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CHALLENGES FOR MALE THERAPISTS WORKING WITH COMMERCIALY AND SEXUALLY EXPLOITED FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

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CHALLENGES FOR MALE THERAPISTS WORKING WITH COMMERCIALY
AND SEXUALLY EXPLOITED FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
John Tito Caballero
June 2018

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AND SEXUALLY EXPLOITED FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The commercial and sexual exploitation of children has become a global multi-billion dollar industry over the past several decades. Throughout history, therapists from various backgrounds have not only advocated against child trafficking but also provided therapeutic services to victims of such an inhuman crime—most of whom are female adolescents. Compared to their female counterparts, male therapists have been assigned CSEC cases involving female clients in excessively lower ratios. Researchers, however, have not fully captured what has prevented the female CSEC population from drawing interests from male counselors. This study explored potential reluctance in male therapists with regard to working with female CSEC clients. Under the qualitative research paradigm, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight male therapists in Southern California. Results from the thematic analysis of the interview data demonstrated that male counselors are reluctant to work on a one-on-one basis with female CSEC clients due to (1) fear of sexual accusations and (2) lack of training. However, results also revealed that support from female colleagues can help dissipate the heavy clouds of fear associated with sexual allegations. Implications for social work and human service agencies were discussed.

Keywords: male counselor, commercially and sexually exploited children, social work, colleague support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

The World Health Organization (2016) stated that the global issue of Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of children (CSEC) has reached 151 countries, with females being the majority of victims. With 33 percent of the CSEC population being children, this issue has become more and more prevalent in our society. Globally, 72 percent of sex traffickers are males as opposed to 28 percent of females (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). Many female victims who have had their negative interactions with a male perpetrator shape their views of men in general, which through research, has shown to be negative. Kristensen and Lau (2007) stated symptoms of sexually abused females manifest themselves both on a psychological level and in relationship disturbances later in life. These forms of abuse (verbal, physical, and sexual) received by adolescent females can negatively impact therapeutic alliances with males in the social work profession.

Evidence suggests that given an abused client's core beliefs (characterized by hostility towards others and difficulty forming positive social attachments) there may be reluctance by the victim to enter into a trusting therapeutic relationship with the worker (Stovall & Cloitre, 2006). This therapeutic issue has both micro and macro implications within the field of social work. From a micro perspective, the problem of transference from female clients

can pose a challenge for male workers. Courtois (2001) stated that the worker may be perceived as a type of replacement for other untrustworthy and abusive authority figures to be feared, tested, disregarded and also sexualized.

Generally speaking, research has shown that clinicians in these settings often do not feel adequately equipped to be helpful to sexual abuse survivors (Binder & McNeil, 2007). Consequently, male workers could be reluctant to work with female CSEC children, thus missing opportunities to model appropriate male professional relationships and boundaries with female clients.

From a macro level, females account for 83.3 percent of the Social Work field, as opposed to 16 percent of males (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Statistically, this gender disparity already exposed CSEC victims to a greater probability to be assigned to female counselors. Most of the clients who are required to seek clinical services are survivors of childhood trauma (Bride, 2004). With female adolescents making up the majority of those who have been sexually exploited, this presents a difficulty regarding male social workers in the helping process. This is especially important to address in our field, given that past research has shown that the majority of sexual exploitation come by way of male perpetrators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research study was to explore potential challenges associated with male counselors' reluctance in working with female adolescents of the CSEC population. Questions have been raised regarding male workers'

suitability to work with vulnerable groups of children (Galley, 2014). Compared to their female counterparts, male therapists have been assigned CSEC cases involving female clients in excessively lower ratios. The literature, however, has not fully captured what has prevented the female CSEC population from drawing interests from male counselors. The gender imbalance within the social work profession creates a lack of direct male influence in the field, and may perpetuate female CSEC victims' generalized stereotypes of males to be untrusting, insensitive, and fearmongering orchestrators.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The need to conduct the study arose from the continuing lucrative exploitation of female adolescents across the globe. Additionally, the social work field has been at the forefront of combating sexual exploitation of children through a variety of methods such as grassroots efforts, empowerment and social advocacy, research, and therapeutic interventions. However, the lack of male influence in social work (Fischl, 2013), coupled with female adolescents making up the majority of the CSEC victims, creates a need to understand why more males do not directly work with adolescent female CSEC victims. The literature has failed to adequately explain the lack of male involvement in the delivery of direct therapeutic services to such a vulnerable group of clients. This research, therefore, sought to extend the literature on gender and service delivery by attempting to answer the following set of questions: To what extent are male therapists reluctant to the female CSEC population? What common challenges

do male therapists face that preclude them from working directly with the female CSEC clients? How can male counselors become more involved in the therapeutic process with female CSEC victims? The results of this study will help social work agencies to better serve the CSEC population.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter consists of exploring past research that is most relevant to the current topic of male workers challenges of working with adolescent females of the commercially and sexually exploited. The subsections will include research behind male worker reluctance to work with adolescent female CSEC victims, and the common issues male workers face with the female CSEC population. The final subsection will examine gender impacting therapeutic outcomes and issues of client transference towards male workers in the therapeutic relationship, as both are relevant to this population.

Male Reluctance Working with Adolescent Commercially and Sexually Exploited Females

The U.S. Department of State (2005) reported that among the children who had been commercially and sexually exploited (CSEC), 80% were females. Social workers have played an essential role in advocating for this vulnerable population through providing supportive services and treatment. Yet, males continue to be the minority in the social work field (Warde, 2009). This gender disparity in the field can leave male workers unwilling to engage in working with sexually exploited adolescent females. Males lacking experience working CSEC youth, gender stereotypes and possible incidences of client transference towards

male workers are found to be barriers male workers face in working with females of the CSEC population.

Lack of Male Experience

One of the major challenges males face in the social work field and may contribute to a reluctance working with females of the CSEC population is a general lack of field experience. Domestically, females make up 79% of the membership of the National Association of Social Workers [NASW] and an estimated 62% of females representing clients served in the field (NASW, 2007). This gives a picture of current gender disparities in our field and also among the clients we serve. This lack of males in a female-dominated field can add extra demands on males to promote positive role modeling behaviors. Globally, the majority of perpetrators of sexual exploitation of children have come by way of males (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2006). Additionally, females who have been abused have experienced it by way of their fathers, partners and other males in their lives (Lucio & Dixon, 2008). Further research in gender issues regarding client-clinician relationships have found that adolescent females felt comfortable with disclosing general needs and services to male workers but felt reluctant to share more sensitive and personal information with them (Lucio & Dixon, 2008). Gender disparities in the field, stressors of modeling appropriate behavior and societal trends of sexual exploitation by males towards female adolescents can be implications for male workers to actively engage with adolescent females of the CSEC population.

One of the more serious issues involving the therapeutic relationship emotional and physical boundaries.

Boundary Issues

Emotional and physical boundaries displayed by both female clients and male workers can impede the therapeutic relationship. Studies in the past decades have looked at the participant (client) factors that may impact the development and maintenance of the client-worker alliance (Bachelor, Gisele, Laverdiere & Gamache, 2010). There has been some focus in past on the factors that can impede positive therapeutic relationships. Yet, the majority of research looking directly at worker's gender as a factor produced no solid conclusions (Lucio & Dixon, 2008). This is largely due to a lack of research on the subject. Malawista (2004) stated that the therapeutic relationship might lead clients to experience "rescue fantasies" where the worker is saving them from their abuse and becoming "rescuer" instead of worker. This type of skewed perception by growing adolescent clients can lead to possible emotional and physical boundary issues towards the male worker. The anxiety of such a situation happening in a therapeutic setting and having ethical and legal ramifications can add to the challenges that male social workers face in their reluctance working with the females of the CSEC population.

Transference

Gillingham (2006) stated that the position of male workers directly working with children's welfare is controversial given that males are the majority of

individuals who commit assaults against women and children. This is a lingering and generalized issue in the engagement of both the sexually abused adolescent and the male worker. Adolescent females who have received repeated sexual abuse could have lasting numerous physical, emotional, and psychological scars. One of the more common scars seen in abuse survivors is that of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Twill, Green & Traylor, 2010). This disorder is characterized by exposure to a traumatic event and brings on feelings of fear and hopelessness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Further, females who have been sexually exploited usually display higher levels of distrust towards others and lower levels of self-restraint (Twill et al., 2010). Twill and colleagues (2010) go on to state that girls with PTSD may generally not trust others, making it harder for anyone to develop healthy, lasting relationships with them. Such mistrust and regression can lead clients to feel forms of transference instead of more formal or helping relationship emotions.

Although there seem to be chasms in the literature regarding female transference towards male workers, types of transference have been found to take many forms in abused patients. One form is that of *negative transference*. Meissner (2001) pointed out that *negative transference* can leave clients seeing the therapeutic relationship in terms of power and victimization, with the worker (or therapist) is seen as the dominant object and they (client) are defending themselves (psychologically) against fears of vulnerability and weakness. Although other forms of transference can impede the therapeutic relationship as

well, such as *physical* (or erotic) transference, *negative* transference can possibly have a deeper impact on both worker and client given that adolescents of the CSEC population have experienced lasting emotions of powerlessness towards males in their repeated abuse. These types of deeply rooted emotions can be wrongly-directed towards male workers and leave them disinclined to work with this population due to this possibly occurring in the therapeutic setting.

Studies Focusing on Male Challenges with Commercially and Sexually Exploited Adolescents

Although there have been many critical studies regarding gender obstacles in the field of social work, it is evident there are many gaps in the literature regarding research concerning male barriers and reluctances when working with female adolescents who have been commercially and sexually exploited. Bachelor et al. (2010) pointed out that, although past research has found relationships between clients' attachment to worker (or therapist) and the characteristics of the alliance, studies regarding overall quality of the therapeutic relationship have not been thoroughly examined. Lucio and Dixon (2008) went further stating a general lack of research on the effects of relationships between workers' gender and clients has either been inconclusive or unconvincing. Although important, this scarce literature regarding clients' possible reluctance to work with male workers does not address male workers' self-perceived challenges in their avoidance of working with sexually exploited female

adolescents. However, it is clear from the limited research that gender may play a role in the therapeutic relationship between female clients and male workers.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Two historical theories that are used to conceptualize the ideas in the current study are the concepts of gender impacting therapeutic outcomes and issues of client transference towards male worker in the therapeutic setting.

Numerous studies have laid a theoretical framework to understanding the effects of gender on the therapeutic relationship. Research has found that male therapists are more direct in communication style, often see the therapeutic relationship as problem-focused and moreover judgmental whereas female clinicians are seen as more uplifting, caring and easier to talk to (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). Johnson and Caldwell (2011) also stated that female workers form more effective relationships with clients (regardless of client gender) than do their male counterparts. Johnson and colleagues (2011) further argued that, generally, male workers see challenges in the therapeutic relationship as due to client factors, not their own.

This theory of gender differences impacting the outcomes and strengths of the therapeutic relationship has been extensively researched and plays a key role in the reasoning behind the current study's conceptualization. If general findings are that male workers do express challenges working with adolescent females of the CSEC population, feelings of reluctance in male workers will be evident in verbal responses regarding different aspects of working with this

population. Such findings may only compound reluctance of female clients of the CSEC population to work with males due to the majority of abuse towards them coming by way of males. This issue of gender effects gives a better understanding as to the range of challenges male workers would face when working with female adolescent CSEC victims.

Another common theory regarding challenges faced by males working with commercially and sexually abused females are issues of transference in the therapeutic relationship. Meissner (2001) explained that the theory of transference has been widened in recent years to include feelings of both erotic and aggressive reactions in therapy. Erotic transference are intense feelings displayed by the client that can bring the male worker into forms of acting out (by client) and reflect a loss of distinguishing reality from fantasies in therapeutic settings (Meissner, 2001). Further, *aggressive* transference can be interpreted by clients as power displayed by the male worker and persecution by the client themselves (Meissner, 2001).

Both types of transference can be seen in sexually victimized adolescent females and can impede the therapeutic relationship on multiple levels. Transference may have more negative effects in therapy when the worker is male and whose client is a female victim of past male sexual abuse. This theory of transference happening in a working therapeutic relationship can leave male workers fearful and can possibly contribute to their reluctance working with female CSEC youth.

Summary

This section explored the literature challenges male workers encountered toward working with female adolescents of the commercially and sexually exploited population. Lack of experience and boundary issues are two persistent themes identified in the existing literature that attempted to explain the lack of male workers within the CSEC client community. This section also identified gender differences and transference as two prominent theoretical perspectives pertaining to the purpose of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter covers specific details on how the study was conducted by the researcher. The sections in this chapter are study design, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

Study Design

This study was conducted under the qualitative research paradigm. In particular, this is an exploratory endeavor to discover possible motives of male workers which have not been adequately addressed in previous scholarly efforts. The qualitative nature of the study allowed to have a deeper understanding of the feelings and experiences of the participants. These were expressed during the interview process via responses to open-ended questions and non-verbal communication cues.

Sampling

This study agglomerated a sample of eight therapists in Southern California. At the time of this study, all participants worked in a residential treatment program for confirmed female CSEC victims. The selected participants worked at different levels within the social service agency, including but not

limited to residential counselor, campus supervisor, program manager, and senior director of residential services. All respondent were male. Demographic characteristics of the study participants are described in full under the results section.

Data Collection and Instruments

A questionnaire was developed to guide the semi-structured interview process. 11 open-ended questions were formulated to elicit topic-focused responses from each participant (please see APPENDIX A for more detailed information about the study questions). The interview guide focused on three main areas of the topic. The first area dealt with the overall level of comfort working with female CSEC clients. The second one identified challenges associated with male therapists' reluctance to work with CSEC clients. Finally, the interview guide looked for ways social service agencies could help male workers overcome their reluctances and have a more positive and direct impact in female CSEC victims lives.

Procedures

Data collection for this research study occurred between February and March 2018. The researcher gathered the data by first speaking to each participant prior in the organization to ensure their involvement. The researcher went up to potential participants in the agency and verbally asked them to participate in a qualitative research project involving the topic of males working

with adolescent females with CSEC backgrounds. Once their participation was ensured, the researcher set up specific times to meet with each of them in their or other office spaces in the agency to conduct the personal interviews. The researcher gathered responses from the participants through audio recording and hand-written notes. Each interview lasted for approximately 25 to 35 minutes. The researcher greeted the participants upon their arrival for the interview and assigned them the demographic form to read and fill out. Each participant was given a \$10 Starbucks gift card as an incentive for their participation in the study. After briefly meeting with each participant, the topic of confidentiality was discussed and consent forms were collected (APPENDIX B).

Protection of Human Subjects

The interview was conducted behind closed door in a private office. The researcher kept confidential from individuals outside of the study. Participants' identifiable information was not included in this research findings in this study. Each participant were given an informed consent form to read and sign as well as a consent form for the interview to be audio recorded. Information gathered in the study was transcribed from audio-recordings to word form and saved on an encrypted USB drive. Both audio recorder and USB flash drive were securely locked in filing desk. One year following the completion of the study, the audio recordings will be securely destroyed.

Data Analysis

The data collected from this qualitative research were transcribed and then organized in themes. In other words, thematic analysis allowed to assemble responses that convey a broader message on reluctance from the study participants. Hence, the themes were inherently grounded in the data gathered from the respondents. Such approach is consistent with what methodology called “grounded theory.”

Summary

This chapter provided methodologically sought insight on the overall purpose of the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data collected from an all-male sample of 8 participants. The qualitative research paradigm described in this section was congruent with the purpose of this study and its questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter starts with a full description of the demographic characteristics of the study participants and then details the major themes that emerged from the interview data. These are: influence of gender on the therapeutic relationship, lack of essential training, colleague support, and fear of sexual allegations. Each of these is described below.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics, including age, ethnicity, marital status and years of experience, are presented in Table 1 below. As displayed in Table 1, the sample consisted of 8 male participants, all of whom were male with ages ranging from 28 to 41. From a racial-ethnic perspective, two participants were Asian/Pacific Islander (25 percent), Caucasian (25 percent), African American (37.5 percent), and Hispanic or Latino (12.5 percent). Participants' marital status was: married (37.5 percent) and single (62.5 percent). Half of the participants have worked at the agency for less than five years, while the remaining half have had over five years of experience at the agency level.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Demographic	N	(%)
Age		
23-34	4	50.0
34-44	4	50.0
Marital Status		
Yes	6	75.0
No	2	25.0
Ethnicity		
African American	3	37.5
Asian	2	25.0
Caucasian	2	25.0
Hispanic or Latino	1	12.5
Years Worked at Agency		
0-4 Years	4	50.0
5-9 Years	3	37.5
10+ Years	1	12.5

Presentation of the Findings

Results from the thematic analysis of the interview data generated five themes. The first one indicates that gender influences therapeutic relationships as male counselors were reluctant to work on a one-on-one basis with female CSEC clients. Two other themes are related to fear of sexual accusations and lack of training. However, results also revealed that support from female colleagues can help dissipate the heavy clouds of fear associated with sexual allegations among male clinicians. Each of these themes is described below.

Gender Impacting Therapeutic Relationship

Regarding how gender may impact workers' therapeutic relationship with this population, male participants were asked, historically, mostly females work directly with female adolescent victims of the CSEC population. When asked to opine on this matter, all of the study participants (100 percent) believed that their female colleagues are better suited for meeting the therapeutic needs of the CSEC populations. In other words, male therapists would have a trust issue in dealing with such clients. Indeed, the participants stated:

They (CSEC clients) might open up more to a female because they may feel females understand their female problems more (Participant 2)....They (CSEC adolescent females) may feel more comfortable with a female versus a male because they may have been pimped out and stuff like that by males (Participant 3).... I'd assume a lot of the CSEC population wouldn't trust males so I'd say they (female therapists or workers) have a better chance of working with them (CSEC adolescents) (Participant 4).... Most of the trauma of CSEC girls has come by way of males so that could be triggering to them (to have a male therapist or worker) (Participant 5)

There's a general belief that males are typically the perpetrator and I think there's a big desire for males to not trigger a client again if she believes

males are the perpetrator, allegedly (Participant 6)....I think it's a trust issue. They been exploited by men for the most part so I think it's just overall harder for them (CSEC clients) to trust men. I think they need more male therapists in their lives though, to show them (CSEC clients) that there are still some males that aren't like that (Participant 8).

Lack of Essential Training

Continuing education is essential for workers to remain competent in their respective fields. With regard to male workers feeling like that had enough training to work adequately with the female CSEC adolescents, there were reports that participants receive little to no training in their current positions. In fact, some participants lamented this lack of training as follows:

I had no experience at all coming into this position (Participant 8).....I have an AA in Criminal Justice but aside from that, I didn't have any knowledge at all as far as working with CSEC adolescents (Participant 3).

Others took a more proactive approach by proposing ways mental health agencies can better prepare males to work with sexually abused female clients. There was a general response by all participants that consistent and updated training on the CSEC population would be beneficial. Below is how participants described the need for continuing education:

Just more trainings involving CSEC risk factors and on a consistent basis (Participant 3)... I think just more trainings for males to teach them positive therapeutic male bonds and understanding firm boundaries (Participant 2)... They (mental health agencies) could have specific training geared towards males to give them insight on having better boundaries with the female clients and always being seen (Participant 1)..... More up-to-date Trauma-Informed training to understand how their (CSEC clients) trauma is related to their maladaptive behavior. I don't see any other way to prepare male staff to work with sexually abused female children (Participant 4).

Worry of Sexual Allegations

One of the main themes found in this research was the fear of sexual allegations from CSEC female clients. In fact, the study participants were asked during the personal interview a question regarding what they felt were possible disadvantages of working with adolescent females of the CSEC population. Almost all participants (75 percent) responded that the fear of CSEC clients making sexual allegations against them explains their reluctance to be in a one-on-one situation with such clients. Hence, worry about sexual accusations places them in a professionally uncomfortable situation. Participants conveyed such worry:

They (female counterparts) may see a male interacting with them (CSEC clients) and they might think something is going on there (socially) when there really isn't" (Participant 2).....There are numerous disadvantages. There's the risk of allegation being made towards you, which could lead to losing your job, having a criminal record and so on (Participant 4).... There's the danger of poor boundaries bringing on allegations or the child not understanding what the relationship really is. In an attempt to bond with the child, you can reinforce some of their beliefs and skewed understandings about males (Participant 6)...If you're a male, the CSEC girls may put you in a (sexual) light that can make you feel uncomfortable (Participant 8).

Colleague Support

Support from female colleagues emerged as one of the main findings in this research. Participants were first asked to rate their level of comfort from 1-10 (1 as the lowest, 10 as the highest) working with CSEC adolescents with a female colleague in close proximity. From the participants' answers, 87.5 percent of the male-only sample rated their level of comfort at an 8 or higher. In other words, there seemed to be an overall agreement of male workers feeling higher levels of comfort with a female colleague in close proximity. Here is how participants expressed this hypothetical feeling of comfort:

I definitely feel more comfortable with a female colleague around (Participant 2)... I would say a level of 8 or 9 for comfort. Having a female on the floor is huge for me as a male worker. You know, just knowing they have my back (Participant 6).... In that situation (having a female colleague around), I'm very comfortable so I'd say a 10 (Participant 8).... I would rate it at a 7. It's always good to have that extra pair of eyes on you but still anything could be said (Participant 4)...With a female colleague? I'd say an 8 for sure (Participant 7).

On the other side of that question, participants were asked their level of comfort working with the female CSEC population *without* a female colleague in close proximity. This question yielded significantly lower scores for comfort working with the CSEC clients from the participants. Again, everything has to do with worries about clients making false statements:

Like a 2 or a 1. It would be very low because you know, allegations could be made and I would be the only one on the floor with them (Participant 2).... That depends. I'm usually at a 10 but if it were in a small room and without another female around, I'd say maybe a 5 or 6 (Participant 5).

Summary

This chapter presented the four major themes that emerged from the study when looking at male worker challenges in their reluctance to work with commercially and sexually exploited adolescent females. This study used a qualitative approach as using open-ended, subject-based questions for the Researcher to have a better understanding of male's point of view working with CSEC adolescent females. Through analyzing transcription, this writer was able to identify four themes that act as challenges for males to work with CSEC adolescent females.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the results pulled from 8 qualitative individual interviews by male workers in a level-12 residential therapeutic setting who work in direct contact with adolescent females who have been commercially and sexually exploited. This chapter also discusses the study findings as pertains to (a) consistency with prior research, (b) implications for social work and criminal justice, (c) limitations, and (4) recommendations for future research. Finally, this section provides a formal conclusory statement about this research project.

Consistency with Prior Research

This study explored potential reluctance in male therapists with regard to working with female CSEC clients. Results from the thematic analysis of the interview data demonstrated that male counselors are reluctant to work on a one-on-one basis with female CSEC clients due to (1) fear of sexual accusations and (2) lack of training. However, results also revealed that support from female colleagues can help dissipate the heavy clouds of fear associated with sexual allegations.

These finding were consistent with Lucio and Dixons' (2008) findings of female clients having "*preconceived notions*" about gender affecting the level of

comfort of them expressing themselves with male workers (pg.63-64). It should be noted that this research extends Lucio and Dixon's 2008 study which interviewed female CSEC clients. By interviewing workers instead of clients, these findings make a contribution to the literature. The results of this study are also consistent with Galley's (2014) findings that male workers reported ongoing problems regarding lack of training in mental health placements and places of work and not feeling adequately prepared to work in a female-dominated field.

Elsewhere, participants expressed a higher level of comfort working with female adolescents of the CSEC population if their female colleagues support them by working close to them. In fact, participants argue that this is the best way to deter sexual allegations likely to be levied against them. To some extent, this theme is consistent with the work of Hamama (2012) which found that worker burnout was lower when they received more colleague and managerial support. However, the *female colleague support* theme is the most significant contribution of this research to the scholarship on the prison system in the US.

Implications for Social Work

The understanding that males may generally have lower levels of comfort working with the CSEC population is important for the social work profession. Study themes such as gender influence on the therapeutic relationship, lack of essential training, fear of sexual allegations, and colleague support represent areas the social work field has attempted to address at both micro and macro levels. Given that men historically are and continue to be the minority in the

social work field, it is vital that the challenges males face when working with female clients be addressed so that future male workers be better equipped to treat adolescent females in a more self-secure and impactful way.

More specifically, this research has implications for the field placement department in social work. In fact, field directors can use the study to guide potential interns toward more gender-appropriate placements. This, of course, is a short term solution to a problem that needs to be addressed on a broader scale, especially via the curriculum. Indeed, social work curriculum developers in social workers should do their best to address this gender gap in practice sooner rather than later. In other words, the social work discipline can use the study results develop and implement policies that integrate male student interns with updated curriculum and specific amount of hours set aside for males to interact with female clients. Ensuring that students receive the appropriate training to meet the needs of the CSEC female population should be of utmost importance. In the meantime, gender-appropriate placements may help the therapeutic process. This research also holds major implications for social service agencies. In fact, social service agencies can build on this research findings to provide adequate support to male workers via up-to-date training for them.

Limitations

This research study came with numerous limitations. The first identified limitation is the small sample of eight participants. First, given the small size of the study sample (8 participants), the overall findings cannot be legitimately

reflective of all male workers who serve the adolescent CSEC population within the social service field. In addition, this study only reflects the perspective of male workers in a small area of California. Another limitation is that the agency where the study was conducted itself only had roughly 20 percent of its hired staff as male. Although male participants seemed to be honest and true, their responses in levels of comfort may have been different had the agency been male-dominated. Due to these limitations, the study findings should be interpreted with caution.

Recommendations for Research

As previously stated, the population of the commercially and sexually exploited children has very little research to date. Most of the studies focus only on the risk factors and long term behavioral, cognitive and psychological effects when children are sexually abused over periods of time. There are obvious chasms in literature regarding CSEC adolescents in therapy treatment and even research looking at gender impacting the therapeutic relationship with this population. Future research should continue to look for the extent to which CSEC clients see gender as a key factor in therapeutic alliance. That is, it would be fascinating to explore if, in fact, CSEC clients themselves display reluctance at the prospect of having male therapists. Future study also need to work with relatively larger sample sizes, preferably collected from different areas of the country. Furthermore, researchers should use more robust methodologies in investigating reluctance among male workers.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research study was to explore male worker challenges in their reluctance to work with adolescent females of the commercially and sexually exploited population and how challenges could be addressed in the social work field. Data were collected from 8 males at a level-12 residential therapeutic setting. From the participants' qualitative responses, the study found numerous challenges that males have in their reluctance to work with this population, including maleness, lack of essential training, and worry of sexual allegations. However, colleague support was found to be the best approach toward addressing the challenges of sexual allegations. In other words, the current study findings support the idea of the need for female colleague support to help male workers feel more secure in working with the CSEC adolescent population. The results of the study are consistent with prior research and extend the scholarship on sexual exploitation of minors. Future research should continue to target ways to shed light on improving the lives of CSEC children and adolescents.

APPENDIX A
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Individual Interview Questions

Opening Question

1.) In what capacity in the agency have you worked with CSEC adolescents?

Comfortability Questions

2.) On a scale from 1 to 10, with one is the lowest point and ten as the highest, where would you rate your level of comfortability being around CSEC adolescents with a female colleague in close proximity?

3.) On a scale from 1 to 10 which one is the lowest point and 10 as the highest, where do you rate your level of comfortability being around CSEC adolescents *without* a female colleague in close proximity?

4.) On a scale from 1 to 10, where do you rate your level of comfortability being around a CSEC adolescent and she attempts to leave the facility without permission?

Experience Questions

5.) What are some advantages of working with young females of the CSEC population, if any?

6.) What are some disadvantages working with young females of the sea set population if any?

7.) How would you describe your preparedness prior to working with young female CSEC adolescent victims?

8.) How does your current position prepare you for working effectively with young female CSEC victim such as supervision, trainings or direct exposure?

9.) Historically, females have worked directly with adolescent females of the CSEC population, why do you think that is?

Optional/Contingent Question

10.) If not, what do you feel are some ways that mental health agencies can better prepare males to work with sexually abused female adolescent clients?

11.) What are some recommendations you would give future male professionals who will work with this same population?

Developed by John Caballero in collaboration with Prof. Rigaud Joseph

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics

1.) What is your current age? _____

2.) What is your ethnicity?

Caucasian ___ Hispanic or Latino ___ African American ___

Native American ___ Asian ___ Pacific Islander ___

Other: _____

3.) What is your marital Status?

Single ___ Married ___ Divorced ___

4.) How many years have you worked in mental health agency?

Less than 1 year ___ 1-3 years ___ 3-5 years ___ 5-10 years ___

10+ years ___

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