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# LAW ENFORCEMENTS PERCEPTIONS REGARDING DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THESE CASES

Adriana Lopez Baca

California State University - San Bernardino, adri\_on\_uh@yahoo.com

Melissa Marie Lopez

California State University - San Bernardino, lopem387@coyote.csusb.edu

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LAW ENFORCEMENTS PERCEPTIONS REGARDING  
DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING AND THE  
INVOLVEMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THESE CASES

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

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

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by  
Adriana Lopez Baca  
Melissa Marie Lopez

June 2016

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Approved by:

Dr. Janet Chang, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work

Dr. Janet Chang, Research Coordinator

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## ABSTRACT

Domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) is a significant issue that affects children, families, and communities throughout the United States. Due to the illegal nature of the problem, it is difficult for law enforcement to identify victims of DMST and when they are identified it is challenging to provide them with services. Because law enforcement often encounter DMST victims through first response calls or within juvenile hall, it is important to understand the collaboration efforts between social workers and law enforcement in order to provide effective services for this population. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of law enforcement officers regarding the involvement of social workers in DMST cases. This study used a qualitative design by collecting data through face-to-face interviews with 10 law enforcement officers from Los Angeles County and San Bernardino County. This design allowed participants the opportunity to provide a more in-depth explanation regarding the involvement of social workers in DMST cases. The study found that there is a need for social workers to collaborate with law enforcement agencies to provide and advocate for services for victims of DMST. The study also indicated the need for transitional housing or other placement options for youth because the current alternative is incarceration.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the Los Angeles County probation officers and San Bernardino County law enforcement officers that participated and made this research study possible. We would also like to thank our loved ones for being a constant source of support. Most importantly, we would like to thank God for being ever present in our hearts and seeing us through our academic endeavors.

## DEDICATION

We would like to dedicate this project to the children who have been or are victims of DMST. Our hope is to expand the academic literature in order to ensure that survivors are provided with the most effective and appropriate services to not only cope, but to thrive in life.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study for social work practice.

#### Problem Statement

Domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) is the commercial sexual exploitation of a minor, legally born or naturalized citizen, within the United States (Jordan, Patel, & Rapp, 2013). DMST is a significant issue within the United States. According to the U.S Department of Justice Website, there are between 100,000 to 300,000 children currently being sexually exploited within U.S. borders ("U.S. Department," 2007). Shared Hope International was one of the first organizations to address DMST as a major issue due to their findings from rigorous research (Shared Hope International, 2009). As a result from such findings, the organization received a grant from the U.S Department of Justice, in order to conduct in-depth research on DMST within the United States. The study found that first responders, such as law enforcement officers, were insufficiently skilled in identifying victims of DMST. The misidentification of DMST victims often led law enforcement officers to treat victims as criminals and charge them with prostitution, which can be re-traumatizing. Since misidentification was shown to be common in the research, this may be a factor as to why law enforcement officers did not

contact outside agencies, such as child welfare or other social service agencies when assisting DMST victims.

It is imperative for social workers to understand how law enforcement agencies identify and work with DMST victims. Because of legislation, such as the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (VTVPA) of 2000, sex trafficked youth are no longer viewed as juvenile delinquents, but instead as victims of a crime. For instance, when law enforcement agencies conduct prostitution stings, they often determine that many of the apprehended suspects are minors. Because they are minors and are unable to consent under law, law enforcement considers them victims of a crime. However, many DMST victims are often involved in other forms of illegal activities, such as heavy gang affiliation and are often detained in juvenile detention centers (personal correspondence, October 23, 2015).

A review of the social work literature suggests that the trauma DMST victims face is complex and multifaceted. Many DMST survivors experience complex posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because they have endured repeated and prolonged exposure to traumatic events while being sex trafficked (Hardy, Compton, & McPhatter, 2013). As a result, law enforcement policies, such as juvenile detention, may be detrimental to the psychological well being of DMST victims. Due to the persistent physical, sexual, and psychological abuse experienced in DMST, juvenile detention centers may further re-traumatize and re-victimize DMST survivors.

Current policies such as the TVPA of 2000, is the first federal law to address the prevention and protection of DMST victims, but also the apprehension of offenders. Prior to the enactment of this law, victims were being prosecuted rather than the traffickers themselves (TVPA, 2000). The TVPA facilitates the study of DMST because it officially categorized DMST survivors as victims. This act further facilitates the provision of services to victims, such as funding for the behavioral mental health treatment of victims.

It is important to study law enforcements view on the involvement of social workers within DMST cases because social workers may provide services, which law enforcement may lack. For example, social workers may refer DMST victims to residential care facilities designed to meet the specific needs of DMST clients, instead of housing them in juvenile detention centers. Even though residential care facilities are said to be the best practice for this population, a recent study located only seven residential care facilities dedicated to victims of sex trafficking within the Unites States (Jordan, Patel, & Rapp, 2013). As a result, social workers can collaborate with law enforcement and advocate for additional services for victims. Although, existing studies on the collaboration of social workers and law enforcement in DMST cases are limited.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of law enforcement officers regarding the involvement of social workers in DMST cases.

By reviewing law enforcements perceptions of social worker involvement with DMST victims, a conclusion can be made to determine whether or not social workers are involved and are providing the needed services. The findings of this study will assist social services in collaborating with law enforcement agencies in order to address the needs of DMST victims.

Enhancing the social workers role in law enforcement encounters with DMST victims will help change law enforcement protocol when encountering DMST victims. Specifically, this study will aid in enhancing services for victims instead of the current procedures law enforcement uses, such as carceral forms of protection (Musto, 2013). This study will also assist social service agencies to understand which interventions law enforcement officers believe to be the most effective when working with DMST victims.

The type of research design that is most appropriate to address the issue of law enforcement officers' collaboration with social workers regarding DMST is a qualitative design, in which interviews would be conducted with law enforcement officers. Conducting interviews with law enforcement officers would provide more in-depth answers as to why or why not law enforcement collaborates with social workers in order to assist these victims. Interviews will

also assist in understanding multiple officers' points of view and their personal experiences with social workers in regards to DMST victims. We may also be able to gain insight as to why some law enforcement officers believe there may be a lack of evidence, regarding the effectiveness of the collaboration of social workers and law enforcement in aiding victims of DMST. Their interviews will not only provide answers to preliminary questions, but also create new questions and implications for study.

### Significance of the Project for Social Work

On the policy perspective, law enforcement officers and social workers may use the findings of this study to address the lack of coordinated services for victims. Legislative mandates can be enacted to require both agencies to work collectively and provide resources on a legal and social service level. For instance, law enforcement can service the victim by apprehending their trafficker and social service can aid in providing them with resources, such as residential care facilities to address their various needs.

On a practice level, the research results could be used to persuade law enforcement and social service agencies to collaborate with one another in order to increase the effectiveness of their multiple interventions. Both agencies could determine that working collaboratively versus independently increases organizational goals and provides effective services to this population. Social workers within child welfare can benefit from the study by

understanding how significant this problem is within the population, which can assist them in providing effective case management resources to DMST victims.

On a research level, this study can contribute to adding to the existing literature currently available on DMST victims, law enforcement interventions, and social service interventions. Also, the literature will assist law enforcement and social service agencies in understanding the importance of multi-agency collaboration. As a result, the perception of law enforcement officers, regarding DMST cases, and their collaboration with social workers will contribute to the limited literature on this topic.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter consists of a discussion of the current literature regarding DMST. This chapter is separated into multiple sections, which include law enforcements experience with DMST, law enforcements interaction with social workers regarding DMST victims, and theories guiding conceptualization.

#### Police Officers Experience with Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

Irazola et al. (2008) stated that first responders, such as law enforcement officers, were more likely to encounter DMST victims and given the task of identifying them as potential DMST victims. Unfortunately, misidentification of victims by law enforcement is common because law enforcement is not properly trained in identifying DMST victims (Sigmon, 2008). Okech et al. (2011) measured the success of the VTVPA, since its enactment in 2000. Okech and colleagues (2011) observed various agencies, such as law enforcement, in order to understand their ability to identify human trafficking victims. Because law enforcement agencies had developed anti-human trafficking task forces and provided mandatory trainings, Okech and colleagues (2011) believed that police officers would be able to identify



sexually exploited children when they encountered one. However, the study found that law enforcement officers did not always accurately identify victims, which meant that they might have encountered more victims than they initially thought.

Another study conducted by Farrell (2009) observed how often law enforcement agencies in local communities encountered human trafficking cases. The study found that it was unlikely for law enforcement officers to identify a human trafficking case. The study also suggested that law enforcement officers needed to be properly trained to identify DMST victims and refer them to the appropriate services. In order to increase the probability of identifying potential victims, Kotrla (2010) proposed the need of screening protocol implementation within agencies that were more likely to encounter DMST. Barnitz (2011) suggested that assessment protocol be implemented by law enforcement agencies, to ensure that cases be handled in an effective and compassionate manner.

Recognizing victims of DMST seems to be one of most significant obstacles for agencies, especially law enforcement. For those that can identify DMST victims, the only means in assisting them is through incarceration. Musto (2013) stated that law enforcement officers that had arrested DMST victims believed it was the only mean in which they could assist these victims and keep them safe. A law enforcement officer interviewed by Musto (2013) stated that she incarcerates these victims because there are currently no other

options to assist them and until there is a different option, her only choice is to detain them. By doing so, law enforcement is able to provide DMST victims with the needed resources.

### Probation Officers Experience with Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

An overview of the literature suggests that DMST survivors are often housed in juvenile detention centers for several reasons, such as a lack of placement options (Jordan et al., 2013; Kotrla, 2010; Twill, Green, & Traylor, 2010). Research also suggests that many DMST survivors have a history of child maltreatment, which is why they do not return home post-trafficking experiences (Twill et al., 2010). Kotrla (2010) suggests that there is a lack of child protective services funded group homes to house DMST survivors. Also, there is a lack of residential care facilities designed to treat the specific needs of this population (Jordan et al., 2013). As a result of a lack of placement opportunities for this population, they are often placed in juvenile detention centers in order to ensure their safety and well-being.

The literature suggests that probation officers assist DMST victims by referring them to relief services, such as basic needs, crisis intervention, and emergency health care (Perdue et al., 2012). Other than the detention of DMST victims in juvenile detention centers, there is limited existing literature regarding probation officers and their involvement within DMST cases.

## Law Enforcements Interaction with Social Workers Regarding Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victims

Baker and Grover (2013) conducted a self-report survey on law enforcement agencies within Southern California to determine whether participants collaborated with other agencies regarding to human trafficking victims. The study found that 100 percent of the agencies that completed the questionnaire collaborated with other agencies. Most of the participants stated that they were knowledgeable about other agencies through word of mouth or by attending community meetings, but did not provide reasoning as to why they did not collaborate with other agencies. The limitation of these results was that only 40 percent of the agencies they contacted actually returned the survey. Another limitation was that the highest number of surveys returned from a county agency was seven. Due to lack of participation of agencies in this study, the finding could not be considered reliable. However, it provides insight about how many agencies actually do collaborate with one another in Southern California.

Unfortunately, there was a lack of literature about law enforcements interaction and collaboration with social workers, in regards to working with victims of DMST. This can be due to the notion that law enforcement and social workers rarely collaborate with each other because they have different goals, which can hinder collaboration. When speaking to Los Angeles County Probation Officer who works closely with the Human Sex Trafficking Task Force, he stated that the reason for the lack of literature could be due to the

fact that law enforcement and social workers have a tumultuous relationship (personal correspondence, February 6, 2015). He explained the reason for this is due to having different agendas, where law enforcement seeks to arrest and incarcerate an individual who has broken the law and social workers want assist the individual by providing different services.

Even though there was a lack of literature that studied the collaboration between law enforcement and social workers, the literature did suggest that the collaboration between these agencies would be beneficial to the victim. Hodge (2008) stated that law enforcement, social workers, and other agencies should align with one another to form a team. As a result, it would allow them to provide DMST victims with effective services. Chamber and Wedel (2009) stated that if social services agencies joined forces with agencies offering legal services, they would be able to assist law enforcement officers in prosecuting those who were trafficking the DMST victims. Rafferty (2013) indicated that because DMST cases are transnational crimes, communication and resources should be incorporated amongst the agencies to efficiently service these victims. Overall, the literature indicates that a collaborating effort would be more beneficial in providing services that improve the well-being of victims, due to the numerous resources both agencies possess. Law enforcement would also aid in decreasing the number of DMST victims they incarcerate by providing these victims with other resources instead of jail time.

## Theories Guiding Conceptualization

General systems theory can be put into practice in various fields of study. Lesser and Pope (2011) define systems theory as a collection of methods which analyze how systems function and associate to one another. It is imperative to understand how law enforcement interacts with other systems, especially social service agencies. By understanding the connection between these two systems and how they service DMST victims, important implications can be made regarding law enforcement and social work practice. Also, Musto (2013) suggested that various systems, such as law enforcement, social service, and community-based agencies could collaborate with one another in order to identify and protect DMST youth.

Currently, law enforcement uses “detention-to-protection” as a means to provide secure placement and services to DMST victims by housing them in juvenile detention centers (Musto, 2013). Research suggests that law enforcement traditionally viewed DMST victims as offenders and that may continue to affect how they approach DMST cases (Kotrla, 2010). Therefore, law enforcement continues to use incarceration as a form of protection even though sexually exploited children are victims and not offenders (Musto, 2013).

Musto (2013) stated that law enforcement continues to use incarceration to protect victims of DMST because they currently have no other means to protect them. As a result, law enforcement can work in conjunction with other

systems like social services to provide support and services to the department. Social workers can also provide advocacy and support to vulnerable populations, such as DMST victims, that continue to be treated as juvenile offenders (Kotrla, 2010). Research also suggests that law enforcement and social service agencies should work together to balance conflicting needs and educate one another about the legal or welfare factors that may benefit or be of detriment to DMST victims (Gozdziak et al., 2006).

### Summary

Although the estimates of DMST victims vary due to factors, such as misidentification, it still constitutes an area of significance and law enforcements officers are generally responding to DMST cases due to legal implications. An overview of the literature implicates the lack of involvement of social workers within DMST cases, as recounted by law enforcement officers. Because there is a lack of social work involvement in DMST cases, observing the issue using systems theory, implications can be generated to determine how agencies can collaborate and provide efficient services for DMST victims.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methods that were used to conduct this study. The methods consist of the study design, sampling, data collection and interview instrument, procedures, protection of human subjects, and qualitative data analysis.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perception of law enforcement officers regarding the involvement of social workers in DMST cases. This study was conducted by asking open-ended questions to gain knowledge regarding whether social workers, specifically child welfare social service workers; aid in the investigation of DMST cases with law enforcement officers and if needed services are being provided for these victims.

A qualitative design was utilized in order to collect data through face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 law enforcement officers from Los Angeles County and San Bernardino County. This type of design was utilized to allow the law enforcement officer, an opportunity to provide a more in-depth

explanation regarding the involvement of social workers in DMST cases. The design was flexible, which allowed the law enforcement officers the ability to express their thoughts, opinions, concerns, and suggestions regarding DMST, social workers, and services that are being utilized with this population. Implementing this design also allowed the researchers the opportunity to develop additional questions, which were based on the answers that law enforcement provided during the study.

Although a qualitative design was appropriate for this type of study, there were some limitations that resulted from using this method. One limitation was since a small sample was obtained from only San Bernardino and Los Angeles County, the results are not representative of all law enforcement officers in the two counties of the participants or in other counties. Another limitation was that some of the results that were provided were based on the law enforcement officers' own personal views or perception. Concerning the information provided on protocols, counties vary in regards to protocol, procedures, and policies meaning that this information may not reflect that of other law enforcement officers or departments.

### Sampling

The data were collected from a convenient sample, which was obtained by contacting individuals who were affiliated with Los Angeles and San Bernardino county law enforcement department and who had connections with



other law enforcement officers. The researchers interviewed 10 law enforcement officers, which included five police officers and five probation officers from San Bernardino and Los Angeles County. From Los Angeles County, five probation officers were interviewed from one juvenile detention center. The remaining five were police officers, who were interviewed at their police station throughout the San Bernardino County area.

For the purpose of this study the sampling criteria consisted of only individuals who currently work in law enforcement and that have worked with or have had contact with DMST victims. The reason this type of sample was chosen was due to the fact that law enforcement are usually the first responders in DMST cases or are the ones working closely with this population in detention centers. The sample size of 10 law enforcement officers was determined due to the limited time available to collect data. This sample size was also chosen because face-to-face interviews are more time consuming in regards to the transcription and evaluation of the information provided.

### Data Collection and Instruments

In order to obtain the data for the study, face-to-face interviews were conducted using an interview guide that consisted of 15 questions. Before conducting the interviews demographic information such as gender, age, race, and education were obtained from the subjects of the study. In regards to the

interview, open-ended questions were asked in order to allow the subject to elaborate on their answer, which assisted the researchers in establishing more questions that were relevant to the study. Questions were worded in a way that did not reflect any prior opinions on the topic of DMST.

The questions were formulated in a way that the subjects were able to incorporate their personal experiences as well as actions that were taken from a legal standpoint. Some of the questions that were asked were based on the law enforcement officers' personal experience with social workers involving DMST cases.

### Procedures

With regards to Los Angeles County, Central Juvenile Hall Detention Services Bureau, the supervising officer provided participants to the researchers for this study. The interviews were conducted on February 10, 2015 at the Central Juvenile Hall Detention facility. The researchers conducting the study provided participants with an informed consent form. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes or less and were administered by the researchers. No incentive were provided for participation in the study. With regards to San Bernardino County Police Department, participants were recruited in a snowball sampling method, which consist of recruiting one law enforcement officer who then in part referred other officers. For San

Bernardino County, participants were provided with informed consent forms. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes or less, by the researcher.

### Protection of Human Subjects

The researchers took appropriate measures to ensure the anonymity of participants in this study. This study did not collect personal identifying information. Participants were provided with both an informed consent form and audio consent form. Within each consent form, the participant placed an X where signature was required, which was their consent to participate. The researchers ensured that participants were informed of the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and that their participation in the study was voluntary and they could discontinue participation at any time. In addition, participants were informed about who was conducting the study, who was supervising the study, and that no incentive was given for participation in this study. During the course of the study, participants were not identified by name, but instead were identified by numbers between 1 through 10. To further ensure the confidentiality and protection of participants, data collected is stored in a password protected computer and in a lock box in which researchers have sole access. Following the completion of the study, data collected will be destroyed.

## Data Analysis

This research study employed qualitative data analysis methods. The interviews conducted with law enforcement personnel in San Bernardino County were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. However, due to security procedures within Los Angeles County Central Detention Center, interviews could not be audiotaped, but instead written verbatim in a notebook by the researchers. A coding method was formulated to categorize the data. Data collected was analyzed to assess for similarities, differences, patterns, and themes. Finally, this study utilized descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, and measures of variability to describe the characteristics of the participants.

## Summary

In summary, this chapter presents the methods utilized in the course of the study. The study used qualitative design and convenience sampling. An interview guide was used when conducting face-to-face interviews with participants. Methods and procedures, including the protection of human subjects and data analysis was discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The findings of the study will be presented in this chapter. This chapter will provide detailed descriptions of the findings and sample characteristics. Also, it will provide statistical analysis of the data analysis.

#### Presentation of the Findings

There were 10 participants in the study. The participants were equally divided by region and area of specialization, as 50% were from Los Angeles County Probation Department and 50% were from San Bernardino County Police Departments. Exactly 100% of Los Angeles County Probation Officer participants had two years or less of experience working in law enforcement. Regarding San Bernardino County Police Officer participants, 60% of participants had approximately 10 years of experience and 40% of participants had exactly 21 years of experience in law enforcement. With regards to gender, 50% of the participants were female and 50% were male. The average age of participants from Los Angeles County was 25 years of age. Concerning San Bernardino County participants' years of age, 40% were 50 years old, 40% were 32 years old, and 20% were 31 years old. Of the entire participant sample, 40% were Hispanic/Latino, 30% were African

American/Black, and 30% were Caucasian. Finally, 20% of participants had an Associate's Degree, 70% had Bachelor's Degrees, and 10% had a Master's Degree.

When the participants were asked about their view on DSMT their responses were mixed. About 40% of the participants reported that DMST is a terrible crime and is an issue that is rarely spoken of. For instance, one participant stated, "I think it's probably one of the most underrated and under observed crimes by law enforcement and the community as a whole and is a terrible terrible crime" (personal correspondence, March 2016). On the other hand, 20% of the participants indicated that DMST was a growing issue within society. For example, one participant stated, "I think that it is an ever-growing trend amongst young people being forced to participate in sex acts" (personal correspondence, March 2016).

When the participants were asked which general issues they believed DMST victims faced their responses were mixed. Approximately 60% of participants stated that DMST victims came from broken homes and lack natural supports, such as a lack of involvement of family and or friends. For example, one participant stated,

"I believe there's a lack of protection, a lack of family support and it drives them to seek outside support and sometimes that supporter is obviously not a great, how do I put this, a sense of security. It could be

a pimp or could be what is known as a bottom bitch that works for the pimp and recruits these young women into these type of organizations and then slowly and quickly manipulates them into this lifestyle” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

However, one participant indicated that DMST victims suffer from mental health disorders. For instance, one participant stated,

“I know personally that there's a lot of mental health issues that are going unaddressed so you got your autism, lower-level autism, ADD, and ADHD. A lot of anger issues, bipolar issues, things like that that with simple medication or a proper channel to get those addressed kids would be normal. But they're going completely under addressed so they're falling out with their friends, are falling out with their family, they're failing in school, they're complete outcasts so they're searching for other things. And next thing you know they're recruited by a caring individual and put out on the blade” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

When participants were asked which type of training they had received regarding this population, their answers were split. With regards to Los Angeles County participants, 80% stated that they had not received any formal training. For instance, one participant stated, “I have not received any training regarding the CSEC population. I haven't, but I would like to go for formal

training” (personal correspondence, February 2016). However, 20% did receive formal training. For example, one participant stated, “I’ve attended multiple training regarding CSEC. I have attended trauma training and how to build positive relationships with victims of CSEC” (personal correspondence, February 2016). Regarding San Bernardino County, 100% of participants stated that they had received formal training. For example, one participant stated, “the training I received is training through two separate law enforcement academy’s” (personal correspondence, March 2016). However, 40% of San Bernardino County participants stated that they were educators on the DMST issue and have taught classes. For instance, one participant stated, “I’ve taught over 500 law enforcement officer about human trafficking” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

With regards to the six participants that did receive formal training, they were asked what their personal view of DMST was prior to training and their answers were mixed. Three of the participants of this pool reported that youth involved in DMST were victims. For example, one participant stated, “I never viewed CSEC victims as perpetrators” (personal correspondence, February 2016). However, two participants in this pool believed that youth involved in DMST were involved by choice. For instance, one participant stated, “I was just uneducated and saw those girls as they knew what they were doing and shame on them they're out there selling their bodies” (personal correspondence, February 2016).



As a follow-up question to the six participants that had received training that had described their personal view of DMST victims prior to training, they were also asked if their view of DMST changed after training and their answers were almost uniform. Five of the six participants stated that their views changed as a consequence of training. For instance, one participant stated,

“Well, as I became more educated in this, I found out that uncle John is probably the pimp and you're just literally releasing these kids right out to their pimp again so they're being re-victimized over and over again and probably about 2007 there was a paradigm shift in how we looked at these girls we went from looking at them as a lawbreaker, as historically we had had been, but now we were looking at the causes that brought them and put them on the blade and we were going after the traffickers“ (personal correspondence, March 2016).

However, one of the six participants that were asked this follow-up question stated that their viewpoint remained the same. Because one participant originally viewed youth involved in DMST as victims, her viewpoint did not change, but stated, “I learned a lot more about minors who have been victims of CSEC” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

When participants that did not receive formal training were asked what their view point of DMST was their answers were mixed. Two of the four

participants that were asked this question reported that they had no viewpoint because they were unaware of the issue. For example, one participant stated, “I never thought about them because we were not exposed to it. Um if you are not on Figueroa or Long Beach Boulevard you don't see them (pause) just like the inner city areas, you don't see them” (personal correspondence, February 2016). In contrast, one participant of the four in this pool reported that her viewpoint was that they chose to engage in DMST. For instance, one participant stated, “I felt that it was something that they chose to do and enjoyed it” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

Subsequently, the participants in this pool that did not receive training were asked a follow-up question regarding how they came about their personal viewpoint of youth involved in DMST and their answers were mixed. One participant of the four reported that they came about their viewpoint due to work experience. For instance, one participant stated,

“I don't know I just thought people who did this chose to do it. I wasn't really aware that they were actually being forced to do it. I guess I learned a lot once I started working with this population” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

Another one of the four participants in this pool stated that their viewpoint was derived from being involved in a psychoeducational group for DMST victims provided by the department for which they work. For example,

one participant stated “I remember I did one of the programs where they view them as a victim instead of a perpetrator. I believe a CSEC program” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

With regards to Los Angeles County participants, when they were asked what their department’s protocol was when encountering a DMST victim, their responses were mixed. Three of the five participants reported that they contacted the CSEC coordinator when encountering a DMST victim. For example, one participant stated, “Umm I’m fairly new here but from my understanding, we get in touch with the CSEC coordinator and they interview them” (personal correspondence, February 2016). On the other hand, one participant reported that their department’s protocol was to provide services to DMST victims. For instance, one participant stated, that their protocol was “To provide services, such as mental health and advocacy” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

With regards to San Bernardino County participants, when they were asked what their department’s protocol was when encountering a DMST victim, their responses were almost uniform. Four of the five participants indicated that they contact the vice unit when encountering a DMST victim. For example, one participant stated, “If our vice unit is working we contact them” (personal correspondence, March 2016). In contrast, one participant reported that they incarcerate DMST victims in juvenile detention centers as protocol.

For instance, one participant stated, “We’ve got an MOU through probation in the hall that anyone that has been identified as a sex trafficking victim we can get them in the hall on a misdemeanor” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

In regards to Los Angeles County participants, when they were asked what type of services their department provided for DMST victims, their responses were almost uniform. Four of the five participants stated that they provide services such as advocacy for DMST victims. For example, one participant stated, “Mental health umm medical, and umm advocacy” (personal correspondence, February 2016). On the other hand, one participant reported that their department provides a psychoeducational group for the youth housed in the detention center. For example, one participant stated, “We have a CSEC program for awareness once a week for new minors” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

In regards to San Bernardino County participants, when they were asked what type of services their department provided for DMST victims, their responses were uniform. All five participants indicated that their Department does not directly provide services to victims outside of law enforcement services, but they do refer them to outside services. For instance one participant stated, “The Department itself, really has no services .so we make

contact in the field with a child or adult and we will refer them ... ” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

When participants were asked if they believed that the services that the DMST victims were provided were effective, their responses were almost uniform. Exactly 80% of the participants reported that the services were effective. For example, one participant stated, “Yes, because minors receive the appropriate services related to their needs” (personal correspondence, February 2016). In contrast one participant reported that services are effective on a case-by-case scenario. For example, one participant stated, “So it’s just you know you never know it’s hit or miss so I would say it would be case-by-case. It works for some, but it doesn’t work for all” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

When participants were asked if social workers were involved when encountering DMST victims their responses were almost uniform. Precisely 80% of the participants reported that Child Protective Services social workers were involved. For instance, one participant stated,

“You know from the police aspect as I am ... CFS is involved we will typically contact them to open up basically a referral because we are mandated reporters. So we will contact them and get them in the loop so that they can provide the services that they have to provide, you

know we make sure to utilize that” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

On the other hand, one participant reported that she was not aware if social workers were involved with DMST victims. For example one participant stated, “I’m not sure” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

When participants were asked how they thought social workers were involved in assisting DMST victims their responses were almost uniform. Eighty percent of participants reported that social workers were involved in assisting DMST victims with placement options. For example, one participant stated,

“CFS will assist with placement of that female let’s just say she was a runaway or she doesn’t have legal guardians often times these children have parents who are in the system themselves ... CFS would likely place them in maybe a foster home rather than maybe the alternative maybe being jail, juvenile hall” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

In contrast, one participant stated, “I do not think social workers are actively involved” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

When participants were asked how social workers were engaged in collaborating with their Department to help DMST victims their responses were mixed. Forty percent of participants reported that social workers did not

directly collaborate with their Department. For instance, one participant stated, “Not so much through the Department specifically, but maybe through CASE (Coalition Against Sexual Exploitation) and that working group” (personal correspondence, March 2016). On the other hand, one participant reported that social workers collaborate with their Department by in deriving suitable placement options for DMST victims. For example, one participant stated, “Uh, yeah we contact the... social workers if we have to place them in a shelter. Umm so, that’s ... how we collaborate and work together” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

When participants were asked if they had personally collaborated with a social worker to help DMST victims, their responses were almost split. Exactly 60% indicated that they had personally collaborated with a social worker when assisting a DMST victim. For instance, one participant stated, “Yes, we exchange information related to the client to ensure that the minor’s needs are being met” (personal correspondence, February 2016). In contrast, 40% of the participants reported that they had not personally collaborated with a social worker in helping a DMST victim. For instance, one participant stated, “No I haven’t” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

As a follow up to the previous question for those who had not personally collaborated with social workers, which consisted of probation officers, they were asked why not and their response were almost uniform.

Three out of four of the participants reported that they were unaware of the reason why they have not collaborated with a social worker to help a DMST victim. For example, one participant stated, “I don’t know, I guess it’s because like I said earlier I haven’t seen one come in this building. Umm ... or at least I didn’t know that they were a social worker” (personal correspondence, February 2016). On the other hand, one participant did not respond to the question.

In regards to the participants who reported that they had collaborated with a social worker, which were mostly law enforcement officers, they were asked if the collaboration was beneficial to the client and their responses were almost uniform. Five of the six participants reported that the collaboration with the social worker was beneficial to the client. For instance, one participant stated,

“You know, it seems like every time that I would see social workers around these clients it was always good because for some reason there was a good bond between the social worker and victim. Where they knew each other by first names and I think that’s important because these kids or most of these kids don’t have you know a family that loves them like the normal family you say would have” (personal correspondence, March 2016).



However, one participant indicated that the collaboration with the social worker was not beneficial to the client. For example, one participant stated, “I guess it was a Band-Aid, but it didn’t work overall. It was because they didn’t give the social worker the opportunity to provide them with services” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

When participants were asked what type of services they believe would be effective for DMST victims their responses were mixed. Fifty percent of participants reported that mental health services such as counseling would be beneficial for DMST victims. For example, one participant stated, “I would say individual counseling first because sometimes group counseling doesn’t work for everyone” (personal correspondence, March 2016). In contrast, 40% of the participants indicated that reintegration services would be effective for DMST. For instance, one participant stated, “Reintegration is important because you know we have to understand you and I have not lived that lifestyle that they are forced to live” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

When the Los Angeles County Probation Department participants were asked if any social workers were currently providing services to DMST victims in their custody their response were almost uniform. Eighty percent of the participants reported that they were unaware if social workers currently providing services to DMST victims in their custody. For example, one participant stated, “I believe there have been social workers in here I am just

not sure” (personal correspondence, February 2016). However, 20% of the participants indicated that social workers were currently providing services to DMST victims in their custody. For instance, one participant stated,

“Yea, that girl who has a four month old baby because they have to set up special visits with their child because no one under 18 can visit ... say like a parent brings a little brother or sister of the minor, they can't come in at all” (personal correspondence, February 2016).

When San Bernardino County law enforcement officers were asked if any social workers had provided services to DMST victims during or after a first response call the responses were almost uniform. Eighty percent of participants indicated that social workers had been involved in providing services to DMST victims during or after a first response call. For instance, one participant stated, “I have been aware of a call where we called them out to notify them of the incident and they actually responded on scene” (personal correspondence, March 2016). On the other hand, 20% of participants reported that social workers had not provided services to DMST victims during or after a first response call. For example one participant stated, “Not that I can think of off the top of my head” (personal correspondence, March 2016).

## Summary

This chapter presented the finding of this study. The study found that sixty percent of participants indicated that DMST victims came from broken homes or lack natural supports, Another finding this study indicated was that eighty percent of participants reported that social workers were involved in assisting DMST victims with placement options.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This chapter will discuss the significance of the results. This chapter will also present the limitations of the study. Considering the finding, this chapter will then discuss the implications for social work practice, policy, and research.

#### Discussion

The study found that most of the participants in the study identified DMST as a heinous crime against children that is occurring at an alarming rate and yet is often unaddressed within American society. This finding is consistent with Kotrla's study (2010) finding that "due to the hidden nature of the problem, the questionable methodologies of prior studies, and a lack of sufficient attention to the issue, there are no reliable estimates of the extent of the problem" (p.182). Based on these findings, there should be increased awareness within the community at large. For instance, there is an increased need for awareness through the media to educate the public. Finally, because DMST is an issue that affects children and youth, there is a need for psycho education awareness in the public educational system to prevent minors from being exploited by human traffickers.

The study also found that most of the participants believed youth involved in DMST came from dysfunctional homes, lacked natural supports, and suffered from mental health disorders. With regards to dysfunctional homes, the results of the study are consistent with Hickie and Roe-Sepowitz's study (2013) finding that DMST victims often report experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse throughout their childhood. These findings suggest that children who have been victimized by their own families are more vulnerable than others to fall victims to sex traffickers. Regarding mental health disorders, this finding is consistent with Hardy, Compton, and McPhatter's study (2013) finding that sex trafficking survivors often experience mental health disorders, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, impulse control, conduct disorder, and antisocial personality traits. These findings suggest that mental health disorders may be a factor of why children are more vulnerable than others and become victims of sex trafficking.

The study indicated that most of the participants also found that formal training on DMST is needed in some areas of law enforcement. This finding is consistent with Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy's study (2010) finding that less than twenty percent of the law enforcement agencies involved in their study had received human trafficking training. It is apparent that formal training is not done in a consistent manner for some agencies. For agencies not offering formal training, they must consider providing law enforcement with the needed training.

The study also identified incarceration as the primary means to ensure the secure placement and provision of services for victims of DMST. This finding is consistent with Musto's study (2013) finding that due to a lack of placement options for DMST youth, law enforcement and nongovernmental agencies believe that incarceration is the only placement option available this population at this time. It is apparent that placement options for this population are needed, such as transitional housing. However, it is important to emphasize that future placement options remain secure to ensure the safety of children from their exploiters.

The study also identified that there is a need for child welfare social workers to collaborate with law enforcement officers. This finding is consistent with Kotrla's study (2010) finding that social workers can be strong advocates for this population of children, especially those who work in juvenile detention centers because minor housed in these facilities are typically treated as criminals. It is apparent that social workers may have an impact the manner in which DMST victims are treated by law enforcement to prevent re-victimization. Therefore, social workers should make an effort to collaborate with law enforcement to advocate for and enhance services for DMST victims.

### Limitations

This study included the personal experiences and knowledge from ten law enforcement participants. Therefore, the information gathered in this

sample cannot be generalized to the entire law enforcement population. The law enforcement officers in this study were a convenient sample because they were recruited by a snowball effect. It is significant to note that law enforcement participants from San Bernardino County had extensive experience in their area of specialization when compared to probation officers from Los Angeles County. In addition, another limitation that was present within the sample in the study was the lack of variation in age among participants from San Bernardino County when compared to Los Angeles County. For example, the age of participants from Los Angeles County were 24, 24, 25, 26, and 27, and in San Bernardino County their ages were 31, 31, 32, 50, and 50. Another limitation in the study was that all participants from Los Angeles County were female and all participants from San Bernardino County were male.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

The study found that there is a need for DMST awareness in both law enforcement agencies and the community at large. In order to promote awareness, social workers should serve as experts and advocates on the subject of DMST. Therefore, social workers can provide educational training services to law enforcement and other organizations to promote community awareness.

Because children and youth involved in DMST come from dysfunctional homes, such as those suffering from child maltreatment issues, education for child welfare social workers would be beneficial. For instance, social services could derive an evidence-based intervention, such as a screening tool, in order to assess whether children involved in the system can be identified as a DMST victim. In addition, social workers can create psycho-educational programs in order to prevent children in the child welfare system from becoming victims of DMST. Furthermore, such preventative programs should be mandated for children involved in child welfare because of the susceptibility of them becoming victims of DMST.

The study found that incarceration was used as a primary means to ensure the secure placement and provision of services for victims of DMST because of the lack of alternatives. However, Clawson and Goldblatt Grace (2007) suggest that best practice for DMST victims include residential care facilities designed to meet their specific needs. In addition to the services provided by the facilities, such as mental health treatment and intensive case management, Clawson and Goldblatt Grace (2007) also suggest family involvement and reunification services be included. As a result, it would be beneficial to DMST victims for child welfare to create transitional housing facilities for this population that would meet their needs with regards to security and social services. By creating such facilities, law enforcement



agencies would collaborate with social workers when placing DMST youth in secure placements.

During the course of the study, it was found that there is a lack of literature regarding the collaboration between social work and law enforcement agencies from a social work perspective. Therefore, additional research may provide insight on how these agencies could collaborate more effectively in assisting DMST victims in the future. In addition, during the course of this study, it was found that there is a lack of empirical literature regarding the issue of DMST. As a result, social workers should advocate to not only bring awareness to the issue, but also to add empirical research regarding this population.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of law enforcement officers regarding the involvement of social workers in DMST cases. The study found that there is a need for social workers to collaborate with law enforcement agencies to provide and advocate for services for victims of DMST. The study also indicated the need for transitional housing or other placement options for youth because the current alternative is incarceration. In order to promote awareness, social workers should serve as experts and advocates on the subject of DMST and provide educational training services to law enforcement and other organizations to

promote community awareness. Finally, it would be beneficial to DMST victims for child welfare to create transitional housing facilities for this population that would meet their needs with regards to security and social services.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## Interview Guide

Prior to conducting this interview, we would like to inform you that your answers will remain anonymous. Also, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please answer honestly and to the best of your ability.

1. What do you think about Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)?
2. What general issues do you see or believe DMST victims face?
3. What type of training have you received regarding this population, if any?
- 4A. Prior to training, what was your personal view of DMST victims? (ASK ONLY IF TRAINING WAS TAKEN)
- 4B. If you did not receive any training, what is your personal view of DMST? (ASK ONLY IF NO TRAINING WAS TAKEN)
- 4C. How did you come about this viewpoint? (ASK ONLY IF NO TRAINING WAS TAKEN)
5. After such training, did your view of DMST change? Please explain. (ASK ONLY IF TRAINING WAS TAKEN)
6. What is your department's protocol when first encountering a DMST victim?
7. What type of services does your department provide to DMST victims, if any?
8. In your view, are these services effective, and why?
9. In the process of helping DMST victims, are social workers involved?

10. How do you think these social workers are involved with DMST victims?
11. How are social workers engaged in collaborating with your department to help DMST victims?
- 12A. Have you personally collaborated with a social worker to help DMST victims? Please explain.
- 12B. If you have not collaborated with a social worker, why not?
13. Was the collaboration with the social worker beneficial to the client?  
(ASK ONLY IF THERE WAS PERSONAL COLLABORATION)
14. What type of social services do you believe would be effective for DMST victims?
- 15A. (PROBATION ONLY) Currently, are any social workers providing services to any DMST victims in your custody? Please explain why or why not.
- 15B. (POLICE OFFICERS ONLY) In the past, have any social workers provided services to your DMST victims during or after a first response call? Please explain why or why not.

Developed by Adriana Lopez Baca & Melissa Marie Lopez

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

**INFORMED CONSENT**

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the perceptions of law enforcement officers which consist of police officers and probation officers regarding social workers and law enforcement involvement in domestic minor sex trafficking cases. The study is being conducted under the supervision of, Dr. Janet Chang, by graduate students, Melissa Lopez and Adriana Baca, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee, California State University, and San Bernardino.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of law enforcement officers, which consist of police officers and probation officers, regarding social workers involvement and collaboration in domestic minor sex trafficking cases.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will take part in an interview regarding their involvement in domestic minor sex trafficking cases and their collaboration with social workers within these cases.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY:** Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

**DURATION:** It will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete the interview.

**RISKS:** There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact, Dr. Janet Chang, at 909-537-5184.

**RESULTS:** Please contact Dr. Janet Chang (email: jchang@csusb.edu) or the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2016.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

Place an X mark here \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

909.537.5501

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT



## Debriefing Statement

The interview you have just completed was designed to understand law enforcements perceptions regarding domestic minor sex trafficking and the involvement of social workers in these cases. This research study is beneficial because it has the potential to increase awareness and add academic literature in order to help domestic minor sex trafficking survivors. Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Janet Chang at (909) 537-5184. If you would like to obtain a copy of the results of this study, please contact the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) after September 2016.

APPENDIX D  
AUDIO CONSENT FORM

**AUDIO USE  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS**

As part of this research project, we will be making a audiotape recording of you during your participation in the experiment. Please indicate what uses of this audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this audiotape, your name would *not* be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the audiotape will be destroyed.

**Please indicate the type of informed consent**

Audiotape

*(AS APPLICABLE)*

- The audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

- The audiotape can be shown/played to subjects in other experiments.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

- The audiotape can be used for scientific publications.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

- The audiotape can be shown/played at meetings of scientists.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

- The audiotape can be shown/played in classrooms to students.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

- The audiotape can be shown/played in public presentations to nonscientific groups.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

- The audiotape can be used on television and radio.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHICS

## Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions:

1. I am a
  - a. Probation Officer in Los Angeles County
  - b. Law Enforcement Officer in San Bernardino County
2. How many years have you worked in law enforcement? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender:  Male  Female
4. Years of Age: \_\_\_\_\_
5. What race or ethnicity do you identify with?
  - a. African American/ Black
  - b. American Indian/ Alaskan Native
  - c. Asian/ Pacific Islander
  - d. Caucasian
  - e. Hispanic/ Latino
  - f. Other\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your highest level of education?
  - a. High School
  - b. Some College
  - c. Bachelor Degree
  - d. Master Degree
  - e. Doctorate Degree

Developed by Adriana Lopez Baca and Melissa Marie Lopez

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Team Effort: Adriana Baca and Melissa Lopez

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Melissa Lopez and Adriana Baca

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

- a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Adriana Baca and Melissa Lopez

- b. Methods

Team Effort: Melissa Lopez and Adriana Baca

- c. Results

Team Effort: Adriana Baca and Melissa Lopez

- d. Discussion

Team Effort: Melissa Lopez and Adriana Baca