

DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING AND TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking is a significant public health and human rights problem with negative physical, mental, and social outcomes that transcend age, sex, gender, and race and ethnicity; these outcomes have immediate and long-term effects for individuals involved. It manifests itself in a number of forms, including the domestic sex trafficking of minors, and involves a wide variety of actors. This paper presents a general overview of human trafficking. The various forms of human trafficking are defined, with particular emphasis on the domestic sex trafficking of minors. Additionally, the perpetration, risk factors, and health outcomes of the domestic sex trafficking of minors are explored in order to provide a working framework for the remainder of the paper. The role of technologies and their relations to sex trafficking follows the background. In particular, key concepts related to the Internet have been explained to further understand how the Internet can be used as a tool for and against sex trafficking. Future work should continue to include the voices of the LGBTQ+ population and consider applying a community based participatory research (CBPR) approach.

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PREFACE

Neither this essay nor my Master's degree would have been possible without the help of a multitude of individuals who have supported me throughout my academic career. Presenting these endeavors as efforts that I have completed alone is both misleading and a missed opportunity to celebrate these lives.

I would like to thank the faculty and staff at the Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences and the Graduate School of Public Health. Through the Graduate School of Public Health, I have received an education that has given me a foundation for my future in the field of Public Health. Many thanks to all the faculty and staff that have offered me guidance along the way. In particular, Dr. Haggerty's background in Epidemiology has been critical in helping me shape this essay. Despite other academic and social obligations, she has provided an invaluable lens that has been integral to my work. Dr. Terry has been a mentor to me even before I began pursuing my Master's, and she has consistently remained a source of encouragement, motivation, and assistance. Without Dr. Terry's profound patience and sympathy, I would not have been able to complete my studies; her personal and professional advice has always been available when I needed it most.

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point, and I hope to offer the same support in return. There are not enough ways to convey my immense gratitude.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to explore domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), a public health, human rights, and legal issue in the United States (U.S.). Despite the recognition of DMST as a significant problem, there is little consensus on prevalence and incident rates. In fact, one of the largest challenges is the wide circulation of grey literature, which is produced outside of traditional academic settings, and may inaccurately depict domestic minor sex trafficking (Lutnick, 2016; Mendel & Sharapov, 2016). Part of the confusion in this area stems from a debate on autonomy or independence; to what extent, if at all, are youth agents in the depictions and instances of trading sex? Youth involved in sexual exploitation experience a number of adverse outcomes related to physical, mental, and social health (Connell, Jennings, Barbieri, & Reingle Gonzalez, 2015). In particular, this essay will explore the historical context of human trafficking, how it is perpetrated, risk factors, outcomes, and the recent use of the Internet in the facilitation and prevention of DMST.

This essay will review existing literature, policies, and current events to fully depict DMST. Additionally, the historical perspective on DMST provides a basis from which one can understand how it has shaped and continues to shape the discourse surrounding this health issue and the implications in addressing it from a public health perspective. Further, the role of technology is considered through a brief history of the Internet, and how it may be used to engage in and prevent DMST. Finally, the conclusion offers a summary of the above issues,

limitations to the paper, and future directions and considerations. This information is necessary in considering future health and legal considerations.

1.1 A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

In the essay that follows, data are cited from an array of authors. As such, the language used in the discussion of domestic minor sex trafficking, also commonly referred to as commercial sexual exploitation of children, varies. Within the literature, there is debate on the role of agency and youths' self-identification as victims, survivors, or being involved in trafficking at all. There are also conflicting accounts on the use of "trafficker" as a term which appropriately addresses the third parties involved in these circumstances. When the literature has been quoted and paraphrased, the greatest degree of specificity given by the author is used. For example, in cases where youths' gender identities are identified, the authors' language is used for a more nuanced understanding of the situations described. However, because the authors are working with various forms of qualitative and quantitative data across different geographic spaces and times, there is no uniformity.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 DEFINITION

In 2000, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol) (UN General Assembly, 2000). One of three Palermo Protocols implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN TIP provides an international definition of the trafficking in human beings as well as guidelines for formulating anti-trafficking policies, implementing legislation, and raising awareness. Incorporated in the UN TIP's definition of human trafficking are three main features: the action, means, and purpose of trafficking (UNODC, 2017). According to the UN TIP, the crime of trafficking in human beings is defined as the following:

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs... The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth [above] shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth [above] have been used (UN General Assembly, 2000, p. 4).

The above definition is the agreed upon global standard for cases relating to human trafficking. In particular, the term “human trafficking” encompasses a number of forms, or purposes, including sexual exploitation and labor exploitation and considers a variety of characters. Implicated as perpetrators of human trafficking are any individuals involved in the actions of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons; human trafficking includes more than individuals selling or seeking services. As such, narratives of human trafficking presented in the literature must be cognizant of the multiplicity of actors and institutions, their intersections, and the individual and collective actions that perpetuate human trafficking.

Further, the above definition includes means by which one might control an individual for the purpose of exploitation including threat, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of powers and vulnerabilities, and payment. Individuals who are trafficking need not use physical force or violence to control vulnerable persons; rather, the above includes a number of psychological or deceitful methods which may be utilized. Finally, it is worth noting that according to the above definition, the agency of trafficked persons is limited to non-existent. In cases defined by the above methods of control and involvement, the crime of human trafficking outweighs the will of the trafficked individual. Even in situations when trafficked individuals provide consent to engage in activities (e.g., sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, slavery, organ removal), this definition proposed by the UN General Assembly and implemented by the UNODC stipulates that their consent is irrelevant and nulled.

In addition to the UN TIP, the United States passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), one of three sections in the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 ("Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000," 2000). The TVPA includes

a series of definitions which lay the legal framework for those involved in human trafficking. While the document applies to multiple forms of human trafficking, the focus of this essay is primarily domestic sex trafficking of minors under the age of 18. Below is a table that contains the relevant legal definitions provided by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000:

Table 1: Key terms from the Victims of Violence Trafficking and Protection Act of 2000

Term	Definition
Coercion	(A) threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person;
	(B) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or
	(C) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process
Commercial sex act	any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person
Severe forms of trafficking in persons	(A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
	(B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery
Sex trafficking	the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act

Germane to this discussion, the TVPA categorizes sex trafficking as a severe form of trafficking in persons “in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or

in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (“Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000,” 2000). By definition, then, any individual under 18 years of age who engages in a commercial sex act is considered to be a trafficked person experiencing severe victimization. Additionally, neither movement from one location to another nor “third-party” involvement is necessary under the TVPA’s definition of sex trafficking of minors (Lutnick, 2016). The TVPA utilized a threefold approach: “(1) prevention of trafficking, (2) prosecution of traffickers, and (3) protection of victims” (Yen, 2008, p. 663). The definitions in the TVPA share language similar to that used in the UN TIP; in particular, both sources emphasize the role of force, fraud, and coercion, and they note the various actions such as recruitment, harboring, transportation, and others that implicate involvement. While physical force and violence are means for controlling individuals, the use of psychological or emotional means are equally valid forms of control.

Goździak (2008) notes that both the TVPA and the UN Protocol rely on the definition of “child” proposed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRS). According to the CRS, a child includes “every human being below the age of 18, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (Goździak, 2008, p. 904). This definition may be too reductionist as it does not take into account the developmental and psychological differences between a three and a 17 year old (Goździak, 2008). In addition, Goździak (2008) argues that this categorization fails to acknowledge social, historical, and cultural differences which result in concepts of “child” and “childhood” that vary across space and time. Goździak (2008) states that in the United States, many of the laws and protocols developed relating to trafficking of minors have been based upon the idealized construct of a Western, middle-class childhood and value concepts such as innocence and dependency on an adult figure.

Also, this framework does not take into account the lived experiences of youth who have had to consider their own economic and social stability in lieu of enjoying a carefree time of growth and development (Goździak, 2008). This depiction illustrated that even in a single country variables such as socioeconomic status must be considered when investigating childhood and agency. Even two individuals of the same age may have vastly different experiences as youth. Goździak (2008) brings up these concerns not to call into question the potential harms trafficked children may be exposed to, but instead to note that there is no single image or circumstance which can define this issue.

2.1.1 “Modern-day Slavery”

Human trafficking is frequently referred to as “modern-day slavery” in academic work, government and non-government documents and dialogues, and popular culture (Brennan, 2014). Citing the work of historian Stanley Engerman, Brennan notes that this use of the term “slavery” as a descriptor refers to a vast range of actions, behaviors, or conditions, which are seen as distasteful and objectionable from a human rights framework, and does not additionally acknowledge that such offenses illegal (Brennan, 2014). However, referring to human trafficking as slavery obfuscates the mechanisms responsible for trafficking and misappropriates the historical context of slavery. Currently, no legal basis upholds slavery in the United States; that is, there is “no legal framework that is based on race, and no one is born into a race-based enslaved status” (Brennan, 2014, p. 7). Current law immeasurably differs from the previously sanctioned chattel slavery:

Under chattel slavery, individuals of African ancestry knew that they or a family member could be sold at any moment. In this sense, although enslaved individuals lived with chronic uncertainty, they knew what was ahead: they faced a lifetime

of being bought and sold... [Trafficked individuals] may not know what is ahead for them, but...they know that their freedom does not have to be bought and declared through legal documents... Today's traffickers in people do not have the law on their side, nor do they have the assistance of slave patrols, fugitive slave laws, and courts. They must be discreet... (Brennan, 2014, pp. 7-8).

This difference between chattel slavery and “modern-day slavery,” as it is used to refer to human trafficking, is substantive insofar as they are not parallel contexts. Chattel slavery was rooted in and upheld through legal measures and maintained through the state; further, families were stripped of their lands and civil liberties, public opinion supported these measures, and the national economy was built and dependent on this operation. While those exploited in cases of human trafficking may be subject to deplorable conditions, there is no legal basis which leads to an intergenerational objectification and dehumanization, and public opinion does not sanction its existence. By creating this false equivalence of chattel slavery and human trafficking, the abuses of chattel slavery are minimized, and the apparatuses and actors upholding human trafficking are misunderstood. Again, this is not an attempt to diminish the severity of either situation. Rather than trying to equate the two, each should be considered in its own historical context.

2.2 HISTORY

Human trafficking is generally considered to be as old as human civilization (Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005). While a recent increase in discourse surrounding domestic minor sex trafficking might suggest it is a new phenomenon, Lutnick (2016) notes that youth have been involved in trading sex throughout history. Jahic and Finckenauer (2005) suggest that the increase in public awareness of and political attention to human trafficking is due to a “one of

our own” or “girl next door” lens; while humans have been trafficked throughout history, Western societies have only recently come to view trafficking as a problem because people of color are no longer the only ones involved.

It is only the phrase “domestic minor sex trafficking” that is new, as organizations tried to address the trafficking of females as early as the nineteenth century (Lutnick, 2016). Lutnick (2016) recalls the United States’ history of attempting to address the trafficking of women and girls as early as the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910, also known as the Mann Act. The Mann Act was the U.S. government’s first attempt to become involved in the case of domestic prostitution of a young cisgender (those whose gender matches their biological sex) woman (Lutnick, 2016). In this case, federal law deemed the consent of the involved parties to be irrelevant. Lutnick (2016) furthers the discussion of the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910 by analyzing the choice of its name and its provisions:

The name...was strategically used to evoke what “many believed was a serious and widespread practice: Commercial procurers taking innocent young girls and women by force and holding them captive with threats to their lives, a practice that resembled black servitude in its exploitative and barbarous nature” (Beckman 1984, 1112). ...The White Slave Traffic Act provides that a person is guilty of violating the act if they “knowingly transport or cause to be transported, or aid or assist in obtaining transportation for, or in transporting, in interstate or foreign commerce...any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose, or with the intent and purpose to induce, entice, or compel such woman or girl to become a prostitute or to give herself up to debauchery, or to engage in any other immoral practice” (Lutnick, 2016, pp. 2-3).

Lutnick (2016) states that the use of the terms “debauchery” and “immoral purpose” are attempts to prevent females from engaging in non-marital sex by policing movement across state lines. Lutnick (2016) also found that this morally-laden discourse was reinforced through the works of other contemporary figures such as Clifford Roe who, in his 1910 book *Panders and Their White Slaves*, defined white slavery as:

the “procuring, with or without their consent, girls and women for immoral houses and for lives of shame and detaining them against their wills until they have become to accustomed and hardened to lives of vice that they do not care to leave, become diseased, or too ashamed to face decent people again” (Grittner 1990, p.67) (as cited in Lutnick, 2016, p. 3).

Again, Lutnick (2016) demonstrates that modern discourse of domestic minor sex trafficking is rooted in the moral standards of the early twentieth century. Notably, the autonomy of the women and girls in these situations is negated as their consent is deemed irrelevant. Lutnick (2016) found that the Mann Act was later used to prosecute women who were consenting to commercial sex acts and testified to aiding other women in interstate movement. Subsequent applications of the Mann Act vastly differ from its initial intent and application, which framed women and girls as stolen by men and forced into sex trading; instead, the Mann Act became a vehicle to “prosecute women who ‘were an affront to traditional American values’ (Brown 2008, 478)” (Lutnick, 2016, p. 4).

The TVPA was signed in 2000, shortly after the UN TIP, and reauthorized as the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) in the years 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2013 (Lutnick, 2016). Notably, the TVPRA of 2003 allowed trafficked individuals to file federal civil suits against traffickers for compensatory and exemplary damages; however, the burden fell on victims, who may not have felt comfortable suing, and it did not speak to the solicitation of commercial sex acts (Yen, 2008). Lutnick (2016) notes that while the initial definition set forth in the TVPA (2000) acknowledged minors’ involvement in domestic sex trafficking, it was not until the 2005 TVPRA that more attention was given to them. The TVPRA of 2005 recognized the role of organizations that worked with trafficked youths and funded them (Lutnick, 2016).

Additionally, through TVPRA of 2005, Congress allocated \$50 million to social service agencies and law enforcement to address the demand side of commercial sex acts via program

development and prosecution of buyers. For example, as of 2008, 40 cities in the United States created day-long educational programs for arrested customers about the harms of seeking commercial sex services (Weitzer, 2010). The TVPRA of 2008 further provides funding for law enforcement in order to promote data gathering about and understanding of online, web-based channels in the use of commercial sex (Weitzer, 2010). The TVPRA of 2008 also protects unaccompanied minors from countries contiguous with the U.S., i.e., Mexico and Canada, from being deported if they are a victim of trafficking (Hill, 2010).

2.3 SCOPE

One of the challenges in addressing human trafficking, particularly domestic minor sex trafficking, is the limited availability of data and a lack of consensus on the number of trafficked individuals involved (Clayton et al., 2013; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Goździak, 2008; Gozdziaak & Collett, 2005; Lutnick, 2016; Musto, 2013; Nichols, 2016; Smith, 2011; Todres, 2011). The U.S. State Department has published estimates claiming 14,500 to 17,000 trafficking cases each year, yet researchers have found a disparity between these estimates and actual victims identified (Musto, 2013). One of the most commonly cited statistics by academics and public figures alike is that between 100,000 and 300,000 are involved in domestic minor sex trafficking; however, this figure is derived from an estimate put forth by Estes and Weiner (2002) on the number of youth “at risk” of becoming involved in domestic minor sex trafficking, not those actually involved (Lutnick, 2016). In their 27-month study, Estes and Weiner (2002) collected data from 17 cities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico by interviewing a variety of characters including stakeholders, law enforcement, individuals soliciting commercial sex, and

human service representatives (Clayton et al., 2013). Further, Estes and Weiner (2002) included data from 86 sexually exploited children in human services and 124 sexually exploited runaway youth (Clayton et al., 2013).

Lutnick (2016) notes that the estimates of at-risk youth are problematic because they are based on speculative and nonexclusive categories, which allows individuals to be counted multiple times, for as many categories as they belong to. For example, gang involvement, runaway or homelessness, and living at either the U.S.—Mexican or U.S.—Canadian border are all categories, yet one could conceivably belong to each of these be counted each time (Lutnick, 2016). Others have pointed out that the Estes and Weiner (2002) study lacks credibility as it was not subject to the scrutiny of peer review or published in a scientific journal (Lutnick, 2016).

In a review of existing literature about the commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of minors in the United States, the Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States (2013) notes that it is likely an impossible feat to attain a “perfect” estimate of the scope of the problem, and methodological flaws in existing estimates suggest much improvement can be made.

Efforts to better estimate the scope have led to the dissection of populations into smaller subpopulation of youth (Clayton et al., 2013). For example, shelter and street youth have been studied as one such subset of the population, and research has suggested that among those ages 12 to 21, nearly 10% of shelter youth and 30% of street youth engaged in survival sex, or trading sex for goods and necessities (Clayton et al., 2013). This study is limited, however, because it fails to disaggregate minors (those under 18 years of age) from adults (those ages 18 to 21) (Clayton et al., 2013).

Crime reports and arrest records have also been used as a means of estimating the prevalence and incidence of youth involved in sex trade (Clayton et al., 2013; Lutnick, 2016). Based on data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting program in 2009, researchers found that 1,400 youth under the age of 18 were arrested for prostitution that year. Of those, 78% were female, 12% were youth under 15 years of age, and 40% were white (Clayton et al., 2013). However, this estimation groups together multiple arrests per individual, those arrested for prostitution vs. those considered to be victims by law authorities, and arrests involving multiple youth (Clayton et al., 2013).

Victim identification via school personnel, law enforcement, health care providers, and social service providers provides another source of data for estimation (Clayton et al., 2013). According to the Innocence Lost National Initiative, a program which the FBI began in 2003, more than 2,100 youth have been recovered from prostitution (Clayton et al., 2013). This estimate includes only youth who have been identified, implying there are youth who have yet to be identified; also, it does not specify whether or not youth have been recovered more than once, and it does not count youth who engage in survival sex (Clayton et al., 2013).

As Lutnick (2016) notes, it is challenging to determine the actual number of youth who engage in sex trading, in any capacity, because of the complexity of counting them in addition to the social repercussions and safety concerns that prevent youth from self-identifying as engaging in sex trade. Estimates of the prevalence of youth involved in sex trading vary wildly, and research on human trafficking indicated that nearly 80% of cited data came from one or more methodologically flawed sources (Lutnick, 2016). This is further exacerbated when media sources, advocates, law enforcement, and organizations perpetuate the circulation of methodologically flawed data (Horning, 2013). The above stakeholders have been found to

include alarming statistics on supposedly informational material with no citations or explanations as to how these figures were obtained (Marcus et al., 2012).

3.0 DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

3.1 RISK FACTORS

Individuals of all races, genders, sexualities, and classes are represented in domestic minor sex trafficking (Lutnick, 2016; Schwarz & Britton, 2015). Below, a closer look at the features of age, gender and LGBTQ+ identity, race and ethnicity, intellectual disability, and family life and child welfare involvement is taken to understand how these factors affect involvement in domestic minor sex trafficking and how they intersect.

3.1.1 Age

There is little consensus on the average age of entry of youth into domestic minor sex trafficking (Lutnick, 2016). The main challenges to determining the average age of initiation are due to the ages of youth involved in research samples and differences in age criteria across studies (Lutnick, 2016). Some researchers specify youth as ages 14 to 24, others extend the criterion as old as age 26, while others focus on specific age brackets such as 15 to 17 years of age, and still others utilize the TVPA definition, which includes anyone under the age of 18 (Lutnick, 2016).

The lack of congruency across studies poses a challenge to creating an unbiased estimation. Researchers have suggested that the average age of entry may be anywhere between 12 and 17 (Clayton et al., 2013; Lutnick, 2016). Cisgender girls have an earlier age of entry

compared to cisgender boys and transgender (gender that does not match biological sex) (Clayton et al., 2013). Additionally, the role of parents or family members as traffickers may lead some youth to be involved in sex trade from an earlier age (Hornor, 2015; Lutnick, 2016).

The literature suggests that the age of entry into sex trafficking is important; youth who report age of entry below 15 years have worse outcomes than those who were 15 years of age or above (Lutnick, 2016). Youth with a younger age of entry were more likely to run away from home, use drugs or alcohol, and have health problems, and they were less likely to have graduated from high school (Lutnick, 2016). Furthermore, those involved in sex trafficking for a longer period of time are more likely to be exposed to violence and abuse (Lutnick, 2016).

3.1.2 Sex, Gender, and LGBTQ+ Identity

Much of the existing literature and media portrays domestic sex trafficking of minors as an issue that primarily affects women and girls who are cisgender (Clayton et al., 2013; Connell et al., 2015; Goździak, 2008; Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005; Lutnick, 2016; Musto, 2013; Nichols, 2016; Schwarz & Britton, 2015). Lutnick (2016) posits that this focus on cisgender girls is built on the social construction of them as vulnerable and in need of saving; cisgender girls are ten times more likely to be the focus of literature compared to transgender youth and cisgender boys. Women and girls are overwhelmingly identified as victims based on prosecuted cases, law enforcement, and social services; according to prosecuted cases, women and girls constituted 94% of survivors (Clayton et al., 2013; Musto, 2013). Further, the Polaris Project, a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in the United States, noted that of the 141 individuals who contacted them, roughly 97% were female (Clayton et al., 2013). However, these statistics do not

necessarily represent the total population of trafficked youth; these numbers merely reflect youth who were aware of and able to contact that specific organization.

Clayton et al. (2013) stated that female youth constituted the majority of arrests for juvenile prostitution in 2012; 601 girls were arrested compared to 189 boys. However, research that specifically considered homeless or runaway youth found that 50% or more individuals who engaged in sex trading were boys, men, or transgender girls (Clayton et al., 2013). Some findings suggest that cisgender boys and transgender youth may be equally or more involved in trading sex compared to cisgender girls (Lutnick, 2016). Notably, studies of transgender boys who trade sex are absent in the literature, which may be due to the overwhelming focus on cisgender girls and fewer transgender boys being identified as victims (Lutnick, 2016).

Of the 500,000 homeless youth in the United States, up to 40% identify as LGBTQ+ compared to 10% in the general population (Clayton et al., 2013). This suggests that LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately represented in the homeless population, and thus, at greater risk of becoming involved in domestic minor sex trafficking (Clayton et al., 2013; Schwarz & Britton, 2015). The disproportionate representation of LGBTQ+ youth in the homeless population is most frequently attributed to parents or guardians not accepting their identities so youth either run away or are forced to leave (Clayton et al., 2013; Schwarz & Britton, 2015).

Homeless youths' vulnerability is largely due to unstable housing and inability to secure the basic requirements for survival (Clayton et al., 2013; Lutnick, 2016; Schwarz & Britton, 2015). Their volatile and uncertain situations lead youth to engage in survival sex to meet the most basic needs of food, water, and housing (Clayton et al., 2013; Lutnick, 2016). Additionally, LGBTQ+ youth, and particularly transgender youth, may face additional challenges such as employment discrimination, which subsequently leads them to rely on survival sex (Clayton et

al., 2013). Further, transgender youth may experience particular challenges when seeking housing in shelters; transgender girls may not be accepted in housing for cisgender girls who are victims of domestic minor sex trafficking due to social stigma (Clayton et al., 2013). Cisgender boys involved in sex trafficking have limited access to resources, such as shelters and group homes, compared to cisgender girls, who are the primary audience for such interventions (Clayton et al., 2013). Transgender girls may not feel welcomed or safe in supposedly safe spaces that do not match their identities; these spaces may also lead to further sexual exploitation by other youth in those programs (Clayton et al., 2013).

3.1.3 Race and Ethnicity

Youth from all races and ethnicities are involved in domestic sex trafficking of minors, but there is conflicting literature regarding whether one group is at more risk than others (Choi, 2015; Clayton et al., 2013). This may be due to the “color-blind” nature of the existing research literature on sex trafficking in the United States, which often fails to stratify by race and ethnicity (Nichols, 2016).

Nichols (2016) argues that if each race and ethnicity had equal risk for becoming involved in domestic sex trafficking of minors, then the distribution of survivors would parallel the proportions as they exist in the general U.S. population; yet, this is not supported by the literature. Black, Latinx (the gender-neutral pronoun for Latino/a individuals), and Native American individuals are represented at higher proportions among survivors of domestic sex trafficking of minors compared to their proportions in the United States population (Butler, 2015b; Nichols, 2016). This disparity may be attributed to their increased societal

marginalization, which may be related to factors such as poor economic opportunity and increased involvement in welfare services (Nichols, 2016).

In 2002, of the under-18 arrests for prostitution—now referred to as domestic minor sex trafficking—and commercialized vice, 54.6% were among black youths (Butler, 2015b). This rate is shockingly high as the black population accounted for only 13.2% of the U.S. population in 2013 (United States Census Bureau, 2015). This situation may be elucidated by applying a critical race feminist (CRF) perspective to prostitution and sex trafficking in the United States (Butler, 2015a, 2015b). According to Butler (2015), the role of structural oppression cannot be ignored as a disproportionate number of girls and women of color are sexually exploited. Butler (2015) traces the underlying sociocultural constructs in the United States which traditionally depict black women as “hyper-sexualized vixens who choose and enjoy prostitution” (Butler, 2015a, p. 97). This kind of caricature creates a false complicity that perpetuates their invisibility.

Consequently, the dialogue surrounding women of color involved in sex trafficking rarely portrays these women as victims, and there is little to no discussion regarding the role of structural racism in sexual coercion and exploitation (Butler, 2015a). Moreover, the overall “system of interlocking oppression,” which includes sexism, racism, and classism, among others, creates an atmosphere in which the black, low income female is more easily subjected to sexual coercion (Butler, 2015a, p. 122). These systems of oppression can be traced far back to the days of slavery in the United States, when “sexual stereotyping and commercial sexual exploitation were fundamental tools for enforcing black slavery and, later, racial segregation...” (Butler, 2015a, p. 125). The stereotypes rooted in the past, and present in current U.S. culture, act to increase the demand for black females while ignoring their existence and exploitation by condemning perceived morally abhorrent behavior (Butler, 2015a, 2015b).

3.1.4 Intellectual Disability

The literature suggests that intellectual disability, operationalized as having a low intelligence quotient (IQ), increases an individual's vulnerability to becoming involved in sex trafficking (Nichols, 2016). The American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines intellectual disability as having an IQ score of 70 or below, beginning before 18 years of age, coupled with poor adaptive functioning (Root et al., 2017). Sexual exploitation of youth with intellectual disabilities may be due to decreased knowledge or awareness of one's right to decline sex and sexual exploitation (Nichols, 2016).

One example is of a 16-year-old woman with an intellectual disability, characterized by her IQ of 58, who was coerced into sex trafficking by her boyfriend (Nichols, 2016). In this case, the 16-year-old woman did not want to have sex, but her boyfriend routinely manipulated her emotionally; he stated that he would be harmed if he could not pay off his debt and then self-harmed and blamed her for his injuries (Nichols, 2016). This is not to say that people with intellectual disability do not have the capacity to provide consent to have sex in any situation. However, intellectual disability is a risk factor insofar as it may be easier for the vulnerabilities of these individuals to be exploited by others.

3.1.5 Family Life and Child Welfare Involvement

While youth belonging to any socioeconomic status may be at risk for becoming involved in domestic sex trafficking, the literature suggests that there is a correlation with household poverty (Diaz, Clayton, & Simon, 2014; Duger, 2015; McClain & Garrity, 2011; Twill, Green, & Traylor, 2010). Impoverished communities are more vulnerable due to the pervasive economic

stress many households face. This economic stress in conjunction with framing of sex trafficking as a way to decrease economic burdens, gain financial independence, fund behavioral habits related to substance abuse and dependence, or simply survive on a day-to-day basis creates an exploitative environment in which domestic youth sex trafficking may be introduced. Among youth, survival sex is seen as widely accepted and common, so that one might become involved in a situation that results in human trafficking (Anderson, Coyle, Johnson, & Denner, 2014).

Adverse life circumstances are another risk factor for domestic minor sex trafficking (Diaz et al., 2014; Duger, 2015; Hammond & McGlone, 2014; McClain & Garrity, 2011; Twill et al., 2010). Included in this broad term of “adverse life circumstances” are situations such as history of physical abuse, sexual abuse, violence in the household, neglect, and involvement in the child welfare system. One study found that for youth at high risk for becoming involved in domestic sex trafficking, 70% had stayed in a shelter or group home, 61% had been in state custody, and 83% had been physically harmed by a caregiver (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). This high correlation of adverse life circumstances with domestic sex trafficking of youth demonstrates the profound impact early life experiences can have on youth.

3.2 PERPETRATION

As Lutnick (2016) notes, the population involved in domestic minor sex trafficking, what she more generally refers to as sex trading, is not a homogenous or monolithic group of youths. In the previous section, a myriad of risk factors related to sex trading was discussed. Just as there is a wide array of risk factors, there are a number of individuals involved in the perpetration of sex trafficking of youths (Chaffee & English, 2015; Lutnick, 2016). Much of the dialogue

surrounding this topic is stuck in the reductionist narrative of trafficker/pimp and victim/survivor, but this narrow scope fails to acknowledge the multiplicity of parties involved and how the various relationships are construed (Chaffee & English, 2015; Lutnick, 2016). In some cases, youth act without a third party involved and initiate themselves into trading sex (Lutnick, 2016; Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014). Below, the variable parties that perpetrate, promote, and initiate the trafficking of minors are discussed.

3.2.1 Pimps

Some of the literature suggests that pimps, or those recruiting minors for sexual exploitation, are attuned to using emotional manipulation by promising improvement in current and future life circumstances (Chaffee & English, 2015). This emotional preying on vulnerable youth is often associated with the concepts of intimate relationships, “love,” and a sense of familial structure (Chaffee & English, 2015; Cohen, Mannarino, & Kinnish, 2015). Given the instability of shelter and social relationships that put youth at an increased risk of becoming involved in sex trafficking, these appeals can be emotionally coercive.

A grave and illustrative example of this relationship that combines various underlying factors is provided by Cohen et al. (2015):

Ann, 13 years old, met Bobby soon after running away from home. He let her stay in his apartment and soon became her first boyfriend. Bobby asked Ann to have sex with his friend to help pay the rent. Ann initially refused, but then agreed due to fear of losing Bobby. Then Bobby told her to have sex with different men; when Ann refused, he beat her up and threatened her. Ann has subsequently had sex at gunpoint, been gang raped and gone out on the street. A month ago Bobby punched her in the stomach and threw her down the stairs. Ann was detained while trying to solicit sex for money from an undercover police officer. When Ann fainted the officer brought her to the hospital where she miscarried. Ann tried to call Bobby from the hospital but he did not respond. Still, Ann is convinced Bobby loves her and she often wants to return to him (Cohen et al., 2015, p. 2).

Ann's age falls around the period of time when youth are considered to be most vulnerable to human sex trafficking due to their dependence on adults for economic and emotional support as well as developmental and neurological vulnerabilities (Chaffee & English, 2015; Duger, 2015; Hammond & McGlone, 2014; Reid & Jones, 2011). According to the above description, it was not long after Bobby found her, that he offered to fulfill her basic human needs, appealed to her emotional longing for love and structure, and then used his emotional control to coerce her into sex. Despite the physical and emotional trauma experienced by Ann, she still believes that Bobby loves her.

According to a manual designed for individuals wanting to become pimps, the act of demoralizing youth is necessary to create an unhealthy bond with the youth and obtain control (Reid & Jones, 2011). The manual states, "After you have broken her spirit she has no sense of self-value. Now pimp, put a price tag on the item you have manufactured" (Reid & Jones, 2011, p. 219). This implies that pimps and traffickers are able to exploit their victims by diminishing their sense of self-esteem, self-identity, and self-worth. While the above cases may be relevant to some youth involved in sex trafficking, other literature has suggested that this narrative is not most commonly identified by youth (Lutnick, 2016; Marcus, Sanson, Horning, Thompson, & Curtis, 2016). Further, researchers have cautioned against hyperbolizing these representations as doing so imbues pimps with an almost mystical coercive ability (Marcus et al., 2016).

In an ethnographic study of sex workers and pimps in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Marcus et al. (2016) found that pimps who had access to minors were not especially keen on using them. According to the pimps, "engagement with minors and other nonconsensual or semi-consensual labor arrangements represent [*sic*] a disadvantageous business model" (Marcus et al., 2016, p.

47). Pimps attributed this to three main elements: (1) an already high supply of willing sex workers coupled with a low supply of high-paying customers, (2) youths' inexperience in engaging in sex work prevents them from charging high prices, and (3) low work ethic of minors who do not "invest" in sex work as a career (Marcus et al., 2016). The majority of pimps avoided working with minors, and those who did were usually already parents of the youth with a pre-existing power dynamic to exploit them (Marcus et al., 2016). Third-party services, such as those recruiting customers, who worked with minors did so on a case by case basis, suggesting a "relatively powerless subcontract employee, rather than a powerful 'pimp'" (Marcus et al., 2016, p. 47).

The participants who identified as pimps in the above study stated that they were familiar with the minors who worked on a particular street in Atlantic City; however, most of the pimps "expressed pity" for the minors and avoided them in both professional and social situations (Marcus et al., 2016, p. 55). While interviewing a "high-profile" pimp named "Nomad" in Atlantic City, researchers found that this man and his peers had a great aversion to incorporating minors in sex trade:

Nomad and the other self-described pimps were initially quite perplexed and alarmed when we told them that we wanted to interview "underage" youth involved in prostitution, which they seemed to equate with pedophilia... According to him, "The only thing a pimp prey [*sic*] on is money, but chasing after under age girls is sick! If a man deals in supplying kids to other adults for sex, then he's not a pimp, he's a C.S.M. (Child Slave Master). You cannot confuse the two, a C.S.M. and a pimp is [*sic*] two different occupations. A C.S.M. thrives off the innocents, as well as the naivety of children. A pimp provides assistance to adults who consensually [*sic*] engage in acts of prostitution. Where's the crime in that?" (Marcus et al., 2012, p. 163).

This depiction greatly differs from the examples noted above as well as the most common narrative portrayed in the media (Marcus et al., 2014). While not taking away from the lived

experiences of sex trafficked individuals who have had violent and exploitative relationships with pimps, the literature suggests that those relationships are not the norm for many youth (Marcus et al., 2014). Based on a statistically valid sample from the 2008 New York City Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) census, only 10% of minors had a pimp and 1.6% lived with a pimp (Marcus et al., 2014). Furthermore, nearly 50% of minors stated that they “did not know a single pimp,” and only 8.1% of youth entered sex work due to a pimp, which suggests low prevalence and involvement of pimps (Marcus et al., 2014, p. 231). Despite the fact that 87.2 % of these youth reported wanting to leave sex work, none of them identified the control or fear of a pimp as a factor preventing their exit (Marcus et al., 2014). Instead, youth noted that employment, educational, and housing instability were factors keeping them in sex trade, with economic vulnerability and homelessness as the prevailing concerns for these youth (Marcus et al., 2014).

3.2.2 Peer Networks

Data from the New York City CSEC census of 2008 suggest that peer networks are a significant avenue leading to youth engaging in sex trade (Marcus et al., 2014). Initiation by a friend was responsible for nearly 50% of youths’ introductions to sex work (Marcus et al., 2014). In a qualitative study of homeless youth who trade sex in the midwestern United States, in-depth interviews revealed that pressure from peers and friends was responsible for youths’ initiation and continued participation (Tyler & Johnson, 2006). One participant noted:

Like my friends will be like, 'do it, do it, do it.' And like I'll be like, 'no I don't want to,' or whatever, and then finally I just give in. Not necessarily that they made me give in or whatever, but I was just sick of being hassled about it . . .like my friend would need a pack of cigarettes or whatever, and then I'd want a pack of cigarettes too .. .and she'd be like, 'just go sleep with this guy for a pack of

cigarettes'. . .and I'd be like, 'no,' and then I'd just keep on saying no, and then she just wouldn't, she wouldn't quit bugging me and I'd end up getting in a fight with her. So finally I just gave in (Tyler & Johnson, 2006, p. 211).

The above response given by a homeless youth indicates the importance of peer networks and social acceptance. For this person, maintaining a social tie with another homeless youth was prioritized in the decision. In addition, this quote implies that there is a lack of viable economic options for youth to support their needs and desires which may lead to sex trading (Tyler & Johnson, 2006).

The role of peers, friends, and acquaintances varies in youths' experiences and decisions in engaging in sex trade (Lutnick, 2016). For example, the friends of street-based minors play integral roles in connecting each other to different clients in return for a sort of connection fee, while other youth have more formal arrangements such that one youth arranges meetings and acts as a form of security for the youth trading sex (Lutnick, 2016). In addition, Lutnick (2016) found that more experienced youth would advise their less knowledgeable friends on various facets of sex trading including safe work practices, client identification, and law enforcement evasion. The variety of these arrangements creates a complex, fluid narrative such that youth may occupy both the roles of pimp and sex trader (Lutnick, 2016). In many of these peer-based situations, the youth do not view their friends as traffickers or pimps regardless of the legal designations under the TVPA (Lutnick, 2016).

3.2.3 Family

The literature indicates that youth may be trafficked by parents, guardians, or other family members (Chaffee & English, 2015; Goździak, 2008; Hornor, 2015; Lutnick, 2016). Horner

(2015) states that family members typically rely on youth to perform commercial sex for economic support, particularly in the situations of poverty and substance use. According to a survey of social service and juvenile justice professionals in Kentucky, the most common trafficker of youth was a family member, at 62% (Lutnick, 2016). In a field assessment conducted in Las Vegas, researchers found that youth were trafficked by family members in 30% of cases (Lutnick, 2016). Similarly, another study found 36% of youths' exploiters were immediate family members (Cohen et al., 2015).

Family members might also serve as a point of entry for youth; rather than playing a primary role, a family member might instead introduce youth to a third party who is legally considered to be the trafficker (Lutnick, 2016). In these cases, however, the initial family member's connection still implicates them in the organization of domestic sex trafficking of minors, and they are still guilty of trafficking in persons.

3.2.4 Intimate Partners

Intimate partners of youth involved in commercial sex exploitation have also been found to be third parties (Chaffee & English, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Goździak, 2008; Lutnick, 2016; Reid & Jones, 2011). Lutnick (2016) found that along with peers, intimate partners are the most common type of traffickers involved, particularly illustrated in the case of boyfriends and young cisgender women. The literature supports this finding that women were frequently victimized by their boyfriends, and 28% of women who have been sexually exploited in the U.S. described a past relationship with an intimate partner who trafficked them (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014).

The level of involvement varies in each situation such that partners may be organizing sex trade, or they may be financially dependent on the youth (Lutnick, 2016). In many cases, youth do not typically think of their partners as traffickers or pimps, but instead as romantic partners (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Goździak, 2008; Lutnick, 2016; Reid & Jones, 2011). In one case, a 19-year-old cisgender woman, who was seven months pregnant, had been selling sex for three years while in a relationship with a man in his 40s (Marcus et al., 2012). Her age at initiation would legally define this as a case of domestic minor sex trafficking according to the TVPA. This man was the father of her child, and he sold incense sticks on the side while offering “market facilitation and protection for his girlfriend” (Marcus et al., 2012, p. 159). In an interview with this man, researchers found that he did not see their current lifestyle as sustainable for much longer:

He claimed that he was bringing in about \$55 a day (he sold three 5–10-dollar bundles while talking) and that his girlfriend’s income was far larger, but less steady and could not be relied upon much longer. As he put it, “She’s the one paying the rent, but that can’t go on forever. She’s about to give birth. We gotta find another hustle soon.” When asked directly if his market facilitation made him the woman’s pimp, he started laughing: “Do you think I’d be sitting here in the sun selling incense if I was a pimp? I’m just trying to get by like everybody else” (Marcus et al., 2012, p. 159).

Coping experiences recalled by cisgender homeless females have also suggested that they may deliberately enter a relationship to secure shelter and safety (Lutnick, 2016). In these cases, the driving factor to be in a relationship is a sense of protection and well-being fostered by being connected to “someone with more experience navigating homelessness and being on the streets” (Lutnick, 2016, p. 35). In the situation illustrated above, this theme of survival-based coping is easily applicable. When researchers interviewed the woman, she suggested that while she felt

affection towards her partner and their arrangement afforded temporary security, she did not plan on remaining in it in the long-term (Marcus et al., 2012).

3.3 HEALTH OUTCOMES

Despite the limited and at times conflicting research on the complex issue of domestic minor sex trafficking, the literature suggests youth may experience a variety of short- and long-term outcomes (Clayton et al., 2013; Institute of Medicine, 2014; Muftić & Finn, 2013; Todres, 2011). Depending on the circumstances to which individuals are subjected, they are susceptible to a number of negative physical and mental health outcomes. Rape (Connell et al., 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013), sexual abuse (Connell et al., 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Institute of Medicine, 2014), physical abuse (Connell et al., 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013), traumatic head injuries (Deshpande & Nour, 2013), unwanted or forced pregnancy (Deshpande & Nour, 2013), forced abortions (Connell et al., 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013), urinary tract infections (UTIs) (Deshpande & Nour, 2013), exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and public lice (Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Muftić & Finn, 2013), psychological trauma (Choi, 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013), depression (Choi, 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Muftić & Finn, 2013), anxiety (Choi, 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Muftić & Finn, 2013), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Choi, 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013), substance abuse (Choi, 2015; Muftić & Finn, 2013), dissociative disorders (Muftić & Finn, 2013), food deprivation (Connell et al., 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Muftić & Finn, 2013), pelvic pain and gynecological infections (Choi, 2015; Muftić & Finn, 2013), memory difficulty (Choi, 2015; Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Muftić & Finn, 2013), and suicidality

(Deshpande & Nour, 2013) are just a few of the outcomes identified in the literature. Physical and sexual abuse of youth may be particularly harmful due to effects on the developing brain and their association with poor mental health outcomes and risk-taking behavior, e.g., early smoking, risky sexual activity, substance use (Clayton et al., 2013; Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Institute of Medicine, 2014).

Referencing the WHO, Clayton et al. (2013) note that health is more than just the absence of disease, and there are physical, mental, and social well-being components to one's health. Furthermore, youth involved must also be considered through a developmental lens, which acknowledges the trajectory of their health and social well-being, a legal framework, and how they may face an increased risk of re-exploitation (Clayton et al., 2013; Institute of Medicine, 2014). Youth may be exposed to social ramifications, such as homelessness and social isolation, which have severe health implications (Clayton et al., 2013).

Research has found that while involved in sex trading, youth may be introduced to illicit substances and subsequently use or develop dependencies on substances as coping mechanisms (Clayton et al., 2013; Lutnick, 2016). These newfound coping strategies must be acknowledged as part of a series of acquired health concerns for youth rather than legal offenses.

The severity of these health outcomes can be further understood by applying a Life Course Perspective, or an ecobiodevelopmental framework. The Life Course Theory is an interdisciplinary approach that draws from epidemiology, biology, psychology, neuroscience, genomics, sociology, and economics (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Shonkoff et al. (2012) propose that persistent early childhood adversity and toxic stress (i.e., continued exposure to high levels of stress hormones) have a harmful effect on the developing brain. Prolonged exposure to chronic

stress leads to short-term changes in behavior as well as more enduring, long-term effects (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

Young children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of toxic stress due to the plasticity and sensitivity of the developing brain; to some extent, early exposure to toxic stress can justify the association between childhood adversity and future challenges related to socio-emotional skills, cognitive, and linguistic development (Shonkoff et al., 2012). In addition, adults with a history of early childhood adversity are more likely to exhibit negative coping behaviors including early alcohol consumption, smoking, illicit drug use, and other risk-taking behaviors (Shonkoff et al., 2012). These effects of toxic stress lead to the exacerbation of health inequities for already marginalized communities (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Applied to domestic minor sex trafficking, an ecobiodevelopmental approach emphasizes the profound effect risk factors such poverty, housing instability, and violent households can have on youth and why they are associated with such negative health outcomes.

4.0 THE INTERNET

The literature suggests that as technologies and online platforms are created, new avenues to facilitate sexual exploitation develop in tandem and become embedded in this issue (Clayton et al., 2013; Farley, Franzblau, & Kennedy, 2013; Kim, Jeong, Kim, & So, 2011; Mendel & Sharapov, 2016; Nichols, 2016; O'Brien, 2014; Vanderschaaf, 2013). In this section, a brief history of the Internet is included followed by a discussion on the sex trafficking of minors as related to technologies.

4.1 A BRIEF HISTORY

The history of the Internet spans as far back as the 1950s, and in the U.S., the 1960s Cold War Era was the catalyst for the development of this technology (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). The Internet was born out of a need for government communication with research institutions and U.S. universities (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). A much deeper understanding of the intricacies of this time period is beyond the scope of this paper; however, the mid to late 1980s was a significant milestone as the Internet became more democratized through the commercialization of civilian networks (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). The 1990s marked a boost in the growth and utilization; increased accessibility allowed it to become integrated into both personal and professional use throughout the globe (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). According to Cohen-Almagor (2011), the 1990s

were significant for another reason: the Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) encryption program. The PGP, debuted by Phillip Zimmerman in 1991, is a free and highly effective tool that can be used to conceal one's identity, creating an atmosphere in which users could engage in deviant, illicit, or unpleasant behaviors with no repercussions (Cohen-Almagor, 2011).

In 1996, the first version of Google was released; though now ubiquitous, Google was a huge milestone for technological innovation (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). Google is a search engine, meaning it was created in order to navigate through and locate specific webpages within an increasing mass of information (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). Furthermore, social networking sites, such as Myspace and Facebook, were created and popularized in the 2000s (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). Though intended as tools for socialization, connectivity, and exchange, a subset of users utilized the spaces for less than desirable activities such as terrorism and sexual exploitation (Cohen-Almagor, 2011).

4.2 KEY CONCEPTS

4.2.1 The Surface Web and the Deep Web

Online information that can be accessed via search engines, such as Google, is known as indexed (Sui, Caverlee, & Rudesill, 2015). Indexed, or searchable, items belong to what is referred to as the Surface Web (Sui et al., 2015). For many, indexed items such as websites in the Surface Web are the only forms of information routinely sought; however, there are non-indexed items that cannot be found via search engines, which are collectively known as the Deep Web (Harrison, Roberts, & Hernandez-Castro, 2016; Sui et al., 2015). Because of the non-indexed nature of this

material, it is not possible to know exactly how large the Deep Web is, but estimates suggest that it is over 500 times larger than the Surface Web (Sui et al., 2015). Further, the 60 largest Deep Web sites store approximately 40 times more data than the entirety of the Surface Web (Sui et al., 2015). The non-indexed items located in the Deep Web can be innocuous. For example, the “get sharable link” option in Google documents allows a user to send to others a link to that specific, non-indexed webpage for viewing or editing purposes. Unless other users have that link, they cannot access that content; it cannot be found by using key terms in a search engine.

4.2.2 The Dark Web

In addition, the Deep Web contains data that are deliberately non-indexed and hidden; this is a subset of the Deep Web known as the Dark Web (Harrison et al., 2016; Sui et al., 2015). Figure 1, included below, illustrates the relationship between the Surface Web, Deep Web, and Dark Web. These intentionally concealed spaces have been linked to illicit activities such as drug trade (Harrison et al., 2016; Zulkarnine, Frank, Monk, Mitchell, & Davies, 2016), firearms trade (Harrison et al., 2016), wildlife trade (Harrison et al., 2016), money laundering (Harrison et al., 2016), terrorism (O'Brien, 2014; Sui et al., 2015; Zulkarnine et al., 2016), and human trafficking and sexual exploitation (Harrison et al., 2016; O'Brien, 2014; Zulkarnine et al., 2016). The Dark Web fosters an environment such that these activities can go undetected by ensuring anonymity of users (O'Brien, 2014; Sui et al., 2015; Zulkarnine et al., 2016).

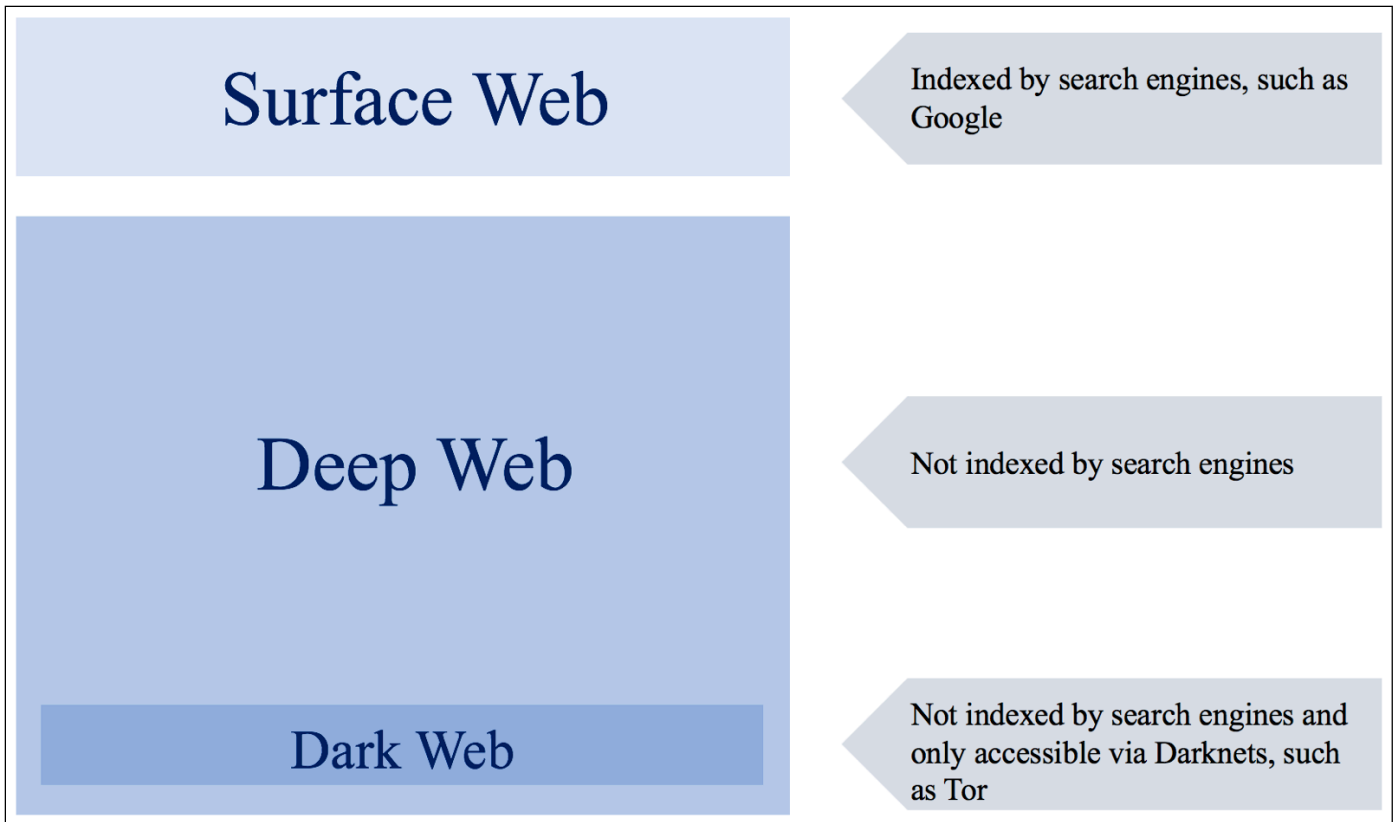


Figure 1: Visualization of the Surface Web, Deep Web, and Dark Web

To access the Dark Web, individuals must use specific software such as the Onion Router, also known as Tor (Owen & Savage, 2016; Zulkarnine et al., 2016). Tor is the most popular of several Darknets, or softwares, used to enter the Dark Web (Zulkarnine et al., 2016). Tor was initially created by the U.S. Navy in the 1990s for online communication, but it was made publically available in 2002 to include more users to ensure anonymity (Zulkarnine et al., 2016). While Tor enables users to facilitate covert communication and money exchange, it can also be used as a traditional web browser to view content on the Surface Web that grants its users anonymity (Sui et al., 2015).

Because of the challenges inherent with studying this anonymous and veiled network, the remainder of this chapter will focus on instances of domestic sex trafficking of minors that take

place on the Surface Web. Furthermore, the topic of this essay is not the trade of sexual services provided by adults, which may also be found in the Surface Web.

4.3 ONLINE MEDIUMS

Researchers suggest that the use of the Internet has changed the nature of sex trafficking; it can now occur under a more hidden guise rather than in plain view (Nichols, 2016). Due to the nearly ubiquitous use of technology in everyday life, particularly among youth, there is large debate over the extent to which these new forms of communication are intensifying sex trafficking of youth (Clayton et al., 2013). Clayton et al. (2013) note that one of the largest challenges to truly assessing the role of technology is a lack of evidence-based research and measurement. Even still, the literature suggests both positive and negative applications of the Internet in providing risks and benefits to youth (Clayton et al., 2013).

4.3.1 Role of the Internet in Sex Trafficking Facilitation

The literature indicates that online technologies have been used to recruit and advertise minors for commercial sex exploitation (Clayton et al., 2013; Hornor, 2015; Tidball, Zheng, & Creswell, 2016). Mediums such as Facebook, Craigslist, Backpage, other forms of social media, and hundreds of websites are commonly cited as venues of sexual exploitation (Chaffee & English, 2015; Farley et al., 2013; Horning, 2013; Hornor, 2015; Kotrla, 2010; Vanderschaaf, 2013). The literature has suggested that traffickers post an online advertisement claiming to offer minors

jobs, such as modeling or acting, to trick youth into commercial sex business (Hornor, 2015; Kotrla, 2010).

Online forums used to disseminate child pornography as well as advertise specific images, sex acts, reviews, and contact information based on the solicitor's preference (Farley et al., 2013; Hornor, 2015; Tidball et al., 2016). In addition, these avenues can be used to legitimize this subculture, validate other users' exploitative behaviors, and advise each other on how to remain anonymous (Farley et al., 2013). According to an analysis of 119 sex trafficking cases, over 25% involved the use of the Internet for solicitation services (Farrell et al., 2012). Further, research across ten cities in the United States found that the Internet was used for trafficking in each location (Nichols, 2016).

In addition, youth who do not have a relationship with a third party person who organizes or facilitates the trading of sex advertise themselves on the Internet (Lutnick, 2016). These independent working youth use the Internet to establish a pool of steady clients rather than relying on someone else to bring clients to them (Lutnick, 2016). In one case, two young cisgender women ran away together from a group home and turned to utilizing the Internet for economic stability:

The [one] young woman's case manager explained that happened after they ran out of money: "The other young woman, who was twenty years old...had sex work experience, Internet based, and she told [the other young woman] how to do they...[T]hey both engaged in Internet and street-based [sex work] and made some money and were able to stay in, like, motels while they were doing this..." (Lutnick, 2016, p. 32).

Using the Internet as a form of advertisement enables these transactions to occur in specified and pre-arranged locations such as hotels or private residences (Lutnick, 2016; Nichols, 2016). The shift to using online venues for coordination rather than in-person or street-based

solicitations has made it an increasing challenge to uncover cases of exploitation, identify sex trafficking cases, and connect youth with social and health services (Nichols, 2016).

4.3.2 The Role of the Internet for Combating Sex Trafficking

Despite the ability to use the Internet in an exploitative way, researchers have found that it can also be used to combat cases of sex trafficking (Heil & Nichols, 2014). It is estimated that between a third and a quarter of sex trafficking cases are uncovered by utilizing the Internet (Heil & Nichols, 2014). Further, one study indicated that law enforcement became aware of over 25% of trafficking cases via Internet searchers, and of those, 55% involved youth (Heil & Nichols, 2014). In some cases, parents have been able to locate their children by searching for them in a similar manner and notifying law enforcement and social services for further action (Heil & Nichols, 2014).

4.3.3 Backpage and Craigslist

Backpage and Craigslist are online classified advertisements websites; employment opportunities, housing opportunities, items for sale, and personal pages are just some of the webpages included in the websites. Shutting down sections of Backpage and Craigslist fuels a highly contentious debate in the realm of sex trafficking and the Internet (Heil & Nichols, 2014; Nichols, 2016). Specifically, some anti-trafficking groups advocate for the censorship and removal of webpages that offer escort and adult services, arguing that pages with these types of ads are responsible for a subset of trafficked individuals; the exact number of cases, however, is not clear (Heil & Nichols, 2014; Nichols, 2016). While some counter that such censorship is

problematic due to infringement of individual freedoms, much of the opposition comes from individuals who also want to end human trafficking, but are cognizant that eliminating these sections of website may not lead to the desired outcome (Heil & Nichols, 2014; Nichols, 2016).

Heil and Nichols (2014) note that while many anti-trafficking advocates applauded the 2010 shutdown of Craigslist's adult services section, this measure merely caused a relocation of these ads to other websites (Heil & Nichols, 2014; Nichols, 2016). Further, it made it more challenging for law enforcement using these sites to locate individuals who were identified as trafficked (Heil & Nichols, 2014). These actions are not an enduring or even desirable solution to the Internet's facilitation of sexual exploitation; instead, they result in a kind of "negative effect of criminal displacement" to "low-profile" social networking and media, and new websites (Heil & Nichols, 2014). Displacement theory posits that as law enforcement attempts preventative initiatives, crime is simply relocated to another "place, time, target, offense, tactic, or offender" (Heil & Nichols, 2014, p. 4). Perhaps then, these shutdowns hinder the identification of trafficked youth.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY OF DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

Domestic minor sex trafficking is a significant public health problem with immediate and long-term considerations for all parties involved. In the United States, the legal framework for understanding these cases is based on the TVPA of 2000, which defines sex trafficking as “a commercial sex act [that] is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (“Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000,” 2000).

Based on this definition, an individual who is under the age of 18 is a victim of sex trafficking regardless of their agency or decision making to engage in commercial sex acts. As such, there has, at times, been a dissonance with the legal definition of domestic minor sex trafficking, youths’ self-identification as victims, and youths’ identification of the third parties involved as exploitative (Lutnick, 2016; Marcus et al., 2014). Further, there is no consensus on the number of youth involved in sex trafficking or at risk of becoming involved in sex trafficking (Clayton et al., 2013).

While youth of all races and ethnicities, genders, sexualities, and classes are represented in sex trafficking, a number of risk factors are associated with this issue (Lutnick, 2016; Schwarz & Britton, 2015). While the average age that youth become involved is not agreed on, the

literature suggests that those who enter under the age of 15 face worse outcomes compared to those who enter at 15 years or above (Lutnick, 2016). Additionally, cisgender girls tend to have an earlier age of entry compared to cisgender boys and transgender girls (Lutnick, 2016).

Though cisgender girls are most frequently represented in the literature, transgender girls and cisgender boys are also involved in trading sex; literature on transgender boys is largely absent (Lutnick, 2016). Among runaway or homeless youth, research has found that 50% or more of those who trade sex were boys, men, or transgender girls (Clayton et al., 2013). Youth homelessness is a significant source of risk associated with trading sex, and LGBTQ+ youth tend to be disproportionately represented in this subpopulation (Clayton et al., 2013; Schwarz & Britton, 2015). LGBTQ+ youth may face housing instability and an inability to meet basic needs which lead them to engage in trading sex for their survival (Clayton et al., 2013; Lutnick, 2016; Schwarz & Britton, 2015). Transgender youth, in particular, may face unique challenges in accessing resources such as shelters and group homes (Clayton et al., 2013).

Additionally, the literature suggests that certain races and ethnicities may be at higher risk of becoming involved in sex trafficking; if all races were equally represented, then the distribution of survivors would parallel the general U.S. population (Nichols, 2016). However, Black, Latinx, and Native American individuals are represented at higher proportions among survivors of sex trafficking relative to the general population (Butler, 2015b; Nichols, 2016). Nichols (2016) proposes that this may be due to these groups' increased social marginalization leading to factors such as poor economic opportunity and increased involvement in welfare services. Bulter (2015) has also suggested using a critical race feminist perspective to explore systems of oppression which marginalize girls and women of color.

Youth with intellectual disabilities are also at greater risk of domestic minor sex trafficking (Nichols, 2016). According to the APA, intellectual disability is defined as having an IQ score of 70 or below, beginning before 18 years of age, and poor adaptive functioning (Root et al., 2017). Youth with intellectual disabilities may not be as aware of their right to decline sex and sexual exploitation (Nichols, 2016).

Finally, youths living in household poverty may be at an increased risk due to pervasive economic stress (Diaz et al., 2014; Duger, 2015; Twill et al., 2010). In times of economic burden, trading sex may be seen as a way to alleviate some of these economic pressures, become financially independent, survive on a daily basis, and fund behavioral habits. Adverse life circumstances, which may be associated with poverty, put youth at further risk (Diaz et al., 2014; Hammond & McGlone, 2014; McClain & Garrity, 2011). Adverse circumstances that put youth at high risk include, but are not limited to, history of physical abuse, sexual abuse, violent household, neglect, and involvement in the child welfare system. Among high risk youth, one study found 70% had stayed in a group home, 61% had been in state custody, and 83% had been physically harmed by a caregiver (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014).

A number of different third-party characters are involved in youths' experiences trading sex. While there is a popular narrative of trafficker/pimp that pervades the literature and media, various individuals are involved who may not fit into this construct (Chaffee & English, 2015; Lutnick, 2016). Youths' peer networks, or friends, are often involved in introducing an individual to sex trade and their continued participation (Tyler & Johnson, 2006). Marcus et al. (2014) found that peer initiation by a friend accounted for almost 50% of youths' introduction to sex work. Parents, guardians, and other family members have often been responsible for domestic minor sex trafficking, particularly as a means of economic support (Hornor, 2015). In

Kentucky, family members accounted for 62% of youths' traffickers (Lutnick, 2016). Furthermore, Lutnick (2016) found that besides peers, intimate partners are the most common form of individuals involved in perpetration. Of U.S. women who have been sexually exploited, 28% reported a having had a past relationship with their trafficker (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014).

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE INTERNET

Though the history of the Internet spans as far back as the 1950s, it became democratized through the commercialization of civilian networks in the late 1980s and integrated into professional and personal use around the globe in the 1990s (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). The advent of the Internet has been linked to new avenues to facilitating sexual exploitation (Clayton et al., 2013). Mediums such as MySpace, Facebook, Craigslist, and Backpage have been used to facilitate commercial sex (Nichols, 2016). These websites are generally accessed by the Surface Web, or indexed, searchable items that can be found via search engines (Sui et al., 2015). In contrast, the Deep Web is comprised of non-indexed items that cannot be found via search engines (Harrison et al., 2016). It is not possible to know the exact size of the Deep Web, as the items contained are non-indexed; however, estimates suggest that it is at least 500 times larger than the Surface Web (Sui et al., 2015).

The Dark Web is a subset of the Deep Web that contains deliberately non-indexed and hidden items (Sui et al., 2015). To access the Dark Web, individuals must use specific software, such as TOR, which ensure users' anonymity. The materials on the Dark Web are intentionally concealed and have been linked to illicit activities such as drug trade, firearms trade, and sexual

exploitation (Sui et al., 2015). Because of the challenges to studying such an anonymous and veiled network, this online tool for human trafficking was not the focus of this essay.

However, the Internet has also been used as a way to hinder domestic minor sex trafficking (Heil & Nichols, 2014). One estimate suggests that law enforcement became aware of over 25% of trafficking cases via Internet searches, and 55% of those cases involved youth (Heil & Nichols, 2014). Parents have also been able to locate their children by conducting similar searches and seeking further action with the support of law enforcement and social services (Heil & Nichols, 2014). Of note, these cases were likely indexed on the Surface Web, as they were found through a search; however, the literature does not specifically specify whether or not this was the case.

5.3 PUBLIC HEALTH FRAMEWORKS

Domestic minor sex trafficking is of particular relevance to public health because its survivors face a number of serious physical and mental health outcomes (Institute of Medicine, 2014). Youth may experience rape, sexual assault, physical abuse, unwanted or forced pregnancies or abortions, exposure to STIs, depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse, suicidality, homicide, among other outcomes (Deshpande & Nour, 2013). These health outcomes have immediate and long-term health implications related to acute and chronic conditions, social integration, and access to resources.

The Life Course Theory is an interdisciplinary perspective rooted in biology, neuroscience, developmental psychology, genomics, sociology, and ecological studies (Shonkoff et al., 2012). It posits that early childhood adversity and chronic stress can have lasting effects

well into later life (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Taken together with the literature on health outcomes and risk factors, the Life Course Theory suggests that DMST has significant public health implications.

One might also consider the work done by scholars who have incorporated the macro-level role of neoliberalism coupled with the micro-level analysis of everyday life to understand the exploitation of humans on a daily basis (Mendel & Sharapov, 2016). These authors argue that a macro-level approach must be taken in order to truly recognize the “context in which exploitation...[occurs and the] normalisation of exploitative labour practices” (Mendel & Sharapov, 2016, p. 666). Consumers readily rely on goods and services for the banalities of everyday life that have been produced, in some way, through exploitative labor (Mendel & Sharapov, 2016). The high degree to which the dependency on these practices has permeated society has culminated in a demand for exploitation, including sexual exploitation (Mendel & Sharapov, 2016).

A good—bad binary has been created such that some forms of sexual expression, which may be propagated through technologies, are acceptable while other are not (Mendel & Sharapov, 2016). These views often work counterintuitively to combat exploitation, and they miss the opportunity to implement a harm reduction approach for those relying on sex work for economic security (Mendel & Sharapov, 2016). The online networks which many have come to fear can, instead, be used for “organization and action” (Mendel & Sharapov, 2016, p. 679). Online mediums can be used to connect youth to resources that allow them to get assistance when needed and make the best decisions within their set of circumstances.

A recent approach to interventions for minors involved in domestic sex trafficking is based upon the harm reduction approach (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). The harm reduction approach

is primarily known for its application in preventing the spread of HIV via injection drug use (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). However, it has also been successfully applied in a variety of other circumstances including (1) decreasing syphilis infection and unprotected sex with clients in the context of a high drug-use area and adult female sex workers (Zhang et al., 2014) and (2) increasing health service accessibility for youth engaging in drug use (Merkinaitė, Grund, & Frimpong, 2010).

Based upon various successful outcomes using the harm reduction model, Hickle and Hallett (2016) consider applying the same principles to children who have been sexually exploited. Youth who have experienced sexual exploitation are often averse to taking advantage of services for reasons similar to why youth are unwilling to stop drug use (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). Youth surrounded by peers engaging in similar behavior, and they may not be consciously considering the health ramifications (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). Further, they may consider it to be the norm or a necessary and temporary situation for supporting themselves which they can leave at any time (Hickle & Hallett, 2016).

Rather than shaming or reprimanding youth for engaging in survival sex, the harm reduction approach emphasizes that these actions were necessary to meet basic needs and survive on a day-to-day basis (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). Further, service providers interacting with youth should tailor approaches to each individual, offer opportunities for education and employment, and mitigate health risks whenever possible, even if youth cannot immediately leave their circumstance (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). By connecting young people through peer support groups, individuals in harmful situations may come to see that their experiences have long-term physical, mental, and social effects through a human rights-centered approach. These positive interactions are thought to offer sexually exploited youth a new lens through which to see

themselves and promote healthy behaviors so they can better engage in other support services (Hickle & Hallett, 2016). Furthermore, these peer groups provide a social and emotional support system that build self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Because of the power this grants the individual, it is a more sustainable approach; rather than “saving” youth each time they engage in a commercial sex act, they are given the tools to get the support of peers and health professionals (Hickle & Hallett, 2016).

5.4 LIMITATIONS

This essay has a number of limitations. One of the main limitations is that no new data have been provided by the author by way of qualitative or quantitative research methods. To truly understand the complexities of this topic, it is of utmost importance to include the voices of those involved, particularly, the youth. While including the perspective of stakeholders is certainly necessary to understand their roles, it is the youth themselves who are best able to understand and articulate their lived experiences, and to express their needs, motivations, and challenges better than anyone else.

All of the data cited have been provided by others and synthesized with the intention of creating a more holistic understanding of this extremely complex issue. Further, the literature on this topic is fairly scarce, often conflicting, and sometimes based on methodologically unsound practices. The abundance of grey literature in conjunction with the role of the media in sensationalizing the lived experiences of individuals has been a challenge in this field. Only documents published in English has been reviewed for this essay.

5.5 FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Domestic minor sex trafficking is not comprised of a homogeneous or predictable set of circumstances. As a result, this essay may have raised more questions than answers. Based on the lack of standardized and rigorous methodology, there is a clear need for more thorough research. In particular, there is a lack of research regarding the experiences and perspectives of transgender boys (Lutnick, 2016). This is not to say that the extreme cases of sex trafficking that are highly publicized and circulated are fabricated; however, the over generalizations which have been made do not lead to enacting relevant, sustainable practices. Instead, future research must rely on a community based participatory research approach that incorporates the population in the research at each step of the way.

A CBPR approach rooted in equity, empowerment, and sustainability that seeks to incorporate communities in every part of the research process (Hacker, 2013). The CBPR approach is the gold standard of community engagement, but it is by no means an automatic or easily established outcome (Hacker, 2013). Establishing trust is a time-consuming process requiring continuous effort, transparency, and respect (Hacker, 2013). Youth involved in sex trading, whether they identify as DMST victims or not, ought to be involved in formulating research questions, collecting data, analyzing data, and disseminating the results of these findings. Doing so will create a space for youth to express their own narratives in ways that are relevant to their lived experiences. Further, such an approach will lead to more meaningful research insofar as the methods used will be specifically chosen with the intricacies and challenges of youths' lives at the forefront. There will be less of a power dynamic inherent in the researcher—subject relationship as the youth are the researchers.

Overwhelmingly, the narratives provided in the previous sections are heavily rooted in a lack of viable economic opportunities. These opportunities may be even more limited for some youths depending on the various systems of oppression to which they are subjected due to their interwoven identities. To address youths' needs for economic stability as the foundation to ensuring basic conditions, there must be greater opportunity for them to have access to living wages and secure, affordable housing. Further, opportunities should stem from the actual needs of the youth as articulated by them. Again, the individuals involved in these circumstances are the ones who best understand their situations.

In conclusion, there is a need for rigorous research rooted in a CBPR approach. Doing so will give voice to the heterogeneous youth and create more accurate, holistic understandings of these situations. As researchers, service providers, and community members it is not our job to project our biases onto the experiences of youth or try to extrapolate their needs from our limited knowledge. Interactions with youth must come from a place of deep respect rather than paternalism, and a harm reduction approach will be beneficial in mitigating the risks and negative health outcomes youth are exposed to. Youth who are engaging in commercial sex may be doing so because of a lack of economic stability and the need to survive on a daily basis. Efforts to provide youth with other forms of income generation should be created from the perspectives of youth. These approaches to future work are challenging, time consuming, and may not show the immediate results that many would hope to see. However, the youth in these situations are not just headlines or statistics; they deserve a long-term commitment that leads to self-efficacy and enduring outcomes.

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