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The Invisible Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Boys and Their Barriers to Access to Services

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The Invisible Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation:

Boys and Their Barriers to Access to Services

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Criminology
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ABSTRACT

While there has been a large body of research conducted on girl (under the age of 18) victims of commercial sexual exploitation, boy (under the age of 18) victims do not seem to receive the same attention. From the few studies that have been conducted, boys and young male victims of commercial sexual exploitation have been shown to have gender specific barriers that prevent them from getting help, yet not many papers explore this unique problem. Using survey data from key providers that work in programs that serve commercially sexually exploited boys, the present study fills this hole in the literature by providing information on these barriers that boys face. This study is exploratory in nature as not much is known about the scope and prevalence of these barriers. However, using theory from feminist criminology and masculinity theory, three specific barriers are proposed as being potentially influential. These proposed barriers are hegemonic masculinity, male victimization/rape myths, and homophobia. While these are the barriers that are expected to be the most prevalent in the survey responses, other barriers will be examined as well depending on the answers that programs provide. Additionally, this study aims to highlight the lack of programs available for boys and suggests that the same barriers that prevent boys from being identified as victims may also be to blame for the lack of programs for boys.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking, also referred to as a form of modern slavery or trafficking in person, is a global issue and a significant public health threat (Bryant & Landman, 2020; Haney et al., 2020; UN General Assembly, 2000) Human trafficking is defined by the Palermo protocol as the following:

“...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (UN General Assembly, 2000, p.2)

The Palermo protocol was signed during the year 2000 and it was signed by 140 countries, including the United States (Baird & Connolly, 2021; UN General Assembly, 2000). The Palermo protocol recognized that victims of human trafficking could not consent to being trafficked and it signaled that human trafficking is a noteworthy issue that requires legislation to combat (Baird & Connolly, 2021; UN General Assembly, 2000).

It is estimated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) that, globally, 50 million people are victims of some form modern slavery, with 27.6 million people being victims of

forced labor and 6.3 million of those individuals being forced into sexual exploitation. (International Labor Organization, 2022). Children are specifically vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, with run-aways and children with traumatic backgrounds being particularly at risk (Baird & Connolly, 2021). The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is defined by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) as “a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person” (OJJDP, n.d., CSEC section). CSEC can include child sex trafficking/prostitution, sextortion, commercial production of child sexual exploitation material/child pornography, child marriage and child sex tourism (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.; Seigfried-Spellar & Soldino, 2020). CSEC can happen in both online and in-person settings (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d).

Although the exact number of commercially sexually exploited children is unknown, it is estimated that there are between 100,000 and 3 million exploited children in the in the United States alone. This number includes children forced into prostitution, pornography, and those trafficked for sexual slavery (Curtis, et al, 2008).

In recent years, there has been more focus on helping victims forced into sex-trafficking. However, one group of sex trafficked individuals that is still routinely overlooked by researchers and service providers is commercially sexually exploited boys and young men. In 2008, the John Jay College and the Center for Court Innovation study, *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in New York City*, estimated that, in the United States, around 50% of commercially sexually exploited children are boys (Curtis et al, 2008).

Despite reports that boys and girls may be commercially sex trafficked at similar rates, boy and girl victims are treated very differently (Curtis et al, 2008). An example of this is that most literature about CSEC is centered around girls. Additionally, most programs and agencies that help these children primarily report providing services to girls. (Josenhans et al, 2019). Alternatively, very few programs have been found to specifically target boy victims. A few reasons that explain this difference in response and treatment include: programs are already filled or are over capacity with girls, boys are often overlooked by law enforcement, organizations rarely receive referrals for or calls from boys, and programs report feeling ill-prepare to work with boys and need more training in order to properly help them (ECPAT, 2010).

This study examines the lack of treatment that boy and young men victims of commercial sexual exploitation receive. Furthermore, this study attempts to explain why boys and young men victims are often overlooked by providers. I argue that different gender specific barriers including beliefs about masculinity, homophobia, and male rape/male victimization myths may explain why boy and young men victims of sex-trafficking are deprived of treatment. This research is needed due to the lack of research around these topics and in order to further understand why boy victims are often overlooked. Recognizing the barriers to access to agencies and programs is important to better understand how to help more boy victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the future.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Size and Scope of Human Trafficking

Given the nature of the crime, the incidence and prevalence of human trafficking are difficult to estimate (Bryant & Landman, 2020; Haney et al., 2020). Nevertheless, in 2021, the ILO estimated that 50 million people were victims of modern slavery. This is around one out of 150 people worldwide. Additionally, 27.6 million people were victims of forced labor with 3.3 million of these labor trafficking victims being children. Of all child victims of labor trafficking, one half of them were victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Furthermore, 22 million people were estimated to be victims of forced marriage in 2021, with 14.2 million of those victims being women and girls (International Labor Organization, 2022).

Human trafficking may be domestic or international, and victims may be trafficked for various purposes, such as sexual exploitation, labor, organ harvesting, and domestic servitude. Human trafficking may also impact any individual regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, age, or gender (Toney-Butler et al., 2017). Despite the variation in types of human trafficking and victims, most research focuses largely on the sexual exploitation of women and young girls (Cockbain & Bowers, 2019). Therefore, more research is needed on a wider range of human trafficking victims to better understand trafficking dynamics and the different experiences of victims and survivors.

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

After signing the Palermo protocol, the United States passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) the same year (Baird & Connolly, 2021). The TVPA provided the first legal definition of sex trafficking in the United States. This act defined sex trafficking 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” (The Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000, p. 8).

It is important to note that sex trafficking is different than sex work. Sex works can be defined as “...the exchange of sexual services for money or goods, including housing, food, drugs, or basic necessities” (Sex Workers and Allies Network, & Yale Global Health Justice Partnership, 2020, p. 1). Some forms of sex work are legal such as stripping and web cam work while other forms such as street-based sex work is often illegal under prostitution laws. Sex workers can be victims of sex trafficking if force, fraud or coercion is involved, however not all sex workers are trafficked (Sex Workers and Allies Network, & Yale Global Health Justice Partnership, 2020). However, while adults can consent to sex work, minors (under the age of 18) cannot. This is why even without force, fraud or coercion in the traditional sense if a minor is involved in a commercial sex act it is considered sex trafficking (The Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000).

With the TVPA declaring minors (individuals under the age of 18) as being unable to consent to commercial sex, law enforcement began to view these commercially sexually exploited children as victims instead of criminalized youth. Additionally, in 2010 the annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* published by the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Office documented the existence of commercially sexually exploited children in the United

States (ECPAT, 2010). With this necessary shift of view, child victims began to be referred to as victims of sex trafficking rather than “teen prostitutes” (Baird & Connolly, 2021 p. 190).

Although many people and organizations are starting to identify commercially exploited children as victims, there are still those who continue to discriminate against them. This is especially harmful among law enforcement officers that still hold on to outdated beliefs about exploited children and view them as delinquents or offenders instead of victims (Bejinariu et al., 2021).

Risk Factors for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Children (individuals under the age of 18) tend to be the most vulnerable group of sex-trafficking victims, with the majority of victims reporting being recruited between the ages of 12 and 14 (Baird & Connolly, 2021). Certain risk factors put some children at a greater risk for exploitation than others, such as involvement with child protective services, a history of childhood sexual abuse, homelessness, exposure to intimate partner violence, problematic relationships with caregivers, drug and alcohol abuse, teen dating violence, and a history of physical, emotional abuse and/or neglect. (Reid et al, 2017). Child sexual abuse is a frequently cited risk factor for the CSEC for both boys and girls (Coy,2009; Mosack et al; Bounds et al, 2015; Reid & Piquero, 2014). Sexual abuse of children is maltreatment that involves a child in sexual activity for either sexual gratification or financial benefit of the perpetrator. This can include contacts for sexual purposes, molestation, statutory rape, prostitution, pornography, exposure, incest, and other forms of sexual exploitation (Abuse and Neglect, 1997; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). In 2020 it was estimated that there were 57,963 children in the United States that were victims of sexual abuse (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020)

Runaway and homeless youth are at high risk for sexual exploitation (Baird & Connolly, 2021). Nearly one in five homeless youth interviewed at Covenant House sites across ten cities reported experiencing human trafficking of some form, with the majority experiencing sexual exploitation (Murphy, 2016). It was found that 91% of homeless youth interviewed reported experiencing being offered lucrative work opportunities that ended up being either fraudulent, scams, or sex trafficking (Murphy, 2016). Furthermore, a different study on homeless youth found that 36% of those interviewed had engaged in a commercial sex act at some point in their lives, and 22% of youth that were approached for paid sex had this happen on their first night of experiencing homelessness (Wolfe et al, 2018). Fedina, et al. (2018) found that the predictors of runaway behaviors may include childhood emotional and physical abuse, having friends who sold sex, having a much older boyfriend/girlfriend, dropping out of school, being worried about where to eat or sleep, homelessness, and frequent alcohol and drug use. Overall, the largest predictor of runaway behavior was if the adolescent had a much older boyfriend or girlfriend.

Another high-risk group for commercial sexual exploitation is children in foster care (Murphy, 2016). Foster care youths are at high risk for commercial sexual exploitation, however one of the largest reasons is that foster youth often runaway. The majority of foster care children that run away are teenagers and they are at least twice as likely to run away than teens that are not in foster care (Crosland & Dunlap, 2015). After returning from running away, these teens often are moved from their previous placements (Crosland & Dunlap, 2015). Changing placements can be detrimental to foster care youths as one study found that the instability from multiple placements made foster care recipients more vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Coy, 2009). Some women in the study even reported being exploited while they were still in state care. (Coy, 2009). Furthermore, even after leaving foster care, these youths are still at high risk

of exploitation. After “aging out” of the system, many youths do not have the skills or resources that are necessary to survive as they often do not receive much support (Wolfe et al, 2018, p.51). Often when these youths age out of foster care, they do so without access to jobs, adequate wages, skills for independence, a place to live, or a connection to a caring adult. These vulnerabilities then put them at risk for commercial sexual exploitation (Wolfe et al, 2018).

Certain developmental vulnerabilities such as identity formation, need for belonging, desire for autonomy, desire for romantic relationships, and developing problem-solving skills make children particularly vulnerable to sex traffickers (Baird & Connolly, 2021). Boys and male youth with a higher tolerance for risk and tendency toward fearlessness, combined with exposure to criminal environments, may face increased risk for commercial sexual exploitation (Reid et al, 2021). Prior research has also found that traffickers are known to use children’s developmental vulnerabilities and other risk factors to their advantage by targeting their victims’ unmet needs with strategic recruitment methods (Baird & Connolly, 2021). Furthermore, traffickers are not always unknown individuals tricking children; instead, in many cases, caregivers are the ones who are facilitating the exploitation of their own children. This is especially true for caregivers living in poverty or facing other types of strain and/or extreme circumstances (Bales 1999; Shelly 2010; USDOS 2015a, as cited in Estes, 2017; Reid & Piquero, 2016).

Boys as Victims of Sexual Exploitation

Despite the growing literature on commercial sex trafficking, boys and young men still seem to be left out of the conversation (Barron & Frost, 2018; Jones, 2010). While most studies continue to focus primarily on girls, the trafficking of boys remains prevalent in the United States and around the world (Josenhans et al., 2019). In the literature that does examine the

sexual exploitation of boys, the research tends to focus only on boys' risk of HIV/AIDS and their sexual identity or connection to the gay community (Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006). The exact number of boys that are sex trafficked is hard to discern, and male victims are even left out entirely in some estimations of general human trafficking statistics (Jones, 2010). Due to detection and disclosure rates of commercial sexual exploitation being potentially lower for boys than girls, the actuality size and scope of the commercial sexual exploitation of boys may be far more underestimated than girls (Cockbain et al., 2015). In addition, while girls are victimized at higher rates than boys in certain contexts, like child marriage, some studies have found that boys may be as, or even more, vulnerable than girls to sexual exploitation in other contexts such as in child pornography where boys make up over half of all victims (Josenhans et al., 2019; Barron & Frost, 2018; Jones, 2010; Todres, 2010;).

Boys who have been abused are particularly at risk for exploitation and those with disabilities are at an even higher risk compared to girls (Josenhans et al., 2019). The most common disabilities reported for sex trafficked boys include behavioral issues, learning disabilities, and an autism spectrum disorder (Josenhans et al., 2019). Research has also found that in the United States, Black justice-involved male youth were three times more likely to report commercial sexual exploitation than non-Black justice-involved male youth (Reid et al, 2014). While studies generally show a higher prevalence of women and girls exploited in sex trafficking in comparison with the number of boys and men, researchers interviewing youth regarding commercial sexual exploitation in New York City found that boys had a higher prevalence of being commercially sexually exploited than girls (Curtis et al., 2008). Furthermore, Azoala (2000) evaluated sexually exploited youth in six areas in Mexico and found that the

proportion of girls to boys varied greatly across cities. The gender of the child sex-trafficking victims was found to be dependent on the local market demand.

Boy victims are usually exploited in locations such as in public toilets, parks, bus/train stations, “cruising” areas, shopping areas, and arcades (Skidmore, 1999; Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006). In online contexts, male victims represented in exploitative materials were often very young and hypersexualized. Boys were found to be more likely to be prepubescent (73%) than pubescent (25.4%) compared to girls. Materials that portray the sexual exploitation of boys, such as child pornography, are also more violent than materials of girls. It was found that when boys are included in these materials, it increased the likelihood of explicit sexual activity or extreme sexual assaults. This means that boy victims may be at an increased risk of violence or injury (Josenhans et al., 2019).

The effects of sexual exploitation can certainly take its toll on boys and young men. In a systematic review of the literature, Le et al. (2018) found that boys had higher substance use than girls for lifetime marijuana use, lifetime methamphetamine use, and binge drinking. Children that are commercially sexually exploited experience PTSD, major depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, dissociation, and panic attacks (Greenbaum et al, 2015). Other health issues that child victims of commercial sexual exploitation may face include: STIs, genital pain, wounds, and abnormal bleeding (Varma et al, 2015). When examining the literature, it was difficult to find information specifically on the impacts of commercial sexual exploitation on boys, which signals that more research is needed in this area.

Programs for Commercially Sexually Exploited Boys and Young Men

Despite the evidence of exploited boys, very few social services are available to them. In 2009, a study by Jones found that only two out of the 222 anti-trafficking agencies that received funding from the US government were specifically targeted towards helping boy and men victims (Jones, 2010). Even programs that are intended to be gender neutral tend to mainly target girl and women victims (Jones, 2010) Out of concern for the negligence of boys as victims, ECPAT-USA (2013) conducted a study in 2010 regarding boys and sex trafficking. The responses from 40 service providers surveyed in the study indicated that the scope of the exploitation of boys is vastly under-reported; that commercial sexual exploitation poses very significant risks to their health and their lives; that gay and transgender people are over-represented as a proportion of sexually exploited boys; and that there is a lack of adequate services for boys and young men who are commercially sexually exploited (ECPAT, 2013) Unfortunately, part of the problem is that many people, including professionals who work with vulnerable boys and young men, hold the false belief that “boys are not sexually exploited” (Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006, p.351).

Another issue is that there are specific barriers that prevent agencies from being able to adequately help boys. One large barrier is that many boy victims of commercial sexual exploitation do not view themselves as victims. This, in turn, makes them less likely to reach out to programs for help (Barron, & Frost, 2018; ECPAT, 2013). Even if they do seek help, many programs lack adequate resources to help them or are already filled/at overcapacity with girls (Chin, 2014; Barron & Frost, 2018; ECPAT, 2013).

Some other barriers include boys not being identified and/or referred by law enforcement, other social service organizations, and public and/or agency outreach; agencies rarely receive

referrals for or calls from boys and do not see a significant need; agencies feel ill-prepared to help boys; agencies report needing more training about commercially sexually exploited boys; agencies often have gender-specific curriculum focused on girls that may not be helpful for boys; boys seem to be sexually exploited through different pathways than girls and may have different needs; and organizations that serve LGBTQ, runaway, and homeless youth meet some needs of boys but are not centered around commercial sexual exploitation (ECPAT, 2013).

Furthermore, program curriculum being focused on girls is a particularly harmful barrier for boys because it has been shown that girl and boys victims of similar crimes require different gender-specific treatment (Widanaralalage et al., 2022). For male rape victims, many report not being able to find programming that is focused on male victims. This limited availability of programming often leads victims to resort to seeking help from female-oriented agencies. Unfortunately, some male victims report that female-oriented programs were counterproductive due to them often portraying men as sexually abusive towards women which leads male victims to feel attacked and invalidated in their experiences (Widanaralalage et al., 2022). Even the American Psychological Association (APA) now acknowledges that boys need different psychological treatment than girls. Furthermore, the APA recommends that practitioners learn more about masculinity and other gender-specific issues that boys and men deal with when treating them (APA, Boys and Men Guidelines Group, 2018).

Additionally, very few agencies that participate in street outreach reported working in sexual exploitation “tracks” known for young men and boy victims, despite agencies reporting knowing where these areas are. However, agencies reported that if they had more funding, they would hire male survivors to be outreach workers to fix this problem (ECPAT, 2013). More research still needs to be conducted to better understand the scope of the problem, the needs of

sexually exploited boys and young men, what programs and services are available as well as what is lacking, and how to better prevent young men and boy victims from continuing to be overlooked.

CHAPTER THREE:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper includes theory from feminist and masculinity criminology theory. Critical criminology is briefly mentioned as well because masculinity theory and feminist criminology are subsections of critical criminology. Both feminist and masculinity theories are used since they both deal with issues around the proposed gender specific barriers, more specifically: hegemonic masculinity, male victimization myths, and homophobic beliefs. However, by providing different points of view on these topics, the theoretical framework of this study is more robust as these topics are approached from different perspectives.

Critical Criminology

The origins of critical criminology can be traced back to radical criminology and the School of Criminology at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1970s. However, by the 1980s radical criminology transformed into what is now called critical criminology through both the impact of British and European post-structuralist, cultural, and postmodern social theorists as well as with the rise of feminist criminology theory. Today critical criminology includes a diverse array of theories such as feminist criminology, critical political-economy, post-structuralism, post-modernism, anarchist criminology, constitutive criminology, cultural criminology, peacemaking criminology, and left-realist criminology (Michalowski, 1996)

Feminist Criminology

Feminist criminologists were instrumental in the critical criminology movement. They included scholars who questioned the legitimacy of the legal system and opposed traditional pro-government criminologists. Then from critical criminology came Marxist feminist, radical feminist, and socialist feminist perspectives. Marxist feminist criminologists view social class relations of capitalism as the main cause of the oppression of women. Radical feminist criminologists, however, view gender inequality and sexism as the main causes of oppression, not social class inequality. Finally, socialist feminist criminologists merge both concepts together to examine how both capitalism and the patriarchy create differences in offending and victimization by gender as well as explore how the criminal justice system treats men and women differently (Renzetti, 2003, pp. 35-42). In the proposed study, feminist ideas around gender and offending will be examined to explain why boys and young men victims of commercial sexual exploitation are often not identified as victims.

Critical Masculinity Theory

Messerschmidt, (1993) took an alternative direction than feminist criminologists to address issues around masculinity and crime. First, while feminist criminologists drew attention to women and crime, Messerschmidt solely studied masculinity and crime as he thought that men were largely ignored when speaking about the concept of gender in criminology. While most research in criminology focuses on men, as they commit the most crime, these studies often don't address the impact of gender on men (Messerschmidt, 1993). Furthermore, instead of asserting that a person's gender influences them to commit crime or not, he argued that gender is

not innate and that it is instead a collective process that is created during daily social interactions. In relation to crime, he saw crime as a way for young men to create masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Masculinity theory is rooted in the same school of thought as Hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2019). The “legitimation of unequal gender relations” that results from hegemonic masculinity is foundational to critical masculinities (Messerschmidt, 2019, p.88) *Hegemonic masculinity* is defined by Connell as “the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over women” (Connell, 1987, p. 185). Due to hegemonic masculinity being commonly misinterpreted, Connell and Messerschmidt reformulated it to provide clarification which further contributed to the study of critical masculinities. More specifically, they reformulated the concept of hegemonic masculinity by updating four main areas: “the nature of gender hierarchy, geography of masculine configurations, the process of social embodiment, and the dynamics of masculinities” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 847). Furthermore, the “legitimation of unequal gender relations” that results from hegemonic masculinity is foundational to critical masculinities (Messerschmidt, 2019, p.88).

Differences in Gender

Gender norms can be defined as “the spoken and unspoken rules of societies about the acceptable behaviors of girls and boys, women and men-how they should act, look, and even feel” (Weber et al., 2019, p. 2455). For boys and men being masculine often means avoiding anything considered “feminine” and concealing emotions. Additionally, they are often expected to be the breadwinner, be self-reliant, confident, and tough (Vincent et al., 2011). Alternatively, girls and women are expected to be nurturing and homemakers (Blackstone, 2003).

Gender socialization starts before birth with parents often decorating their future child's room depending on the sex of their child (Portengen et al, 2022). Once the child is born, their parents, often unintentionally, can use several different types of gender socialization. Some of these methods include creating gender-specific environments for children, using different parenting practices with their sons and daughters (gender-differentiated parenting), responding negatively to their children's behavior that break gender norms, and parents themselves often model expected gender-role behavior through their own actions, behaviors, and interests (Portengen et al, 2022). Gender roles are further embedded into children through society as a whole, even children's books display certain gender stereotypes such as mothers being portrayed as being the parent that completes chores and nurtures children. Additionally, mothers often are represented as expressing more emotion than fathers in children's books. Alternatively, fathers often don't make appearances in children's books and when they do, they are often portrayed as being "hands-off parents", less affectionate, and disengaged (Anderson et al, 2021).

In adolescence, schools and peers start to have great influence on the gender socialization process (Adler et al. 1992; Rosen & Nofziger, 2019). Concepts like popularity and the methods by how adolescents create social groups serve to further gender socialization (Adler et al. 1992). Bullying is another common social process in school that leads to gender socialization. More specifically, forms of bullying in schools by other peers varies widely by gender with boys being more likely to be victims/perpetrators of direct bullying (physical) and girls more likely to be victims/perpetrators of indirect bullying (verbal and psychological) (Rosen & Nofziger, 2019). For boys, being bullied and bullying others may be the beginning of the socialization process of hegemonic masculinity (Rosen & Nofziger, 2019).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is a type of masculinity that describes the “legitimation of unequal gender relations” (Messerschmidt, 2019, p.88). Hegemonic masculinity is relational to other concepts in masculinity literature and the relationship with these other concepts creates a pattern of hegemony (dominance). In turn, this then constructs socially what gendered behavior is considered acceptable by society in the overall social structure. (Messerschmidt, 2019).

Hegemonic masculinity is commonly misunderstood by scholars who mistakenly attribute hegemonic masculinity to individuals, whereas it is actually a structural issue (Messerschmidt, 2019).

Due to the unequal gender relations created by hegemonic masculinity boy and girl victims of sex trafficking are treated differently in society. As a result of gender bias boys and men often are not considered vulnerable to victimization. (Kepler, 2021). For example, in the U.K., for trafficking victims to receive aid from the government they need to be acknowledged as being vulnerable. However, due to gender stereotypes, men victims are often are not granted protection (Magugliani, 2022). Another example is in Thailand, where there are not enough programs for boys despite the need due to the assumption that boys and men cannot be sexually victimized due to their gender (Kepler, 2021).

Male Victimization and Male Rape Myths

In the case of male assault victims, Stanko & Hodbell (1993) found that men often view their own victimization through a male frame and view victimization as “weak and helpless” (Stanko & Hodbell, 1993, p. 413). These beliefs make it hard for men victims to get help, with men in the study being hesitant to even speak about their injuries due to their beliefs about men

and masculinity. Men reported feeling isolated and found themselves unable to ask for support in some cases due to their beliefs (Stanko & Hodbell, 1993). Furthermore, the men interviewed had a hard time talking about their emotional reactions to being victimized and dealing with their feelings of vulnerability. When men did talk about their emotions around their victimization, they were more likely to externalize blame in comparison to women. Men commonly reported feelings of anger and problems with controlling their anger after being victimized. The men who were most severely affected all expressed strong beliefs about how men need to “fend for themselves” (Stanko & Hodbell, 1993, p. 408).

Men that are victims of sexual assault commonly face discrimination. Part of this is due to how society views sexual assault as a crime. Often, sexual assault is seen as a crime where women are the victims, not men. Instead, when talking about sexual assault, men are focused on as the offenders rather than its victims (Spiegel, 2013; Depraetere et al., 2020). This is further shown in the following: despite sexual victimization being common for both men and women, care and treatment is typically targeted only towards women, which may make it harder for men to get help (Hendricks et al, 2018; Larsen & Hildren, 2016; Depraetere et al., 2020). Several male rape myths make it even more difficult for men to get help after being sexually assaulted (Chapleau et al., 2008; Turchik & Edwards, 2012; Depraetere et al., 2020). Some male rape myths include phrases such as “real men defend themselves”, “men cannot be forced to have sex against their will”, and “men are less likely to be affected by sexual assault than women” (Depraetere et al., 2020, p.1002).

Beyond discrimination, Widanaralalage et al. (2022) found that many male rape victims report feeling that male rape is “hidden and invisible” (Widanaralalage et al., 2022, p 1155). In the same study it was found that survivors reported that their victimization made them realize

how little they themselves knew about male victimization. Additionally, survivors reported that their friends and families were unable to meet their needs due to their not being public recognition of male rape (Widanaralalage et al., 2022).

For commercially sexually exploited boys and young men specifically, the perception that boys are more likely to be viewed as delinquent offenders rather than victims contributes to deficient access to victim assistance. (Figlewski & Brannon, 2011; Josenhans et al., 2019). Due to the stigma around the victimization of boys and men, commercially sexually exploited boys and young men are often viewed in society as deviants who desire sex and money (ECPAT, 2013). Although the human trafficking community does not hold this belief anymore, people outside of human trafficking and in the culture as a whole often view them this way. Some reports have shown that officers have referred to victims as “sex addicts,” which further adds to the invisibility of boys and young men who are victims (ECPAT, 2013, p.11). It is rare that law enforcement refers boys to agencies in general as they usually are looking for the “stereotypical girl” victim (ECPAT, 2013, p. 9). Informants have reported that law enforcement officers are often found to believe that boys are not pimped and are not in need of services (ECPAT, 2013). Furthermore, the myths around boys and young men have social and legal implications for victims. (Figlewski & Brannon, 2011; Josenhans et al., 2019). The belief that boys cannot be victims makes it so that victims are unable to receive proper legislative action. Lawyers for these victims also may find it difficult to convince courts that males may be victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation (Figlewski & Brannon, 2011).

Homophobia

Studies conducted on male rape victims and homophobia have shown that men portray higher levels of homophobia. Additionally, higher levels of homophobia were found to be

predictive of negative perceptions of male victims of sexual assault and this was found more often in male participants than female participants (Anderson, 2004).

For commercially sexually exploited boys specifically, a study by ECPAT found that people often assume that they are bisexual, gay, or transgendered. In reality, the majority of boys and young men who are victims report being heterosexual (ECPAT, 2013). Some studies estimate that the number of bisexual, gay, and transgender sexually exploited boys are overrepresented due to straight boys not reaching out due to fear of stigma (ECPAT, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR:

PRESENT STUDY

Despite evidence of the prevalence of boys and young men as victims of commercial sexual exploitation, the number of programs that help these victims is scarce. To address this, this study investigated programs that are available to boys and young men. This study explored the scarcity of treatment for boys through a lens of critical criminology, more specifically feminist criminology and critical masculinity theory. The two main research questions that this study posed are: 1. What barriers prevent boys and young men from being identified as victims of CSE and 2. Do these same barriers explain why there are so few programs available for commercially sexually exploited boys and young men.

While this an exploratory study, there are three barriers that are unique to boys and young men that will be examined: beliefs about masculinity (hegemonic masculinity), homophobia, and male rape/male victimization myths.

Sample Size

Data used in this study consists of 13 programs/agencies that provide treatment to boys and young men. Although only 13 programs/agencies responded to the survey, these programs represented different parts of the country and from agencies that served predominantly different racial/ethnic groups (white, black, Hispanic, etc.). The original sample goal was for at least 20

programs, however the population of programs for boy sex trafficking victims were less than expected and the few programs that exist were difficult to contact.

Comparison of Data on Program Availability for Boys from Other Sources

To justify the small sample size, data from the Safe House Project 2023 Survivor Identification & Restorative Care Services by State Annual Report was analyzed. This data was examined to show how sparse the population of programs for boy and young men victims of commercial sexual exploitation is. The Safe House Project is an anti-sex trafficking organization that has data of what residential support services are available for trafficking survivors by state (and for Washington D.C.). This data includes type of program, victim sex, and whether the programs are available to minors or adults. The program types included are emergency residential (up to 90 days placement), long-term residential (12-to-18-month placement), transitional residential (variable length of placement), and non-trafficking specific residential options. The non-trafficking specific residential options include group homes, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and other housings options that do not have trafficking-specific programing but still house trafficking survivors. However, the data for non-trafficking specific residential options were not examined in this study because it was not specified by sex as the other program types were. Additionally, after analyzing this data, it was found that some of the states listed as not serving boys were some of the same states that we had found programs in. In order to check for consistency in publicly available lists of programs, data in the Annual report was compared to programs listed as serving boys on the National Human Trafficking Hotline website. Findings from this comparison are included in the results section.

Data from Present Study

Due to so few programs treating specifically boys, many agencies surveyed help both boys and girls (as well as other genders). The sample was obtained through snowball sampling. Due to there being a shortage of programs that assist commercially sexually exploited boys and young men, a snowball sample is necessary. Due to the nature of sex-trafficking and lack of programs, there is not a publicly available standardized list of all programs that help child and youth sex-trafficking victims. While there are some lists of resources available, none of them contain all programs. Even if a list of programs was available, it may not be reliable due to frequent changes in agency missions, funding/resource, staffing leadership, etc.

Programs for victims are easier to contact if there is an established personal relationship with an employee. To combat this, the TIP (Trafficking in Persons) lab offered to assist with this study. With support from TIP lab, a trafficking lab that has connections to many sex-trafficking programs, providers that help boys and young men that were willing to take the survey and provide us with connections to other providers/agencies were identified. With the assistance of these programs, a snowball sample was conducted to provide a more robust sample.

We began with six leading experts who helped identify other programs and assisted by completing a pilot study. This was immensely helpful as their feedback was used to create the finalized survey. In addition to the programs that we were able to contact through other programs, we also reached out to programs that we were able to find online via email and phone calls. We attempted to contact providers/participants multiple times via emails and phone calls in order to get as large of a sample as possible. First an initial email was sent and if there was no response, a follow up email was sent. If there was still no response after the follow up email, a

phone call was attempted and a voicemail was left for the programs that had publicly listed phone numbers.

As shown in Appendix A, the questions in the survey relevant to this study ask about the barriers that keep commercially sexually exploited boys from receiving the help they need. While victims themselves will not be answering these questions, service providers who have extensive experience with the victims are qualified to answer these questions. By surveying providers instead of victims this prevents potentially retraumatizing victims.

The survey includes questions about the difference of treatment between boys and girls in the programs, if boys are less likely to be viewed as victims of commercial sexual exploitation than girls, whether boys and young men are more or less likely to seek services, whether boys and young men were more or less likely to be involved with the police and criminal justice system, common myths and misconceptions about commercially sexually exploited boys and young men, beliefs about masculinity that boy victims may have, and whether boys and young men have fears of being outed as gay or perceived as gay. Other questions ask about demographics of clients served, questions about the agency/program, background/risk factors, Covid-19, and services available. In addition, during the survey providers were asked if they know of any other agencies that treat boys as well as contact information for those agencies. (See Appendix A for full list of questions). Furthermore, this type of data is appropriate for this study because survey data allows for a variety of questions about different topics.

Methodology

This study is a mixed methods study that used both closed-ended and open-ended survey questions (see Appendix A) to assess the hypotheses. Mixed method research designs

incorporate features of qualitative and quantitative research. This allows for data collection of both numeric and text data in order to study research questions from different angles (Piquero & Weisburd, 2010). By using mixed methods, this study was able to develop a deeper understanding of the reality of the barriers for boy victims by examining both written accounts from programs as well as numerical data.

For analyzing the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to identify the themes of different barriers that the programs list in the open-ended questions. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method that involves analyzing data for common themes and repeated patterns (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This qualitative analysis method allows me to search for barriers that service providers commonly answer in the open-ended questions.

For the quantitative data, all survey data was collected via Qualtrics. Qualtrics was then used to analyze the data and to create graphs.

CHAPTER FIVE:

RESULTS

First to demonstrate the lack of programs available for boys and young men data from the Safe House Project 2023 Survivor Identification & Restorative Care Services by State Annual Report was analyzed (see table 1) It was found that only 11 states (including D.C.) offered some form of treatment to boys and young men victims with nine of those states offering some form of treatment to boys (boys under the age of 18) and only five of those states offering some form of treatment to men. Additionally, the majority of treatment offered to boys and young men was emergency residential treatment with very few states offering long-term treatment options. With this information in mind, our sample consisted of 13 programs with seven of the programs in our sample being from different states.

Table 1: Program Availability for Boy and Young Men Victims of Sex Trafficking by State (N=11)

State	Emergency Residential Minor	Emergency Residential Adult	Long-Term Residential Minor	Long-Term Residential Adult	Transitional Residential Minor	Transitional Residential Adult	Any Treatment Minor	Any Treatment Adult
California	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	Yes	None	None	None	None	None	Yes	None
Hawaii	Yes	None	None	None	None	None	Yes	None
Maine	None	Yes	None	None	None	None	None	Yes
Minnesota	None	None	Yes	None	None	None	Yes	None
Missouri	Yes	None	None	None	Yes	None	Yes	None
New York	Yes	Yes	None	None	None	None	Yes	Yes
Tennessee	Yes	None	Yes	None	None	None	Yes	None
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None	None	Yes	Yes
Virginia	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	Yes
Washington	Yes	None	None	None	None	None	Yes	None

However, some of the programs sampled in this study were from states that were listed as not serving boys and young men in the Safe House Project 2023 Annual Report. To address this potential issue, the National Human Trafficking Hotline website was examined to compare program availability between these resources to further assess whether the sample size is appropriate.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline Website listed 36 different programs with long-term treatment options for boys (minors under the age of 18) with some of them having multiple locations in different states. If this is accurate, then it seems our sample is representative of the total population of programs with around 36% of all programs that serve boys being sampled in this study. The programs from the website were from 28 different states which varied widely from the four states that were listed as offering long-term residential treatment on the residential report. This discrepancy further highlights the greater issue of how difficult it is to track down programs when attempting to research program availability. Even the website itself states that their list is not “an exhaustive list of anti-trafficking organizations” (National Human Trafficking Hotline, n.d.). More importantly it highlights how difficult it may be for boy victims to find resources/programs in their local area.

Currently showing only providers which care for people: of age: of gender: who are victims of: which provide:

This is not an exhaustive list of anti-trafficking organizations in the United

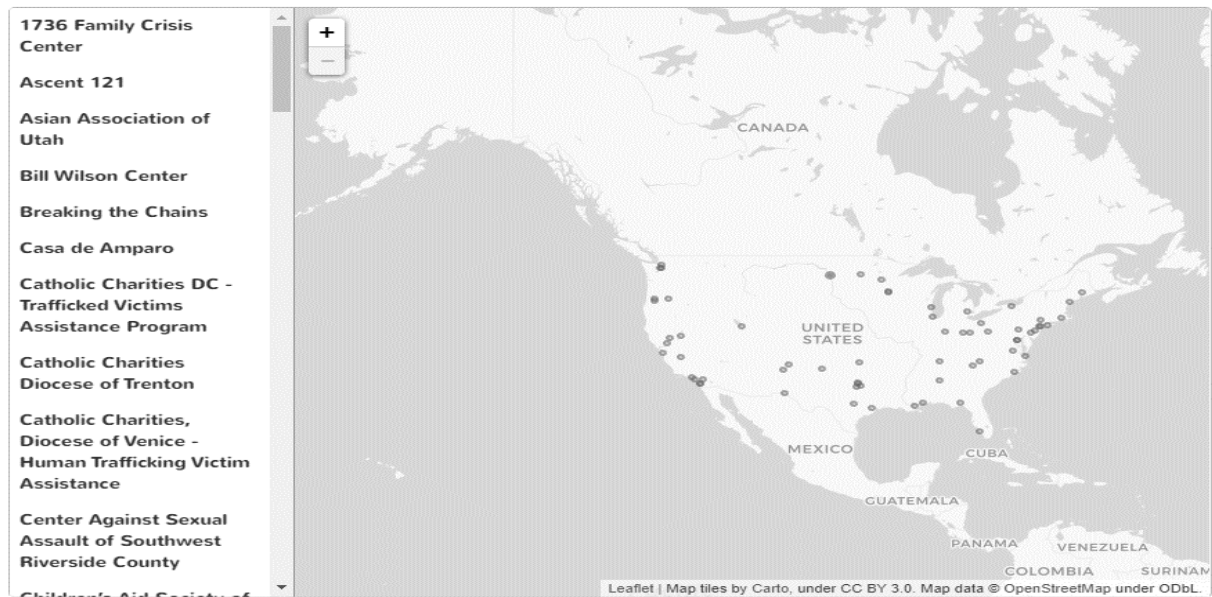


Figure 1. Map of Long-Term Programs for Boy Victims of Sex Trafficking in the United States from humantraffickinghotline.org

Quantitative Results

Despite the sample potentially being representative of the population of programs, it is still small. Due to the overall small sample size and varied number of responses for different questions, rigorous quantitative analysis was unable to be conducted. However, some tables and figures were created in Qualtrics to portray the results from the close-ended questions. Many of the questions were yes or no questions and were combined into two larger figures (see figures 3 and 4).

Boys' Self Beliefs

Figure 2 contains the results from question 56 that asked service providers how often boys view themselves as victims of sex trafficking from a scale of one to five (with one meaning never and five meaning always). Ten providers answered this question with 70% of respondents reporting that boys view themselves as slightly more than never being victims. This supports previous literature that suggests that boys have a difficult time identifying as victims and may be evidence that boys have internalized male victimization myths that claim that boys and young men cannot be victims.

Participant Responses Regarding How Often Boys View Themselves as Victims of Sex Trafficking

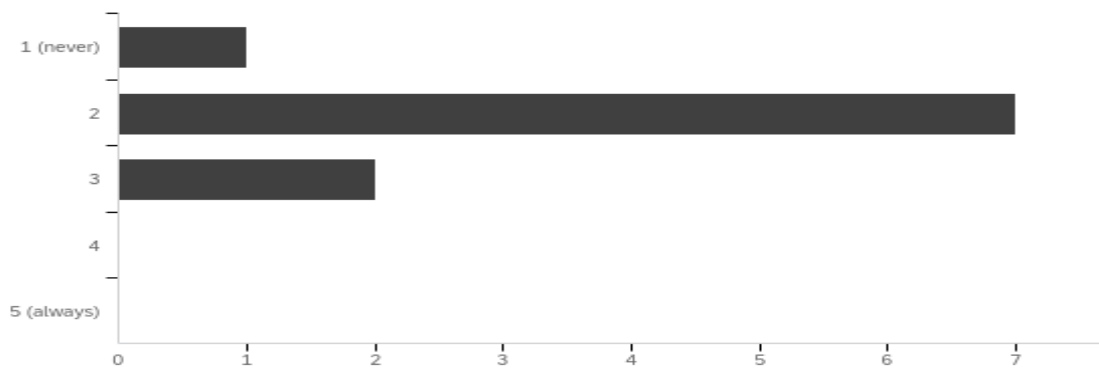


Figure 2. Participant Responses Regarding How Often Boys View Themselves as Victims of Sex Trafficking

When respondents were asked if there were any catalysts that allowed boys to realize that they were victims/survivors of sex trafficking in question 59, the majority of the nine respondents that answered the question said yes (see figure 3) with eight (around 89%) of respondents saying yes. The catalysts they mentioned are explored in more detail in the qualitative section.

Respondents were asked if they had observed any commonalities in the lives or histories of boys and young men in question 64 (see figure 3). Interestingly, all 11 service providers answered yes for this question. These commonalities are explored in the qualitative section.

Question 66 (see figure 3) asked if service providers had encountered boys and young men in their programs that are fearful of being outed as gay or perceived as gay. Ten providers answered this question and 70% of them said yes. This supports that homophobic beliefs may be a prevalent barrier for young men.

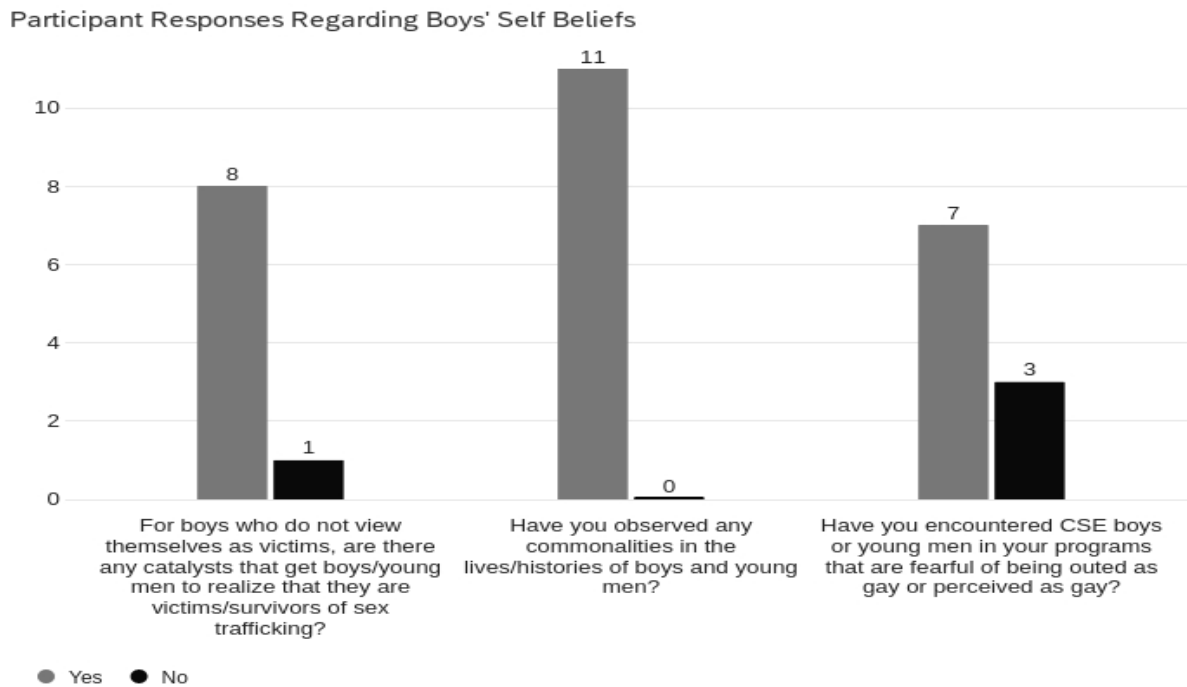


Figure 3. Participant Responses Regarding Boys' Self Beliefs

Differences in Victims Between Genders

In question 61 service providers were asked if they had observed any differences between boys and young men in their programs compared to the girls and young women in their program.

Ten respondents answered this question and 80% of them answered yes with 20% answering no. This supports previous literature that asserts that boy and girl victims are different with different needs. The differences that providers noticed and the reasons for these differences are described in the qualitative section.

Society's Beliefs About Boy Victims

Question 68 asked service providers about if they had encountered any common myths and/or conceptions about sexually exploited boys and young men. All of the ten respondents that answered the question answered yes. The myths and misconceptions that they encountered are explored further in the qualitative section.

Differences in How Society Views Victims by Gender

When asked if people in general view boys and young men as victims of sex trafficking in question 71, only one of the 11 providers who responded said yes (see figure 4). Alternatively, when asked the same question about girls in question 75, the nine providers that answered the question all responded yes (see figure 4). The reasons why boys and girls are viewed differently by society are explored in the qualitative section. However, this shows evidence that society may view boy and girl victims very differently with people accepting girls as victims, but refusing to see boys as victims too. Furthermore, when asked explicitly if there was a difference in how people view boys and girls as victims of commercial sexual exploitation in question 79 all of the ten providers that answered said yes (see figure 4).

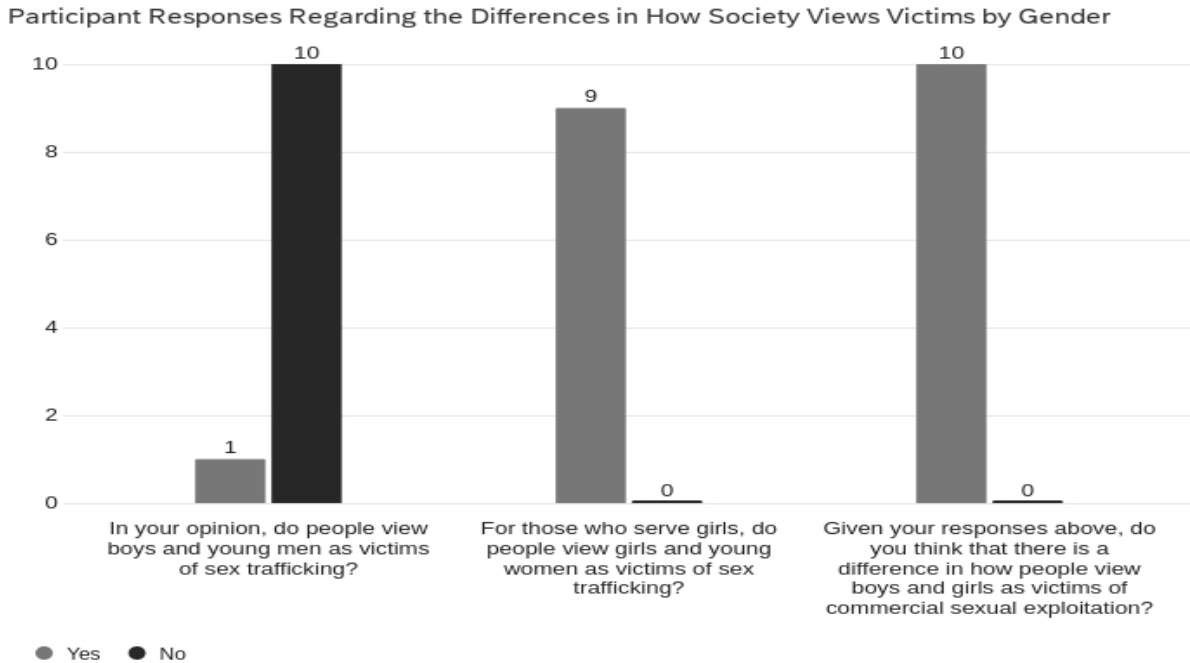


Figure 4. Participant Responses Regarding the Differences in How Society Views Victims by Gender

When asked who views boys and young men as non-victims in question 74 (see figure 5), the most common responses were healthcare providers, the educational system, the court system, and law enforcement. If this is true then this could potentially explain part of why boys have such low referral rates. The healthcare system, educational system, court system, and law enforcement commonly come into contact with victims and if they are not recognizing boys as victims then this could explain why they seem to be falling through the cracks.

Participant Responses Regarding Who Views Boys and Young Men as Non-Victims

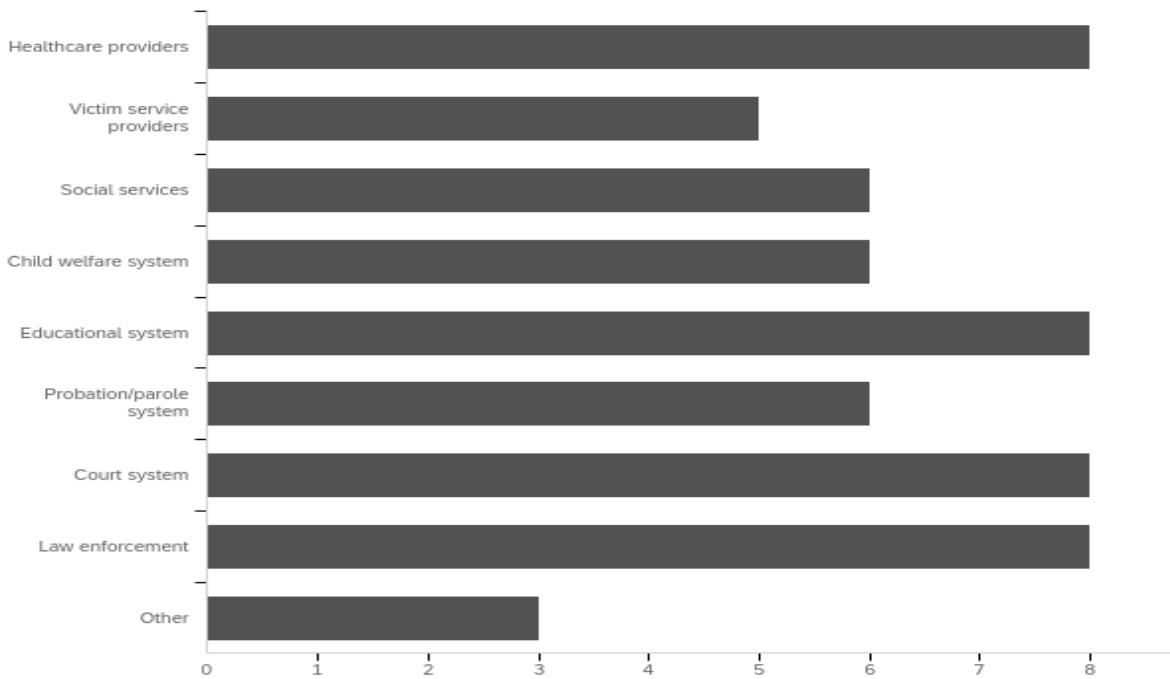


Figure 5. Participant Responses Regarding Who Views Boys and Young Men as Non-Victims

Challenges for Providers

When providers were asked what challenges providers face when identifying and responding to boy and young men victims in question 90 (see figure 6), some of the most common responses were lack of awareness, lack of training, lack of male-inclusive response protocols, and gender bias. However, when asked to choose the single most common provider challenge in question 91 (see figure 7), the majority of providers said it was lack of awareness. Again, this shows evidence that boy and young men victims may often be overlooked due to people not being aware that they can be victims.

Participant Responses Regarding Challenges Providers Face When Identifying and Responding to Boy and Young Men Victims

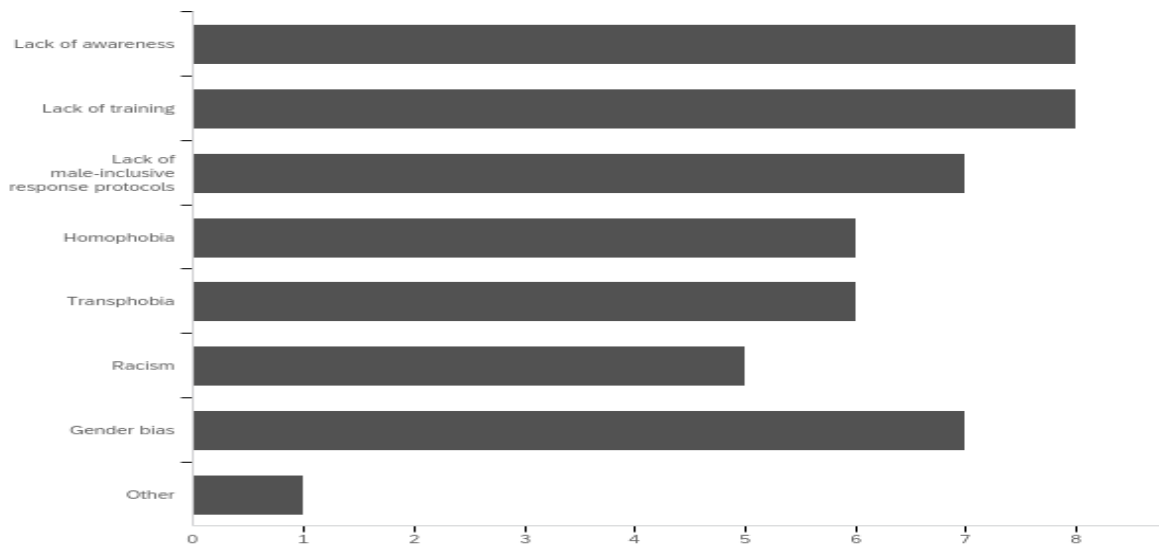


Figure 6. Participant Responses Regarding Challenges Providers Face When Identifying and Responding to Boy and Young Men Victims

Participant Responses Regarding the Greatest Challenge Providers Face When Identifying and Responding to Boy and Young Men Victims

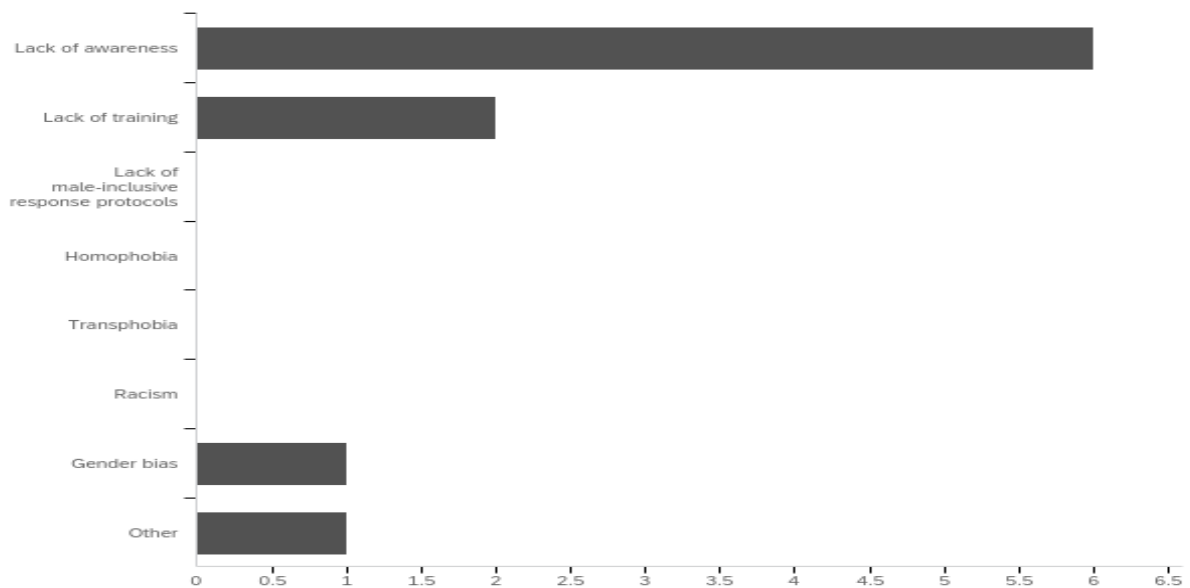


Figure 7. Participant Responses Regarding the Greatest Challenge Providers Face When Identifying and Responding to Boy and Young Men Victims

Qualitative Results

After analyzing the open-ended questions some common themes arose. The proposed barriers of hegemonic masculinity, homophobia, and male victimization myths were mentioned as well as others.

Boys' Self Beliefs

Boys were reported as feeling lost, worthless, confused, shameful, weak and that they deserved what happened to them. One respondent stated that “they [boys] are told that to be a victim is to be weak and unworthy of respect”. Additionally, respondents reported that boys who identify as heterosexual feel particularly shameful, often do not report, and feel the need to defend being straight/their interest in women. Many boys seemed to have fears about being outed as gay or perceived as gay. This is illustrated well by a response from one respondent who replied that straight boys “...feel the need to defend being straight and their interest in women”. Moreover, boys often worry that if they are perceived as gay that many negative reactions could occur such as being killed/beat up, losing friends, rejection, and that they’ll be traumatized in the homeless shelter system. One respondent reported that boys are afraid that if they are outed as gay or perceived as gay that “they won’t have friends, families will hate them and they feel like they will go to hell”.

Society's Beliefs About Boy Victims

The providers surveyed reported mixed although mostly negatively responses from law enforcement officers when interacting with boy victims. Some negative reactions that were reported include not believing victims, ignoring victims, assuming they are criminals, and stigmatizing victims. One provider reported that “a lot of boys report flying under the radar or

being picked up [by law enforcement] for non-related offenses and having police not recognize their victimization and/or vulnerability”. Alternatively, some providers mentioned occasional positive responses to the victims by police which included changing the legal charges, referring the boys to services, and being accepting. One provider reported that occasionally law enforcement “might change legal charges [of the boy victim] and be referred to services”.

Service agencies (i.e., healthcare providers, social service, child welfare) were also reported as having mixed responses to boy victims. Some providers reported disbelief/ignorance from agencies and that boys feel shamed and ignored by them. A commonly reported problem was that there is a lack of resources for boy victims as well. One provider stated that boys received “disbelief, [are] turned away, [agencies have a] lack of knowledge on what to do for them, [and there is a] lack of available resources”.

Furthermore, providers reported that there are many myths about boy victims in society. Some of the most commonly reported myths were that sexual exploitation doesn’t happen to boys, boys are all offenders, all boys that are trafficked are gay, and that boys choose their victimization to happen to them and wanted it to happen. One provider stated that some common myths and misconceptions about boy victims are that “it doesn’t/can’t happen to boys, they are gay and wanted it, they are the perpetrator, and that they put themselves in that situation”. Another provider reported that common myths they’ve encountered are “that all boys who are trafficked ID as LGBTQ, that boys have more choice and agency than girls, that boys are not pimped and controlled the way girls are, that boys can leave any time they want”. Furthermore, one of the most common reported ways that boy and young men victims were reported as being viewed as by society instead of as victims were as “perpetrators of violence”.

Other Gender Specific Barriers

Compared to girls, boys seem to respond differently when in treatment. One provider said that boys and girls were “completely different”. It was reported that girls were quicker to engage and had more motivation while boys took longer to warm up to treatment. Additionally, boys were reported as being more secretive, less motivated, having more problematic sexual behavior, and being lost/in their own worlds than girl victims. One provider asserted that “the boys are quieter, live in their own worlds, and ignore what happened to them”.

It was speculated by the practitioners that the gender difference could potentially be explained by cultural norms, increased stigma for boys, boys feeling more shame, homophobia, victimization myths, gender constructs, and testosterone.

Potential Ways to Mitigate Barriers

While from the responses it seems that boys and young men may have different needs than girls due to certain barriers, ways to treat boys were mentioned. Many of the common suggestions mentioned were educating the boys, providing long-term mentorship from someone with similar experiencing/culture, and being around supportive peers who openly talk about their experiences. Providers made clear that healthy relationships are essential for the treatment of these boys with one provider saying that “long term mentorship from someone with the same experiences and culture” is particularly important.

Furthermore, service providers indicated that resources, deconstructing gender norms, training, and awareness are needed in order to prevent boys and young men from being trafficking. When asked what is needed to prevent other boys and young men from being trafficked one respondent said “That is a massive question but in a nutshell, until we dismantle

systems of power that leave some people/families/communities living on the margins we won't end trafficking of people, regardless of gender. We need to go WAY upstream to be truly effective”.

CHAPTER SIX:

DISCUSSION

Upon review of the open-ended questions in the study it is evident that there are gender specific barriers that boy and young men victims of commercial sexual exploitation experience. There was evidence that the proposed barriers of hegemonic masculinity, male victimization myths, and homophobia seem to be common themes when treating male victims. In both the answers to close-ended and open-ended questions.

From the responses, it was clear that there is a difference in how victims of commercial sexual exploitation are viewed by gender. This supports previous literature that shows that boy victims are treated differently by researchers and programs (Barron & Frost, 2018; Jones, 2010; Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006; ECPAT, 2013). Additionally, the results from this study provide evidence that there may be gender specific barriers that boy and young men victims face when being identified and referred to services.

It was found that boys do not often view themselves as victims and often do not report their victimization which supports previous research (Barron, & Frost, 2018; ECPAT, 2013). Furthermore, the survey participants reported in both the close-ended and open-ended questions that boys are often not seen in society as victims. This is particularly harmful being it was also reported that agencies that typically refer boys to treatment such as schools, law enforcement, health care providers, and the court system often do not view boys as victims. Commonly listed challenges for identifying and responding to boy and young men victims included lack of

awareness, lack of training, lack of male-inclusive response protocols, and gender bias which supported the proposed barriers and prior research (ECPAT, 2013; Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006; Widanaralalage et al., 2022; APA, Boys and Men Guidelines Group, 2018). Instead of being viewed as victims, it was commonly stated that boys and young men are often seen as “perpetrators”. This supports previous literature that states that boys and young men often are seen as those who commit violence instead of being victims themselves (Spiegel, 2013; Depraetere et al., 2020).

Support for homophobic beliefs being an issue in regard to self-referrals came from the majority of programs responding that boys are fearful of being outed as gay or perceived as gay. Providers reported that boys had many fears around negative reactions if this were to happen such as physical harm and losing friends. Additionally, providers supported prior research by establishing that not all boys that are sex trafficked are gay and that many are straight (ECPAT, 2013; Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006). Boys often felt the need to justify that they are straight due to these stereotypes and fear around being perceived as gay.

This study is important because not much is known about boys as victims of sexual exploitation despite their particular vulnerability. Further, even though there are studies that show that boys may be sexually exploited at higher rates than previously estimated, there are not many programs to aid boy victims. (Curtis et al., 2008; Josenhans et al., 2019; Barron & Frost, 2018; Jones, 2010). This study fills a gap in the literature by exploring explanations as to why there is this disparity in treatment for boy and young men victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Limitations

Due to the survey being given at a single point in time, changes over time were unable to be measured. Additionally, the survey may be lacking questions that would be more appropriate for the study. Due to the few programs available to boys this study also suffers from a small sample size and uses snowball sampling which makes it a non-random sample as well. While snowball sampling allows for the sampling of hard-to-reach populations, there are limitations to this sampling method. Since this sample is non-random, it is impossible to know if the sample that was obtained is representative of all agencies that provide service to male victims of sex trafficking. Furthermore, there were most likely agencies that were missed by using this sampling method (e.g., unknown agencies).

Additionally, due to the large scale of topics that are covered in the survey, it is long, therefore participants may have experienced survey fatigue.

Despite these limitations, this study highlights a unique and understudied problem. The findings in this study show that more research is needed into this topic in order to fully assess the gender-specific barriers to treatment that boys and young men commonly face.

Ethical Concerns

This survey covered traumatic topics since it is focused on the sexual exploitation of children. However, risks are minimal, as it is the providers' job to work with sex-trafficking victims, so they are familiar with the concepts that they are asked about. Additionally, to minimize any risks of retraumatizing victims, providers were surveyed instead of victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Policy Implications

From the results found in this study, there seem to be gender specific barriers that prevent boys and society from realizing that boys can be victims too. These barriers need to be considered both when attempting to conduct outreach to male victims as well as when treating them. Due to society believing that boys are not victims these same barriers, such as male victimization myths, may potentially explain the lack of programs for boys despite the need for them. More research is needed in order to further understand if gender specific barriers explain why there seems to be a discrepancy in the program availability between boys and girls.

Findings in this study support prior literature that boys and girls may have different needs and may need different, gender-specific treatment. It was found that boys took longer to warm up to treatment than girls and that boys were less motivated. Different programming may be needed in order to successfully treat boys. More research is needed to find what treatment works for boy victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

The findings in this paper can help make policymakers aware of the problem of the lack of programs for male victims which, in turn, could potentially lead to more programs being created for boys in the future. This study can also be used to help inform current programs and providers of the specific barriers that boys have, which could shape their recruitment tactics going forward. Finally, this study's findings have implications for future research of the needs of boy victims and their specific barriers to treatment.

Furthermore, resources should be allocated into creating a more comprehensive, standardized list of programs that assist boy victims. This is essential so that boys can be accurately placed in treatment programs and so that more robust research can occur in the future.

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APPENDIX A:

SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Q55. What beliefs do sexually exploited boys and young men have about their own identities?
- Q56. On a scale from 1 to 5 how often do boys view themselves as victims of trafficking compared to viewing themselves as nonvictims? (1 meaning never and 5 meaning always)
- Q57. What responses have boys and young men reported receiving from law enforcement when they have reported their experiences with trafficking?
- Q58. What responses have boys and young men reported receiving from services agencies (i.e., healthcare providers, social service, child welfare) when they have reported their experiences with trafficking?
- Q59. For boys who do not view themselves as victims, are there any catalysts that get boys/young men to realize that they are victims/survivors of sex trafficking?
- Q60. If yes for Q59, what catalysts have you noticed?
- Q61. Have you observed any differences between the boys and young men in your program compared to the girls and young women in your program?
- Q62. If yes for Q61, what differences have you noticed?
- Q63. If yes for Q61, why do you think these differences occur?

- Q64. Have you observed any commonalities in the lives/histories of boys and young men?
- Q65. If yes for Q64, what commonalities have you noticed?
- Q66. Have you encountered CSE boys or young men in your programs that are fearful of being outed as gay or perceived as gay?
- Q67. If yes for Q66, what are boys and young men afraid of happening if they are outed as gay or perceived as gay?
- Q68. Have you encountered any common myths and/or misconceptions about sexually exploited boys and young men?
- Q69. If yes for Q68, what are some common myths and/or misconceptions you have encountered?
- Q70. If yes for Q68, who are spreading these myths and/or misconceptions? For example, law enforcement, agencies, the general public, etc.
- Q71. In your opinion, do people view boys and young men as victims of sex trafficking?
- Q72. If yes for Q71, why do you think that is?
- Q73. If yes for Q71, if not as victims, how are boys and young men viewed?
- Q74. If yes for Q71, who views boys and young men as non-victims? Select all that apply (healthcare providers, victim service providers, social services, child welfare system, educational system, probation/parole system, court system, law enforcement, other)
- Q75. For those who serve girls, do people view girls and young women as victims of sex trafficking?

Q76. If yes for Q75, why do you think that is?

Q77. If yes for Q75, if not as victims, how are girls and young women viewed?

Q78. If yes for Q75, who views girls and young women as non-victims? Select all that apply
(healthcare providers, victim service providers, social services, child welfare system,
educational system, probation/parole system, court system, law enforcement, other)

Q79. Given your responses above, do you think that there is a difference in how people view
boys and girls as victims of commercial sexual exploitation?

Q80. If yes for Q79, what are the differences?

Q81. If yes for Q79, can you explain why you think these differences in viewpoints exist?

Q82. What services or programs (in-house) are available to boys and young men who are
trafficked (select all that apply)? (hotline, shelter, transitional housing, sober housing,
physical health, mental health counseling, substance dependence treatment, support
groups, legal services, language services, recreational, employment/job training,
educational, case management, offender reentry, pornography recovery,
mentorship/advocacy, other)

Q83. What services or programs are referred out to a strategic partner for boys and young men
who are trafficked (select all that apply)? (hotline, shelter, transitional housing, sober
housing, physical health, mental health counseling, substance dependence treatment,
support groups, legal services, language services, recreational, employment/job training,
educational, case management, offender reentry, pornography recovery,
mentorship/advocacy, other).

Q84. Do you believe that boy and young men victims of sex trafficking face discrimination?

Q85. If yes for Q84, from whom do boys and young men face discrimination (select all that apply)? (law enforcement, service providers, families, other youth, judicial system, policies, funding streams, other).

Q87. Which individual risk factor is **most** likely to lead to discrimination among boys and young men? (disabilities, gender, race/ethnicity, religion/culture, sexual orientation, citizenship, socioeconomic status, age, other)

Q88. From your experience, what are the victim/survivor barriers to disclosure for boys and young men (select all that apply)? (previous discrimination, fear of withdrawal, fear of incarnation, fear of exploiter, language access, fear of losing livelihood, do not see themselves as having been victimized, fear of getting exploiter in trouble, other)

Q89. From your experience, what is the **most** common victim/survivor barrier to disclosure for boys and young men? (previous discrimination, fear of withdrawal, fear of incarnation, fear of exploiter, language access, fear of losing livelihood, do not see themselves as having been victimized, fear of getting exploiter in trouble, other)

Q90. From your experience, what are the provider challenges to identification and response for boys and young men (select all that apply)? (lack of training, lack of male-inclusive response protocols, homophobia, transphobia, racism, gender bias, other)

Q91. From your experience, what is the **most** common provider challenges to identification and response for boys and young men? (lack of training, lack of male-inclusive response protocols, homophobia, transphobia, racism, gender bias, other)

APPENDIX B:

IRB EXEMPTION LETTER



EXEMPT DETERMINATION

February 7, 2022

Sandra Stone, PhD



Dear Dr. Stone:

On 2/4/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY003768
Review Type:	Exempt (2)(i)
Title:	And Boys, Too!: A Replication of the 2010 ECPAT Study of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys in the United States
Funding:	None
Protocol:	• Protocol, Version#1, Feb 1 2022(1).docx;

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.