Rapid Assessment Exploring Impediments to Successful Prosecutions of Sex Traffickers of U.S. Minors

Joan A. Reid

University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Author Note

Joan A. Reid, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, MA.

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Correspondence should be addressed to Joan A. Reid, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, MA. Email: Joan_Reid@uml.edu
Abstract

Critical psychological, systemic, and legislative barriers to the successful prosecution of child sex traffickers who exploit U.S. citizens were uncovered during a rapid assessment conducted in a U.S. metropolitan considered a high intensity child prostitution area. Information obtained during 34 face-to-face interviews with criminal justice professionals most likely to encounter child sex trafficking victims was supported by the collection of supplementary quantitative data. Findings revealed complex psychological that deter victim participation in prosecutions of traffickers such as child victims’ denial of exploitation, trauma bonding between victims and traffickers, and frequent flight and revictimization. Existing inadequacies within the criminal justice system were found that may contribute to child sex trafficking persisting as a low risk/high reward crime.

Keywords: child sex trafficking, trauma bonding, rapid assessment, child victims
1. Nature and Scope of the Problem

Child sex trafficking is one of the most complex and difficult crimes to investigate (Brayley, Cockbain, & Laycock, 2011; Estes & Weiner, 2005; Williams & Frederick, 2009). Child sex trafficking comprises all activities involved in inducing a minor’s involvement in commercial sexual exploitation, from the initial recruitment of the minor into commercial sex exploitation to buying the sexual services of the minor (Adelson, 2008; Gallagher, 2010; Kreston, 2005; Moossy, 2009). Research confirms that trafficking of U.S. children in prostitution occurs in major cities (Estes & Wiener, 2005; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2010) and in rural America (Vieth & Ragland, 2005; Wilson & Dalton, 2008), and the number of children exploited by the commercial sex industry appears to be escalating (Cooper, 2005a; Farr, 2005; Hughes, 2002, 2005). Researchers, child advocacy groups, and governmental agencies offer widely varying estimates of the number of U.S. minors exploited in sex trafficking in prostitution every year (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008). Estes and Weiner (2005) provided the most widely cited estimate, suggesting that approximately 100,000 to 300,000 youth in the United States are at risk for victimization in commercial sexual exploitation.

Advances in digital technology have acutely impacted the quantity and quality of pornographic images of children sent via the Internet. Prior these advances, pornographic images of children were limited to scanned copies of magazines or child pictures from medical reference books (Taylor & Quayle, 2005). The pornographic images of children currently available are high-quality digital moving images with clear audio recordings (Jones, 2005; Taylor & Quayle, 2005). Estimates of the number of children victimized in sex trafficking involving pornography are also elusive and uncertain. However, pornographic images of
children proliferate throughout the Internet (Hughes, 2002, 2005; Jones, 2005; Taylor & Quayle, 2005). During 2008, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) received more than 102,000 hotline tips regarding child sexual exploitation, primarily related to child pornography, and analyzed more than nine million child pornographic images attempting to locate and rescue child victims (NCMEC, 2008). The number of federal investigations of cases involving child pornography increased from 526 investigations in 1998 to 1307 investigations in 2005 (Adams, Owens, & Small, 2010). Such figures suggest that this problem merits concerted efforts aimed at eliminating this crime against children.

1.1. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act

Combating the trafficking of children for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation has become a priority for the United States government (U.S. Department of State [DOS], 2010). Governmental efforts to combat this crime are focused on three key objectives; the prevention of trafficking, the prosecution of traffickers, and the protection of victims (DOS, 2008). Despite greater awareness of the problem and increased efforts by the Federal government to combat child sex trafficking, the definition of child sex trafficking and the labels assigned to its victims remain ambiguous and many misconceptions regarding this form of child maltreatment still exist (Adelson, 2008; Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009; Gallagher, 2010; Musto, 2009; Schauer & Wheaton, 2006; Skilbrei & Tveit, 2008). To provide the most clarity and precision, for this study the legal definitions and terms provided by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 serve as the primary basis for defining child sex trafficking.

In 2000 Congress first passed the TVPA in 2000, and the act was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, and 2008. The TVPA specifies that all U.S. minors (youth under 18 years of age) involved in commercial sex acts – including prostitution and pornography - are regarded as
victims of trafficking (TVPA, 2000). The TVPA defines commercial sexual activity as “any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person” (Sec. 103(3)). The prostitution of minors, therefore, is a major focus of the TVPA, which provides protection for trafficking victims rather than punishment even if entangled in illegal activities, stating that “victims … of trafficking should not be inappropriately incarcerated, fined, or otherwise penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked” (TPVA, 2000, Sec. 102). Minors are not required to show that “force, fraud, or coercion” was involved in their inducement into sex trafficking (TVPA, 2000, Sec. 103). Buying the sexual services of a minor constitutes trafficking, and the buyer is considered guilty of trafficking when there is no third party or trafficker profiting from the sex act (Adelson, 2008; Pollet, 2010; U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], n.d.).

Even after the passing of the TVPA in 2000, criminal justice professionals in numerous jurisdictions continue to mistakenly assume that all victims of human trafficking in the United States are foreign nationals (DOS, 2010). Although the main objective of the TVPA of 2000 was to protect international victims trafficked into the United States, it was not intended to exclude the protection of victims who are U.S. citizens or legal residents (Adelson, 2008). In legislative deliberations, it was argued that the TVPA of 2000 would “make a difference for many American girls, mostly runaways, who are then victimized by the traffickers” (statement by Representative Smith, quoted in Adelson, 2008, p. 101). Moreover, federal resources provided to combat human trafficking include the provision of federal monies to assist state and local law enforcement investigations of regional cases of human trafficking and to expand victim assistance programs to trafficking victims who are U.S. citizens or legal residents (TVPRA, 2003, 2005, 2008).
In addition, another common assumption is that human trafficking always involves the transporting of a person across international borders. However, a trafficker may sell victims over and over without moving them from one location to another (Finckenauer & Schrock, 2003). Although the movement of victims is commonly practiced to hamper detection of criminal activities by local law enforcement, it is not a necessary component of human trafficking (Logan, Walker, & Hunt, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2010). Some minors – those trafficked by parents, siblings, or boyfriends – may never even leave home (Albanese, 2007; Estes & Weiner, 2005; Raymond, Hughes, & Gomez, 2010).

1.2. Federal Efforts to Combat the Sex Trafficking of U.S. Minors

The commitment of the Federal government to combat the child sex trafficking of U.S. citizens was further evidenced by the formation of the Innocence Lost National Initiative (ILNI) and Internet Crimes against Children Task Force Program (ICAC). The ILNI began as a major federal effort to combat commercial sexual exploitation/trafficking of U.S. minors. Consistent with the goals of the TVPA, the ILNI aims to combat the prostitution of minors by protecting victims and pursuing and prosecuting traffickers. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) coordinates the ILNI, working jointly with NCMEC and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS). ILNI conducts training for state and federal law enforcement agencies, assigns agents specifically to work cases involving child sex trafficking, and assigns prosecutors to cities with high levels of child prostitution (DOJ, 2005). These ILNI activities are designed to foster cooperation between the FBI field offices and local law enforcement agencies by promoting regular communication and information sharing about investigations that involve the prostitution of minors. Between 2004 and 2007, the FBI reported that 31 criminal enterprises that exploited minors in prostitution were dismantled through the
efforts of the ILNI task forces and working groups (Office of Inspector General [OIG], 2009). From 2003-2010, ILNI cases related to child sex trafficking resulted in 625 convictions, many with lengthy sentences including multiple 25-years-to-life sentences (FBI, 2010). In addition, during the same time period ILNI recovered over 1200 sexually exploited minors, rescued as a result of prostitution stings in various cities across the United States (FBI, 2010). In 2006, the ILNI task force was established in the metropolitan area selected as the site for the current study. The FBI identified the selected metropolitan area, along with 12 other cities in the United States, as high intensity child prostitution areas (OIG, 2009).

The ICAC program was initiated in 1998 and is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The purpose of the ICAC program is to provide assistance to state and local law enforcement in developing an effective response to criminal cases involving cyber enticement of minors and child pornography (Medaris & Girouard, 2002). ICAC training includes courses for law enforcement, investigators, prosecutors, probation/parole officers, and victim advocates on topics such as child sex offender monitoring, investigative strategies in the area of Internet crimes against children, and undercover chat investigations. By 2010, the ICAC program had grown to include a national network of 61 task forces. In 2009, the ICAC task forces collectively investigated more than 13,000 cases involving child pornography, enticement of minors, and the prostitution of minors (DOJ, 2010).

Although the passing of the TVPA and the establishment of ILNI and ICAC task forces undoubtedly strengthened U.S. governmental efforts to curtail the child sex trafficking within its borders, uniform protection for U.S. victims of child sex trafficking and adept investigations and prosecutions of child sex traffickers are not occurring across all jurisdictions in the United States (Adams et al., 2010; DOS, 2010). In the 2010 governmental report on trafficking in persons it
was acknowledged that many local law enforcement professionals in the United States still lack the necessary knowledge to effectively investigate and counter domestic minor sex trafficking, resulting in the misidentification of many victims as juvenile delinquents (DOS, 2010). When a prostituted U.S. minor comes to the attention of state or local authorities, the involved minor is often treated as an offender and arrested (Adams et al., 2010; Adelson, 2008; Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice [FACJJ], 2007; Finkelhor & Ormond, 2004; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2010). A recent national study found that law enforcement classified 40% of minors involved in prostitution as offenders, rather than as victims (Halter, 2010). Many in law enforcement remain unaware that the prostitution of a U.S. minor is defined as a severe form of trafficking by the TVPA.

1.3. Critical Need for Successful Prosecution of Traffickers

Sex trafficking of minors is a multi-faceted crime of exploitation that is perpetrated by highly motivated criminal entrepreneurs who often flourish due to the vulnerabilities of young victims and due to existing inadequacies within the criminal justice system that often make child sex trafficking a low risk/high reward crime (Hodge & Lietz, 2007; Reid & Jones, 2011; Shelley, 2010; Wheaton, Schauer, & Galli, 2010). Girls in the United States typically enter prostitution between the ages of 12 and 14 (Boxill & Richardson, 2007; Estes & Weiner, 2005; Williams & Frederick, 2009). Boys usually are initiated into prostitution at even younger ages (Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, & Khan, 2008; Estes and Weiner, 2005). In a recent ILNI prostitution sting, the youngest victim rescued was 10 years old (Stone, 2009). The initiation of younger and younger minors into sex trafficking is partially due to the increased demand by sex offenders or johns for sex with “virgins” or prepubescent minors based on their fear of contracting sexually transmissible infections (Fang, 2005; Farr, 2005; Hanna, 2002; Hughes, 2005; Kreston, 2005).
Researchers have postulated that traffickers may not only target minors in response to market demands, but also because younger victims are easier to manipulate (Brayley et al., 2011). The youthfulness of these victims casts doubts upon their capability to detect exploitative motives or withstand manipulation of sex traffickers (Romer, 2010; Steinberg, 2010). Girls are considered particularly vulnerable to such exploitation due to societal norms which embed an expectation that men take the sexual initiative in relationships, with girls and women expected to comply, potentially leading young girls into “painfully one-sided sexual bargains” (Hanna, 2002, p. 12; see also, Miller & Mullins, 2009).

Traffickers appear to control the majority of prostituted girls in the U.S. and often employ recruiters to “spot” needy or runaway youth by hanging around their typical locations (Albanese, 2007; Vieth & Ragland, 2005). Sex traffickers who exploit minors in prostitution exhibit attributes of psychopathic offenders and strategically plan their interactions with minors to maximize the likelihood of recruiting and manipulating a victim (Reid & Jones, 2011; Raphael, Reichart, & Powers, 2010; Spidel, Greaves, Cooper, Hervé, Hare, & Yuille, 2007). Previously abused runaways appear to be especially susceptible to sex traffickers’ manipulation due to the harmful effects of childhood abuse and neglect (Arata, 2002; Carnes, 1997; Scott, Wolfe, & Wekerle, 2003; Tyler & Johnson, 2006; Williams & Frederick, 2009). Based on these research findings, vulnerable populations do not only originate from impoverished or war-ravished countries, but within the United States there also exists an ample quantity of vulnerable individuals available to traffickers (Shelley, 2010). In fact, trafficking persons within a country rather than internationally reduces the expenditures or monetary costs to the trafficker. For example, less costs are incurred for transportation of victims, less expenditures go to establishing trafficking routes, less bribes need to be paid, and less costs are incurred for forged travel...
documents (although false identification documents are needed when trafficking minors) (Wheaton et al., 2010). Based on the relatively low monetary costs involved in trafficking victims within a country, enforcing the “criminal” costs or the risk of being caught and punished (Wheaton et al., 2010, p. 124) becomes a key component to combatting this crime against U.S. minors (DOS, 2010; Shelley, 2010). Without successful prosecutions, it is unlikely that sex traffickers of U.S. minors will be deterred from commodifying this vulnerable, relatively inexpensive, and easily exploitable population (Shelley, 2010).

1.4. Purpose of the Current Study

Understanding the importance of successful prosecutions of child sex traffickers, the purpose of this study was to assess the implementation and effects of the TVPA and its reauthorizations on the protection of child sex trafficking victims and on the prosecution of sex traffickers exploiting U.S. minors in one metropolitan area in the United States. The assessment was conducted within a southern U.S. metropolitan area considered by the FBI to be a high intensity child prostitution area (OIG, 2009). Using rapid assessment (RA) methodology, the study endeavored to provide insight into the logistics of present system, and to identify gaps and impediments to successful prosecutions of sex traffickers exploiting U.S. minors.

2. Methods

2.1 Rapid Assessment Methodology

Rapid assessment (RA) methodology is used to swiftly assess the current state of a particular problem or population (Beebe, 2001; Trotter, Needle, Goosby, Bates, & Singer, 2001). RA methodology has been used across many diverse fields from epidemiology to ecology (e.g., Ensign & Gittelsohn, 1998; Ensign & Santelli, 1998; Fennessy, Jacobs, & Kentula, 2004; Macinko, Almeida, & Klinggelhoefer de Sá, 2007; McDonnell, Brennan, Burnham, & Tarantola,
RA is defined as an intensive inquiry “using triangulation, iterative data analysis, and additional data collection to quickly develop a preliminary understanding of a situation from an insider’s perspective” (Beebe, 2001, p. xv). RA produces high quality research in a much shorter time period than other more conventional research methodologies (Beebe, 2001). Therefore, a key strength of RA methodology is the acquisition of comprehensive and timely information through a minimal expenditure of resources (Beebe, 2001; Trotter et al., 2001).

In addition, RA methodology was selected based on its ability to provide valuable information on emerging problems or conditions, particularly those that are regionally concentrated and not yet observable in other data sets (Trotter et al., 2001). The use of this methodology corresponds well to research on child sex trafficking, as this crime is thought to be concentrated in particular regions of the United States (Estes & Weiner, 2005; OIG, 2009) and is described as a problem, about which there is little reliable data (Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008). Examples of similar rapid assessment projects within regional areas in the United States include studies regarding health problems of homeless youth (Ensign & Gittelsohn, 1998; Ensign & Santelli, 1998), home-based care for people with AIDS in the United States (McDonnell et al., 1994), and health care needs of persons with AIDS living in Hispanic or African American communities within major metropolitan areas of the United States (Trotter et al., 2001).

RA methodology is founded upon the social science concept of triangulation, a term that refers to the process of using multiple perspectives to understand a particular problem, the gathering of data from different sources, and the utilization of a team of research associates (Beebe, 2001; Trotter et al., 2001). By using interviews and questionnaires to gather information from a broad array of individuals in a localized area, RA provides insight into perspectives from
a diverse set of respondents on a single issue. In this way, RA can produce useful results even when the most important elements of a complex, localized situation are not known or understood prior to beginning of the study (Beebe, 2001; Trotter et al., 2001). To support and supplement qualitative data gathered during interviews, quantitative data are also collected and incorporated into the findings. The supplementary quantitative component provides statistical data on the actual numbers associated with the central concerns of the assessment. In summary, this methodology was used in the current study due to its ability to produce high quality and actionable results (Beebe, 2001; Trotter et al., 2001), in this instance, an understanding of the complexities of combating child sex trafficking of U.S. citizens and the obstacles faced by professionals who are engaged in the critical task of protecting child victims and prosecuting child sex traffickers.

2.2 Site and Participant Selection

As previously mentioned, the selection of the metropolitan area for this RA was based on reports by the FBI that this area was experiencing high levels of child prostitution. In order to maximize anonymity of the study participants and minimize any potential risk associated with research participation, the specific metropolitan area of the U.S. is not named. However, this particular metropolitan area possessed numerous community risk markers known to foster child sex trafficking. Previously documented community risk factors related to U.S. cities included high levels of poverty, the presence of a substantial adult prostitution market, and the influx of large numbers of transient men (e.g., tourists, conventioneers, military personnel, truckers) (Estes & Weiner, 2005). Based on these known community risk markers, the metropolitan area chosen for this study would seem to be ripe for a considerable problem with child sex trafficking as the area is a popular tourist and convention destination, has a large military base, and has been
ranked among the top three cities in the United States based on the number of adult entertainment establishments per capita.

Beyond the use of multiple methods of data collection, a key to the effectiveness of RA methodology is the use of person triangulation or the inclusion of study participants who may possess varying perspectives on the study topic (Beebe, 2001; Trotter et al., 2001). The RA sampling strategy begins by determining the categories of individuals who are likely to have the most knowledge about the study topic and who also represent those with the most likely variation in experience within the topic domain (Trotter et al., 2001). This strategy has been shown to facilitate data analysis and to enhance the validity of the findings (Beebe, 2001; Trotter et al., 2001). Based on prior research utilizing the targeted sampling strategy applied in this study, comprehensive coverage of a local issue can be adequately achieved by fifteen to thirty in-depth expert interviews (Trotter et al., 2001). The adequacy of this sample size is due to local experts’ ability to provide information regarding their understanding of the problem of interest as well as supply knowledge of competing or complementary views about the topic.

The 34 study participants interviewed during this assessment represented a diverse group of experienced professionals likely to encounter child sex trafficking victims during minors’ involvement with different segments of the criminal justice system. Using nominated sampling procedures (referrals based on nominations of people for interviews who are believed to have in-depth knowledge and experience with sex trafficking of U.S. minors in the local area), study participants were selected from law enforcement, prosecution, judiciary/public defense (juvenile), juvenile justice, child protective investigative units, and victim advocacy (Trotter et al., 2001). Prior to the initiation of the current study, these professional groups were identified as likely to come into contact with victims of domestic minor sex trafficking by the agency
funding the study. Next, an advance team of researchers traveled to the area and met with the directors of the region’s children’s services agency as well as the FBI agent in the regional office coordinating law enforcement efforts to combat sex trafficking of U.S. minors. These key contacts provided the original source of names and agencies in the area that were most likely to come into contact with trafficked minors. During interviews, these nominated individuals were asked to nominate others who they thought would be able to offer further information regarding U.S. minors involved in sex trafficking. Additional contacts of individuals or agencies were gathered during interviews until no new names were offered as potential study participants. Minors were not interviewed as a part of this study due to ethical concerns related to research involving vulnerable populations. The final set of participants included local, state, and federal law enforcement officers, investigators, victim advocates, and prosecutors involved in the regional DOJ-funded human trafficking task force. Additional key informants included juvenile justice probation officers, detectives working with local and state ICAC task forces, as well as directors or senior representatives of the region’s lead children services agencies, children justice centers, juvenile division of the public defender’s office, juvenile justice diversion programs, juvenile assessment office for the local circuit courts, child protection investigation units, and juvenile justice treatment providers.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Over a period of eight weeks, 34 study participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. Informed consent was obtained prior to commencing the interview. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were all conducted by a single interviewer specifically trained for this project. The majority of the interviews were audio taped with the participants’ consent. Audio recordings of certain interviews were not produced as several
participants did not agree to have interviews recorded. The digital recording of the interviews allowed for reexamination of the recorded interviews, reducing threats to the accuracy of the research findings due to poor recall. Electronic file sharing of the recorded interviews with the program supervisor and a team of off-site research associates allowed for analysis of the interview data by more than one analyst, thereby reducing the likelihood of undue levels of investigator bias (Patton, 2002).

All interviews were conducted by a trained interviewer with extensive knowledge of the local cultural conditions related to child sex trafficking. Through a screening process, the interviewer was selected based on affiliation with the regional DOJ-funded human trafficking task force, professional connections to local victim advocates and various law enforcement agencies, previous employment by local juvenile justice agencies, and employment as a treatment provider of child protective services. The interviewer received special training in RA methodology and the RA instrument designed for this study. The prepared semi-structured questionnaires were not intended to be exhaustive, but were designed to assist and guide the interviewer (Beebe, 2001). Slight variations of the questionnaire items were available for the interviewer and were selected depending on the professional position and responsibilities of the interviewee. The utilization of comparable semi-structured interview formatting balanced the need to collect uniform information from all study participants with the need to capture unanticipated findings (Beebe, 2001; Patton, 2002).

In addition to the interviews, quantitative data were requested from each interviewee based on their respective agency records including the number of U.S. minors identified as sex trafficking victims, the number of minors arrested for suspected involvement in prostitution, the number of traffickers identified, and the number of active cases and prosecutions. In an effort to
collect the most accurate and up-to-date data available, after the interview date was confirmed, the interviewer emailed a list of the requested statistical data for the interviewee to compile prior to the interview. The quantitative data were reviewed along with the interview data to substantiate information gathered during the interviews or to alert the interviewer to inconsistencies requiring further investigation. Additionally, the collection of the statistical data prior to the interview encouraged the study participants to prepare for the interviews.

RA methodology uses an iterative process for data analysis. Specifically, the initial analysis is followed by several cycles of additional data collection and analysis (Beebe, 2001). To facilitate this analytic process this study utilized template analysis (TA), a systematic method for thematically analyzing qualitative data collected based on the clustering of responses among a priori designated and/or data driven templates (King, 1998; King, Carroll, Newton, & Dornan, 2002). Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were used to support the coding and organization of the study data (Leahy, 2004; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). This software is widely-used and provided the most efficient and convenient way to analyze the data due to the involvement of multiple analysts.

For the current study, the researcher first defined a priori themes based on the priorities of prevention, prosecution, and protection (DOS, 2008) including informational categories related to training, victim identification, information sharing between agencies, key barriers, promising practices, and recommendations. The interviewer began the analytic process by coding and synthesizing the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. If these data were encompassed by the a priori themes, they were so coded. If not, new themes were created or existing themes were modified. A final data-derived template was used to interpret and frame the study findings. The strength of TA was the explicit documentation of all decision making during
the analytic process, providing data-based evidence for any interpretations or conclusions (King, 1998; King et al., 2002). Along with the analysis of the interview data, the descriptive statistics collected from each interviewee were assessed and provided confirmatory evidence of the qualitative findings.

Following the initial synthesis of the data by the interviewer and quantitative data by the interviewer, the data were further analyzed by a team of off-site research associates to confirm accurate handling of the data and to counter threats of investigator bias. As recommended by Beebe (2001), during this time period follow-up phone calls were made to study participants to gather missing information, seek out further explanations, and resolve any discrepancies in the findings. The interviewer reviewed and revised the study findings based on the newly collected information, incorporating the observations and analyses of the team of off-site research associates. Several prescribed cycles of data analysis continued over a one-month period.

3. Findings

As noted, the interviews of the study participants focused on three key components of combating domestic minor sex trafficking: prevention of child sex trafficking, prosecution of traffickers, and protection of victims. Due to the critical need for successful prosecutions of child sex traffickers in order to effectively combat this crime against children, the study findings regarding impediments to prosecution of sex traffickers of U.S. minors are highlighted here.

Quantitative information gathered during the assessment revealed that approximately 400 minors had been arrested and adjudicated for prostitution statewide since the passing of the TVPA in 2000 until 2007. In this metropolitan area, from 2000 to 2007, fewer than ten cases of domestic minor sex trafficking involving prostitution were investigated by those interviewed during this study. Only one of those cases resulted in the successful prosecution of the trafficker.
No arrests or prosecutions of those facilitating domestic minor sex trafficking (i.e., hotel owners, strip club managers) were reported. Although law enforcement agreed that all cases of sex trafficking of U.S. minors, including those involving prostitution, should be treated as a high priority, they reported significant obstacles to collecting evidence and prosecuting sex traffickers of U.S. minors. First and foremost, the cooperation of the minor victim is needed to identify the trafficker. One investigator of cyber-crimes against children reported, “Victim testimony is very powerful and needed in the courtroom to provide evidence of the crime and the detrimental effect on the victim. Without that testimony, the likelihood of a conviction is slim.” Another law enforcement investigator stated that “without victim cooperation there was little interest in pursuing a sex trafficking investigation.” The few U.S. minor victims identified as victims of sex trafficking by the study participants since 2000 had been unwilling to assist with an investigation of their trafficker.

3.1. Psychological Barriers to Prosecutions of Child Sex Traffickers

According to the study participants, victims of child sex trafficking do not necessarily view themselves to be victims, nor do they view their trafficker as an exploiter. Confused about their culpability and responsibility for the crime being committed against them, it was reported that these minors often minimize or deny their sexual victimization. Unfortunately, based on the findings of this assessment minors exploited in prostitution are more likely to be arrested and charged with prostitution with no charges being filed against their traffickers. According to victim advocates and child protection investigators, “being picked up by the police only increases [the youth’s] distrust of everyone who is an authority figure, including child social service providers, and pushes the youth toward those using them.” Exploited minors’ lack of trust in law enforcement and in other professionals involved in their care is compounded when they are
arrested and labeled delinquent. Such treatment was thought to reinforce the lies fed to the minors by their traffickers regarding the untrustworthiness of others, and further solidifies minors’ conviction that their traffickers are the only ones worthy of their trust and loyalty. An interviewee with child protective services recounted that even when sexually exploited minors willingly return for services “they will share just enough information about their exploitation to be removed from the situation but not enough to identify their trafficker or pimp. They will not give up [the name of] their pimp or ‘boyfriend’ because they do not trust anyone and do not know when they may need a place to run to in the future.” She further clarified that, “These kids have been trained to manipulate and lie to survive; they can’t just turn that on and off.” The arrest and placement of minor victims of sex trafficking in juvenile detention facilities are not consistent with the provisions of the TVPA of 2000 that specify that victims of trafficking are not to be punished for offenses committed as a result of being trafficked, nor are they to be detained in facilities that are inappropriate for crime victims. Yet, numerous members of law enforcement confirmed that there are no safe shelter alternatives for trafficked youth in this metropolitan area apart from juvenile justice facilities.

Study participants described runaways who are prostituted as unwilling witnesses due to exploitive tactics of traffickers that create dysfunctional psychological attachments or trauma bonds—chains that link a victim to someone dangerous to them (Carnes, 1997; Dutton 1993; James, 1994). Most minors encountered by the study participants insisted that they were engaging in prostitution to help out their boyfriends. One director of an alternative school for at-risk girls noted that “girls often completely believed that they were earning money for their boyfriend because he was in a desperate situation and was an emergency or short-term.” She went on to say, “to these girls the word prostitution does not describe what they were doing.”
One study participant with child protective services stated, “People who use kids like this are the most brilliant child psychologists on the planet. They know these kids are not credible, they know how to manipulate them into being less credible, they get them addicted to something, anything; then even if the child does rat them out, no one will believe them.” Often, the fear instilled by the trafficker far outweighs the offer of protection and assistance by law enforcement and service providers. Most study participants understood that the hesitancy to cooperate with law enforcement by minors engaged in prostitution was a direct result of the minors’ experience of the brutal reality of harm that their traffickers can inflict. Several interviewees did not concur with the notion that minor victims of trafficking were fearful and exploited. Juvenile justice administrators who did not provide direct services but rather held supervisory roles stated that these youth “know exactly what they are doing” and labeled them “sex offenders” during interviews. However, prostitution is considered a public order crime not a sex offense. This mislabeling highlighted the typical confusion regarding minors charged with prostitution within the juvenile justice system. This inconsistency concurs with a recent national study that found 40% of U.S. minors involved in prostitution were arrested and treated as juvenile delinquents by law enforcement while 60% were not arrested but treated as victims (Halter, 2010). Regardless of the assessment of youth as exploited or as voluntarily engaging in prostitution, study participants reported that those involved with the prostitution of minors remain relatively safe from arrest and prosecution, stating that “traffickers manage to operate safely below the radar of most law enforcement” and “due to less severe sentencing guidelines for sex trafficking minors than trafficking cocaine combined with the fact that the kids won’t testify against you – it’s a relatively safe crime to commit.”
Further complicating the problem, study participants reported that trafficked minors detained by law enforcement frequently attempt escape at the first opportunity, only to be revictimized by their traffickers. One law enforcement investigator told how one girl who he was transporting across state to a treatment facility “jumped from his car and ran as soon as he stopped at the first red light.” Interviewees involved in investigations of traffickers or with child protective services were gravely concerned at the high rate of revictimization that occurs with trafficked minors. One investigator stated that child sex traffickers knew the locations of group homes to which their victims would be returned after being detained by law enforcement. He recounted how “traffickers would wait near these group homes in order to pick up their victims when they run away.” He noted that girls who have traffickers “will run away from insecure facilities within 24 hours of being returned and soon be picked up again by police in areas that are known for prostitution.” The investigator added, “There is no public transportation from the group homes to these areas, so unless the girls are hitchhiking, someone is transporting them.”

Study participants presumed that the unrelenting motivation of sex traffickers to regain possession of a victim is driven by the enormous profits gained through this crime. An investigator provided specifics on the amount of money that can be earned stating that “johns will pay $150 for sex with a girl and the girls will have eight or more johns per day” (i.e., profit of $1200/day), with all of the money going to the trafficker minus the incidental expenses of keeping a minor (i.e., “pizza and taking her to get a manicure”). A juvenile court representative recounted her disappointment and perplexity regarding the behavior of a trafficked 14-year-old girl, who received inpatient psychiatric care over a period of months, only to return to her trafficker at the first opportunity. When later questioned regarding her reasons, the minor explained to the staff that this trafficker “took care of her in ways no one else ever had” (i.e.,
“bought her pizza and McDonalds, took her to get her nails done”). The study participants observed that the colluding effects of a childhood characterized by neglect and/or abuse coupled with the calculated exploitative methods of sex traffickers creates a melding, or trauma bonding, of the minor to the trafficker that is extremely difficult to for these professionals to resolve or overcome. The complexity of assisting trafficked youth encountered by these professionals was corroborated by a recent study of sexually exploited youth that noted, “while we lack sufficient information about the nature of the relationship that these youth have with their pimps, clearly there is a strong bond between them that will require a sustained and robust effort by practitioners to break” (Curtis et al., 2008, p. 119). Failure to detect and adequately address the psychological stronghold that traffickers maintain over victims was perceived to be a key barrier to the successful prosecution of traffickers and the protection of victims.

3.2. Legislative and Systemic Impediments to Prosecutions of Child Sex Traffickers

As previously mentioned, approximately 400 minors had been arrested and adjudicated for prostitution statewide since the passing of the TVPA in 2000 until 2007. Most of these arrested and adjudicated minors were not identified as trafficking victims by the professionals serving them, nor did they self-identify as victims. Due to the manipulation tactics and threats of traffickers combined with victims’ immaturity, such spontaneous disclosures of victimization in sex trafficking were noted as being exceedingly rare. As described by one victim advocate, “It can take up to ten interactions with a trafficking victim before trust is built and the truth is told.”

In general, minors arrested for prostitution were encouraged to plead guilty. A study participant from the juvenile public defender’s office, serving at one of the two judicial circuits within the study area, reported that as far as she knew “no cases of juvenile prostitution had been defended by their office since 2000.” Instead, the practice of this juvenile public defender’s
office was to encourage all minors charged to plead guilty rather than incur court expenditures. It is important to note that juveniles were only assigned a public defender if they pled not guilty. In order to reduce the number of juvenile court cases and to allow the court to concentrate its efforts on the juvenile offenders with more severe charges, the circuit court in the region maintains a diversion program for juvenile misdemeanor offenders. Minors who successfully complete the diversion program have their charges dismissed. Only juveniles who admit guilt to the charges brought against them are eligible for participation in the diversion program. Additionally, the court often orders juvenile defendants to pay court fees (including fees for public defenders) as part of their sentence. This practice is employed to reimburse the county or state for the services of public defenders and other court personnel. As a result, pleading guilty was considered the preferred path as a juvenile prostitution charge was only a misdemeanor. However, encouraging minors charged with prostitution, who are possibly victims of sex trafficking, to plead guilty drew them further into the juvenile justice system, prevented a victim-centered response, severely curtailed the likelihood of an investigation of the trafficker, and confirmed to the victims that they are juvenile delinquents and not entitled to protection or victim services.

The overwhelming majority of sex trafficking cases reported by law enforcement and prosecutors during this assessment involved child pornography and were investigated and prosecuted by federally and state funded ICAC units. These units were comprised of law enforcement investigators and prosecutors whose primary mission is to target child predators, child pornography, and Internet-based sexual exploitation of children. In recent years, state legislation increased penalties for the possession or distribution of child pornography online and created a new, separate penalty against Internet predators who communicate with a child online.
and then travel to meet that child for the specific purpose of further abusing them. State legislation also increased penalties for offenders who misrepresent their age to seduce a child over the Internet. The law substantially increased penalties for collectors of child pornography who have more than 10 images of child pornography and either possess or promote child pornography with images of children under the age of five, sexual battery of a child, sadomasochistic abuse of a child, bestiality involving a child, or any pornographic video or live movie of a child. From 2005-2007, the ICAC units across the state collectively facilitated the arrests of 50 individuals who created, possessed, or distributed child pornography, or who sexually solicited children online and traveled to meet them. Members of the ICAC units reported significant success in arresting and prosecuting these types of sex trafficking cases, although the classification and use of the term “human trafficking” in connection with these cases were nonexistent.

This disconnect ran deeper than simply a lack of common terminology. The assessment revealed a lack of coordination or cooperation between those investigating child pornography cases and those working on child prostitution cases. Traffickers who prostitute minors often multiply their profits by producing and marketing photos and videos of their victims (Brayley et al., 2011; Cooper, 2005b; Klain, Davies, & Hicks, 2001). Information sharing could assist in building cases against sex traffickers who prostitute minors by providing clear evidence of the crime. Such evidence is rarely available for prosecutions of child sex trafficking cases involving prostitution and victim cooperation is often difficult to obtain.

Additionally, the assessment revealed that the fragile state and special needs of minor victims of sex trafficking are incompatible with current procedures regarding child witnesses in criminal cases. During interviews with the staff at the regional child justice center it was stated...
that “live-feed capability into the courtroom had not yet been used in a single criminal case involving child victims.” Frustration over the lack of victim-centered court processes was high among victim advocates interviewed during this study, as they reported many child witnesses/victims begged to be excused from participating in trial proceedings often refusing to testify due to fear and dread of facing their alleged perpetrator in court. Beyond the unavailability of victim-centered court processes, victim advocates also stated that taped depositions of child witnesses were regularly made available to lawyers of alleged perpetrators as part of the trial discovery process. One interviewee had experienced this first hand as “a sex offender brought a copy of the taped deposition of his [alleged] child victim to a therapy session.” Participants reported that adult sex offenders obtained the tapes of the child victims/witnesses from their lawyers. Several participants noted that this practice of making child victims’ recordings available to their alleged perpetrator functioned as an unintentional yet substantial deterrent to child victims’ willingness to testify. Child sex trafficking victims who have been intimidated, threatened, and victimized may be reluctant give a deposition or testify knowing that their traffickers could obtain their recorded testimony.

Related to the lack of protection of child witnesses in sex trafficking cases, the assessment found that the identities of minor victims who cooperate with law enforcement in sex trafficking cases are not sufficiently protected. As evidence of this problem, the statements to police by several minor victims of sex trafficking, the birth date of the minors, their initials, and sheltering agency were posted on the Internet in a news article regarding the case. The alleged sex trafficker was still at-large, and described as armed and dangerous. Immediate legislative changes are needed to protect the identities and the lives of minors who choose to cooperate with law enforcement in the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. The United Nations
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000, Art. 6(1)) addresses this critical need by requiring that action be taken to protect the identity of victims, including making legal proceeding confidential. This may require passing legislation that would not allow members of the public or media representatives to have access to any legal proceedings or by imposing limits on the publication of specific information that would permit identification of the victim. The protocol notes that amendments to state laws may be needed to make this possible.

4. Conclusion

This study sought to substantiate whether the passing of the TVPA (2000) was “making a difference for many American girls, mostly runaways, who are then victimized by the traffickers” (statement by Representative Smith during legislation deliberations, quoted in Adelson, 2008, p. 101) in one U.S. metropolitan area that is known to be a high child prostitution area (OIG, 2009). Secondly, the study sought to uncover existing barriers to successful prosecutions of sex traffickers exploiting U.S. minors. As was anticipated, collecting data from multiple sources and the use of multiple methods provided an adequate depiction of the localized situation (Beebe, 2001; Patton, 2002; Trotter et al., 2001). Drawing from the perspectives of law enforcement officers, local and federal prosecutors, juvenile justice staff, and victim advocates illuminated the complex issues involved in prosecuting cases involving sex trafficking of U.S. minors in the selected metropolitan area. The study also revealed several inadequacies within the regional criminal justice system – such as the failure of juvenile justice staff to identify possible victims of sex trafficking, the encouragement of minors charged with prostitution to plead guilty to reduce court expenditures, the absence of collaboration between those investigating child pornography and those investigating child sex trafficking, and inadequate implementation of
Impediments to Successful Prosecutions of Child Sex Traffickers

victim-centered court processes – which may contribute to the problem of child sex trafficking persisting as a low risk/high reward crime (Hodge & Lietz, 2007; Shelley, 2010; Wheaton et al., 2010).

4.1. Implications and Recommendations

The proper identification of potential victims is considered by many law enforcement officials to be the key to combating human trafficking in the United States (General Accounting Office [GAO], 2007). This assessment revealed that among professionals most likely to encounter child sex trafficking victims, many were misidentifying victims as juvenile delinquents. This lack of understanding was evidenced by the high number of minors arrested for prostitution and the rare identification of U.S. minors as victims of sex trafficking. The identification of minor victims is important not only because they need protection, but also because the successful prosecution of traffickers hinges on the identification and testimony of victims. Misidentification of victims as juvenile delinquents causes the chain of events that should follow – an investigation, prosecution of the trafficker, and victim restoration – to break down before it even begins.

Because of the “hidden” nature of the crime, many law enforcement officials believe the key to combating human trafficking in the U.S. lies in the ability to effectively identify and engage potential victims (GAO, 2007). Successful human trafficking prosecutions often hinge on victim testimony and cooperation. Identifying and engaging victims, however, requires a systemic effort among law enforcement, social service providers, school staff, medical personnel, charity workers, and other non-governmental professionals. Numerous successful examples of such collaborations are emerging from among the global efforts to combat child sex trafficking (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2008).
highlighted one such best practice begun in Mumbai, India purposed toward ensuring victim protection and fostering successful prosecution of traffickers. Before, during, and after police raids, the Rescue Foundation in Mumbai, a non-governmental organization (NGO), works together with law enforcement to provide assistance and counseling to victims of sex trafficking. Prior to a police raid, if a minor is suspected of being trafficked at a certain locality, a decoy customer from the NGO is sent to the location or brothel to gain the trust of the victim. At times numerous visits are needed to convince the girl that she can be rescued and to allay her fears of violent retribution by the traffickers (UNODC, 2008). Following police raids, victims of repeated sexual trauma are in no condition to endure questioning by law enforcement, so counselors from the NGO are present with the victims from the very first interview with law enforcement (UNODC, 2008).

Across all of primary professional domains involved in this study, there seemed to be a collective deficiency in competency needed to counter the complex relationship bond that often forms between traffickers and victims. A paradoxical mixture of affection with violent or threatening behaviors characterized the relationships between traffickers and victims reported during this assessment. While numerous case studies have documented entrapment experiences of prostituted youth, very few researchers have conducted in-depth investigations into the nature of the exploitative relationship or trauma bond between sex traffickers and minor victims. Gaining insight into the psychological stronghold that traffickers seem to maintain over minor victims is needed to ensure the successful prosecution of traffickers, and to inform standards of care for minor victims of sex trafficking that are currently very limited or practically nonexistent (Saewye & Edinburgh, 2009).
Prosecutions of sex traffickers of U.S. minors are essential, and it is important that these cases result in convictions and appropriate sentences (DOS, 2010; Shelley, 2010). Collaborative efforts between all agencies and organizations in the prosecution process are critical to securing convictions of traffickers. This assessment found a lack of collaboration between those investigating the two major forms of child sex trafficking – pornography and prostitution. Coordination between investigations of these two types of cases could prove to be highly beneficial as obtaining victim testimony against traffickers can be a challenge. Firm evidence of sex trafficking gathered during child pornography cases such as pornographic images of underage victims could increase the likelihood of successfully prosecutions.

Adopting strong legislation criminalizing child sex trafficking and laws that protect victims are critical. Although state legislation increased penalties for the possession or distribution of child pornography and other types of cyber crimes against children, similar legislative efforts are needed to improve legislation combating child sex trafficking involving prostitution. For example, several states including Tennessee and Illinois have enacted state legislation that prevents minors from being charged with prostitution. Tennessee Code Ann. § 39-13-513 (Prostitution) states “if it is determined after a reasonable detention for investigative purposes, that a person suspected of or charged with a violation of this section is under eighteen (18) years of age, that person shall be immune from prosecution for prostitution as a juvenile or adult.” Such legislation would facilitate the protection the victims of domestic minor sex trafficking by recognizing them as victims and ensuring that they are not simultaneously subject to arrest and prosecution for prostitution that was a result of being trafficked. As previously noted, legislation that ensures the protection of the identity of minors who cooperate with law enforcement needs
Impediments to Successful Prosecutions of Child Sex Traffickers

to drafted, passed, and enacted immediately in accordance with the United Nations (2000) protocol regarding trafficking in persons.

4.2. Limitations

Despite the current study’s successful production of quality and actionable results, this study has several limitations. First, a single field researcher conducted all the interviews. Ideally, using a team of interviewers would have added diversity and a varied set of expertise from several disciplines into data collection process. However, for this study using a sole interviewer for a longer period of time was preferred over using a team of interviewers over a shorter period of time. Primarily this decision was related to the time and flexibility necessary to set and confirm appointments with a very busy group of professionals. Using a single interviewer over a longer period allowed greater flexibility in setting appointments, allowing for the inclusion of numerous key individuals in the study. Also, to offset this limitation, a team of offsite research associates were engaged in the process of data analysis.

In addition, the study was limited to one region and therefore can only provide information on the effects of the TVPA (2000) within one area of the United States. Although, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the TVPA in one metropolitan area labeled as a high intensity child prostitution area (OIG, 2009), the effects of the TVPA may vary widely across different regions of the United States.

4.3. Future Research Directions

Criminal justice research has much to contribute to emergent efforts directed at developing policies and practices purposed toward protecting minors and successfully prosecuting child sex traffickers. All study participants, from law enforcement professionals to victim advocates, agreed that the primary barrier to prosecuting child sex traffickers is the
Impediments to Successful Prosecutions of Child Sex Traffickers

precarious psychological state of the victims. Traffickers often presented themselves as caring and strong boyfriends who promised to help minors escape from a brutal life on the streets or an abusive home. Maltreated minors can be easily seduced by the traffickers’ fraudulent promises of the love, safety, and attention. One previous research study found that sex traffickers or pimps were more likely possess psychopathic tendencies than other types of offenders (Spidel et al., 2007). However, further investigations into the common characteristics or psychological profiles of sex traffickers are needed. Such studies could provide useful information on the tactics and strategies that facilitate sex traffickers’ exploitation of minors in child sex trafficking.

In addition, evaluations of policies and programs that respond to child sex trafficking are almost completely absent from current research on this topic. Addressing deficiencies in research on this topic, Laczko (2005) concluded that there have been very few —systematic studies of the role of actors involved in the fight against trafficking, such as service providers, law enforcement agencies, and NGOs (p. 14). Evaluation research is necessary to assist policy makers in implementing effective strategies and to guide social service providers toward best practices focused on rescuing and restoring victims (Saewyc & Edinburgh, 2009). Such evaluations are vitally important for law enforcement and other professionals working in the criminal justice system to facilitate and aid their efforts to protect victims and prosecute traffickers (GAO, 2007). Although the current study contributes to the need for such research through the evaluation of the criminal justice response to child sex trafficking in one metropolitan area of the United States, greater participation and involvement by criminal justice researchers is needed.

4.4. Contributions of the Study

Although RA methodology has been applied in research studies across various disciplines
Impediments to Successful Prosecutions of Child Sex Traffickers

(e.g., Fennessy et al., 2004; Macinko et al., 2007; Parry et al., 2008; Parry et al., 2009; Trotter et al., 2001), Beebe (2001) notes the need for more empirical evidence comparing the results from studies using RA methodology with those findings using more conventional methods. As previously noted, RA methodology has been found useful in providing actionable information regarding problems similar to child sex trafficking, which are concentrated in particular regions and are not yet observed within the typically available data sets (Trotter et al., 2001). The findings of this study provide useful validation of RA methodology, as the results from this study are remarkably similar to the findings of previous qualitative research regarding law enforcement responses to child sex trafficking that utilized more conventional and empirically supported methodologies (Brayley et al., 2011; Halter, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2009).

In closing, preventing and combating child sex trafficking are among the most vexing problems currently facing the law enforcement community. The federal government has invested millions of dollars in these efforts, as well as hundreds of law enforcement personnel (GAO, 2007). Despite high levels of governmental action, genuine public concern, and intense media attention on the topic of child sex trafficking, this assessment revealed the existence of a vacuum of information regarding this crime, its victims, and best practices for protecting victims and successfully prosecuting traffickers (Brayley et al., 2011; Estes & Weiner, 2005; Saewyc & Edinburgh, 2009; Williams & Frederick, 2009). Considering the psychological and legal complexities of this crime committed against a vulnerable segment of the population, preventing and abating further escalation of this crime against children in the United States will require an interdisciplinary effort by legislators, law enforcement personnel, child advocates, and scholarly researchers (Shelley, 2010).
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Appendix A

Sample Form for Collecting Statistics (Shared Hope International, 2007)

For Law Enforcement/Public Defenders/Prosecutors

1. How many domestic minor sex trafficking victims has your agency identified since 2000? Or how many juveniles were arrested for prostitution since 2000? If you can yearly figures, that would be helpful as well.

2. Have there been any arrests/cases of traffickers/pimps of domestic minors for commercial sexual exploitation? If yes, how many arrests since 2000? If yes, what charges were brought against the traffickers/pimps?

3. Have there been any arrests/cases of johns buying commercial sex services from a domestic minor victim? If yes, how many arrests since 2000? If yes, what charges were brought against the johns?

4. Have any cases involved the arrest of those involved in facilitation trafficking of minors? (e.g., taxi drivers, hotel desk clerks, security guards, etc.). If yes, how many arrests/cases since 2000?

5. In reference to the identified domestic minor sex trafficking victims please provide, if available, the following statistical date:
   a. Average age range of the domestic minor sex trafficking victims you have served since 2000
   b. Racial breakdown of the domestic minor sex trafficking victims you have encountered
c. Any common family structures among the victims, such as single-parent households, multi-generational households, “latch-key” child, foster care, runaway, history of sexual abuse, etc.

d. In cases where the abuser is a family member subjecting the minor to commercial sex – what family member was the perpetrator?

e. Home states of victims who are identified. Number of girls local to the area or from out of county/out of state?
Footnotes

1 This delineation of childhood aligns with the definition of a child contained in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989) and the definitions of a child within *The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182*, which was ratified by 169 counties who have membership in the International Labour Organization (ILO) of the United Nations (ILO, n.d.). According to this ratified agreement, this definition of a child is binding regardless of national legislation. Even in countries with legalized prostitution, the commercial sexual exploitation of any individual under the age of 18 is to be prohibited (ILO, n.d.).

2 This notion is not accurate; even the youngest prostituted minors have most likely already been raped by family members or sex traffickers (Albanese, 2007). Due to possessing an underdeveloped genital tract with less efficient natural protectants against infections than adults and the frequent tearing of anal or vaginal tissue during intercourse, younger minors face greater risk for contracting sexually transmissible infections (Farr, 2005; Leth, 2005; Kreston, 2000, 2005; Hughes, 2002). In addition, young victims lack the power or even awareness to demand protected sex. This lack of awareness disastrously combines with the willingness of those who buy sex with children to pay more for sex without a condom to elevate minors’ vulnerability to infection (Farr, 2005; Leech, 2002; Leth, 2005; Raymond et al., 2010).

3 For example, a question targeting prosecutors was “What victim-centered steps are in place throughout the investigation to facilitate the minor’s participation, while minimizing the potential for revictimization? (e.g., videotaped interviews, having a trained child forensic
interviewer on call/staff, creating protocol where the “arresting” officer is not also the intake interviewer)” (Shared Hope International, 2007, p. 28). For victim advocates, the question was slightly rephrased, “What victim-centered steps are in place throughout the investigation to minimize the potential for revictimization while facilitating the minor’s participation? Is your assistance part of these steps?” (Shared Hope International, 2007, p. 74).

The description of a young adult sex trafficking victim’s emotional fragility during her testimony in the trial of her sex trafficker indicates the importance of protecting child victims/witnesses, “Cowering and gasping for air, Gwen had barely started speaking when she succumbed to a panic attack. Judge Christopher Droney called for a break. McKee recalls, ‘Gwen totally broke down. Our hearts went out to her. She was reliving the experience. Then the defense attorney was on her. He really had some zest in questioning her. He just wrecked this girl on the stand.’ Reflects Scates, ‘Donovan’s only strategy was to discredit Gwen, but she was completely credible. Gwen was literally curled up in a ball with her knees up, leaning toward the judge’s bench, sobbing mournfully’” (Collins, 2011).