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RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIMIZATION

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IN THE MENTAL HEALTH FIELD

A Project

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Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

by

Kimberly Dawn Nichole Mena

June 2013

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Approved by:

-6-13 Date

Dr. Teresa Morris, Faculty Supervisor Social Work

Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, M.S.W. Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research project was to examine mental health workers' knowledge about sex trafficking, ability to assess for sex trafficking victimization and existence of education and training about sex trafficking in the social work field. Existing literature revealed that approximately 50,000 women and children are trafficked each year for commercial sex exploitation though this social problem is often not recognized as prevalent in the United States (Hepburn & Simon, 2010). The research project adopted the post positivist worldview in order to utilize in person interviews with eight licensed clinical social workers within two counties of Southern California. The interviews were analyzed using open coding, axial coding and selective coding in order to look at key categories that emerged and the links between these categories. The analysis of the study showed that participants were not educated on sex trafficking while obtaining their Master of Social Work degree and that training opportunities on sex trafficking victimization for social workers in the mental health field is still lacking. It was also found that risk assessment for sex trafficking and having a

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standardized risk assessment instrument would be beneficial. This information and other insights gained through the study revealed that there needs to be increased competency on the issue of sex trafficking in the social work profession. The impact of the study on micro and macro social work is that social workers need to assess for risk of sex trafficking victimization on all levels and fight for social justice and the dignity and worth of this population.

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I would like to thank all of the participants in the study for taking time to share their experiences and perceptions with me in order to help me further my own awareness on the subject and encourage my passion to aide a vulnerable population. I would also like to acknowledge my research advisor, Dr. Teresa Morris, for dedicating her time and expertise to help bring this project together. I also want to express my appreciation to my friends and family for always showing understanding and support. I finally want to give the deepest thanks to my husband, Kyle, for his undying commitment to helping me succeed in the obtainment of my Master of Social Work degree.

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CHAPTER ONE

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This chapter reviews the research focus of the study, which is risk assessment for sex trafficking victimization within the mental health field. It also reviews the selection and use of the post positivist paradigm as well as the literature on sex trafficking in the United States. The chapter explores how the study will add to the knowledge base in micro and macro social work practice. Finally, the chapter describes the ecological perspective, which is the theoretical orientation that the study is built on.

Research Focus

The research focus of this study is mental health workers' knowledge about sex trafficking, ability to assess for sex trafficking victimization and existence of education and training about sex trafficking. This study was tailored to licensed clinical social workers in the mental health field in order to see if they are aware of the magnitude of sex trafficking in the United States and how to assess for victimization.

Sex Trafficking is defined by The Trafficking Victim's Protection Act of 2000 as,

the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the 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. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, N.D.)

The counties that study participants were chosen from for this study live in a region of Southern California that has high trafficking victimization rates due to easy access to freeway systems, high unemployment rates, a substantial migrant population, access to open land areas and vacant properties as well as few resources dedicated to fighting human trafficking (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, N.D.).

Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

This study utilized the post positivist paradigm as the chosen world view. The post positivist paradigm assumes that there is an objective reality that holds truths for the participants in the study, but we can

never know that reality completely. Using this paradigm in the study, allowed the problem focus to serve as the starting point and then evolve as the researcher gathers data from the licensed clinical social workers within the mental health field (Morris, in press). These participants served as key players in understanding if sex trafficking is prioritized in the mental health arena as they have obtained a wealth of training through their years in school, years working towards their license, obtainment of their licensure and currently practice in the mental health field.

The reasoning for determining post positivism as the most appropriate world view, is that the study was mostly based on the pre-existing literature on sex trafficking, but was modified slightly through ⁱinteraction with study participants. As the study progressed, the literature review was added to and the interview questions evolved as the data received after each interview was analyzed immediately after completion to expand on the research focus (Morris, in press). Using a qualitative approach to interviewing the social workers in a naturalistic setting was seen as an important part of the study because it is the best way to discover things about the research focus

that the study participants and the researcher may not be aware of otherwise. This is important as post positivism looks at how no one empirically experiences everything in the world, so there is a need to find truth that empirically connecting data cannot begin to look at (Morris, 2006). In conducting the interviews in the participants' private practice, the researcher was also able to observe their naturalistic setting and how the participants interacted in it. The researcher was able to observe their style of therapy and expertise through what was seen in the environment, such as how the physical space of their practice was set up, the types of resources they had available and the tools for intervention that were visible that would have not been accounted for in a postivist study. Furthermore, the researcher was able to sit in the space where mental health consumers sit and get a sense of each participant's interaction style and in a sense feel as a consumer might.

Literature Review

The literature on sex trafficking within the United States shows the extent of sex trafficking in this

developed nation, the demographics for who are often victimized, the social work ethics that apply to this problem and what social workers can do on a macro and micro level when sex trafficking victimization is identified. This evidence was the reasoning for the study's focus on the knowledge base and practice of mental health social workers, as it is these professionals that can serve this vulnerable population. Social Problem

Sex trafficking is defined by The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 as "a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age" (Kotrla, 2010, p. 181). A commercial sex act is defined as "any sex act on account of which anything of value is given or received by any person" (Kotrla, 2010, p. 181).

Though sex trafficking, the largest subset of human trafficking, is a billion dollar business in the world today, this globally reaching social problem goes relatively unnoticed due to the covert nature of the enterprise (Marx, 2010). Furthermore, many fail to recognize that sex trafficking is a significant issue in

the United States, with more U.S. citizens falling victim to sex traffickers than foreign nationals (Kotrla, 2010).

Through a shrouded misunderstanding and misconception of the prevalence of sex trafficking in the United States, society accepts the commercial sex industry as a social problem in terms of morals and ethics. The focus is generally on prostitution, but many do not recognize that those engaging in prostitution often have no choice because they have been forced into it. Therefore, victims of sex trafficking are often labeled "criminals" rather than "victims" and the underlying issues of the social problem go unresolved (Kotrla, 2010).

Scope of Sex Trafficking in the United States

Due to the hidden nature of sex trafficking, it is difficult to concretely determine its prevalence, but there are many estimates. Around the world, there are 1.39 million victims of sex trafficking (Marx, 2010). The United States ranks amongst the top three nations for trafficking victims, with California, Nevada, and Texas being the top destinations (Marx, 2010). Often those that are trafficked are not brought in from other countries, but are found in areas close to sex trafficking hubs

(Kleemans, 2011). It is estimated that within the United States, 14,500 to 17,500 people are trafficked per year (McClain & Garrity, 2011). The CIA found that approximately 50,000 women and children are trafficked each year for commercial sex exploitation (Hepburn & Simon, 2010). Other experts suggest that there are around 100,000 sex trafficking victims under the age of 18, with up to 325,000 more children at risk for being victims in the United States (Kotrla, 2010).

Trafficking victims may be forced into prostitution, stripping, becoming mail order brides, sex tourism, pornography, etc. Some of this is conducted in public spaces, such as on the street, or in cover up service businesses, such as nail salons and massage parlors. Other times sex trafficking happens in private arenas, such as brothels being run out of residential homes (Department of Health and Human Services, N.D.). According to Immigration agents, approximately 10,000 women are being forced into sexual servitude in underground brothels in Los Angeles, California (Marx, 2010). Victims are also lured to commercial sex businesses by advertisements and flyers for employment or other opportunities. Sex trafficking also takes place

over internet sites, where sexual services and the actual victim are readily sold to the highest bidder (Kotrla, 2010).

Connection to Other Social Problems

Sex trafficking within the United States is connected to various other problems on both a macro and micro societal level. Victims of sex trafficking are more likely to have faced gender discrimination, a lack of socioeconomic and educational opportunity and family violence in their lives (Marx, 2010). Sex traffickers often find victims in areas with high poverty rates, areas with high amounts of drug use and low literacy rates. Victims are also likely to have a history of being physically and sexually abused (McClain & Garrity, 2010).

Homelessness is also connected to vulnerability for becoming a victim of sex trafficking. Every year 450,000 to 2.8 million minors find themselves homeless and susceptible to sex traffickers after they have run away or been kicked out of their homes (Kotrla, 2010). Homeless teens have a higher risk of becoming a victim of commercial sex exploitation because they are in need of shelter, food, and money (McClain & Garrity, 2010).

Sex traffickers seek out adolescents by looking for social problems that make them more vulnerable, rather than looking for a specific age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. Adolescents who face problems with family such as abuse in the home, isolation, and overall dysfunction are targeted. Also, adolescents that fail in school or have a history of criminal behaviors are more susceptible to becoming victims. Often girls are tricked into the commercial sex trade when families from other nations are promised marriage or economic upturn for their daughter if she comes to the United States (McClain & Garrity, 2010).

Other prevalent problems that stem from being a victim of sex trafficking include health risks and psychological harm. Victims face potential physical risks such as permanent physical injuries, such as brain injuries, vaginal injury, and broken bones (Department of Health and Human Services). Victims are often sedated with drugs and alcohol while held captive, so they often leave with substance addictions. Victims often contract sexually transmitted diseases and other diseases that are life threatening, such as hepatitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. Victims are likely to have post-traumatic

stress disorder, suicidal ideation, mood disorders, and hatred for others and themselves (Department of Health and Human Services).

Causes of the Problem

One cause of sex trafficking in the United States is directly related to supply and demand. There is a demand for commercial sex that society does not question due to desensitization, so inevitably traffickers exploit thousands of American minors and countless women in the commercial sex trade. Sex has been so normalized throughout American society through different forms of media, that adults buy into the industry and children are lured into it unwittingly (Kotrla, 2010). If there were no demand for commercial sexual services by "Johns" then there would be no sex trafficking for the traffickers to profit billions of dollars, while the victims make nothing (McClain & Garrity, 2010).

Falling in line with the supply and demand for commercial sex, the United States is a society that glorifies a "culture of tolerance" for sexual consumerism. Throughout different forms of media, such as music and television, women are portrayed as sexual objects (Kotrla, 2010). Furthermore, lyrics in songs

about "pimping" and shows such as *Pimp my Ride*, equate being a pimp to being stylish and cool. This view of what a pimp stands for helps keep those who buy into the notion from recognizing that prostitutes, who are often sex trafficking victims, are beaten, kept in deplorable conditions, demoralized and degraded (Kotrla, 2010). This "culture of tolerance" also helps cover up the fact that pimps starve, rape, threaten the victim and the victim's family, and shame them into compliance (Department of Health and Human Services, N.D.).

Who the Problem Affects

Sex trafficking victims are of all ethnicities, ages, and nationalities within the United States (McClain & Gerrity, 2010). However, 98 percent of those forced into the sex trade industry are girls and women (Hepburn & Simon, 2010). Research has found that 70 percent of women that are in prostitution were brought into the commercial sex industry before they reached 18. Children as young as five are subject to sexual exploitation, with the average age of children being brought into the industry being between 11 and 14 years old (Kotrla, 2010). With national-level data on human trafficking made available for the first time in 2009, it was discovered

that 83% of human trafficking cases were sex trafficking cases. Of the sex trafficking cases, 63% of the cases involved victims that were citizens of the United States and 32% involved minors (Kotrla, 2010).

Values and Social Justice

The societal value that prostitution is a moral or ethical dilemma adds to the misunderstanding of sexual exploitation. Victims of sex trafficking are also viewed as "offenders" even though they were forced into illegal activities, which helps substantiate the mistrust they have in society and often those that try to help them (Kotrla, 2010). With this view of the victims mixed with a lack of resources, juvenile victims are often held in detention centers, taken back to homes they ran away from, or put in facilities that are not properly secured. Victims are then more likely to run away again and be subject to victimization again (Kotrla, 2010). Victims of sexual trafficking also come into issues with the police.

Opposing political viewpoints may also have an impact on the social problem of sex trafficking. A conservative political viewpoint is most likely to present the victim as being responsible for themselves and the circumstances that got them into commercial sex

trafficking. A conservative viewpoint would fall in line with seeing prostitution as a moral dilemma and the victim as being an "offender." A conservative viewpoint would also suggest that regulating the commercial sex industry is not the government's role (Popple & Leighninger, 2011). A liberal viewpoint would see that the victims' environment contributes to how vulnerable they are to falling victim to sex traffickers. Liberals, therefore, would be more inclined to make changes to the environmental system and the commercial sex trade (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

The key social work values that pertain to sex trafficking victims are social justice and respect for the dignity and worth of the individual. It is surprising that In fighting for social justice, the social worker will work to educate the general population about the issue of sex trafficking, fight against the oppression they felt at the hands of their abusers and refer them to the services and resources they need (Hepworth, Rooney, Dewberry Rooney, Stron-Gottfried, & Larsen, 2010). Sex trafficking victims need an array of services, such as their basic needs, mental and physical health services, and legal services (Kotrla, 2010). In implementing the

value of the dignity and worth of the individual, social workers will be giving respect and self-worth to victims that often cannot find it for themselves. Furthermore, they can help advocate for a change in the perception of those forced into prostitution (Kotrla, 2010). Social workers can start by standing up against the normalization of the commercial sex trade by addressing sexual exploitation of women seen in the media. Social workers can work on getting legislation passed that outlaws the purchase of sex, which will make the "John" the offender rather than the prostitute (Kotrla, 2010).

With these core values securely at the heart of the social work profession, it seems that social workers would be focused on sex trafficking as a prominent human rights issue, however there is little in the scholarly literature about this topic (Hodge, 2008). Through completing this literature review, the researcher found most literature on sex trafficking on the macro level, criminal justice, and advocacy, while little literature on the micro level, working with victims.

Moving the Focus of Sex Trafficking from a Macro Level to a Micro Level

Much of the scholarly research that currently exists focuses on sex trafficking as a macro problem in terms of a criminal act and rectifying that. Though this is very beneficial in making advances in bring about laws and ways to criminally charge perpetrators, it does not constructively help many victims of sex trafficking. In fact, the Civil Rights Division and the US Attorneys' Offices only brought about 52 cases of human trafficking, which is quite small given the number of people trafficked each year (Vance, 2011).

The literature suggests that there are social service agencies geared at helping sex trafficking victims, but most of these focused on the problem in macro terms as well. One such organization that does offer help on the micro level is Shared Hope International, a social agency that partners with other organizations in the effort to eradicate sex trafficking of women and children around the world. Shared Hope International has three main goals at the two at the macro social work level and one at the micro level in order to help those who have been victimized in the

commercial sex industry (Shared Hope International, 2011).

Shared Hope International's micro goal is to "Rescue and Restore". The social workers are first and foremost outreach workers for the victims and communities that are victimized. The social worker works on rescuing individuals that are victimized and empowers them to recognize their own worth and dignity (Shared Hope International, 2011). When in the safe housing and programs that Shared Hope International social worker is in the role of caregiver and ensures the rescued victims are connected to those that have been victimized in the past to create a support system. The social worker engages in practice by offering therapeutic services as well as programs offered to the victims help them integrate skills, whether new or relearned. Programs focus on health, educational services, life skills, spiritual renewal, and long term needs, such as shelter (Shared Hope International, 2011).

Though Shared Hope International is working diligently to help sex trafficking victims, the organization does not offer any specific information on mental health providers' role that can help the worker to

identify victims. Other programs such as the Polaris Project focus mostly on a macro level, but do also do crisis intervention (Polaris Project, 2012). However this implies that the victim has to be found in the act of being trafficked or go into a crisis. Furthermore, Crisis Intervention Programs do not have a long-term mental health service built in as crisis intervention programs generally last six to eight weeks (Roberts, 2005). Identifying Victims in the Mental Health Field

Identifying victims is a priority in order to provide them with resources. Many victims are reluctant to admit the trauma they have been through due to their inability to trust and the control that has been held over them, so without their disclosure social service workers may not identify them (Hodge, 2008). Furthermore, the turn over rate of women is high, so age range of victims will vary as they are let out of sex trafficking when they are deemed unprofitable (Hodge, 2008). Some mothers may expect that their daughters are being trafficked, but do nothing because they think they may have a better life due to the glamorization of the sex industry in the media (Hodge, 2008).

The psychological effects of being a sex trafficking victim are vast in their scope. Victims present with a wide array of symptoms that comprise many diagnoses. Victims may present with depression, panic attacks and diminished self-esteem (Hodge, 2008). Victims may also present with mood disorders, PTSD, anger issues and suicidal ideation. Victims often runaway, which may indicate defiance to the practitioner if the issue is not explored further (Department of Health and Human Services, N.D.). Victims are also fed drugs and alcohol while being trafficked, so they may have substance abuse problems (Kotrla, 2010).

With so many presenting problems, it is difficult for social workers within the mental health field to identify victims without further exploration of these problems in assessment and throughout treatment.

Risk Assessment

The difficulty in identifying clientele that may be currently or previously victimized through sex trafficking may be alleviated through risk assessment questions tailored to this social issue. The Department of Health and Human Services has created a campaign to help not only educate about sex trafficking, but also

things to consider when meeting clientele to help formulate risk assessment questions. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (N.D.), things to consider are whether the consumers have documentation and are able to hold on to that documentation and their own money. Other things to look into are if they are accompanied by a person that seems controlling, if they seem submissive or fearful and if they are often isolated (Department of Health and Human Services, N.D.).

Literature Review to Current Study

After looking through the established literature, the researcher intended to focus on how information dissemination on sex trafficking may lead to assessment for and identification of sex trafficking victims. The scarcity of information on this in particular, was of interest in that procedures for identification do not seem to be commonly discussed throughout the mental health field. The researcher intended to discover through personal interviews with clinical social workers if education, training and actual assessment for sex trafficking victimization was occurring. Furthermore, the researcher wished to introduce the idea of using assessment tools, such as those presented by the

Department of Health and Human Services, as standard practice in mental health as California has many sex trafficking victims in the population.

Theoretical Orientation

The Ecological Perspective

This study was framed around the ecological perspective in order to ensure that the research focus had clear components to adhere to. Since the research project dealt not only with the social issue of sex trafficking victims, but also with risk assessment training, the ecological perspective is most appropriate because it suggests that the individual should be studied within the social context (Lesser & Pope, 2011). This not only logically pertained to the victim in a sex trafficking situation, but also to mental health social workers and their training and experience.

A fundamental concept of power and oppression is embedded in the ecological perspective, which asserts that cultural biases and the ability of the powerful to define reality oppress the less powerful (Lesser & Pope, 2011). As aforementioned in the literature review, sex trafficking victims are often negatively viewed and are

often overlooked by the population for engaging in sex practices, even when they are being coerced or forced to do so. This leaves sex trafficking victims with little power to define themselves, as the people that traffic them and society have more power over them and have already defined them as criminals and morally apprehensible people. Mental health workers also may have little power, especially when working within an agency, as they are held to certain standards of service that often mean an overburdened case load. This may be an indication of social workers' inability to spend as much time with each consumer as they like or to attend specialized trainings.

Role theory is intertwined with the ecological perspective. Role theory asserts that social roles dictate individual behavior and how outsiders behave towards that person (Lesser & Pope, 2011).

Regarding this study, role theory explained how sex trafficking victims get sucked into the role of victim and how societal views them as "criminal". Also, the negligence to recognize or understand the scope of the problem, keep victims in the role of powerless victim. Role theory also indicates why social workers in the

mental health field are not assessing for sex trafficking victimization. These social workers are given a set role . with set assessment tools, so they curtail their practice to those expectations. Furthermore, if the appropriate training, both academic and professional, is not offered them then they will not be given an environment that fosters learning and competency about the social issue of sex trafficking victimization.

Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and Macro Social Work Practice

This study has potential contributions to macro social work practice. Knowledge gained through this study has the ability to educate mental health social workers and also empower them to make a difference at both the micro and macro level. The literature review purposefully indicated ways to help sex trafficking victims through avenues such as advocacy, promoting awareness, physically rescuing victims and political campaigning.

This study aimed to contribute to micro social work practice through ascertaining licensed clinical social workers' experiences, perceptions, and insights on risk assessment for sex trafficking victimization. This study explored the extent of knowledge and training about sex

trafficking in the mental health field to determine if this issue is known about or assessed. In starting at this micro level, the study was meant to discover if there is a void in appropriate risk assessment on the part of mental health social workers through their education and awareness of how to differentiate sex trafficking victims in their clientele.

In completing the literature review it became clear that there is a lack in the existing professional literature on sex trafficking in terms of micro practice. This became evident as what was prevalent in the professional literature on sex trafficking was policy change and advocacy at the macro level. Due to this finding, the researcher wished to add to the professional literature available on the micro level by exploring the issue of sex trafficking victimization identification of individuals by social workers within mental health field.

Summary

Chapter one discussed the problem focus of the study as well as the rationale for using the post positivist paradigm. The chapter also provided a review of the existing literature on sex trafficking in the United

States. The potential gains of the study to macro and micro social work was assessed. The chapter concluded by explaining the theoretical orientation used in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter two reviews selection of the research sites and study participants through the use of an online directory of private practice mental health workers. This chapter reviews how the researcher prepared for the engagement of the licensed clinical social workers who work in mental health private practice. It also explains how diversity, ethical and political issues that the study poses were addressed and handled. Finally, the use of technology in the engagement phase is described.

Study Site

The study participants were selected from an online directory of mental health workers. As the world continually becomes more technologically advanced, online directories of services have replaced the phone book as a place where consumers are gaining access to mental health services. In light of this change in the way consumers are accessing services, the study participants were chosen from an easily accessible online directory, "Psychology Today". "Psychology Today" has many

attributes that uphold the criteria essential for study participants. This online directory lists mental health workers by county and provides information on where each mental health worker is employed, their contact information, and their Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) licensing number. "Psychology Today" verifies all of this information and ensures that the mental health worker's licensing is up to date, which is important to the study (Sussex Publishers, LLC, 2012).

The online directory, "Psychology Today", can be accessed by anyone seeking mental health services through the website www.psychologytoday.com where users can then click on the link "Find: Therapists". The site then directs the user to enter their location in order to provide a list of therapists in their geographical area. Therapists listed on the site pay to have their private practice advertised and are required to have their license to practice mental health, given by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, current. A list of therapists of different disciplines, such as licensed clinical social work, psychology, marriage, and family therapy, is given. The user can then refine their search for a therapist by things such as location, treatment

orientation, areas of specialization, language spoken, religious orientation, and insurances accepted for treatment. The potential study participant sample was narrowed down to those therapists that were licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs) as that is the researcher's professional field. Utilizing this method of finding participants enabled the inclusion of study sites that were in communities of varying socio-economic status and demographics. The site also included participants' licensure information and years of experience as a LCSW. This allowed for diversity in the environment and in study participants' experience as a LCSW.

The study was conducted with licensed clinical social workers from various private practice mental health sites though one interview was conducted in a non-profit agency for the participant's convenience. These mental health sites were located in two counties in Southern California and serve clientele that range in age. The participants all serve consumers from a variety of age ranges and all but two of the participants provide services to minors. Six of the participants see consumers who are children (6-10), two see consumers who are preteens (11-13), six of the participants see consumers

who are adolescents (14-19), all of the participants see adults (20-64) and seven of the participants see elders (65+). On the online directory, there is also a place for each therapist to list their specializations. Of the eight participants, seven of them indicated more than one specialization, while one participant did not fill in this section. As specializations: one listed "Trauma & PTSD", six listed "Relationship Issues", five listed "Anxiety or Fears", one listed "Parenting", one listed "Divorce", two listed "Anger Management", one listed "Self-Esteem", one listed "Behavioral Issues", one listed "Family Conflict", One listed "Life Enhancement or Personal Growth" and one listed "Depression". In looking at this list of specializations it became apparent that the participants had a wide range of knowledge. It is important to note that these listed specializations are to quide potential consumers and that the therapists will see consumers who do not identify those specializations as something they want to work on. Furthermore, sex trafficking victims may present with a number of the problems that these specializations revolve around, so there is potential that these participants have or will at some point come across a victim. This gave a

comprehensive view of how licensed clinical social workers are assessing different clientele, as sex trafficking victims can be minors and adults, and what their specialties are.

Engagement Strategies for Gate Keepers at Research Site

After accessing the aforementioned website, "Psychology Today", a list of twenty LCSWs working in two counties of Southern California was compiled with the phone numbers given on the website for each in the contact information section. All potential study participants were contacted by phone in which the researcher either spoke to them directly or left a message. The phone message and phone correspondence included the researcher identifying herself and her affiliation to Master of Social Work Program at Cal State San Bernardino. Following this brief introduction, the purpose of the study and the level of commitment expected of the participant was explained. Of the twenty potential study participants, eight people agreed to be study participants. The participants were asked if they had any questions followed by an assessment of their willingness to participate. As an incentive, participants were

informed that they would receive a five dollar gift card to Starbucks for volunteering their time to the study. Each participant that agreed to be a part of the study then was scheduled for an in-person interview at their office. In meeting at each participant's office, this allowed not only a greater opportunity for finding a time to schedule the interview, but also minimized the time and effort that each participant would have to give to be a part of study.

Self Preparation

Self preparation was imperative to the study as the researcher was not only utilizing her own time and resources during the progression of the study, but also the study participants'. As this study is of a post positive design, the researcher developed a literature review, but did not fully invest in the knowledge it presented before engaging the study participants, as the study participants helped to solidify the research focus (Morris, in press). Furthermore, the researcher did take note of each participant's listed specialization, aforementioned in the study site section of this paper, that are listed on the "Psychology Today" website in

order to understand each participant's mission and focus. This aided the researcher in assessing appropriateness as well as developing competence before talking with key stake holders.

The researcher prepared for the various reactions that the study participants may have to the topic of sex trafficking. A statement to be utilized after the presentation of the case vignette was drafted to ensure that each participant understood the purpose of the study, got a chance to ask questions, and still consented to continue in the interview. The researcher went over this statement continually until key points were memorized as to ensure the researcher could give attention to the participants rather than focusing on reading from a prepared statement. The researcher recognized that this is a subject that may bring up trauma for the study participants, so the researcher was prepared for this by bringing appropriate resources that offer support. The interview questions were mostly open-ended, but clear in intent so the purpose of the study was clear as study participants may feel that the researcher was not questioning their personal competence (See Appendix A).

Resources were collected and compiled so that they could be offered via e-mail at the conclusion of each interview. Having these resources e-mailed, rather than printed out, allowed links to the actual websites and lengthy documents to be more accessible over the long term. Also, this allowed each participant to be able to share these resources with other social workers with relative ease, which brings awareness to the issue of sex trafficking victimization. These resources included fact sheets and assessment tools the researcher found during the literature review through the Polaris Project and The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Diversity Issues

Issues revolving around how well the literature reflects the diversity of victims are bound to have impacted the study in some regard, especially since the study revolves around risk assessment. The demographics of victims are documented in the literature to include mainly women and children of all ethnicities and backgrounds. The literature does show that lower socio-economic classes tend to become victims more readily however. This study reflected findings in the

literature, but the researcher was also cognizant that the range of victims is diverse and that many victims may not fit the predetermined risk factors.

The diversity of the study participants was also important to the study. Though most social workers are women, the study included three men to see if their perception of victimization varied from that of the female participants. This diversity actually aided the researcher in gathering a more accurate picture, even if men serve as the minority in the social work mental health field.

The researcher was aware of age as this may play a role in not only in study participants' perceptions and training, but also how the study participants view the researcher, as she looks younger than even her actual age, twenty-seven. The combination of the researcher's appearance and the fact that she holds less education may have had an impact on her relationship with study participants, which will be further explored in the political issues section.

The researcher is a woman, so this helped when discussing the sensitive topic of sex trafficking with study participants the majority of which were female,

though by a slight margin with such a limited sample. As with any type of sexual abuse, sex trafficking mostly affects women and girls with male perpetrators, so talking with females is often more comfortable for victims than talking with males. One male participant brought up this gender issue by stating that he finds difficulty at first working with girls or women that have been sexually abused because they have to learn to trust men again. The researcher took into consideration that the study participants themselves may have a history of victimization, so she assessed how this affected participants by getting verbal assurance that participants were willing to proceed with the interview after the case vignette was presented and the topic of sex trafficking was brought up.

Ethnicity and race of the researcher as well as the ethnicities and race of the study participants was not an important diversity issue. The researcher was open to talking about her ethnicity with study participants if they requested though none of them did. None of the study participants were hesitant to disclose their ethnicity and most of them asked the researcher why she asked if it was okay for her to record their answer, which indicated

that ethnicity and race did not affect the relationship between the participants and researcher.

Ethical Issues

There are ethical issues found in each world view as social workers are committed to upholding the social work code of ethics. First, the moral and legal implications of the study on participants was considered and ethically resolved, by having an informed consent to explain the study (See Appendix B). Morris (In Press) states that any deception or perceived deception of the study participants has potential ramifications, so the purpose and potential harm must be assessed and a debriefing statement must always be included (See Appendix C). This meant that ethically, the researcher had to debrief each participant after the case vignette that the study revolved around sex trafficking and include this in the debriefing statement. Third, the study worked to protect the confidentiality of the research participants by giving them numbers rather than referring to their names and having their contact information securely held in a computer locked with a password only the researcher knows.

As this study was university sponsored, it went through a Human Subjects review by the Institutional Review Board in order for potential harms to be assessed.

There were special ethical considerations for this study since it used the post positivist view, which included the researcher not revealing the location of the private practices of the participants or her reason for being there to those who may have been present at those practices

Audio taping and notes written directly after the interview were utilized as every participant agreed to have the interview audio recorded. The confidentiality of the participants was secured with the use of numerical codes instead of names after the initial interview and the results was securely kept in a password protected computer that the researcher alone has access to. However, ensuring anonymity or even confidentiality may prove difficult as those that work with the study participants may become aware the participants were a part of the study and may be able to decipher what information they contributed.

Political Issues

In post positivism, political issues arise in regards to the power relationship in roles between the participants and the researcher. There may be some role confusion due to the researcher being more powerful, but also engaged in a partnership as open discussion in the interviews takes place, which can become an issue. The post positivist view maintains that the researcher may redefine the problem focus and decide what data is pertinent based on personal discretion (Morris, in press). Therefore, it was deemed important in this study that the participants were informed of this, so they did not feel used or mislead if all of the information they contributed was not integrated in the study.

There was a further political issue as the study participants were licensed clinical social workers and the researcher is a Master of Social Work (MSW) student. The study participants did treat the researcher as competent in regards to the study, but some participants did qualify their lack of knowledge on sex trafficking by educating the researcher on other types of victimization, such as domestic violence or familial sexual abuse. In looking at this, it seemed that since the career status

of the researcher is lower than that of the participants they wanted to supply the researcher with knowledge that may help her career rather than focusing on the issue of sex trafficking. Since the study revolved around the risk assessments carried out as well as knowledge and training in sex trafficking assessment, some study participants appeared to feel like their competence was being placed into question. This lead to unintended emotional reactions of the study participants, such as lack of comfort as evidenced by adverted gazes or asking if they had answered the question appropriately throughout the interview process. To combat these unintended reactions the researcher assured participants that the purpose of the study is to look at their experiences and perceptions as an overview of the competency that is gained through education and training in the social work profession as a whole rather than measuring their personal knowledge and competency.

The Role of Technology in Engagement

The internet was the technological tool that was used initially to find an online directory of licensed clinical social workers in private practice within two

counties in Southern California. Telephone correspondence with the potential study participants was utilized during the engagement phase. Once study participants agreed to become a part of the study, then telephone correspondence was used in coordinating and keeping in contact with study participants until the time of the interview. This study did not incorporate the use of any web cams as it is imperative for the researcher to be physically with the participants during the process of engagement, which consisted of an in person interview. The study cut out on confusion of study participants becoming disengaged by having the researcher there to explain, guide and create a rapport with the study participants.

Summary

This chapter detailed the study site as well as engagement of study participants. The chapter also went over the diversity issues involved in implementing a study of this nature with LCSWs of varying specializations working with people of varying demographics. The effects of political and ethical issues were also expressed. The chapter ended with an

explanation of how technology was used in the engagement phase of the study.

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CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

In this chapter, the reasoning for choosing certain study participants and how study participants were selected is examined. The use of an in-person interview to gather data and how that data was analyzed qualitatively is explained.

Study Participants

The study participants in this study were licensed clinical social workers in the mental health field working in two counties within California. The sampling procedure of this study allowed for a diverse range of clinicians to be in the study. This made the study more comprehensive as licensed clinical social workers with various demographic backgrounds will have varying experiences and different cultural lenses in which to view the problem focus.

The eight participants in this study were of almost equal gender with a more diverse sample of ethnicity than is seen in larger samplings of LCSWs in the mental health field. Five of the participants were female and three

were male. Of the female participants, three were Caucasian, one was African American, and one identified herself as biracial. Of the males that participated in the study, one was Caucasian, one was African American, and one identified himself as biracial. The participants also had a varying number of years since obtaining their licensure to practice therapy. One participant had only one year as an LCSW, while the person with the most experience had 17 years. The median number of years of a LCSW was 8.5, while the mean number of years as an LSCW was 8.25. The majority of participants have been practicing LCSWs for over eight years.

Selection of Participants

The study design used criterion sampling, a type of purposive sampling that selects study participants based on the set criteria of the study. Criterion sampling makes sure that the study participants will be able to provide relevance to the study and give the most in depth information on the research focus. According to Patton (1990), criterion sampling is "...sampling based on a particular characteristic of the population that potentially can be included in the sample" (p. 93).

Only licensed clinical social workers were chosen to be in the study. This ensured that the participants have gained experience in the field by attaining a Master of Social Work degree, completing their clinical hours as an associate clinical social worker, and passing the exam to obtain licensed clinical social work accreditation with the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS). Licensed clinical social workers also have to complete Continuing Education Credits (CEU), which are gained through attending trainings of their choice. In choosing only licensed clinical social workers, insight to how prevalent the issue of sex trafficking has been throughout their degree attainment and experience was revealed.

Data Gathering

As this study is rooted in the post positivist paradigm, the study looked for the objective reality identified by the study participants and then verified this reality through qualitative analysis (Morris, in press).

Data was gathered through face-to-face interviews with study participants. Interviews were conducted in a

naturalistic setting as it was at each participant's private practice office or in one case a non-profit agency site. This better serves the study as there was no manipulation of the environment in which the participants serve their clientele, which leads to a sense of comfort for the participant while allowing the researcher to gain insight into the environment each participant works in.

All of the interviews were conducted behind closed doors, which provided confidentiality and allowed the participants to be honest and forthcoming about their education, experience and training. This was conducive to the research as the researcher is not studying any agency, but the personal knowledge and experience of the licensed clinical social worker throughout their education and professional career.

Before conducting any interview, the researcher went through the informed consent. Study participants were also were once again informed that the study is meant to look at assessment procedures employed in the mental health field, and length of time the interview will last.

After the participants signed the informed consent, they were asked to give demographic information including their ethnicity, gender, and years as a licensed clinical

social worker. Information regarding service to different clientele demographics throughout being an ACSW and as an LCSW was obtained through information posted on "Psychology Today" and the participants own accounts.

A case vignette (see Appendix A) followed this step in order to ascertain participants' knowledge of risk indicators of sex trafficking victimization. The vignette contained known risk factors for sex trafficking victimization in order to investigate the study participants' perceptions, whether or not the participants can pick out the risk factors and if the participants associate those risk factors with sex trafficking victimization. These risk indicators separately may not indicate the possibility of sex trafficking victimization, but in totality show a much clearer picture of possible victimization. Indicators included were: a consumer being a young female who ran away at fourteen to live with a boyfriend, of unknown age, who now presents as controlling, isolation, not sleeping at night, moving frequently, shy and anxious mood with blunt affect, alcohol and drug use from an early age and an addiction to heroin. This case vignette was successful in bringing up talking points for the

interview as participants often referred to it when talking with the researcher.

This study dealt with the sensitive topic of sex trafficking and research participants may have had a history of being victims of sexual or physical abuse, so the researcher informed the study participants that there is risk in participating while being aware of signs that the study may be causing certain participants harm. In that regard, this study had a thorough debriefing after the study participants read the client vignette and informed the researcher which risk factors they saw, as the researcher could not inform the participants that they are looking specifically for sex trafficking victim risk indicators.

The researcher utilized a set of open-ended questions to be asked of each participant in order to gain similar qualitative information. The researcher employed descriptive questions, structured questions and contrast questions in order to assess the knowledge and perceptions of the research subjects thoroughly, which will be further explained in the phases of data collection section that is to follow (Morris, in press).

Study participants were allowed to talk about issues pertaining to the problem focus when relevant, however the majority of the same questions were utilized for each study participant. The data received during the interview altered the questions asked of subsequent participants minimally when new insights were discovered. The question of how research participants learned of sex trafficking was added as one participant mentioned gaining knowledge of sex trafficking outside of the social work field. The description of possible risk assessment tools was also refined in questioning to having a check-list of symptoms as participants asked for more concrete details of how this assessment tool may look and function.

At the beginning of the formal interview, study participants' demographic information was obtained in order to search for further insights into the problem focus as their personal diversity helps to shape their views as well as their experiences. Study participants were asked if they have anything that they would like to add or if they have any concerns at the end of the interview.

A reflective process was used to journal the researcher's thoughts and reactions immediately after

each interview in order to help put the transcriptions of the interviews into the appropriate context. This journal included what stood out the most in the interview and the reactions to what was gained in the interview. The journal also included what may have seemed irrelevant and exploration of why this might have been. The journal also included thoughts about the process of the interview and the questions asked and what may need to be asked or modified in the future.

Phases of Data Collection

Since the study is a post positivist one, the major phase of data collection was the face-to-face interview. Preparation of questions did precede the interview stage of the study. The acknowledgement of values on the part of the researcher was assessed before the interview stage in order to recognize values or biases throughout the interview process. It is important to make certain no harm comes to the study participant, so informed consent, adherence to the code of ethics, and confidentiality are imbedded into the study as well.

Morris (in press) recognizes that the interview process most evolve through various phases, which are

engagement, development of purpose, maintaining focus and termination. This study adhered to the tenants of those phases throughout the interview process. Engagement of the study participants was culturally appropriate and was utilized to let participants know that they are the experts on their experience and that their input is valuable to the study.

The study was comprised of different types of questions in order to immerse the study with as much detailed information as possible. The study began and concluded with throw-away questions. Throw-away questions are questions regarding demographic information as well as questions to engage the participant and build rapport (Morris, in press). The interview then proceeded with descriptive questions about what assessment of risk participants saw when reading over a provided consumer vignette, such as "what particular risk factors or symptoms did you identify in reading the client vignette?". Morris (in press) notes that descriptive questions are overarching questions that get to the general knowledge and experience of the participant, so they will constitute the main structural frame of the entire interview. Descriptive questions included

questions such as, "To what extent do you feel you were educated on sex trafficking in college?"

The implementation of a variety of question types throughout the interview was used to create a comprehensive view of what each study participant adds to the study. Structured questions, those that delve deeper into a particular topic or idea, were used to expand on descriptive questions, such as "How has the training you've been offered helped you in assessing for sex trafficking victimization?" Contrasting questions, those used to decipher what information is pertinent to the research focus and what should not be included, were employed, such as "In what ways would adding risk assessment of sex trafficking victimization help the mental health field?" Probing questions were utilized to delve further into the essence of topics that are essential to the research focus in order to give the study more depth. Other questions, such as extra questions, were used throughout the interview to help filter out both participants' and researcher's perceptions (Morris, in press).

Data Recording

Data recording began with gaining the permission to tape record the face-to-face interview from each study participant. Every study participant agreed to be tape recorded throughout the interview as noted by their signature in the informed consent. The researcher then transcribed the recordings and utilized open coding before proceeding to the next interview.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from each interview was analyzed before the next interview was conducted. To begin analyzing the narratives, it was imperative to also analyze the ability of the participants to link the risk indicators of sex trafficking victimization included in the case vignette, to ensure that the study sample was congruent to open codes found in the narrative of the interview.

To analyze the data obtained from the interviews, the researcher open coded the information given by each participant before interviewing the next participant. A "bottom-up" approach was employed and started with open

coding in order to get an idea of the categories that emerge in each narrative (Morris, in press).

Axial coding was then used to link categories that seem similar in nature or seem to point to the same conclusions, which can help guide future interviews (Morris, in press). In this study, the researcher looked for ways to link categories in areas such as how the participants perceive sex trafficking victimization, the levels of training they have received in assessing for risk, resources that are available, impact of sex trafficking victimization on mental health and general feelings.

The use of selective coding allowed a theory of what is happening to emerge. The researcher then saw if there is training and emphasis put on risk assessment for sex trafficking victimization on various social levels. The final analysis showed the specifics of what is being done or not being done in the mental health arena to assess for victimization and the implications of that.

Summary

Chapter three reviewed the implementation stage of the study. Who the study participants are and how were

gained to be a part of the study was touched on. The chapter was comprised in part by how the data was gathered and analyzed.

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CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Introduction

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This chapter discusses how the data gained through the interviews was analyzed. The open codes and axial codes are deciphered and interpreted as well. Selective coding was used to form an overarching theory. The chapter ends with the implications this theory has for micro and macro practice in the social work field.

Open Codes

The open codes that emerged were: "Education", "Training", "Awareness", "Initial Intake Assessment", "Standardized Risk Assessment", and "Profession".

Education

"Education" refers to the need for education on sex trafficking while obtaining a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. The data revealed that none of the participants received education on sex trafficking while obtaining a MSW degree. One participant remarked, "Not while obtaining my college degree. I think that was back when, or before [it was] identified as a major problem or given

a name at least in this part of the country" (Participant 5, interview, February 2013). One participant stated,

...it is a topic that is so prevalent and we really aren't talking about it as such. But it is something that is becoming more current, so I think that it is very important to talk to students about what it means, what are some signs you can look for, what are some first steps you can take with regards to be able to address helping someone that has been a

victim. (Participant 8, interview, February 2013) Training

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"Training" refers to the availability of trainings on sex trafficking. The consensus shown throughout the interviews was that there are trainings that have emerged in the last couple of years, but the accessibility of the trainings is in question. For example one participant said, "I am sure there are some trainings on it, but I think you would have you would have to go looking for it specifically" (Participant 7, interview, February 2013). Another participant remarked when asked if training was readily available, "I guess I will say no, not like other trainings where you can really get the information. I mean it is there, but you really have to search for it if

you really want it" (Participant 8, interview, February 2013).

Awareness

"Awareness" refers to the need for further awareness of sex trafficking victimization in the mental health field. The overall theme emerged is that there is a need for awareness by mental health professionals. A participant highlighted this by saying, "There is definitely a need for a push, for more because it is still a hidden secret in the world" (Participant 2, interview, February 2013). In regards to heightening awareness in the mental health field another participant stated, "It's easier to know where to go. But it would be...it would be beneficial period. So you can recognize whether or not you're going to be able to help someone" (Participant 1, interview, February 2013).

Initial Intake Assessment

"Initial Intake Assessment" refers to the reasons that including risk assessment for sex trafficking in initial intake assessments can be beneficial. In looking at this component, participants thought that including risk assessment for sex trafficking was beneficial when risk indicators present themselves in initial

assessments. One participant stated, "I think especially with the assessment because from there you can kind of determine, based on your setting and skill level, whether or not you can treat whatever the outcome of their experience" (Participant 7, interview, February 2013). One participant stated, "Yeah, why not. I mean to me any type of risk assessment would be a good risk assessment" (Participant 4, interview, February 2013). One participant did show hesitation by saying, "You have to get your basic information, if none of it leads to this type of victimization you don't need to go there. You don't want to put an idea into someone's head where it doesn't belong" (Participant 1, interview, February 2013).

Standardized Risk Assessment

"Standardized Risk Assessment" refers to the need for a risk assessment tool that is standard to the mental health field. Participants indicated support of having a tool that could be easily used to check off symptoms of sex trafficking and guide them in what questions to ask. In reference to the young mental health consumer, Carrie, presented in the case vignette, see Appendix A, one participant remarked,

Just like she was frightened to admit who she was, they get to the point where if you don't ask the right questions and you don't approach them in the right way then you are going to miss a window, an opportunity that maybe you could have helped. Yes, just like you have a risk assessment for suicide, depression, harming somebody, alcohol, drugs. It would be beneficial to have one for that too.

Profession

"Profession" refers to the potential benefits to increasing the profession of social work's competency regarding the issue of sex trafficking victimization. Participants were able to recognize the separate benefits to increasing awareness and competency in the profession of social work. One participant said,

(Participant 1, interview, February 2013)

I don't think there is ever enough training with what has to do with the knowledge base of social work. I think I have the obligation to refresh and discover whatever is out there as far as what will add to the knowledge base or street wisdom. (Participant 3, interview, February 2013)

Axial Codes

After the open codes were formed, the codes were further broken down and expanded through analysis to form categories. These categories were then axial coded to link them together in order to understand the relationship of the categories in the context of the study (Morris, 2006). Figure 1 Expansion of Codes, shows the open codes and the categories formed through axial coding. In looking at this figure, the connections between the categories are depicted as many categories are present in more than one open code.

The data showed that all of the categories that were found in the open code "Education" were also found in the open codes "Training" and "Awareness". These categories were "Benefits", "Hidden Issue", and "Rise of Topic in Social Work".

Open Codes	Categories linked through Axial Coding
Education	• Benefits
	• Hidden Issue
	• Rise of Topic in Social Work
Training	Availability of Appropriate Resources
	• Benefits
	• Finding Information on Their Own
	• Hidden Issue
	 Impact on Mental Health
	• Rise of Topic in Social Work
	• Skill Level
	• Targeting Real Issue
	• Willingness
Awareness	Availability of Appropriate Resources
	• Benefits
	• Finding Information on Their Own
	• Hidden Issue
	 Impact on Mental Health
	 Not Knowing How to Help/Resources
	• Personal Experience
	 Rise of Topic in Social Work
	• Targeting Real issue
	 Tenets of the Profession
	Willingness
Initial Intake	 Impact of Setting
Assessment	• Skill Level
	 Targeting Real Issue
	• Willingness
Standardized Risk	 Availability of Appropriate Resources
Assessment	• Benefits
	• Hidden Issue
	Targeting Real Issue
Profession	• Benefits
	• Competence
	• Hidden Issue
	• Impact on Mental Health
	• Impact of Setting
	• Skill Level
	Tenets of the Profession

Figure 1. Expansion of Codes

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Benefits

"Benefits" is a category containing perceived benefits to social work as it relates to the open code it is encompassed in. The category "benefits" was found in the open codes "Education", "Training", "Awareness", "Standardized Risk Assessment" and "Profession". For example, in the case of the open code "Education", a perceived benefit of having a broader base of knowledge was found when one participant stated, "Well, I think being exposed in college...kind of gives you a more well-rounded view in terms of who you are dealing with, from community organizing to just working on an individual level with someone" (Participant 6, interview, February 2013). The category "Benefits" was also seen in the open Code "Training" when one participant remarked, "I think some of the benefits of having those types of trainings would be being able to do more community outreach" (Participant 4, interview, February 2013). Hidden Issue

"Hidden Issue" refers to how sex trafficking is seen as a hidden social problem. "Hidden Issue" was detected in all open codes except for "Initial Intake Assessment". Participants stated that sex trafficking "...is a crime

that is not given a lot of light" (Participant 6, interview, February 2013), is a "hidden secret in the world" (Participant 2, interview, February 2013), and "well hidden because there is a lot of threat to exposure" (Participant 4, interview, February 2013). One participant remarked, "How some of them never, didn't come to the attention or department of children's services...it baffles me how many never get referrals made on them or follow-up" (Participant 2, interview, February 2013).

Rise of Topic in Social Work

"Rise of Topic in Social Work" refers to how the topic of sex trafficking is becoming more important to the field of social work. "Rise of Topic in Social Work" was identified in the open codes "Education", "Training" and "Awareness". Participants stated that years ago "...this wasn't a hot topic whereas it is now" (Participant 4, interview, February 2013) and "I have noticed probably in the last five years, maybe, more focus in that area..." (Participant 5, interview, February 2013).

Additional categories were seen in the open code "Training" and it is noteworthy to mention that all of

these categories were also seen in the open code "Awareness". Categories not already mentioned in "Training" were "Availability of Appropriate Resources", "Finding Information on Their Own", "Impact on Mental Health", "Skill Level", "Targeting Real Issue" and "Willingness".

Availability of Appropriate Resources

"Availability of Appropriate Resources" refers to the participants' knowledge of resources available to help those that have been sex trafficking victims. "Availability of Appropriate Resources" was also found in the open codes "Awareness" and "Standardized Risk Assessment". Participants identified the following resources: "...Children's Network..." (Participant 2, interview, February 2013), "...C.A.S.E. movement." (Participant 3, interview, February 2013),

"...information from NASW, through their agencies that provide education for licensing and they do have many more opportunities now to go to workshops, earn C.E.U.s." (Participant 4, interview, February 2013), and "...ISTSS, International Society for Trauma" (Participant 7, interview, February 2013). In relation to resources available, one participant stated, "And if people are

desiring to look at other opportunities and avenues for their life then at least we would have a better opportunity to know what then to provide" (Participant 4, interview, February 2013).

Finding Information on Their Own

"Finding Information on Their Own" refers to participants learning of the issue of sex trafficking outside of the social work profession. "Finding Information on Their Own" was linked to the open codes "Training" and "Awareness". Of the eight participants, five of them indicated that they gained awareness of sex trafficking through means such as books, movies, television shows, or the internet rather than education or training associated with the social work profession. One participant stated,

You don't know where to go and you see it every now and then. Lisa Ling on 20/20 [or] on the Oprah Winfrey Network they may come across a subject like this and talk about sex trafficking and how rampant it is and they'll mention the state of California.

(Participant 6, interview, February 2013) Another participant remarked,

Then I think some of the Hollywood movies... and I think wow that is so horrible. But it is a reality. I think it is such a horrible crime that we don't even want to think of it because of that.

(Participant 8, interview, February 2013)

Impact on Mental Health

"Impact on Mental Health" refers to how sex trafficking victimization impacts the mental health of the victim and the ability of the mental health worker to work appropriately with them. "Impact on Mental Health" was seen in the open codes "Training", "Awareness" and "Profession". One participant indicated that sex trafficking victimization impacts "safety", can lead to a "drug problem" and one becoming "very suicidal" (Participant 1, interview, February 2013). Another participant remarked that those that have been sex trafficking victims, "End up later semi-getting their life together, trying to lead a normal life with mental health issues. A lot of that is rooted in child and PTSD issues like prostitution and exploitation" (Participant 3, interview, February 2013). Another participant stated that, "Victims will continue to see their role as a

victim" (Participant 6, interview, February 2013). One participant stated that,

It is obviously an exploitation of kids, women and it leads to drug addiction, domestic violence, and the exploitation of women and girls. It leads to a mess of mental health problems, PTSD and depression. It feeds into almost every problem that I deal with, especially since there are a disproportionate amount of females that come to therapy and leads to criminal behavior and behind a lot of mental health stuff is this. The trafficking causes all this other stuff, so you deal with this and do the prevention stuff [and] it reduces all the mental health stuff. So in the long run you can prove the prevention helps, which is what we should be doing in life in this field. (Participant 2, interview, February 2013)

Skill Level

"Skill Level" refers to the clinical skill level of the mental health worker in assessing for sex trafficking victimization. "Skill Level" was found in the open codes "Training", "Initial Intake Assessment" and "Profession". Participants indicated that the probability of detection

and risk assessment of sex trafficking victimization may be dependent not just on training and education, but also clinical skill level. One participant stated,

My first sessions are geared to risk assessment and mental health history, those types of issues. I think you can miss a lot, you can know a lot, and still miss things. It is a very subjective experience; you can come in here and tell me whatever you want. You don't have to tell me the truth, so all I know is what you tell me. I have to be skilled at ferrying out these types of things.

(Participant 3, interview, February 2013) Another participant remarked, "Just in my experience, you can have a person that has been trained in depression and they completely miss depression in the client they are assessing. You have to take into account the individual skill level of the clinician" (Participant 7, interview, February 2013).

Targeting Real Issue

"Targeting Real Issue" refers to clinicians treating symptoms that arise from sex trafficking victimization as if they were associated with other mental health issues. "Targeting Real Issue" was linked to the open codes

"Training", "Awareness" and "Standardized Risk Assessment". Participants indicated that sex trafficking impacts mental health in various ways that mimic other diagnoses or issues rather than sex trafficking and due to this the mental health consumer is not getting the treatment necessary to improve their mental health. For example, one participant stated,

It might be seen as something a little different, so I can see people seeing depression and usually you are going to see something like indiscriminate attachments, more manic stuff versus the depressive, isolative behaviors. You have a couple ways to look at it, so I can see where they would target like depression and substance abuse and things like that and they may not necessarily clue in on the trafficking, unless there was a clue that exposed

it. (Participant 4, interview, February 2013)

Willingness

"Willingness" refers to the willingness of victims to disclose that they are victims of sex trafficking to a mental health professional. "Willingness" was found in the open codes "Training", "Awareness" and "Initial Intake Assessment." Participants viewed the willingness

of a mental health consumer to disclose their victimization as a barrier to helping them. As one participant put it,

Some victims are probably terrified of revealing information about their circumstances and that would probably require a little bit more in depth training and experience in terms of working with the client who does not know how to come out and clearly say I'm a victim. (Participant 6, interview, February 2013)

All of the aforementioned categories were connected to "Education", "Training" and "Awareness". Two categories were unique to the open code "Awareness": "Personal Experience" and "Not Knowing". The category of "Personal Experience" refers to whether or not the participants have come into contact with any sex trafficking victims as LCSWs. Of the eight participants, three of them stated that they have had at least one consumer that was a victim of sex trafficking. However, two participants expressed concern that they may have come into contact with victims, but they wouldn't know how to assess for it. One participant stated, "...I haven't been trained. I haven't been given the tools....I

am ill-prepared...And who knows I may have come across it and wasn't even aware of it" (Participant 6, interview, February 2013). Another participant said,

...I worked at a rehab and it was primarily for females. And I worked with adolescents and adults and I think it would have been very much more relevant there. There were a lot of clients there with histories of prostitution and they are at risk for a lot of things. A lot of history of abuse and so I think that was not something we screened for and it would probably been more helpful to have it

there. (Participant 7, interview, February 2013) This participant also stated that, "...I have only had one client who was involved in anything and she was an adult, but still it was like a really horrible experience. And I remember being so shocked because she disclosed everything to me" (Participant 7, interview, February 2013).

Personal Experience and Not Knowing

The category "Personal Experience" goes along with the category of "Not Knowing" as it seems that having "Awareness" will better equip mental health workers to identify victims as well as resources geared towards

helping them. "Not Knowing" refers to being unaware of the resources available to sex trafficking victims. One participant expressed this concern,

Where are they going to go? If a client is coming to see me and they are a victim, what am I going to do for them?...In addition to not being able to assess for victimization as far as sex trafficking is concerned, ya know, it would be unfair to that person if there is nothing available to them...I think that if somehow that can be known or somehow the services, interventions that are available, I think victims would be more forthright, especially in the assessment process or before the assessment begins to ask for help. (Participant 6, interview, February 2013)

Tenets of the Profession

There was one more category found in the open code "Awareness", which was also found in the open code "Profession": "Tenets of the Profession". "Tenets of the Profession" refers to the values and tenets that are to be upheld in the social work profession.

"The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the

basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty.

(National Association of Social Workers) Sex trafficking victims are "...stolen, kidnapped or held against their will" (Participant 1, interview, February 2013), and "...vulnerable" (Participant 6, interview, February 2013) making it necessary to "realize the global perspective of how it impacts women throughout the world" (Participant 5, interview, February 2013). One participant stated that in regards to gaining awareness as a profession,

Especially with more vulnerable populations, people where English is a second language, they came from other countries, they are more vulnerable to influence, It would be more helpful if in our profession individuals that have the talents to communicate with these individuals could do that.

(Participant 4, interview, February 2013) Another participant remarked about building awareness of sex trafficking victimization,

It would help the mental health field because it would help identify those issues that particular

population struggle with that maybe go unnoticed or unserved. Or I think a lot of times that population might be blamed if...their whole circumstances aren't understood. (Participant 5, interview, February 2013)

One participant answered if there is a need for awareness, training, and education with, "Yeah, I mean I am in the helping profession" (Participant 6, interview, February 2013).

As noted above, the open code "Initial Intake Assessment" included the categories "Skill Level", "Targeting Real Issues" and "Willingness". There was one more category linked with "Initial Intake Assessment" that was also found in the open code "Profession", which was "Impact of Setting".

Impact of Setting

"Impact of Setting" refers to how the mental health workers' professional setting impacts the ability to assess for sex trafficking victimization. One participant stated,

I know at the transitional youth centers and those kind of things, those people are targeted to work with that population specifically. That should be a

requirement of their employment, ya know, is that they have had education in that area. (Participant

5, interview, February 2013)

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Another participant questioned the relevancy in "...private practice..." or the "...VA hospital..." (Participant 7, interview, February 2013). While another participant believed that the knowledge of sex trafficking could benefit many settings,

I think that you are going to see it a little bit more and at least it will be more recognizable. And I think for those people who are going to go to a hospital setting where people may enter due to small incidents, getting small injuries due to substance use or domestic violence or different things that are going on, then you might kind of get a little bit of a rotation and be able to recognize it better. (Participant 4, interview, February 2013)

The open code "Standardized Risk Assessment" included the "Availability of Appropriate Resources", "Benefits", "Hidden Issue" and "Targeting the Real Issue". Looking at this in linkage with the other open code dealing with mental health assessment, "Initial Intake Assessment", which had the additional categories

of "Impact of Setting", "Skill Level" and "Willingness", it becomes clear through the data that the actual assessment of sex trafficking deals more with concrete application rather than conceptual ideas and knowledge in the open codes linked to "Education", "Training" and "Awareness".

The last open code was "Profession" which was linked previously in this chapter to "Benefits", "Hidden Issue", "Impact on Mental Health", "Impact of Setting", "Skill Level" and "Tenets of the Profession".

Competence

The final category related to "Profession" is "Competence". "Competence" refers to the overall competence of the profession in the issue of sex trafficking. Overall, in analyzing the data it has become clear that the issue of competence as a profession has been slowly building as indicated by what participants offered as their final comment on risk assessment for sex trafficking in the mental health field. One participant remarked, "We need to not just understand that it has happened, but we need to understand how people do this to other people" (Participant 1, interview, February 2013). While another participant stated,

And we miss that as a profession all the time. A lot people don't even want to deal with the whole sex thing in therapy at all and if we miss it our clients are certainly not going to bring it up.

(Participant 2, interview, February 2013) One participant brought up the continual need to educate and train to build competence,

it is really important to incorporate that when you are getting your license or after getting your license so you can at least be aware and pick up on those signs or something maybe remise...but if you had the training then that can go into your scope. So at least it can come back to remembrance if you saw someone walk in that kind of had some of those

signs. (Participant 8, interview, February 2013) While another participant said,

...we need to know more, always need to know more, always need to broaden the knowledge base. Always need to continue to do our own introspection to make sure we have enough, know enough, if there is anything new we can add to our repertoire of things to do. (Participant 3, interview, February 2013)

The open coding also showed that two of the participants assessed that the risk indicators presented in the case vignette could be symptomatic of sex trafficking, two of the participants indicated that their might be prostitution, one indicated possible sexual abuse and two did not connect the risk indicators to any facets of sexual trafficking victimization. This showed a varied understanding of the risk indicators of sexual trafficking by the participants, which allowed the study to get a diverse sample in regards to competency.

Selective Coding

To interpret the data and get a thorough picture of the meaning behind it, selective coding was utilized. Selective coding involves conjoining the open codes and axial code categories to refine them based on their connections. This creates an overarching theory derived from a core concept, which is the unifying theme that emerged through analyzing the data (Morris, 2006). Through connection of the categories to various open codes, a core concept of competency began to emerge. All of the categories in the open codes "Education" and "Training" are found in the open code "Awareness", which

shows that education and training on sex trafficking victimization leads to awareness on the subject. Gaining awareness is the first step to gaining an overall competency on sex trafficking victimization in the mental health field and the social work profession as a whole.

To gain this competency, the social work profession needs to develop more educational and training opportunities. After competency is formed it is imperative to utilize this competency through the use of risk assessment and continued accumulation of knowledge in order to maintain the competency on sex trafficking victimization within the profession of social work. Utilizing this competency in the mental health field revolves around including standardized risk assessments in conjunction with initial and continual assessment of the mental health consumer. Figure 2 Core Concept, depicts the process of gaining and utilizing competency on the subject of sex trafficking victimization.

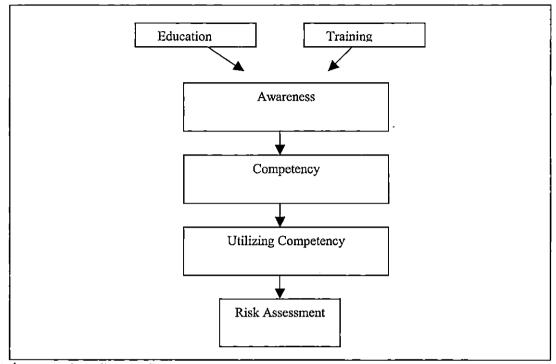


Figure 2. Core Concept

The overall theory that has emerged from the qualitative data provided by participants is that there is a need for heightened education and training on sex trafficking victimization in order to build competency that is to be utilized in the form of risk assessment to ensure that sex trafficking victims are being properly identified and served. This is needed as those that have been sex trafficked are vulnerable and underserved. It is important for social workers to work for social justice and the dignity and worth of this population as they are put into a powerless role of victim.

Implications of Findings for Micro and Macro Practice

Though this study was limited by participant numbers and geographical constraints, it does suggest that there is perhaps the need to increase competency in sex trafficking victimization in the mental health field and the broader social work profession as this issue is directly related to social workers and victims at both the micro and macro level. Regarding the population of victims as a whole, it has been shown through the literature review and participants' narratives, that sex trafficking victims are in fact vulnerable, oppressed and underserved. Victims are placed into the role of victim and are often looked down on or forgotten about by society due to the lack of awareness of the subject of sex trafficking. In this role and societal context, it less likely for a victim to openly disclose the victimization to mental health providers in order to receive mental health treatment that targets their needs.

The interviews have shown that it then needs to become a priority in social work to increase educational and training opportunities to bring awareness of the social issue. This increased knowledge can be used in

individual practice as well as for advocacy to make this issue less covert nationally and globally. Universities and Organizations should be introducing the subject of sex trafficking, so that mental health providers know what to look for, how to properly treat victims and what resources are available to aide in helping victims.

Though trainings are becoming more prevalent, there should be more advertising of the trainings that are out there. The development of a standardized risk assessment tool for sex trafficking would be beneficial as it can make identifying risk indicators easier for mental health professionals and guide them to asking the right questions to help a victim become a survivor through appropriate treatment and acquisition of resources.

The issue of sex trafficking victimization is destructive and the amount of people that are victimized each year is overwhelming, however this issue is not given the proper attention from the social work profession, which needs to change as this profession is built on helping those that are vulnerable and oppressed.

Summary

This chapter analyzed the qualitative data through open coding, axial coding and selective coding. These coding procedures allowed for themes to be expanded into categories in order to create an overall theory proposed from the data. The overall theory was then looked at in terms of the application to both micro and macro practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

This chapter reviews the termination of the study with study participants and how the results of the study are going to be communicated. The termination of the relationship with study participants is discussed. Finally, the chapter ends with the researcher's plan to disseminate the study to members of the mental health field and social work profession.

Termination of Study

True to a post positivist design, the termination with the research participants directly followed the interview process. Inquiry about organizations that participants belong to, such as the NASW, ways participants discover new information and practices in the field and what will make participants consider something new in the field was included in the termination. Study participants were informed where and how the final research project can be accessed. The participants were offered the findings of the study in a bullet-point format that can be delivered in the way of

their convenience, such as through mail, e-mail, or presentation given by the researcher. The study participants were given a heartfelt thank you for helping with the study.

Communicating Findings to Study Participants The findings of the study were communicated to people in general through the publication of the researcher's research project. This research project is available at the Cal State University, San Bernardino library. The findings were also communicated to study participants, colleagues and others in the profession through a poster, formal reports and meetings. Study participants who expressed an interest in having the findings communicated to them, were reported to in the format of their choosing, a bullet-point summary of findings or formal presentation. As each participant was from their own personal practice, findings were communicated individually to each person.

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Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants The study participants' role terminated after the researcher conducted the debriefing. The debriefing included the researcher offering to e-mail study

participants a list of resources regarding sex trafficking. Study participants were asked if further contact and collaboration in working with this research focus is something they would be interested in, but the participants only displayed interest in gaining more information.

Dissemination Plan

As aforementioned, the study was disseminated through Poster Day held at Cal State San Bernardino and is available in the Cal State San Bernardino library. The researcher contacted the NASW and county mental health agencies to see if it would be possible to present the findings in order to bring awareness to the topic of sex trafficking. The researcher also looked into presenting the study to Coalition Against Sexual Exploitation (C.A.S.E.) and the Polaris Project, as the researcher would like to collaborate with these organizations to form a standardized risk assessment for sex trafficking victimization.

Summary

This final chapter had information regarding how the study was terminated and how the information will be

communicated to participants as the relationship with them has ended for the researcher. The chapter also discussed how the study will be disseminated to other people within the profession and the researcher's plans to form a relationship with agencies specific to sex trafficking to work at a micro and macro level. APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

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Case Vignette

Carrie, a nineteen year old woman, comes into your mental health facility for an initial intake assessment. Carrie is accompanied by a man that identifies himself as her boyfriend, Ted. Ted gives you all of Carrie's information as she sits in the waiting room. While filling out paperwork, Ted goes through it line by line with Carrie. Carrie presents as shy and anxious with a blunt affect. Carrie reports that she lives with her boyfriend and that she often does not get much sleep at night. Carrie reports that she ran away from her parents home when she was fourteen years old and that she has been drinking and using drugs since she ran away. Carrie reports that she now has an addiction to heroin. Carrie reports that her boyfriend took her in off the streets when she was fourteen and let her move in with him. Carrie states that they have moved around a lot in the last five years. Carrie reports that she has no friends and that she stays home most days.

Developed by Kimberly Mena

Interview Questions

"What is your ethnicity?"

"What is your gender?"

"How many years have you been a licensed clinical social worker?"

"What are your initial reactions after reading that case vignette?

"In reading that case vignette, which things stood out to you the most to you?"

"Have your perceptions of the case been altered when the issue of sex trafficking is brought up?"

"Were you offered any educational opportunities regarding sex trafficking while obtaining your college degree?

"To what extent do you feel you were educated on sex trafficking while in college?"

"Were you offered any training opportunities on assessing for sex trafficking victimization when working for your licensure?"

"How has the training you've been offered helped you in assessing for sex trafficking victimization?"

"Have you had any personal experience working with sex trafficking victims either when you were gaining clinical hours or as a licensed clinical social worker?"

"Have you found that trainings or information regarding sex trafficking victimization is readily accessible?"

"Do you believe that information regarding sex trafficking victimization would be helpful to integrate in gaining a master of social work degree?"

"Do you believe information about sex trafficking victimization would be helpful to social workers at the associate clinical social work level?"

"Do you believe information about sex trafficking victimization would be helpful to social workers at the licensed clinical social work level?"

"Do you feel that risk assessment of sexual trafficking victimization would be beneficial to add to initial intake assessments?"

"Do you believe a standardized risk assessment form that listed risk indicators of sex trafficking that mental health workers could check off when assessing a consumer would be beneficial?"

"Do you feel that risk assessment of sexual trafficking victimization would be beneficial after risk factors of sexual trafficking surface when working with a consumer?"

"In what ways would adding risk assessment of sex trafficking victimization help the mental health field?"

"In light of the varying symptoms and potential risk indicators that mimic so many other diagnoses, how probable do you think doing risk assessment for sexual trafficking victimization is?"

Developed by Kimberly Mena

APPENDIX B

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INFORMED CONSENT

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Informed Consent

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The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate education, experience and training for risk assessment of a vulnerable population in the mental health field of a vulnerable population. This study is being conducted by Kimberly Mena under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Morris, Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to examine how education, training and experience have impacted the knowledge base and risk assessment procedures of licensed clinical social workers in the mental health field in regards to a vulnerable population.

DESCRIPTION: The in person interview will begin with the presentation of a case vignette followed by a discussion on what you see as risk factors. The interview will then follow with a set of questions designed to explore your education, training and experience as a licensed clinical social worker in regards to this vulnerable population.

PARTICIPATION: Participation within this study will consist of participating in an in-person interview on one occasion. Participation is completely voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your confidentiality will be secured with the use of numerical codes instead of names after the initial interview and the results will be securely kept in a password protected computer that the researcher alone will have access to. Names will not be used in the final research project.

DURATION: The duration of your participation in this study will be one face-to-face interview lasting forty-five minutes.

RISKS: There is minimal risk associated with this study. The study is a voluntary interview, which is non-evasive. The only risk would be that the research project may unearth some emotional responses due to the subject of the study being mental health risk assessment of a vulnerable population.

BENEFITS: The potential benefits to you and the profession of social work knowledge gained of your and other participants' understanding of how education, training and experience have impacted risk assessment for a vulnerable population.

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH: I understand that this research will be audio recorded Mark

CONTACT: If you have any pertinent questions regarding the research, your own rights, or if you obtain a research-related injury contact Dr. Teresa Morris, Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. You may contact Dr. Teresa Morris by phone, (909) 537-5561, or via e-mail at Tmorris@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: The results of this research project will be available at the California State University, San Bernardino Library. The research project will also be presented at Poster Day at Cal State University, San Bernardino, which is an event in June that displays all of the graduating Master of Social Work research projects.

I have been fully informed about this study and voluntarily agree to participate.

Mark: Please mark 'X' to consent to being in this research study

Mark: _____ Date: _____



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APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

The research focus of this study is licensed clinical social workers' knowledge about sex trafficking and the use of this knowledge in risk assessment in the mental health field. You were asked to look at the case vignette before knowing that the study involved sex trafficking victimization in order to see if the risk indicators were identifiable to licensed clinical social workers. This study aims to look at whether licensed clinical social workers gain awareness of sex trafficking victimization through education, training and experience. The study is also designed to look at your perceptions of whether implementing risk assessment for sex trafficking victimization is currently happening or has the potential to happen in the mental health field.

Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the contents of the study with other mental health professionals. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Kimberly Mena at Menak@csusb.edu or Dr. Morris at (909) 537-5561. If you would like to see the finished research project, it will be available in the library at Cal State University, San Bernardino after September 2013).

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