access to the data. The data will

be kept secure in a locked file drawer and protected computers. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by Walden University.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions now, or at a future point in time, you may contact the researcher. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 11-11-14-0186499 and it expires on November 10, 2015.

You may print or save this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this email with the words, "I consent," I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Thank you for your consideration! I look forward to learning from your extensive experience and expertise.

Appendix B: Interview Face Sheet

Date:

Time:

Setting:

Preliminary Demographic Information

1. What is your current assignment at the [Name] Police Department

2. To what unit are you assigned? _____

3. What is your rank?

a. Patrol_____

b. Supervisor_____

c. Detective_____

d. Other_____

Appendix C: Police Officer Qualitative Interview Guide

1. Describe your role in working with domestic minor sex trafficking through prostitution.

Probes

- a. In relation to a minor involved in prostitution.
 - b. In relation to the trafficker or pimp.
 - c. In relation to the john or others involved in the DMST offense.
2. The research indicates that some police officers view minors engaged in prostitution as criminal offenders, while others view them as victims. How do you perceive these juveniles--as offenders, victims, or both? Please explain your response.
 3. In what ways, if any, are children involved in prostitution different than youth outside the life?
 4. How do you make decisions regarding the disposition of a juvenile involved in prostitution?

Probes

- a. What are your criteria for arresting or detaining a juvenile (e.g., age, attitude, prior arrest history, substance use, willingness to testify in court)?
 - b. What are your criteria for referring a youth to services?
5. How do you think your personal background, professional experience, beliefs, and values have influenced the decisions you make regarding how you define, categorize, and manage minors engaged in prostitution?

6. Based on your work as a police detective, what are your biggest challenges in working with DMST cases?
7. What do you think the ideal DMST-specific training would be like?

Probes

- a. What topics would you like covered?
- b. What changes relative to training would you like implemented?

Appendix D: Document Retrieval Form

Name of document:

Author:

Date of document:

Source:

Content:

History of document:

Authenticity/accuracy/completeness of document:

Intention of document:

Potential Bias of content:

Other sources linked to document: