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Knowledge of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking among African American Parents

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial fulfillment

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Abstract

Domestic minor sex trafficking in the United States is a human rights issue and social problem affecting over 300,000 children ages 12-17, 43% of whom are African American girls. This survey was an exploration of domestic minor sex trafficking knowledge among African American parents and their protective strategies to prevent victimization. Ecological systems theory provided a conceptual framework to examine the environmental factors shaping parental knowledge. The sample consisted of 2 Southern California African American churches (n = 38, n = 32) that served different socioeconomic groups. The African American Sex Trafficking Knowledge survey was researcher designed and pretested by 7 police colleagues. The qualitative data analysis provided sample demographic specifics and associated themes on their knowledge and strategy. Both had basic information about minor sex trafficking, but were unaware of its presence in their communities or the availability of local resources, if needed. Parents believed their children became insulated from victimization because they engaged in protective measures. The social change implications included building and coordinating resources in African American communities with the goal of reducing the high victimization rate of African American children. African American churches as family resource centers could facilitate meaningful parent-child dialogues about sex trafficking. This partnership could initiate innovative preventive programs with community organizations. The outcome could be a model for creating effective culturally-sensitive prevention programs for not only African American families, but also other vulnerable groups.

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Dedication

First giving honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for without my faith I would not have known my purpose. I'd like to thank my parents, brother, and my extended family for pushing and cheering me on through life. I thank my husband for his sacrifice, support, understanding and patience. To my children, this degree is for all of us. I am raising the bar, and I know you can reach it because you have shared the journey with me. To those who came before me, to those who tried and couldn't, and to those who will because I did, this journey is in honor of a people marginalized but resilient. I dedicate this to the human family; the ones who know the only real power lie in the creator of all things.

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I would like to give a special thank you to the Pastors who allowed their churches to participate in the research study. Your willingness to participate in the study of such a sensitive subject truly shows your leadership, dedication and love for your communities. If I can ever be of assistance to you, I will more than happy to help in any way I can.

Last but certainly not least, Dr. Fiesta Kagler, my sister, my friend. Thank you for the endless nights of mentoring and keeping me sane. You are the reason I took this journey. You showed me it could be done against all odds. I am forever grateful for your friendship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Sex trafficking is a major social problem in the United States with approximately 300,000 minors at risk of being victims via the Internet and on the streets nationwide (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). The risk factors for children are age, poverty, unemployment, sexual abuse, health and mental health issues, police corruption, and high crime areas. Potential victims between 12 and 17 years old are often from single parent, economically challenged households.

African American parents may not have the information or knowledge of these risk factors and may not know how vulnerable their children are to this social issue. What parents know about sex trafficking and how they protect their children is not presently known. Resources to prevent sex trafficking have not been specifically aimed at the African American population.

The numbers are growing daily as the issue of domestic minor sex trafficking has reached epidemic proportions (Kara, 2009). Likewise, the lack of knowledge from parents and caretakers fuels this epidemic. Forty-five percent of children in foster care are African American (National Center for Victims of Crime, n.d.). The Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported that 800,000 children under the age of 18 are missing each year. Of those missing, 33 % are African American. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Human Trafficking Unit (2014), 55.2 % of children arrested for prostitution were African American.

With these statistics in mind, an exploration of the preventative methods used by African American parents was essential to developing prevention programs aimed at this population. The number of female adolescents involved in prostitution was too high. Therefore, African American parental knowledge of sex trafficking was explored so that resources and prevention programs could be developed in their communities to protect their children. To begin the process of building this knowledge base, the next sections include the following: the problem statement, the purpose of the study, nature of the study, the research questions, conceptual framework, scope and limitations, definition of terms and assumptions.

Problem Statement

African American youth are particularly vulnerable in becoming victims of sex trafficking in the United States. Parental lack of knowledge about exploitation is a major barrier to taking proactive measures against sex traffickers and warning their children about potential dangers and how to protect themselves from sexual predators. When parents have the knowledge about predatory sex trafficking and the potential dangers to their own children, they can take steps to safeguard their children. If the sexual exploitation has already occurred, they will know the symptoms and how to seek help from community resources**.**

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore African American parental depth of usable knowledge about sex trafficking to protect their children from becoming its victims. Specifically, the focus was on parental ability to (a) identify risk factors that

make their children vulnerable for recruitment by sex traffickers, and (b) use protective measures making their children less vulnerable to sex trafficking.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research was the methodology that I chose for this study. To address the research questions, I designed a survey instrument aimed at exploring what parents know about trafficking and the ways they protect their children from exploitation. This design was the preferred way to compare and contrast parental knowledge of the issues associated with sex trafficking in a context that ensures their privacy. The ecological systems conceptual framework helped me to highlight the social problem of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, and how it is understood within the family unit. The unit of analysis was knowledge of the risk factors and routes to recruitment of sex trafficking and their preventive strategies. The sample consisted of African American parents and caretakers of children, ages 10 to 17, both males and females.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of this study was: What knowledge and prevention strategies do African is prominent? The specific research questions were:

Knowledge

1. What do African American parents know/understand about prostitution?
2. Do African American parents know about sex trafficking in their community?
3. Do parents understand the risk factors that make children vulnerable for exploitation?
4. What do parents identify as the symptoms of sexual exploitation?

5. Do parents know the ways their children can be recruited for sex trafficking?

Prevention Strategies

1. How do parents prevent their children from being exploited?
2. Where do parents go for help when they believe their child is exploited?
3. What community resources do parents currently use to protect their children?
4. What family support do parents currently use to protect their children?

Conceptual Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Ecological systems are the theoretical constructs used to explain how the environment and cultural factors shape human behaviors and social relations (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These environmental factors influence the family dynamics and cultural patterns with implications for how African American parents raise children in those environments that support sex trafficking.

Assumptions

1. African American parents do not take action against sex trafficking because they do not have sufficient knowledge about the practice.
2. Building community awareness and knowledge of sex trafficking will empower parents to act on behalf of their children.
3. Parents may not understand (a) the impact of child sexual abuse as a precursor to victimization in sex trafficking and (b) the media's role in promoting sexualized female images aimed at teenagers (ages 13 through 17).

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I focus on the perceptions of African American parental knowledge of the risk factors associated with sex trafficking. This includes their understanding of the environmental factors and family issues that lead to prostitution, as well as preventive strategies to protect their children from exploitation. The sample consisted of only two southern California African American churches. The delimitations of the study included participants who were only African American parents, who lived in Orange County and San Bernardino County areas, located in Southern California, an area of high sex trafficking.

Limitations

1. Sex trafficking does not discriminate on race, gender, class or ethnicity. However, the African American west coast urban population used for the sample may or may not represent the knowledge and experiences of all African American families, whether living in other urban or rural environment. However, patterns of their responses related to the items may be similar.
2. The population from which the sample was drawn were church members and not representative of the public at large. Due to the difficulty of reaching this population, the church was the best way to reach possible participants in large numbers.

3. The findings do not represent other ethnic or racial groups of within the groups of church goers or non-church goers. Therefore, generalization to other groups is not possible.

Definitions

Awareness: The observation, perception, and acknowledgement of sex trafficking and its consequences for children.

Child sexual abuse: The involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent, or violates the laws or sexual taboos of society (World Health Organization, 2003).

Commercial sexually exploited children (CSEC): A commercial transaction that involves the sexual exploitation of a child, such as the prostitution of children.

Domestic minor sex trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, enticing, transporting, maintaining or providing for minor children for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Shared Hope, 2013).

Internet-based trafficking: The use of internet dating and social media sites to sexually exploit victims by posting pictures of them and using coded language to attract buyers. Buyers can order the victims and they are delivered to the agreed address for sexual exploitation purposes.

In the life: When a person is involved in the life and culture of prostitution.

Knowledge: The accumulation of life learning and experiences that provide the basis for information, understanding, and resources to cope with life's demands and

opportunities. This accumulative process structures one's world views and interpretation of the events in life and the environment.

Prevention strategies: The ways in which parents act/react in order to protect their children from exploitation.

Pimp / pimping: One who sexually exploits others for their own personal gain, or the process or act of exploiting others through force, fear, coercion or trickery.

Prostitution: This definition is interchangeable with the term sex trafficking.

Socioeconomics: The combined social status or class of an individual or group (American Psychological Association, 2014).

Surrogate respondents: Family or extended family members (e.g., grandparents, cousins, aunts, etc.) other than parents, who serve as surrogates for and caretakers raise family children.

Track: Also known as the blade: certain streets where prostitutes can be found; often in inner cities on busy streets, truck stops, and highways.

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA): A law passed in 2003 to define human trafficking. The act enhances pre-existing laws, ordinances, and criminal charges against traffickers. The act reinforces prevention, protection, and prosecution involving trafficking victims. Trafficked persons and prostitution are equivalent in this environment (Fight Slavery Now, 2014).

Significance of the Study

The African American victims of sex trafficking and their families have not been frequent subjects of investigations. As such, the results provide a basis for future studies

about this social problem and ways to prevent and intervene with sexual exploitation of minors. This study could be of particular interest to professionals working in the field of social work, law enforcement and human services. The study results could provide the basis to create culturally- based preventions and interventions for children at risk, victim, and their families.

The goals of these programs would be twofold: (a) reduce the number of potential sex trafficking victims, and (b) help families to cope with the stigma and cultural barriers of dealing with children who have been victimized. African Americans parents would have greater awareness and knowledge of the sex trafficking problem and how to identify its presence in the lives of their children and themselves. This study could be used as the basis of further research, which could further knowledge in the field in a variety of ways. This information could be useful in creating training programs for police and probation officers, human service workers and other paraprofessionals to increase understanding and awareness of the complexity of the problems and its impact on African American families. This could also provide the basis for developing curricula for juvenile justice programs, highlighting the environmental and sociocultural dimensions of trafficking, creating greater understanding of the problems parents face, and learning appropriate supportive intervention strategies for parents and children victimized by trafficking.

In addition, these results may provide foundational information for creating school and community-based primary, secondary and tertiary prevention and intervention programs to alleviate sex trafficking in high risk communities. This research may help communities to create culturally supportive environments for African American parents

and their children by engaging the community to become advocates for families when they better understand the trauma and needs of child victims and their families.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an introduction to the sex trafficking problem and statistics on the background for this study. The problem was that African American parents may not be aware of the risk factors and resources to guard their children from sex trafficking. The purpose of this study was to explore African American parental knowledge of sex trafficking in their community, the risk factors that make their children vulnerable, and how they protect their children from exploitation. The overarching research question was: What are African American parental knowledge and intervention strategies to protect their children in communities where sex trafficking is prominent?

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory was the conceptual framework for that I chose for this study, with qualitative descriptive research as the chosen methodology. The survey design involved use of a research-designed instrument I created to gather data. The underlying assumption and rationale for this study was that information on sex trafficking may not be filtering down to African American parents. They may be concerned about trafficking, but not emotionally able to deal with its complexities. The limitations include the delimited geographical area and the focus only on church-attending African American families.

Chapter 2 is a review of the state of the art literature available to conduct an in depth study necessary to provide an investigation into parental perceptions. I include coverage of the cultural foundations of child rearing in African American families, as

well as causal factors of sexual exploitation. In Chapter 3, I provide an in depth strategy on how the study was conducted, including the research design and rationale, data analysis, researcher's role, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methodology and instruments. Chapter 4 includes the findings of the research, including the setting, demographics, data collection, analysis tools, evidence of trustworthiness and results. Chapter 5 is an interpretation of the research findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for social change and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore how African American parents view domestic minor sex trafficking, what they know about it, and how they protect their children in an environment where sex trafficking is present. The Walden University library database served as the primary resource for identifying research elated to this topic.

My search for literature included use of the following search engines: SocINDEX, PsychINFO, psychARTICLES, Proquest, and Google Scholar. The university libraries used to acquire articles for research were California State University Los Angeles and Claremont Graduate University. In addition, current materials were gathered from human trafficking conferences and trainings attended in Northern and Southern California, as well as the greater Atlanta Metro area.

The key terms laying the background foundation for the study included: *African American Parents perceptions, African Americans and child sexual abuse, parental perceptions of sex trafficking, Black families and sex trafficking, Black family neighborhood perceptions, victims' families and sex trafficking, African Americans and sexual exploitation, African Americans and child rearing, child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, domestic minor sex trafficking and families,* and *sexual exploitation and minorities.*

The topics that I cover in this chapter include: African American parental behaviors and expectations, cultural aspects of African American child rearing, child sexual abuse and domestic minor sex trafficking and parental and community perceptions

of domestic minor sex trafficking. Also covered are common methodologies and theories used to study the knowledge area and interpret data.

Overview

African American families have historically suffered a lack of resources and information to protect their loved ones (Willie & Reddick, 2010). As parents struggle to provide for their families, their children often face the harsh realities of urban life. This experience often translates into deleterious environments for adolescents, who become victims of sex trafficking under the watchful eye of their parents (Farrell, Mehari, & Kramer-Kuhn, 2014). Without the knowledge of risk factors, support and resources, African Americans discernment of the causes and dangers of sex trafficking may not be strong enough to protect their families from sexual exploitation.

Information on important community issues does not get disseminated among the residents of the African American community, often due to several issues: lack of funding, lack of resources, or the push to give information to professionals (Wrightman & Mooney, 2013). Therefore, they are apt to receive the least information and attention. This lack of information leaves the African American community at risk for criminal behavior, violence and victimization; in their homes and in the community.

African American Parental Behaviors and Expectations

Childhood experiences and environment shape African American parental behavior (Willie & Reddick, 2010). Parenting is gender specific with clearly defined roles for males and females. Males and females are socialized differently, raised differently, and often groomed by the expectations of the local church. Mothers are

harder on their daughters than on their sons. Gaylord-Hardin et al. (2010) revealed maternal attachment and coping was significant for adolescent males, but not as significant for adolescent females. This could be one possible explanation for the differences in parenting styles according to gender.

Parents and children coping skills dictate the outcome of how the child is disciplined or how a parent responds. According to Gaylord-Hardin, Elmore, and Montes de Oca (2013), parents influence the coping mechanisms of their children by demonstrating the behavior. Environmental factors and positive support influence children's outlook on dealing with negative situations, lessening the need for discipline.

Expectations in Education

Expectations of their child's education remain important in all socio-economic classes. However, middle class parents have increased educational expectations (Hayes, 2011). Middle class parents tended to volunteer more and were more active in the schools than working class parents. Previous researchers (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Overstreet et al., 2005) have shown that parental involvement declined between elementary and high school; a time where their involvement was needed most. Hayes (2011) found that urban parents were not a homogenous group. Depending on education level and income, urban parents could also have a high degree of involvement in their child's education. Previous studies concentrated on lower socioeconomic class and assumed no middle class family could be urban.

The expectations are not much different than any other ethnic group; graduating from high school, possibly going to college, being respectful to the elderly, being self-

sufficient and independent, spiritual, and most importantly, strong (Nobles, 1998). The expectation for African American females is to have the capacity to endure the harshest of realities. Daughters were taught to be able to take care of themselves and depend on no one (Ward, 1996). This ideology came from disenfranchisement and Jim Crow, where through marginalization, many African American males were not able to become gainfully employed, leaving the females to work harder to provide for the family.

The Benefits of the Extended Family

African Americans employ the help of extended family members and long standing members of the community to assist in the social development of their children. Mothers often take their children to church for spiritual guidance and keep them involved in church activities. Older, stable church members often become additional mentors to the family in times of need, particularly for single mothers (Wilson, 1986).

Previous research explains the extended family paradigm well. Single parents often protected their children by creating clear defined rules in the home: with an emphasis on gender expectations. Women learned to cook, do laundry, and keep the house clean. Men had more freedom, and often less responsibility (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). The help of the extended family assisted in shifting the responsibilities of the parent and gave some small relief from the stress of raising children alone (Wilson, 1986).

African American parents and caretakers have a considerable amount of daily stress. Historically, these stressors came from marginalization, which could directly or indirectly affect their physical and mental health if there are no resources or supports available to them. Taylor, Washington, Artinian, and Lichtenberg (2007) found African

American parents suffered from an accumulation of stress factors. These factors caused health issues, such as diabetes, hypertension, and insomnia. African American parents are often caring for the children of other family members as well as their own. Grandparents often must step up and raise their grandchildren due to the absence of the parent (Whitley & Kelley, 2011). In the golden years, this responsibility can cause more health problems due to structuring and disciplining grandchildren, who may not have been raised in a structured supervised environment (Kelley, Whitley & Campos, 2013). Grandparents often promote positive socialization. However, the changes in society often create added stress.

Structure and Disciplinary Methods

African American parents have historically used corporal punishment as a disciplinary action for negative behavior (Simons, Simons, & Su, 2013). Parents may view their parenting style as a deterrent or contributor to their children's community behavior. Evans, Simons, and Simons (2012) examined African American parenting styles of discipline and questioned whether the use of corporal punishment and verbal abuse contributed to adolescent delinquency. While some in the community argue the lack of corporal punishment has led to more delinquency, these authors found that verbal abuse had the same effects and increased the risk for delinquent behavior (Fechette, Zoratti & Romano, 2015).

Bradley (1998) explored disciplinary measures of African American parents and found that their parenting style was more authoritarian than Caucasian parents. Adkison, Bradley, Terpstra, and Dormitorio (2014) also found parents escalated discipline

according to the behavior. Spanking was not in use as much as it was during the time of Bradley (1998). The older the child, the smaller the margin of error allowed. Parents believed that control was important in raising their children.

African Americans were more likely than other ethnic groups to use spanking as a means of discipline, but preferred to use nonphysical forms of discipline (Coley, Kull & Carrano, 2014). These parents discussed their children's conduct with them and used spanking as a last resort. Spanking was more common with mothers than fathers.

Parenting Styles in Middle Class Families

Small differences exist in how middle class African American parents raise their children compared to parents living in high poverty urban areas. Middle class families have greater access to resources and better living conditions. However, they still navigate the ills of racism and sexism because they are often working in professional environments where they must perform better than others to stay relevant (Toliver, 1998).

Tolliver (1998) explored the parenting styles of African American families in corporate America. Parental projective care was necessary to prepare their children to deal with racism while living in suburbia. Projected care meant the parent projected what they deemed to be the experience of their child within the white suburban context.

Adkison-Bradley (2011) argued that African Americans, despite the stressors and societal hardships they often face are competent and loving parents. While society may deem them as unacceptable and irresponsible parents, when examined in a critical historical context, they are resilient and determined. The media negative perceptions have permeated every facet of African American family life. With the tools they have given

and a strong sense of spirituality, African American parents try to navigate through unsafe neighborhoods, situations and traumatic experiences to keep their families intact.

Child Sexual Abuse and the Transition to Sex Trafficking

In examining this knowledge area, Walsh and Brandon (2011) found parents lacked awareness of the symptoms and warning signs of child sexual abuse. The risk factors for child sexual abuse are similar to those for victims of sexual exploitation: promiscuity, depression, substance abuse, anger, erratic behavior, withdrawn behavior, and self-destructive behaviors (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis & Smith, 1990).

Brown and Finkelhor (1985) conceptualized child sexual abuse as having four traumatizing factors: (a) traumatic sexualization, (b) betrayal (c) powerlessness, and (c) stigma. This set of factors presented together is what the authors believed makes sexual abuse unique to other forms of trauma. Later, Brown and Finkelhor (1986) reviewed the literature regarding child sexual abuse (CSA) and discussed how abuse was disclosed, type of abuse, frequency, impact of father figures perpetuating the abuse, and parental support. Abuse by fathers and stepfathers had a more traumatic impact than by strangers, uncles or cousins. Abuse by adults rather than teenagers or older children, and abuse by force including penetration also created severe trauma.

Kendell-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor (1993) found the symptomology of sexual abuse included hyper sexualized acting out (public masturbation, sexual play with dolls, insertion of objects in the anus or vagina, and wanting sexual attention from adults), as well as aggression, school problems, anger, anxiety, depression, low self-

esteem, and withdrawn behavior. In the first year to year and a half of disclosure, victims exhibited less symptomatic behavior and usually *heal* from the abuse.

According to Snyder (2000), 96% of perpetrators were adult males, with 26.3 % juvenile abusers of whom 19.5% were ages 12 to 17. Most children were victims violated by someone they knew and trusted. Summit (1983) found that victims experienced secondary trauma as they revealed their experience. Most parents were not prepared to handle such charges of abuse involving their child by someone they trust without some form of psychological assistance. London, Bruck, and Ceci (2005) found the initial reaction of disbelief from parents and family members, law enforcement and others could create feelings of self-hate, anger, self-blame and re-victimization. This cluster of psychological factors is called Accommodation Syndrome.

Accommodation Syndrome provides an explanation on how children try to rationalize their experiences so as not to fall out of favor with their families. Victims go through five phases in their accommodation: (a) secrecy, (b) helplessness, (c) entrapment and accommodation, unconvincing disclosure, and (d) retraction (Summit, 1983: Malloy, Lyon & Quas, 2007). Left unchallenged, this syndrome reinforces societal complacency and re-victimizes the child.

Conley and Garza (2011) found a limitation in research examining child sexual abuse survivors and adult sexual abuse survivors as the omission of impulsivity as a coping mechanism. In studying college students, those who were sexually abused as children had higher body weight and more frequent sexual encounters than those

victimized as adults. CSA victims were more impulsive, and adult sexual abuse (ASA) victims were more restrictive.

According to Cromer and Goldsmith (2010), myths (e.g., CSA not being physically damaging, the child being at fault, and perpetrators only being male strangers) created barriers to the healing of CSA survivors. The myth that child victims always show signs of abuse by making disclosure at a later time makes coping and healing difficult.

Coping with child sexual abuse over the long terms requires a series of strategies and stages. However, the coping usually happens after adulthood, if at all. Burke-Draucker et al. (2011) developed the sexual violence study by using the Storying the Violence and Living the Family Legacy frameworks. Of the 121 participants (both male and female), 95 had CSA experiences with 51 % women and half of the participants being African American.

According to Burke-Draucker (2011), in the (a) parenting stage, participants revealed they were abusive to their own children, followed by the (b) disclosure stage, where they discussed their experience with others. During the (c) spirituality phase, participants searched for a higher power to help them come to grips with their experience, and finally the (d) altruism phase, they understand the dynamics of their abuse and are aware of the abuse of others, but cannot offer assistance because they are still dealing with their own experience.

Fontes and Plummer (2010) examined and discussed social issues and child sexual abuse. Due to societal norms and expectations, it was taboo to discuss anything

sexual, and the thought of being sexually abused brought shame to the family. For African American girls and women, societal expectations are that they remain strong and able to endure anything. This mindset contributes to the acceptance of violence and exploitation.

The grooming process is the same process used by exploiters preparing their victim for a life of exploitation. A child who has been sexually abused has already experienced a violation of their body and soul. For those who have been abused repeatedly or over a period of time, being presented with sexual exploitation would not be a new concept. Exploiters know this. Victims of CSA are at greatest risk to be recruited into a life of prostitution (Albanese, 2013).

The transition is an easy one if parents are not aware of the early signs of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Exploiters know the signs and use them to their advantage. Through trust gaining, victims confide in exploiters thinking they can be trusted with their secrets (Kotrla, 2009). Adolescents and teenagers who have been sexually abused may enter the world of exploitation on their own accord, as an answer to joblessness and poverty (Marcus, Thomas, & Horning, 2014).

Research in New York City conducted by Marcus, Thomas and Horning (2014) found that 42.7% of youth involved in sex trafficking were introduced to it by a friend, 14.6% were introduced by a relative, 21% were approached by a customer, and 7.4% were approached by a pimp. Kendell-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor (1993) understood the dyadic and family context where the abuse occurred and its effect on the entire lifespan. The authors, examining themes of betrayal, stigmatization, and subjection,

concluded that child sexual abuse affects the victim throughout the lifespan, with or without supports. Therefore, the grooming process by the original and subsequent perpetrators of child sexual abuse has lasting effects on the victim, often resulting in a misuse of their own bodies.

Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors

Domestic *sex trafficking of minors* is more commonly known as *juvenile prostitution*. Until the mid-2000s, most communities had no idea what sex trafficking was. Human trafficking was something happening in other countries. Americans had no connection with the plight of trafficking in the United States. While horrified, Americans walked past sex trafficking victims daily without thought. Juveniles involved in sex trafficking were bad girls, troubled youth, and criminals. The move from criminal centered to victim centered has taken hold and communities are being enlightened to an old problem under a new name: the modern face of slavery (Kotrla, 2010).

The definition of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) encompassed the recruitment, harboring, enticing, transporting, maintaining or providing for minor children for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Shared Hope, 2013). Currently, commercial sexually exploited children (CSEC) are treated as *juvenile delinquents* rather than *victims* (Dysart, 2013).

According to Clarke, Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz and Fey (2012), African American women are more likely to have started a life of prostitution at ages 12 and 13. Other factors related to its beginnings were substance abuse, suicide and dropping out of middle school. Other risk factors included: involvement in foster care services, poverty, low self-

esteem, family dysfunction, involvement in the juvenile justice system, family history of prostitution, and drugs (Shared Hope, 2013).

The findings of some previous research still hold true today. Silbert and Pines (1982) argued that minors became involved in prostitution while in school, hanging with at-risk peers whose influence had major impacts. However, Kramer and Berg (2003) found that although Caucasian women had more substance abuse risk factors, their entry into prostitution was 2.5 years later than for African American women. Also noted was that for each year a minor stayed in school, the likelihood of involvement in prostitution decreased.

Twill, Green and Traylor (2012) conceptualized victims of child prostitution as often have mental diagnosis, such as bi-polar or depression, which adds to their vulnerability. These victims are easier to recruit into a life of prostitution. If they are not taking their prescribed medication or seeking regular mental health services, they are prime candidates for exploitation.

Williamson and Prior (2009) examined domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) and provided information on the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). The purpose of the article was to add to the growing body of knowledge about DMST and present the experiences of the victims. The authors discussed the experiences of child sex trafficking victims, recruited from the Midwest with six objectives in mind: (a) experiences with violence (b) HIV risk (c) emotional and physical health (d) substance abuse, home life and street life (f) experiences with local systems.

Fong and Cardoso (2009) discussed the TVPA Act and concluded the purpose of the act was to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers. The TVPA act fell short of solutions; however, it was a great start. Rieger (2007) argued that the TVPA act failed to help as expected because the victims the act was meant to protect were denied services for unknown reasons. In other words, TVPA served only a minimal number of victims.

Fong and Cardoso (2009) argued that a plethora of barriers for child welfare agencies, building collaborations and partnerships were needed to provide services. Some of these related issues included: policy issues, cultural issues, and clarity involving each agency's role. Joining with other agencies could be problematic in identifying victims. Oftentimes, local law enforcement officers were able to identify victims only after interviewing them in juvenile hall. The victims often were arrested for other crimes (i.e., such as petty theft). Thorough interviewing of the victim would uncover symptoms of involvement in sex trafficking, requiring further questioning to get to their victim status.

Prostitution Going High Tech

Prostitution has changed throughout the years. Although street prostitution appears in the public eye, many don't understand the magnitude of the problem because solicitation has gone high tech. Most who are involved in prostitution post advertisements on social networking websites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), as well as specific dating sites and general classified advertisement sites (i.e., Craigslist). Holger-Ambrose, Langmade, Edinburg and Saewyc (2013) found that all their research participants used the Internet to solicit dates.

According to McClain and Garrity (2011), the Advanced Interactive Media Group (AIM) reported projected earnings of 36.3 million dollars from its adult entertainment websites, which include sites for pornography, as well as sexual advertisements. While attempts to shut down the adult site of Craigslist failed, the site still exists and monitoring for under aged prostitutes remains impossible.

For parents, the greatest enemy is inside their home. The Internet provides a space for predators to victimize their children. Facebook and other social media are extremely popular with adolescents, and loading pictures of themselves attracts the attention of those who are recruiting for pimps. Bergen et al. (2013) conducted a quasi-experiment impersonating youth under the age of 18 in internet chat rooms. They found that as the age of the proposed youth went up, the targets (adults) increased their discussion of sexual advances. However, 25.7% of those in the chat rooms discussed sexual advances with proposed 10 to 12 year olds, even after being told their real age.

Mitchell et al. (2010) added that online predators don't prey on naïve children. Instead they develop relationships, leading to an agreement between the adolescent and the predator. For example, using statutory rape as an analogy, they described the grooming process between an adult and an adolescent. They form an online relationship, gain trust, and agree to meet.

On these adult websites, adolescents and teens looking for attention and an occasional gift or two could be easily enticed into prostitution (Alexander, 2013). However, a population of victims is aware of what they are doing and have chosen to do

so. The question remains, are they still victims if they choose to engage in this behavior without the force, fear or coercion of another?

Once in the life, whether by the hands of someone else or their own immature decision, parents need to know the signs that indicate their child is involved. Some signs include tattoos or branding of the pimp's name, school truancy, staying out late, associating with much older people, bringing home items they themselves cannot afford, and extreme secrecy regarding their cell phone (Shared Hope, 2013).

Wells, Mitchell and Ji (2012) explored the role of the Internet in minor sex trafficking. The cases that gain the attention of law enforcement showed that many victims posted on the Internet were much younger than those on the streets and involved an exploiter from their own family.

Posting selfies online, adolescents are able to mask their ages with makeup, revealing clothes and adult hairstyles (Kunz, 2010). Pimp codes alert buyers that the girl they see is much younger. Phrases, such as *new in town*, meant the victim was new to the life, the term *selective* or *playful* meant she was not sexually experienced and was under aged.

Reasons why adolescents get involved do not require kidnapping, force or coercion involved distortions. Marcus et al. (2014) argued the narrative of pimp trickery was distorted for three reasons: (a) The role of the pimp was overestimated, (b) The initial recruitment stage was overestimated, and (c) It simplified the complex choices made by the victims. Their study involved New York City sex workers, of which 87%

stated they wanted to leave the life, but not one said the pimp was a barrier to leaving. The researchers found that pimps were less important to street prostitution than thought.

Heilemann and Santhiveeran (2011) examined the lives and coping skills of adolescent sex trafficking victims and proposed they mitigate harms by use of their own self-made safety plans. These plans included coping and survival skills aimed at appeasing their trafficker by any means to obtain favor; whether not being beaten that night or sleeping with the trafficker. Most people have no idea of the horrors a child has to endure to survive the life.

Although an arrest of the victims provides a break from the victimization, once they receive services and return home, they become victimized again by the social values of their family and community. When the family does not receive the information needed to understand the trauma and the cause, the minor becomes shunned and pushed back out into the streets. Once the community knows the minor was involved in sex trafficking, that victim is not met with compassion. A lack of knowledge in the African American community creates the paradigm that these are dirty girls who chose to get out there.

Parental and Community Knowledge of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

To discuss parental perceptions of sex trafficking, the child sexual abuse (CSA) literature offered comparisons because child sexual abuse is linked to sexual exploitation. According to Kouyoumdjian, Perry, and Hansen (2005), children with a history of sexual abuse were less likely to achieve, make friends, and more likely to be aggressive and get in trouble. Likewise, adolescents who entered a life of prostitution most often fit the same risk factors of those with CSA. Some African American parents may perceive the

transition to prostitution as a natural progression from sexual abuse. Without parental support, this transition becomes possible. These supports may include extended family, spiritual support from the church or services in the community. However, some researchers questioned whether non-offending parents could be both ambivalent and supportive at the same time (Bolen & Lamb, 2007).

Ambivalence and Support

According to Walsh, Cross, and Jones (2012) parents blamed or doubted the victim more when the perpetrator was an adolescent versus an adult. The researchers found that parents had a hard time with the concept of adolescent sex offenders, and felt their child may have enticed the situation. This ideology appears to be common among parents and caregivers. Warner, Branscombe, Garczynski, and Solomon (2011) found that victims who suffered great harm were not favorable in the eyes of society as victims who did not suffer physical harm. Society did not like to discuss sexual assaults and exploitation. Garczynski and Solomon (2011) found parents support of their children may depend on the age and sex of the perpetrator.

Protection of Children

Koo and Gard (2010) found that although parents believed talking to their adolescents about sex was necessary to protect them from engaging in early sexual behavior, most had not done so. Early communication between parent and child could alleviate or lessen the chance of early sexual experimentation. Bakken and Brown (2010) examined adolescent ways of negotiating secretive peer relations and relationships with their parents. Parents believed they knew who their children befriended. However, the

researchers found that their children had friends of whom their parents would not approve. The choices made by their children could endanger them by succumbing to negative peer pressure. This further exhibits how parents do not have true knowledge of what is transpiring between their child and the community, as well as the potential impact and danger secretive peer relationships can impose.

Stevenson (2013) examined parental perceptions regarding their degree of involvement in their child's public school education. Parents believed that if school officials and teachers had more cultural knowledge about African Americans, it would help smooth out the communication issues between families and the school. If parents communicated more with the schools, the bridge between schools and the community could be an effective collaboration for the safety of neighborhood youth. Supportive parenting has proven to promote higher levels of competence, self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescents (Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2012).

Maternal Modeling and Self-Perception

The maternal perceptions of children living in high poverty areas, directly reflects the amount of supervision they provide for their children. Kimbro and Schachter (2011) argued that minimizing depression among mothers living in high poverty area could positively affect the amount of fear they have for their children socializing in these areas.

Reid (2012) used life course theory as a theoretical lens to review the literature on sex trafficking. Victims of sex trafficking often had the same backgrounds, such as domestic violence, drug addiction, lack of supervision, and poor modeling from parents. Parental bonds and communication could make the difference if parents understood the

risk factors early on. Youth who learn about sex from peers were at great risk of being sexually exploited or exhibiting unhealthy sexual attitudes. Open honest communication about relationships and sexual attitudes is necessary to protect adolescents from making dire mistakes governing their bodies and minds.

Maternal expectations of their daughters' sexual behaviors were often the opposite of how they conduct their own personal life. Catania and Dolcini (2012) explained that mothers had more influence on their daughter's sexual behavior than they thought. African American females were more likely to engage in sexual behavior at an earlier age than other females, with a median age of 13 as the first encounter. Exposure to single mother's lifestyles may be a great factor, as well as the media images and low expectations placed on them by society.

Jones (2012) in one of the few studies on perception of sex trafficking measured the perception of college students regarding sex trafficking. Controlling for race and ethnicity, Jones found that 63% of students believed human trafficking and sex trafficking were different. However, 87% agreed that sex trafficking and human trafficking were related. Another 71% agreed that a majority of the victims were female. Statistically, different perceptions of sex trafficking existed between white students and non-white students.

Neighborhood Perceptions

The perception of the communities these victims come from may make it difficult to return. Social standing and reputation are important factors in the lives of adolescents. Byrnes, Miller, Chen and Grube (2011) examined neighborhood perceptions and found

that closely knit, stable neighborhoods provided an extended family to raise the children, and the community had better protections in place.

The perceptions of the community are as important in adolescent growth and human development as family perceptions. Akers, Muhammad and Corbie-Smith (2011) studied neighborhood perception and the effects on adolescent sexual behaviors by conducting 11 focus groups within African American rural communities. They found that adolescents engaged in risky sexual behaviors as a pastime due to the lack of community resources (e. g., Boys and Girls clubs, Parks and Recreation centers, and sports). The lack of resources created an expectation or nonchalant attitude toward this behavior.

Collaboration between parents and the schools would be welcomed, but was not yet commonplace. In addition, parental perceptions of their family and community environment helped shape how they viewed possible risk factors for sexual exploitation. Oftentimes, sexually abused females reacted to their abuse by being promiscuous or using drugs to self-medicate (Roemmele & Messman-Moore, 2010).

Pazdera, McWey, Mullis and Carbonell (2013) discovered a lack of research regarding how mothers with child sexual abuse (CSA) backgrounds parent their children successfully. Using symbolic interactionism, the authors were able to investigate CSA and maternal parenting indicators with no direct correlation between CSA and parenting outcomes. However, other factors may present a different conclusion. Parental neighborhood perceptions could indicate social disorder in the child's environment.

Methodological Approaches to the Knowledge Area

Qualitative studies have been widely used to explore and examine the knowledge area of sexual abuse. The most common approaches have been case studies, phenomenology and ethnography. These methods worked well for exploratory studies to explain why the phenomenon existed. However, the chosen method for this descriptive study, emphasizing understanding of what is occurring, is survey research.

Studies using qualitative survey research are more common in studies inquiring about knowledge. Carter et al. (2013) used these surveys to inquire about parental perceptions of self-determination and performance in children with autism. They used a self-administered three page questionnaire to explore parental assessments and found the educational setting and perceived severity of the child's disability influenced their perceptions.

DeBont, Francis, Dinant, and Cals (2014) explored parental knowledge, attitudes and practice regarding childhood fevers by using an Internet-based qualitative survey design. These researchers used a 26 item cross-sectional survey. The results revealed attitudes and knowledge varied among parents with young children. Most parents expected a thorough examination and information, rather than a prescription for the ailment.

Kavanagh and Hickey (2013) explored the lack of parental involvement in children's education by using a twofold process: interviews and a qualitative survey. Using open-ended questions on a large scale survey, the researchers found among seven

main themes that low proficiency and practical issues (i.e., work, lack of time) were the main reasons many parents were not as involved in their children's education.

Although the majority of studies in the realm of parental knowledge, awareness and prevention used a case study or interviews, researchers employed qualitative descriptive surveys to explore issues where little known or no prior research existed. In these cases, this method allowed for an initial inquiry into the phenomena. For populations closed to outsiders, concerned about anonymity or harder to reach, qualitative surveys are the ideal methodology.

Theoretical Approaches

Conceptual frameworks in sex trafficking research vary as scholars are still exploring this human rights issue. Four conceptual frameworks are common in sex trafficking research: Symbolic Interactionism, Critical Theory, Feminist Approach, and Ecological Systems Theory.

Symbolic Interaction has been useful in interpreting meaning by examining symbols, language and one's social interactions. Levin and Peled (2011) used symbolic interactionism as a problem-oriented approach to develop their research tool to create the Attitudes towards Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale (APPS).

Critical Theory has been widely used in the area of sexual abuse research. This theory allows the researcher to explore and examine the phenomenon through the eyes of society, (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). This theory provides the researcher with a social lens to examine phenomena.

The feminist approach has been useful in examining sex trafficking in the context of gender and sexism, two variables strongly associated with sex trafficking. Lobasz (2009) argued the feminist approach highlighted the destructive role stereotypes of race and sexism have in promoting how victims are viewed and treated. Menaker and Franklin (2013) explored the issue of blame and race by using a conceptual approach similar to the feminist approach. Alvarez and Alessi (2012) used a feminist approach to describe how sex trafficking diverts the attention from labor trafficking.

Many researchers have applied ecological systems theory to their studies. Harper (2013), using a dual framework of ecological systems approach and phenomenology explored school-based interventions for African American adolescent females. Harper argued the need to focus on the specific needs of African American adolescent females was vital in lowering the victimization rate in the metro Atlanta area.

Choby, Dolcini, Catania, and Harper (2012) used an ecological systems approach to examine how family and environment affect the deciding factor to experience sex and how to perceive the violence in their neighborhoods. Parents who created a positive and structured environment for their children had a positive impact on their child's decision making.

Mitra, Faulkner, Buliung and Stone (2014) integrated an ecological framework when exploring parental perceptions of neighborhood environments. They found those perceptions correlated with their child's independent mobility. Thus, parents used their own experiences coupled with their home environment to dictate how much independence children should have in the community.

An ecological systems framework was the most appropriate way to conduct this study. The impact of environmental experience allowed for a comprehensive investigation into the family culture, environment, and worldview. The results from the study could create interest in exploring ways to reach families and empower them to become stakeholders in their communities, while protecting not only their families, but also eliminating the criminal activity sex trafficking brings to their neighborhoods.

Summary and Conclusions

The main limitation in the current literature was the relatively few studies involving the knowledge of parents, in particular African Americans as a group, within the domestic minor sex trafficking knowledge area. A study of these issues could expand the ways and means to design intervention programs to reduce the serious and long term effects of sex trafficking by providing marginalized communities the same information and education given to human service and law enforcement professionals.

Previous researchers had primarily focused on African American parental behaviors and expectations, socialization of African American childrearing, child sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and parental and community perceptions of domestic minor sex trafficking. Previous researchers did not have a focus on the experiences of African American parents raising children within communities where sex trafficking was a major issue. Previous researchers focused on the global phenomenon of sex trafficking (Hughes, 2000) or domestic minor sex trafficking as it pertained to the victims (Holger-Ambrose, Langmade, Edinburg, & Saewyc, 2013).

An exploration of literature in child sexual abuse, African American parenting, and sociohistorical factors provided a background to explore this social problem and how it affects the perceptions, child rearing, parental behaviors and expectations of families. The literature on child sexual abuse was a pathway into sexual exploitation. The conceptual framework of ecological systems theory provided the context for parental experiences in an environment where sexual exploitation is present.

While strong evidence exists about pathways and risk factors for sexual exploitation to occur, the knowledge and ability to safeguard African American children remains an issue to be explored. The question of what parents know about sex trafficking can be the difference between a continuum of the pandemic or early prevention strategies. In Chapter 3, I present a thorough explanation of the conceptual framework, as well as the research plan and methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore African American parental perceptions of (a) sex trafficking in their community, (b) identification of risk factors that make their children vulnerable, and (c) parental protection measures for their children from being vulnerable to sex trafficking where sex trafficking is prominent. The sections in this chapter include the methodological approach, the conceptual framework, identification of the research sites, research design and rationale, population and sample selection, instrument development, research procedures, ethical concerns, data analysis, and role of the researcher.

Methodological Approaches

Several theories were possible to find the best fit for this qualitative study. The first was sociocultural theory, which would provide an exploration of the phenomenon of parental knowledge and perceptions of sex trafficking through the lens of social, historical and cognitive contexts (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). This framework would be helpful in understanding the phenomenon and provide a way to interpret the results in this context.

The second emphasis on culture could help in examining the effects of cultural influences on how African American parents perceive sex trafficking. Carson, Foster, and Tripahi (2013) used sociocultural theory to examine child sexual abuse in India. They found that cultural norms, such as family silence, enabled child sexual abuse to continue. Likewise, cultural factors may have a part in the perception of African American parents,

and provide meaning they associate to the issue of sex trafficking. Although the cultural aspect would be embedded within the neighborhood environment, the sociocultural perspective was not applicable because the focus of the study was on parental perceptions of sexual exploitation and not on how the culture shaped that knowledge.

My third consideration was critical theory, a moral approach to social science by providing a framework for a critical examination of social norms and expectations (Held, 1980). The core of critical theory has as its unit of analysis the totality of society in a historical perspective in regard to power and oppression (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). Oftentimes, this theory is useful to critique social orders and issues (Stryder, 2013).

I considered this because of the marginalization of African American families and the societal view of African American girls victimized by traffickers. My original assumption was that marginalization in the media, oppressive music, and the lack of economic empowerment in some communities could influence parental perceptions of sex trafficking of adolescent females. However, with little known prior to this study, critical theory would not be applicable without a concurrent explanatory, practical, normative understanding, guided by political science (Corradetti, 2011). Therefore, this theory was not found to be appropriate for the study.

The final theory that I considered as the most appropriate conceptual framework for this study needed to relate to the educational, social, neighborhood and economic environment shaping parental perceptions of sexual exploitation. Thus, an ecological systems framework was useful in guiding me to examine the environmental factors and provide a framework to interpret the results. Based on the support of the literature review,

an ecological systems framework was chosen for this study. To explore what parents know and how they protect their children, I created a framework to examine (a) the environmental and social paradigm of African American families, and (b) how their perceptions shaped their choices in dealing with domestic minor sex trafficking.

Methodology

A qualitative descriptive methodology provides the means to gather data from a range of participants at the same time. The qualitative survey was useful in studying diverse topics and establishing meaningful variation in a population with the capacity to explore thoughts and behaviors with a variety of open, closed, and Likert responses. This survey design provided frequency distributions of items for nominal and ordinal data. The demographic data enabled me to compare and contrast responses of different subgroups by age, socioeconomic status, and educational background in descriptive, and small population studies.

The advantage of using a descriptive methodology was to derive data from a knowledge area where little was known about the subject of study (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Thus, I was able to explore parental perceptions and knowledge about sex trafficking within a reasonable amount of time (Creswell, 2009). An additional advantage to this methodology was gathering the data simultaneously from the participants. Based on the literature review, survey research was useful in studies involving child sexual abuse and parental perceptions of educational issues. The major limitations of survey methodology included the lack of in-depth information to fully explain the phenomenon.

Research Design and Rationale

The survey design involved cross-sectional data collected at one time for two different research sites. Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire, which saved time for both the participants and me, as the researcher. The survey allowed for multiple people to fill out the survey simultaneously. The survey was a self-designed instrument I created called the African American Sex Trafficking Knowledge Tool (AASTK). This tool was pre-tested by eight to ten individuals to analyze the type of questions used, check for clarity, reliability, validity, ease of implementation and relevance to the study.

The results were helpful in highlighting comparisons of the similarities and differences between the geographic areas. The rationale for this design was two-fold: (a) The two demographic areas represent a large portion of the Southern California area, and (b) The comparison included differences in the cultures and socioeconomic status of the communities.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of this study was: What knowledge and prevention strategies do African is prominent? The research questions involved two sets of variables related to general parental knowledge of sex trafficking and common prevention strategies to protect children from becoming victims. Specifically, in terms of knowledge, five items were involved:

1. What do African American parents know/understand about prostitution?
2. Are African American parents aware of sex trafficking in their community?

3. Do parents understand the risk factors that make children vulnerable for exploitation?

4. What do parents identify as the symptoms of sexual exploitation?

5. Do parents know the ways their children can be recruited for sex trafficking?

In terms of prevention strategies, four items captured the most common ways to protect children from becoming victims of sex trafficking.

1. How do you think parents prevent their children from being exploited?

2. Where do you think parents go for help when they believe their child is exploited?

3. What community resources do you think parents currently use to protect their children?

4. What family support do you think parents currently use to protect their children?

Research Sites

African American families in Southern California are geographically dispersed throughout the Orange and San Bernardino County areas. These areas are ethnically and economically diverse, within urban areas as well as suburbs (U.S. Census, 2014). The African American population is not centralized in these two large counties, so no predominantly African American community exists in these locations.

Creswell (2012) stated that locating the site and gaining access is the first order of business to recruiting participants and collecting data. To access large numbers of African American families, churches were the logical target because of the access to large

numbers of families with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The final selection for research sites were two churches in the Orange County and High Desert areas of San Bernardino County, California. San Bernardino County is said to be the largest county in the United States at 20,105 square miles. Orange County is 948 square miles (U.S. Census.org).

For the purpose of this study, the church located in Orange County was referred to as the Southern Church (SC), and had a total membership of approximately 1500 to 1700 members, of which 92 % are African American. The church had an educational center, book store, two sanctuaries, and a small community center. The appropriate sample size for this site was 75 participants, due to the expectation of apprehension from potential participants.

The church in the High Desert, the Northern Church (NC), had approximately 300 members, of which 76 % were African American. The location, in an industrial complex, had a learning center and sanctuary. The appropriate sample size for this church was 75 participants. The equal number of participants from each church would allow for better comparison of the data.

Population and Sample Selection

Population

The population that I studied was difficult to reach due to its wide spread distribution in Southern California. Within this designated locale, were African American parents and caregivers of minor children who lived, worked, or worshipped here. Parishioners from the participating churches were transplants from Los Angeles, San

Bernardino, and Riverside Counties, with the majority of those in Orange County originating from the Los Angeles area.

Sample and Participant Selection

The sample was from Orange County and the High Desert region of San Bernardino County in California. The two demographic areas served various populations. One area was generally affluent, and the other working class to poverty level. Convenience samples from two medium to large sized church congregations was the goal with a maximum expectation of 50 to 100 participants each site. Both churches represented variations in income, education, and marital status.

Criteria for Selection

Participants were men and women parents or caregivers, whether married or unmarried, 30 years of age and above, with female children over the age of 10 years old. Due to the difficulty in narrowing down parents with children in this age group, I widened the scope to include children over the age of 9. Using convenience samples did not enable me to know whether those completing the surveys actually fit the criteria. However, the criteria were useful in sorting out parents or family caregivers with children or grandchildren in their homes.

Sample Size and Strategy

Creswell (2012) discussed purposeful sampling strategies and the three considerations: (a) the type of site, (b) type of sampling strategy and (c) sample size. The only way to find this demographic was in large gatherings, such as churches. With two medium to large size research site churches, a minimum of 75 to 100 participants from

each would capture the diversity of the parishioners. However, not all participants had responsibility for children between the ages of 10-17. Therefore, the final sample size might reflect two groups within each setting: those with and without children of the appropriate age. The former group would be the sample for the study. The latter will be available for analysis at a later date.

Due to the design of this study, the final sample sizes were not under my control. The church administrators sent out notices and flyers informing their parishioners of the study. The participants had the choice to participate or not. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Therefore, the possibility of low participation could create an issue in the data collection. To compensate for this issue and to gain a large enough sample, participants if interested, received surveys at two different services at each church. Thus, parishioners had the opportunity to complete the survey at different times to maximize the number of completed surveys.

Instrument Development

Patton (2002) explained that surveys should include demographic, feeling/sensory and knowledge questions. These types of questions were a measure of emotion, what the participants saw and heard, and the factual information they already knew. According to Creswell (2009), the researcher must provide information on the research tool. Using a published tool was the easiest, as long as a researcher receives permission to use it. However, in the case where no tool captured the necessary data to answer the research questions, a researcher creates the instrument, as I did here.

The instrument was a researcher-designed tool called the African American Sex Trafficking Knowledge (AASTK) Tool. The basis of the AASTK tool came from a conceptualization of what variables might affect knowledge, perceptions, and awareness. Conceptually, these three categories of variables potentially shaped African American culture by exploring what parents might or might not know about sex trafficking.

Initially, the design of the instrument included knowledge, awareness and prevention in five sections: (a) demographics, which include age range, city of residence, education level, and economic status; (b) parental understanding, perception, and awareness of prostitution, including risk factors; (c) what they knew about male prostitution; (d) parental knowledge of how exploiters operated; and (e) strategies for protecting their children.

The knowledge, awareness, prevention and intervention captured in the questions were at a language level culturally understood and relevant. The questions in the survey included multiple choice questions, as well as *true-false* items. The development of survey questions involved taking into consideration (a) the cultural language used to promote clarity on what the subject, and (b) the differences in subcultures as a result of socio-economic factors.

The intent of the cross-sectional design was to decrease bias and increase reliability. The preliminary survey was 12 pages long and later reduced to two pages with items on both front and back sides. The number of questions was significantly reduced to provide a clearer focus on parental knowledge and intervention-protective strategies because the number of items was necessary to explore parental perceptions in depth.

However, the pretest would be the determinant of whether, (a) the survey was too long, (b) any items were redundant or superfluous, and (c) which items could be deleted and still provide the necessary and sufficient data to answer the research questions.

Pretest of the Instrument

I tested the instrument with a diverse group of African Americans currently associated with me through employment and community relations. My workplace provided diversity in socio-economic class, education, marital status and gender. Eight African American parents (n = 2 males, n = 6 females) volunteered from my workplace in the pretest of the readability of the instrument and whether the data was necessary and sufficient to answer the research questions. The pretest panel consisted of three African American law enforcement officers (n = 4), two parent advocates (n = 1), one administrative clerk (n = 1) and two parents with similar backgrounds to the proposed participants (n = 2). The panel had an average of 3 children. Four participants had children over the age of 18; 2 with children between 9 and 17, and 2 refused to answer the demographic section. I expected that some respondents would not answer all of the personal questions.

The pretest panel examined the questions and items to report any ambiguities, vague language, leading or double barreled questions, and offered to give suggestions on any questions that needed additional options or need clarification. The panel requested there be another category for answers in the multiple-choice questions when the participant does not know how to answer the question. They also requested clarification on some of the questions so they would know exactly what is being asked. The panel

recommended that the term *prostitute* be used as a substitute for *trafficking victim*s to ensure the participants understand the subject in their own cultural terms and language.

While the entire panel completed the 12-page survey in 10 minutes, due to the length and comprehensive nature of the content, it was determined the actual participants might rush through it or leave items unanswered. With this important consideration in mind, I revised the instrument with a specific focus on parental knowledge and their strategies to protect their children from exploitation. All other items were eliminated if not immediately relevant to this focus. The dissertation committee served as reviewers and approved the shorter version for administration (see Appendix A for the final rendition).

Research Procedures

After researching which congregations in the chosen areas were predominantly African American, I sent letters of introduction and follow-up emails briefly explaining the research and requesting a meeting with the head of the church. After one to two weeks, phone calls to the churches were useful in narrowing down the two sites interested in participating in the research. Only two responses resulted from this outreach to 40 predominantly African American churches.

A follow-up with these two churches involved a meeting with the designated church head during which they received a brief synopsis of the study and how it may benefit their community. Procedurally, the initial request was for five minutes to address the congregation and ask that they be willing to participate in the study. More importantly, the congregation would learn that I worked with at-risk youth and families in

another county, and the information provided in the study would be strictly for the purposes of my dissertation research.

At the conclusion of the meetings, the two site representatives e signed their letters of agreement to participate in the study (see Appendixes B, C, and D). The pastors received a copy for their records. Two weeks after the initial meeting, the pastors received a thank you letter to keep them abreast of the stages and expected Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval timeline. Each pastor received an email every 2 weeks until approval from the IRB.

Due to the holiday season closely approaching, postponement of the data collection process was for 6 weeks, due to both sites having special programming, conferences and vacations during that time. Ongoing emails went to both sites to continue communication and to propose a new start date.

Two weeks before the actual data collection was to commence, I requested an approximate estimate of church attendees for each service to give a general idea of how many potential participants I could possibly get. This way a sufficient number of surveys could be printed and available for distribution. The data collection instrument was professionally printed so all the surveys were uniform with enough spacing between questions to improve readability.

Prior to Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study to commence, I scheduled a meeting with each pastor to discuss strategies for the best way to present the research to the parishioners. This discussion clarified the pastor's comfort level in presenting the topic and their ideas of how to approach the subject to maximize

participation. I presented some suggestions, including a short invitational paragraph describing the research and the benefits to the community in the church bulletin, a notice of the study and an invitation to participate on the church website, or through a two minute presentation I would present to the congregation prior to the date of administration.

On the day of the data collection, I distributed the surveys. The surveys were distributed in a meeting room provided by the sites after each service. The rooms were separate from the sanctuary, and did not interfere with the service. Each participant received a survey on a clipboard with a writing utensil. Upon completing the survey, each participant received a pamphlet on the risk factors and resources for victims of sex trafficking as a way to thank them for their participation. The information packet was made available to all parishioners attending the service. Approximately 120 surveys were provided for those who wanted to participate. A large box was the deposit point for the completed surveys.

Ethical Concerns

Prior to beginning the study, each site representative signed a letter of agreement for permission to conduct the study (See Appendix B). Once they granted permission, to protect the rights of the participants, they received an informed consent in the form of a covering letter attached to the survey. Their completion of the survey signified their willingness to participate in the study. The covering statement included a statement of the purpose of the study and information on the nature of the participation, the

confidential nature of the data, and voluntary participation with withdrawal and/or not completing the survey without consequence (See Appendix A).

The first section on demographics did not include any names or other identifying information. A summary compiled the data on the characteristics of the sample. The names of the churches were omitted. If during the data collection process, participants chose to withdraw from the study, they were able to do so without penalty or concern. Their information would be immediately destroyed by shredding their surveys, and I would seek someone else to replace the participant. The new participant received reassurance that their information and identity would remain anonymous and thanked for taking the time to complete the survey.

Once parishioners at both sites completed the surveys, I gathered the surveys and placed them into a locked secure briefcase and transported them to my home office. There, all surveys were kept in a locked file cabinet until the data collection period was over. After analyzing the data, I placed the surveys according to site in an individually sealed 81/2 by 11 envelope and placed them inside the secured file cabinet drawer. The data is to remain in the locked cabinet for a period of seven years. At the end of that time, the surveys will be destroyed by shredding. I will be the only person with access to the surveys.

Northern Church (NC) Site

To prepare for the data collection, I had the surveys professionally done and printed 150 surveys, bought 16 clipboards, a nice decorative basket to place the surveys in and a box of 35 ink pens. On January 8th, 2015, I brought 150 flyers and consent forms

to the church to be available prior to my arrival for data collection. I met with the pastor and was shown the room they set aside for data collection. It was a good sized room with a long hallway, leading to the front door and a lounge area and desk. An exit door provided for the participants to walk in, fill it out and walk out the other door towards the lobby. The room was used for their adolescent and teen program, and had two ping pong tables inside, two sofas and four chairs, so that the participants would be comfortable, and somewhat private while completing their surveys.

On January 18, 2015, I arrived at 7:45am to prepare for the 9:00 service. I was escorted to a different room, much smaller with only one door, and nowhere to sit. Apparently, the teens were having a study after the first service so the room had to be switched. I removed the surveys from a locked rolling briefcase I transported them in, along with the box, the clipboard and the pens to the new location. After I set up, an usher came and informed me that there was a seat up front reserved for me in the sanctuary, and that the pastor would like to introduce me and have me give a brief introduction to the study. The room where the data collection was to commence was locked and I was escorted to the sanctuary.

After a brief introduction, I introduced myself as the researcher and gave a brief purpose statement, reminded the congregation of the importance of the study, anonymity, and that it was completely voluntary. Just before the end of the first service, I was escorted to the small room and the door was unlocked. The approximate attendance was about 86, with about 45 adults. The congregation demographics appeared to be mostly parents of pre-teen to teenage youth, mostly African American.

With a steady stream of participants, all sixteen clipboards with surveys were in use with some surveys placed on a small table for others to fill it out. Participants filled them out in the small hallway, in their cars and standing in the room. Only one Caucasian parent wanted to fill out the survey, but understood they were not in the needed demographic. One parent stated there was a real need for information on sex trafficking due to the area being the corridor to Las Vegas. They appeared open minded and willing to help. Another parent told me she attended a seminar on sex trafficking that included a panel discussion and a survivor who told her story. Each participant received a brochure on sex trafficking information. After completion of the first batch of data, 27 surveys were completed.

I was informed that at the second service, I would move to the larger room shown the week before. I gathered everything, locked the surveys in the briefcase and moved to the larger room. After being escorted to my assigned seat for second service, I was again introduced to the congregation. I presented the purpose, importance of the study, and reiterated the study as voluntary and anonymous. The congregation for second service was half the size of the first service with approximately 45 congregants, half of them children. Towards the end of the service, I went to the room to prepare for data collection.

As parents came into the room, I noticed a few female teenagers between the ages of 14 and 17 asking for a survey. I explained they did not fit the demographic. However, I asked why they were interested. Two of them stated they wanted to know how to protect themselves from traffickers, and another stated she wanted to help. Another Caucasian

parent stated she wanted to participate because her husband and children were African American. Although her concern was valid, she did not fit the sample demographics. I could tell she did not feel comfortable with it.

A total of 14 surveys resulted from the second service. Those parents were interested in knowing what the church as a whole could do to protect the children in the community. After securing the surveys, the data was transported and secured in a locked file cabinet drawer in my home office. A total of 41 surveys were from the NC. All participants received brochures with information on sex trafficking upon completion of the surveys. Additional brochures were left in the church foyer for anyone who would be interested in the information.

Southwestern Church (SC) Site

On January 8, 2015, I was able to contact the representative from the Southwestern church. We agreed that the data collection would begin on January 25, 2015. Instead of bringing the flyers and consent forms to this church, they offered to print the documents from an email. I emailed both the flyer and consent forms and requested that they make them available two weeks before I arrived. The representative agreed. On January 22, 2015, I called the representative to confirm the time I needed to arrive, which was 9:30a.m. for the 8a.m. service. This would give me 30 minutes to set up. The pastor requested that I not address the audience. I brought 100 surveys, 16 clipboards and 35 ink pens.

Upon arrival, I drove around the parking lot to find parking, and took note of the type of parked vehicles (i.e., many Mercedes Benz, BMWs, Range Rovers, Cadillac and Lexus vehicles) No parking spaces were available, so I had to park down the street. The church was large with about four separate buildings and a large courtyard. I was escorted to a medium size room with four tables and 12 chairs. The church had posted a large sign on the door, which read "Sex Trafficking Survey in this room." As the church let out, I stood by the door and estimated approximately 320 congregants with a large number of elderly couples. However I noticed the church also had tents set up outside with other vendors, which may have added to any distractions from my research.

Slowly, a few women came in to participate in the survey. I explained to them it was voluntary, and if they had any questions I would be happy to answer them. Two came in during service. They were middle aged women who appeared serious about the survey. One looked over the questions carefully, and then began to fill it out. Afterwards she gave me her business card. She was a professor at a college and told me if I needed any help she would be glad to help me with my dissertation. She said what I am doing is important. A few more came in and filled them out.

One after filling it out said that her daughter met a man who told her he would help her make money. He took her and her infant son to Las Vegas. She called her daughter and found out she was in a hotel room with other girls and their children. A family friend rescued her daughter by going there and getting her. Another participant said she learned about sex trafficking at another church. They had a ministry that dealt with sex trafficking victims. She took my card. Another participant said she was part of a

coalition that was having a seminar in March. She took my card and asked if she could contact me for a panel discussion.

After an hour, I had only collected 15 surveys from such a large congregation. Most of the people stood around talking and sending their children to Sunday school. I took some surveys and went out to the quad area to try and gain more participation. I approached 5 women sitting around a tree. All the women were well dressed, as was the rest of the congregation. I could tell they really didn't want to be bothered, but since I asked, they consented and filled out the survey.

One of the women took the survey, started filling it out and showed it to her son. She told me her children weren't going to be involved because she prayed over them. This response seemed to be echoed by the other women. They appeared to believe that prayer would keep their children from becoming victims. Once the women filled out the surveys and returned them, they appeared to be relieved that it was over. I felt a sense of stiffness in the air, which became uncomfortable. I gathered my utensils and returned to the room.

A few women were walking in and out of the room, but made no effort to come and fill out a survey. One woman came in and I asked her if she would like to fill one out. She took the survey and left. However, she returned and filled it out. She stated she knew this was important. I told her I was having a hard time getting people to fill it out. She said it was a very sensitive subject, and the church was very conservative. Another person stated "They ain't giving up nothing."

I noticed many older people whose children were adults. Some of the women I asked to fill out the surveys were grandparents and had no children at home. One lady raised her nieces and nephews. Two men filled out surveys. It appeared as though most of the people who attend that church either had adult children or children under 10 years old. Very few appeared to be interested. One told me someone gave a brief presentation in December. I thought maybe this was one of the reasons for such a low turnout for the surveys. I was able to collect 20 surveys, 5 of which the participants didn't seem to be too interested in doing.

After being there for 4 hours after service, I intended to stay for second service, but the low turnout discouraged me, and I left. The site representative who was not happy with the low turnout contacted me and we agreed that I would return on February 8, 2015. On that date, the church was combining both services, as it would be a special day, and I would have access to everyone. I agreed to return.

On February 8, 2015, I arrived at the site and the area was so full of cars, they sent an usher on a golf cart to pick me up from the parking lot. I was escorted to a room where they usually held children's Bible study. Three tables and eight chairs were available for data collection. The room was located at the end of a hallway that connected to a large multipurpose room with a large kitchen, where people were preparing food. An usher told me the parishioners would have to pass me to get to the room where breakfast would be served. Two signs posted announcements of the study and where they could go to complete a survey. One sign was located outside the first door to come into the building, and the other was located on the door of the room I was using.

Four teens, three males and one female came into the room and inquired about the survey. They wanted to see the survey. I told them it was a scientific study and they were not allowed to participate, but their parents could. The young girl started asking questions about it and wanted to know if she would be safe from becoming a victim. A couple of the boys asked where sex trafficking was occurring and stated they wanted to know how to stay away from it. I could tell these youth had no connection at all to the inner city. They had been sheltered and protected. Three of them stated they were homeschooled.

As the service let out and the parishioners lined up for the food, I stood by the door with clipboards in hand and asked if anyone would like to fill out a survey. Many smiled, but did not volunteer. I stayed in place and greeted everyone hoping to get some response for about 30 minutes before the first two people arrived. I was able to gage the amount of parents who fit the demographic by the amount of teens in the line and by the general age groups of parents coming through.

The first person to enter had three small children with her and their plates of food. She used the room not only to do the survey but also to eat. She stated her daughter was involved in sex trafficking. Slowly women came in and asked for the survey. One older gentleman asked me about sex trafficking, and had no idea of how serious it was. He picked my brain and was appalled this criminal activity could go on. Another woman was with her cousin who was a doctoral student in Boston. They said they wanted to support me because they felt this was important.

Another woman filled out a survey and asked how many responses I had gotten. When I told her very few, she was upset that her church would be silent with such an important matter. She said she was going to go and ask people to come in. Another woman came in and asked what the research was about. When I informed her of the subject, she turned her nose in disgust. Her body language said "no", and when I asked her if she was willing to fill one out, she didn't answer. When I turned around she was looking at one of the surveys. I told her she couldn't view one unless she was going to fill it out. She said she would participate. The others chimed in and reminded her that she had refused. She denied it and filled one out. A few other women came in but did not qualify because they were not caring for any children or their children were adults.

After staying at the site for 90 minutes after service, the total numbers of surveys collected were 7. I secured the surveys and transported them back to my home office. The surveys were added to the Southwestern church stack and secured in a locked file cabinet until time for data analysis.

Data Analysis

This descriptive survey was the data source to answer the research questions. First, the surveys were sorted into two groups by church site. Then, each group was sorted as to whether each met the criteria for the study or not, thereby creating two groups (those with female children between the ages of 9 and 18; those with younger children or none at all). I reported the number of estimated church attendees versus the actual number of participants who did or did not return the surveys in a table, thus providing the nature of the sample.

The second step consisted of creating a list of the survey questions and responses The spreadsheet provided a visual of all the data in an easy to understand format. The questions and responses were coded in two ways: (a) qualitatively using abbreviated codes and (b) numerically, for statistical purposes. The third step was to use SPSS to analyze the data and compare and contrast the data by sites, groups, subgroups, and regions, since the research sites were in two different counties. I ran the data for frequencies and percentages for the nominal and ordinal data from the surveys. These results were the basis for deriving patterns and themes of responses from each church and by subgroups.

The resulting analysis of each section produced types of knowledge related to sex trafficking and the types of strategies employed to protect their children. Using content analysis, this data was analyzed for themes and perspectives. Content analysis was an effective tool for analyzing data when prior research was limited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Trustworthiness

Using a convenience sample has certain built-in limitations in terms of the trustworthiness of the data, such as participant refusal to complete or partially complete the survey. Those seven surveys were discarded and not included in the results. Those surveys that were 100% complete or 80% of each section complete were used for the basis for data analysis.

Internal validity was established by addressing potential researcher bias. My bias as a probation officer specializing in sex trafficking was minimized by conducting the

study in counties where I had no professional involvement or knowledge of the participants. However, after completion of the study, I used my experience to help participants understand the relevance of the results, which were shared in a follow-up seminar.

The ability to fully describe the research setting could assist any reader in understanding the site and the diversity of its participants. This knowledge was applied to developing strategies to ensure maximum participation. First, involving pastors and/or their administrators in planning these approaches increased their stake in (a) learning about the topic and (b) encouraging their parishioners to participate. Second, these meetings enabled me to gauge the comfort level of the pastors and their assistants in broaching the topic of sex trafficking, as well as providing suggestions on how to present the discussion.

In addition, my professional experience in human trafficking served as a strong background to help participants understand the importance of the research to their communities. Each person who was approached had the opportunity to refuse the survey. The right to refusal ensured that those who participated could do so of their own free will, which assisted in obtaining data that was unpretentious.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, my role was to gather the data necessary to conduct the study by creating the research instrument, making the initial contacts to gain access to participants, making sure there was documented informed consent, organize, code and analyze data. I originally thought one of the issues in conducting the research would be

my position of authority. As a known instructor of domestic minor sex trafficking for law enforcement and county professionals, ethically, it was important to reveal my position. After consulting with a member of the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB), it was advised that participants be made aware of employment with an agency that works with high risk children. However, the law enforcement aspect did not need to be revealed so that my safety would not be compromised. However, I found my position did not negatively affect the way I was perceived by the research sites. In fact, it enhanced it.

To reduce researcher bias, I was not in uniform, but rather dressed in conservative attire befitting a parishioner to mentally help separate myself from my other role. Conducting the study in a different county minimized the chance that the participants would recognize my professional position and allowed for a group of unknown participants to be available. The locations of the study area were over forty miles away from my place of employment and seventy miles between each location. Due to the distance between both research sites and the change in environment, I was able to completely step out of the law enforcement role and into the role of a Human Services researcher.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the data analysis process, survey, and responses. Chapter 5 will include an explanation of the results, findings of the study and implications for future research. I will also discuss implications for social change.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative survey study was to explore what African American parents knew about domestic minor sex trafficking and what methods they might use to protect their children. In the literature review there appeared to be no study addressing these issues through the lens of the parent. Using an ecological systems conceptual framework for data analysis, the results encompassed the general knowledge and understanding of African American parents in the sample from Southern California. I further examined how their environment might have influenced their perceptions of sex trafficking, as well as what methods they believed prevent their children from victimization.

The Northern Church (NC) Sample

The location of the NC research site was in the High Desert region of San Bernardino County, in Southern California. The High Desert region approximately 357,000 square miles was between the Cajon Pass and Las Vegas, Nevada. Much of the high desert consisted of homes with acres of land, resembling a rural community. The eight cities, comprising the area had several prisons and included: Adelanto, Apple Valley, Barstow, Helendale, Oak Hills, Phelan, Hesperia and Victorville. San Bernardino County had an estimated population of 2,088,371, composed of ethnically and racially diverse groups: 77.5% white, 51% Hispanic, and 9% African American. The median home worth was $222,000 with median income of $54,000 per year (Quikfacts.census.org, 2014).

The area once boomed as a military town with an Air Force base and airport. When the airbase closed, the area lost much of the revenue the military generated. At the time of the study, the main occupations involved employment in local school districts, county and city employment, criminal justice facilities (federal penitentiary, private prisons, juvenile hall, and probation and parole offices), hospitals, and medical care facilities. Most professionals commuted forty miles to the San Bernardino/Rancho Cucamonga area. A large number of Democratic voters reside in this area. The High Desert had two community college campuses and a few satellite campuses from private colleges.

Most of the area boasted affordable housing and was the most affordable living area in Southern California. A number of the residents lived in Section 8 housing or were working class. However, many professionals, some retired, lived in the more affluent areas. Since 2000, a surge in transplants relocated from Los Angeles and San Bernardino due to the lower cost of living. With these changes crime statistics had increased due to the lack of resources, jobs, and programs for youth.

NC was in a commercial area, surrounded by physicians' offices, grocery stores, and retail chain stores. The number of parishioners was approximately 300, comprised of 40 % males and 60 % females with 72 children, most of them teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17. The total number of members attending services on the day of data collection was 75 adults, of which 45 attended the first service, and 30 the second. This figure did not include the number of children attending the service.

The intended size of the sample from the NC site was 75. However, only 39 (52%) responded. None were disqualified. In Table 1, the demographics of age, education, and income of NC males and females resulted in 50% of males were over 50 in contrast to 37.5% females. The youngest male participants were 31-40; whereas, the youngest females were in the 21-30 age groups. The majority (70.8%) of females and males (42.2%) had some college education. Two females (8.3%) and two males (14.2%) did not complete this item. The income comparisons revealed the female majority (29.2%), while their male counterparts (28.5%) had comparable incomes between 31-59k (see Table 1).

Table 1

Gender Comparison of the NC Sample of Age, Education, and Income (N = 38)

	Females (*n* = 24)		Males (*n* = 14)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Age				
21-30	4	16.7	-	-
31-40	5	20.8	2	14.2
41-50	6	25	5	35.7
51+	9	37.5	7	50
Education				
High school	-	-	5	35.7
Some college	17	70.8	6	42.2
BA/BA	4	16.7	2	14.2
Graduate	1	2.4	-	
Income				
30 or <	6	25	3	21.4
31-59k	7	29.2	4	28.5
60-99k	5	20.8	2	14.2
100k or >	4	16.7	3	21.4

In terms of marital status, all the males and 75% of the females were married with 2 females (8.3%) living in alternate arrangements with 1 (4.2%) unknown. All were parents. Of their combined 39 children, 16 (41%) had preteens and 11 (28%) adolescents. All were potentially at risk for becoming victims of sex trafficking. Approximately two males did not respond to the item regarding children's ages (see Table 2).

Table 2

Comparison by Gender of the NC Sample for Marital and Parental Status, and Children's Ages (N = 38)

	Females (*n* = 24)		Males (*n* = 14)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Marital status				
Single	3	12.5	-	-
Cohabiting	1	4.2	-	-
Married	18	75	14	100
Divorced	1	4.2	-	-
Unknown	1	4.2	-	-
Children (*n* = 26)			Children (*n* = 13)	
0-9	8	30.8	7	50
10-13	11	43.3	5	35.7
14-18	7	26.9	7	50

The Southern Church (SC) Sample

The SC was in Orange County, California, and encompassed 948 square miles, approximately 45 cities, with the three largest cities having a population exceeding 200,000 with a total estimated population of 3,144,000. The county was Southeast of Los Angeles. The racial demographics in the county included: 74 % white, 34% Hispanic, 19% Asian and 2% African American. The median home value was $519,600.00 and the median income level $75,422.00 per year (Quikfacts.census.gov, 2014). Orange County

had a large number of financial institutions, colleges, and universities, (both private and public). This county had primarily Republican (70.8%) voters.

The SC was in an upper middle class area, surrounded by master planned communities and fine dining. The approximate size of its congregation was 1500 members of whom 60% were female and 40% male with an average age between 40 and 50. The majority of the congregation consisted of married couples, many of whom were professionals. The church provided many resources for its parishioner, including a counseling team. I was prepared for 100 potential participants, with an anticipation of 75 completed surveys with 39 (53%) responding (see Table 3).

Table 3

SC Gender Comparison by Age, Education, and Income (N = 32)

	Females (*n* = 27)		Males (*n* = 5)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Age				
21-30	1	3.7	-	-
31-40	6	22.2	1	20
41-50	12	44.4	2	40
51+	7	25.9	1	20
Education				
High school	1	3.7	1	20
Some college	7	25.9	2	40
BA/BA	10	37.3	1	20
Graduate	7	25.9	1	20
Income				
30 or <	5	18.5	2	40
31-59k	5	18.5	1	20
60-99k	3	11.1	1	20
100k or >	11	40.7	-	-

In comparing the demographics of age, education, and income between SC females and males, 37.3% of the females had Baccalaureate degrees as compared to 20% of the males. More females (25.9%) had graduate degrees compared to the males (20%). Females (40.7 %) earned incomes over 100,000 per year; whereas, none of the males reached that income bracket (see Table 4).

Table 4

Gen*der Comparison of the SC Marital and Parental Status, and Children's Ages (N = 32)*

	Females (*n* = 27)		Males (*n* = 5)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Marital status				
Single	6	22.2	-	-
Cohabiting	1	3.7	-	-
Married	16	59.2	5	100
Divorced	4	14.8	-	-
Children (*n* = 26)			Children (*n* = 13)	
0-9	8	29.6	1	20
10-13	8	29.6	2	40
14-18	15	55.5	3	60

In terms of marital status, 59.2% of the females were married compared to all of the males, and all were parents. The average age of children for both males and females was in the 14-18 year range.

Presentation of the Results

Knowledge Variable

In this study, the definition of parental knowledge was what parents believed to be the risk factors, symptoms, and behaviors that placed children at risk or indicated

involvement in domestic minor sex trafficking. The participant responses with the two major variables (i.e., knowledge and prevention strategies) coincided with the survey sections of the research instrument. The first set of tables represents the Knowledge results section of the data analysis. The Tables 5-7 represent information obtained from the NC regarding the knowledge factor.

Table 5

NC Gender Comparison of Risk Factors for Involvement in Sex Trafficking

Females (*n*= 24)			Males (*n* = 14)	
Major risk factor:	No.	%	No.	%
Child sexual abuse				
Possible	11	46	6	42.8
Yes	2	8.3	4	28.5
No	2	8.3	1	7.1
Not sure	7	29.4	3	21.4
No answer	2	8.3	-	-
Other risk factor				
Runaway	2	8.3	1	7.1
Low esteem	5	20.8	1	7.1
Homeless/esteem	1	4.1	2	14.2
-	-	-	1	7.1
Not sure	3	12.5	1	7.1
*All factors	13	54.1	8	57.1

Note. *Includes runaways, homelessness, low self-esteem, drugs, school dropout.

NC females and males agreed that child sexual abuse was a significant risk factor. Females (20.8%) identified low self-esteem as a risk factor. Males (14.8%) agreed and added that low self-esteem and drugs together were an important combination risk factor. Multiple risk factors including: Child sexual abuse, running away, drug addiction, low self-esteem, homelessness, foster care, school dropouts and single parent home as a group received the highest frequencies (54.1% for females; 57.1% for males).

Table 6

NC Gender Comparison of Recruitment Sources for Sex Trafficking

	Females (*n* = 24)		Males (*n* = 14)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Recruitment source				
Internet	13	54.1	5	
Middle/high schools	1	4.1	3	
Youth	1	4.1	-	
All Sites	9	37.5	6	42.8
Recruiters				
Pimps	18	75	5	35.7
Females in the life	3	12.5	8	57.1
Criminal	2	8.3	1	4.1

All NC participants agreed that sex trafficking of children was a global concern. Both thought California had the largest number of victims (76.9%). Females (37.5%) and males (42.8%) believed that multiple places were sources for recruitment of children and included: bus stops, train stations, other youth, middle and high schools and social media. Females (41.6%) believed that the Internet was the most prominent method used to recruit potential victims. Only one female did not answer the recruitment source identification item.

In terms of who or what introduced victims to a life of sex trafficking, females (75%) thought that pimps forced children into it; whereas, fewer males (35.7%) agreed. Of note, 57.1% of the men believed that females chose to sell their bodies for drugs or economic reasons. Females (16.6%) chose multiple answers on the recruiters, including: females involved with gangs and criminals, chose to get involved, pimps who forced them and females who agreed for economic reasons, compared to 14.2% of males.

Table 7

NC Gender Comparisons of Symptoms of Sex Trafficking Involvement

	Females (n = 24)		Males (n = 14)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Symptoms				
Runaway	6	25	5	21.4
Older men	5	20.8	2	14.2
Clothes	2	8.3	3	14.2
*All symptoms	11	45.8	4	28.5

Note. *Includes runaways, older men, foster care, revealing clothes, tattoos, cell phones.

Multiple symptoms (i.e., running away, older men, body tattoos, new clothes the parent didn't buy, drastic changes in behavior, guarding the cell phone and wearing revealing clothing) received the highest response for females (45%) and 28.5% for males. Both groups believed they would know the whereabouts of their child and their children's friends.

The Southern Church

SC participants had some knowledge regarding the signs and symptoms of sex trafficking. However, a larger number (51.8%) of the females were not aware domestic minor sex trafficking was happening in their community**.** Many females (37.3%) and (60%) of males did not think sex trafficking would affect their families. The major recruiter for victims of sex trafficking was the pimp. All agreed that the Internet was a major issue; however, females believed recruitment happened in many forms. Males believed their presence in the home were a protection from victimization; whereas, none of the females agreed. Tables 8-9 represent data obtained from the SC site.

Table 8

Gender Comparison of SC Sample Identification of Risk Factors for Sex Trafficking

	Females (*n* = 27)		Males (*n* = 5)	
	No	%	No.	%
Sexual abuse: Primary risk factor				
Possible	17	62.9	2	40
Yes	1	3.7	1	20
No	2	7.4	-	-
Not sure	7	25.9	2	40
Secondary risks				
Runaway	6	22.2	-	-
Drug addiction	2	7.4	2	40
Low self-esteem	2	7.4	2	40
*All risks	17	62.9	1	20

Note. *Includes: homelessness, runaways, drugs addiction, low self-esteem.

SC Females (62.9%) believed child sexual abuse was a possible risk factor in contrast to 40% of males. Female (62.9%) awareness of the risks was clearly articulated by knowledge of all risk factors, including: running away, drug addiction, being raised in foster care, living in single parent homes, low self-esteem and having a mental health diagnosis, compared to 20% of the males.

Table 9

Gender Comparison of SC Sample Identification of Sex Trafficking Recruitment

	Females (*n* = 27)		Males (*n* = 5)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Recruitment source				
Internet	7	18.5	5	100
Youth	2	7.4	-	-
Not sure	3	11	-	-
**All sites	15	55.5		
Recruiter				
Pimps	21	77.7	3	60
Females in the Life	6	22.2	1	20
-	-	-	1	20

Note. *Includes dropouts, runaways, homelessness, low self-esteem, drugs. ** Includes Internet, schools, bus, youth, foster care, pimps.

In terms of recruitment factors females (18.5%) and males (80%) identified the Internet as a major recruitment strategy. The largest number of responses for females (77.7%) and males (60%) identified pimps as the number one reason youth became introduced into a life of prostitution. Females (55.5%) identified multiple recruitment strategies, consisting of social media, middle and high school peers, train stations and bus stops as a common strategy. None of the males agreed (see Table 10).

Table 10

SC Gender Comparisons of Symptom Identification of Sex Trafficking Involvement

	Females (*n* = 27)		Males (*n* = 5)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Symptoms				
Runaway	3	11	2	30
Older men	6	22.2	3	40
Low self-esteem	2	7.4	-	-
*All symptoms	16	59.2	-	-

Note. *Includes runaways, low self-esteem, older men, dressing provocatively, changes in behavior, staying out late.

According to females (14.8%), dating an older man was a symptom of involvement in sex trafficking. In contrast, no SC males selected the item as an indicator. Females (59.2%) identified multiple symptoms (i.e., running away from home, changes in behavior, associations with older men, staying out late, wearing revealing clothes and hanging out with the wrong crowd) as indicators of possible involvement, and 80% of males agreed. Both genders (female 85.1%, male 100%) identified the Internet (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) as a site where their children posted messages and communicated with others. Another 16-20% did not know how to check their children's social media accounts.

SC females (40.7%) admitted they only knew some of their children's friends, compared to 80% of the males who knew them all. Interestingly, 33.3% of females thought parents sometimes allowed their children to spend the night at their friends' homes, where recruitment could occur. In contrast, 60% of the males believed that most parents never met the other parents prior to giving permission for an overnight stay.

However, both genders were not aware that sex trafficking was happening in their own communities (51.8% females; 60% males) However, females (29.6 %) compared to males (40%) believed that sex trafficking was an issue, but did not have any effect on their families. Knowing the family of their child's friends was an important strategy in protecting their children from the possibility of becoming involved in the life.

Knowledge Variable Summary

Participants from both sites had general knowledge regarding the risk factors, recruitment strategies, and symptoms of domestic minor sex trafficking. Both genders

agreed that the Internet was a major method of recruitment, and parents should monitor their children's social media accounts. Both agreed that all symptoms of involvement (i.e., changes in behavior, staying out late, running away from home, and having money or goods that they could not afford to buy) were applicable to involvement in the life. All agreed that multiple recruitment strategies were possible to lure children into prostitution.

Differences in responses between genders were of note. Major recruiters according to NC females were pimps. On the other hand, males believed females already involved in prostitution to be a major recruiter. SC Females believed involvement with older men was an indicator, while males disagreed. Males believed they knew their children's friends, with fewer than half of the females agreeing. The participants had general knowledge of sex trafficking concerning children. Given this data, the question in the intervention section of the survey was (a) Did the participants know where to go for help should their children show signs of involvement and (b) Did the participants know how to access appropriate resources?

Intervention Variable

In examining this section of the survey, the assumption was if parents had comprehensive knowledge about domestic minor sex trafficking, they would have greater ability to protect their children. This knowledge could be useful in helping them devise a plan of action to intervene in the victimization of their child. Both female and male respondents from the SC site agreed that checking their children's social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) would help prevent Internet solicitation and give clues to any possible involvement.

The main intervention strategy for both samples (NC-77%; SC-88%) was monitoring their children's communications in social media on the Internet. However, whether they did the checking or not was not ascertained due to IRB protective measures during the application approval process. The IRB was concerned that parents might experience anxiety due to the nature of the study and therefore asked that the wording of the survey be changed. The IRB was not comfortable regarding asking the sample about their personal experiences. To neutralize the impact of a possible admission of victimization occurring, the items were changed to inquire what participants thought other parents thought and believed.

Fewer (NC- 27%; SC-13%) acknowledged either not knowing how to access social media (e.g., Facebook) or seldom checking the sites. This finding within the context of the Internet being the fastest growing recruitment medium for exploiters requires that parents need ongoing technological skill sets to identify and access new social media sites. These burgeoning new social media sites become available almost instantaneously, which make the challenge even more daunting for parents to discover which sites their child might be using and how to gain access to that account.

To further compound the problem, access to these sites was difficult because its procedures, user names and passwords could vary from site to site. Thus, gaining access to their child's social media page could be both frustrating and time-consuming for parents. Furthermore, the child might be using more than one site to communicate with others. Having multiple media accounts often made their child inaccessible to parental supervision.

Should their child be a target for sex traffickers, the majority of the samples from both sites would go to the police for assistance. NC females (12.5%) confirmed they would seek support from the church, while none of the NC males would. Equally 37.5% of females would seek help from the police, while 28.5% of males would seek help from the police. Only 1 male and 1female would go directly to police and family. Females (25%) and males (28.5%) were uncertain of where they could get help. Participants of the NC site were aware that sex trafficking was a problem (29.1% of females and 50% of males), but not aware that it was happening in their community.

NC females (45.8%) were not aware that sex trafficking was that close to their own homes, compared to 48.2% of NC males. However, 16.6% thought although it may be in their community, sex trafficking would not affect their families. Half of the male respondents indicated their families would not be affected. None of the NC participants stated having a husband or male caretaker in the home would be a safeguard against victimization of their children.

The SC site differed in their strategy to protect their children from trafficking. Females (29.6%) would seek help from the Police, with another 33.3% not knowing where to seek help. Of the males, 40% did not answer the question. SC females (29.7%) would seek help from the church, and 11% would seek help from their families. of the females, 7.4% did not answer the question compared to 40% of males. None of the males gave multiple answers.

Intervention Variable Summary

Once parents have knowledge of the risk factors and symptoms of sex trafficking, they are inclined to seek out information to confirm involvement, and protect their child. Participants in this sample believed knowing who their child associates with and their daily whereabouts could help them protect their child. However, their largest barrier was within their own home. Technology has made internet capability and social media outlets accessible at anytime, anywhere. The Internet is never static. The complexity of knowing how to access their child's social media accounts leave an open window of opportunity for exploiters to court their children right at their fingertips.

At this juncture, parents must seek help. Although the church and family were viable resources, all participants agreed the police would be their most powerful weapon in protecting their children. Combined with knowledge of domestic minor sex trafficking and access to resources and support, parents could develop strategies to intervene in their child's possible involvement and protect their child.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore African American parental knowledge of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and how they would protect their children. A self-designed qualitative survey instrument was the instrument that I used to collect data from two Southern California research sites, both of which had small samples. Using an ecological systems framework, the data were analyzed by exploring the environmental factors that may have influenced the knowledge and understanding of the participants in the sample. The data were analyzed by comparing the responses of the male participants

versus the female participants, examining the different paradigms according to age income and gender.

An observation of the conversations and body language during the data collection process allowed me to obtain pertinent data associated with environmental factors. The most pertinent information was compared and contrasted to purge out data that directly answered the research questions. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the findings in this chapter and recommendations for further study and research on this topic.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore African American parental knowledge of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. The number of young sex trafficking victims reached 300,000 in the United States and continues to grow. African American victims represent a disproportionate number of those involved and a higher number of those arrested for prostitution related crimes (i.e., theft, burglary, loitering to commit prostitution).

To help eradicate this growing trend within the African American community, it was important to explore what (a) parents knew about this topic and (b) protective measures used to protect their children. A descriptive qualitative survey methodology with an ecological systems conceptual framework provided a background to explore this subject. In this chapter, I present a summarization of the results of the study, discussion of the strengths and limitations of the methodology, and recommendations for future study, the conclusion and implications for social change.

The Conceptualization of the Sex Trafficking Process

In order to place the data in its everyday processes, conceptualization of its dynamics provided a context for understanding sex trafficking more fully. For the purposes of this study, the process of sexual exploitation occurred in four phases:

The Phase 1 Risk Factors encompassed those variables to increase vulnerability to sex trafficking, attracting and connecting the victim with the perpetrator. These factors in various combinations included: a history of experiencing child sexual abuse, being a

runaway, having foster care placement(s) or being raised in a single parent home, having a mental illness diagnosis and/or suffering from low self-esteem.

The Phase 2 Recruitment frequently took place on the Internet with its multiple social media sites used by recruiters to increase the exploitation of children. Peer pressure (e.g., other youth involved in the life) or direct recruitment through pimp courting could be a result of socio-economic issues (i.e., lack of jobs and/or programs for youth). Additionally, recruitment tactics could occur during sleepovers or overnight stays at a friend's home.

The Phase 3 Grooming Process involved an exploiter mentally and physically seducing the youth and teaching them the rules and expectations of prostitution (*the game*). In this process, an exploiter isolated a child from normal everyday activities and family members. The pimp monitored a child's whereabouts by providing a cell phone, used only for direct contact with him or his designee. At the same time the exploiter spent money on a victim to create a false sense of family. During this phase the consequences for non-cooperation with the exploiter become most dangerous through threats of violence directed to the child and/or family. To reinforce the grooming process, the exploiter or designee committed violent acts (e.g., physical and sexual abuse under horrific conditions) against the minor until indoctrination was complete.

The Phase 4 Signs of Involvement began when the youth exhibited behaviors and symptoms indicative of their participation in sex trafficking. Behaviors included: secrecy, self-isolation and aggression towards family. Symptoms included: running away, coming home late in scantily clad clothing, posting seductive pictures on social media and/or

having new friends who are older or secretive. During this stage as a child's behavior changed, parents began to suspect something is amiss, but its causes were unclear. The child begins to rebel against any parental attempt to protect them.

By conceptualizing the stages of sex trafficking from risk to recruitment, I was able to associate survey items with all the phases, except Phase 3 Grooming. Phases 1 and 2 related to knowledge about sex trafficking in order for parents to understand how to protect their children. How a parent reacted to each phase depended on environmental factors, such as their own background, where they live, their values, and beliefs.

Churches as research sites provided researcher access to potentially large numbers of participants with children. The churches provided a pool of participants with different socioeconomic statuses, age groups, and educational backgrounds at one time. The research sites included San Bernardino County (NC) and Orange County (SC) in southern California. Both sites had parishioners who represented multiple cities in the area, with the SC site reaching as far as Los Angeles.

Sample Demographics

Similarities

Both churches had a high number (86.1 %) of respondents with some college education. Most were married. African Americans were the smallest number in the county population and lacked resources geared towards African Americans. The NC site had a large number of parishioners over 50 years of age (females 37.5%) and 50% males. The SC site had a large number of parishioners between 40 and 50 years of age (44% females, 40% males). With the demographic differences, both churches had professionals

with incomes of $100,000 per year, of which a large number of those wage earners African American females in the 40 to 50 plus age range.

Differences

Major environmental differences existed between the two sites. NC was in a vast, more rural community not closely connected to important resources (e.g., sexual assault counseling and support services). NC church had more exposure to crime due to the high number of transplants from inner cities, lack of transportation, resources, affordable housing, and easy access to Las Vegas, where prostitution was legal (Farley, 2007). NC had more male respondents (n = 14) than SC (n = 5). NC had a smaller and more active congregation than its counterpart.

SC was in an affluent area with a strong law enforcement presence confining crime to certain urban areas. Due to its high tax revenue, community centers and ample resources flourished throughout the county. SC was much larger than its counterpart with an estimated 1500 members. These members were in a better position financially due to their higher education level. The general income range of the NC sample was 31-59k with the SC income level higher at 60-99K range.

Participants living in this affluent area were able to provide their children with better schools and access to resources. SC had a higher number (51 %) of college graduates and a lower number (30%) of those who attended, but did not complete college. This larger congregation surprisingly produced the least number of participants.

Northern Church (NC)

The NC participants appeared concerned about sex trafficking in their community. Although the size of the congregation was small, they lined up in hallways, the foyer, and outside to participate in the survey. Parents who did not fit the demographic wanted to help by completing a survey. Some participants made the following statements that reflected their concern about the topic: "I went to a seminar a few months ago on sex trafficking" (P1 survey), "There is a real need for this information. This is the corridor to Vegas." "I just want to help." "Do you need any help? How can we help you?" "I can get you some information that might help you with your studies."

I observed these statements and ongoing conversations occurred during the data collection at NC. Many respondents had either been directly or indirectly affected by the issue of domestic minor sex trafficking. Their genuine concern about the community and how they could make a difference appeared to be an awareness of the problem, but still needed for more information.

Southern Church (SC)

Although a lack of SC participation was most noticeable, their silence spoke volumes. Observation during both SC data collection dates revealed that many parishioners were not interested in completing the survey. The content of these comments related to their socioeconomic status with its attitudes of privilege. "We live in Orange County." "Do you live here in Orange County?" "I'm not worried about this (problem) because it doesn't affect me." "I home school my kids, and we live in Chino Hills." In

terms of attending SC were such comments as “This is a conservative church.” “I pray over my children every day.” A belief in their religion or faith appeared to be a protective mechanism against sex trafficking.

In contrast to these responses, some were visibly upset that others did not see the importance of the topic with such comments as: “I can’t *believe* the rest of the church is *not here*. *This* is important.” “*They* ain’t giving up *nothing*.” “*I’m* going to go find some people to help *you*.” “It is a *very sensitive subject*, and *this* is a *very conservative* church.” “Their parents have *no clue* about what is going on in *their (children’s) lives*. They are *too busy* in their *own life* to *talk to their kids*. *This* is happening *right here*.”

The date of the last data collection process, four adolescents came into the area reserved for the survey administration. The youth were curious about the survey and its content and they asked questions. They wanted to take the survey, however they were not a parent. The adolescents included one female and three males between the ages of 14 and 16. The female wanted to know more about sex trafficking. She said she was home schooled but was still concerned about it. One of the males attempted to view the survey. The males wanted more information, and wanted to know if they were in danger.

These comments reflected the concern of those who understood the potential impact of sexual exploitation on their children. In their outreach to others to participate in the survey, they, too, found little interest in this problem area. Particularly disappointing, others did not share their commitment to addressing this social problem.

Of the 32 who responded to the survey, their environment and life style provided a sense of security for them. Many mature adults (aged 45 to 65) believed because their

children had not experienced this problem, their grandchildren were safe. By leaving such a legacy they believed that their grandchildren and children could not be harmed by outside negative influences.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this study was to explore what African American parents know about domestic minor sex trafficking and its prevention. In the previous section, the comparative analysis of both research sites shaped by socioeconomic realities. These two profiles of social environments had a corollary effect shaping parental knowledge of sex trafficking. In this section, by combining the data of all surveys (N=73), the conclusions are highlighted.

Knowledge Variable

This variable consisted of two phases of the sex trafficking process, specifically Phase 1 Risk Factors and Phase 2 Recruitment. While participants knew many sex trafficking risk factors, all agreed that child sexual abuse was a major contributor to exploitation. In terms of symptoms associated with the recruitment phase all agreed that symptoms of sex trafficking were multifaceted, which they readily identified.

Parents agreed that pimps were the primary recruiters for potential victims with the Internet serving as the major medium for access to this population. However, they had minimal knowledge of the growing use of other minors involved in sex trafficking as recruiters. Also, minimal knowledge was apparent for minors who because of socioeconomic reasons exploit themselves. Initially, these minors were self-promoting

and not with a pimp, but eventually acquired one whether by either choice or circumstances.

Prevention Variable

This variable consisted of the phase 4 (symptoms) of the sex trafficking process. In this phase parents observed indicators that something of great concern was happening to their child. The symptoms phase was marked by drastic changes in behavior (e.g., child continuing to run away from home, hanging out with older men, coming home with clothes and items they couldn't afford, or wearing inappropriate clothing) the common symptoms and warning signals given to parents of the potential sex trafficking problem.

The participants believed knowing the whereabouts of their children would generally protect them. They agreed that the Internet was the fastest growing means of recruitment. Due to the exponential growth of technology, many parents did not know how to check their children's social media pages because they could not keep up with the newest social media trends. Parents were not aware that recruiters were using school aged children to recruit other minor's into the life. This lack of information created a significant need to know who their children were befriending at school, in the neighborhood, and on social media sites.

If they suspected their child was involved in sex trafficking, parents would seek help from the police. Parents were not aware of any community resources or supports for sex trafficking. Parents who believed their child had become involved in sex trafficking would contact their local police agency for help.

Limitations of the Study

In this research study and as required by the Walden University IRB, the church leaders could not encourage parishioners to participate in the study. Unfortunately this requirement affected the size of the sample because the parishioners did not see their leaders actively supporting the research study and encouraging them to participate. Therefore, the current design that was chosen would have been more effective if this requirement was not imposed. Another limitation was that the selected participant pools were only from churches. I invited 40 churches to participate in the study. Only two responded. It might be possible that the other churches were not interested, or comfortable with the subject matter, hence the low interest and lack of feedback.

The original intent of the instrument was designed to ask parents what their knowledge was and what their strategies were directly. However, the Walden IRB committee believed there would be undue duress if the questions were directed towards parent's actual experience. I had to modify the questions from what parents directly experienced into what they believed other parents experience. This modification changed the unit of analysis.

I did not expect a low response from the parishioners of the SC site due to the large number of members. The low response prevented me from gathering enough data to thoroughly answer the research questions. The impression given from such a low response was that the parishioners were not concerned about the subject matter for various unknown reasons.

One explanation could be the maturity of many of the parishioners (45-50 plus years of age) who thought their children were adults and the subject matter was not a topic of concern. In addition, they felt their grandchildren did not have the risk factors for sex trafficking. Another possible explanation could be some of the parishioners believed they were protected by their socioeconomic status. Lastly, some parishioners believed their religion was a protective measure against sex trafficking.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Specific to churches, future research should include a larger participant sample. Due to the low response rate from participants, a strategy to reach marginalized communities would increase awareness of the topic. Future research should include those who do not attend church.
2. To reach more parents, alternative research sites should include schools, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), community centers and organizations, colleges and universities particularly with adult learners, youth sports teams and doctor's offices.
3. Research on the experiences of children who are at risk of sexual exploitation should continue. There are studies on children who are already victimized. However, studies on children who are not victimized, but at risk for sex trafficking could provide data to prevent these children from being victims. During the data collection of this study, four adolescents came in and inquired about the topic. They wanted to know if they were at risk. Future research

should also include studies on children who exhibit risk factors but have no involvement in the sex trafficking process.

Implications and Recommendations for Social Change

1. The data from this study revealed that parents are not connected to resources in their communities. To develop effective programs to counter sex trafficking in their communities, parents need to know how to identify and access prevention and intervention resources. A concerted effort in doing this may eventually reduce the high statistics of young African American women involved in sex trafficking.
2. The data revealed that parents need a good communication network and sharing of resources in the community. In addition, they need to communicate more with their children and actively listen to what their children share with them and act on it.
3. The churches need to be a venue for family seminars, local resources, and support groups for victims and their families. Churches need to network with community organizations to develop programs to combat sex trafficking.
4. The sample believed they would go to the police for help. However, in this climate of distrust rooted in historical trauma, human service practitioners and law enforcement need cultural awareness because of the past, when providing services to African American sex trafficking victims and their families. Service agencies need this awareness to assure families they are here to help,

as well as support and prepare them to assist in their child's recovery and promote healing.

Pastors need to know that protecting family values includes being aware of what is going on in the community. This requires broadening the focus from serving the needs of the congregation to serving the needs of the community at large. Programs inside the church will not benefit the community if the community is not included. Likewise, the community will not come to the church for help if they are not aware that the church is open and willing to address these needs. Joining with other congregations to form an alliance could create a network beneficial to the communities they are in. Silence in the pulpit regarding issues such as sex trafficking of minors helps perpetuate the crime. Pastors must band together and learn about this issue, and be vocal by educating their congregations and joining with local community organizations outside the church.

Parents need to know that awareness of the issues faced within the community could directly or indirectly affect the safety of their children. Parents must seek out information and make the time to attend seminars and resource fairs to gain much needed information on the issue. They need to understand that sex trafficking has no socioeconomic boundaries, no racial boundaries, and certainly no spiritual boundaries. Parents need to become involved in the communities they live in and become active at their children's schools; requiring more communication with school and community officials. Parents should get to know those who live close to them, and build a neighborhood network of parents and families who could filter down pertinent information regarding criminal and questionable activity, as well as help monitor the

activities and whereabouts of each other's children. Since many African American families have left the traditional close knit neighborhoods and spread out, this is equally important so there remains a sense of community among those who have moved to the suburbs.

Social change requires that each individual accept some responsibility for another regardless of the social constructs (race, class) created by humans. The best defense is a good offense. Preventive measures could help alleviate the high number of victims, and strengthen families who could be involved in this deleterious social issue. Therefore, a program with an ecological systems approach would be best to bring together the churches, community resources and families.

Conclusion

Parental knowledge of potential risk factors provides the parent with a proactive stance by protecting their children, lessening the possibility of any future involvement in sex exploitation. Prevention strategies involve knowledge of risk factors, symptoms, social media, and community resources. Communication between parents and children prior to the age of vulnerability can be a vital step in developing a parental prevention action plan. Underlying these action plans are core knowledge including not only risk factors, symptoms and protective measures but also the stages of change, and what parents need to know when their child returns from the life. Often, when a child returns, they are re-victimized three times: once by the exploiter, once by the criminal justice system, and again by their own family when things get tough.

When sex trafficking occurs, parents need support. For those African American families living in areas with no sense of community finding appropriate resources becomes problematic. To counter the traumatic effects of sexual victimization, human service professionals and law enforcement professionals not only need to be trauma informed, but also have knowledge of African American socioeconomic factors and approach these families with understanding and compassion. These elements are critical in forming the basis for a trusting relationship between victim and helper during a therapeutic intervention.

Programs with a family strength orientation and cultural base provide a safe and comfortable environment to empower families. In such programs the focus is to (a) discover the root causes that promoted vulnerability to sexual exploitation, (b) address the traumas associated with these root causes, and (c) treat the symptoms that attract exploiters. Programs with these types of goals can help decrease the number of sex trafficking victims and return those who are survivors to their homes with family and community support. In essence, to save thousands of innocent young lives, along with strengthening families and communities, a victim-centered approach involves cultural and strength-based programs, resources, and aggressive outreach to families. This combination can make a difference in each victim's life.

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Appendix A: African American Sex Trafficking Knowledge (AASTK) Tool

Date:

Dear Parishioner:

The purpose of this survey is to explore your understanding of domestic minor sex trafficking (prostitution) of youth. The results of this survey will provide information to develop prevention programs to help parents protect their children from becoming a victim.

There are three parts to the survey: (Part 1) Information about you, (Part 2) Your Knowledge about Sex Trafficking (also called Prostitution), and (Part 3) Your Strategies to Protect Your Children from Sex Traffickers.

Please answer each question by circling or completing the answer or answers that reflect the closest answer to your own views. If you are not sure how to answer a question, you can choose ***Not Sure***. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your completion of the questionnaire reflects your wish to participate.

You may stop the survey at any time. If you do not want to answer an item, go on to the next one. The information you provide is strictly confidential.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for participating.

African American Sex Trafficking Knowledge (AASTK) Tool

Part 1. About You and Your Family

Please indicate your city of residence: _____

1. Your Gender: Male__ Female___ 2. Your Age Group: 20-30 31-40 41-50 Over 50

3. Your Education Level: H.S. Diploma Some college BA/BS Degree Graduate

4. Your Family Yearly Gross Income: Under 30k 31-59k 60-100k above 100k

5. Your Marital Status: Single Cohabitating Married Divorced Widowed

6a. Are you a parent? Yes No 6b. Are you a relative/friend/foster parent caring for children? Yes No

7. Do you have female children between the ages of 10 an 18? Yes No

Part 2. Your Knowledge about Sex Trafficking (Prostitution)

Directions: Circle all answers that apply.

1. Sex trafficking (Prostitution) involves:

(a) Women who agree to sell their bodies for money or drugs.

(b) Pimps who force women into selling their bodies for monetary gain.

(c) Criminals and their women who agree to hustle and get money.

2. In my community, sex trafficking (prostitution) is

(a) A huge problem.
(b) A concern, but does not affect my family.
(c) I am not aware that it is happening in my community.

3. Nationwide sex trafficking (prostitution) is

(a) Limited to the inner city on certain streets.
(b) (b) Prevalent in large cities, but not small towns.
(c) A global problem, happening anywhere, at any time.
(d) Not Sure

4. Sex trafficking of young girls in the U.S. is

(a) Not common. Most prostitutes are adults.

(b) Common. Youth that abuse drugs may do it to get drug money.
(c) Common. The amount of young girls being prostituted is growing.
(d) I am not sure.

5. The average age a prostitute enters that life is:

(a) 12 (b) 16 (c) 18 (c) 21 (d) 22 and over

7. Prostitutes become targets of sex traffickers due to:

(a) Economics (b) Pimps (c) Lack of parental guidance (d) Drug addiction

8. Sex trafficking (prostitution) affects which of the following groups the most?

(a) Caucasians (b) Hispanics/Chicanos (c) African Americans

9. Girls involved in sex trafficking (prostitutions) were sexually abused as children.

(a) Yes (b) No (c) Possibly (d) Not Sure

10. The majority of prostitutes come from the following homes:

(a) Working class (b) Middle class (c) Upper class (d)All classes

11. The risk factors for youths to become victims of sex traffickers include:

(a) Homelessness (b) Drug addiction (c) Foster care (d) Single parent home
(e) Low self-esteem (f) School drop outs (g) Runaways

12. Symptoms my child may exhibit if she is involved in sex trafficking include:

(a) Talking on her cell phone all the time (b) Wearing inappropriate or revealing clothing

(c) Leaving home late at night or running away (d) New body tattoos

(e) Drastic change in her behavior (f) Clothes the child cannot afford to buy

(g) Older men or women communicating with your child

13. Youth prostitutes are recruited at

(a) Bus stops (b) Train stations (c) Middle and High schools
(d) Other youth (e) Internet and social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter)

14. According to the FBI, the state that harbors the highest sex trafficking area is

(a) New York (b) New Jersey (c) California (d) Texas (e) Arizona

15. The international crime industry reports a profit of $32 billion every year from

(a) Illegal drugs (b) Arms trafficking (c) Sex trafficking

Part 3. Strategies to Protect Your Children from Prostitution

1. My daughter/son cannot become a victim of sex traffickers because there is a father in the home.

(a) True (b) False (c) Not sure

2. I monitor my child when they are on the internet.

(a) Always (b) Usually (c) Sometimes (d) Never

3. My daughter is safe from sex traffickers because I/we live in a nice area.

(a) True (b) False (c) Not sure

4. Teenagers become involved in prostitution because:

(a) They are forced to do so by a pimp.
(b) Their families cannot provide the basic necessities.
(c) No caring parent/caregiver is in the home.
(d) I do not know.

5. How important do you believe it is to have access to your child's Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace?

(a) Their social media is their own privacy.

(b) I do not know anything about these sites.

(c) I believe it is very important, but I don't have access to them.

(d) I believe it is very important, and I check their social media pages.

(e) I never thought about this.

6. If you suspected your child might be a victim, where would you seek help?

(a) The Police (b) My church (c) My family (d) I wouldn't know what to do (e) Other

7. If I keep my child in church he/she will not be involved in prostitution.

   (a) True (b) False (c) Not sure

8. My daughter can never become a victim of sex trafficking because I have taught them right from wrong.

   (a) True (b) False

9. I know all my daughters/sons friends, and their parents.
   (a) True (b) False (c) I know some of them

10. I allow my child to spend the night at anyone's home without first meeting the parents.

    (a) Never allow it

    (b) Sometimes

    (c) I never meet the parent. I just speak to them on the phone.

    (d) I must meet the parents first before my child can come there at all.

12. How do you monitor your child's whereabouts?

    (a) Always ask where they are going, who they are going with, and when they will be back.

    (b) I don't ask. I trust my child.

    (c) I am at work, so I don't know where they are.

13. I know who my daughter's boyfriend.

    (a) Yes (b) No (c) She has never brought him to meet me. (d) She doesn't have one.

14. I allow my daughter to have relationships with older boys/men.

    (a) A little older is ok. (b) I accept that she likes older men. (c) It is not acceptable.

15. Would you and your child be willing to attend a seminar to learn about the dangers of prostitution and how to guard against being a victim?

(a) Yes (b) No, I am too busy. (c) I am not aware of any, but I would attend.

(e) I would not attend because I am uncomfortable with the subject (f) Not sure

Thank you for your thoughtful responses and taking the time to answer this survey.
If you have any questions or suggestions on how to protect your child, please add them below.

Questions or Suggestions on How to Protect Your Child(ren)

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Greetings Pastor:

My Name is Jamille Harrell-Sims. I am a Walden University doctoral student, working on my PhD in Human Services. I am contacting you because I hope that you and your congregation will be interested in participating in my study, entitled "African American Parental Perceptions of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking." The focus of the study is to explore what parents know about this topic. The results will help parents protect their children from becoming potential victims of child prostitution (also known as sex trafficking). Knowledge about how this serious problem operates in our communities can empower parents to create community support and prevention programs to protect children.

I am requesting your permission to conduct my study at your church by asking parishioners to complete a survey that takes about 8-10 minutes. Participation is on a strictly voluntary basis with no names or other identifying information used. Since several churches will serve as sites for the survey distribution, the names of the church will not appear anywhere in the final report. However, the results of the surveys will become part of a 1 hour workshop for your congregation on protecting their children from sex traffickers.

The distribution of the survey can be arranged, so that it is not intrusive to your Sunday services. If you have any questions about the study and/or are interested in allowing me to present the study to your congregation, please contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, or email me at xxx.xxxx@xxx.xxx. I will follow-up this letter with a telephone call to discuss the specifics of the research and to answer any of your questions. I anticipate beginning the survey distribution in mid-September to December, 2014.

Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to consider my request. Your congregation's participation in this research will be greatly appreciated because it will add to our understanding of how best to assist parents in protecting their children.

Sincerely,

J. Harrell-Sims

PhD Human Services

Doctoral Student

Walden University

Appendix C: Research Site Consent Form

July 17, 2014

Dear Jamille Harrell-Sims,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled African American Parents' Perceptions of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking within the Victory Christian Center Church. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit participants by requesting their participation in a survey. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing a space to distribute surveys and allowing access to parishioners who choose to participate in the research. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Appendix D: Research Site Follow up Letter

July 28, 2014

I just wanted to write and thank you for allowing me to use your congregation as one of my research sites. I will be keeping in touch with you during the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process to let you know when my proposal has cleared for data collection. I am currently in the process of defending my proposal, and the IRB is the next step.
I will contact you at the end of August to let you know my status. Your congregation should be into your fast at that time. I know God will give clarity, peace and instruction during that time for some, and healing for others. I am trying to take care of some things before I go on my much needed vacation. I look forward to working together to make a difference in the lives of families.

God Bless you and your family,

Jamille Harrell-Sims
Doctoral Student
Walden University