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Experiences of Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth in the United States: A Qualitative Systematic Review

Michelle D. Hampton, *Samuel Merritt University*

Michelle Lieggi, *University of California, San Francisco Medical Center*



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Experiences of CSEY in the US

A Qualitative Systematic Review

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Michelle DeCoux Hampton, RN, PhD

Associate Professor

The Valley Foundation School of Nursing

College of Health and Human Sciences

Disclosure Statement

No relationships to disclose.

CSEY

Type of human trafficking involving sexual abuse of a child or adolescent (pornography, physical abuse, or sex work) for financial gain¹

Background

Prevalence



Reasons for Under-reporting

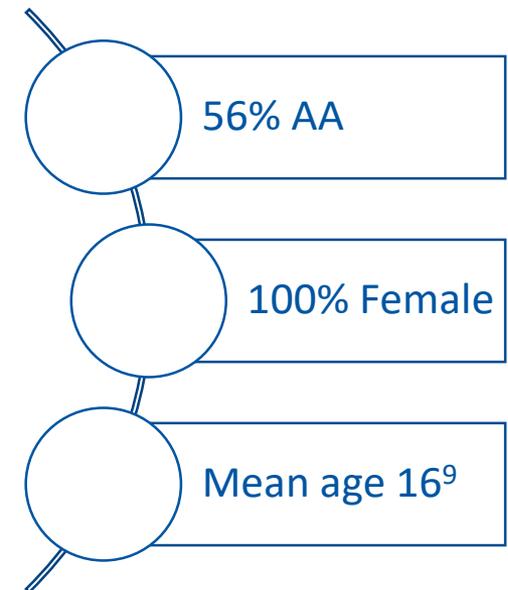
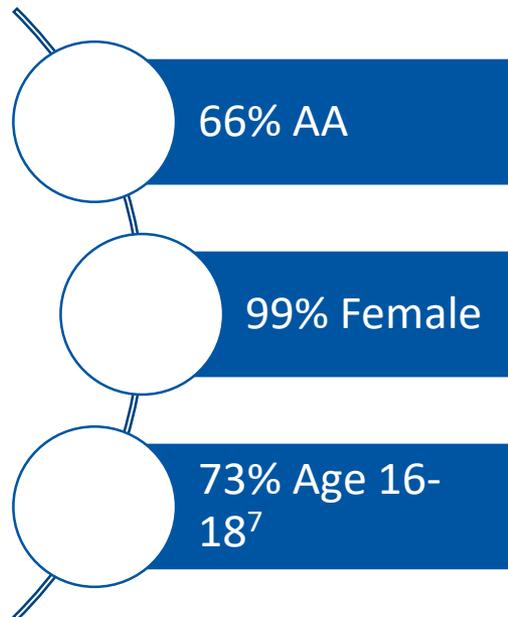
- Frequent moving across borders
- Online advertising⁴
- False identification
- Appearance changed to look older⁴
- Lack of follow through on abuse reports⁵



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Common Characteristics

Consistencies and Inconsistencies



Influences

Preceding Entry

Abandoned¹⁰

Criminal activity by parents

Abuse and neglect¹⁰

Polyvictimization¹¹

Preventing Exit

Fear of exploiter

Need for food, housing,
drugs¹²

Manipulation¹³

Lack of education/
independent living skills¹⁴

Purpose

- Explore the experiences that influence youth vulnerability to sex work
- Aggregate qualitative evidence to describe characteristics of CSEY
- Explore factors that influence sex work entry, continuation, and exit among adolescents in the US

Methods

Search

Published and unpublished

9 databases

KW: human trafficking, prostitution, CSE, adolescent, teen, youth

Inclusion/Exclusion

Qualitative study

First hand account of current or former CSEY

US since 2000

Categories/Themes

Investigator
findings

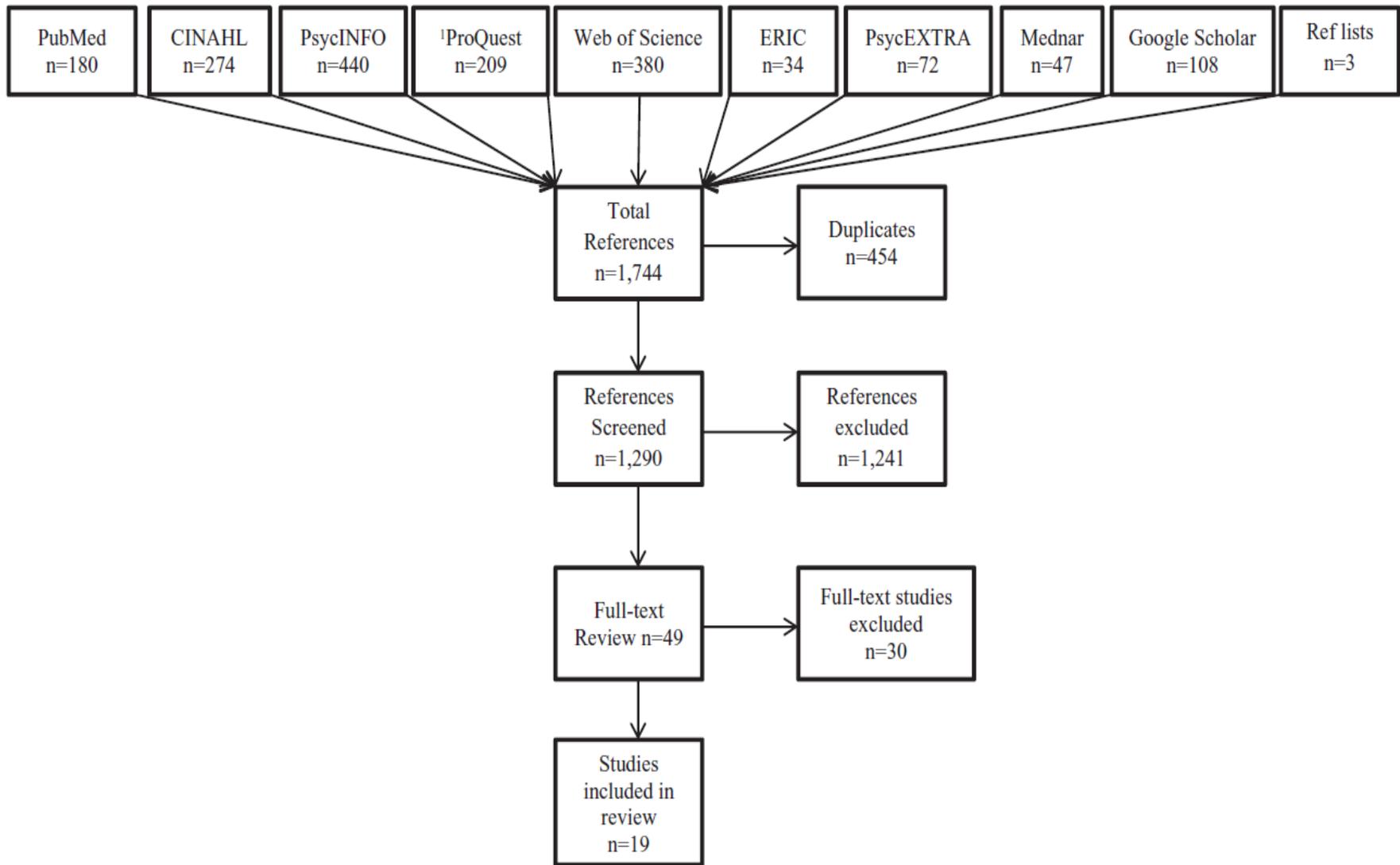
Emergent
themes within
quotes

Illustrations

Compiled across
all studies to
validate themes

Selected most
representative
and poignant

Results



Participants

- N=795
- Females 462
- Males 276
- Transgender 57
- States: AZ, CA, CT, FL, IL, MA, MN, NY, WA, DC
- Or Midwest, West, Northeast, South, Southwest

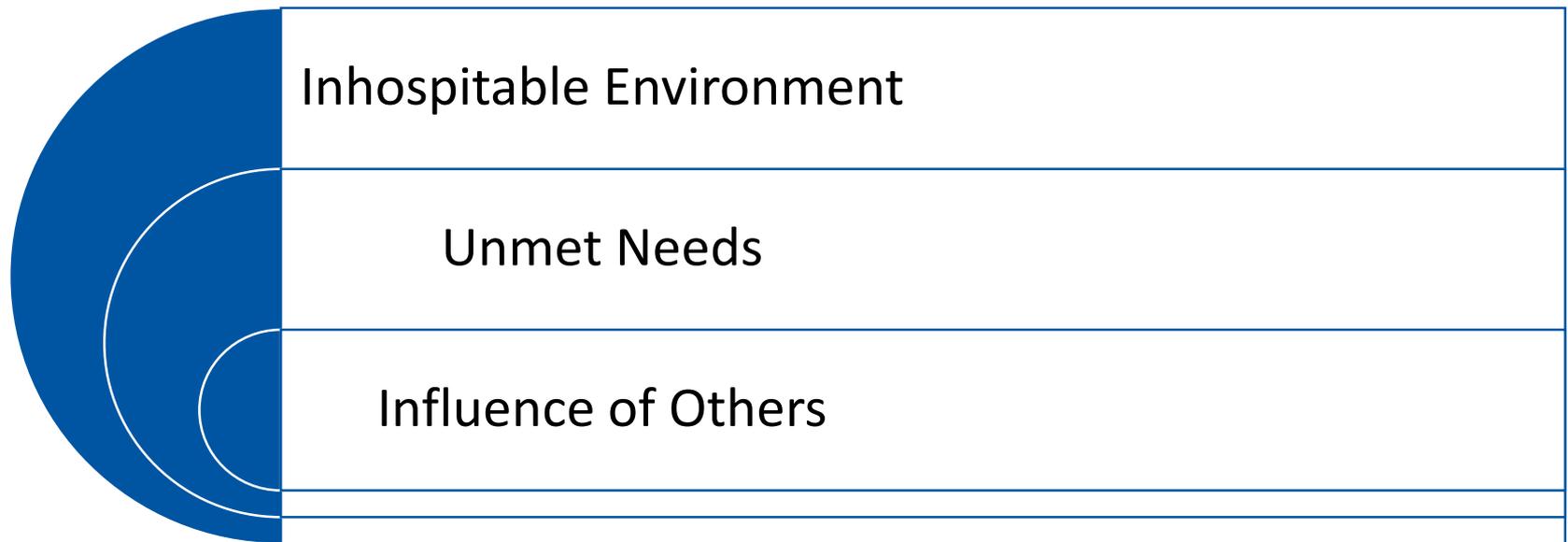
Methods of Inquiry

- General qualitative
- Consensual qualitative research
- Feminist
- Narrative
- Photovoice
- Phenomenology
- Grounded theory...

Categories

- Experiences **preceding** entry
- Experiences facilitating **continuation**
- Experiences facilitating **exit**

Experiences preceding entry



Inhospitable Environment

“The people that my mama gave me to, one [of] their sons molested me real bad. I would go through the house and he would catch me in the kitchen and do stuff to me...Grandpa, his daddy, he would always give me a little money to feel and touch on me and stuff like that, so that’s how I got off into that [prostitution]. I learned that if I wanted something, I had to give up something.”¹⁵

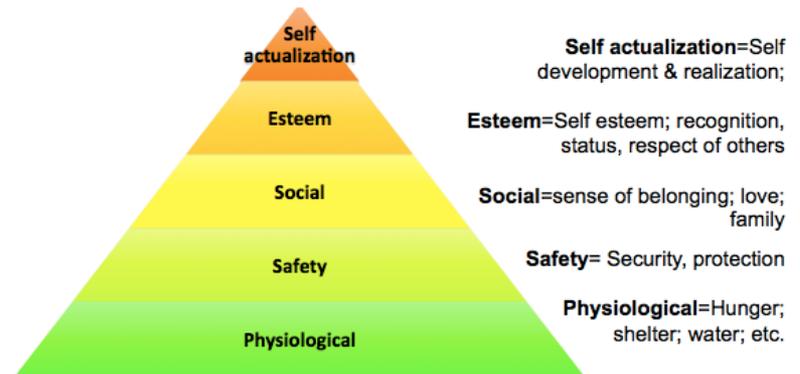


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Unmet Needs

“...If you think about a bad relationship that you were in, at first it wasn't bad. There was so much love there, but maybe after about 6 months...it just turns bad, but you want so much for what it was in the beginning to return that you'll stay in that relationship and you'll do anything in hopes that it will return back to that. But the problem for girls in the life and with pimps is that that was never real, so it will never, ever go back to that because it never existed...”¹⁶

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



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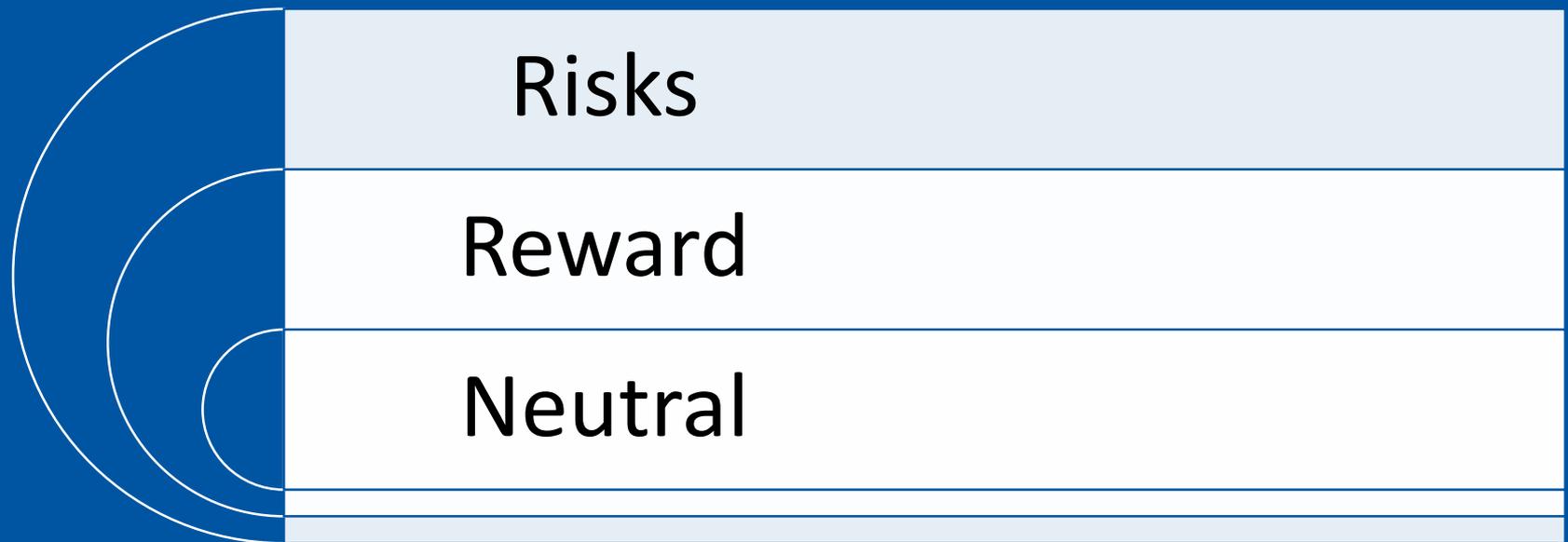
Influence of Others

“...I was raised up with the game period, the pimping. My daddy was a pimp...My uncles ‘nem was pimps and I knew when I used to see the women and the houses we were in I was like, I was the one that lingered on with the adults.”¹⁷



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Experiences Facilitating Continuation



Risks

“...I know there are things as far as like STD’s and HIV and I don’t care. What I mean is, I really don’t care if a person want to go out there and have sex. I used to feel bad ‘cos there was a lot of kids got out there at an early age, but...I actually have to go out there and make money, you know, so how can I care about the risks...”¹⁸



Rewards

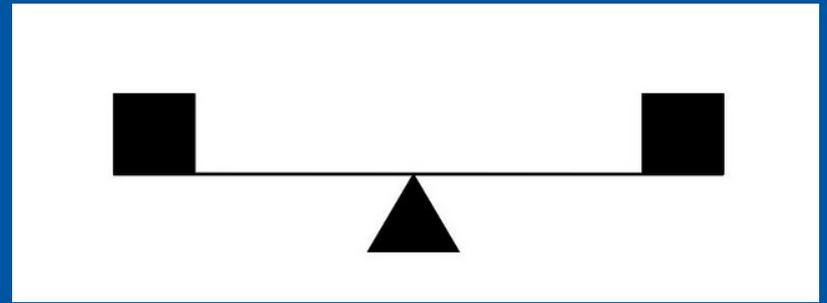
“Such is the power of effective slave training. When done properly—with just the right mix of isolation, degradation, violence, pain, terror, and occasional kindness—it can really be used to control someone body and soul.”¹⁹

“...I knew who my people were, where I belonged, who I belonged to...The good part was the sense of belonging. I knew I belonged to that group of ghetto hustlers.”²⁰

Balance 12/8/17	
Happiness	Troubles
	Failures 367.20
	Defeats 46
	Downfalls 27.09
	Mistakes 176.11
	616.40
	X Stress @ 17.8% 109.71

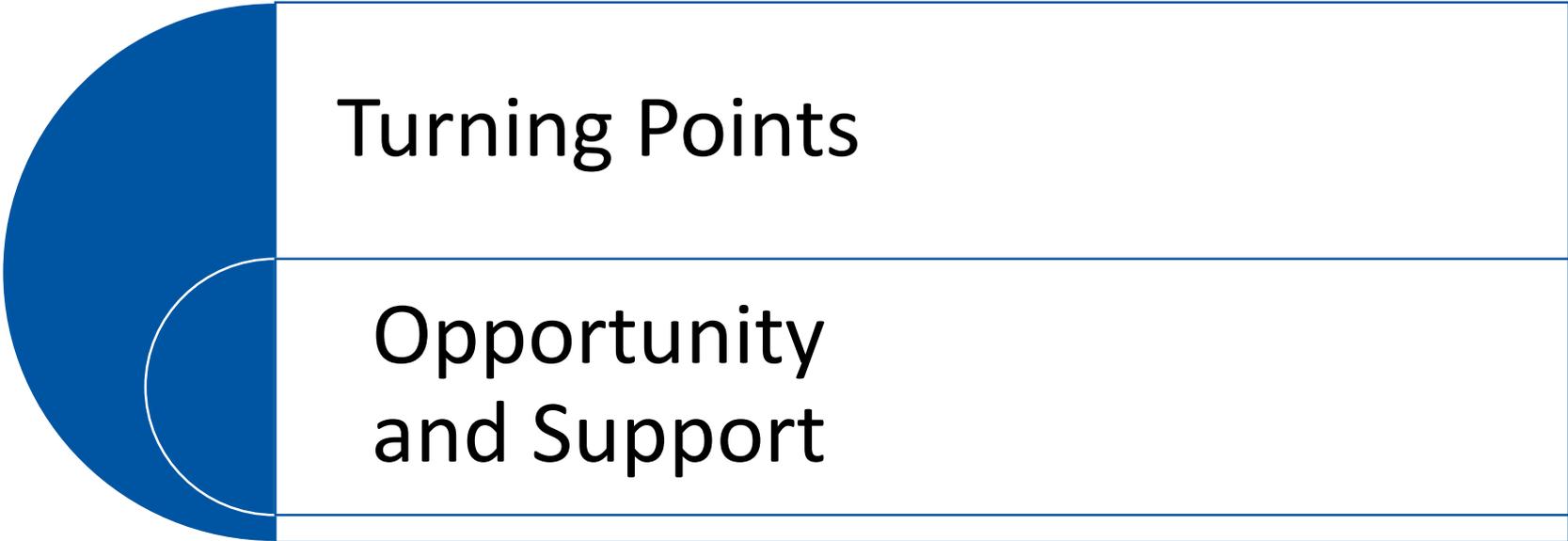
Neutral

"Sometimes they don't even want sex, sometimes they just crave the attention, and sometimes they just want that person to be next to them. I guess they just like, feed off of the attraction or whatever but, it's cool, like they, they're very nice, take me out to eat, chill, watch a movie, sometimes of course there have been sexual encounters, but like it doesn't really—it's not so strong. Not like how regular dates would be if you wanted to just have sex, you just want sex and then money and that's it."²¹



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Experiences Facilitating Exit



Turning Points

Opportunity
and Support

Turning Points

"I can't explain for other people but I can explain for myself...I slept with 50 men over that weekend, Friday through Sunday. I probably got like 5 to 6 hours sleep, um, just constantly out there, you know, cold and freezing, and I was thinking to myself 'oh my god it will never end'. I was jumping in and out of cars constantly, sucking dick, fucking, you know, and I was just like what if I catch HIV?....you know, I feel like a big whore and that kept on going through my head, why the fuck am I doing this? Do I want to be another statistic, you know, another transgender girl gets in a car and a boy doesn't know 'she's' a 'he'...and he takes her and kills her, takes her off and plays it off and then leaves her in the middle of nowhere and shoots her, stabs her up or cuts her body up...and I got scared...I was like I can't do this anymore, I have to think about myself, you know, this is not working...and I told him [i.e., pimp] that I wanted to be out and he didn't take it very well. He told me if he ever saw me that he would shoot me."¹⁸



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Opportunity and Support

"You know since being here I've learned a lot of things. I live a better life today because I don't live by the codes of the streets anymore. I now decline sexual propositions in exchange for money. When I first came in I didn't know what I wanted at the time, but I did know that I didn't want any more of what I had been getting. It was the structured program set up that really helped me to talk about some things that had happened to me and what life was like when I was on the streets. I was able to tear down some fences and build some new ones and I was able to begin to see myself in another life. A lot of that was because the structure the program gave me, and all the things they offered, such as housing, food, job training..."²²



Discussion

Critical Review Findings²³

1. Layers of psychological, physical, environmental trauma
2. Deterrents to reporting abuses
3. Interactions with police
4. Positive and negative reinforcements for sex work
5. Service needs NOT limited to youth alone
6. Specialized service needs for transgender youth

Implications for Policy and Practice²³

1. Infrastructure for interdepartmental information sharing needed
2. Screening for polyvictimization in school, health, social service, and criminal justice settings
3. Training for professionals appropriate to role
4. Law enforcement policies and procedures that prevent further abuse and establish a safe setting to seek assistance
5. Recognize signs of emotional fatigue, shift in goals, absence of trafficker, and engagement with support agency to facilitate exit

Questions?



Table of Included Studies²³

Study	Methods	Participants ¹	Phenomenon	Location/Setting	Conclusions
Ashley, 2008	Mixed Methods	12 F, 5 T	CSEY in Illinois	Illinois/CSEY service setting	School prevention, family violence reduction, and screening needed.
Bruhns, 2014	Consensual qualitative research	11 F	CSEY lived experience, exit and recovery	Oakland, California/CSEY service setting	Exiting is facilitated by: social support, consistent relationships, and support in meeting basic needs.
Cavazos, 2014	Feminist	13 F, 3 T	Experiences of CSEY	Midwest and west/national online recruitment	Trauma-informed, substance use and medical care, education, housing, and family reintegration needed.
Cecchet, 2012	Narrative interviews	6 F	CSEY resilience	Seattle/ Trafficking service setting	Pregnancy, stress, and forming caring relationships led to sex trade exit.
Cimino, 2013 ²	Mixed methods	2 M, 4 F (+10 adult-entry participants)	Examination of intentions to exit prostitution	Phoenix/Sex worker service setting, flyers, and internet	Exiting sex work is influenced by attitudes, agency, self-efficacy, skills, and environmental constraints.
Cobbina & Oselin, 2011 ^{2,3}	Qualitative	20 F (+20 adult-entry participants)	Events preceding sex work entry and outcomes	Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Chicago, Hartford/Non-profit	Sex workers' needs vary depending on age of entry: adolescent vs. adult
Curtis, et al., 2008	Qualitative	N=249: 53.5% M, 42% F, 4.5% T	CSEY characteristics, experiences, & service needs	New York City/street youth service agencies	CSEY survivors were largely born in the US and did not have pimps. Housing was the most significant service need.
Dank, et al., 2015	Mixed methods	N=283: 47% M, 36% F, 16% T	LGBTQ involved in survival sex	New York City/street youth service agencies	Youth worked both under trafficker's control or independently. Most expressed a desire to stop sex work.
Edinburgh, et al., 2015	Mixed methods, retrospective	55 F, 7 M	CSE meaning and experiences	Midwest/Child advocacy center	Access to trauma-informed care is recommended for treatment.
Holger-Ambrose, et al., 2013	Qualitative	12 F and 1 T	Exploration of homeless CSEY service needs	Minneapolis & St. Paul/Youth shelters and street corners	Basic needs and health and safety education recommended for youth prior to CSE exposure.
Hurst, 2013	Mixed methods,	40 F	Relationship of	Midwest, west,	Prevention efforts are recommended

Table of Included Studies²³

	retrospective		childhood emotional abuse and CSE entry	northeast, and south/ internet survivor networks	and identifying children at risk based upon history of childhood abuse could be a way to identify youth at high risk.
Meister, 2014	Photovoice	5 females	Exploring current health and safety of former CSEY	Miami-Dade County/ CSEY service agency	Youth distrusted law enforcement. Engagement between police and CSEY is needed.
Monheit, 2010 ¹	Phenomenology	7 F (+8 adult-entry participants)	Lived experience of sex work	2 large northeast and southwest cities/sex work service agency	Entered sex work for money, housing, drugs, and to feel loved. Lack of self-agency made complicated exit.
Oselin, 2014 ^{1,2}	Ethnography/ Grounded theory	14 F (+26 adult-entry participants)	Sex work exit/sex worker-serving organizations	Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Chicago, Hartford/Non-profit	Sex work service organizations can support and improve quality of life for those who are/are not ready for exit.
Rees, 2010	Constructivist, grounded theory	18 T	Lived experience of transgender CSEY	New York City/ Youth service agency	Mentorship, employment support, and advocacy for transition-related healthcare delivery.
Robinson, 2004	Feminist case study	3 F	Lived experience, high school dropouts involved in sex work	Chicago/Sex work service agency	Common experiences included: limited or no supervision, pregnancy, substance use, sexual abuse, truancy, high crime, and untenable home life.
Rothman, Bazzi, & Bair-Merritt, 2015	Constructivist grounded theory	4 females	Exploration of abusive dating relationships prior to CSE	Location undisclosed/ Violence advocacy agency	CSEY leaving violent relationships is similar to intimate partner violence. Opportunities to exit are brief and complicated by emotional attachment.
Stevens, 2012	Auto-ethnography	1 F	Personal experience	New York City/self-reflection	Shame contribute to mental illness for survivors. Need validation to heal.
Williams & Frederick, 2009	Qualitative	24 F, 3 M, 1 T	Factors leading in and out of CSE	Boston, Washington, DC/Youth shelters and service agencies	Complex trauma can elicit behavior that makes it difficult for teens to request or accept the help

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