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# Understanding How Juveniles Become Human Traffickers

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# Understanding How Juveniles Become Human Traffickers

By: Rachel Price, Molly Paisley & Abby Snow

# Problem Statement:

Modern-day slavery, also known as human trafficking, exists and grows worldwide, exploiting people for their physical and sexual labor (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011).

Professionals from many disciplines have gathered information about victims as well as the perpetrators of this human atrocity. Though there have been studies on the profiles of the individuals who do the trafficking; little research exists on a recently discovered phenomenon: the involvement of minors in trafficking endeavors. Increased studies examining the participation of children as perpetrators in human trafficking will help professionals target interventions.

# Qualitative Research Question

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?



# Literature Review:

## Definitions and Terms:

- Human trafficking may be defined as:
  - Recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining a person for the use of labor or commercial sex acts (U.S. Department of State, 2013).
  - Involuntary services such as slavery, debt bondage or forced labor (U.S. Department of State, 2013).
  - “the use of force or fraud for the purposes of exploitation” (Kiss, Yun, Pocock & Zimmerman, 2015, p. 2).

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Literature Review (Cont.)

## Current Understandings of the Problem:

- 8,000,000 juveniles are victims of human trafficking
  - 5,700,000 juveniles being exploited in forced and bonded labor.
  - 1,800,000 juveniles exploited in commercial sexual activities.  
(Baglivio, Epps, Greenwald, Piquero & Reid, 2018).
- The development of international businesses and organizations has significantly increased the prevalence of human trafficking. These globalization endeavors have allowed for a more developed and accessible context in which crimes such as human trafficking thrive (Dandurand, 2017).

## Research Question:

**What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?**

# Literature Review (Cont.)

## Research Conducted on Human Trafficking:

- A look at traffickers and how victims are recruited and exploited (Deb, Srivastava, Chatterjee & Chakraborty, 2005).  
The research looks at the traffickers, how traffickers work with victims, and how to keep the victims in trafficking.
- Ways to help victims:
  - Counseling services assist in healing and trauma recovery (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu & Heffron, 2011, p. 6).
  - Working to find health insurance (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu & Heffron, 2011, p. 7).

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Literature Review (Cont.)

## Research Conducted on Traffickers/Juvenile Traffickers:

- The trafficking industry is estimated to be third on the list of violent crimes for the world (Williams, 2018, p. 625).
- Juvenile perpetrators often traffick as a means of survival -- because they believe that they have no other options. Others do so because it is part of their “family business” and they have been conditioned and groomed in this type of behavior (Raphael & Myers-Powell, 2010, p. 3).

### Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?



# Why Our Research is Valuable

- Multiple research sources affirm the fact that there is little to no quality research on that of traffickers and their methodology, experiences, and lives (Blank & Troshynski, 2012).
- The research will provide helpful information for social workers assisting both traffickers and trafficking victims.

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Qualitative Research Design

We plan to use a **qualitative, exploratory research design** to examine the experiences of traffickers who trafficked when they were minors.

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Population & Sample

- Population criteria:
  - Individuals who self-identify as having current involvement in trafficking who had trafficked others when they were a minor
- Sample Selection:
  - Non-probable Snowball Sampling

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Data Collection Procedures

- Gain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- Grounded Theory as theoretical foundation
- Use of Semi-structured, in-depth Interviewing
  - Two interviewers/researchers with each interviewee
  - One interviewer will ask questions and audio-record while the other takes copious field notes
  - Interviews will last approximately one hour and thirty minutes
  - Setting will be a semi-public place and time identified by the participants themselves
  - Interviews will be recorded and transcribed, omitting any identifiable information regarding our participants

## Research Question:

**What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?**

# Interview Format

- In-depth, phenomenological Interviews
  - Gain permission from interviewees using informed consent forms to audio record our sessions; including a confidentiality statement
  - There will be at least 2 interviewers with each interviewee. Interviews will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes, with each set of thirty minutes dedicated to asking open-ended questions related to their past, then present, and finally future
  - Between phenomenological stages, we plan to offer the interviewee a five minute break

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Data Analysis

- Transcription
  - Transcribe both audio recordings and our field notes
- Data analysis
  - Stage One: Open Coding (basic themes)
    - Team members all code separately
    - Team comes together to discuss
  - Stage Two: Axial Coding (rearrange data to find more/connect themes)
    - Team members all code separately
    - Team comes together to discuss
- Share data analysis with other researchers in the field

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Ethical Considerations

- Gaining permission from IRB
- Conscience with nature of study
  - Current human traffickers
  - Two researchers at each interview
- Pseudonyms
- Past study of human traffickers (Blank & Troshynski, 2008)



## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

# Believability of Study

- Three researchers
- Outside coder with at least a year of experience in trafficking research
- Triangulation of data
- 2 hours of data analysis will be completed per half-hour of audio transcription
- Final analyses with three randomly picked participants from our study

## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?





# Importance of Study

- Improve research on human trafficking grooming strategies
  - Diminish future harm
  - Affects professionals at hospitals, schools, agencies, libraries
  - Affects parents
- Person-in-environment vs. Incarcerated traffickers
- Encourage future researchers to further study all aspects of human trafficking



## Research Question:

What are the experiences of youth perpetrators?

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# Appendix A: Interview Questions

## Phenomenological stages

Stage 1: Questions related to their past

- Where did you call “home” growing up?
- What were your earliest childhood memories?
- What were some of the best and worst experiences you had growing up?
- At what age were you first exposed to human trafficking? What did that look like?
- At what age did you begin participating in trafficking? What did that look like?



# Appendix A: Interview Questions Cont.

Phenomenological stages

Stage 2: Questions related to their present

- How would you describe your current role in the trafficking process?
- Would you consider yourself satisfied with this career?
- What is the youngest and oldest person you have interacted with in the trafficking business?
- How do you operate in your role within trafficking process- different strategies, etc.



# Appendix A: Interview Questions Cont.

## Phenomenological Stages

Stage 3: Questions related to their future

- How long do you see yourself being involved with human trafficking?
- What would you want to change about your current life?
- Where do you perceive the scope and trends of human trafficking are going ?

