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Fact vs. Fiction: Uncovering the Experiences of Homeless/Street Youths' Involvement in Survival Sex

Abstract

Youth involvement in trading/selling sex has become of concern for policy makers, scholars, and the general public in recent years (Cecchet & Thorburn, 2014; Hossain, et al, 2010; Pub L No. 106-386; Reid & Piquero, 2013; Sapiro, Johnson, Postmus, & Simmel, 2016; Shared Hope International, 2015). The behavior of trading/selling sex is defined dichotomously within the literature. One body of literature, employs the term "survival sex" when empirical work focuses on trading/selling sex among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) identified individuals or youth that are homeless (Greene, Ennett & Ringwalt, 1999; Halcon & Lifson, 2004; Walls & Bell, 2011). Other literature refers to any youth involved in trading/selling sex as victims of "human trafficking" or "commercial sexual exploitation," especially when the focus is on cisgender young women (Cecchet & Thorburn, 2014; Hossain, et al., 2010; Reid & Piquero, 2013; Sapiro, Johnson, Postmus, & Simmel, 2016). This separation in the literature asserts a division in the perception of young people involved in trading/selling sex. Some have stated that this empirical divide has created a separation between youth who are seen as worthy (commercially sexually exploited youth) or unworthy victims (youth identified as involved in survival sex; Lutnick, 2016) Currently, among the research available regarding youth involvement in trading/selling sex, very few studies involve talking to youth directly about their experiences (Holger -Ambrose, Langmade, Edinburgh, & Saewyc, 2013; Marcus et al, 2014; Lutnick, 2016). The overall goal of this research study was to understand the experiences of homeless/street youth involvement in trading/selling sex so as to uncover information to begin to understand how clinical professionals may attend to these youths service needs. Through the use of a sequential mixed-methods research design, youth at homeless and drop-in shelters in one Western State were surveyed about their involvement in trading/selling sex. Subsequent to the surveys, youth were asked to participate in focus group discussions about their perceptions of peers' involvement in trading/selling sex. Of those surveyed, 17% (n = 21) identified themselves as having traded or sold sex for money or goods. A vast majority of those (who traded/sold sex) being cisgender, educated, Caucasian men. Focus group participants describe a spectrum of involvement in trading/selling sex. Some mention this occurring within romantic relationships where sex is used to obtain things, as well as the identification of more traditional forms of involvement such as survival sex and human trafficking.

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Chapter one: Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the topic of youth involvement in trading/selling sex. It begins with identifying the increased public interest in this issue and how the behavior of trading/selling sex among youth populations is defined differently within the empirical literature and policy. An overview of recent U.S. policy is provided and focuses on the phenomenon of trading/selling sex among women and children. The argument is made that current policy has stunted efforts to thoroughly understand the phenomenon of youth involvement in trading/selling sex. Additionally, a discussion of the risks associated with youth involvement in trading/selling sex is presented. Finally, this chapter concludes with an explanation of the importance of studying youth involved in trading/selling sex.

Overview

Youth involvement in trading/selling sex has become of concern for policy makers, scholars, and the general public in recent years (Cecchet & Thorburn, 2014; Hossain, et al., 2010; Pub L. No. 106-386; Reid & Piquero, 2013; Sapiro, Johnson, Postmus, & Simmel, 2016; Shared Hope International, 2015). The behavior of trading/selling sex is defined dichotomously within the literature. One body of literature, employs the term “survival sex” when empirical work focuses on trading/selling sex among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) identified individuals or youth that are homeless (Greene, Ennett & Ringwalt, 1999; Halcon & Lifson, 2004; Walls

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Political influences

Human trafficking in the U.S. is a broad umbrella term that encompasses trafficking of persons of any age or origin for sex or labor (Pub L. No. 106-386). The term *human trafficking*, when referring to sex trafficking of minors within the U.S. is often referred to as, *Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* (DMST; Cecchet & Thorburn, 2014; Hossain, et al., 2010; Reid & Piquero, 2013; Sapiro, Johnson, Postmus, & Simmel, 2016). Understanding the evolution of human trafficking policy within the U.S. provides the reader a foundation for understanding the divide between two groups of youth: victims of human trafficking vs. survival sex involved youth. The following subsections provide background on the political climate at the time human trafficking policy was initiated

within the U.S., a detailed summary of DMST, and evidence of language used within the policy and by policy makers which has impacted prevention, intervention, treatment, and the evaluation of these practices, among youth involved in trading/selling sex.

Background

Increased attention towards issues of human trafficking in the U.S. began after Janie Chuang, Harvard Law School graduate and United Nation's advisor, offered criticism on the 1949 United Nations *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* (1998). Chuang (1998) highlighted the importance of international trafficking law, but emphasized that without social and political support at the domestic level, international law would be meaningless. As a result, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was enacted in 2000 (Pub L. No. 106-386). The TVPA's primary focus was to end commercial sexual exploitation of women and children internationally (Pub L. No. 106-386). Faith based organizations, Republican legislators (Pub L. No. 106-386; Shared Hope International, n.d.), and feminists (Zimmerman, 2013) were the driving force behind the passing of the TVPA. After the initial legislation was passed, President George W. Bush framed the issue of persons' involvement in trading/selling sex as a terrorist threat (after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S.). During President Bush's State of the Union Address (2006), he spoke to the U.S. about terrorism and his commitment to ending isolationism. His statements within the Address explicitly linked terrorism and human trafficking and the responsibility of the U.S. to address these problems on the home front through the reauthorization of the Patriot Act (*Washington Post*, 2006). The link of these two

phenomena, amidst a war rooted in anti-terrorism, added momentum to the human trafficking movement in the U.S. (Weitzer, 2007).

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)

DMST as defined by the TVPA is, “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where the person is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under age 18” (Pub L. No. 106-386). Under the TVPA, individuals under the age of 18 years involved in trading/selling sex of any kind or for any reason, are identified and labeled as victims of a crime (Pub L. No. 106-386). This policy removed the burden from law enforcement agencies of proving that the youth was forced, frauded, or coerced in to involvement in trading/selling sex (Pub L. No. 106-386). Also, any adult, and in some circumstances youth (i.e., youth who recruit others in to trading and/or selling sex), who aids or benefits from a relationship with an underage person involved in trading/selling is labeled as a human trafficker or co-conspirator in human trafficking, under the TVPA (Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014).

The removal of “force, fraud, or coercion” from the statute when referencing minors involved in trading/selling sex was an enormous shift in U.S. policy. Prior to the year 2000 when the TVPA was enacted, policy makers, law enforcement officials, and the broader public were viewing and referencing youth who exchanged sex or sexual acts for money as prostitutes (Polaris Project, 2015). This was problematic because youth were (and in some areas still are) being treated as offenders and being detained in locked juvenile facilities (Halter, 2010) for a crime that is by law [in most states] considered statutory rape.

Despite increased media attention on youth involvement in trading/selling sex (Bruxvoort, 2014), factual prevalence numbers are unknown since it is clandestine act. Prevalence rates of DMST cited within the TVPA and subsequent reauthorizations have ranged from 244,000 to 325,000 victims who are at risk in any given year (Estes & Weiner, 2002). These statistics have been discredited due to a lack of scientific and mathematical rigor in estimation (Stranskey & Finkelhor, 2008).

With the TVPA's initial efforts focused on addressing sexual exploitation of international women and children (Pub L. No. 106-386), the application of the TVPA to domestic youth was delayed. It was not until 2008 that the TVPA formally acknowledged that domestic youth were involved in trading/selling sex within the U.S. (Pub L. No. 110-457). In 2015, the first explicit provisions addressing services for domestic youth were added to the TVPA (Pub. Law 114-22).

The TVPA has received criticism about its overarching application of the "victim" label to all youth involved in trading/selling sex in the U.S. Specifically, it has been argued that labeling all youth as victims is an overly simplistic assumption regarding the youth involved and ignores the many structural factors and inequalities that precede youths' involvement in trading/selling sex (Lutnick, 2016). Arguably, this is yet one more factor stunting efforts to identify prevalence rates.

Policy before research

It has been noted that the policy cycle moves much more quickly than the research to support that policy, therefore the evidence and evaluation of social problems tend to appear after policy implementation (Pawson, 2002). This is precisely what happened within the U.S. Human trafficking policy has long preceded any empirical

work on the topic, therefore resulting in policy that misrepresents many aspects of the social problem (i.e., scope, who is involved, complexity of the social issue; Lutnick, 2016). To go a step farther, it has been claimed that language used within federal policy (TVPA) has been reactionary and does not incorporate any current empirical knowledge of the complicated reality of those involved in trading/selling sex within the U.S. (Lutnick, 2016). This problematic because policy makers, community activists, and the general public have adopted the narrative articulated within the TVPA (and subsequent reauthorizations) which has resulted in publicly promoting one dimension of a much larger social issue (Lutnick, 2016). Specific examples of language used can be found through the examination of language used by U.S. appointed officials and within the TVPA, itself (Pub L. No. 106-386, § 42 U.S.C. § 14044b, Pub L. No. 108-193, P.L. 113-4, Pub L. No. 110-457 describes youth experiences in trading/selling sex as “evil;” p.6; Pub L. No. 106-386 describes all people involved in trading/selling sex as “victims” whom have experienced “physical violence” at the hand of a “trafficker;” p.4; Luis CdeBaca, Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, referred to the issue of youth involvement in trading/selling sex as “modern day slavery;” DOJ, 2010). To reiterate, this language is problematic as it does not represent the experience of all youth involved in trading/selling sex (Lutnick, 2016).

An additional problem in the allocation of service provisions, and more importantly, the impediment of the ability of scholars to conduct intervention research, is that organizations seeking to work with individuals involved in trading/selling sex are required to take the “anti-prostitution pledge” if they wish to receive federal funding. In 2003, the “anti-prostitution pledge” was incorporated in to the TVPA and applied to any

organization seeking federal monies for anti-trafficking efforts (Pub. L. No. 108-193).

This pledge is a promise that organizations will not promote, support, or advocate for the legalization or practice of prostitution or sex trafficking (Pub. L. No. 108-193). Since the TVPA labeled all individuals under the age of 18 years involved in trading/selling sex as victims of sex trafficking, any organization seeking to work with this population of young people must make this pledge in order to receive federal funding to support prevention, intervention and treatment programming. As recent as 2015, Open Societies Foundation, InterAction, and Pathfinder International challenged the U.S. government's provision to prohibit funding from those who fail to openly oppose prostitution (Krueger, 2015). After a lengthy journey all the way up to the Supreme Court, the plaintiffs won their case under the auspice of free speech (i.e., cannot deny funding based on what organizations believe). However, the federal government remains able to dictate how their money is spent (Kruger, 2015), therefore still impacting programming.

As many service providers know, most behaviors do not completely cease once someone is connected to services and it takes time to change, practice, and internalize new behaviors (Laser & Nicotera, 2011). Since the TVPA's organizational mandate to adopt the anti-prostitution pledge prevents the use of federal dollars to be used for anything other than abstinence from trading/selling sex, service delivery organizations are limited in their approaches to serving young people involved in the trading/selling sex (i.e. harm reduction models). This subsequently limits scholars' ability to study the effectiveness of programming beyond abstinence practice.

In recent years under the Obama administration, efforts were made to inform federal processes in addressing involvement in trading/selling sex. Former President

Obama's Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States, 2013-2017 (referred to hereafter as "Action Plan") has committed to addressing the issue of trading/selling sex among individuals through a victim-centered and trauma informed approach. This is a commendable effort, however, the Action Plan still contains language such as "rescue" when referencing interventions for people involved in trading/selling sex. This is another well intentioned, but ill-informed effort in working with individuals involved in trading/selling sex. The language used assumes a circumstance of the individual involved and the use of the word "rescue" is "highly inappropriate and demeaning" when used to reference someone who is a survivor of an unfortunate circumstance (Bullard, 2014, para 4). Further, individuals involved in trading/selling sex may not view themselves as needing rescuing, thus again perpetuating a complete disregard of the lived experience of the person involved (Harris & Fallot, 2001).

The aforementioned descriptions of language within federal policy and by policy makers is presented to distinctly articulate the philosophical values proclaimed within the policy, and by those involved in the policy making process. The values that have been embedded in to the TVPA, subsequent reauthorizations, and descriptions of the social problem by policy makers have made a complex issue appear simple and have misrepresented the lived experiences of many involved in trading/selling sex (Lutnick, 2016). Further, the one dimensional presentation of the issue has hindered efforts to study youth involvement in trading/selling sex, and has directly impacted services offerings for individuals involved in trading/selling sex. Hence, the importance of

research that solicits information about trading and/or selling sex experiences directly from youth.

Importance to Social Work

Youth involvement in trading/selling sex, regardless of agency or circumstance can be dangerous both physically and emotionally (Rekart, 2006). Though very little empirical research has been conducted on the phenomenon “DMST,” there are obvious implications for involvement in any form of trading/selling sex. For example, there is an increased physical health risk associated with trading/selling sex (Decker et al., 2011; Hossain, et al., 2010; Mutfic & Finn, 2013); and the risk of serious mental health problems such as psychiatric hospitalizations and substance abuse issues are also associated with the trading/selling of sex (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Halcon & Lifson, 2004).

Trading/selling sex, is often associated with youth living on the streets, homelessness, and/or those who are marginally housed (Farley & Barkan, 1998; Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999), with 1 in 5 homeless youth reporting a history of involvement in trading/selling sex in the U.S. (Halcon & Lifson, 2004). Involvement in the child welfare system and/or juvenile justice system increases risk for youth involvement in trading/selling sex (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015). With 32% of the U.S. homeless population being youth (under age 24 years; HUD, 2015) and 3.2 million children (under age 18) involved in the child welfare system (US Department of Health & Human Services, 2016), youth involvement in trading/selling sex should be on the forefront of social work scholars and practitioners minds.

Much of the research pertaining to youth experiences of involvement in trading/selling sex provides counter-positioned findings related to causes and consequences of involvement (see Farley, 2009 vs. Marcus et al., 2012). These findings represent a spectrum of youth involvement in trading/selling sex as victims of crime (commercial sexual exploitation; Anderson et al., 2014; Pub L. No. 110-457) to those involved in trading/selling sex due to a lack of options or social support (survival sex; Sherman, 2012). The definition of a “crime victim” is an important element to consider when studying youth involvement in trading/selling sex. The legal definition of “crime victim” varies widely from state to state (National Crime Victim Law Institute, 2011). However, a majority of states within the U.S. identify a victim as those who have been harmed by certain types of offenses (National Crime Victim Law Institute, 2011). Accordingly, literature identifying youth who are involved in trading/selling sex as a result of manipulation, violence, or trickery by a third-party individual (Kennedy Klein, Bristowe, Cooper & Yuille, 2007) are typically referred to as “commercially sexually exploited youth” who are victims of a crime perpetrated by an individual (i.e. human trafficker). Conversely, youth involved in trading/selling sex due to a lack of job skills, education, or supports do not receive the “victim” label (Marcus et al., 2014) and service provisions outlined within the TVPA may not be available due to the discretion of the service provider.

Currently, among the research available regarding youth involvement in trading/selling sex, very few studies involve talking to youth directly about their experiences (Holger -Ambrose, Langmade, Edinburgh, & Saewyc, 2013; Marcus et al., 2014; Lutnick, 2016). Historically, accessing individuals under the age of 18 years, who

are involved in trading/selling sex has been difficult for social science researchers due to the vulnerability level of this population as viewed by institutional review boards, as well as the organizations that serve the youth. These factors have undoubtedly impacted the depth of information that was collected in this dissertation (more about this in the discussion section). Moreover, youth involved in trading/selling sex have been distinctly separated within the empirical literature and through language used within federal policy and by policy makers, which also complicates efforts to gather data on a phenomenon that is obscure.

Gathering information [data] from the population of interest directly, removes the influence of a third party lens (i.e., professional's opinion of another's experience) and creates an opportunity to gain insight to the world of clandestine populations. Research that places value on the views and experiences of the lived events of participants has been shown to be a useful methodological tool in empirical research (Richardson, 2002). As such, this dissertation draws upon secondary data that collected information from young people (ages 12-24) about their involvement in trading/selling sex and utilizes focus group discussions to platform the voice of young people in expressing their views of involvement in trading/selling sex.

Conclusion

This chapter began with introducing the topic of trading/selling sex among youth and explored the efforts of scholars and politicians in trying to understand, address, and eradicate youth involvement in trading/selling sex. A brief overview of the TVPA was presented as a foundational component to understanding how U.S. policy has confounded scholars and policy makers' ability to examine the phenomenon of youth trading/selling

sex. Factors associated with involvement in trading/selling sex as a young person were presented. Finally, the chapter closed by endorsing the importance of understanding a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it.

Chapter two will provide a comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to youth involved in trading/selling sex. The literature relied upon in the review predominantly focuses on studies of youth involved in survival sex and youth involved commercial sexual exploitation within the U.S. Next, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) is summarized in detail. Human behavior is driven by a motivation to get individual needs met, per Maslow's theory (1943), and is the theoretical underpinning this author brings to this research. This author adapts Maslow's (1943) model to reflect an untested theory of youth involvement in trading/selling sex and then uses the model to frame all involvement in trading/selling sex, regardless of agency, as involvement in survival sex. The chapter ends with identifying the empirical gaps within the literature and the overarching research question this dissertation seeks to answer.

Chapter two: Literature and Theory

Introduction

Chapter one provided an introduction to the topic of trading/selling sex among youth. Additionally, it explored the efforts of scholars and politicians in their attempt to address youth involvement in trading/selling sex. U.S. human trafficking policy (TVPA), was reviewed as it serves as a foundational component in understanding how the phenomenon of trading/selling sex among youth is currently viewed by scholars and policy makers. Next, the importance of defining the term “crime victim” was highlighted to exemplify the divide in literature on this topic. Chapter one concluded by highlighting the significance of understanding the phenomenon of youth involvement in trading/selling sex through the perspective of those who are involved.

This chapter begins with a review of empirical literature that pertains to youth involved in trading/selling sex. There has been a paucity of literature on the topic of U.S. youth involved in trading/selling sex. Due to the limited amount of research available, literature on youth involvement in “survival sex” is included in this literature review. To simplify language and avoid confusion due to the merging of two literature sources, all work within the literature review is referred to as involvement in “survival sex.” Subsequent to the literature review section of this dissertation, the terms “trading/selling sex” will be used interchangeably with “survival sex” as appropriate for clarity and precision of terms throughout the remainder of this dissertation paper.

There are four distinct subsections of literature associated with youth involvement in survival sex: demographics, maltreatment history, pathways to involvement, and overall health risks. Due to the merging of the empirical literature (youth involvement in commercial sexual exploitation literature + youth involvement in survival sex literature) a reference table is provided to the reader (APPENDIX A). The table provides the citation for each article referenced in the literature review, identifies for the reader the classification of the article (i.e. commercial sex or survival sex), and indicates where in the literature review the article contributed (i.e., demographics, maltreatment history, etc.).

The second section of this chapter provides a thorough explanation of Maslow's (1943) Humanistic theory. It begins by providing an overview and description of the evolution of Maslow's hierarchy of needs from the years 1943 when the model was first published, to 1971 when the final pieces of the hierarchy were fleshed out. A visual depiction of Maslow's (1969) hierarchy is provided, as well as, detailed descriptions of each level of the hierarchy.

Further, information gleaned from the review of the literature is woven in to Maslow's (1943) model and used to create McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017). The McDonald survival sex hierarchy (2017) is a theoretical model which encompasses empirical evidence regarding youths' involvement in trading/selling sex. The McDonald (2017) model proposes a continuum of involvement in trading/selling sex from the perspective of engagement on behalf of youth as a means to survive, similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). A summary of the McDonald hierarchy, foundational

assumptions, and a visual depiction of the hierarchy are provided. Next, an in-depth description of each level of the hierarchy, as well as examples of how to apply the model, are given.

This chapter concludes with identifying the empirical gaps within the literature. The empirical gaps are then tied to the overall research goal of this dissertation, which is to understand the experiences and perceptions of homeless/street youth involvement in survival sex. Finally, the reader is introduced to the type of research design used in this dissertation (sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design) to answer the overall (above) and more detailed research questions posed.

Review of Literature

This section discusses the available literature on young people's involvement in survival sex since the passage of the TVPA because language such as "domestic minor sex trafficking" and "commercial sexual exploitation of children" were not common within the literature prior to the passage of this legislation. Due to the limited available research, the literature review is brief and categorized broadly by topic area (demographics, child maltreatment, risk factors, etc.). When reviewing the literature of youth involved in survival sex, it is important to remember that the research has transpired in two different areas (i.e., commercial sexual exploitation of youth literature and youth involvement in survival sex literature). When collecting literature for the review, the focus was identifying studies that looked specifically at U.S. literature on: commercial sexual exploitation of children, domestic minor sex trafficking, juvenile prostitution, youth sex work and youth involvement in survival sex. A more thorough

description of the two different areas of research will be described in the introduction section of the literature review, below.

Introduction. The following literature review includes empirical research involving youths aged 12-24 years and involved in survival sex. The purpose for including young people up to age 24 years, as opposed to 18 years, is due to neurological research showing that the human brain continues to develop and mature into an individual's mid-twenties (Steinberg, 2005). Also, Erikson's (1959) psychosocial development work emphasizes that growth and development continues throughout adulthood. Knowing that many homeless young people experience high levels of complex trauma (Gonzalez & McLoughlin, 2014) and more than half of homeless youth have impairments that directly impact their ability to make wages sufficient for independent living (Saperstein, Lee, Ronan, Seeman, & Medalia, 2014), it seemed reasonable to include young people up to age 24 years within the literature review. Individuals up to age 24 years are referred to as "youth" throughout the remainder of this paper.

In an effort to create transparency due to referring to all youth involvement in trading/selling sex to involvement in "survival sex" (within the literature review), a table is provided in the appendices. Articles were categorized based on the language used within each paper to describe the phenomenon of youth involvement in trading/selling sex. More specifically, if the characterization of the article is that persons experiencing involvement in trading/selling sex are victims of a crime as a result of someone recruiting them in to the sex industry, and as defined in chapter 1, the article was categorized in to

commercial sexual exploitation. If the tone of the article is that persons experiencing involvement in trading/selling sex have agency, thus not meeting the criminal definition of a crime victim, it was put in the survival sex category. Kidd and Krall (2002) refer to youth involvement in both “commercial sexual exploitation” and “survival sex,” therefore is marked in both categories. Citations marked in the not applicable (referred to as N/A) category are studies that focused on areas not specific to persons’ involvement in trading/selling sex.

Who are these youth? As mentioned in chapter one, survival sex is closely linked with youth who are homeless or marginally housed (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Kattari & Begun, 2017). One study in particular identified a prevalence rate of homeless youth involvement at 20% in a Midwestern metropolitan city (Halcon & Lifson, 2004). Also, a history of childhood sexual abuse has been associated with involvement in survival sex (Bagley & Young, 1987). Current prevalence rates for youth involvement in survival sex are unknown (Stranskey & Finkelhor, 2008), but there is evidence to support that 1/3 of the U.S. homeless population are youth under age 24 years (HUD, 2015), and 1 in 10 children experience sexual abuse prior to their 18th birthday (Townsend & Rheingold, 2013), therefore concern for U.S. youth is warranted.

Factors such as housing instability (Roy, et al., 2016) school difficulties, spending time in juvenile detention, conflict with parents, and identifying as multiracial have been found to increase the odds of involvement in survival sex (Chohaney, 2016). In one study, Black/African American transgender/gender non-conforming (GNC) individuals were found to be four times more likely to engage in survival sex than their white

transgender/GNC peers (Kattari & Begun, 2017). This is not surprising as transgender and GNC populations are more likely to experience homelessness due to family rejection as a result of the individual's gender and/or sexual identity (Durso & Gates, 2012). Class, gender and race has been referred to as the "interlocking systems of oppression," (McCready, 2004, p. 136), therefore the intersectionality of these Black/African American transgender/GNC youth further compounds their experience of marginalization (Collins, 1990). Youth that identify as LGB have a higher likelihood of engagement in survival sex than their heterosexual peers, and homeless females are more likely than homeless males to engage in survival sex (Walls & Bell, 2011). A negative relationship between age and involvement in survival sex has also been identified within the literature (i.e., the younger the youth the higher likelihood they were involved in survival sex (Ferguson, Bender & Thompson, 2015; Walls & Bell, 2011). Also, a relationship between age and race has been identified, where the younger the youth involved in survival sex, the more likely they were Black/African American (Clarke, Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz, & Fey, 2012). Finally, retrospective studies that inquire about the experiences of adults who were involved in survival sex as youth report that many youth involved in survival sex were unlikely to complete high school as a result of dropping out (Clarke, Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz, & Fey, 2012; Reid & Piquero, 2013).

Childhood maltreatment. It was well established in the aforementioned section that a history of childhood maltreatment is associated with involvement in survival sex. In addition, research has found that childhood emotional abuse has been linked to involvement in survival sex at a younger age (Roe-Sepowitz, 2012). Children living in homes where family members use illicit drugs is also correlated with youth involvement

in survival sex (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999). Particularly, Green, Ennett and Ringwalt (1999), found that the stability of the home (i.e., family economic status and family member drug use) within the prior 30 days to the youth leaving was directly related to subsequent involvement in survival sex on behalf of the youth. Furthermore, homeless and street youth are twice as likely to engage in survival sex if they reported being physically abused by a family member (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999). Dank, Yu, and Yahner (2016), conducted a three-year study with youth involved in survival sex in New York City ($n = 283$). Their study found that 64% of sampled youth in their study indicated health problems not associated with sexual transmitted diseases, but with mental health issues consistent with experiencing extensive trauma (alluding to the involvement in trading/selling sex).

Pathways to survival sex. Being young and homeless or marginally housed has shown to be a risk factor for involvement in survival sex (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Halcon & Lifson, 2004; Kattari & Begun, 2017). Empirical inquiries and findings related to pathways to survival sex have generated considerable debates within the literature about the actual process through which youth become involved in survival sex. For example, some work has found that youth involved in survival sex were either kidnapped, manipulated, or forced by an unrelated adult (i.e. being forced into survival sex by a “trafficker”) in to the commercial sex industry (Mones, 2011; Reid, 2012). Others have found youth are involved in survival sex as an extension of the sexual abuse and/or general abusive relationships that exist(ed) within their own families (Cole & Anderson, 2013; Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014; Reid, 2012). This particular “route” to involvement in survival sex may be seen as a mechanism for

youth to gain control over their previous trauma history (Personal Communication, Janet Drake, October, 2014). Yet, others have found that some are involved in survival sex as validation and/or exploration of their gender and sexuality (Lutnick, 2016). Further, it has been suggested that youth are involved in survival sex as a means to support a substance abuse problem (Reid & Piquero, 2014). However, this pathway has been largely debunked as it has been found that a large portion of young people do not start engagement in survival sex as a mechanism to support a drug habit (Lutnick, 2016).

Survival sex introduced by a trafficker has received the most in depth analysis in terms of the empirical literature on youth within the U.S. (Anderson et al., 2014; Cecchet & Thornburn, 2014; Raphael & Shapiro, 2010; Reid, 2014). Much of this literature explores relationships between cisgender women whom are enticed to a committed and loving relationship with an adult cisgender man. After the relationship is established, it is asserted that the male persuades the youth to engage in survival sex as a means to make money because the male convinces the youth that the couple is in a desperate financial situation (Anderson et al., 2014; Reid, 2014). Some research has suggested that the tactic traffickers use is to prey on the vulnerabilities of the youth and their trauma histories (Cecchet & Thornburn, 2014) and use threats of ending the relationship to keep the female working in the sex-trade (Raphael & Shapiro, 2010).

The labeling of people as “traffickers” due to their involvement with youth whom are participating in survival sex, is contested in the research. Lutnick (2016) suggests that while true traffickers do exist (those individuals who force youth to sell sex), it is rare (10%; p.20). Regardless of the label or outside view of individuals who participate or

benefit from youth involvement in survival sex, youth often view these people as peers, friends, intimate partners, and family members (Lutnick, 2016).

Due to the contested nature of the word “trafficker,” there is also much debate around the use of violence by those who introduce youth to the sex trade. One piece of work found that physical violence was a mechanism used in a relationship with youth as a form instilling fear to keep the youth from leaving the sex industry (Kennedy et al., 2007). Other research suggests that there is a complex and sometimes mutually beneficial relationship between youth and those benefitting from their sexual labor, thus when violence is excessive, youth voluntarily leave (Marcus et al., 2014). However, many scholars agree that when family members or those acting as legal guardians are involved with the youth’s involvement in survival sex, violence is most perilous and the hardest to escape (Anderson et al., 2014; Cecchet & Thornburn, 2014; Marcus et al., 2014; Mones, 2011; Reid, 2013; Lutnick, 2016). This is likely due to the complexity of relationships when abuse is perpetrated by a guardian or family member. It is well established in the literature that the closer a perpetrator of abuse or violence is to a youth, the more difficult disclosure and escape is (Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones, & Gordon, 2003; Herman, 1992; Jonzon & Lindblad, 2004).

Health risks. There are known physical health risks associated with engaging in survival sex (e.g., sexual transmitted infection, physical violence resulting in physical injury, mental health concerns; Decker et al., 2011; Hossain et al., 2010; Muftic & Finn, 2013). It is posited that youth who have experienced force, fraud, or coercion in entering sex work exhibit poorer health outcomes than those who enter willingly (Decker et al., 2011). Additionally, those who are involved in survival sex at a younger age were also

susceptible to poorer health outcomes than those who entered as adults (Decker et al., 2011; Hossain et al., 2010; Muftic & Finn, 2013). Adults who were involved in survival sex as youth reported serious mental health problems associated with a continuous threat to life, specifically physical violence committed against them, while involved in survival sex (Cecchet & Thorburn, 2014; Hossain et al., 2010). Conversely, a study of youth actively involved in survival sex (i.e. actively engaged in the sex trade during the inquiry) found that youth described their experiences as positive due to making large sums of money (Holger-Ambrose, Lengmade, Edinburgh & Saewyc, 2013). A separate body of literature, but of equal importance, is the work of Marcus et al., (2012), that found that despite youth not identifying as victims of a crime, 87.2% are reporting that they would like to exit the industry all together.

Psychiatric hospitalizations (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999) and substantial substance abuse (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Halcon & Lifson, 2004) have been related to youth involvement in survival sex. In fact, both males and females involved in survival sex report higher instances of substance use than homeless youth not involved in survival sex (Ferguson, Bender & Thompson, 2016). Additionally, youth who are involved in survival sex have higher rates of suicidality and a higher frequency of attempted suicide than those not involved in survival sex (Clarke, Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz, & Fey, 2012; Kidd & Krall, 2002). Finally, high levels of exposure to general street victimization while being homeless contributed to higher levels of engagement in informal income generation among both males and females (e.g. survival sex, drug dealing, theft; Ferguson, Bender & Thompson, 2016).

Conclusion. Two separate categories of literature pertaining to youth involved in survival sex (i.e., commercial sexual exploitation literature and survival sex literature) was combined in the aforementioned section. The literature reveals many adverse life experiences of youth who are involved in the sex industry and trying to survive. In 1943, Abraham Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs to understand the motivation behind human behavior. The crux of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) is that humans seek to reach "wholeness" through fulfilling self-identified needs (Maslow, 1943, p. 1). An individual's life experiences, whether positive or negative, undeniably impact a person's ability to be whole. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) is the theoretical foundation for this dissertation and is presented below.

Humanistic Theory

Overview

An individual's desire to reach "wholeness" is the motivation for all human behavior (Maslow, 1943, p. 1). Satisfaction or expression of basic needs is the mechanism for which individuals achieve wholeness and is what drives human behavior (Maslow, 1943). Wholeness is the integration and [at least] partial satisfaction of an individual's basic needs. Additionally, an individual's striving for wholeness is the underlying tenant for motivational theory (Maslow, 1943).

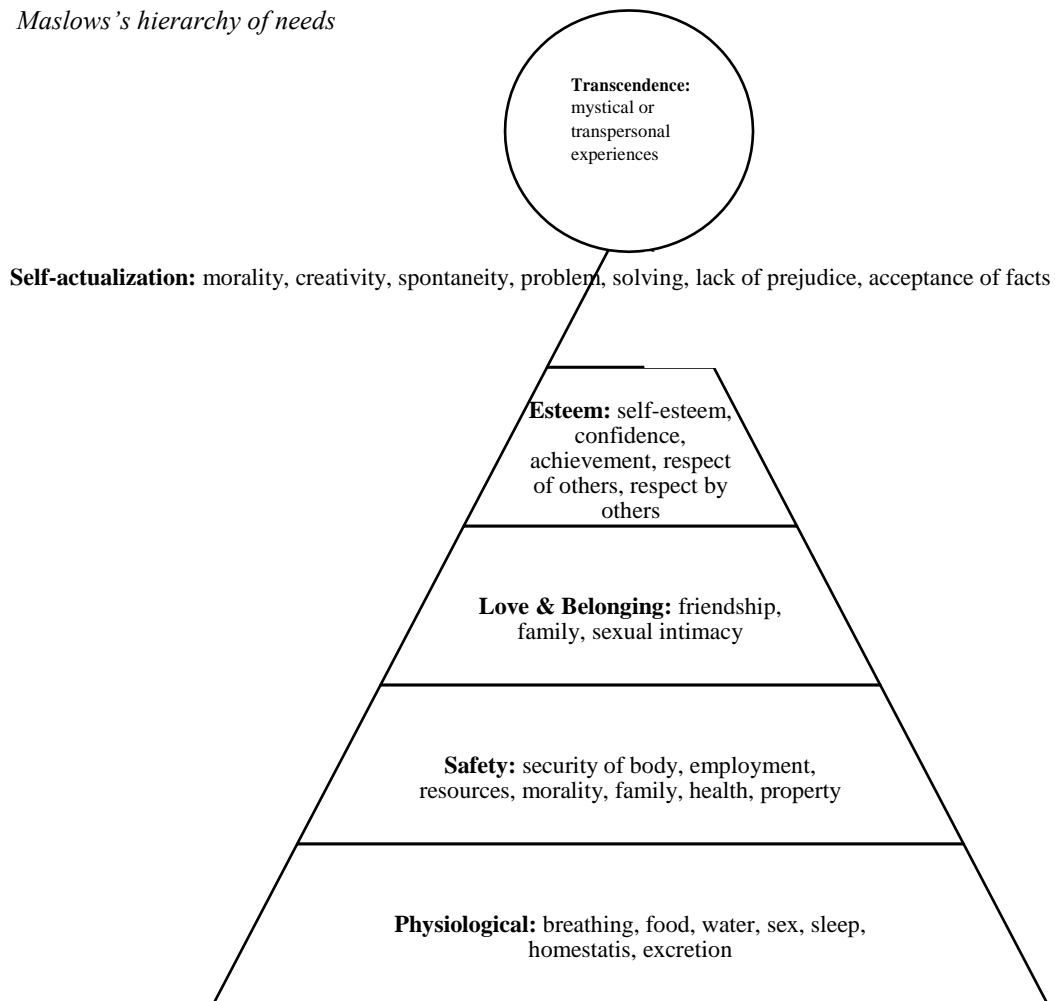
Abraham Maslow's (1943) Humanistic theory (also known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) is a motivational hierarchy used to understand human behavior. In his early writings, the hierarchy contained five levels of needs (physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization; 1943). However, in 1969, Maslow made

revisions to the hierarchy that reflected his discontent with self-actualization being the “peak-experience” in one’s life (Koltoko-Rivera, 2006, p. 304). This resulted in a transformation of the hierarchy that added a level beyond the individual meeting and sustaining their *own* self-benefit (self-actualization) and incorporated an individual’s motive to seek benefits beyond the self (Maslow, 1969). This additional level was called, *transcendence*. Transcendence is a level of development where an individual identifies with something greater than the self and may have mystical and/or transpersonal experiences (Maslow, 1969). Additionally, this level seeks to encapsulate motivation for behavior on the behalf of others as opposed to pure self-interest (Koltoko-Rivera, 2006). An overview of each of Maslow’s levels of development will be discussed in detail later.

Humanistic theory purports that individuals have an innate drive that motivates them to their maximum level of potential. The force to progress through life is driven through [typically] unconscious behaviors that fulfill basic human needs (Maslow, 1943). While the hierarchy initially presents as linear (Figure 2.1; Maslow, 1969), actually, the importance of needs are influenced by the individual (i.e., if self-esteem is more important than love, the positioning of these elements may change within the hierarchy for an individual; Maslow, 1943).

Figure 2.1

Maslows's hierarchy of needs



Maslow's Hierarchy explained

Maslow's hierarchical model provides a simplified graphic that intends to capture ordinary life (O'Conner & Yballe, 2007). Maslow (1943) acknowledged that behavior at any given moment may be motivated by one or many basic needs simultaneously. Humanistic theory embodies a positive approach to understanding human behavior, where individuals and their behavior are seen as intrinsically good (Sattler, 1998).

Maslow (1943) believed that individuals were innately built to strive for optimal potential (transcendence), and exercised free will.

Maslow (1943) embraces an individualistic and malleable approach to the application of Humanistic theory. This means that the hierarchy is to be viewed more fluidly than linearly (as displayed) and allows individuals to identify their own placement on the hierarchy [as opposed to placement being determined by others]. Thereby, if an individual identifies themselves as identifying their motivational level at *esteem*, but an outside third-party (e.g., sibling) indicates that the individual is at the motivational level of *love and belonging*, Maslow acknowledges the placement of the self-assignment of the individual at *esteem* (1943). This is in contrast to earlier concepts of Freudian Psychotherapy, where the professional explained to the patient her/his psychological placement (Greene, 1999).

Any obstructions or threats of obstructions to needs within the hierarchy are considered “psychological threats” (Maslow, 1943, p. 14). Most simply, psychological threats are the threat of, or potential threat of, preventing an individual from reaching basic human needs (Maslow, 1943). Individuals respond to these threats through behavior regression; this is the process where an individual will seek to fulfill a specific earlier need within the hierarchy (Maslow, 1943). For example, if an individual feels a threat to their level of physical or emotional safety (i.e., involvement in an intimately violent relationship), and had once transitioned past this need on the hierarchy, they will likely return to this level of the hierarchy, in order to re-fulfill the need. If the threat is great in magnitude or prolonged, an individual may fixate on an earlier stage or need

within the hierarchy, despite it being previously fulfilled (i.e., an individual who experienced a lengthy period of time without sufficient food during childhood may persevere on this level of the hierarchy despite having the full capability to sufficiently feed themselves; Maslow, 1943). Also, Maslow (1943) did not think that 100% of a need must be fulfilled in order to progress through the hierarchy. In fact, he thought that fulfillment of needs was fluid and that behavior could be the result of more than one motivator (i.e., purchasing a home fulfills safety needs such as owning property and also achieves esteem through respect of others for acquiring wealth through the purchase; O'Conner & Yballe, 2007).

The following sections provide a thorough explanation of each level of Maslow's (1943; 1969) hierarchy. The first five descriptions of the hierarchy come directly from his original work in 1943. His subsequent work, which included the addition of transcendence will be incorporated and information regarding this level of the hierarchy will be drawn from Maslow's work published in 1969.

Physiological. Physiological needs are the starting point for the hierarchy due the body's need to always maintain a normal state of the blood stream (i.e., homeostasis; Maslow, 1943, p.3). Maslow (1943) acknowledged that it was not possible to make an all-encompassing list of human physiological needs, as needs may be rooted in an individual's self-interest. This means, that Maslow did not create a check-list, per say, of all the needs to be met at the physiological level of the hierarchy because humans exercise free will and have some control or desire over their physiological needs. Additionally, Maslow acknowledged that physiological needs may be met through the

discretion of the individual through unconventional means (e.g., smoking to satisfy hunger; Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) felt that individuals were dominated by physiological needs, thereby if not satisfied [in some fashion] all other needs on the hierarchy would become non-existent or ignored.

Though Maslow (1943) acknowledged his inability to name all the physiological needs, he did establish a summary of needs at the physiological level that determined primal functioning in an organism. These included oxygen, water, protein, salt, and other vitamins and minerals (Maslow, 1943). The need to maintain a pH level, body temperature (~98.6), exercise and rest, the ability to eliminate waste, avoidance of pain, and sex were also included (Maslow, 1943). Again, Maslow (1943) argued that if an individual was profusely deficient in all the needs of the hierarchy, the primary motivation of the individual would be to fill the physiological needs over any of the others first.

Safety. A second motivating factor for behavior is the need for safety (Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) indicates that the individual is a “safety-seeking mechanism,” and there are times when immediate or catastrophic safety risks may supersede physiological needs within the hierarchy (p. 5). For example, psychological needs of a person may be overlooked if an individual is experiencing persistent levels of danger. Additionally, individuals have the need to live in a predictable and stable world, which is the foundational component of this level of the hierarchy (Maslow, 1943). Maslow’s thoughts related to safety were rooted in protection from threats such as wild animals, temperature, crime, murder, etc (Maslow, 1943). However, due to Maslow’s (1943)

belief that a majority of the US population were well-functioning and “normal” adults, he included the need to have stable employment, income, and insurance to this level of the model. The addition of these factors demonstrated a modernization to Maslow’s (1943) model as humans had evolved past the hunting and gathering stage of survival.

Maslow (1943) reiterated the importance of an individual’s need to have stability, familiarity, and known environments and/or experiences in order to fulfill this need. Further, a connection to religion or philosophy assists in understanding or organizing the universe, which was also a contributor to safety (Maslow, 1943). Overall, typically-functioning adults fulfill this need within the hierarchy if they have structure, order and a sense of protection within their lives (Maslow, 1943).

Love and belonging. Love and belonging is the most unambiguous level within Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy. This level comprises of an individual’s need to feel love, affection, and a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943). An individual at this level will strive for a place within a group and will long for affectionate relationships with others (Maslow, 1943). It is very important to note that love and sex are not synonymous needs (Maslow, 1943). While sex and love may co-occur, Maslow (1943) was unwavering in his opinion that sex was a physiological need and was separate from love and belonging (p.7). Additionally, Maslow (1943) was not specific in identifying from whom one should feel love, affection, and a sense belonging, suggesting that it did not have to be from an intimate partner.

Esteem. The need for esteem moves beyond the hierarchical need for love and belonging as it seeks to enhance relationships through the development of self-confidence

and receiving respect from others (Maslow, 1943). Esteem is separated into two ancillary sets of needs, those connected directly to the self, and those connected to others (Maslow, 1943). First, individuals strive for a sense of achievement, strength, confidence to face the world, independence, and freedom (Maslow, 1943). Second, individuals yearn for respect or esteem from others', recognition, attention, and appreciation. Maslow (1943) indicated that satisfaction at this level of the hierarchy leads to feelings of confidence, worth, capability, and feeling useful within the world. A deficit of these needs produce feelings of inferiority and worthlessness, thereby contributing to discouragement on behalf of the individual and potential neurosis (Maslow, 1943).

Self-actualization. The self-actualization level of the hierarchy is where an individual seeks fulfillment as their highest level of personal potential (Maslow, 1943). The level of "potential" attained varies from person to person and can be expressed in many forms (Maslow, 1943). For example, self-actualization may be the desire to be an ideal parent and for another it may be the desire to be an exceptional musician (Maslow, 1943). People who are self-actualized are "reality centered" (Maslow, 1943). "Reality centered" is the ability to differentiate reality and genuineness from fake or contrived, thus being able to identify and sense authenticity in others and situations (Maslow, 1971). Individuals who are self-actualized experience the world around them fully and selflessly (Maslow, 1971). These are people who view life as a process and believe personal choices they make are individual growth opportunities (Maslow, 1971). Also, Maslow (1943) believed that individuals who had attained self-actualization were comfortable being alone and were exceptionally skilled at maintaining their level of autonomy.

On the path to self-actualization, an individual is to rely on the notion of “when in doubt” and take responsibility and be honest with thoughts (Maslow, 1971, p. 45).

Maslow (1971) indicates that when an individual is “in doubt,” the individual is not being honest, thus they must center themselves on the truth of the situation.

Making growth choices and speaking honestly contributes to an individual intently listening to the self at each moment and remaining calm in disadvantaged situations (Maslow, 1971). Maslow (1943) believed that to reach and maintain self-actualization an individual must take risks. He acknowledged the difficulty and courage that accompanies this level of needs attainment; and how it frequently involves the challenging of social norms and the infliction of conflict within relationships.

Maslow (1964) identified “being-values” as a component of self-actualization in a later development of Humanistic theory (p.742). Being-values are simple traits or values, but are difficult to fully embody considering the challenges of every-day life such as truth, justice, beauty, goodness, and purposefulness are all examples of being-values (O’Connor & Yballe, 2007). Notably, Maslow (1964) found that self-actualizers were people who were profoundly dedicated to core values that paralleled those of many of the major world religions. Self-actualization is an ongoing process that is never completed. It encompasses a series of decisions, experiences, and a knowledge of the self that transforms over time (Maslow, 1971).

Transcendence. Not universally acknowledged in the literature (Koltko-Rivera, 2006), Maslow formally added an additional level to the Humanistic theory hierarchy called, transcendence (Maslow, 1969). This addition was the result of Maslow’s unrest

with self-actualization being the pinnacle of his motivational theory (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Maslow (1969) progressed his model by adding “being-cognition” which is a next step beyond being-values (Maslow, 1964), referenced in self-actualization (Maslow, 1971). Being-cognition is described as phenomena involving mystical experiences, aesthetic experiences, and emotional experiences involving nature (Maslow, 1969). In Maslow’s (1971) book, *The Farther Reaches of Human Behavior*, he identifies 35 meanings of transcendence. Examples include an individual’s loss of self-consciousness due to immense concentration on something outside the psyche (Maslow, 1971). This state of being is simplified and described by Koltko-Rivera (2006) as an experience or feeling where an individual is seeking something beyond personal benefit (p.305).

Maslow (1971), further describes transcendence as a process for which an individual embraces and accepts the present self and offers forgiveness to the self for past experiences. To experience transcendence is to reject all dichotomies through binding all separateness together (Maslow, 1971). This is the ultimate acceptance of “both/and.” Maslow (1971) believed that rising above the dichotomous viewpoint created a unity that is more true and realistic; by acknowledging the fluidity of reality and individual experience.

Many of the meanings of transcendence refer to an individual reaching the “very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness” (Maslow, 1971, p.296). Transcendence is a realm that exists beyond basic core human needs of physiology, safety, love and belonging, and esteem (1969). At this stage, an individual behaves and relates “as ends rather than means” to all that exists and includes the cosmos

(Maslow, 1971, p.269). All motivation at this level of the hierarchy is motivated and gratified by experiences that have depth and meaning beyond the self (Maslow, 1969). To reach transcendence means that individual behavior is no longer motivated by needs of the self, but to contribute to the betterment of something else (Maslow, 1969).

McDonald's survival sex hierarchy

Using the empirical literature available and relying on Humanistic theory, this author adapted Maslow's (1969) hierarchy of needs and proposed a theory of individual's involvement in trading/selling sex. McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017) depicts an individual involved in trading/selling sex may evaluate the current world around them, in present time, in order to achieve their basic needs to include self-actualization. The model is rooted in the belief that all involvement in trading/selling sex is deeply embedded in an individual desire to fulfill their needs. Use of the word "survival" is intentional and embodies the belief that there is no situation, anywhere in the world, where trading/selling sex is an optimal health choice. The McDonald survival sex hierarchy is an illustration of a proposed theory, supported by the literature and built off of Maslow's (1943) respected work on motivational behavior. There are known and identifiable individuals (Annie Sprinkle, Phoenix Goddess Temple) and scholars (Comte, 2013; Wahab, 2003; Sloan & Wahab, 2000) whom disagree with the assumptions made within this model.

Description. The McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017) is not a clinical assessment tool to be used to assess functioning of an individual involved in trading/selling sex (i.e., trauma, disassociation, mental health, etc.). Rather, it may be

used as a heuristic model in understanding how youth may use trading/selling sex as a mechanism to fill their needs. More specifically, McDonald's (2017) model depicts the array of narratives one involved in trading/selling sex may use, thus highlighting the perception of the individual. Each level of the hierarchy provides insight into the benefit or gains youth may be receiving from their involvement in trading/selling sex. The underlying assumption of McDonald's (2017) model is that the benefit or gains youth are receiving counterbalance the potential negatives of involvement in trading/selling sex (e.g., risk of arrest, exploitation, risk of sexually transmitted infection, abuse, etc.).

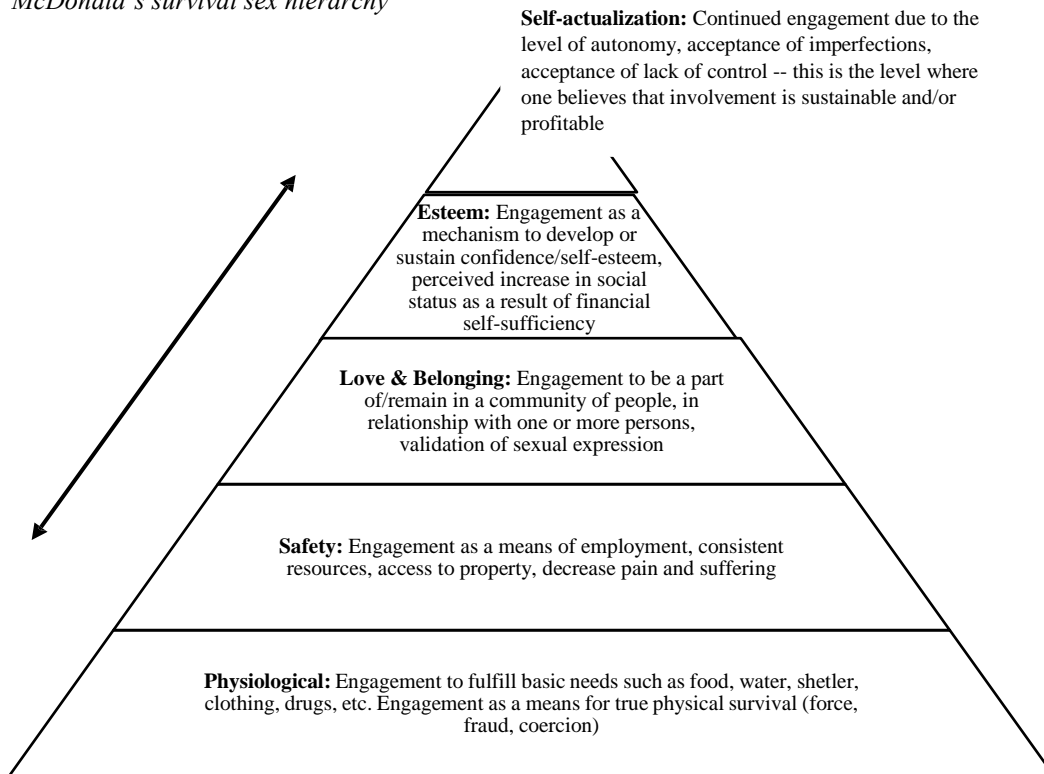
Assumptions of the model. There are a number of assumptions contained within the McDonald (2017) model that will be reviewed here. As mentioned previously, regardless of the basis of involvement, all engagement in trading/selling sex framed here as an individual's need to survive. Next, this model is based on the assumption that there are always individual, social, or systemic issues that influence an individual's involvement in trading/selling sex. Most importantly, individuals who are exercising agency through involvement in trading/selling sex [whether to pay their bills or purchase nice things] are not separate from individuals who have experienced force, fraud or coercion in trading/selling sex in terms of McDonald's (2017) model. The difference is their placement on the hierarchy. This assumption does not intend to assume that the experiences of all individuals in the sex industry are the same. In fact, the model hopes to bring light to the larger spectrum of experiences of those involved in the sex industry. For example, a young person trading/selling sex to purchase an expensive name-brand purse is still conceding to a larger social message of being seen as valuable through the possession of "x." Perhaps the view of the young person is that trading/selling sex is the

[only or fastest or least worst, or best] mechanism for which to earn the money to purchase the item, thus does so in order to get some level of esteem or social status out of owning the purse. Similarly, a young person who is convinced or manipulated by a partner to engage in trading/selling sex may not exercise agency when involved, but justify [to themselves or others] their involvement as a way to be a part of a larger community or family (i.e., love and belonging). The first example is a situation where an individual is exercising full agency in their involvement in trading/selling sex in order receive social status or esteem from somewhere else (e.g., peers, family, society). The second example is a situation where the individual is potentially experiencing force, fraud, or coercion to engage in trading/selling sex, but holds the belief that involvement is the vehicle for which they can receive love and belonging. Both examples can be tied to a hierarchical level in McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017).

McDonald model overview. Figure 2.2 (below) is a visual depiction of McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017). Subsequently, an explanation for the dissolution of transcendence in the model is explained and details on how the model works. Also, parallels between Maslow's (1943;1969;1971) model and the McDonald (2017) model will be covered, as well as, each level of the hierarchy will be explained.

Figure 2.2

McDonald's survival sex hierarchy



With the exception of transcendence, each level of Maslow's (1943; 1969; 1971) hierarchy will be attended to in McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017). Much thought was put in to the decision of not including transcendence in McDonald's (2017) model. The final decision to not include transcendence is rooted in this author's belief that it is not possible for an individual to reach transcendence while involved in survival sex. The imposition of having to exit seemed counter-intuitive to fundamental premise of the reconstructed conceptual model of individual involvement in trading/selling sex to meet basic needs. To include a level of the hierarchy that purports condemning [or

condoning] involvement in trading/selling sex seems antithetical to the initial purpose of the creation of the model.

McDonald's (2017) survival sex hierarchy parallels the basic tenants of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. That is, each level of McDonald's (2017) model is grounded in the belief that all motivations for involvement in survival sex are directly linked to an individual striving for "wholeness," through meeting basic needs (Maslow, 1943, p.1). Similar to Maslow's (1969) model, McDonald's (2017) model presents as linear, but the importance placed on needs are self-directed by the individual (i.e., an individual involved in survival sex as a mechanism to bolster feelings of normalcy may be more important than safety, thus these elements may change within the hierarchy). Additionally, McDonald's (2017) is built on the premise that the model believes that more than one need may motivate behavior at any given time (Maslow, 1943) and that needs may be fluid and/or change over time.

Free will and inequalities. McDonald's (2017) model acknowledges the existence of "free will" which is a caveat of Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1943) amongst individuals involved in survival sex. However, McDonald's (2017) model also recognizes constraints, rational decision-making, and limitations that serve to influence one's ability to exercise decision making (i.e., force, fraud, or coercion). It is well established within the literature that there are social and systemic inequalities that effect marginalized populations' involvement in survival sex (Eckenrode, Elliot, McCarthy, & Dineen, 2014; Mizock & Mueser, 2014; NAACP, 2013; Kosciw et al., 2012; Juhnke, Granello, & Granello, 2011; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013; Singh, Siapush, & Kogan, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith,

1999). For example, people of color (POC) are as much as three times more likely to be poor than their white peers (Shapiro, Meschede & Osoro, 2013). To add to this, income inequality and poverty is associated with children's health (Singh, Siapush & Kogan, 2010) incidents of child maltreatment (Eckenrode, Elliot, McCarthy, & Dineen, 2014), educational success (as measured by test scores), drop-out rates, and admittance to college (Ladson- Billings, 2006) for young people. POC tend to be targets of racial profiling from police (NAACP, 2013) and are denied employment or housing based on their race (Valentine, Silver & Twigg, 1999). Paralleling the experiences of POC (and compounding levels of marginalization when an individual has multiple marginalized identities) youth who are transgender or GNC also experience employment discrimination (Mizock & Mueser, 2014). Additionally, LGBTQ youth tend to experience higher levels of depression than their peers (Juhnke, Granello & Granello, 2011). All of these factors, and many that are not mentioned here, are assumed to contribute to an individual's decision making as it relates to involvement in survival sex.

Survival threats. Obstructions or threats to meeting basic needs (Maslow, 1943) are also recognized in McDonald's (2017) hierarchy, but are referred to as survival threats, as opposed to psychological threats, as Maslow referenced them (1943). Similar to Maslow's psychological threats (1943), a survival threat is a threat that prevents an individual from meeting their basic needs. Threats to survival within McDonald's (2017) hierarchy prevent an individual from surviving at any level of the hierarchy, and/or preventing an individual from progressing through the hierarchy. For example, an unwanted intervention (i.e., an arrest with mandatory treatment) may be perceived by the individual involved as a survival threat to financial self-sufficiency (esteem level), thus

resulting in diminishing income generation and limitations of social support due to their criminal record.

There are many survival threats for those involved in survival sex spanning from those who wish to intervene (e.g., treatment providers, police, etc.), third-parties involved (e.g., traffickers and exploiters) buyers of sex, sex work communities, and families and children of individuals involved in survival sex. Many or all of these may pose a survival threat to someone involved in survival sex at different times and for different reasons. For example, someone who is involved in survival sex as a result of control by another person (exploiter), may experience the threat of violence, thus impact their level of safety; an individual who is involved as a means of being a part of a community experiences a disruption within the community (e.g., law enforcement sting) which causes the community to disperse. Families of those involved in survival sex may pose survival threats through exit-interventions, or removal of support (emotional, financial, etc.) upon discovery of the loved one involved in trading/selling sex.

The five components

Next, each component within McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017) will be reviewed in detail. Factors pertaining to agency on behalf of individuals, as well as, those who experience force, fraud, or coercion, will be explained for each level of the hierarchy. The examples provided are just an illustration and are not intended to include every experience or scenario that occurs with those involved in survival sex. Finally, the hierarchy is intended to be fluid and individuals may be at multiple levels at a time. More details pertaining to fluidity and categorization of individuals are provided later in this chapter.

Physiological. Maslow's premise of the human body's need to always maintain a normal state of the blood stream (i.e., homeostasis; Maslow, 1943), is assumed at this level of McDonald's survival sex hierarchy. Individuals involved in survival sex at this level of the hierarchy are doing so as a means to fulfill their basic needs, including staying alive. At this level of the hierarchy, one may find people who do not have the skills and/or will to attain employment outside of survival sex and use the sex trade to be able to access food, shelter, water, etc. One may also find people who are dependent on substances, thus engage in survival sex to support their habit. People who are kidnapped, chained up or held captive who are forced to engage in survival sex are at this level of hierarchy, as well.

This level of McDonald's survival sex hierarchy truly encapsulates the term "survival" as individuals at this level are typically profoundly impoverished or of a vulnerable population (e.g., young children <12, mentally ill, chronically homeless, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer population, immigrants, trafficked, etc.). This is not to say that someone who was previously employed and suffered a catastrophic loss would not engage in survival sex, but this scenario is typically classified under *safety*, as the individual in this situation may be able to draw upon other resources that are assumed to not exist for many people at this level of the hierarchy.

Whenever there are threats of harm (whether physical, emotional or sexual) by a third-party as a result of an individual trying to exit, minimize, or take a break from survival sex, for any duration of time, this level of the hierarchy is activated in terms of motivation for involvement in survival sex. Note, threats may ebb and flow, therefore

fear of harm on behalf of the individual involved in survival sex is also classified at this level. Threats of harm also do include those inflicted by buyers.

Safety. Involvement at this level of the hierarchy can be first understood as an individual possessing motivation that is slightly more elevated than at the physiological level. Individuals at this level may have the know-how to obtain employment, but based on their occupational skill level, they have more income potential in the sex industry. For example, a person has the ability to obtain employment at a local fast-food restaurant, but chooses to be involved survival sex because the formal employment offer from the fast-food restaurant does not provide a livable wage. Moreover, a person at this level may find that resources available among community members involved in the sex industry may be more valuable than what a formal employer may offer. An example of this, would be someone in the sex industry who is willing to provide an informal loan or arrange some level of trade for housing, property, vehicles, etc.

Individuals may also be categorized at the safety level of the hierarchy if they are involved in survival sex as a means to reduce their pain and suffering (current or historical). For example, an individual may be involved in survival sex or remain involved in survival sex [after being recruited] because of low self-esteem associated with abuse and/or neglect histories, or as a means to gain control over past abuse and/or neglect experiences. More specifically, using an example involving an individual that endured prolonged sexual abuse as a young child – the objectification that occurs as a result of the ongoing abuse influences their personal identity (i.e., feeling like a sex toy; Beitchman, 1992; Jumper, 1995), thereby they become involved [or are vulnerable for

recruitment] in to survival sex as a means to gain control over their body and/or receive compensation for the behavior.

Love and belonging. People who are seeking to validate or explore their gender identity or sexual preferences through involvement in survival sex are at the love and belonging level of the hierarchy. For example, individuals who are questioning if [or know that] they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), may engage in survival sex as a mechanism to live their sexual or gender identity, due to high rates of homophobia and transphobia (Chettiar, Shannon, Wood, Zhang, & Kerr, 2010; Lutnick, 2016). To be very clear, this does not mean that by simply identifying as LGBTQ [and involved in survival sex] automatically places a person at this level of the hierarchy; only those who self-attest to being involved in survival sex as a mechanism to validate, explore, or express their gender and/or sexual identify may be placed at this level of the hierarchy. Also, this pertains to people who are not questioning their sexuality or gender, but may be simply experimenting with sex in general.

Youth who are introduced to survival sex by a friend, family member, or intimate partner, without (explicit or implicit) threats of harm may be placed at this level of the hierarchy as well. An individual who identifies as being involved in survival sex to be a part of a community (i.e., friends or family members involved), is one example of someone who may be categorized at this level. Also, those who are seeking to sustain a relationship (e.g., intimate partner requests involvement for “x” reason, individual acknowledges that involvement in survival sex is not desirable, but the commitment to the intimate partner and the benefits of the relationship motivate the individual to

continue involvement in the sex industry) are categorized as being involved in survival sex to fulfill the needs of love and belonging as well.

Esteem. Typically, individuals involved in survival sex at the esteem level are engaging as a mechanism to indulge the self. This means that an individual is engaged in survival sex to gain something extra in life. There is not a positive or negative value placed on the behavior of “indulgence” within this model, self-indulgence just needs to be identified as the motivator for the behavior. Individuals at this level of the hierarchy are involved in survival sex to fulfill self-interests for themselves as opposed to fulfilling needs of the self through others (i.e., those involved in survival sex at the love and belonging level). For example, instead of engaging in survival sex for “x-person” to feel loved by him/her (love and belonging), one is involved in survival sex as a means to purchase expensive clothing or accessories or experience trips or things for oneself, which makes them feel good or contributes to feelings of value. For example, an individual may identify as being involved in survival sex through employment with an escort service, as a way to feel powerful and in control. The reason or motivation behind the need to feel powerful and in control [or why involvement in trading/selling sex makes them feel powerful and in control] is information that is not needed for classification at this level of the hierarchy. The bypassing of the “why” is of utmost priority because of the profound importance this model places on the individual and their reasoning for engagement. Noting that the survival sex behavior is rooted in self-interest or elevation of the self, is all that is important to be classified at the esteem level of McDonald’s (2017) hierarchy.

Individuals at this level of the hierarchy may be confused with those involved in survival sex at the safety or physiological level of the hierarchy. This may occur when a person identifies as being involved in survival sex as a mechanism to pay off a debt, and without involvement in survival sex they would not have the means to pay the debt and feed, clothe or house themselves. Someone who identifies as involved in survival sex as a mechanism to pay off debt, otherwise they are unable to feed their family or pay their bills is different than someone involved in survival sex to pay off gratuitous purchases. The difference between someone involved in survival sex at the esteem level as opposed to those involved at safety or physiological levels is that either, involvement in survival sex [literally] elevates the educational, social, financial status of the individual (as opposed to involvement because there are no or very minimal other options for survival), or there is a realistic probability that current involvement is temporary or time-limited (debt paid off, college tuition covered, etc.). Someone may not be classified as involved in survival sex at the esteem level if they are engaging in survival sex for reasons outlined in the physiological and/or safety needs of the hierarchy.

Self-actualization. Components of self-actualization in McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017) mirror Maslow's (1943) characteristics of those who are self-actualized, with a slight variation. Individuals who are placed at the self-actualized level in McDonald's (2017) hierarchy believe that involvement in survival sex *is* reaching their full potential. For example, someone at this level of the hierarchy and involved in survival sex, embrace involvement in the sex trade as their destiny. Self-actualizers in McDonald's model are similar to Maslow's (1943; 1969; 1971) self-actualizers as they

are also reality centered, have an uncanny ability to identify genuineness from the fake or contrived, and are able to sense authenticity in others. Individuals who reach self-actualization within McDonald's (2017) model possess the ability to be reality centered and sense authenticity within others, theoretically, because of lengthy involvement in a risky and illegal work. In Maslow's (1943; 1969; 1971) model, individuals reach self-actualization and have the ability to identify genuineness because they grew interpersonally through the progression of the hierarchy. This is different than McDonald's (2017) model as self-actualization is attained through reliance on and building resiliency skills. Certainly, one could reach self-actualization within McDonald's (2017) hierarchy through involvement in each level of the hierarchy, but it is not an implicit assumption as with Maslow.

What separates self-actualization from other levels of McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017), is that an individual involved in survival sex at this level possesses full awareness of the risks (health and legal) associated with the work, and defends or promotes involvement as a right or a choice. Individuals at this level believe that involvement in trading/selling sex is sustainable and/or a longstanding, profitable enterprise. Typically, those who are at the self-actualized level of McDonald's (2017) hierarchy use survival sex as their primary income generator and have minimal desire or intention to change professions. This level of the hierarchy includes individuals who are legally employed as a madam or manager (someone who teaches those involved in trading/selling sex the "basic techniques and rules of the prostitute profession;" Heyl, 1977, p. 545), such as those who work in the legal brothels in the Western U.S.

As mentioned previously, not all individuals involved in survival sex may have entered at the self-actualized level of the hierarchy. Individuals may evolve to this level of the survival sex hierarchy through experience and awareness, and are not limited to lower levels of the hierarchy simply because of how they were introduced to the sex industry (e.g., through force, fraud, or coercion). For example, an individual may enter in to survival sex as a mechanism to feed themselves (physiological level) or was recruited by an intimate partner (love and belonging level) and over time, transition to the self-actualized level of the hierarchy due to a shift in their personal outlook or perception.

Concluding examples

An overview, assumptions, and specific details of each level of the McDonald survival sex hierarchy (2017) were detailed above. To display the applicability of the model, two examples are provided below. Please note, the fluidity of people and their motivations for involvement in survival sex encompasses far too many examples to depict here. The two scenarios provided below are simply used as examples to illustrate how the model may be applied in different hypothetical scenarios [after obtaining information from the person involved in the sex industry]. Please also note that there is no presumption within this model that an individual's needs or motivations within the hierarchy will or will not change (Figure 2.3), or that an individual will, in fact, move within the hierarchy (figure 2.4).

Figure 2.3 depicts the notion of someone being involved in survival sex for multiple reasons: the individual is involved in survival sex because of a drug dependency (physiological), because it makes them feel less isolated (safety), and because it provides

an opportunity to be a part of a community (love and belonging). Again, to determine the distinct placement(s) of the individual on the hierarchy, the individual must disclose involvement in survival sex that directly supports the placement markers. This model does not intend to teach or inform who or how the information to determine placement on the hierarchy is collected. It is a proposed theoretical model that may be used to support an assessment with someone involved in survival sex.

Figure 2.3

Example of involvement in survival sex for multiple reasons

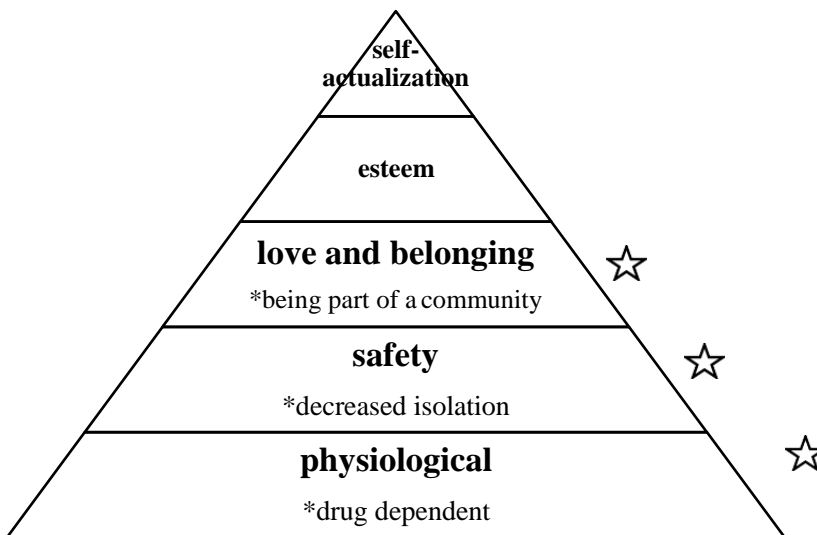
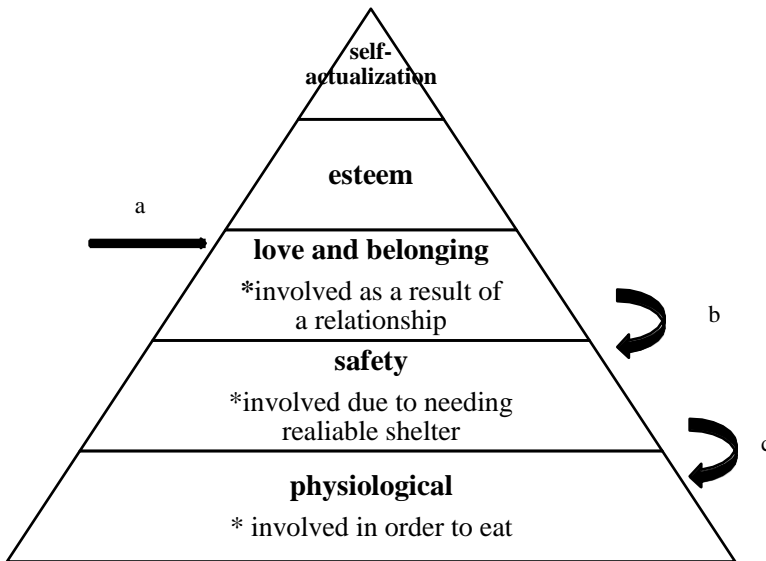


Figure 2.4 depicts someone whose needs are fluid or change over a period of time. For example, someone entering in to survival sex through a romantic relationship with someone (love and belonging; a), remain involved when the relationship becomes tumultuous because of consistency in housing (safety; b), and when the young person breaks up with the partner who introduced them to the commercial sex industry, they may remain involved because of a lack of skills, arrest records, etc. and literally need a way to

feed themselves (physiological; c). This information may be collected over time in therapy.

Figure 2.4

Example of survival sex when needs are fluid pr changing



Gaps in literature

This chapter began with a review of the empirical literature pertaining to youth involvement in trading/selling sex (to include literature on commercial sexual exploitation of youth and youth involved in survival sex). Due to the “newness” of the framing of this phenomenon (i.e., involvement in the sex industry is not new, but the exploration of “DMST” is) there are many gaps in the empirical research, thus leaving endless opportunities for contribution to the scholarly literature. As a result of the complexities of the phenomenon and many differing opinions of the topic, this author first seeks to explore two areas where clinically supported claims have been made, but

are lacking in scientific evidence: 1) impact of childhood sexual abuse on youth involvement in trading/selling sex, and 2) impact of experiencing out of home placement impact of youth involvement in trading/selling sex. Following this section, explicit connections are made between childhood sexual abuse and out-of-home placement and involvement in trading/selling sex to further justify the need for empirical exploration. Next, this author explores youth perceptions of involvement in trading/selling sex to see how their narratives compare to the results of the quantitative data. Specific research questions are presented later.

Childhood sexual abuse. Anecdotal statements about childhood sexual abuse being associated with involvement in trading/selling sex have been made within the empirical literature base (Koltra, 2010). There are not many studies that look specifically at the relationship between these two variables (impact of sexual abuse on trading/selling sex among youth). The closest empirically supported source that supports this claim is Bagley and Young's Canadian study of self-identified prostitutes from 1987. Much of the other literature had identified factors such as physical abuse and neglect, as opposed to sexual abuse, contributing to involvement in trading/selling sex (Wilson & Widom, 2010) It makes clinical sense that there would be an association between childhood sexual abuse and involvement in survival sex considering that children who experience childhood sexual abuse tend to have higher levels of sexual preoccupation (directly associated with increased levels of anxiety), higher teen pregnancy rates, increased mental health risks (Noll, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003) and have higher rates of running away from home or placements than similarly like youth who had not experienced sexual

abuse (Siegal & Williams, 2003). Thus, contributing to risk factors associated with trading/selling sex, but we do not have recent empirical data from the U.S.

Out-of-home placement. Experiencing out-of-home placement is another area of inquiry to be explored within this dissertation. This variable was chosen due to the association out-of-home placement has with overall childhood maltreatment research that suggests that out-of-home placement negatively impacts children's behaviors (Berger, Bruch, Johnson, James, & Rubin, 2009). It is well documented within the literature that simply because a youth experiences childhood maltreatment does not mean they will experience out-of-home placement (Britner & Mossler, 2002). Thus, creating a separation among what is documented within the literature about childhood maltreatment (i.e., emotional abuse; Roe-Sepowitz, 2012; exposure to illicit drug use, and physical abuse; Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999) and a relationship with involvement in trading/selling sex and those experiencing out-of-home placement.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a review of the literature regarding youth involvement in trading/selling sex within the U.S. Second, a complete explanation of Maslow's (1943) Humanistic theory was provided. This included a review of the basic tenants of the theory, a visual depiction of the hierarchy that Maslow created (1943; 1969; 1971) to illustrate his theory, and individual sections that provided in depth information regarding each level of the hierarchy. Using Maslow's (1943) work as a theoretical frame to build upon the literature, McDonald's (2017) survival sex hierarchy was created. A visual of the McDonald (2017) survival sex hierarchy was provided to the reader, as well as a full

explanation of the model and assumptions inherent in the model. In-depth descriptions of each level of McDonald's (2017) hierarchy are provided for the reader, as well as complexities to consider and examples of how to apply this model to youth.

Next, a section dedicated to highlighting the gaps in the literature was provided. Within this section specific areas of focus for the quantitative data are presented (childhood sexual abuse, and out-of-home placement) with evidence to support how and why these variables were chosen. Also, a justification for the inquiry of youth and their perceptions of involvement in trading/selling sex is given. Chapter three will share the more specified quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research questions asked under the umbrella of the broader research goal of understanding involvement in survival sex among homeless/street youth. Then, a comprehensive summary of the methods used to answer the questions posed will be provided. Specifically, a thorough explanation of the steps involved in conducting a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design will be provided, as well as the importance and justification of choosing this research design. Particular details of the collection of both the quantitative and qualitative data will be outlined for the reader. Chapter three concludes with how both the quantitative and qualitative data will be merged to answer the mixed-methods research question previously mentioned.

Chapter three: Methods

Introduction

Chapter two began with reviewing the broad scope of literature regarding youth involvement in trading/selling sex. This process merged two distinct sets of literature (youth involvement in commercial sexual exploitation and youth involved in survival sex) in order to cover the breadth of current research about youth populations involved in survival sex. Next, Humanistic Theory (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; 1943) was described and then used as the theoretical underpinning for understanding youth involvement in trading/selling sex. Maslow's work (1943;1969;1971) is the theoretical infrastructure used to develop McDonald's survival sex Hierarchy (2017), which is an untested theoretical framework for understanding youth involvement in survival sex. The chapter closed with an explanation on how the limited research available on the topic of youth involvement in survival sex has created many opportunities for contributions to the scholarly literature; and that this dissertation seeks to employ a sequential explanatory mixed-methods (Creswell, 2013) research design study to contribute to this scholarship and answer the broader question of understanding homeless/street youths involvement in survival sex.

A sequential explanatory mixed-methods research study provides an effective and efficient way to contribute to the literature. Specifically, due to the minimal empirical literature available, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data in to this dissertation study provides a good opportunity to reach the overall research goal of understanding homeless/street youth involvement in survival sex (Creswell, 2013).

This chapter commences with a general overview of mixed-methods research. Next, a description of the components of the specific type of mixed-methods design used to guide this dissertation (sequential explanatory mixed-methods design) is given, and the argument for why this type of research design was chosen is provided. Next, research questions to be answered by the individual strands of data and the mixed-methods research question are listed for the reader.

Finally, the methods used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data are presented. The process of collecting the quantitative and qualitative data required two separate IRB protocols and are separated as such within each section. Also, each the quantitative and qualitative section provides information pertaining to sampling methods, design and procedure of data collection, the demographic details of participants and the analytic plan. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how the quantitative and qualitative data will be merged together to answer the mixed-methods question posed.

Mixed-methods design research

Mixed-methods research emerged over 30 years ago (Creswell, 2009). The term “mixed-methods” literally means, “the integration of both quantitative and qualitative

data” (Creswell & Zhang 2009, p. 613). Mixed-methods research involves the collection of both types of data. The design of the mixed-methods study may vary (i.e., concurrent design, exploratory design, explanatory design), meaning that the quantitative and qualitative data may be collected concurrently or in a sequential manner depending on the type of design chosen (Creswell & Zhang, 2009). Both sets of data collected must adhere to the standards of good research and strive for optimal levels of rigor (Creswell, 2008). For the purposes of this dissertation the procedure of merging the data will be conducted. Meaning, both the quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed separately. Following, both strands of data will be merged together to determine how the qualitative data confirms or contradicts the quantitative data (Creswell & Zhang, 2009).

Sequential explanatory mixed-methods design

Given that the goal of this study is to gain an understanding of homeless/street youths experiences of survival sex, this proposal seeks to employ a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Figure 3.1). In this approach, two strands of data are collected sequentially where the findings from the data collected in the first strand inform the design of second strand. Findings from the second strand of data will be used to provide more depth to the results found in the first strand of data collection (Creswell & Zhang, 2009).

The first strand of this study was quantitative and examined whether or not street/homeless youth acknowledge involvement in trading/selling sex and to identify demographic characteristics of the population. Additionally, Propensity Score Matching was utilized as a statistical tool to estimate the likelihood of involvement in

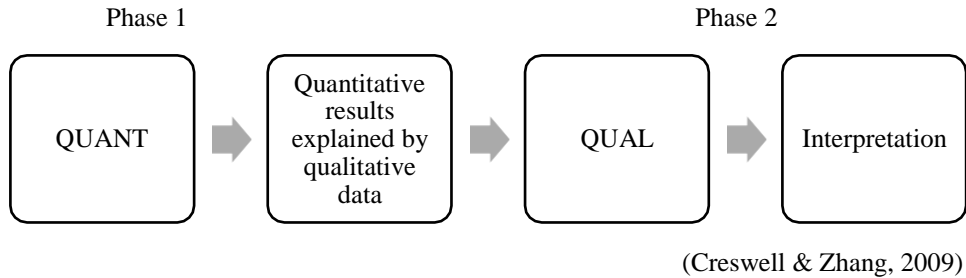
trading/selling sex if one has experienced childhood sexual abuse, or if they have a history of out of home placement. Trading/selling sex is defined in this study as youth who have traded or sold sex for money, clothes, food, drugs, phones, or electronics in return.

The second strand of this study was qualitative. The questions asked of participants were derived from the findings of the quantitative strand. Data collected in the second strand consisted of focus groups with a subsample of youth accessing services at one data collection center in the quantitative strand.

An explanatory sequential design is used in this study due to the clandestine nature of the population being studied. Specifically, due to housing status and survival behaviors (i.e. being homeless or marginally housed and having minimal means to make money), it made most sense to collect data through surveys which allowed for participants to maintain some level of anonymity around personal involvement in trading/selling sex. Then, subsequently conducting focus group discussions with a smaller sample of a similar population, who were not asked to disclose involvement in trading/selling sex, provided the opportunity to garner a greater depth to the quantitative findings. Collection of both strands of data provided an effective and efficient way to contribute to the literature on homeless and street youths' involvement in trading/selling sex. The omission of one type of evidence over the other would weaken the ability to reach the overall research goal of understanding homeless/street youths experiences in trading/selling sex.

Figure 3.1

Explanatory sequential design



In order to meet the overall intended research goal of understanding homeless/street youth involvement in survival sex, the following questions have been posed within this sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design:

Quantitative:

- 1) What percentage of youth in shelters acknowledge being involved in trading/selling sex?
- 2) What demographic factors are associated with homeless/street youth who identify as being involved in trading/selling sex?
- 3) What is the estimated effect of sexual abuse on the likelihood of trading/selling sex for money/goods?
- 4) What is the estimated effect of out of home placement on the likelihood of trading/selling sex for money/goods?

Qualitative:

- 1) How do homeless/street youth perceive involvement in trading/selling sex?

Mixed Methods:

- 1) How do [non-disclosure] focus group discussions with homeless/street youth about their perspectives of survival sex compare to the anonymous survey responses from homeless/street youth who disclose involvement trading/selling sex?

Quantitative methodology

This study employed a secondary data analysis approach to the quantitative methodology. Secondary data can be virtually any type of previously collected data ranging from government records from past years, to current administrative records, to the application of new research questions/hypothesis applied to already collected data (Smith & Smith, 2008). The benefits of using secondary data are the minimal time and low cost associated with not having to conduct an original study (Cheng & Phillips, 2014), as well as, the obvious benefit of not exploiting a vulnerable population to excessive surveying when data are already collected.

Secondary data was the first strand of data used in this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study. Secondary data was extracted from the BELL Study, where both Dr. Julie Laser-Maira and this author are co-primary investigators (co-PIs; McDonald, Laser Maira, 2017). The following section outlines the detailed purpose and methodology of the BELL study and concludes with specific details on how the data collected in the BELL study was used to answer the research questions posed within this dissertation.

Bell study background and purpose. The BELL measure was created after McDonald and Laser-Maira performed a thorough search of the empirical literature for a valid and reliable measure to assess the risk level of youth involvement in trading/selling sex. There were not any empirically validated measures available within the literature at the time of the search. The measures that were identified by this author typically presented in the form of a check-list (dichotomous variables) identifying problematic

behaviors of youth, thereby just identifying risk factors and not actual involvement in trading/selling sex (San Luis Obispo County, 2015; Allies Against Slavery, n.d.; Salisbury, Dabney, & Russell, 2015), or, the variables used within the measures were not reflective of the empirical literature on the topic. For example, many of the measures exclusively looked at youth in trafficker or pimp controlled environments, instead broadly inquiring about involvement in trading/selling sex (Covenant House, 2013). The purpose of the creation of the BELL measure, and subsequently the BELL study, was to create a measure to assess the risk of youth involvement in trading/selling sex that had psychometric properties and to use it to do exploratory research of the extent and demographics of trading/selling sex. A review of existing measures, prior to the creation of the BELL measure, occurred.

Center recruitment. A purposive sample of drop-in and homeless youth centers across the metropolitan areas of Colorado were contacted to inquire about participation in the BELL study of homeless/street youth. Center directors were contacted initially by phone and/or email and provided a brief description of the purpose of the study (purpose of original study provided above). If the center expressed interest in participation in the BELL study, the co-PI's emailed a copy of the BELL measure to the director and scheduled a time to visit the center and staff to further explain the study and provide instructions on dissemination and data collection procedures.

Three centers that serve homeless or marginally (out of five contacted) housed youth located in the metropolitan area of a Western State agreed to participate in the BELL study. Two centers; one in Northern part of the state and 1 in the capital city were

unable to participate due to lack of staffing and other research commitments. Letters of confirmation of participation from center directors were received and provided to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Denver prior to final IRB approval.

The exact location of the centers required is not disclosed in attempt to protect anonymity of participants due to the size of the cities in which they are located. However, to give the reader context, demographics of each are provided here. The first center, where most of the data was collected has an approximate total population estimate of the city in which sample participants were recruited is 322,000, 19.6% of people aged 18 years or under, and 62.5 % aged 18-65 years. Aproximately half (49.7%) of the population are individuals who identify as women and 90.7% are Caucasion (Census, n.d).

The second center, has an approximate total population of 465,000 people, 24% of people are 18 years or under, and 57% are aged 18-65 years. Similar to site one, approximately half (50.3%) of the population are individuals who identify as women and 78.8% are Caucasion (Census, n.d.).

The final center, has an approximate population of 361,000 people, 26.3% are aged 18 years or under, and 56% are aged 18-65 years. Half (51.2%) of the individuals within this city identify as women and 61.8% are Caucasion (Census, n.d.). Staff members at each center who were responsible for administering, or providing oversight of the administration of the BELL measure, met with the PIs of the BELL study. During the meetings, staff member(s) were provided with copies of the assent form (APPENDIX B), which included resources (e.g., suicide hotline, human trafficking

hotlines, abuse and neglect hotline, dating violence hotline, and sexual assault hotline), the BELL measure, and instructions on how to administer the measure and were given opportunities to ask questions about the research process. The staff were instructed that participation in the study was voluntary and were trained on the eligibility requirements to participate in the study, as well as, how to introduce the study so as individuals would know that the receipt of center services would not be impacted by participation in the study. Additionally, the staff were required to provide a secure locked box in a communal area where surveys were to be placed by the youth upon completion, so that youth could anonymously return the survey.

Sampling. Providing anonymity to research participants has not only become an ethical consideration for researchers (Grinyer, 2002), but also increases the likelihood that respondents will answer truthfully when inquiring about clandestine behavior (Babbie, 1998). When studying social problems, scholars frequently need to access populations that are outside the purview of mainstream society (Watters & Biernacki, 1989). These particular populations are frequently referred to as “hidden,” thus can only be accessed through a few venues which may provide a point of contact between researchers and the population they seek to study (Watters & Biernacki, 1989). Research has suggested that homeless youth seek services such as food, shelter, clothing, and financial assistance at shelters and drop-in centers (Thompson, et al., 2006), thereby drop-in shelters throughout the Western State’s front-range were solicited as data collection sites for this study (via the BELL study). Utilizing drop-in shelters provided a cost-effective and convenient approach to accessing this particular population of youth.

Convenience sampling was used and the sampling frame was youth aged 12-24 years who accessed drop-in shelters across metropolitan cities in Colorado. Neurological research has shown that the human brain continues to develop and mature into an individual's mid-twenties (Steinberg, 2005). Although 18 years of age is considered to be the age of majority in the U.S, this is not the ideal age to separate youth from adulthood from a biological or developmental perspective. Therefore, individuals 24 years and younger were deemed eligible for participation as "youth." Furthermore, many homeless young people experience high levels of complex trauma (Gonzalez & McLoughlin, 2014) and more than half of homeless youth have impairments that directly impact their ability to make wages sufficient for independent living (Saperstein, Lee, Ronan, Seeman, & Medalia, 2014), thus providing further justification for identifying individuals up to the age of 24 years as youth.

Individuals aged 12-24 years who accessed services at one of the three study sites, were eligible to participate in the study. The age of participants was also reflected by the eligibility requirements of each of the centers participating in the study (i.e. 12-24 years is the age range served at the drop-in centers and shelters, and this was verified during intake screening).

Procedures and measure. Each center established a protocol to ensure that youth accessing services at their center would not be asked to complete the survey more than one time in order to avoid duplicity of surveys and perceived pressure to participate (i.e. checking a box indicating a survey had been offered on an intake form that was referenced every time the youth accessed services).

The survey inquired about basic demographics (age, gender identification, race), risk factors and historical events experienced by the youth (e.g. child abuse and neglect, criminal history, involvement in intimate partner violence), social supports, and income generation. Participants were approached during the intake process at the center they were seeking services and asked if they were willing to participate in an anonymous study about homeless/street youth involvement in sex networks. Participants were informed by staff members that participation was voluntary and that the survey should take no longer than five minutes to complete. If the client agreed, the individual received the assent form and the survey from a staff member. The assent form was used to provide informed consent to youth who were under the age of 18 years. The youth were not required to sign any documentation as a mechanism to protect their confidentiality in participating in the study. Additionally, youth were asked to deposit the completed survey in a locked-box located in a common area of the center, as another mechanism to prevent identification of the participants. Writing utensils were available from staff at each center for participants to use while filling out the survey. The research team did not offer incentives for completion of the survey. The study was cross-sectional, and data were collected from Spring 2016 and concluded in May 2017.

Surveys were secured in the locked location until a PI was able to pick them up from the research site. This author routinely reached out to staff members at each individual drop-in center to determine the number of surveys collected and arranged for a time to collect them.

Participant involvement in trading/selling sex was determined if the participant indicated on the survey that they had: had sex with someone and received money, clothes, food, drugs, phones, or electronics in return (referred to thereafter as trading/selling for “money or goods”) at least one time, or if they identified trading/selling sex for money or goods as a primary area of support.

Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Denver was obtained on March 25, 2016. The BELL study included individuals over the age of 18 years and “children,” (youths 17 years of age and under), thus a specific request to waive parental consent of youths participating in the BELL study was requested and approved. Additionally, in order to preserve anonymity of the research participants, a waiver of informed consent was also requested and approved.

Current study. The current study, *Fact vs. Fiction: Uncovering the experiences of homeless/street youths’ involvement in survival sex* (referred to thereafter as “Fact vs. Fiction,”) sought to understand the experiences of homeless/street youth’s involvement in survival sex. The Fact vs. Fiction study used data collected from the BELL study (previously outlined) as secondary data for the quantitative strand of this sequential mixed-methods design. Specifically, data was extracted from the BELL study to answer the following quantitative research questions:

- What percentage of youth in shelters acknowledge being involved in trading/selling sex?
- What demographic factors are associated with homeless/street youth who identify as being involved in trading/selling sex?

- What is the estimated effect of sexual abuse on the likelihood of trading/selling sex for money/goods?
- What is the estimated effect of out of home placement on the likelihood of trading/selling sex for money/goods?

Participants. A total of 123 surveys were collected. One survey was removed due to a participant falling outside the age range for participation ($n = 122$). The sample consisted of 82 (67%) cisgender young men, 32 (26%) cisgender young women, and 5 (4.1%) individuals who identified as non-binary. The age range of participants was 15 years – 24 years. Of the participants, 72 (58.5%) identified as White, 13 (11%) Black, 10 (8.1%) Hispanic/Latino, 2 (1.6%) Asian/Pacific Islander, 6 (4.9%) American/Native Indian, 11 (8.9%) Multi-racial (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Sample demographic characteristics

<i>N = 122</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Cisgender young men	82	67%
Cisgender young women	32	26%
Non-binary	5	4.1%
White	72	58.5%
Black	13	11%
Multi-racial	11	8.9%
Hispanic/Latino	10	8.1%
American/Native Indian	6	4.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	1.6%

A large majority of the surveys were collected from one center within the Western State’s metropolitan region ($n = 84, 68.3\%$) and the remainder from one other center ($n=38, 31\%$). One study site was not well-known within the community it served and lost funding for drop-in services half-way through data collection and subsequently did not provide any data to be included in the study. Demographics of participants across the sample is broken down between data collection sites in Table 3.2 below. All the data collection centers were similar in service offerings and eligibility requirements for accessing services (i.e., age, housing status). The distinct difference between the center that collected the largest number of surveys and the others was well-known community presence and consistent funding.

Table 3.2

Demographic breakdown by center

<i>N = 122</i>	Data Center 1	Data Center 2
	(N, %)	(N, %)
	84, 69%	38, 31%
Cisgender young men	54, 44%	28, 23%
Cisgender young women	25, 20%	7, 6%
Non-binary	2, 2%	3, 2%
White	57, 47%	15, 12%
Black	2, 2%	11, 9%
Hispanic/Latino	6, 5%	4, 3%
Multi-racial	9, 7%	3, 2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0, 0%	2, 2%
American/Native Indian	5, 4%	1, .08%

Descriptives of youth who identified involvement in trading/selling sex.

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run to answer the first two quantitative research questions posed (1. percentage of youth involved in trading/selling sex; 2. demographic factors associated with involvement in trading/selling sex). Participant involvement in trading/selling sex was identified in two ways: 1) participants were asked about primary sources of financial support, if they identified trading sex for money or trading sex for goods as a primary support, they were categorized as involved in trading/selling sex; 2) participants were asked in the survey if they have ever had sex with someone and gotten money, clothes, food, drugs, phones or electronics in return. If a participant acknowledged that they had participated, at least one time, they were categorized as involved in trading/selling sex. After frequencies were run on the entirety of the sample, cases were selected within the data set and cross referenced against each other to avoid duplicity in counting (i.e. a participant identifying that trading/selling sex is a primary support and traded or sold sex for money or goods).

Measurement

Propensity score matching. In order to answer research questions 3 and 4, a propensity score matching (PSM) technique was used to estimate the effect of two chosen “treatment” variables (sexual abuse, and out-of-home placement) on the likelihood of trading/selling sex for money or goods. Two different matching models were estimated, one for each treatment variable. This approach is used to produce an estimate the effect of a treatment variable (i.e. experiencing sexual abuse) or propensity score on an outcome (i.e. involvement in trading/selling sex for money) using statistical matching, and is

particularly useful when randomization is not possible or ethical. The process is analogous to a quasi-experimental design where a treatment and comparison group are formed based on a matching process. The same analytical process was completed for each treatment variable and Stata Statistical Software Release 14 (StataCorp, 2017) was used for the PSM analysis.

In order to use PSM, the treatment variable must be dichotomous, thus both the sexual abuse variable and the out-of-home placement variable were transformed from the original question that asked “number of times” and individual experienced the event to dichotomous “yes/no” variables (Table 3.3). Next, covariates were selected to create a matching model. Covariates were first selected because it was believed that the event occurred prior to the treatment, or they were not changed by the treatment (e.g. gender, race, etc.). These covariates were used to create two groups that are as similar to each other as possible on all variables except the treatment variable, hence reflecting a quasi-experimental type design (covariates: physical abuse, emotional abuse, basic needs, gender, age, and race).

Table 3.3

Dichotomous breakdown of treatment variables

	Yes	No
Experienced sexual abuse	n=33, 27%	n=89, 73%
Experienced out-of-home placement	n=29, 24%	n=93, 76%

When estimating the effect of experiencing childhood sexual abuse on the likelihood of involvement in trading/selling sex for money or goods, the balanced groups looked similar on all covariates entered in to the model (age, race, gender, etc.) except the control group had not experienced childhood sexual abuse while the treatment group had. The purpose of matching cases to create balanced groups is to isolate the effect of treatment on the treated group through looking to find a reasonable counter-factual. PSM is a more robust analytical tool than regression for a few different reasons. First, it is easier to determine whether the propensity score model has been appropriately specified, as compared to the regression, because of the balancing component needed in the propensity score. Thus, because the distribution of the baseline covariates is similar between the “treated” and “untreated” groups systematic differences between subjects is much easier to identify in PSM. Goodness-of-fit models used with regression does not do this (Austin, 2011). Second, analogous to a randomized control trial, PSM allows for a separation between the design of the study and the analysis of the study, thereby removing temptation to modify the model until the desired outcome is obtained (Austin, 2011). Instead, multiple matching models are built and tested in order to find the best matches, thereby creating one propensity score and reducing the dimensions in the matching. Balance is tested on all covariates when identifying the best model to use for analysis. The following outlines the variables that were selected to be entered in to the statistical model and their function within the model.

Covariates. Covariates used in both PSM models included: (1) physical abuse; (2) emotional abuse; (3) basic needs; (4) gender; (5) age; and (6) race. Participants were

asked, “How many times were you [child maltreatment] before age 12?” and rated their experience on a scale ranging from 0 “never” to 4 “always”. The basic needs variable was derived from the question, “How often were your basic needs met (by anyone) before age 12?” and rated their experience on a scale ranging from 0 “always” to 4 “never”. Sociodemographic variables (age, race, gender) were open-ended questions posed to participants at the beginning of the BELL Measure (i.e. “What gender do you identify as?” with a blank for the participant to fill in). There was very little variability in the race variable due to the limited sample size. Thereby, the race variable was transformed in to a dichotomous variable of white versus non-white, when entered in to the model.

Outcome. The outcome variable for the PSM model is participation in trading/selling sex for money or goods. If a participant answered “yes” to one the following question: Have you had sex with someone and gotten money, clothes, food, drugs, phones, or electronics in return?; or indicated that their primary support was either “exchange of sex/sexual acts for money” or “exchange of sex/sexual acts for goods/shelter/clothing,” the participant was identified as having been involved in trading/selling sex for money or goods. The intent behind running these models is to identify specific factors having an effect on the outcome (i.e. trading/selling sex).

Treatment. The two treatment variables entered in to the PSM models were, “experiencing childhood sexual abuse” and “experiencing out-of-home placement.” Participants were asked, “How many times were you sexually abused before age 12?” Participants were given a scale ranging from 0 “never” to 4 “always.” If a participant

selected anything other than “never,” they were marked as a “yes” in the experiencing sexual abuse category for statistical analysis.

Also participants were asked, “How often have you been removed from your homebyprotective services?” and were given a scale from 0 “ I have never been removed” to 4 “removed 18 or more times.” If a participant indicated that they had been removed at least one time, they were included in the group that had experienced out-of-home placement for statistical analysis.

Analysis. Groups were matched using Stata’s psmatch2 command. Multiple models were run for each treatment variable in order to identify the best matched groups. The matching model is a “means to an end”. Meaning, not all covariates may work well in the matching model. Covariates can be added and removed, and also transformed to improve model performance. This was done by transforming the covariates using log, square-root, multiplying by itself, or are removing the variable from the model entirely. Interactions among covariates were also entered in to the models in attempt to achieve optimally balanced groups.

Approximately 20 models were run for each treatment variable in order to identify balanced groups. When good balance is achieved, then differences between the two groups can be reasonably attributed to the effect of treatment (Bellamy, Goplan & Traube, 2010). This was achieved by identifying similarities across all covariates among the groups. Looking at the differences in percentages across the treatment and comparison groups, provides a preliminary indication on the degree of similarity between the treatment and comparison groups.

In the PSM models run, matching with replacement was used to match cases across the treatment and comparison groups. Using matching with replacement allows for one person in the comparison group to be matched more than one time, thus helping achieve the balanced groups.

Regression. A regression analysis was run for each of the outcome variables: trading/selling sex for money or goods. Using regression analysis allows for a conservative estimate for the error term to be created, thus giving more confidence when interpreting the results. When running the regression, the weighted cases are entered in to the model to account for the amount of times a comparison group case is used as a match for the treatment group.

Qualitative methodology

Focus group discussions, using purposive sampling of youth accessing services at one homeless/street youth center (referred to thereafter as “the center”), served as the qualitative data for this mixed-methods research design. The focus group format was chosen for this study for two reasons: time and privacy. Conducting focus group discussions allowed for in-depth discussions with multiple people at once to occur. Also, conducting focus groups allowed for homeless/street youths to share their understanding of youth involvement in trading/selling sex without having to identify personal involvement, thus preserving their privacy. Approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Denver was obtained on April 20, 2017.

Center involvement. The Program Director (PD) at the center, where the majority of surveys were collected, was an integral part of the qualitative data collection process. The PD was a vital element in ensuring the safety of participants in the focus group discussions about homeless/street youth involvement in trading/selling sex. In an effort to ensure research practices were handled in a way consistent with the culture and values of the organization, the PD was named as Co-PI on the IRB submission for the qualitative data application request. Also, the PD served as a partner and collaborator in designing all elements of the qualitative portion of this dissertation. Specific details of the PD's involvement will be described in subsequent sections.

Sampling.

Center information. One youth serving organization that provided drop-in services and shelter for homeless/ street youth aged 12-24 years was the location where sample participants were recruited. The center was chosen based on the high percentage of quantitative surveys they collected, indicating a commitment and interest in the study from staff members. This center is identified as "Center one" in the quantitative methodology section for reference to the reader.

Hours of operation of the center where focus groups were held were from 12:30p.m. – 5:00p.m., seven days a week. Youth typically accessed services such as food, laundry, clothing, showers, and therapy (individual and groups) from the center. There is an average of five youth that access the center on any given day. Purposive sampling was the sampling method technique used to recruit participants for participation in the focus group discussions.

Recruitment. The PD was responsible for recruitment of subjects to participate in the focus groups. A separate IRB process was completed for the focus group discussion. A waiver of formal written consent was requested and approved from the IRB for this portion of the study because it was the only record linking the subject to the data collected. The risk associated with the signature of the participant was a potential harm for the participant, thus the request to have the written consent waived.

After IRB approval was received, The Co-PI's agreed upon dates for which to hold the focus group meetings at the center. The PD provided information to clients accessing services at the center in two ways: 1) through a house meeting where clients who are residing in the shelter convene, and 2) through discussions that the PD had with clients' every time they accessed drop-in services at the center. In an effort to ensure that clients at the center did not feel pressured to participate in focus group discussions, the PD kept clear notes on who they engaged with regarding involvement in focus groups so as they would not approach a client more than one time. The PD was the only staff member permitted to introduce information about the focus group discussions and inquire about client interest in participation. The PD provided a one-page information sheet (APPENDIX C) to individuals who expressed interest in participating in the focus groups. The information sheet highlighted the parameters of the research and participant criteria for involvement in the focus groups. The information sheet also indicated that participants must be 18 years of age or older to participate, a brief description of a focus group discussion was provided to participants, as well as all of the questions that were asked in the focus group [ahead of time], date, time, and location of the focus group, the

incentive (food) that will be offered, and that participation is completely voluntary and does not impact eligibility for services at the center.

Participants were not asked about involvement in the BELL study (i.e., asked if they had filled out the BELL measure) to participate. Also, the center assesses client's likelihood of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs upon entering the center and denies services to those who demonstrate they are under the influence. This author (Co-PI and facilitator of the focus group discussions) relied on this already established procedure, thus attending to participant's capacity to consent to participate in the research study. However, this author maintained the right to exclude any individual(s) who do not demonstrate comprehension, appreciation, and/or ability to reason in relation to the study's procedures, risks, benefits, and voluntary nature.

Focus group procedures. Youth seeking services at the center were only permitted to attend one focus group discussion. Focus groups were held if at least two people were present to participate. Less than two people in attendance would omit the presence of a "group." Putting a concrete number on the optimal amount of focus group participants is difficult, thus the focus group size erred on the side of "smaller" using this researchers discretion. Smaller focus groups are more appropriate when discussing sensitive topics and when the researcher is seeking to get high levels of participant involvement (Morgan, 1996) Larger groups than this are difficult to facilitate and limit opportunities for individuals to share insight and perceptions of the phenomenon being studied. There are few studies that identify the overall number of participants needed to reach saturation. However, Brown (2017) found that after conducting 40 focus group discussions, a vast

majority of her themes were identified within the first three focus groups. Similarly, Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, and Cieza (2012) found that five focus groups were enough to reach saturation. In order to strike a balance between numbers found by Brown (2017) and Coenen et al. (2012) , this author chose to do four focus groups in total (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4

Number of participants per focus group discussion

Focus Group	Number of participants
1	3
2	4
3	4
4	3

Once an individual indicated their willingness to participate, as demonstrated by the participant showing up to the center, in the “middle room” where the focus group discussions were held, each participant received a copy of the informed consent form (APPENDIX D). All participants were instructed to read the document in its entirety. This author also offered to read the document aloud to participants. Additionally, this author asked each participant if they understood the document. This author verbally shared the guidelines and rules of the focus group, offered to share the discussion questions again prior to beginning the discussion to ensure that participants were informed what the focus group discussion was about, and emphasized that participation was voluntary. The rules and guidelines used in the focus group discussion were

established using the center's language, rules, and guidelines from other sensitive group meetings (e.g., therapy groups, discussion of sensitive topics, etc.). All participants who exhibited interest in participating in the focus group discussions followed through with participation and respected the guidelines and rules provided.

Simultaneous to providing the consent forms to each participant, reviewing the rules and guidelines, and answering participant questions, participants were offered dessert as an incentive for participation. Each participant received a number that was affixed to the table in front of them. This was the mechanism used to indicate their identity without having to provide their names during the focus group conversation. Participants were asked to state their number prior to speaking in order to most efficiently track responses during the focus group discussion. Additionally, prior to starting the recording, each participant was asked to verbally acknowledge their commitment to confidentiality of the discussion. All were reminded that self-disclosure was discouraged and that any accidental self-identification that occurred during the discussion (i.e., saying names) would be removed from the written transcript. Disclosing or "outing" others by name (in the focus group or otherwise) was prohibited. Finally, the focus group interview guide was constructed specifically to steer participants away from self-disclosure by using phrasing that was more general as opposed to asking about specific participants. Also, participants were given verbal instructions on avoiding using "I" statements in order to discourage self-disclosure and the outing of others.

Once all participants had the opportunity to "hear" the rules and guidelines, review the information and consent document, ask any questions, verbally agree to rules

and guidelines, and had acknowledged that they are at least 18 years or older, the focus group commenced. The audio recorder on an iPhone 7 was used to record the focus group discussion. To preserve participant confidentiality, the iPhone was password protected and remained in the possession of the facilitator at all times. After the completion of the focus group, the audio recorded data was securely transferred to a password protected computer, deleted from the iPhone, and then securely downloaded to a reputable transcription service for the audio file to be transcribed. Once transcribed, the data was secured within a password protected file on a password protected computer.

Participants. A total of 14 individuals participated in the focus group discussions. Four focus group discussions were held. Among the groups, there was an even representation among youth accessing services from the shelter and those utilizing drop-in services at the data collection site (i.e., two subsets of seven youth made up the entirety of sample). Youth participating in focus group discussions were not mixed, meaning that youth accessing services at the shelter did not participant in the same focus group discussion as those who were utilizing drop-in services. The sample consisted of 10 (71%) cisgender young men, 3 (20%) cisgender young women, and 1 (7%) transgender person (female to male). The age range of participants was 18 - 24, with an average age of 20 years old. Of the participants, 7 (50 %) identified as White, 2 (14 %) Black, 1 (7 %) Asian/Pacific Islander, 1(7 %) Multi-racial, and 2 (14%) other (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5

Demographics of participants by focus group discussion

	Focus Group	Gender	Age	Race
Shelter	1,2	Cisgender young men	18 years, <i>n</i> =5	White, <i>n</i> =4
Youth		, <i>n</i> =4 Cisgender young women, <i>n</i> =2 Transgender, <i>n</i> =1	19 years, <i>n</i> =2	Black, <i>n</i> =1 Mixed, <i>n</i> =1 Other, <i>n</i> =1
Drop-in	3,4	Cisgender young men,	18 years, <i>n</i> =1	White, <i>n</i> =3
Youth		<i>n</i> =6 Cisgender young women, <i>n</i> =1	21-22 years, <i>n</i> =3 23-24 years, <i>n</i> =3	Black, <i>n</i> =1 Hispanic/Latino, <i>n</i> =2 Other, <i>n</i> =1

Analysis.

Constructivist Self-Development Theory (CDST). Constructivist Self-Development Theory (CDST) is the philosophical lens underpinning the codification process of the focus groups. The foundational tenant of this theory is that human beings construct their own personal realities through the development of complex cognitive structures which are then relied upon when the individual interprets an event or observation (Trippany, White Kress, & Wilcoxon, 2004). CDST embodies the person in their entirety through recognizing that an individual's history and/or personality influences their perception and narration of events. Through this account, the application

of this theory provides a glimpse into homeless/street youths perceptions of others, like them, involved in trading/selling sex (Saakvitne, Tennen, & Affleck, 1998).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Consistent with the CDST, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an analytical process that is committed to understanding the participants point of view (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), and is relied upon for coding the focus group discussions. This process has been described as an “iterative and inductive cycle” that is “multi-directional” because each level of data analysis is compared to previous steps in the process and reflected upon (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p.79 & p. 71). This approach requires an immense level of familiarity with the data, thus requiring multiple in-depth readings of individual transcripts, as well as, across transcripts (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Through the iterative reading process, codes are drawn out of the data and subsequently themes are devised from the codes that occur within the totality of the sample (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Although described as “multi-directional,” Smith and colleagues (2009) describe a five-step approach to analyzing qualitative data. The “five-step” analytic process is to be interpreted loosely as to capture the true essence of the participants’ experience is to approach each step fluidly, recognizing that returning to an earlier step in the analytical process may be warranted (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Smith et al. (2009) describe the analytical process as follows: 1) immersion in to the data; 2) deliberate noting of transcripts; 3) within transcript coding; 4) theme mapping; and 5) development of themes across sample.

Data analysis. Focus group discussions were held between April 20, 2017 and June 30, 2017. On average, the focus group discussions lasted 30 minutes and were digitally recorded, professionally transcribed, and checked for accuracy against original audio files. Some of the interview questions included: “When people, like you, are trading sex or selling sex, what do they call it?” and, “What do you think are the experiences of young people, like you, who trade/sell sex?” (the full focus group discussion guide is located in APPENDIX E). All qualitative data analysis was done using hard copy transcripts and electronic word documents housed within Microsoft Word. This author felt most comfortable and capable using Microsoft Word, though an unconventional tool in qualitative analysis, during the IPA process. This author felt that Microsoft Word created the best opportunity for this researcher to fully engage iteratively and flexibly as IPA suggests.

Step one: Immersion in to the data. The analytic process commenced promptly after the first collection of data. Immediately after each focus group, this author reflected on the focus group discussion and documented this author’s most prominent observations and experience of the focus group that had occurred (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This process allowed this author to identify and preserve this author’s initial thoughts after being among the participants, in a way that could be relied upon later in the coding process (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Next, this author listened to the audio files of each focus group discussion and independently noted feelings and common narratives among participants (i.e., each focus group discussion had its own notes regarding participants). Re-engaging with the focus

group discussions through the audio recording provided the opportunity to intently listen to the participants' tone and language. This is an important step at the start of this analytic process because it allowed this author to actively engage with data differently than before (i.e., as a facilitator of the discussions; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Patterns of discussion and the fluxuation of energy around questions were noted and added to the initial observations.

Step two: Deliberate noting of transcripts. Audio files of the focus group discussions were securely sent to a reputable transcription service to be transcribed in to a word document. The transcribed documents were compared to the audio files for accuracy upon receipt. Similar to step one, each focus group discussion [transcript] was independently reviewed at this stage in the analytic process.

This author began by writing the overall research question, *what are homeless/street youth's perceptions of involvement in trading/selling sex*, on a sticky note and placed it next to the transcript that was being reviewed. Understanding the unique view of the participants as it relates to the issue of study is of profound importance to IPA. Thus, having the research question available provided grounding and clarity when determining what to highlight [within each transcript] during this part of the analytic process (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Procedurally, this author read each transcript, line by line, and highlighted quotes from participants that related to the overall research question mentioned previously. This process involved drawing out quotes that represented participants' perceptions of involvement in trading/selling sex. Going through each transcript and highlighting these quotes gave context to the "lived world" of

participants and their understanding or perspectives of youth involvement in trading/selling sex (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 83). At this stage of the analytic process, coding and identifying themes within each focus group independently is important as it serves to “reduce the volume of detail” within the data while also preserving the depth of participants’ experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.91). Some examples of quotes drawn from the transcripts are provided in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6

Example quotes

-
- There’s lots of names to it so I don’t know what it’s called
 - It is kind of frowned upon in our society but at the same time it’s encouraged.
 - I visualize the actual experience they have with it being a rather unsafe one, simply because... I’ll call it a “service” – [those purchasing] are usually not the safest people to be around.
 - To make that kind of decision [to engage in trading/selling sex] that they would have to have had gone some kind of tragic thing to happen for their mindset to be like that.

Step three: Within transcript coding. Upon completion of identifying relevant quotes within individual focus group discussions, this author re-reviewed the data and examined the quotes that were drawn out of the transcript. While reviewing the data, this author assigned one to two word codes or phrases to tie the quote to the research question (Table 3.7; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). When all the quotes were coded, the codes along with their corresponding quotes were compiled in to a chronological table (i.e., data/codes were entered in to the table in the order they presented within the transcript; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Table 3.7 provides a succinct example of the process used in the creation of chronological table and does not represent the entire body of quotes.

Table 3.7

Example of quotes and codes assigned

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There’s lots of names to it so I don’t know what it’s called. • It is kind of frowned upon in our society but at the same time it’s encouraged. • I visualize the actual experience they have with it being a rather unsafe one, simply because... I’ll call it a “service” – [those purchasing] are usually not the safest people to be around. • To make that kind of decision [to engage in trading/selling sex] that they would have to have had gone some kind of tragic thing to happen for their mindset to be like that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuum • Push/Pull factors • Dangerous • Adverse life experiences
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Next, this author examined and noted within the focus group tables obvious commonalities among the codes. For example, one participant mentioned how people they knew “were selling it [sex] for survival” in reference to why people were involved in trading/selling sex. Another mentioned that individuals are, “selling it [sex] for money so they can put food on their table.” These two independent statements were connected as they both identified trading/selling sex as “survival” mechanisms for people they knew. Similar to previous steps, each focus group table was coded separately from one another at this stage in the analytic process.

Step four: Theme mapping. After the initial codes were extracted from the data in step three, the codes identified within each focus group table were clustered in to seemingly common themes (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Themes were different for each focus group as each group consisted of different individuals. While identifying

themes within focus groups, this author simultaneously documented the justification of why and how this author identified the “interrelationships” among the data to develop the themes (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.91). For example, isolation was identified as a theme because in focus group 1, participants not only talked about how individuals involved in trading/selling sex had a “lack of hope and support,” but also that people involved “build barriers so well that you can’t tell what’s going on with them.”

Smith et al. (2009) describe IPA as an iterative process. Thereby, the themes identified in this step were compared to the initial prominent thoughts and observations that were noted in step one (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This provided an opportunity for reflection and the evaluation of “fit” between notations in step one and present themes identified.

In order to increase the rigor of the analytic process, as well as minimize potential researcher bias, reflexive memoing with the Co-PI and PD (Charmaz, 2014) was conducted. Memoing is a process which serves to assist the researcher in making conceptual links between the raw data to the themes extracted from the data (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). This technique provided a venue for the lead-researcher to identify personal bias and create transparency within research team as it relates to the analysis of the data. The Co-PI and PD received a copy of each focus group table, the emergent themes identified, and the rules associated with how the codes were clustered together to identify the themes. After the Co-PI and PD reviewed all the documentation provided, this author and the Co-PI and PD reconvened, discussion ensued about the development of the themes, disagreements were resolved, and preliminary code

definitions were documented in codebook. Having the Co-PI and PD, who was not present during the focus group discussions, read the [aggregated] raw data proved to be an invaluable resource.

Step five: Development of themes across sample. The final step in the analytical process involved bringing together the themes identified from each individual focus group discussion to determine common elements across the focus groups. To facilitate this process, themes from each focus group were individually summarized and consolidated in to one document for review. The Co-PI's were intimately involved in this process, as each one was responsible for reviewing the consolidated document autonomously. The Co-PI's agreed to the following steps in reviewing the across group themes: 1) read each individual theme within the document in full; 2) document preliminary commonalities and differences noticed; 3) re-read at a later time to see if preliminary thoughts match current thoughts; 4) document what seemed to be a salient trend across the data; and 5) establish themes from the salient trends identified. After each PI had completed the agreed upon steps, they came together to discuss their individual findings. Similar to step four, discussion ensued regarding salient trends that each PI identified, both identified how they themed the salient trends, disagreements related to salience and themes were debated and resolved, leading to an agreement on the overall findings related to homeless/street youth's perceptions of involvement in trading/selling sex. Findings are presented in the next chapter.

Integration of the findings

Upon completion of the qualitative analysis, the results of both strands of data were integrated in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of homeless/street youths' experiences in trading/selling sex. Specifically, this author systematically looked at the themes identified within the qualitative data and compared them to data collected from the BELL measure. This consisted of drawing out all participants within the quantitative sample who indicated involvement in trading/selling sex (as described in the quantitative section of this chapter) and comparing characteristics of those who identified involvement in trading and selling sex against characteristics and experiences that were described within the focus group discussions. Particular focus was on differences identified, if any, between youth who are asked questions regarding involvement in survival sex with anonymity as opposed to those who described their perceptions of trading/selling sex within the focus group setting.

Conclusion

A mixed-methods research design was chosen for this research study. This chapter began by providing a summary of mixed-methods research, and provided details regarding utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. A model representing the sequential order of collecting the quantitative and qualitative strands of data was provided for the reader. Additionally, the reader was provided with a list of research questions that each strand of data was tasked to answer, as well as, the mixed-methods research question. Methods of collecting each strand of data (quantitative and qualitative) are distinctly different and required separate IRB processes, thus were separated within

this chapter. Each quantitative and qualitative section provided the reader with information pertaining to sampling, data collection, demographics of participants, and fine details on how analysis was conducted for each type of data.

Chapter four provides the results of the data analysis conducted for the quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods data. It begins with a presentation of the quantitative data, attending to each research question posed. Next, findings from the qualitative focus groups are presented, with examples to support the themes identified. Finally, the findings from integrating the quantitative and qualitative data will be discussed.

Chapter four: Findings

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a description of the mixed-methods research used in this dissertation. For this study, a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design was chosen and the rationale was provided in chapter 3. Methods for collecting both the quantitative and qualitative data were outlined for the reader. Chapter 3 concluded with a description on how the different strands of data would be integrated to meet the overarching goal of this study; understanding homeless/street youth involvement in trading/selling sex.

Similar to chapter 3, this chapter is separated into sections according to the type of data collected. This chapter begins with the results from the quantitative data analysis, to include a more thorough description of sample participants (beyond what was provided in chapter 3). The propensity score model results are broken into sections according to the treatment variable entered into the model (i.e., childhood sexual abuse and out-of-home placement). Next, the qualitative findings are presented and supported by participant quotes drawn from the focus group discussions. This chapter closes with the findings from integrated data. The table below (Table 4.1) provides the demographics across participants from both the quantitative and qualitative data samples.

Table 4.1

Demographics across quantitative and qualitative samples

	Bell Study	Focus Groups	Total and Percentages
Sample	$n = 122$	$n = 14$	$n = 136$
Gender	Cisgender young men, $n = 82$, 67%	Cisgender young men, $n = 10$,	$n = 92$, 68%
	Cisgender young women, $n = 32$,	71%	$n = 35$, 26%
	26%	Cisgender young women, $n = 3$,	$n = 5$, 4%
	Non-binary, $n = 5$, 4%	21%	$n = 1$, .7%
Race		Transgender, $n = 1$, 7%	
	White, $n = 72$, 59%	White, $n = 7$, 50%	$n = 79$, 58%
	Black, $n = 13$, 11%	Black, $n = 2$, 14%	$n = 15$, 11%
	Hispanic/Latino, $n = 10$, 8%	Hispanic Latino, $n = 2$, 14%	$n = 12$, 9%
	Asian/Pacific Islander, $n = 2$, 2%	Asian/Pacific Islander, $n = 0$	$n = 2$, 1%
	American/Native Indian, $n = 6$, 5%	American/Native Indian, $n = 0$	$n = 6$, 4%
	Multiracial, $n = 11$, 9%	Multiracial, $n = 1$, 7%	$n = 12$, 9%
		Other, $n = 2$, 14%	$n = 2$, 1%

Results

Frequencies and demographics. Demographics for this study are provided above. The left portion of Table 4.1 provides demographics for the entirety of the quantitative sample which is discussed in this section. The right portion of Table 4.1 is the demographics of the qualitative sample and will be discussed later in the corresponding qualitative section of this chapter. Both samples had many participants that identified as cis-gender young men who were White. The educational level of

participants ranged from completion of middle school ($n= 5, 4.1\%$) to completing some college ($n =12, 9.8\%$). Approximately half of the sample had received a high school diploma or GED ($n =60, 48.8\%$) and a slightly lower percentage had completed some high school ($n =44, 35.8\%$). Table 4. 2 below provides the educational statistics for the reader.

Table 4.2

Educational levels of quantitative sample

Completion of middle school	$n= 5, 4.1\%$
Some high school	$n =44, 35.8\%$
Completion of high school diploma/GED	$n =60, 48.8\%$
Some college	$n =12, 9.8\%$

Also in the survey, participants were asked about primary sources of financial support. The top two areas of financial support identified were: support from friends ($n=44, 36.1\%$) and support from a shelter or social service agency ($n=42, 34.4\%$). Other areas of support listed within the measure were: boyfriend/girlfriend, work, family, savings, selling drugs, stealing/theft, exchange of sex/sexual acts for money, and exchange of sex/sexual acts for goods/shelter/clothing.

As mentioned in chapter 3, trading/selling sex among participants was determined if they indicated that they had traded or sold sex for money or goods; or if they identified trading/selling sex for money or goods as a primary support. The data were reviewed to ensure that participants were not counted twice when indicating that

they had traded or sold sex for money or goods. Of the total sample, 17% ($n = 21$) acknowledged involvement in trading/selling sex.

Demographic characteristics of the sample that identified as involved in trading/selling sex were also examined (Table 4.3). Of those involved in trading/selling sex, 76% ($n = 16$) identified as cisgender young men, 19% ($n = 4$) identified as cisgender young women, and 4.8% ($n = 1$) identified as transgender. All participants who identified involvement in trading/selling sex indicated that they were 18 years of age or older when they took the survey. Participants were not asked about their age at first involvement in trading/selling sex due to fear on behalf of staff of having to report youth who were involved under the age of 18 years. This is a limitation that will be discussed in chapter 5. At the time of the survey, 66.7% ($n = 14$) were between 21- 24 years of age and 33% ($n = 7$) were between the ages of 18 and 20 years. Consistent with the overall sample characteristics, a large majority of the participants involved in trading/selling sex were White 47.6% ($n = 10$). The remainder of participants identified as: 14.3% ($n = 3$) identified as Black, 9.5% ($n = 2$) Hispanic/Latino, 4.8% ($n = 1$) as Asian, and 14.3% ($n = 3$) as mixed race. People of color were overrepresented within this sample (see census data for each study site in Methodology chapter). Education levels of participants who indicated involvement in trading/selling sex were also explored. Approximately 71% ($n = 15$) of the sample who identified involvement in trading/selling sex had attained either a high school diploma or GED (61.9%, $n = 13$) or attended some college (9.5%, $n = 2$).

Table 4. 3

Age and race demographics of individuals involved in trading/selling sex

Age	21- 24 years, <i>n</i> =14, 66.7%
	18 - 20 years, <i>n</i> =7, 33%
Race	White, <i>n</i> =10, 47.6%
	Black, <i>n</i> =3, 14.3%
	Hispanic/Latino, <i>n</i> =2, 9.5%
	Asian, <i>n</i> =1, 4.8%
	Mixed, <i>n</i> =3, 14.3%

Effect of childhood sexual abuse. Groups were matched using Stata’s psmatch2 command. Approximately 20 models were run in order create the balanced group. This was achieved by identifying the best matched groups. Matching with replacement was used to match cases across the treatment and comparison groups. The balance statistics for the propensity score matching model (using childhood sexual abuse as the treatment variable) are provided in Table 4.4. The mean differences in this model did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that the matched groups were reasonably similar across all 6 covariates. The groups are not perfectly matched, however there are not any clinically significant differences therefore presenting minimal concern about the covariates causing an effect on the outcome variable.

Table 4.4

Propensity score matching balance statistics for youth whom experienced childhood sexual abuse, n=43

Covariate	Mean		<i>p</i> value
	Treated (<i>n</i> =29)	Control (<i>n</i> =14)	
Age	3.34	3.41	.66
Gender	.59	.62	.81
White	.55	.48	.61
Physical Abuse	2.55	2.34	.51
Emotional Abuse	3.00	3.21	.39
Basic Needs	1.59	1.80	.51

After matching, 34% of the youth who had experienced childhood sexual abuse also traded or sold sex for money or goods, while only 17% in the comparison group had done so. After matching, 43 cases were used in the analysis. The final propensity score model estimate with an additional covariance adjustment (i.e., running a regression analysis) found that experiencing childhood sexual abuse prior to age 12 did not have a statistically significant impact on whether or not youth traded or sold sex for money or goods ($p = .301$, $SE = .21$).

Effect of out-of-home placement. Groups were matched using Stata's `psmatch2` command. Approximately 20 models were run in order create the balanced group. This was achieved by identifying the best matched groups. Matching with replacement was used to match cases across the treatment and comparison groups. The balance statistics for the propensity score matching model (using out-of-home placement as the treatment variable) are provided in Table 4.5. The mean differences in this model did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that the matched groups were reasonably similar across all 6 covariates. The groups are not perfectly matched, however there are not any

clinically significant differences therefore presenting minimal concern about the covariates causing an effect on the outcome variable.

Table 4.5

Propensity score matching balance statistics for youth whom experienced out-of-home placement, n= 45

Covariate	Mean		p value
	Treated (n= 27)	Control (n=18)	
Age	3.44	3.41	.80
Gender	.81	.89	.51
White	.41	.44	.79
Physical Abuse	1.52	1.41	.78
Emotional Abuse	2.33	2.30	.92
Basic Needs	1.52	1.74	.52

After matching, 33% of the youth who had experienced out-of-home placement also traded or sold sex for money or goods, while only 11% in the comparison group had done so. After matching, 45 cases were used for the analysis. The final propensity score model estimate with an additional covariance adjustment was run by running a regression analysis. Experiencing out-of-home placement did not have a statistically significant impact on trading/selling sex for money or goods ($p = .33$, $SE = .20$).

Qualitative findings

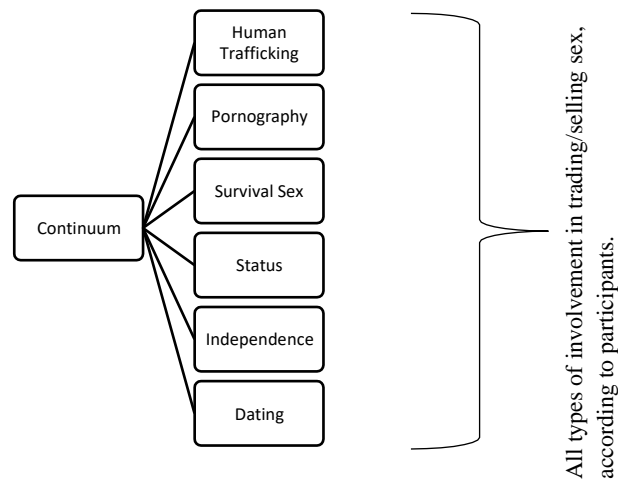
Understanding how homeless/street youth perceive involvement in trading/selling sex was the goal of the focus group discussions. The demographics for this sample are provided in Table 4.1 at the start of this chapter. Each focus group discussion used the same script; participants were asked basic demographic information about themselves (age, race, gender) and then the question, “When people, like you, are trading sex or selling sex, what do they call it?” Focus group participant responses to this question in

particular were wide-ranging with answers such as, “prostitution,” “hustling” “trafficking” and “Thotties” (that hoe over there). This pattern of wide-ranging answers was present in each focus group discussion. Because of the variation in language used among participants, every focus group member was asked to tell the facilitator more about the words they were using to describe trading/selling sex. Participants unanimously (in every focus group) stated that they needed a definition of trading/selling sex in order to answer questions about the phenomenon. A definition was not provided to participants. Instead, individuals in the focus group discussions were probed to share additional information about their thoughts on whether or not the “names” they used to describe involvement represented the same experience on behalf of the individual involved. This initial back-and-forth with participants and the facilitator regarding experiences and circumstances surrounding involvement in trading/selling sex is what lead to the development of the umbrella theme of Continuum and is described in more detail below.

Continuum. The overarching theme Continuum encompasses the range of sexual experiences and circumstances that sample participants described as involvement in trading/selling sex. This theme had several subthemes: 1) Human Trafficking,; 2) Pornography, 3) Survival Sex, 4) Status, 5) Independence, and 6) Dating. All of these subthemes are described in detail below and figure 4.1 provides a visual depiction of the theme and subthemes derived in this study for the reader.

Figure 4.1

Theme and subthemes of focus group discussions



The establishment of Continuum. Focus group participants indicated in each focus group discussion that language such as, “trading/selling sex” was too broad of a descriptor for them to answer specific questions about an experience. Initially, participants presented as perplexed by the questions [about others involvement in trading/selling sex], as many described sex as something that is routinely negotiated and transactional in nature. When probed further, participants described the sexual negotiation process as something that occurs as a result of non-verbal agreements or unspoken understandings between relational partners, peers and people in general. Also, it can include those who are involved in trading/selling sex professionally. One participant eloquently described this continuum of involvement in trading/selling sex as the difference between “hard versus soft water,” indicating that the more implicit (soft water) forms of trading sex typically occur within romantic relationships. Conversely, explicit forms (hard water) of trading/selling sex are usually represented among individuals who view their involvement in trading/selling sex as a job. Table 4.6

provides an example quote from each focus group that illustrates the spectrum of experiences and perceptions participants had regarding involvement in trading/selling sex, thus representing the umbrella theme of Continuum. Interestingly, all subthemes identified by participants, except for Human Trafficking, involve a level of agency on behalf of the individual.

Table 4.6

Reponses from participants illustrating the continuum of perceptions regarding trading/selling sex

Focus Group 1: There's lots of names to it so I don't know what it's called.

Focus Group 2: I think it just depends on the person and like, their background and like how long they've been doing it for.

Focus Group 3: ...there is a level of individual consent to prostitution and human trafficking is actually being in charge of that person illegally and forcing them into these acts. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Focus Group 4: All classes have people involved in trading/selling sex, they just call it different things.

Human trafficking. Human trafficking is a subtheme underneath Continuum and encompasses participant beliefs that human trafficking is an illegal act that is committed against another individual, where the other individual (i.e. victim) is being held against their will. This is evidenced by one participant describing human trafficking as being, “in jail.” Also, another participant described the route to involvement in human trafficking being through the “kidnapping” of an individual who is required to perform the sex acts. There was overwhelming consensus among participants that individuals involved in

human trafficking are bought and sold. Also, participants believed that individuals who experience human trafficking were severe victims of a crime and were not fairly compensated for their time or work. Unprompted, about 29% of participants referred to human trafficking as “slavery” across focus groups. Another participant described the lack of compensation, “[Traffickers provide enough resources to] upkeep your health, at least the health that is needed to maintain your work, or to feed or clothe you.” One participant described how individuals who are being trafficked have, “a very strong sense of like, fear and stuff like that.” Overall, participants were clear and in agreement about their perception of human trafficking and what it entailed. The phenomenon of human trafficking, as participants described it, appeared to be an experience that they did not relate to, meaning they had not experienced it firsthand.

Pornography. The most explicit form of trading/selling sex that falls under Continuum is participants’ description of involvement in the making of pornography. Participants agreed that involvement in pornography was an undisguised and very overt form of trading/selling sex as individuals who are trading/selling sex are negotiating some form of payment and agreeing to be photographed or filmed, “you’re getting contracted and you know what’s happening beforehand.” Participants did not discuss the taping of sexual acts for their own personal use. Opinions regarding the appropriateness of involvement in pornography varied across participants. For example, one participant described his distaste of the pornography industry and those who perform on screen, “People’s moral integrity is lower than others.” Though presented as a negative, this quote captures the participants belief that involvement in pornography is not typically

influenced by constraints (50%). Another participant states, “I would love to be in the porn industry; I’m just not cool enough,” again reinforcing that there is a belief among this sample that there are few (financial?) restraints impacting decisions around involvement in pornography.

Survival sex. Another subtheme identified, and seemingly most familiar to the participants, is “survival sex.” The participants depicted this theme as involvement in trading/selling sex as a mechanism to meet basic needs. Involvement in survival sex, according to participants, is more of a deliberate decision or an “option” to be considered when in a desperate situation. One participant described this as a “coping mechanism to prevent life from getting too rough.” Another explained, “You don’t know where to turn and you feel like it’s the only option available.” Below (Table 4.7) are quotes from different participants across focus groups describing unforeseen circumstances that drive someone to consider involvement in survival sex.

Table 4.7

Quotes describing unforeseen circumstances to involvement in survival sex

-
- It’s when you really need, and you hit a dark spot and you don’t know what to do.
 - Lives can be really good and then some chain of events might change things. You never know what is going to happen.
 - If they’re homeless, if they’re in a horrible position and they, you know, they don’t feel they have anywhere else to go.

Though involvement in survival sex was presented by participants as an option during incredibly difficult times, participants were very clear in articulating that the

internal process individuals go through in making the decision to engage in this type of sex exchange is very distressing. The weight of the decision is best captured by this quote, “You have to ask yourself a tough question about ‘what am I going to do to make it to the next day so that I have a chance to get somewhere better?’” Another participant states, “It-it’s sort of like suicide in a way. It’s just, they view it as a way out. Whether or not it’s a good one or not. --- gives that as another possibility to you.”

Involvement in survival sex was something that many believed was kept private from family and friends. One participant describes a loved one who was involved, “They hide it so well on the outside. They build up their barriers so well that you can’t tell what’s going on with them.” Therefore, despite participants describing a level of agency associated with survival sex, participants still acknowledged an element of shame or embarrassment on behalf of the person involved. Notably, participants agreed that even individuals involved in survival sex who formally advertise their sex services (e.g., webpages, on street corners, etc.) also maintain a level of secrecy related to their involvement to family and close friends. Interestingly, participants did not describe involvement in survival sex as a criminal act involving a victim and perpetrator as they did when discussing human trafficking.

There was consensus across the focus group participants that prevalence rates for involvement in survival sex are higher in urban areas as opposed to suburban or rural areas. Participants believed that in high populated areas there are more people who are impoverished and have extreme economic needs, therefore there they identified an increased likelihood that individuals would consider survival sex. One participant

describes this in the following quote, “I came from the projects out there. There’s people everywhere. So they do what you gotta do to survive out there. [There are] no labor places or nothing out there. Or..Nothing, so you’re broke or you gotta.. [trade/sell sex]”. Additionally, participants described how family culture or an area in which someone resides influences involvement in survival sex. For example, participants discussed how an environment such as having family members with a history of involvement may naturally present trading/selling sex as viable economic option, “Your lifestyle and like where you-like your location...A lot of who you become is who you surround yourself with and who you interact with. [For example] If, um, someone you look up to or like a sibling, if they do it, then you might think, ‘Oh! That’s what we do to get money.’”

Many participants believed that a history of trauma or child abuse had to be present for someone to engage in any of the explicit forms of trading/selling sex: “To make that kind of decision, they would have had to gone through some kind of tragic thing to happen for their mindset to be like that.” In agreement with another participant during a discussion about abusive histories of those involved in trading/selling sex a participant stated, “I think those experiences are the kind of the ones that would influence whether or not someone would end up in that situation to where they would either have to or even voluntarily do such a thing.” Finally, a participant described how a history of child abuse profoundly impacts an individual’s perception of self, thus leading them to involvement in survival sex, “I think if you just already think of yourself as really low and just not worthy of anything, then you’re like, ‘okay, well I might as well anyways.’”

Status. Status is a subtheme that is described as an implicit form of trading sex also under the theme of Continuum. Approximately 35% of the sample believed that trading/selling sex was done to increase an individual's status, typically among peers. Participants described how individuals may try and "get with someone," in an effort to receive "props" or praise from friends. "There's guys that try to get with girls to just get the payment of respect from friends," is a way one participant described this. Participants described this as something that is far more prominent among male peer networks.

Independence. Independence is a subtheme that involves trading sex as a mechanism to fulfill a feeling or create the appearance of maturity or adulthood. Participants described peers that anxiously awaited their 18th birthday or graduation from school so they could move out of their current residence to a new-to-them residence with their partner. Cohabiting was not seen or chosen as a mechanism to deepen the intimate relationship or more fully commit to the partner. Rather, it provided an opportunity to gain independence and separation from their current home. Participants stated that individuals are not openly conversing with partners about trading sexual favors in order to live in their home, but that it was an unspoken understanding among the young people. "I hear it all the time," is the response of one participant. This participant is describing how she has many friends who use the exchange of sex within their romantic relationships in order to live independently from their families or current caregivers. She described that the progression of the relationship on behalf of the youth is not fueled by the desire of a deeper commitment to the partner they are moving in with, but a means to

be more self-reliant. Youth who trade sex as a means to gain independence use sex as currency to “pay” the person they are cohabitating with.

Dating. The most common implicit form of trading sex under Continuum, according to participants, was dating. All (100%) of participants in this study believed that people were socialized to trade sex as a mechanism to receive something within a romantic relationship. One participant stated, “money is always spent” when describing the dating process and articulates that typically a sexual exchange occurs as a result. Another participant described how individuals of higher socioeconomic status camouflage the purchasing of sex through dating, “when you have money, nice cars, and drugs [you can] get anyone to do anything for you.” This quote directly speaks to the sample’s perception of the transactional nature of how persons with economic resources use their resources to get sex.

Interestingly, participants also described situations in which persons who want money or things use mechanisms like flirting, sex, and sexuality to get what they want. “It’s more of a way of acquiring things” is how one participant described this. This participant described a female who is pretended to be interested in someone she just met at a party to obtain things, “She’s just kind of kissing up to him to get money and stuff.” Another participant described using dating websites such as Tinder, Bumble, or Grinder as a mechanism to get his next meal and possibly have a place to stay for the night, “I’m hungry and don’t, um, have any way to eat so I swipe right [to get a date].” This participant described how he would facilitate a date and potentially a longer-term relationship as a result of this meet up. This subtheme is separated and different from the

Survival Sex subtheme as individuals within this group have other options than the dating applications and/or enough resources, they simply want more of something or do not want to make use of the resources available. For example, the participant that used dating sites to get a meal or a place to stay had the ability to stay with a friend, or access shelter services but preferred to try and facilitate a nicer or “better” option for himself.

Data integration. As mentioned in Chapter 3, a prominent element in mixed-methods research is the integration of the quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Zhang, 2009). The mixed-methods research question this study sought to answer is: How do focus group discussions with homeless/street youth about their perspectives of trading/selling sex compare to the anonymous inquiries of homeless/street youth who disclose involvement trading/selling sex? The collection of both types of data was exceedingly beneficial to this research study because the quantitative data confirmed that some homeless/street youth were in fact trading/selling sex, and the qualitative data provided insight to the narratives tied to involvement. Specifically, the qualitative findings expanded what was identified in the quantitative results (that trading/selling sex is occurring among the homeless/street youth population surveyed) through identifying that involvement in trading/selling sex encompasses a multitude of factors, takes various forms and can be dependent on individual circumstance.

In addition to the observations highlighted above, the qualitative narratives of youth allowed this author to draw out their perceptions of experiences of youth involved in trading/selling sex and compare them directly to the quantitative sample of youth who identified involvement in trading/selling sex. Pointedly, the following subsections are

four areas (sex with someone you just met, child maltreatment, depression, and human trafficking) in which the quantitative and qualitative data are integrated to display how the perceptions of the focus group participants converged or diverged from those who participated in the BELL study.

Sex with someone you just met. Within the Dating subtheme participants describe how common covert forms of trading sex are within relationships. Some participants describe how individuals will use their sexuality to acquire nice things from people they first meet. Others discuss how they use dating websites to optimize their options for accessing food or shelter and how a relationship may form as a result of the date. Table 4.8 provides a quote from a focus group participant describing someone he knows that uses sex/sexuality with people they meet to get money and things (note: this is not because they are trying to get their basic needs met, but want to get more of something). In the middle of the table is the number of individuals from the quantitative survey who identified involvement in trading/selling sex and the amount of times they have had sex with someone they just met. Finally, the far right of the table is the remainder of the sample that identified having sex with someone they just met, but did not identify as having ever traded or sold sex for money or goods. The latter (youth who did not identify involvement in trading/selling sex) were included in this comparison because focus group participants described behavior such as having sex with someone you have just met, as involvement in trading/selling sex. Thus, it was important to see how many of the total quantitative sample would meet the focus group participants' description.

Table 4.8

Having sex with someone you just met across data strands and remainder of sample

Qualitative quote	Youth involved in trading/selling sex (N = 21)	Remainder of sample (N = 101)
She's just kind of kissing up to him to get money and stuff	71% (n = 15), percentage of youth who indicate having had sex with someone they just met	59% (n = 60), percentage of youth who indicate having had sex with someone they just met

Child maltreatment. Through comparing the results from the quantitative data and the findings from the qualitative data, there was a link drawn between adverse life experiences and involvement in trading/selling sex. For example, the propensity score models from the quantitative data identified a clinically significant result for individuals experiencing sexual abuse prior to age 12 and involvement in trading/selling sex for money or goods. Also, the propensity models for individuals who experienced out-of-home placement indicated a clinically significant effect on involvement in trading/selling sex for money or goods. Paralleling these results, focus group participants indicate that experiences such as child abuse and/or trauma influence the likelihood of involvement in what is themed within the qualitative data as “survival sex” (i.e., involvement in trading selling sex to make money, secure housing, etc.). Table 4.9 provides an example quote from one participant in the focus group discussion describing experiencing child maltreatment among those involved in trading/selling sex. Alongside the quote, percentages of youth involved in trading/selling sex who identified child maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse) and those who experienced out-of-home placement, are displayed.

Table 4.9

Child maltreatment comparison across data strands

Qualitative quote	Youth involved in trading/selling sex (N = 21)
<i>I think those experiences [child maltreatment] are the kind of the ones that would influence whether or not someone would end up in that situation to where they would either have to or even voluntarily do such a thing.</i>	Sexual abuse, 48% (n=10)
	Physical abuse, 67% (n=14)
	Emotional abuse, 67% (n=14)
	Out-of-home, 33% (n=7)

Depression. Experiencing depression or having a low sense of self-worth was another underlying factor (closely connected to childhood maltreatment) among focus group participants when describing the lives of those involved in trading/selling sex. Table 4.10 is an example quote from a focus group participant describing how she believed an individual involved in trading/selling sex thought about themselves. Then, the breakdown of youth involved in trading/selling sex and the percentage and frequency of feeling depressed or sad is presented.

Table 4.10

Depression comparison across data strands

Qualitative quote	Youth involved in trading/selling sex (N = 21)
<i>I think if you just already think of yourself as really low and just not worthy of anything, then you're like, "okay, well I might as well anyways."</i>	I haven't felt sad/depressed, 9.5% (n= 2)
	Rarely (1x per month), 23.8% (n= 5)
	Sometimes (2x per month), 28.6% (n= 6)
	Frequently (1x per week), 14.3% (n= 3)
	Always (everyday), 23.8% (n= 5)

Human trafficking. Focus group participants described human trafficking as a distinct experience where the person involved in the actual trading and selling of sex is forced to do so against their will. Some participants described this experience as “enslavement” or “jail.” Considering participants in the focus group discussions were so clear in their definition of the experience of human trafficking, it was important to identify if those who acknowledged involvement in trading/selling sex, through the survey, felt as though they had been trafficked. On the survey, participants were asked, “Do you believe you were trafficked?” and were provided a yes or no answer option. Table 4.11 provides a quote from one focus group participant describing their perception of human trafficking. Next, the middle portion of the table provides the breakdown of participants who identified involvement in trading/selling sex and their belief on whether or not they had been trafficked. Finally, the far right portion of the table identifies whether or not those who are involved in trading/selling sex have ever had someone make them tattoo or burn their name or symbol on to their body.

Table 4.11

Human trafficking comparison across data strands

Qualitative quote	Youth involved in trading/selling sex (N = 21)	Youth involved in trading/selling sex (N = 21)
<i>[Traffickers provide enough resources to] upkeep your health, at least the health that is needed to maintain your work, or to feed and clothe you.</i>	Did not feel trafficked, 90.5% (n= 19)	Tattoo/burns, 38% (n= 8)
	Felt trafficked, 9.5% (n= 2)	No tattoos/burns, 62% (n= 13)

Conclusion. Findings for the quantitative, qualitative and integrated data were provided in this chapter. The chapter separated the quantitative results from the qualitative findings for clarity for the reader. Specific research questions were formulated for the type of data that was being collected and were embedded within the aforementioned sections accordingly. The mixed-methods question and integrated findings concluded this chapter.

Chapter five is the final chapter in this dissertation and serves to make sense of the findings and to tie the findings of this study to the broader research base. Additionally, the findings will be interpreted and implications of this research will be reviewed. Limitations to this study will be given and recommendations for further research will be provided.

Chapter five: Discussion

Introduction

Chapter 4 provided findings for the quantitative and qualitative strands of data, as well as, the integrated data for the mixed methods portion of this study. Chapter five begins by discussing the discovery of a new population involved in trading/selling sex: cisgender, white, educated men and the impact this finding has on future steps for empirical literature, policy efforts, and practice. Next, implications of the propensity score models, organized by treatment variable (childhood sexual abuse and out-of-home placement) are reviewed. The qualitative implication section begins by highlighting the difference in definition of youth involvement in trading/selling sex, to include human trafficking, between the youth sampled within this study and scholars, policy makers, and professionals in the field. As evidenced by the theme, *Continuum*, data from the focus group discussions uncovered important differences in perceptions of what involvement in trading/selling sex means among the homeless/street youth population and current policy definitions and practice standards. The McDonald Survival Sex Hierarchy is then compared to the findings of the study and is suggested as a tool that may better enable communication between and assessment of youth involved in trading/selling sex and the adults who are attempting to help them. In the following section, implications regarding

the mixed-methods results are presented. Next, ideas for future research are proposed and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and dissertation conclusion.

Quantitative results

Demographics. Contrary to prior research, 76% of youth involved in trading/selling sex in this study identified as cisgender men, who are Caucasian, and a large majority had either completed high school, received a GED, or completed some college (71%). This is completely at odds to most opinions of youth involvement in trading/selling sex as a cisgender women, minority, poorly educated phenomenon. This finding bolsters scholars' critiques of policy makers who have framed trading/selling sex as a one dimensional issue (Lutnick, 2016; Marcus et al., 2012; Weitzer, 2007). This study identified an understudied population of young people involved in trading/selling sex. Cisgender women are often at the center of the literature on youth involvement in trading/selling sex (Anderson et al., 2014; Cecchet & Thornburn, 2014; Kennedy et al., 2007; Mones, 2011; Raphael & Shapiro, 2010; Reid, 2014; Reid, 2012), and cisgender men are frequently overlooked as victims or participants (Lillie, 2014).

As mentioned in previous chapters, much of the literature on youth involvement in trading/selling sex focuses on variables (race, gender non-conformance, cisgender women) not present among sample participants in this study. Expanding our understanding of the youth who are involved in trading/selling sex to include young, cisgender, educated men serves as an important shift in perspective for scholars, policy makers, and the public to reexamine core beliefs and assumptions about who is involved in trading/selling sex.

Childhood sexual abuse and sex for money or goods. Scholars have explored the role of various forms of childhood maltreatment and its effect on involvement in trading/selling sex (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Roe-Sepowitz, 2012). This study found a clinically significant effect of experiencing childhood sexual abuse (prior to the age of 12 years) and involvement in trading/selling sex for money or goods (34% vs. 17%). This result, though not statistically significant given the small sample size, has meaningful implications for policy, and practice should it hold up in replication. The concept of “clinical significance” surfaced after decades of concern regarding traditional methods used to evaluate treatment efficacy (i.e., the importance placed on statistical significance; Jacobson & Traux, 1991). “The clinical significance of a treatment refers to its ability to meet standards of efficacy set by consumers, clinicians, and researchers” (Jacobson & Traux, 1991, p. 12). The criteria for clinical significance within this study was based on numeric differences identified between matched groups of participants on the outcome variable.

Policy. This study and past empirical work consistently point to elements of complex trauma, childhood abuse, and neglect as factors associated with involvement in trading/selling sex. Early sexual abuse has profound effects on the child’s developing brain, most clearly linked to hippocampal volume loss (Andersen et al., 2008). The reduction in size of the hippocampus results in the decline of executive functioning on behalf of the individual and is linked to the development of major depression (Frodl et al., 2006). Thus, the age at which youth experience sexual abuse may have more deep-seated effects on a youth’s involvement in trading/selling sex than their age.

When youth are aged 17 years or younger and involved in trading/selling sex, U.S. federal laws treat them as victims of a crime as individuals under the age of 18 years are not able to consent to the sexual act (P.L. 110-457). Once a youth reaches 18 years of age, in most states their involvement in trading/selling sex is considered prostitution therefore youth can be prosecuted per state statute (Procon, nd). If force, fraud, or coercion can be proven on behalf of the individual over 18 years, federal statute understands the individual to be a victim of human trafficking (P.L. 106-386). Though federal legislation (Trafficking Victims Protection Act; TVPA) has drawn lines delineating victims from offenders, it is important to emphasize that federal jurisdiction over cases involving trading/selling sex is rarely enforced. Thus, state statute is enforced and youth under the age of 18 are arrested for prostitution related offenses when involved in trading/selling sex (Mitchell, Finkehor, & Wolak, 2009). Eighteen years is an arbitrary age to mark as an adult, especially when that person has a trauma history. Neurological research has shown that the human brain continues to develop and mature into an individual's mid-twenties (Steinberg, 2005). Erikson's (1959) psychosocial development work also emphasizes that growth and development continues throughout adulthood. This developmental lens combined with knowing that many homeless young people experience high levels of complex trauma (Gonzalez & McLoughlin, 2014) and that early experiences of childhood maltreatment effect brain development (Teicher, Samson, Anderson, & Ohashi, 2016), points to the need to initiate dialogue at the State and Federal levels about the legal definition of adult, particularly when there are discussions of repercussions about behavior association with high levels of past traumas. This current research supports the movement away from age of the youth as critical element in

prosecution. Instead, consideration should be focused on adverse childhood experiences, the presence of coercion, polyvictimization, and signs of complex trauma.

Practice. Ensuring that youth who have confirmed involvement in trading/selling sex receive thorough assessments, specifically geared towards identifying risk factors that are linked to involvement in trading/selling sex, is a practical practice implication drawn from the clinical effect of sexual abuse found in this study. In an effort to effectively engage with clients, practitioners should have an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of those they are serving. Thereby, knowing if a youth had a history of childhood sexual abuse would be critical to consider when evaluating intervention and treatment planning for a youth—along with other important clinical considerations.

The clinical effect of early sexual abuse has practice implications for prevention planning for children who have experienced sexual abuse. To start, encouraging therapists who treat children who have experienced sexual abuse to consider incorporating age appropriate prevention information about sexual health and healthy relationships. This may include information on boundary setting, healthy sexual relationships, negotiating sexual contact, and safe ways of exploring sexuality in the context of personal trauma. Similarly, broadening treatment efforts to include general life skills and boundary setting and negotiation, considering the effect of the abuse on involvement in trading/selling sex, could also be beneficial.

Out-of-home placement and sex for money or goods. The clinically significant result of out-of-home placement having an effect on future involvement in trading/selling sex for money or goods (33% vs. 11%) adds credibility to the many anecdotal statements

and assumptions about the relationship between out-of-home placement and involvement in trading/selling sex made by professionals in the field (Birge, Chon, Dukes, & Littrell, n.d.; PCG, n.d.). The following subsections identify policy and practice implications tied to this result.

Policy. Child welfare professionals are routinely encouraged to keep children in their family's home, with in home services, as opposed to placement in out-of-home care when abuse or neglect is suspected (Schneider & Phares, 2005). The findings of this study identify a clinically significant effect of out-of-home placement on youth involvement in trading/selling sex. Knowing this impacts child welfare caseworkers in that they have an additional factor to consider (i.e., risk associated with involvement in trading/selling sex) when evaluating the placement of a child in out-of-home care. Federal and State child welfare policies should consider the inclusion of mandates that would require child welfare workers to receive training on the risks of vulnerable children and the impact of out-of-home placement on trading/selling sex.

Practice. Professionals evaluating and recommending out-of-home placement for youth now have an additional element to consider. Identifying other risk factors associated with involvement in trading/selling sex (i.e. emotional abuse, physical abuse, exposure to drugs, etc.) may be of benefit when tasked with this very difficult decision. For example, professionals placing youth in out-of-home care may consider incorporating general life skills and sexual negotiation techniques in to treatment and/or case planning when deciding to place a youth with many risk factors for trading/selling sex in to out-of-home care. Receiving homes, residential centers, and other child placement settings

should be made aware of the potential effect of the placement on youth involvement in trading/selling sex and begin to consider how they may work to engage and keep youth safe. This may include general awareness training for staff, safety guidelines and sensitivity training for staff, interviewing and assessment skills training – with all skills and competencies rooted to client centered and trauma informed approaches.

Qualitative findings

Collection of qualitative data through focus group discussions provided valuable depth and increased understanding to the quantitative data that was collected. To start, the umbrella theme of Continuum theme emerged and illuminated the complexity surrounding involvement in trading/selling sex among homeless/street youth. More specifically, the Continuum theme and the subsequent subthemes (e.g., 1) Human Trafficking, 2) Pornography, 3) Survival Sex, 4) Status, 5) Independence, and 6) Dating) uncovered differences in language and viewpoints of youths and the community of professionals trying to serve them (i.e. scholars, policy makers, practitioners, etc.). These findings highlight the difficulty in putting legal parameters on the sexual and/or relational behavior of marginalized communities, particularly homeless or marginally housed youth. For example, identifying all young people under the age of 18 years who are involved in a commercial sex act as victims of human trafficking (per TVPA) may be too exaggerated in relation to the lived experience of the youth.

The following sections are brief summaries of the subthemes identified within the Continuum theme as described by focus group participants. Implications of the findings are discussed.

Status and independence. Trading sex as a mechanism to get respect or obtain status from friends' parallels empirical findings on the importance of peer acceptance and the impact on self-esteem among youth populations (Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995). Similarly, the need, immense desire, and push for independence and self-sustainability is a prominent message delivered to U.S. youth (Dey & Pierret, 2014). Learning that the homeless/street youth sampled in this study perceive that their peers are using sex with partners as a mechanism to reach some level of independence after completing high school is not an earth-shattering finding. Implications of these findings (Status and Independence, pointedly) do support the broader literature base that seeks to encourage service providers to incorporate public health frameworks in to their practice to address health needs of homeless/street youth populations (Rew, 2001). Thereby, focusing efforts on healthy relationships and sexual practices among homeless/street youth would be a beneficial use of time for service providers.

Dating . Though not legally defined as commercial sex (P.L. 110-457), participants describe dating as a form of trading/selling sex. Specifically, participants describe a philosophical opinion about how sex is negotiated within romantic relationships. Commercial sex acts described by participants while dating were circumstances when an individual used their sexuality to get things like “money and stuff.” Additionally, many describe a process of hedging their bets on the best or most optimal circumstance for the evening (i.e. which option has the best sleeping arrangement, food, etc.) through online dating applications. This finding sheds light on the developmental and self-esteem levels of homeless/street youth and the interplay those

have with their limited options to meeting basic needs. For example, parallels can be drawn between this study's population of young people and the research that identifies a connection between self-esteem and materialism in children and adolescents. For example, children who experience chronically low levels of self-esteem are more likely to exhibit higher levels of materialism (Chaplin & John, 2007).

Also, this subtheme identifies a real difference in what is meant by dating in the homeless youth world and what is understood as dating among other populations that may not have a lens of trauma and/or mistrust overlaid onto the meaning of dating. With the homeless youth's understanding of dating being akin to what may be viewed by others as human trafficking.

Pornography. According to the participants, individuals involved in the production of pornography is a distinct subset of people who are involved in commercial sex. Contrary to the Survival Sex theme, participants did not seem to have many encounters with the pornography industry or exposure to dynamics or experiences of those involved. This is evidenced by participants' glorified perception of those involved in the pornography industry and some participant's immense desire to be involved. Participants did not believe that issues such as poverty, unfortunate life circumstances, or other adversities influenced involvement in pornography. However, participants were clear that involvement in pornography was a choice on behalf of the person agreeing to be filmed or photographed. Participants also believed that payment on behalf of the person being filmed or photographed always occurred and was negotiated with the photographer or videographer ahead of time, thus making the transaction legitimate and fair.

This finding points to the importance of demystifying Hollywood and the pornography industry to homeless/street youth population. While their perception of involvement in pornography may be the narrative of some involved in the industry, their glamorous view creates an idealistic picture that can be easily used to exploit them. Yet another reason to work with homeless/street youth on developing skills to assess individuals they are encountering on the streets and mechanisms to keep themselves safe when presented with danger.

Survival sex. The subtheme of Survival sex is a type of trading/selling sex that participants seemingly had most familiarity with. Interestingly, participants include blatant forms of trading/selling sex, such as involvement in prostitution, as a form of involvement in survival sex. It is important to keep in mind that the perceptions captured within this study are those of homeless young people, therefore experiences or opinions of those involved in survival sex may change when speaking with other populations.

This Survival sex subtheme adds legitimacy to McDonald's survival sex hierarchy (2017) in that it exemplifies the impact of constrained decision making in difficult situations. Additionally, this finding aligns with the empirical research that identifies the complexity of situations youth experience, apart from recruitment from a third-party exploiter, in involvement in trading/selling sex (Lutnick, 2016; Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014). The depth and context provided by participants in this study can be used to educate policy makers on factors to consider when looking at service provisions for young people and intervention techniques. Most importantly, this finding

adds credence to the critiques of the TVPA and its one-dimensional framing of youth involvement in trading/selling sex (i.e. victims of slavery).

Human trafficking. Participants had very little to say about human trafficking beyond a brief description of what they believed it entailed. The narrative of participants and their description of individuals involved in human trafficking as “slaves” with high levels of fear, aligns well with the TVPA’s description of experiences of those involved (Pub L. No. 106-386). However, participants unknowingly describe many other circumstances (i.e. Survival Sex, Dating, Pornography) that they do not categorize as “Human Trafficking,” though would be considered as such per the TVPA if the individuals involved in such were under the age of 18 years (Pub L. No. 106-386). Participants shared that their perceptions of and about involvement in trading/selling sex are largely influenced by media. Therefore, media may be the cause for the narrow definition of Human Trafficking among participants in this study.

Participants’ limited understanding of what constitutes human trafficking per federal law has implications on prevention, detection, and intervention efforts. Service providers seeking to deter homeless/street youth from involvement in any or all forms of trading/selling sex (i.e., not exclusively focused on those who are kidnapped or physically forced) must consider the perspectives and definitions used by youth in order to offer effective prevention programming and skill building. For example, a prevention curriculum that utilizes language and scenarios that are rooted only in experiences of slavery and emphasize dramatic power differentials among the individuals involved in

the trade may miss connecting with many youth. Youth may perceive this as unfamiliar or something that happens to other people. Programming that offers clear definitions and examples (to include the perspective of youth) of what may be constituted as human trafficking under the TVPA is an essential element to be provided to youth populations.

Paralleling prevention efforts, clinicians should consider the youth's definition of trading/selling sex when assessing the health and risk factors for the youth, and subsequent treatment planning. For example, open-ended questions about sexual relationships is one way to inquire about a youth's involvement in trading/selling sex as opposed to asking pointed questions about commercial sexual behavior. Also, questioning the youth about implicit rules or agreements they have with community members, partners, or other individuals within their lives may also provide insight to involvement in trading/selling sex and may capture some of the more implicit forms of trading/selling sex participants within this study describe above.

Programming or assessment tools that rely solely on check boxes to indicate the presence of "human trafficking" among homeless/street youth is an ineffective screening strategy. This is demonstrated by the very narrow definition provided by participants in this study. This finding legitimizes claims that many youth involved in trading/selling sex do not self-identify as a victim of human trafficking (Anderson et al., 2014; Cecchet & Thoburn, 2014; Lutnick, 2016; Marcus et al., 2014; Mones, 2011; Reid, 2013;), and how parameters around language and perception complicates detection and effective intervention strategies.

McDonald model. In chapter 2, the McDonald Survival Sex Hierarchy (2017) was presented to the reader. It posited that all involvement in trading/selling sex is associated with an individual's desire to survive (i.e., exist within a world of social and systemic pressures, inequities, and prejudices). The qualitative theme and subthemes identified in this study corroborate assumptions made within the McDonald model in that participants identified many circumstances and situations in which persons like them are involved in trading/selling sex, though do not identify as victims of a crime. Table 5.1 is a comparison of the McDonald model and findings derived from this study. Findings were aligned with levels of the hierarchy based on estimated appropriateness of fit. Subthemes identified within the qualitative focus groups were compared to the McDonald model and were matched to areas on the hierarchy (i.e., descriptions of subthemes were connected to areas of placement on the hierarchy based on the theoretical assumptions made in Chapter 2). Justifications for each match are provided below.

Table 5.1

Comparison of McDonald model and findings

McDonald Survival Sex Hierarchy	Findings
<u>Self-actualization:</u> Involvement due to level of autonomy, acceptance of imperfections, acceptance of lack of control. Involvement is sustainable and or profitable.	Pornography
<u>Esteem:</u> Engagement as a mechanism to develop or sustain confidence/self-esteem, perceived increase in social status as a result of financial self-sufficiency.	Independence Status
<u>Love & Belonging:</u> Engagement to be a part of/remain in a community of people, in a relationship with one or more persons, validation of sexual expression.	Independence Status Dating
<u>Safety:</u> Engagement as a means of employment, consistent resources, access to property, decrease in pain and suffering	Survival Sex
<u>Physiological:</u> Engagement to fulfill basic needs such as food, water, shelter, clothing, drugs, etc. Engagement as a means for true physical survival.	Survival Sex Human Trafficking

The subtheme of Pornography matched well with McDonald's Self Actualization level of the hierarchy in that participants' involvement in pornography was sustainable and profitable. Independence and Status, though not traditionally recognized as involvement in commercial sex per federal definitions (Pub. L. No. 106-386), is categorized as involvement at the Esteem level. Participants described having unspoken and informal agreements with partners after completing high school, to trade sexual favors in exchange for housing and separation from family. Also, participants described using sex to gain an increase in status among their community. Considering that there may be more than one motivator behind a behavior, Independence, Status, and Dating were also included in the Love and Belonging level of the hierarchy as well.

The subtheme, Survival Sex encompassed the broadest of circumstances within the qualitative data and matched both the Safety and Physiological levels of the McDonald Hierarchy. Participants discussed that individuals may be involved in Survival Sex as a mechanism to make money to support their children, pay their bills, and meet basic needs, thus meeting the circumstances tied to both categories. Participants described Human Trafficking as an experience that involved individuals being enslaved as a result of kidnapping, thus connected to the Physiological level of the hierarchy.

The parallels drawn between the McDonald model and qualitative findings point to the potential utility of the McDonald model by clinical professionals who may suspect youth involvement in trading/selling sex. Clinical professionals may reference the tool (after establishing rapport and conducting preliminary assessments) to gauge suspicions of involvement in trading/selling sex in context of the lived experience of the youth. For

example, a clinical professional may have concerns about a youth involved in trading/selling sex as a result of ambiguous statements the youth has made, or general vulnerabilities (such developmental level, the presence of complex trauma, poverty, etc.) and use the McDonald model as a tool to frame the inquiry to the youth. Pointedly, the clinical professional may use this tool as a mechanism to attempt to understand the youth's perception of self and whatever relationship the professional is concerned about. Subsequently, the clinical professional may use the McDonald model to evaluate the need for intervention, whether it be for the involvement in the trading/selling of sex, or other factors such as inaccessible housing, low self-esteem, drug addiction, etc.

Data integration

In chapter 4, the quantitative results were merged with the qualitative findings. This was displayed visually to the reader through the use of tables highlighting quotes from focus group participants and how their narratives converged or diverged from what youth, who acknowledged personal involvement in trading/selling sex, said. The four areas exploring the following: sex with someone you just met, experiences of child maltreatment, episodes of depression, and human trafficking, are discussed in the subsections below.

Sex with someone you just met. Across focus group discussions, participants described the fluidity of the behavior of involvement in trading/selling sex. In particular, participants discussed how the use of sex/ sexuality may be used when first meeting someone in order to get something (i.e. money, belongings, etc.). Also, participants described how assets such as money, cars, drugs, etc., are used by individuals to attract

others for sex. In this context, participants articulated that, “all classes have trading/selling sex, [they] just call it different things.” Because of the seemingly low benchmark of focus group participants’ belief of casual and presumably frequent involvement in trading/selling sex, a comparison across the data strands, to include the entirety of the quantitative data strand, was warranted. Participants who completed the survey were asked the frequency in which they have had sex with someone they first met. For simplification purposes, this variable was dichotomized to reflect a yes/no response on behalf of participants. Among youth who identified involvement in trading/selling sex, 71% ($n = 15$) acknowledged having sex with someone they first met.

Likewise, participants who **did not** acknowledge involvement in trading/selling sex ($n = 101$) were reviewed to identify their frequency of having sex with someone they first met. As previously mentioned, this behavior was identified among focus group participants as a type of involvement in trading/selling sex, thus important to examine across the quantitative data strand. Interestingly, more than half of the remainder of participants (59%, $n = 60$) acknowledged having sex with someone they first met. Thereby meeting the definition of involvement in trading/selling sex according to focus group participants. This results in approximately 61% ($n = 75$) of the entire quantitative sample ($n = 122$) meeting the focus group participant’s definition of involvement.

The clearest implication of this mixed-methods finding is the confirmation of ambiguity around the definition of involvement in trading/selling sex. This impacts law enforcement and social service agencies (to name a few) who are tasked with assessing or investigating youth involved in trading/selling sex. Also, it complicates scholars’

abilities to create measures that assess risk for involvement in trading/selling sex. This finding points to the importance of using the vocabulary of youth to create measures that capture their lived experiences, not the vocabulary of researchers, law enforcement or child welfare workers. Similarly, scholars who are seeking to create assessment tools need to consider incorporating narratives in to the tools they develop, or be confident that the questions asked within the measure are able to capture the depth and circumstance of the involvement.

Child maltreatment. Focus group participants expressed the perception that an individual who is involved in what they [the focus group participants] identified as Survival sex, would have experienced previous adverse life experiences. The results from the quantitative data strand within this study indicated that many individuals who acknowledged involvement in trading/selling sex experienced child maltreatment prior to the age of 12 years (sexual abuse 48%; physical abuse 67%; and emotional abuse 67%). Consistent with Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt (1999) and Roe-Sepowitz's (2012) work, more individuals involved in trading/selling sex indicated experiencing physical and/or emotional abuse. This finding highlights the importance of ensuring that practitioners are attending to appropriate prevention and intervention techniques for children beyond those who have experienced sexual abuse. Emotional abuse is very difficult to detect and measure due to the lack of physical evidence, thus is harder to substantiate when working with child welfare populations (Thompson & Kaplan, 1996). Due to this difficulty, community agencies or therapists in or outside of child welfare may consider including coping strategies and resources that would address high-risk stressors of young people.

For example, when child welfare agencies have suspicion of emotional abuse on behalf of a child (as opposed to substantiation), outside providers would be encouraged to address elements of low self-worth on behalf of the child and attend to risk factors that lead to trading/selling sex, as opposed to focusing exclusively on the substantiated finding from the child welfare referral.

Depression. It is well documented within the literature that childhood maltreatment, such as emotional abuse, is closely related to physical and mental health concerns in adulthood (Norman et al., 2012). Having feelings of depression or low self-worth have been connected to various forms of childhood maltreatment, to include childhood emotional abuse (Norman et al., 2012). The results of these studies alone support looking at the depression rates of youth involved in trading/selling sex especially considering the percentage of youth within this study who indicated experiencing child maltreatment. Interestingly, in this research the focus group participants also noted this relationship and stated that most individuals involved in trading/selling sex typically think of themselves as “really low and not worthy.” The focus group participant’s perception of individuals involved in trading/selling sex as being depressed or having low self-worth is validated by the survey results. Approximately 90% ($n = 19$) of youth who acknowledged involvement in trading/selling sex identified feeling sad or depressed at least one time per month in the last six months. Of those youth, 3 identified feeling sad or depressed at least one time per week and 5 indicated feeling sad or depressed everyday (total, 38%). The U.S. national average, as of year 2014, of depression among young people aged 18-25 years is approximately 9.6% (Mojtabai, Olfson, & Han, 2016).

Among youth who denied involvement in trading/selling sex, approximately 80% ($n = 82$) identified feeling sad or depressed at least one time per month in the last six months.

Future research may explore feelings of sadness and/or depression and the relationship it has with trading/selling sex, to include those who have exercised full agency in their decision to enter the sex industry. Scholars such as Roxburgh, Degenhardt, and Copelands (2006) have begun to uncover some elements of this relationship. For example, they found that 47% of the women they sampled who were involved in sex work (women identified as not being human trafficked) met the diagnostic criteria for life-time Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Human trafficking. As previously discussed, focus group participants had a distinct view of what constitutes an experience of human trafficking (being enslaved, held against your will). According to the TVPA human trafficking (for sex) is:

“the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (22 U.S.C. § 7102).

Per federal statute, any individual under the age of 18 years involved in trading/selling sex of any type is a victim of human trafficking. The federal definition clearly casts a much larger net when evaluating the presence of human trafficking than the focus group participants articulated; thus in the survey it was important to identify if youth involved in trading/selling sex, within this study, ever felt “trafficked” and/or if they had been forced to get tattoos or had been burned (sometimes associated with human trafficking; Shandro, et al., 2016).

Almost 90% ($n = 19$) of youth involved in trading/selling sex stated that they did not feel trafficked. A total of 62% ($n = 13$), denied ever being forced to get a tattoo or had a name or symbol burned in to their body. The 90% of youth who do not identify as victims despite being labeled as such by federal policy validates the difficulty that exists in identifying this group of young people. Only a third (38%) of these youth claim to have tattoos or burns, complicating identification efforts even farther (using TVPA and pop-culture standards). While it cannot be determined conclusively, these percentages lead to the possibility that the definition of human trafficking that focus group participants held may be similar to those who identified involvement in trading/selling sex from the survey. It is important to note that definition of human trafficking drawn out from this particular sample of young people does not necessarily transfer to other individuals' definitions or experiences.

Future research

This section proposes three areas for new research based on identifying the cisgender male population of youth involved in trading/selling sex and the clinical effect of sexual abuse on involvement in trading/selling sex. These areas were chosen based on the minimal amount of information on cisgender men, and the impact this type of research would have on minimizing the disconnect around terms and language among youth and practitioners. There are many more areas for future research beyond what is explored here.

Further exploration of the lived experience of cisgender men or boys who are, or have been, involved in trading/selling sex is a logical next step in the research. Acquiring

this information would add more depth to what is known about the complexity of circumstances related to involvement in trading/selling sex for individuals who do not fit the predominant profile of someone involved in trading/selling sex (Anderson et al., 2014; Cecchet & Thornburn, 2014; Kennedy et al., 2007; Mones, 2011; Raphael & Shapiro, 2010; Reid, 2014; Reid, 2012;). Future qualitative research should be exploratory and consider answering the following research question: What factors contribute to involvement in trading/selling sex for cisgender young men? This type of research would contribute to the literature by broadening the scope of understanding on how this population is exposed to involvement in trading/selling sex and can begin to uncover risk factors for the cisgender men.

Future research may also explore how gender identification impacts negotiation of trading/selling sex, entry and exit in to the sex industry, and/or general experiences within the industry. Findings from a study like this would expand what is known about the experiences of individuals involved in trading/selling sex, as well as potentially identify factors related to sexual negotiation techniques and skills among the vulnerable population of homeless or marginally housed youth. Further a study of this nature may shed some light on the debate on the role of romantic relationships (Anderson et al., 2014; Cecchet & Thornburn, 2014; Raphael & Shapiro, 2010; Reid, 2014) and involvement in trading/selling sex.

Drawing upon the clinical effect of childhood sexual abuse on involvement in trading/selling sex result, exploring specific elements of the sexual abuse and how those contribute to involvement in trading/selling sex is an area another area for future

research. Factors such as the youth's relationship with the offender, duration of abuse, number of offenders, and/or extent of sexual contact allows for better assessment of risk factors of involvement in trading/selling sex for youths with a sexual abuse history. This information would contribute to the literature by adding depth to the current knowledge surrounding child maltreatment and prevention efforts surrounding youth involvement in trading/selling sex.

Finally, considering the normalization of trading sex within relationships, as identified by focus group participants, future research may explore how marginalized (i.e., homeless/street youth) or impoverished communities negotiate sex with partners. Specifically, it would be notable to identify if marginalized youth navigate dating similarly or differently than their non-marginalized peers. A study such as this would contribute to the literature by increasing our knowledge base on the role childhood development has on youth engagement in risky sexual behavior versus the role of vulnerabilities such as homelessness, child maltreatment, etc. It would be useful to try and measure the level in which marginalized youth rely on or use their sexuality to increase their societal value compared to their non-marginalized peers.

Limitations

Important limitations need to be taken in to account in relation to the findings in this study. First, causal relationships between variables cannot be identified within this study, as the study is correlational in nature. Due to organizational sensitivity around uncovering youth accessing services within their shelter being involved in trading/selling sex and fear about reporting, questions were omitted from the survey administered to

youth (e.g., age of first involvement in trading/selling sex, with whom they are trading/selling sex with, etc.) that would have added a fuller picture of their experiences. Also, while focus group discussions are well regarded for their ability to gather information from the majority, they also limit the types of questions that may be asked of participants. As a result focus group participants within this study were not asked about their direct involvement in trading/selling sex, but were asked about their perceptions. Focus group discussions were on average 45 minutes, also a potential limitation to this study. It is unclear if participants were really able to share all that they wanted to regarding their perceptions of trading/selling sex, or if they were anxious to get to other activities occurring within the center (i.e., pottery).

Overall, many precautions were taken into consideration to ensure participant safety within this study which limits the generalizability and transferability of findings. However, findings from this study did confirm that there are homeless/street youth involved in trading/selling sex. Again, factors such as small sample size, lack of diversity across research sites (e.g., 3 centers in 1 State), and that most of the surveys were collected from one research site need to be considered when reviewing the results. Also, data was collected from one type of service agency (homeless drop-in centers and shelter). Similarly, the focus group discussions were drawn from one center, thus limiting transferability of the findings. This may be mitigated through additional data collection in partnership with service organizations that have more diversified client populations and in other states.

Another element to consider is that a large majority of participants in this study identified as White males including both those who took the survey and those who participated in the focus group discussions. This hinders the ability to extend these findings to the experiences of people of color, transgender or gender non-conforming (GNC) individuals, and cisgender women and girls.

Chronology of events could not be determined in this study because youth were not asked what age they were when they first traded or sold sex. Therefore, it is unclear if experiencing sexual abuse or out-of-home placement occurred prior to involvement in trading/selling sex which is a large assumption in Propensity Score Matching.

An unfortunate and unavoidable limitation to this study is that it is cross sectional. Thus, the inability to member-check the qualitative findings or conduct follow-up interviews with participants. Also, youth who participated in this research were connected to services, thereby further limiting generalizability. Finally, the survey used in this study was new and was not validated prior to use.

Dissertation conclusion

This dissertation was an empirical mixed-methods study exploring homeless/street youths' involvement in trading/selling sex. It was posited early on in the dissertation that a divide in the literature exists between homeless or marginally housed youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) versus their cisgender, housed peers. The predominant narrative presented by many scholars, policy makers, and the general public regarding youth involvement in trading/selling sex was

challenged with the most current empirical evidence available. This served as the foundation for the research questions asked within this study. Homeless or marginally housed youth were surveyed at homeless shelter, drop-in sites about their experiences of involvement in trading/selling sex. Focus group discussions with youth followed the collection of the quantitative data where youth were asked about their perceptions about involvement in trading/selling sex.

Of the quantitative sample, 17% ($n = 21$) acknowledged involvement in trading/selling sex. The majority being cisgender, Caucasian, and educated men. Separate propensity score models were run to understand the effect of childhood sexual abuse and the effect of out-of-home placement on youth involvement in trading/selling sex. Neither model reached statistical significance, but because of the matching model and the balance created across groups, there was enough of a difference between groups to determine a clinically significant effect of each of the variables reviewed.

The focus group discussions identified a number of circumstances in which this sample of young people believed were involvement in trading/selling sex. In sum, participations believed there was a spectrum of involvement, which was themed Continuum and included subthemes that emerged within the focus group discussions. The subthemes reflect the spectrum of involvement that youth explained within the focus group discussions.

Finally, this dissertation concluded by highlighting the importance of identifying an understudied population of people involved in trading/selling sex and the importance of continuing research in this area.

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APPENDIX A

Author/Date	Commercial sexual exploitation	Survival sex	Who are these youth?	Child maltreatment	Pathways	Health Risks	N/A
Anderson, Coyle, Johnson, & Denner	x				X		
Bagley & Young, 1987		x	x	X			
Cecchet & Thorburn, 2014	x					x	
Clarke, Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz, & Fey, 2012	x		x			x	
Chohaney, 2016	x		x				
Cole & Anderson	x				X		
Decker, et al., 2011	x					x	
Ferguson, Bender, & Thompson, 2015		X	x			x	
Ferguson, Bender, & Thompson, 2016		X				x	
Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones, & Gordon, 2003							x
Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999		X		x	X	x	
Halcon & Lifson, 2004		X	x		X	x	

Herman, 1992							x
Holger-Ambrose, Lengmade, Edinburgh, & Saewyc, 2013	x					x	
Hossain, et al., 2010	x					x	
HUD, 2015							x
Jonzon & Lindblad, 2004							x
Kattari & Begun, 2017		X	x		X		
Kidd & Krall, 2002	x	X				x	
Kennedy et al., 2007	x				X		
Lutnick, 2016		X			X		
Marcus, et al., 2012		X				x	
Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014		X			X		
Mones, 2011	x				X		
Mutfic & Finn, 2013	x					x	
Raphael & Shapiro, 2010		X			X		

Reid, 2012	x				X		
Reid & Piquero, 2013	x		x				
Reid & Piquero, 2014	x				X		
Roe-Sepowitz, 2012	x			x			
Roy et al., 2016		x	X				
Townsend & Rheingold, 2013							X
Walls & Bell, 2011		x	x				

APPENDIX B

University of Denver Information Sheet for Exempt Research

TITLE: The BELL Measure of homeless/street youth
Principal Investigator: Amber McDonald, Julie Ann Laser-Maira
Protocol #:
DU IRB Exemption Granted:

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

You are invited to participate in a research study about experiences of young individuals who are accessing services at drop-in centers in Colorado. Specifically, we are interested in your experiences in sex networks, therefore the survey will ask about your behavior, who you encounter on a day-to-day basis, what things contribute to your livelihood and overall general life experiences, and if you feel as though you have ever been trafficked or exploited.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to fill out the survey titled the BELL Measure and turn it in to the locked box located in the common area of the Center.

Potential risks and discomforts may include minimal emotional discomfort by recalling past or current events in your life. There are no physical risks to you as an individual, regardless of disclosure of sensitive information, as your name will not be ever asked or provided to the researchers, thus never disclosed to third-parties and all information obtained will remain confidential. If you are experience any level of discomfort as a result of taking this survey, please connect with the clinical staff at the Center you are accessing services and/or review the resource list provided to you below.

By doing this research we hope to learn about experiences of young individuals who access services at drop-in centers in Colorado.

You will not receive any compensation for the completion of this survey and the study is not publically or privately funded.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that are asked of you, if you so choose, for

any reason. Refusal to participate in the study does not prevent you from accessing any services at this drop-in center.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact Primary Investigators of this study, Amber McDonald, 720.301.6338 or Julie Laser-Maira, 303.871.2352.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during research participation, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4015 or by emailing IRBChair@du.edu, or you may contact the Office for Research Compliance by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu, calling 303-871-4050 or write to the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

The University of Denver Institutional Review Board has determined that this study qualifies as exempt from full IRB oversight.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

Agreement to be in this study

I have read this paper about the study or it was read to me. I understand the possible risks and benefits of this study. I know that being in this study is voluntary. Regardless of my decision to participate in this study, I will receive access to services at the Center.

By continuing with this research, you are consenting to participate in this study. If you are in need of resources, please review the following:

Suicide:

- Lis'n Crisis Hotline -Professional Psychology Center, 24 hours / 7 days
-Suicide / Depression Hotline
303- 860-1200
- Youth Support Line
303-894-9000

Trafficking/

Exploitation:

- Prax(us)
720-421-4311

- CoNEHT
1-866-455-5075

Abuse/Neglect:

- Colorado Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline
1-844-264-5437

Dating Violence:

- SafeHouse Denver
303-318-9989

Sexual Assault:

- the blue bench
303-322-7273

APPENDIX C



Project Title: Homeless/street youths perceptions of trading/selling sex

Principal Investigators: Amber McDonald, Tug Levy

DU IRB Protocol #:

INFORMATION SHEET:

Study Information & Eligibility: A student researcher at the University of Denver (Amber), along with Attention Homes is conducting a research study on young people's opinions/thoughts of trading/selling sex. This will be done by Amber guiding a focus group conversation with a group of interested individuals. Participants do NOT have to acknowledge involvement in trading/selling sex to participate. In fact, disclosure of involvement in trading/selling sex is discouraged for participant safety. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY AND DOES NOT IMPACT SERVICES RECEIVED AT ATTENTION HOMES

Attention Homes Participation: Tug Levy is the Attention Homes staff member involved in the study. He is available to answer questions regarding participation in the research. Tug will **NOT** be involved in the focus group discussion regarding your thoughts/opinions regarding trading/selling sex. He is only available to answer questions regarding interest and involvement in the research study.

Focus Group: A focus group is a guided conversation, that is audio recorded, involving more than one individual, about a topic of interest – typically used for academic research purposes. We are looking for 6-8 people to participate in the group conversation about their thoughts and/or opinions of young people's involvement in trading/selling sex. Participants will **NOT** provide their name to the facilitator (Amber), and will be given a number to use as an identifier to document their responses to the focus group questions. The conversation will be audio recorded with the specific purpose of using the participant's responses for research purposes. The following are a list of questions that will be asked during the focus group:

- When people, like you, are trading sex or selling sex, what do they call it?
- What percentage of young people, like you, do you think are involved in trading/selling sex?
- What do you think are the experiences of young people, like you, who trade/sell sex?
- How do you think that people, like you, get involved in trading/selling sex?
- At what age do you think that people, like you, get involved in trading/selling sex?

Safety: The researchers of this study **STRONGLY** encourage you to assess your own level of physical and emotional safety regarding participation in this study. This includes assessing your level of risk associated with answering the questions above in the presence of others. A commitment to confidentiality among research participants will be requested, and rules will be established prior to the discussion. Additionally,

the facilitator is held to the same confidentiality and mandatory reporting standards as required by Attention Homes. Remember, participation is voluntary. You may exit or disengage from the discussion at any time without penalty.

Date/Time/Location: TBD “Middle Meeting Room” **Lunch will be served during focus group discussion**

APPENDIX D

University of Denver Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Research Study: Perceptions of survival sex – homeless/street youth perspectives

Researcher(s): Amber McDonald, LCSW, PhD Candidate, University of Denver & Tug Levy, MEd.,
Attention Homes

Faculty Sponsor: Julie Anne Laser-Maira, LCSW, PhD, University of Denver

Study Site: Attention Homes

Purpose

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with written information about the study. You are also going to be provided this information verbally prior to you engaging in the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

You are invited to participate in a research study about your perceptions, (thoughts/opinions) of young individuals' involvement in trading/selling sex. You are **NOT** required to disclose or be involved (ever or currently) in trading/selling sex to participate in this study. In fact, you are strongly discouraged from disclosing involvement, or explicitly sharing information pertaining to sharing specifics regarding others involvement.

Procedures

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group that will take approximately an hour of your time. A focus group is a facilitated conversation with PI, Amber McDonald where you will be asked specific questions regarding your thoughts and opinions about homeless/street youth involvement in trading/selling sex. You may request a to see a copy of the questions prior to consenting to participate in the study.

You will NOT be asked to provide your name, but you must acknowledge that you are 18 years or older to participate. Strict adherence to confidentiality will be kept with the exception of mandatory reporting (e.g., direct disclosure of suspected child abuse, suspected elder abuse, and/or substantial risk of harm to others) and explicit disclosure of criminal activity will also be reported (e.g., participant uses "I" statements to describe illicit criminal activity). In the event that a mandatory report needs to be made, Amber (the facilitator of the group) will notify you that a report will be made and to whom it will be made to (i.e., human services or law enforcement agency).

During the focus group discussion, you will receive a piece of paper with a number on it. I, as well as other group members will refer to you as the number you received in order to preserve your confidentiality during the conversation. The focus group conversation will be audio recorded. Participation in this study means you are also agreeing to be audio recorded. If identifying information is mentioned during the conversation (i.e., name), it will be deleted from the transcript.

The digitally recorded focus group interview(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet at GSSW and once transcribed it will be stored on a password-protected computer network within the University of Denver, and available only to the research team. In addition to storing data on a password-protected computer, these files will also be stored on a secure server as a backup.

Digital recordings of interviews will be deleted once transcribed. Seven years after the study has ended, all hard copies will be shredded.

Thoughts and opinions provided by participants during the focus group are confidential, with the exception of a mandatory reporting situation mentioned above. Amber is unable to guarantee that the other focus group members will keep the information shared during the focus group conversation confidential, but will be strongly encouraged to do so.

Lunch will be served during the focus group discussion.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that are asked of you, if you so choose, for any reason. Refusal to participate in the study does not prevent you from accessing any services at Attention Homes.

Risks or Discomforts

Potential risks and discomforts may include emotional discomfort by discussing the topic of trading/selling sex in the presence of the facilitator and other participants. **Please be sure to take time to evaluate your own level of short & long-term physical and emotional risk** (example: risks associated with discussing trading/selling sex in the presence of the facilitator and/or others in the focus group discussion).

There are no physical risks to you as an individual during focus group participation. Confidentiality of your statements made during the focus group will be kept (with the exception of mandatory reporting/criminal behavior), from the public, and staff of Attention Homes (even Tug will not know individual persons' responses). The facilitator of the focus group will not ever inquire about your identity from Attention Homes staff (with the exception of mandatory reporting/criminal behavior).

If you experience any level of discomfort as a result of participating in the focus group, you may disengage/exit the group at any time. Attention Homes has clinical staff available on site to assist you if you are in need of support or mental health assistance during or post involvement in this study.

Dr. Beth Mazzola is available at Attention Homes from 12:30-3:00 on Wednesday's. Dr. Tom Mazione is also available 24/hrs a day 7 days a week. In order to access these people, please inquire with an Attention Homes staff member. Per Attention Homes policy, staff will not ask you about the basis of your inquiry.

Questions

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact Primary Investigators of this study, Amber McDonald, 720.301.6338 and/or Tug Levy (Program Manager at Attention Homes). You may also contact the Faculty Sponsor, Julie Anne Laser-Maira, 303.871.2352, with questions as well.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

Resources

Colorado's 24/7 Human Trafficking Hotline and Resource Center – CONEHT: 1.866.455.5075
hotline@combathumantrafficking.org

Colorado Crisis Line – available via phone (text or talk) or online chat: 1.844.493.TALK
<http://coloradocrisisservices.org>

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study. If you do not understand any part of the above, please ask the researcher/facilitator of the group (Amber) any questions you may have

If you decide to participate, your completion of the research procedures indicates your consent. Please keep this form for your records.

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Interview Guide

Project Title: Homeless/street youths perceptions of trading/selling sex

Principal Investigators: Amber McDonald, Tug Levy

DU IRB Protocol #:

Each participant will have a number placed in front of them to indicate who they are during the focus group conversation. Participants will be encouraged to state their number prior to speaking in order to most efficiently track responses during the focus group discussion.

Participants will all be requested to verbally acknowledge their commitment to confidentiality of the discussion. They will be reminded that self-disclosure is discouraged, but any self-identification will be scratched from the written transcript if it occurs. Disclosing or “outing” others by name (in the focus group or otherwise) is prohibited.

- 1) Age: _____
- 2) Gender Identification: _____
- 3) Race/ethnicity: _____

- 4) When people, like you, are trading sex or selling sex, what do they call it?
- 5) What percentage of young people, like you, do you think are involved in trading/selling sex?
- 6) What do you think are the experiences of young people, like you, who trade/sell sex?
- 7) How do you think that people, like you, get involved in trading/selling sex?
- 8) At what age do you think that people, like you, get involved in trading/selling sex?