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The Role of Gender in Sex Trafficking

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“The Game” as Sex Trafficking: Exploring Gender as Structure and Hegemonic Masculinity in Modern Day Slavery.

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Abstract

Human trafficking, or trafficking in persons (TIP), is a crime where people profit from the exploitation of others through some form of labor (Polaris, 2015). In the U.S., the three most common forms of TIP are sex trafficking, domestic trafficking and agricultural trafficking (Human Rights Center, 2007). This study specifically focuses on the system of domestic sex trafficking and uses gender theory to explain its perpetuation. In order to explore how individuals’ gendered identities affect sex trafficking, and to explore how these identities affect the perpetuation of this crime, four survivors of sex trafficking and one law enforcement official were interviewed. Based on the interviews, it is evident that gendered identities and individuals’ gendered interactions greatly affect the internalities of sex trafficking. Gender as a multi-leveled structure that affects human behavior was evident in all narratives, which ultimately shed light on how this industry is perpetuated. Additionally, all of the participants reported having been affected by the power structures created by masculine identities in sex trafficking, which indicates that hegemonic masculinity is at play with regard to this industry. These masculine power structures fit well within the multi-leveled gender model, and they show how this model within sex trafficking is controlled by masculine identities. The narratives also provided insight into other unexpected phenomena within sex trafficking that are affected by gender, such as evidence of hegemonic masculinity within the anti-trafficking movement, and how traffickers employ capitalist ideals within this system to control women.
Introduction

Human trafficking, or trafficking in persons (TIP), is a crime that occurs throughout the world, and the United States is no exception. According to the UN Protocol, TIP is the process of recruiting, transporting or harboring individuals who are forced into labor (Siskin & Wyler, 2013, p.1). The most common ways slavery occurs are for sex work, domestic services, agriculture and factory work (2013). In the U.S., the three most common forms of TIP are sex work (46 percent of illegal labor), domestic services (27 percent) and agriculture (10 percent; Human Rights Center, 2007).

TIP in any form generally operates through exploiting individuals who are vulnerable due to social variability (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). For example, traffickers often take advantage of political, economic and social instability in communities and use instabilities to enslave individuals who live in these communities. This includes exploiting individuals due to their young age (child pornography and sex trafficking are especially problematic in the U.S.); being impoverished or ostracized from a community (traffickers take advantage of this by “promising a better life,” but exploit individuals instead); having an unstable family life (individuals, especially women, who seek to leave undesirable familial situations are susceptible to being trafficked); or being displaced due to political instability. Therefore, given that social, political and economic instabilities occur worldwide in countless communities, the UN claims individuals in many communities may be susceptible to forced labor, including TIP (Siskin & Wyler, 2013).

With TIP and its common characteristics defined, this study specifically focuses on sex trafficking – a subcategory of TIP – throughout the West Coast of the United States. The purpose of this study is to apply gender theory to individuals’ experiences in
sex trafficking in order to understand the way gender affects the creation and perpetuation of this industry.

**A Brief Overview of Sex Trafficking**

The difference between sex trafficking and sex work is that the former involves, as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act outlines, “force, fraud or coercion” (Human Rights Center, 2007). Sex work, or prostitution, is a voluntary vocation in which the individual actively chooses to sell sex. However, sex trafficking is different because another individual – the trafficker – controls his or her workers and makes a profit from their commercial sex work. TIP individuals gain little profit, if any, whereas sex workers seek to make substantial profit. The lines are often blurry, however, because of both industries’ surreptitious natures, which can complicate policy and anti-trafficking efforts (Cullen-DuPont, 2009; Siskin & Wyler, 2013).

Traffickers often subject individuals to physical and mental abuse and social isolation. Isolation is an effective power tactic that prevents the individual from remaining in contact with people who could potentially remove them from slavery, and abuse forces them to succumb to the trafficker as their “master” (Cullen-DuPont, 2009). Traffickers also often confiscate identification documents or visa cards from international victims, which removes the opportunity for them to leave the country (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). Many perpetrators threaten to harm loved ones upon victims’ escape or lack of

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1 Before exploring policy and sex trafficking further, I ask readers to keep in mind my use of the words “victim” and “trafficker.” These terms have been associated with empathy and evil, respectively, and invoke audiences to feel certain ways as they read them. These associations should not be used when reading this paper. I will use terms to merely distinguish the individual from the trafficker and to create a clear difference between the two. I ask for the reader to suspend these connotations – whether it is with empathy towards the “victim” or hatred towards the “trafficker” – throughout this paper. I will merely use these terms as a distinguishing factor.

2 Although this vocation is voluntary, I understand that, in many cases, females’ choices are highly constrained (Rosenblum, 1975).
cooperation, and traffickers resort to other violent actions in order to force individuals into labor (2013, p. i).

Given its inherently surreptitious nature (many actions by traffickers are done underground or behind the façade of social media), the extent of sex trafficking around the world is not well known, and law enforcement and policy struggle to effectively eradicate the crime. Additionally, the public is poorly educated about TIP and does not fully understand sex trafficking (Belles, 2014). Therefore, because the current anti-trafficking movement lacks effectiveness, and the public is poorly informed, it is vital to understand some of the key social factors that contribute to the perpetuation of this crime in order to clear misconceptions and help further the movement to end the crime. Race, class, and gender are three factors that deserve particular attention.

The Role of Race, Class and Gender in Sex Trafficking

Race, class and gender are social constructions that are factors in the perpetuation of TIP. According to Clawson, Dutch and Solomon (2009), race and class play a prominent role in the continuation of TIP because a) many trafficked individuals are from different countries of origin and are illegally transported for labor work in the U.S.; and b) TIP individuals tend to come from poor, working class families who live in communities with high crime activity. This means that the social underpinnings of trafficking that perpetuate this crime often involve particular classes of people, which ultimately has implications for how victims should be treated upon rescue (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon & Grace 2009). Gender has also been studied with regard to TIP; however, studies addressing gender’s role in affecting in certain forms of trafficking and how it affects relationships in sex trafficking are limited.
**Race.** Despite some scholars’ claims that it is problematic to “racialize” the other, it is a fact that many minority women are trafficked around the world annually. Scholars have found that race does play a part in how TIP individuals are treated while enslaved, and in how individuals belonging to certain races are more susceptible to trafficking. For example, Elabor-Idemudia (2003) argues that current racial discriminations contribute to “risk factors” for individuals in Nigeria. She discusses how the colonial slave trade impacted European racist ideals, and she relates this to her study of Nigerian women who were trafficked to various European countries (2003). She argues that the slave trade, although physically extinct since the 19th century, still impacts the perceptions and beliefs surrounding Sub-Saharan Africans.

In a more recent study, Elabor-Idemudia (2013) discusses how obsolete racist ideals are continually manifested in modern Europe through sex trafficking. She argues that the treatment of trafficked African women in Europe, combined with other risk factors (i.e. economic poverty, structural violence and suffering), are highly dependent on race and European racist perspectives (2013). These residual 17th century European ideals, coupled with current patriarchies, predispose minority women to becoming trafficked. Elabor-Idemudia argues, “[Minority women’s] subordinate and devalued

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3 The argument primarily comes from Isgro, Stehle and Weber (2013). They call for a change in the way scholars analyze sex trafficking and prostitution: To acknowledge unique stories and backgrounds within these overarching enterprises, and to become more critical of current anti-trafficking efforts and legislation. Thus, they claim that instead of making a contribution to the anti-trafficking movement, researchers create a fictitious “monolithic sex slave” that over-generalizes “race” as a determining factor. This approach consequently groups all minority experiences into a single image: the sex slave (2013, p. 173). Needless to say, it is still important to take an individual’s race into consideration when studying his or her experiences in sex trafficking.

4 By “minority women” I mean women who are prescribed to a certain race that holds a minority of the population in a society (for example, Native Americans are a minority in the U.S; Greer, 2013).
position in a patriarchal world coupled with their inferior status in the international
division of labour makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation” (2013, p. 119).

Elabor-Idemudia (2013) expounds on the implications of racialized trafficking in
this division of labor (p. 119). She argues that minority women’s increased economic
poverty in Nigeria is caused partly by the global, capitalist economy. And because this
division of labor exists in a globalized society, Elabor-Idemudia (2013) claims that this is
often the case for minority women in any country. Therefore, social stratification through
gender (and through the exploitation of disadvantaged women) is inevitable when society
aims to “maximize [its] economic advantage” in a global world (2013, p. 120). Nigerian
women are attempting to survive in this cutthroat environment, and Elabor-Idemudia
(2013) argues that one of the prominent ways women can compete is through forced
labor. Thus, economic poverty may be a prominent factor in minority individuals’
susceptibility to becoming trafficked.

In addition to the presence of racism in sex trafficking abroad, domestic racism is
equally as prominent in the U.S. For example, Greer (2013) found that the history of
treatment of Native Americans in the U.S. is also linked to race and sex trafficking. In an
essay discussing the shortcomings of California anti-trafficking policy with regard to
aiding Native Americans, he argues that traffickers “actively target” Native American
women because of they commonly live in poverty and have a low status in society. Greer
argues that this targeting stems from racism: Native Americans in the U.S., like Nigerians
in Europe, are automatically predisposed to risk factors that may make them susceptible
to trafficking due to how they are viewed in society. Greer (2013) claims that this
predisposition ultimately stems from a long history of unequal treatment and racialized
beliefs towards these peoples in the U.S., and from the way political structures are composed within Native American reservations.

Greer also discusses how traffickers target Native American reservations for many reasons, two of which involve law enforcement and policy ambiguity. Because of “an underfunding of law enforcement and the…misunderstanding of applicable criminal laws and jurisdictional duties,” Greer (2013) claims that traffickers see reservations as environments in which they can easily traffic people (p. 482). He also argues that certain socioeconomic vulnerabilities on reservations—such as poverty and high rates of drug and alcohol addiction—make these environments “soft targets” for traffickers (2013, p. 481). Greer (2013) ultimately claims that racial minorities in America, including Native Americans, experience more socioeconomic vulnerabilities (two of which include poverty and higher rates of drug and alcohol addiction), which makes them more susceptible to becoming trafficked.

Indeed, although literature addressing race and sex trafficking may be highly specific with regard to the populations studied (i.e., Nigerian and Native American populations), it is important to understand how social vulnerabilities within minority populations – such as alcoholism and poverty – could possibly make these populations more susceptible to becoming trafficked. Thus, sex trafficking may be intertwined with larger racial issues that predispose minority individuals to maltreatment.

**Class and age.** Socio-economic status, in combination with other racial and gender identities, also may have a profound impact on the likelihood of an individual being trafficked. In an essay discussing the multi-dimensional identities within human trafficking, Javidan (2011) argues that one’s class and social views of childhood greatly
affect identities within human trafficking. The author discusses the correlation between the prominence of the number of children in poverty with the number of children in prostitution within Southeast Asian and Sub-Saharan African countries. Javidan (2011) claims that it is no coincidence that countries with the highest rates and proportions of child poverty also have the highest rates of child sex trafficking. Poverty, a potentially devastating social vulnerability, creates circumstances where individuals may be constrained to choose from among undesirable economic ventures, such as forced labor. Javidan (2011) argues that in some cases, children in poverty have few or no other alternatives to trafficking.

The same study also addresses the issue of socioeconomic class and child sex trafficking within the US. Javidan (2011) claims, “A disproportionate number of children who are commercially sexually exploited through prostitution in the United States and globally are female and come from conditions of poverty” (p. 378). Indeed, an exploration of the racial and class makeups of child sex trafficking survivors validates this statement: Javidan (2011) found that most TIP survivors were below the poverty line and African-American, and she claims that these “disproportions in class and race” cannot be coincidental. This is especially notable when statistics about child trafficking, poverty and race are similar throughout six U.S. cities known to be trafficking hubs (2011). Javidan ultimately argues that the perpetuation of trafficking is multi-foundational: Race, class and age are all factors in subjects’ vulnerability to becoming trafficked. Because large proportions of minority populations are below the poverty line in America, financial and other economic options for work are limited, and the added layer of age (or youth) further constrains these economic opportunities (Javidan, 2011).
This is why age, race and class are not coincidentally connected in becoming susceptibility to trafficking: All three confer sets of limitations that can funnel an individual into this industry.

Class is also a major factor in adult human trafficking. In a review of the literature discussing human development (i.e., the stage of economic, social and political development in countries) and international TIP, Danailova-Trainor and Laczo (2010) argue that within poverty-ridden communities, the lure of trafficking is greater because individuals wish to leave their impoverished lives with promises for economic gain. The authors argue that there have been many empirical studies conducted on TIP individuals from “developing countries of origin” (or countries from where international TIP individuals come, such as Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, India and Eastern Europe) who say that they left with their trafficker from their rural, agricultural communities in order to make more money (see Aronowitz, 2001; Dottridge, 2008; Laczo & Gozdziak, 2005; Thanh-Dam, 2006).

Danailova-Trainor and Laczo (2010) also argue that one of the vulnerabilities traffickers use to exploit individuals is their economic situation. According to an International Office of Migration (IOM) study, 48% of identified TIP individuals in 1999 came from communities with high levels of poverty (International, 2008). Therefore, because of the various vulnerabilities associated with high levels of poverty, the literature (including the IOM study) suggests that economic class and status are significant factors with regard to adult human trafficking.

**Gender.** Several studies have addressed the correlation of gender inequality and the level of trafficking both domestically and internationally. However, because
searching for universalities in sex trafficking often yields insignificant results, this paper focuses on micro-level gender inequalities in the U.S., which hopefully sheds light on a subject that previous, macro-level studies have failed to address on an international scope.5

Many scholars argue that finding the “master narrative,” or an all-encompassing structure that “is reproduced as a universal social reality by dominant institutions,” is a questionable approach to studying sex trafficking (Snadjr, 2013, p. 234. Also, see Vance, 2012; Weitzer, 2013). However, this does not suggest that micro-level studies addressing gender and human trafficking do not exist. For example, Vindhya and Swathi Dev (2011) explored the experiences of sex trafficking survivors within a community in India, and because of their local approach, they found that gender inequalities significantly affect TIP individuals’ experiences. This is because they qualitatively explored individuals’ experiences with gender inequalities in human trafficking. Through a qualitative analyses of narratives of Indian women who were rescued from sex trafficking, Vindhya and Swathi Dev (2011) discovered that these women were subjected to various social gender inequalities that partially led them to becoming trafficked:

Denial or curtailment of formal educational opportunities, the status of being unwanted or girl children in the family, child marriage and desertion/abandonment by the husband served as proximal events to the trafficking experience both in the natal as well as in the affinal family...[are] institutionalised cultural practices and norms of the family that place young girls increasingly at risk for trafficking. (p.

5 Historically, micro-level approaches to studying gender roles in sex trafficking have generated more significant results (see Elabor-Idemudia, 2003; Greer, 2013). For example, Rao and Presenti (2012) found it difficult to come to any conclusions about sex trafficking when they extracted data from over 120 countries. Thus, because the system of sex trafficking varies greatly (and it is affected by many subjective factors), trying to find overarching, universal laws with regard to gender in sex trafficking has yielded little to no results.
Indeed, it is still crucial to qualitatively and ethnographically analyze gender dynamics from an emic perspective of sex trafficking, as this study suggests. Although this has been studied in India (Vindhya & Swathi Dev, 2011) and Eastern Europe (Snadjr, 2013), it is vital to study micro-level gender relations within the context of U.S. sex trafficking in order to further understand why this crime exists today.

**Males in sex trafficking.** A majority of studies involving gender, race and class in sex trafficking solely focus on the trafficked individual, or the “victim,” who is primarily female (Reid & Piquero, 2014; Vance, 2011; Weitzer, 2012). However, within the last few years, research has expanded to explore experiences among male populations as victims, consumers and traffickers (Reid & Piquero, 2014). This study will focus not only female victims, but male consumers of sex and traffickers as well.6

Males as consumers of sex have mainly been studied through economic theory (Teifenbrun, 2002; Yen, 2008). This economic approach, although effective in assessing how to eradicate the crime using supply-and-demand principles, glazes over gender and automatically assumes that men, “just want sex, or want something ‘exotic’… and this is why they want trafficked women” (Yen, 2008, p. 666-667). This approach is problematic because it fails to address the reasons why men “just

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6 Before discussing males as sex consumers and traffickers, I would like to acknowledge that contrary to popular perceptions, females are not the only gender susceptible to becoming sex-trafficked (Reid & Piquero, 2014). Although limited research has addressed the male as a victim of sex trafficking, it is important to understand that the male as a victim identity is a reality in this industry (2014). However, this study will only discuss the adult female as a trafficked individual.
want sex,” and it discounts any agency consumers of sex might have to change this alleged tendency. Through this study, I approach consumer behavior in the sex industry via gender theory, which hopefully adds to economic theory in that it elucidates the reasons why men behave the way they do when purchasing sex.

With regard to male traffickers, only one study, founded in sociological theory, addresses the behaviors of male traffickers in this industry (Troshynski & Blank, 2008). Some research addresses economic reasons behind selling individuals in sex trafficking; but again, most of the analyses’ supply-and-demand economic theory and do not address how masculinity, race or class affect participation in sex trafficking (Teifenbrum, 2002; Yen, 2008, Troshynski & Blank, 2008). Therefore, exploratory studies are needed to discover how gender affects not only the victim’s role in sex trafficking, but that of the trafficker as well.

**Purpose of the Study**

It is evident that race, class, age and gender all play an important role in the sex trafficking industry. The purpose of this study is to further explore the influence of the last, as the role of gender in sex trafficking, particularly at the micro-level, is still widely misunderstood (Snadjr, 2013; Vance, 2011; Weitzer, 2013). This study will provide a domestic and qualitative analysis of identities, relationships and structures that both men and women identify with and participate in sex trafficking.
Theory

A micro-level, domestic approach to studying gender and sex trafficking in a specific part of the U.S. requires one to take into account how people “do gender” while being involved in this industry. How do women perceive themselves while they are trafficked? How do men perceive themselves as traffickers or consumers of sex? How do the perceived gendered identities of the participants affect or facilitate the sex trafficking industry? Acknowledging current gender hegemonies within society allows one to fully examine these questions. Additionally, I also highlight possible improvements the U.S. could make in the anti-trafficking movement. Indeed, examining the structure of gender in society with regard to sex trafficking sheds light on how the system works and how it is perpetuated.

Gender as structure. The study of gender has embodied multiple approaches: sex role theory (Mischel, 1966; Weitzman, 1979); psychoanalytic theory (Chodrow, 1989); economic structuralism (Kanter, 1977; Reskin, 1988); and the “doing gender” approach, which claims that the construction of gender prompts people to behave and inhabit society according to the norms of their ascribed gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). However, according to Risman (1998), none of these approaches completely explain how agency and structure (micro and macro levels of gender) work together to reproduce human behavior. Thus, to understand how gender works in both individual participants and overall structures of sex trafficking, one must understand gender as both a structure and as an individual identity (Lorber, 1994; Risman, 1998).

Lorber (1994) describes gender as “an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life... [It] is built into
the major social organizations of society…and is also an entity in and of itself” (p. 1). In other words, gender is a structure that is a pervasive force, which affects patterns in human behavior, social institutions and relationships of power (Lorber, 1994). Therefore, not only is gender an identity given to individuals, but it is also an embedded social institution that affects the family, workplace, state and other components of society such as sexuality and language.

The concept of gender as a structure that universally affects society reveals gender’s macro-level implications in society. Because gender is an institution, one can understand how this institution affects human behavior and relationships, as individuals ingrain norms associated with institutions within everyday life (Lorber, 1994). Risman (1998) builds on this notion of gender as a social structure and argues that this structure differentiates and polarizes identities at every level of society:

This differentiation [between male and female] has consequences on three levels: 1) at the individual level, for the development of gendered selves; (2) at the interactional level, for men and women face different expectations even when they fill the identical structural position; and (3) at the institutional level, for rarely will women and men be given identical positions. (p. 7)

In short, Risman (1998) argues that although individual agency is vital in changing individual behavior, only considering this level of gender does not determine that a radical change in the way gender is perceived in society will occur. Risman (1998) uses the example of a woman who is aware of gender inequalities in society, yet she proceeds to get married and use her husband’s last name, thus reinforcing patriarchy within the institution of marriage. Although this woman is individually trying to change her behavior toward equality, she still continues to reinforce inequality because gender (and
patriarchy) still exist on a macro level: In the institution of marriage. Therefore, Risman (1998) argues that in order to eradicate gender inequalities, one must critically and holistically analyze the ways gender reinforces differences, inequalities and polarizations on all three levels of society: individual (level one), interactional (level two) and institutional (level three). Indeed, these three levels are crucial in understanding the saliency of gender inequalities in sex trafficking.

**Gender in sex trafficking.** How does the structure of gender recreate inequalities in sex trafficking? Lorber (1994) and Risman (1998) highlight the importance of understanding gender as a multi-leveled, institutional force. Using this concept, I explore how these levels of gender perpetuate sex trafficking, and how personal identities and interpersonal relationships affect the overall system within this institution.

Gender as a multi-leveled structure has been studied in virtually every aspect of society. Studies of topics as diverse as pay equity and economics (Bautista-Vistro, 2003); norms and values surrounding eating and drinking (Bird & Sokolofski, 2004); and hierarchies in bureaucratic organizations (Aker, 1988) all suggest that gender is a powerful, omnipresent social force. I suggest that women and men involved in sex trafficking reinforce gender structures through their individual behavior, relationships and participation in overall systems. In other words, I explore how gender exists on all three levels, as Risman (1998) claims, and how the saliency of gender inequalities within these three levels contributes to the perpetuation of sex trafficking.

The first level in Risman’s (1998) three-tiered model is how individuals’ gendered identities affect their behavior (see Figure 1). This level incorporates all individual perceived identities and how these identities manifest themselves in
individuals’ behaviors. Components of this level include how individuals are socialized, how they construct their identities (or “the construction of self,” according to Risman and Davis [2013, p. 746]) and the process of internalizing these gendered identities (Risman, 2004; Risman & Davis, 2013). Although level one of gender as structure involves more than socialization, “construction of self” and internalization (Risman & Davis, 2013), these are the three components of this level that I address with regard to my data.

In the context of sex trafficking, there are three main entities that comprise this industry: traffickers (or “pimps”) who sell individuals for sex; trafficked individuals, who are the commodity sought after by consumers and exploited by traffickers; and consumers (or “johns”) who solicit sex from traffickers. I later explain that there are sub-entities within each of these (and that all of them are complex and often over-simplified). However, to understand gender on the most basic level, I explore this first level of gender in society by discussing perceived identities and who individuals believe they are in sex trafficking.

*Figure 1. Risman’s (1998) multi-leveled gender theory.*
The second level of Risman’s (1998) model involves social interactions (see Figure 1). Because individuals have perceived gender identities, these identities are also manifested interpersonally. The components of level two of gender as structure that this study addresses include interactional cultural expectations, how groups create status expectations, altercasting (or the process of manipulation and persuasion) and how people with gendered identities interact with one another (Risman, 2004; Risman & Davis, 2013, p. 746). In the system of sex trafficking, understanding gender within relationships involves exploring how traffickers interact with trafficked individuals and consumers, how trafficked individuals interact with their trafficker and the consumers who solicit sex, and how consumers interact with traffickers and trafficked individuals. Risman (1998, 2004) claims that within these interactions lies gendered behavior, and to understand gender as a structural force in sex trafficking, it is important to dissect these interactions and find how gender affects behavior interpersonally.

The final level of this tiered gender system involves how individual identities and interpersonal interactions create and reproduce gender in society, or, for this study’s sake, gender as an institution in sex trafficking (see Figure 1). To view gender as an institution means identifying gendered power structures or hegemonies that affect the whole system. Such components of level three of gender as structure include organizational practices (or how the overall system operates), the creation of hegemonic ideologies and the distribution of rules and resources within this institution (Risman & Davis, 2013, p. 746). In this paper, I explore how these components in level three are affected by identities and interactions, and how these level-three components conversely create identities and interactions. In short, to understand the system of sex trafficking with the two
aforementioned levels of gender allows me to highlight gender inequalities that perpetuate the entire institution.

To highlight how the tiered gender system works as a matrix to affect sex trafficking, one such example is how women often feel about their participation in this institution. Clawson, et al. (2009) found that many formerly trafficked women claimed that although they may have wanted to flee from trafficking, relationships with men in sex trafficking and sex trafficking in its entirety (much like the forward-thinking woman who lost her name to her husband’s) continued to hinder them from breaking the cycle. Therefore, although trafficked individuals may have wanted to change their gender performance on an individual level, as Risman (1998) discusses, it is possible that many individuals may have difficulty in successfully removing themselves from sex trafficking because the interactional and institutional levels of power in gender hinder them from making a change.

In short, Lorber (1994) put the cycle of the creation and recreation of gender concisely:

The gendered microstructure and the gendered macrostructure reproduce and reinforce each other. The social reproduction of gender in individuals reproduces the gendered societal structure; as individuals act out gender norms and expectations in face-to-face interaction, they are constructing gendered systems of dominance and power. (p. 6)

In this study, I analyze gender in these three levels. I suggest that gendered institutions within sex trafficking perpetuate inequalities and keep individuals in the trafficking cycle. My study aims to examine these inequalities and discover if and how they exist.

Hegemonic masculinity. Just as gendered structures and performances help explain individuals’ behaviors in sex trafficking, the concept of hegemony – a powerful,
all-encompassing force that overshadows its societal counterparts (see Connell, 1987) – also allows me to identify gendered inequalities in sex trafficking. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) claim that there are multiple kinds of hegemonies within gender because people have unique pasts and are socialized differently. Thus gender—especially hegemonic masculinity—is not unilineal, nor is it uni-conceptual (2005). This is an important consideration when studying men and women who “do gender” differently in the context of human trafficking (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) discuss, “…‘masculinity’ represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices” (p. 841). Neither gender nor hegemony represent a specific person; rather, my studied subjects ultimately exercise different hegemonies depending on their backgrounds and socialization.

Indeed, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) claim that hegemonic masculinity as a concept involves multiple masculinities exercising hegemony, which is substantiated by McGuffey and Rich’s (1999) study on the creation of “gender transgression zones” among adolescent boys who exercise hegemonic masculinity in peer groups. They found that among boys and girls, boys who exercised the greatest amounts of hegemonic masculinity (i.e., self-control, control over girls, aggression, etc. [Connell, 1987, 1995]) got to “set the rules” for all zones of gender, including zones of “transgression,” or where the social context is mixed-gendered. Thus, boys who are more masculine control the social situations over girls and boys who exercise less hegemonic masculinity. In this light, the idea of multi-status masculinities in sex trafficking comes to surface: If there is more than one male figure in sex trafficking (i.e., traffickers and consumers of sex), then there is a possibility that there are multiple masculinities with different levels of power in
this industry.

In addition to the multitude of masculinities that fall under hegemonic masculinity, it is also important to understand the key components that construct this hegemony. Such phenomena include masculinity being defined through: a) financial success in the public sphere (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kivel, 2007); b) success with women, which ultimately connects behavior to heteronormativity \(^7\) (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2008; Pascoe, 2007); c) maintaining a strong sense of self-control, having no emotions and maintaining control of women (Kimmel, 2008; Kivel, 2007); d) knowing about sex and having sex often (Connell, 1995, 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2008; Kivel, 2007); and e) the creation of “emphasized femininity,” which is a ramification of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995, 2001) labels it “emphasized” because Females’ identities are constructed through hyper-sexualization that fits within hegemonic, masculine ideologies.

Because hegemony through gender is subjective, multilinear and dependent on the agent’s history and socialization, its associated behavior is defined not through the agent, but through interaction (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). An example of this interaction is how boys are taught at an early age to behave “like a man,” which involves participating in polarized heterosexual activities and behaviors (Kimmel, 2008; Pascoe, 2007). They may distance themselves from anything “gay”; taunt or physically harass women; joke about domestic violence and rape; and partake in activities with violent undertones, such as sports (Pascoe, 2007). Aggression and violence are also common ways in which men

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\(^7\) Heteronormativity is the idea that heterosexuality is the preferred sexual orientation within society. Thus, if a man performs according to heterosexual norms (such as having success with women romantically or sexually, or having more control over women), he holds a higher status in society (Kimmel, 2008).
may exercise their hegemonic masculinities; where society (media, parents, friends, etc.) encourages fighting as a “manly” thing to do (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kivel, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Lastly, a social ramification of hegemonic masculinity is that masculinity holds more power and is highly heteronormative under the social construction of gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel 2008). Also, the female body is subsequently objectified and commodified under these hegemonic social standards (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This is important to note, as female objectification and commodification are important aspects of participants’ narratives regarding sex trafficking.

The aforementioned “manly” behaviors (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2008; Kivel, 2007; Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009) ultimately shed light on what I find within the context of sex trafficking. Just as institutions may keep individuals from leaving the trafficking industry, males’ accordance to hegemonic masculinity may also affect the perpetuation of individuals’ involvement in this crime. Sex traffickers and consumers, who are male, have perceived gendered identities that may affect their behavior in this institution, and these gendered identities could possibly be shaped by hegemonic masculinity. Much like how teenage males assert hegemonic masculinity through the “fag discourse” and mildly harassing females, as Pascoe (2007) found in American high schools, this study highlights how hegemonic masculinity may manifest itself and create inequalities in the institution of sex trafficking.
Method

Participants

To study how gendered identities and interactions compose overall structures in sex trafficking, I conducted and audio-recorded five open-ended interviews with individuals who were formerly trafficked and one law enforcement official. All of the interviews happened within a four-month period between November 2014 and February 2015. Each interview lasted two to three hours, during which each participant shared his or her story or involvement in the industry. Four participants were formerly trafficked women, and one was a police officer who works currently in the prostitution division at the Portland Police Bureau in Portland, Oregon.

Survivors. All four participants who were formerly trafficked individuals referred to themselves as “survivors” of sex trafficking. Because all of them identified with this title, I will call these women “survivors” throughout this study. To find survivors for my study, I went to three different anti-trafficking conferences in Portland, Oregon. Through these conferences, I came into contact with nonprofits that help survivors of sex trafficking in their recovery processes. Personnel from these nonprofits directed me to high-functioning survivors who they knew who would be willing to share their story for my research, and I recruited these potential participants via email and phone conversations. All of the survivors were trafficked in major cities on the West Coast, ranging from San Diego, California, to Portland, Oregon. Along with being survivors of sex trafficking, three of these participants currently work with nonprofit organizations that lobby for effective anti-trafficking policy and that aid trafficking and domestic abuse victims.
Although my study had a small number of participants, they were demographically diverse: two were Caucasian, one was Mexican and Native American, and the other was Mexican. Because race is a factor in the likelihood of becoming trafficked, and it is a factor in how women are treated in sex trafficking (see Elabor-Idemudia, 2003; Greer, 2013), one must account for participants’ ethnic backgrounds as a factor that diversifies the data collected. In addition to race, the survivor participants also comprised a wide age range for this study, which is important for my data collection: Survivors’ ages ranged from 27 to 53-years-old. 

All participating survivors had gone through extensive recovery and rehabilitation processes before agreeing to interview. This is important for the following reasons: a) Having gone through therapy and rehabilitation, all participants were willing to share potentially traumatic details of their life without showing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, nor did they experience any overwhelming discomfort as they talked about this part of their lives; b) because they have had time to process their experience as a trafficked individual, their answers to the interview questions were coherent and insightful. In other words, being distanced

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8 Although I already established that age plays a prominent role in trafficking (see Javidan, 2011), I have not yet discussed the importance of historical change in this industry. Much has transformed since the advent of the Internet within sex trafficking—now, the majority of trafficked individuals are sold through online media instead of on the street (Farley, Franzblau & Kennedy, 2013). For example, the Syracuse Police Bureau in New York State found that 90 percent of the city’s prostitution (and other forms of sex work, including trafficking) had moved from the street to online between 2009 and 2011 (2013). In addition, Farley, et al. (2011) found that 88 percent of American sex consumers in 2011 used the Internet to purchase individuals for sex. These data show that the sex trafficking industry has shifted strongly to e-commerce in the digital age, which means that significant change in the overall system had to occur during this transition (Farley, Franzblau & Kennedy, 2013). Given the diversity of ages within this study, I was able to collect data that reflected a trafficked individual’s perspective before and after this digital transition occurred. Thus, the wide age range represented in this study provides a wider variety of data.
The role of gender in sex trafficking

from trafficking allowed them to explain rationally what had happened to them 
without the obstruction of personal feelings; and c) as a student who has had limited 
experience interviewing individuals with traumatic pasts, it was safer for both my 
participants and me to interview individuals who have successfully rehabilitated and 
recovered from trauma.9

Law enforcement official. The remaining participant in this study was a 
police officer from the Portland Police Bureau in Portland, Oregon. To protect his 
anonymity, he will be referred to throughout this study as “Dan.”

Like the survivor participants, I retrieved Dan’s contact information from a 
nonprofit worker at one of the anti-trafficking conferences that I attended. Dan’s 
input was helpful for this study—having worked in the Portland Police Bureau for 
over 20 years, he has come in contact with countless sex traffickers, consumers and 
trafficked individuals. Therefore, he has not only interacted with females, but he has 
also worked and come into contact with male traffickers and consumers in sex 
trafficking. Because I was unable to interview traffickers and consumers for this 
study, Dan’s involvement was a way that I was able to collect data representing these 
two inaccessible populations. Although he is a secondary source for this kind of 
information, given his lengthy experience with traffickers and consumers, his input 
was nonetheless valuable for my study.

9 It is important to note there that all of these survivors were further removed from their life in sex 
trafficking, which may have impacted the way they talked about their experiences. Because of this, 
the results of this study reflect how they interpreted their life after their views had been shaped by 
any possible cognitive transformations in recovery.
Interviews

I examined gendered identities, interactions and structures through two to three-hour in-depth interviews with each participant. Although I had a set of questions for each kind of participant (i.e., survivor or law enforcement official), I only asked these questions when the discussion needed guidance. Using Troshynski & Blank’s (2008) methodological approach to qualitatively analyzing vendors in the sex trafficking industry, I split the kinds of interview questions into three different categories for each kind of participant. To survivors, I asked questions about a) how they became trafficked (and the factors that led up to this moment, sometimes dating back to childhood); b) how they were treated and the kinds of things in which they were involved during their time as trafficked individuals; and c) their overall perceptions about themselves and the individuals around them during their time being trafficked (Troshynski & Blank, 2008; see Appendix A for a list of my interview questions).

Questions were also split into three similar categories for the law enforcement official, except they were directed toward understanding traffickers and consumers: a) how traffickers become “pimps” and consumers become “johns” (and what factors are involved leading up to their involvement); b) how both parties treat women, or trafficked individuals, and I asked about the kinds of activities in which both parties participate in the industry (which addresses their behavior and interpersonal interactions); and c) how traffickers and consumers view the overall sex trafficking industry with relation to their personal perceived identities (2008).

Although all interviews started with the same relative question (i.e., “how did
you become trafficked?”), each was unique, and I found myself asking questions that were not on my original guide because the participant wanted to go in a more fascinating direction. The interviews were not tangential; rather, I believe they embodied the exploratory nature of this study, which involved venturing into new territory about unexpected topics. Thus, the premeditated guiding questions were not as useful as what participants had to say. Because gender is rarely explored in sex trafficking, I decided to follow the course of the conversation rather than adhering to the original questions.

“The master narrative.” The micro-level, qualitative method reflects a new approach to studying international phenomena such as sex trafficking. Rather than trying to collect quantitative data from many sources, these interviews provided an in-depth, emic and qualitative perspective of individuals in sex trafficking. This approach to studying sex trafficking (suggested by Rao & Presenti [2012] for future research) prevents the researcher from over-generalizing, and it allows space to provide historical context for each participant (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Vance, 2011; Weitzer, 2012). It also has historically yielded more useful results (see Snadjr, 2013; Vindhya & Swathi Dev, 2011), because localized results allow for policymakers and activists in the area to use the data collected to create grassroots change. Snadjr (2013) addresses the problem of taking an etic approach to studying sex trafficking, and advocates for this grassroots approach. He claims that “the master narrative” that researchers seek, or the universal solution to end trafficking, cannot exist because of cultural particularism. He claims that the micro-level, in-depth studies yield more accurate results because they are applicable to improving the anti-
trafficking movement: “…Beneath the master narrative, ethnography on human trafficking can reveal subtler and more accurate appraisals of experiences and contexts that depart from the grand discourse.” (Snadjr, 2013, p. 231).

In other words, the method for this study not only prevented me from over-generalizing (and over-simplifying) experiences of individuals involved in sex trafficking, but it also provided data that can be useful for the U.S. to improve the domestic anti-trafficking movement. Thus, instead of searching for this “master narrative” within five individuals, I sought “subtler and more accurate appraisals” of how individuals with gendered identities produced and reproduced sex trafficking.

A Brief Overview of Participant Backgrounds

Before I explain the data, it is important to understand each participant’s background and experience in trafficking. This will allow for a greater understanding of the context of each narrative: 10

Dan. As an officer in the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) for over 20 years, Dan has had extensive experience with trafficked individuals, traffickers and consumers of sex. His work in the prostitution division has allowed him to interact with over 2,000 trafficked individuals and hundreds of traffickers and consumers of sex. Dan joined the PPB prostitution division full-time when street-level prostitution proliferated in the late 1980s, and he has worked with his colleagues to reform the PPB system to be more effective in eradicating sex work in Portland. Within Dan’s time in the police force, the prostitution division has evolved to become an educational system for consumers of sex that likely prevents them from buying sex in

10 Keep in mind that for safety and anonymity purposes, I have applied pseudonyms for all participants in this paper.
the future, and it works to provide resources to women who are trafficked. It also has partnerships with other nonprofits and organizations to help women instead of treating them as criminals. Additionally, Dan claims that through the PPB’s efforts and partnerships, Portland has become a city that is known for its anti-trafficking policies and punishments against traffickers. Dan’s narrative ultimately provided an experienced law enforcement perspective with regard to how sex trafficking exists in Portland.

**Shelby.** Shelby was raised in Southern Oregon by her mother and stepfather, and she moved to Portland to attend college when she was 17-years-old. Within months after Shelby started working at a department store in Portland, her trafficker found her and recruited her. After building a relationship with her, he initially trafficked her by kidnapping her, taking her to a house in North Portland, and letting men in the house repeatedly rape her throughout the night. The next day, Shelby found that her trafficker had broken into her apartment and sold almost all of her belongings. He had also confiscated all of her forms of identification and her cell phone. For the next four years, Shelby worked for her trafficker in Portland and other cities on the West Coast (including Las Vegas, Nevada, and cities in Southern California). When she was not working, her trafficker locked her and all of the other women who worked for him in a room upstairs at his sister’s house with one mattress and a jug of water. He also forced all of his women to use ecstasy (in order for them to be able to remain awake for longer periods of time), and he repeatedly beat and raped them to maintain control.

Shelby became pregnant within the last year of being trafficked, and shortly
after she had her son, a man who was one of her regular consumers became aware of her situation. By duping her trafficker into believing that Shelby had run away, this consumer helped remove her from trafficking. Shelby and her son lived in the consumer’s house for the following year, which was when she began receiving help from nonprofit volunteers and church members to aid her in the rehabilitation process. Today, Shelby is seven years removed from trafficking, she has a son who is eight-years-old and she is currently in a long-term relationship.

**Caroline.** Due to financial depravity, Caroline’s mother began selling her for sexual favors to people when she was 18-months-old. When she was eight-years-old, Caroline’s father (who was divorced from her mother) discovered what was happening and promptly had DHS take her away from her mother. For the next four years, Caroline traveled through the foster care system, and when she was 12-years-old, Caroline moved in with her father who was addicted to heroin. At age 13, her father’s drug dealer began trafficking her in exchange for her father’s heroin, and because of this, Caroline considers her father and his drug dealer to be her first traffickers. During this time, a trafficker who was disguised as a consumer convinced Caroline to live with him, and he became her trafficker until Caroline’s ex-boyfriend (although he was her boyfriend at the time) removed her from sex trafficking at age 14. Today, after imprisonment, rehabilitation and schooling, Caroline has finished college, has a full-time job and lives near Portland with her two sons.

**Vivian.** Vivian’s mother passed away when she was an infant, and she attributes this trauma to deviant behaviors in her childhood and young adulthood. She lived with her father and stepmother in California until she ran away from home
when she was 15-years-old. Vivian’s young adulthood involved heavy drug use, sexual activity and other forms of what she considers “delinquent behavior.” When she was 15, Vivian first sold herself by giving several blowjobs to a man who picked her up when she was hitchhiking. At 18-years-old, she began using hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin and amphetamines (however, she did not consider herself a narcotic addict until she was in her late 20s). After high school, Vivian married her high school boyfriend, who was sexually and physically abusive, and she stayed married to him for several years until she divorced him in her late 20s. Shortly after, she married her second husband, who eventually became her drug partner and trafficker.

Vivian’s second husband did not immediately exploit her, and when he did, his tactics were not what one would traditionally consider “sex trafficking.” The way Vivian became trafficked was that she offered to “go sell herself on the street” to get drug money, and she claims that she felt “backed into a corner” by the situation and her husband. Upon first selling herself on the street, Vivian’s husband became her trafficker because he took all of the profits from her sex work, used the money to get their drugs and controlled all of the financial resources from her prostitution. Vivian’s story is important because it allows for an understanding that sex trafficking occurs under many different contexts, which is something that Snadjr (2013) claims is extremely important. To conclude, 20 years after getting out of trafficking (and after years of recovery through drug rehabilitation and therapy), Vivian is now divorced from her second husband, she is working on earning a college degree, she is sober from narcotics, and she is helping sexually abused women in their recovery.
processes.

**Jody.** Jody, like Vivian, is extensively removed (26 years) from trafficking. She grew up in a home with sexual assault, incest and physical abuse, and she married her first husband in Rhode Island, who was also sexually and physically abusive, when she was in her 20s. Several years into her marriage, Jody fled Rhode Island with her three children to Oregon to leave her husband; however, authorities made her return to Rhode Island to divorce her husband and deal with legal issues in their marriage. Upon her divorce, Jody moved to Oregon for a second time with two of her children, which was when she befriended a woman who was recovering from cocaine addiction. This woman was how Jody was recruited into sex trafficking: the woman’s brother, a recently released convict, kidnapped Jody at her apartment and immediately began trafficking her.

Jody’s trafficker maintained control by threatening the safety of her children and through physical abuse, and he maintained isolation by locking her in her own apartment when she was not working. Several years into trafficking, after being severely assaulted and nearly robbed by a consumer, Jody promptly left her trafficker upon his arrest for other gang-related crimes. For the next decade, Jody struggled with rehabilitation and recovery from her experiences in her childhood and trafficking. Today, 26 years after being trafficked, Jody is currently working for the City of Portland to resolve sustainability and environmental issues.
Results and Discussion

Through this series of interviews, it is evident that the matrix of gendered identities, interactions and macrostructures greatly affects the internalities of sex trafficking. Risman’s (1998) theory of gender as a multi-leveled structure is evident in each of the participants’ narratives, which not only shows that gender affected their experiences in sex trafficking, but also sheds light on how this industry is perpetuated by gender inequalities in each of the three levels. Additionally, all of my participants reported having been affected by the power structures created by masculine identities in sex trafficking, which suggests that hegemonic masculinity is at play within this industry. These masculine power structures fit well within the multi-leveled gender model, and they suggest how the gender as structure model within sex trafficking is affected greatly by hegemonic masculinity. The narratives also provide insight into other unexpected phenomena within sex trafficking that are affected by gender, which I highlight later in this paper.

Gender as structure.

All three levels of gender in society that Risman (1998) highlights were evident in these sex trafficking narratives, and within the levels, one can see that hegemonic masculinity is present as well. The narratives within all five interviews elucidate important aspects of how individuals’ gendered identities (level one), interactions (level two) and the overall macrostructures in sex trafficking (level three) are connected, created and reinforced.\footnote{I would like to note here that my data with regard to individuals’ identities and interactions are only applicable to my qualitative sample. Thus, it is important to understand that these specific narratives, although useful and insightful, are not pertinent to all trafficked individuals, vendors or consumers in sex trafficking. However, this is not to say that conclusions about gender in sex trafficking are not significant.}

They also shed light on how the
industry is possibly affected by hegemonic masculinity.

**Level one: gendered identities.** Risman (1998) argues that at the most basic level, we are gendered beings who identify with specific gendered identities. Thus, we are “gendered selves” whose behaviors are manifested according to our socially constructed identities (Risman, 1998, p. 7). With regard to sex trafficking, this study explored the life of trafficked individuals, traffickers and consumers in sex trafficking at the most basic level of identification: What does it mean to be a trafficked woman? A male trafficker who sells women? A male consumer who buys women? The participants’ narratives yielded noteworthy results with regard to level one of Risman’s (1998) gender as structure model in several ways. Along with providing insight into the gendered identities of females and males (and the creation of these identities), the narratives also shed light on how individuals’ lives before trafficking affected their experiences during trafficking.

**Identity before trafficking.** Before exploring the makeup of male and female identities within sex trafficking, it is important to understand individuals’ identities before their involvement in this industry. This is because, according to Risman and Davis (2013), one of the main ways gendered identities are developed is through home life and early childhood socialization. Participant narratives suggest that trafficking cannot be made. Again, my micro-level approach is not aiming to create pertinent data for an entire population; rather, it aims to elucidate data that could allow for change on a localized level.

12 As noted earlier, it is important to understand that women, although comprising a majority of sex trafficked individuals, are not the only people who are victims in this industry – men and boys are also trafficked (Reid & Piquero, 2014). Given the gender makeup of the participants for this study, I am answering questions about trafficked individuals specifically under the notion that they identify themselves as females. Additionally, although there may be exceptions (which I will highlight in this section), a male trafficker is most often the person who is in control of the trafficked individual.
childhood trauma, being raised in a dysfunctional home, sexual assault and physical abuse may have contributed toward survivor participants’ perceptions of themselves and the people around them. Thus, it is important to understand how participants’ processes of socialization affected the way they perceived themselves as gendered individuals during trafficking.

One of the main patterns that the narratives yielded about participants’ lives before sex trafficking was how sexual abuse impacted their identities. Dan, the law enforcement participant for this study, claimed that the reason that many women have been sexually abused before becoming trafficked is because sexual assault can impact one’s perception of sexuality. He said, “Most of the women that I deal with have been sexually abused as minors, which kind of diminishes the normalcy of what a sexual relationship actually means or looks like.” Thus, sexual assault can affect the way one views a sexual relationship, which could possibly affect the way she sees herself during trafficking. Caroline, one of the survivor participants, remembers a childhood where she was frequently sexually abused. This may have contributed to her believing that she was not in control of herself:

My mother started calling people and telling them that I was masturbating myself to see who would be interested in taking part of her scheme and scams. I remember her being on the phone [calling people] at 3 years old…So I’ve been fucked up my entire life. I’ve never had a clear moment where I’ve been in control. [Caroline]

Caroline said that her lack of control – the control that was taken away from her through sexual abuse – drastically impacted the way she views her sexuality:

I will never be able to really, truly explore what I’m okay with mentally as far as sex goes because I have a hard time reconciling whether or not I will ever get over the label of being a whore…And that started with my mom and her letting people assault me. So I might have desires or thoughts about things
that I’d want to try or experience sexually, but I’m still…not able to actualize those things because I still haven’t reconciled whether or not the past is still a part of my identity. [Caroline]

Caroline’s experience before being trafficked was all too common in participants’ narratives. Although varying in its manifestations, all survivor participants had experienced some form of domestic violence or sexual abuse before they were trafficked. This is noteworthy because sexual abuse during childhood and early adulthood drastically impacts one’s self-image – past research has found sexually assaulted individuals associate more negative traits with both feminine and masculine identities than non-abused individuals (Krause & Roth, 2011). Therefore, because sexual assault has been found to negatively impact one’s gendered socialization process, it is understandable that this happening in somebody’s life would create certain vulnerabilities that could make her more susceptible to trafficking.

Another noteworthy aspect of participants’ lives before trafficking was how their upbringing impacted their identity formation. Dan stated that most of the cases he handles involve women who were raised in dysfunctional households. He said, “A lot, but not all, come from broken home lives, whether it’s somebody living in a normal two-parent, suburban house to people who can barely get by in an apartment.” This diversity is important to understand with regard to my survivor participants’ upbringings: Each was raised in a household with a different socioeconomic background, yet all of them reported to have grown up in dysfunctional families. For example, Shelby said that although her family was

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13 I used the term “dysfunctional,” defined by Harter and Taylor (2000), where childhood occurs in homes with heavy physical, emotional, sexual or verbal abuse. Although poverty may be a factor, it does determine dysfunctionality (2000).
financially stable, because of her mother’s unstable relationships with men, Shelby feels that she was not raised to know how to healthily interact with men:

   I [went with my pimp] because for me, when I was 17, I was never taught how to interact with men. And my mom had been married and divorced three times, so seeing men that she had married, I guess watching my mom was not the best model for me as to how to interact with men. My dad was abusive, so I just always had this fear in my heart that you just don’t say what you think or what you feel to a man. [Shelby]

Indeed, one can see why Shelby says that her unstable upbringing impacted her naiveté when becoming trafficked—she believes her mother’s unstable relationships with men partially led her to becoming exploited by her trafficker.

Conversely, Caroline grew up in an impoverished home with parents who were drug addicts, and she believes that poverty was partially the reason as to why she was sexually abused and later trafficked. Additionally, both Vivian and Jody claimed that trauma in their childhoods led them to believing something negative about themselves:

   My mother died when I was 10 months old, and the more I learn about preverbal trauma… the more, you know, I think it affected me…It’s like I was really drawn to drama and emotional overacting…Anything that hit that spot that was dramatic, I was drawn towards it…It was the poor motherless child thing. Poor Vivian. [Vivian]

   After I got away from my pimp…I remember my dad saying, ‘I have six children. Five of them are doing great. What is wrong with you?’ And years later, I’d say, ‘Gee dad I don’t know. The sexual abuse?...We lived in a place where domestic violence happened that we were never allowed to talk about?’ …At the time, I was like, I don’t know what’s wrong with me…Because I didn’t want to be this. This is not who I am, but I felt so ashamed. [Jody]

All of the survivor participants’ narratives highlighted how their home lives—whether it was from drug abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence or trauma—affected their susceptibility to being trafficked. Their upbringings were extremely
diverse, yet it should not go unmentioned that the dysfunctionalities with regard to their childhood socialization created vulnerabilities within their perceptions of themselves when women as they grew older: Shelby felt that she was not capable of interacting with men; Caroline felt a lack of control over her sexuality; Vivian internalized a “poor motherless child” identity that prompted her to want attention from men in a sexual way; Jody felt ashamed and blamed herself for the violence that happened to her. These narratives suggest that all of these vulnerable traits could be rooted in participants’ perceptions of themselves through their upbringing, and these identities may have followed them as they were trafficked.

Past research has indicated the impact of early childhood socialization can have on the formation of gendered identities (Bem, 1993, Risman & Davis, 2013; Schwalbe, et al., 2000). Indeed, survivors’ narratives suggest that trauma, family dysfunctionalities, sexual assault and physical abuse may have contributed toward their perceptions of themselves and other gendered identities. This ultimately illustrates how Risman’s (1998) level one of gender as structure is at play within feminine identities among trafficked individuals: Their childhoods and preceding lives before trafficking ultimately initiated the development of gendered vulnerabilities upon which traffickers could exploit. Such vulnerabilities include Shelby’s lack of confidence when interacting with men, how Caroline felt that she had never had control of her life, Vivian’s creation of the victimized, “poor motherless child” identity and how Jody felt ashamed of herself because of her past. It is important to understand such vulnerabilities within identities (or level one) when I discuss the process of exploitation and how traffickers recruit women to work for
them.

**Females’ identities.** Participants’ narratives highlighted several patterns when discussing who they felt they were as women during trafficking. One such pattern was how women felt that they needed a male figure in their lives to achieve self-satisfaction, which is indicative of how survivor participants needed male approval to validate their identities. Past research has indicated that individuals who identify as female often seek validation through their male counterparts (Holstein, Goldstein & Bem, 1971; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Grossbard, Lee, Neighbors & Larimer, 2009; Thorne & Michaelieu, 1996). Participants’ narratives ultimately indicate how the “male gaze” impacts femininity is present in sex trafficking (Calogero, 2004; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Narratives also illustrate how it affects females’ identities within the context of sex trafficking. The need for male approval among women is likely to be a component of females’ gendered identities, which further highlights the composition of level one of gender as structure among trafficked individuals.

For example, Dan remembered a particular case when a pimp recruited a woman because she desired to be with a man who was good with children through social media:

I had one female who had a toddler son who lived in Washington, she posted on social media that she broke up with her boyfriend and was looking for a guy who liked kids, and that was all it took. He started telling her how beautiful she was, or that she wasn’t overweight. And he said that he’d always loved kids and wanted to have some of his own. He asked her out to dinner, paid for her to get her hair and nails done. He bought her kid a present. And in a matter of a week or two, she had fallen head-over-heels for this guy. Pretty soon, he said that he wanted her to move with him to Portland. He said, ‘You can move down here and get an apartment of your own with your son, and you won’t have to live with your brother anymore.’ She agreed, so he put her on a train to Portland. Later, she told me, ‘It never seemed fishy. He was always completely legitimate and nice. He promised me and told me all these things.’ [Dan]
Dan’s experience with this woman highlights one important aspect with regard to femininity: Some women feel as if they need a masculine figure to actualize their well being. For instance, this woman whom Dan mentions explicitly posted on a public social medium that she was looking for a guy who was good with children. Dan later said, “Why did she post this? Well, she wouldn’t have done so if she hadn’t felt that something was wrong in her life.” Thus, because she posted this, the trafficker deduced that her vulnerability (which he could exploit) is that she wished to have a man in her life for her child.

Survivor participants also highlighted how male figures were an important aspect of their lives. For example, Vivian felt that she needed sexual validation through men, which suggests that self-objectification was a way for Vivian to achieve high self-esteem:

I became very sexually active with everything except intercourse. So I gave a lot of blowjobs. And I gave them out like candy. To everybody…So I took Bill Clinton’s approach - as long as I thought that I wasn’t having intercourse, Jesus was okay with it. So I gave a lot of blowjobs…I was the blowjob queen…I didn’t necessarily want that title, but I think that it went back to being the ‘cootie girl’ in fourth and fifth grade where boys would have nothing to do with me. And then as soon as I started getting a little boob, all the boys just started lining up, and they liked me even more when I put out…Yeah. I liked being liked. [Vivian]

This suggests that for Vivian, sexual activity and whether men are attracted to her was directly related to her femininity. Thus, she “liked being liked” and was called the “blowjob queen,” because this meant that she was accepted by men and her peers. Much like how childhood socialization created possible vulnerabilities within participants’ gendered identities that may have contributed to trafficking, another possible liability within survivor participants’ identities was the need to achieve self-actualization
through a male figure. In short, the way the male gaze likely impacted survivor participants’ identities ultimately suggests how Risman’s (1998) level one of gender as structure was likely manifested through females’ construction of self around the male figures in their lives.

Risman and Davis (2013) also highlight how the process of internalizing a gendered identity falls under level one of gender as structure. One such example of internalization is how survivor participants believed that their sexuality defined them during their time as trafficked individuals. This process of internalizing a hyper-sexualized self may be connected to how survivor participants believed they were powerless, which suggests that the perpetuation of sex trafficking may involve women believing they have little control over their life. Thus, survivor participants internalizing powerless identities – which likely played part in perpetuating sex trafficking – indicates that hegemonic masculinity affects the creation of identities and the perpetuation of the overall system of sex trafficking. In survivors’ narratives, Masculinity likely held power over survivor participants because they believed that, as women, they did not have control of who they were. They also believed that their self-worth was validated through their sex appeal to men.

Both Jody and Shelby described what they internalized as trafficked women, and they mentioned their perceptions of sexuality during trafficking:

And you’re constantly being reminded that you can’t turn a house into a home, you’re not a housewife. Once a hoe always a hoe. [Jody]

[My pimp] would tell us stuff like, ‘You just need to accept this. Once a hoe always a hoe. Don't you get that?...And once those things are repeated to you so many times… And you don’t hear anything else…Then I started to believe it. [Shelby]
Jody, rather than defining herself as a woman in a traditional way (i.e., “turning a house into a home”), felt that this ability – the basic right to what she believes is the definition of femininity – was stripped from her. Instead, put in its place was the idea that her worth was through her identity as a “hoe,” and that she could never escape this. Shelby was also told “once a hoe always a hoe” by her trafficker, and because of the constant bombardment of this message, Shelby started to believe that her worth as a woman was placed in her sexuality. As Risman and Davis (2013) claim how internalization is an indicator of level one of gender as structure, through these narratives, females’ internalizations of their hyper-sexualized identities may reflect how feminine identities are likely to embody a certain hegemony that displaces power to men. An indicator of this is how Shelby and Jody believed that their only self-worth was through their sexuality, and their traffickers controlled even this.

One can also see through Shelby’s narrative how the internalization of a feminine identity in trafficking (which is often hyper-sexualized) could be related to loss of power and control. Indeed, it is evident that hegemonic masculinity in sex trafficking is likely manifested through displacing agency from trafficked individuals and given to the trafficker, which is partly achieved through females’ internalization of hyper-sexualized, powerless feminine identities. For example, Shelby felt that she completely lost control of her agency through her trafficker, and because of the way he treated her, she began to accept or believe this powerlessness. She described her thought process of this internalization and loss of power:

"Literally, there was not one person in my life during that time who was telling me anything like, ‘No you’re not a hoe. There is hope. You will get out. You will get better. We will get you help.’ Like, there was none of that. So all I got to hear was stuff that put me down… I had to believe it. Because even though I may get out,
I’ve been raped so many times I can’t even keep track, and I have a son who is a product of that, I mean, what man would want me? What guy would want that?... I’ve been so abused and used and run through that, I just for the longest time I thought I’d never get married. I’ll never find a man...

I would go through rollercoasters this whole time. The first 6 months, I was so adamant—I was like, ‘I’m going to tell on you. There’s going to be an end to this. And I’m going to make sure you serve as much time as possible.’ … And my pimp called me a ‘defiant hoe,’ and he was like, ‘You’re very disobedient. You’re a defiant hoe.’…The whole thing is traumatizing. At one point, I was keeping track of the number of tricks I was seeing, and that was devastating. Because I’d look down and think, ‘I didn’t even know this was possible! I’m the only girl in this world who has had this much sex with a different person every single time.’… It’s devastating. What I did know though was when I hit the apathy point like ‘I don’t care!’ … That was after I’d hit my low point. I thought, ‘…I just want him to kill me. Send me off to another pimp. I don’t care just do something because this guy is… I can’t do this.’ [Shelby]

If Shelby fought back, her trafficker’s beatings would “get more severe,” and it eventually led her to think suicidal thoughts because she believed that she had no power over her situation.

This internalization of lack of control may have certain ramifications with regard to the perpetuation of sex trafficking: through believing their gendered identities were powerless, and through founding their gendered identities primarily on appealing to the opposite sex, survivor participants sometimes participated in their own oppression. The subsequent perpetuation of sex trafficking that is likely caused by females internalizing powerless identities suggests that hegemonic masculinity is at play with regard to the creation of female identities in sex trafficking. The consequence of this internalization is the perpetuation of male hegemony, which ultimately may perpetuate the overall system. For example, Caroline expressed how she resorted to prostituting herself after being trafficked because that is the only thing she felt like she knew how to do to make money:

[My pimp] made me feel like I was a loser or a piece of trash because I wanted to get loaded…So, he kicked me out of the apartment that he used all that money
[from prostitution to pay for the rent]…and then I was on the street. So here I am, by this time, I’m about 13 and half. I don’t even know if I was 14 yet…And then I started, you know. I was on the street and I started just tricking myself out on my own because I had nowhere to go…I wasn’t like, top-girl, stripper material. I was short, but I was cute. But I wasn’t like the top girls who made money in that field. And so I always compared myself to that. I judged my insides and compared it to everybody else’s outsides…And I just never, I had no skills. I had nothing. All I knew how to do was lie, cheat, steal and have sex. That’s it. [Caroline]

The self-oppression in which Caroline participated is evident: Because she felt like she “had no skills” (besides sex work), Caroline resorted to prostitution even after she got out of trafficking. The perpetuation of prostitution without the trafficker present indicates that Caroline may have internalized an identity that was powerless, which prompted her to believe that the only way she could make money was through selling herself. Therefore, she unknowingly perpetuated this cycle of hegemonic masculinity and powerlessness \(^{14}\) through internalizing this identity. In short, the composition and internalization of female powerlessness and hyper-sexualized identities within level one of gender as structure may demonstrate how gendered identities can contribute to the perpetuation of sex work.

Although level one may explain how the internalization of powerless female identities is likely to affect the perpetuation of hegemony in sex trafficking, one must understand that level one of gender as structure does not exist by itself: gendered identities simultaneously create and are created by other levels of gender (Risman, 1998). Thus, it is important to understand how level one fits within the overall context of gender as structure, and how level one intersects with other levels of this model.

\(^{14}\) I discuss later how traffickers and consumers contribute to the formation and internalization of this identity, and I argue that in no way should one place blame on the trafficked individual for this internalization of her powerless feminine identity; nor should one blame her behaviors after she adopts this identity.
One such example of how multiple levels of gender affect level one is the overall social construction of feminine identities in sex trafficking. Risman and Davis (2013) claim that one characteristic of level one of gender as structure is the “construction of self,” and they also claim that the “construction of self” is affected by overall ideologies that fall under level three of gender as structure (2013, p. 746). Participants’ narratives indicated that the construction of feminine identities was affected by the broader context of gender as structure, which ultimately suggests how patriarchal ideologies are likely at play with regard to females’ identity creation.

An example of this is how all participants reported that there is a supposed “ideal” woman in sex trafficking who does not actually exist. They claimed that many people are under the impression that trafficked individuals are leading glamorous, exciting and dramatic lives, but they reported that this usually is not the case. Not only does this suggest that a proverbial, hegemonic male figure is “behind the curtain,” creating ideal identities for women (so to speak), but it also indicates how the construction of self is affected by overall gendered ideologies (or level three of gender as structure). Caroline reported that many women who were working in sex trafficking claimed that their lives were glamorous; however, she did not share their sentiments due to her past with sexual abuse in her dysfunctional upbringing:

A lot of the bottom bitches,\(^{15}\) you know those kind of women, they’d tell me like, ‘You’re getting to have sex and you’re getting paid for it. This is glamorous.’ But I never saw it that way. And I think it has to do with the way I fell into it…It started in my early childhood, when I was months old and my mom was letting that man do things to me and they were paying her bills…It was never like that for me. [Caroline]

\(^{15}\) A “bottom bitch” is often the woman who makes the most money for a trafficker. She is typically recruits other women for her trafficker, and she is in charge of the rest of his “stable” (or group of girls whom he sells). She also gets special privileges from the trafficker because she makes the most money. I explore this phenomenon in depth later in the paper.
Vivian also talked about how her reading choices and perceptions of females in the sex industry affected the way she felt about her femininity when she sold herself for the first time:

My reading choices were about girls that ran away, got pregnant, did drugs, were prostituted... And even though those books were written to dissuade one from doing that, to me they seemed dramatic and glamorous.

And so he goes, ‘I’ll give you $20 to suck my dick.’ And I wasn’t shocked, I wasn’t like, oh let me out of the car! I thought that it was something exciting, and I did it. [Vivian]

Lastly, Jody discussed how her trafficker took advantage of how female teenagers believed interacting with an older man to be exciting, which indicates that these women were persuaded into trafficking because they thought that being feminine meant being “exciting”:

I’m making somewhere between $200-300 dollars every night, he’s taking all the money, taking my two little toddlers, going downtown with his gang buddies...and picking up teenagers. Teenagers who are looking for some excitement in their life...[Jody]

If one pieces together participants’ narratives, he or she can find the description of who an ideal woman is supposed to be in trafficking. The life of an ideal trafficked woman is glamorous – she is having sex every night and getting paid for it. She is sexy enough to get money from customers, yet she must play “hard to get” sporadically to maintain her reputation. An ideal trafficked woman’s life is exciting because of the nature of her work – she makes hundreds (if not thousands) of dollars every night, and she is rewarded with fancy clothes, expensive cars and other luxuries from her trafficker. Indeed, the components of an ideal woman in sex trafficking may reflect the overall ideologies that construct level three of gender as
structure within this system.

If one pieces together participants’ narratives of what actual life may be like for trafficked women, he or she can also find the description of who a real woman may be in sex trafficking. The actual life of a trafficked woman is dirty and dangerous – she is having sex with several different men every night, sometimes without any protection. She must be seductive to get customers, yet her pimp, who regularly calls her “bitch,” “hoe,” “whore,” and “slut” simultaneously punishes her for this sex appeal. Her reputation is based on the amount of money she makes for her trafficker, who promptly takes all of her earnings after each night of work. A trafficked woman’s life is degrading and monotonous – although she makes hundreds (if not thousands) of dollars every night, she lives in constant fear because she knows that one wrong move will prompt her trafficker to beat her or abuse her. Indeed, the components of who a real woman in sex trafficking reflects participants’ narratives regarding how their femininity was constructed in the system of sex trafficking (level one).

The stark differences between ideologies and realities for women in trafficking likely illustrate that a masculine and hegemonic force is affecting level one of gender as structure. Men want sexy; men want “hard to get”; men are expected to define personal success through money; men are expected to find excitement in sex. Therefore, ideologies that may affect the construction of feminine identities in this industry embody these highly masculine traits, and the expectations surrounding female identities suggest which gender may have power. It is important to understand that the reality for all of my participants’ experiences in sex trafficking
was not glamorous, nor was it exciting and luxurious. This is seen through Shelby’s “rollercoasters” of emotions when she tried to “defy” her trafficker, and how Caroline’s trafficker repeatedly called her a “piece of trash.” Thus, hidden underneath the ideologies is a gendered power structure where female identities are at a disadvantage to their male counterparts. Masculinity may not only control the industry, but it also likely contributes to the perpetuation of patriarchal ideals that females use to construct their identities in sex trafficking. Indeed, participants’ experiences in sex trafficking indicate that there is likely a relationship between powerless female identities and the possible creation of hegemonic ideals that favor masculinity.

In short, these narratives highlight how female identities in sex trafficking are based on ideals that act as a façade that are overlaying an ulterior hegemony. These ideals (glamor, excitement, luxury, sense of control, drama, etc.) indicate that socially constructed patriarchal ideologies ultimately affect the construction of the feminine identity – indeed, the relationship between levels one and three of gender as structure is evident in females’ construction of self in sex trafficking.

In conclusion, level one of gender as structure within female trafficked individuals is likely manifested in a multitude of ways: Through females’ construction of self on the foundations of male approval, how participants internalized a powerless identity and how they believed this identity to be one-dimensionally hyper-sexualized. The internalizations of these powerless, sexualized identities ultimately led one participant (Caroline) to believe her entire self-worth was in sex work. Therefore, this indicates that a possible ramification of
internalization of powerless, hyper-sexualized feminine identities in sex trafficking is that the oppressed (trafficked women) may participate in their own oppression, which may ultimately perpetuate the cycle of sex trafficking.

It is also important to understand the ways in which level one intersects with other levels of the gender as structure model. One way the narratives demonstrate this is how the overall, patriarchal social construction of femininity may affect the construction of self within trafficked individuals. According to participants’ narratives, females construct their gendered identities based on the highly masculine, hyper-sexualized, glamorous and luxurious ideologies that are created by men in a patriarchal system. This ultimately suggests how patriarchal hegemonic ideologies (that fall under level three of gender as structure) affect identity creation, or level one of gender as structure, within females.

**Traffickers’ identities.** Level one of gender as structure also helps one understand who traffickers likely believe they are as men, which ultimately suggests how hegemonic masculinity may affect traffickers’ behaviors in sex trafficking. To begin, the most prominent trait of identification for traffickers that participant narratives highlighted was that a trafficker’s status was based on his financial success and the way his trafficked individuals looked. This is indicative of past research that addresses the overall social construction of masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2008; Kivel, 2007). One such manifestation of hegemonic masculinity in society is how men are expected to base success in their lives through the workplace, thus, money is the main measurement of

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16 It is important to note here that these narratives provided a secondhand insight into traffickers’ lives, as this study’s participants did not include any traffickers.
their success (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kivel, 2007). Indeed, the overall social construction of hegemonic masculinity and how traffickers define their masculine identities through financial success and success with women were evident in participant narratives:

Most have a history of loved ones being pimps and making a lot of money. They see it as a way to get out of the lifestyle they’ve been involved in and do this and make a lot of money in a quick time. And there is a little chance of getting caught...They spend [money] as fast as they get it. They don’t have bank accounts... They’re going on trips to Vegas...Yeah there’s this yearly convention. The pimps go down there in Vegas and flaunt their girls. But they’re buying nice cars... He may have two girls working for him and they’ll make hundreds of dollars in one night, but they’re not the ones going out to dinner… He’s taking his buddies out to the strip club and having top shelf drinks and throwing money to the girls who are on stage dancing. And then he goes back when he’s done, and he collects the money from the girls for that night. It’s all very one-sided. [Dan]

If an escort sets up a date for a blowjob [for $120], and her rules are that she doesn’t do anal sex. If the john offers her to pay her $200 for anal, the pimp’s response is, ‘You’re going to do it because he is paying you for it.’ Even if she doesn’t want to do it, the pimp is going to still include this in the date because he can get more money off of it. It doesn’t matter whether she wants to or not. [Dan]

And I remember when I was talking to him, now looking back on it, the first thing that was such a red flag was he told me told me how to dress. He was like, ‘Make sure you get fancy, but make sure you wear something with some sex appeal.’ … And I remember what he said to me, it felt so good. His thing too was that he wanted to see that his date was super good looking compared to everybody else’s. So I felt like this obligation to dress really good. I really wanted to please this guy. He’s paying cash for suits so obviously he has money. He’s super classy, super good looking. [Shelby]

His whole thing was that if we looked tip-top, then he’ll be able to get more money. Men are going to be willing to spend more on us... Like, when I found out that I was pregnant… I went back [to the pimp’s house]. When I got back and told my pimp, he was so excited and said, ‘Johns love pregnant pussy. I can sell you for $100 more.’ And literally, the amount of calls that he was getting for me doubled. Drastically doubled. And my pimp was so happy. [Shelby]

Here I am, half naked, but the thing I’m most concerned about is him taking my money. Because if I go home with no money, my pimp is going to kick my butt…Anyways, I’m walking up and down [Blank Street] every night. I’m
making somewhere between $200-300 dollars every night, he’s taking all the money. [Jody]

All of these narratives highlight how the trafficker’s success may be based on financial terms, and it is determined by how beautiful “his girls” look. Dan explained that traffickers even have a “convention” in Vegas so they can go “flaunt their girls,” and Shelby explained how her trafficker told her how to dress to look in “tip-top” shape. Jody discussed how she would make hundreds of dollars every night, and all of it would go to her trafficker. She also said that if she did not make any money, her trafficker would beat her. Indeed, it is evident that financial success and the way trafficked individuals look are likely key aspects to traffickers’ identities, which begins to illustrate how hegemonic masculinity defines men’s identities in trafficking. Thus, sex trafficking may be highly controlled by a hegemonic force that provokes traffickers to define themselves through monetary success. Additionally, the way traffickers’ identities are defined in trafficking is indicative of the construction of masculinity in society (Connell 1987, 1995, 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel, 2008; Kivel, 2007). This ultimately shows how level three of gender as structure intersects with the creation of masculine identities in sex trafficking.

Another aspect of traffickers’ identities that coalesces with the social construction of masculinity is how participants’ traffickers needed to maintain self-control at all times. Social expectations surrounding masculinity require men maintain self-control, which indicates how hegemonic masculinity is partially founded on the expectation for males to be in control at all times (Kivel, 2007). This was especially evident when Shelby discussed, “[My pimp’s] whole world could be
breaking down, but [he] can hold [himself] together and put this false swag on.” This suggests that traffickers’ gendered identities and subsequent gendered behaviors may be centered on maintaining self-control. Thus, a trafficker’s gendered, masculine identity likely embodies this control because of the social expectations surrounding what it means to “be a pimp.”

Additionally, one can deduce that masculine identities within race are at play in sex trafficking. Three of the four survivors’ traffickers were African-American, and Dan reported, “The [traffickers] that we deal with, the majority of them are black males.” Shelby claimed how her trafficker’s race might have affected his behavior:

And my pimp was black…so there was this added intimidation. I always viewed black men as more dominant and more confident than white men, because they have this false swag to them. Like, their whole world could be breaking down, but they can hold it together and put this false swag on. [Shelby]

She also reported that her pimp believed he was part of a larger system, and that his goal was to be the “best pimp” in the U.S.:

Yeah he called it The Game.17 He’d be like, ‘Don’t hate me, hate The Game,’ and he’d talk to other pimps and say, ‘The Game just got real.’ When they said they were going to ‘break The Game,’ it meant that they were going to be the best pimp in the U.S. And they were going to be known… They literally almost have a manual on how to pimp. They have a pimping manual, which is crazy to me.

Dan provided a copy of a pimping manual for this project, and it contains many of the same things that Shelby talks about with regard to “swag,” “breaking The Game,” and how their identity is supposed to be based on dominance and control (see Appendix B). Although this study did not explore the extent of reach that this document has in the sex trafficking industry, it nonetheless indicates that rules have been transcribed in an actual document. Thus, it legitimizes sex trafficking to a

17 “The Game” is the emic term for sex trafficking, according to some participants.
greater extent than if it were solely based on undocumented, non-concrete principles.

Participant narratives indicate possible social expectations surrounding masculine identities: A trafficker’s identity is likely based on financial success, control of women and property and the extent of control he has over himself. Additionally, Shelby’s narrative suggests the importance of how intersectionality between race and masculinity may involve the need to have a “false swag,” which also indicates the hegemonic masculine ideal of self-control was likely present in Shelby’s trafficker. These components ultimately reflect how hegemonic masculinity may be at play within sex trafficking in level one of gender as structure. This is because traffickers (who are men) construct and internalize identities that suggest their gendered identities have the most power.

Consumers’ identities. Although this study did not contain narratives from anybody who was a “john,” all of my participants highlighted certain behaviors that these consumers of sex are likely have. Level one of gender as structure allowed for an explanation as to why consumers of sex may be allowed to develop the transient, non-punishable identity that is the “john.” This is because within participant narratives, there was a theme that suggested males who purchase sex from a trafficker may believe they are participating in excusable behavior, thus they are likely to not associate themselves with the negative “john” identity, nor are they likely to believe this behavior is something for which they should be blamed. This suggests that the overarching hegemony that allows more power to men in sex

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18 “John” is the term for a consumer of sex. Participants also called them “tricks,” “dates,” or “customers.” Although the term “john” is the most widespread term to describe a consumer of sex, it is also highly masculinized and ambiguous, as it uses a popular male name to describe the behavior of these consumers. This is why my paper refers to “johns” as consumers of sex.
trafficking may act as a “hall pass” for male behavior (so to speak).

Dan and Shelby discussed the excuses they have encountered with regard to consumers purchasing sex. Also, Caroline’s narrative highlights how a certain consumer identified himself by his career, thus creating a possible excuse for his behavior. In short, the way consumers often avoid identifying themselves negatively as “johns” suggests how level one is possibly affected by hegemonic masculinity.

The most dominant theme within the narratives was that the demographic makeup of the “john” was extremely diverse for all of my participants. Additionally, the reasons or excuses as to why consumers bought sex were diverse as well:

Sex is the motivation behind it...I mean, is it asking for something that their spouse wouldn’t do? Is it a guy who’s a loner and cannot get in a relationship who wants to hook up with a gal? Is it somebody who’s never had sex before and wants to try it for the first time without investing in a relationship? These are all excuses I’ve heard...Every excuse that’s possible, I’ve heard. I’ve talked to hundreds and hundreds of johns, and I’ve heard everything you could possibly think of. I’ve heard from CEOs of companies and guys who spend their last $40 on a trick. And everything in between. In their mind when they make that decision to do what they’re doing, they’re justifying their actions. It’s like, ‘My wife won’t put out, so I’ll go meet this escort. I’m just doing it this one time. Just $150, no big deal.’… Whatever it is, it justifies their actions. [Dan]

And I would ask tricks, ‘Why would you do this if you’re married?’ And some of them are cool, like we could talk and have a conversation. So I’d ask, ‘Is your wife just not doing it for you?’ Their responses were varied. I’ve heard that they’d been married for over 20 years and they just want something different. I’ve heard, ‘Well my wife doesn’t have sex with me as much as I want it.’ I’ve heard, ‘I have the money to do it, so I do.’ I’ve heard, ‘Me and my wife are in an open relationship and she lets me do this.’ I’ve heard, ‘You know, I watch porn and I saw them doing things that I really want to try, but my wife would think I’m crazy.’ So they go pay for other girls to go do their fantasies with. There’s just so many excuses. [Shelby]

Dan’s narrative highlights that the consumers’ socioeconomic makeup is extremely diverse – he has arrested CEOs of companies, yet he has also arrested men who spent the last of their money on sex. Both Shelby and Dan also said that the excuses for
buying sex were extremely diverse – whether it was “My wife won’t put out,” or “I have the money to do it, so I do,” both Dan and Shelby argued that there is not a proverbial, universal identity of a “john.”

Caroline and Jody both claimed that although the demographic makeup of consumers of sex is diverse, these men only want one thing, which is sex:

In my mind, every single guy, all they want is a piece of ass, and you have to be pretty. And I had a really sick idea of what all men are like… Pussy mongers! That’s all they cared about! [Caroline]

The tricks, or the johns, or now they’re calling them the customers, are really for the most part sick individuals. Who are trying to get pleasure out of what they want to do and they figure because they’re paying for it, they can do whatever they want to you. And they can say whatever they want to you. And it’s just pretty disgusting stuff. Basically, they treat you like you’re a garbage can, and they’re putting their garbage in you. That’s how you feel. [Jody]

Although both Caroline and Jody believed consumers to have one identity (which is, as Caroline stated, being a “pussy monger”), participant narratives also indicated that consumers are likely to disassociate themselves from having a “john” identity. For example, Caroline shared a story about how a consumer of sex reacted when she and her drug dealer tried to rob him:

[My drug dealer] was like, ‘No, we’re going to rob the johns, okay?’ So I’m standing out on [Blank Street], he’s in the bushes with some other guy…So, the first guy pulls up… And he’s got a brand new truck… So I’m panicking, and I just know like, ‘Yeah we’re going to get him.’ It was sweet revenge. And man, he cried like a little bitch when they pulled up. Because I get in the truck and they come up, so it’s supposed to look like, I’m a bait. I’m supposed to act like I didn’t know they were going to be there. Then they held that gun to him and he pissed his pants. He acted like a little bitch, ‘Please don’t hurt me! I’m a Navy man and if they find out that I was hooking…’ [Caroline]

Through this narrative, it is evident that the consumer saw himself as a “Navy man,” not as a “john” who was trying to purchase sex. Therefore, one can see how consumers’ identities may not be associated with the transaction that they make for sex; rather, they
are likely to define themselves by other possible aspects of their life. This discrepancy between self-identification and physical behavior could possibly be explained through the way men are viewed in society. For example, Dan talks about how men are expected to be sexual beings, which makes the social ramifications of participating in prostitution much less severe:

If [a woman] got arrested for theft, and I got arrested for prostitution, but we apply for the same job, who are they going to hire? Do you think the stigma of prostitution arrest is going to be greater than the stigma of a theft arrest? Usually, employers overlook prostitution if it’s a guy…As a guy, you know, it’s one of those things that’s like, ‘Oh it’s something guys do and it’s no big deal.’ [Dan]

Narratives such as Dan and Caroline’s suggest the saliency of the current hegemony in society that affects the construction of male identities in sex trafficking: Not only is it excusable for men to purchase sex through a trafficker, but men are also likely to disassociate themselves from this activity and identify with other, more culturally acceptable titles that are not “john.” Because these consumers of sex have gendered identities may hold more power in society, they are likely able to create excusable behavior (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kivel, 2007).

**Conclusions.** By examining childhood socialization and upbringing, females’ identities, traffickers’ identities and consumers’ identities, it is evident that gendered identities within sex trafficking contribute to sex trafficking’s perpetuation. Females are likely to internalize powerless, hyper-sexualized identities, which is an indicator of how level one of gender as structure is constructed within females. Additionally, the ramifications of how level one of gender as structure intersects with level three indicate one of the reasons why sex trafficking is possibly perpetuated: Because survivor participants internalized hyper-sexualized, powerless identities, they became susceptible
to participating in their own oppression. The narratives also suggest that traffickers, by identifying themselves through financial success, exercising self-control and flaunting the women whom they control (according to secondhand sources), may be contributing to the overall hegemony that perpetuates sex trafficking. Additionally, their identity composition subsequently indicates how the overall construction of masculinity in society can affect male identities in trafficking. Lastly, narratives suggest that consumers, although lacking a universal demographic makeup, are able to disassociate from identifying themselves as “johns,” and they are instead able to continue to fuel sex trafficking because they are likely to believe their behavior is legitimate. This behavior, as well as the creation of the transient “john” identity, suggests that consumers of sex have gendered identities that reflect which gender has the most power in sex trafficking. Indeed, level one of gender as structure not only elucidates how masculinity and femininity are constructed in sex trafficking, but it also sheds light on how gendered identities fit within the matrix of gender as structure to perpetuate the industry in its entirety.

**Level two: gendered interactions.** Risman (1998) argues that the second level of gender involves face-to-face interaction, which is why she deems this level of gender as structure “interactional” (1998, p. 7). Such characteristics of level two include interactional cultural expectations (or the expectations of behavior within interpersonal interaction), how groups create status expectations, altercasting (or the process of manipulation and persuasion) and how gendered identities interact with one another (Risman, 2004; Risman & Davis, 2013, p. 746). All of these characteristics were evident in participants’ narratives, which shows how level two of gender as structure
affects and perpetuates the overall industry of sex trafficking. Similar to how hegemonic ideologies and the social construction of femininity affect identity construction among females (see level one), traffickers also use ideologies to recruit women into trafficking, and they use females (who have gendered identities with less power) to recruit other women as well. Moreover, there are two overarching typologies of “pimps” that are defined through how traffickers interact with trafficked individuals, which indicates how gendered interaction affects the ways traffickers maintain control in sex trafficking. Level two of gender as structure also explains how traffickers create possible mechanisms of social control (including altercasting) to keep women working for them. There are also basic relations between traffickers, trafficked individuals and consumers that are explainable through level two, including how masculinities with multiple statuses are created within the system of sex trafficking through discourse and interaction.

The recruitment process. The way traffickers recruit women to work for them involves manipulation, coercion and unequal gendered interactions between women and their male trafficker. Past research has indicated that the construction of gender within the context of hegemonic masculinity involves gendered interactions being characterized through inequality or difference in power. In other words, men use discourse and interaction to empower themselves over women through manipulation or degradation (Kivel, 2007; Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Although these power structures may be characterized as level three of gender as structure, I argue that the recruitment process and the way men gain power through recruiting women into sex trafficking is a gendered interaction (level two) because of the
altercasting and lies that traffickers use within their interactions with women.

Additionally, I argue that traffickers may act as “heroes” in recruiting women, which suggests that the recruitment process is likely fueled by unequal gender dynamics between men and women (Holub, Tisak, & Mullins, 2008; Larabee, 1990). Thus, although hegemonic masculinity is at play with regard to which gender gains power (something that falls under level three), this is ultimately manifested within the interaction.

One example of a recruitment tactic found within participants’ narratives is how traffickers lie to women to draw them into trafficking:

The women believe that they’re going to end up with the house on the hill with the white picket fence. A car with two kids. And that’s what the pimp promises them… They’re promised financial riches beyond what they could ever make on their own…Pimps talk about the finer things in life, hooks them, and then takes it all. [Dan]

He always paid cash for suits, and he would say stuff to me like, ‘Man, you are strikingly beautiful.’ It wasn’t cheesy stuff, you know? Like, no pick up lines. It was more like a classy, super respectful flirt. [Shelby]

This pimp came and presented himself as a john to the heroin dealer, took me to a hotel, and then told me, ‘You shouldn’t be having to do this. I can tell you’re younger than you seem. I’m going to save you.’ And within a couple of weeks, he started to say things like, ‘Well, we don’t have any money. We can’t make it, so if you just do this…’ And it evolved. [Caroline]

So I decided to leave, and I told him that…Then [my pimp] says, ‘But I love you.’ And I’m like, love has nothing to do with this. You know?... And so I said, ‘I’m done. I’m leaving. I’m not coming back.’ And he goes, ‘No you have to go out tonight. It’s like falling off a horse you have to get right back on it or else you won’t go back.’ [Jody]

The ideologies reflected in these narratives are: a) The trafficker “promising the finer things in life” to get women to work for them (Dan and Caroline); b) talking to women using “classy, respectful flirt” techniques (Shelby); c) assuring the girl that he is “going to save” her (Caroline); d) saying “I love you” to women (Jody). Many
of these forms of interactions are ways in which traffickers take advantage of the aforementioned vulnerabilities that come from dysfunctional upbringings. For example, because Shelby felt that she was never socialized with regard to interacting with men, when her trafficker flirted with her, she deemed it as “classy” and “respectful,” and she was unaware of the many red flags that indicated he was planning to take advantage of her. Additionally, Caroline discussed how she left her father and his drug dealer for her second trafficker because she thought he would rescue her. Thus, partly due to her dysfunctional home life and her situation with her father, when the trafficker proposed “I’m going to save you” as a recruiting tactic, Caroline left with him and became trafficked by him.

Indeed, the interactions between traffickers and recruited trafficked individuals suggest how the gender in power (the masculine figure) interacts with the gender who has less power (the feminine figure) in order to recruit her into exploitation. It also suggests that women may be susceptible to exploitation if they deem males as their “rescuers,” which past research has shown to be a common trait in gender dynamics (Holub, Tisak, & Mullins, 2008; Larabee, 1990). This suggests that in sex trafficking, just as in society (see Kivel, 2007; Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009), men may gain power through interacting with other identities characterized as unequal or of lesser power. It also suggests that the recruitment process may thrive from the savior complex (i.e., women deeming men as their “heroes”) that is manifested within gendered interactions among traffickers and trafficked individuals.

Manifestations of inequality through gendered interactions also take place
when the trafficker uses women who work for him to recruit other women for him.

Participants’ descriptions of how women recruit other women indicate a possible gendered behavior that is common among females in society: Women tend to trust women because they place more value on affiliation and emotional closeness (Felmlee, Sweet & Sinclair, 2012). Therefore, this behavior that involves same-gender interaction suggests that traffickers may use the emotional trust that is developed in female friendships to their advantage in the recruitment process (Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Felmlee, et al., 2012).

Dan and Jody both reported having come into contact with women who were working for their trafficker by recruiting other women:

What will happen is that pimps are always looking for new women. So they’ll get a girl who they trust and she trusts them. They’ll get her to recruit other women, or they’ll use her as their bottom, which is basically somebody goes out to recruit other women, to keep track of them, to manage the money…[Pimps] will use bottoms to recruit because they are not as intimidating. You know, if you have that girl in the club with you who has a Coach purse and nice clothes, and she starts talking about how much money she’s making while you’re working at McDonald’s… All of a sudden, it sounds pretty good… You set your own hours, you work whenever you want to work. She says, ‘All you have to do is meet my friend here and he’ll hook you up.’ [Dan]

So while I was looking for work, I had met this young lady who was pregnant with twins and trying to stay off of crack…She appeared to be a good person. The kids loved her, and she took good care of them…And then one day she said, ‘My brother is coming over I want to introduce you to him. He just got out of jail.’ So her brother comes over with a bunch of gang members… and they basically jumped me into the gang by being raped by all of these guys…And then I got all these requirements on me. [Jody]

It is clear that the woman who is the recruiter is working for the trafficker; however, what may not be clear is that there are still gender inequalities among the female recruiter and the trafficker. This is evident in Dan’s narrative: The woman, who is being trafficked, works for her trafficker to get more women to work for him. She “is less
intimidating,” so she can talk to women as an equal. She also physically looks like somebody who lives a luxurious lifestyle. In the scenario that Dan mentioned, she brandishes expensive clothing brands and promises girls that her trafficker will “hook them up.” Although this may look like the recruiter woman is the trafficker, this is not the case. She may have expensive clothes and promise women luxurious lifestyles; however, Dan explains that she is only creating the same ideologies that traffickers use to recruit women. The only reason that she becomes the recruiter is because she is the same gender identity as the people whom the trafficker wishes to recruit. Given the social trend of female-to-female friendships having higher levels of trust and emotional connection (see Felmlee, et al., 2012), it may be the case that the trafficker only uses females to recruit for him because it is likely to be more successful. Therefore, it is evident that gendered interactions between equal identities might play to the trafficker’s advantage in recruiting: Because she is a woman, the trafficked individual is likely to be less on guard and less intimidated by her.

An example of this interaction, although not as archetypal as Dan explained, is in Jody’s narrative. She befriended a woman who was trying to stay off of drugs, and in exchange for shelter, this woman babysat her children while Jody worked. However, shortly after becoming friends, the woman invited her trafficker brother over for dinner, and this is how Jody became trafficked (see quote).

Again, the construction of gender within the context of hegemonic masculinity involves gendered interactions characterized by inequality or difference in power (Kivel, 2007; Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Thus, men use discourse and interaction to empower themselves over women by interacting with
women, which means men are likely to exploit gendered differences in power in sex trafficking. According to participants’ narratives, the recruitment process for traffickers – whether they recruit by themselves or get women to do it for them – is a possible example of this hegemony, and its manifestations are present within interactions. Not only is the trafficker, who is male, likely to use his masculinity (and vulnerabilities within the female identity) to his advantage in recruiting, but he also may assert power over women who already work for him by getting them to recruit for him. In short, level two of gender as structure indicates how genders with different levels of power in sex trafficking interact, and how this interaction may favor males. This level also sheds light on how the recruitment process affects the perpetuation of sex trafficking: Gendered interactions can be used to the trafficker’s advantage in a process that results in more women becoming trafficked into this industry, thus sex trafficking is likely perpetuated. Indeed, at the heart of sex trafficking’s perpetuation within the recruitment process lies gendered interactions, and how these interactions are characterized by inequality or difference in power may be important to note with regard to this form of perpetuation.

**Trafficker typologies.** Several participants described how traffickers are categorized into two different types that are representative of the ways they work in sex trafficking. The reason that this section is in level two is due to how these titles are achieved, as they are based on how they interact with women. In other words, trafficker typologies are likely determined by gendered interactions within sex trafficking. Comparing these behavioral patterns helps one differentiate the patterns in which traffickers interact with the trafficked: The “gorilla pimp” resorts mostly to coercion, thus women are controlled through fear of abuse or abuse; the “finesse pimp” resorts mostly to
manipulation, thus women are controlled through their consent to an ulterior hegemony that the trafficker perpetuates. Indeed, regardless of the typologies placed on traffickers, it is evident that hegemonic masculinity – whether through violence and physical force (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Kivel, 2007) or altercasting (Risman & Davis, 2013; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009) – is at play within the different forms of social control through gendered interactions between traffickers and trafficked individuals. I explain these forms of social control later in the paper; however, this section is dedicated to narratives about trafficker typologies and how they relate to gendered interactions. 19

The first category of trafficking is called “gorilla pimping.” This kind of trafficker uses violence, threat of violence, sexual abuse and other physical forms of abuse to coerce women into working for him (see Table 1). The way this trafficker is likely to use physical force, abuse or threat of abuse suggests that there is an ulterior hegemony at play. Given that violence, sexual assault and abuse are characteristics of expectations surrounding masculinity (Kivel, 2007), it is likely that the gorilla pimp typology suggests how masculinity manifests itself within level two of gender as structure. Narratives illustrated that because gorilla pimps (who are male) interact with female trafficked individuals in a way that is likely to displace power to the male abuser, hegemonic masculinity may be present within gorilla pimps’ interactions. In his narrative, Dan illustrated the typical characteristics of a gorilla pimp:

There is this constant fear that if you don’t do things right, and even if you do get things right, there’s something that you could have done better so he beats you…It’s the stereotypical pimp. They’ll rape the women for that initial control. If the girls don’t make enough money they’ll get beat. If they look at another black man he’ll beat them…He’s an all force kind of guy…Again, it’s

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19 It must be noted here that traffickers do not call themselves by these titles; rather, they are placed on them by formerly trafficked individuals and law enforcement.
this fear: they know where your mom lives, they know who your family is…It is all about getting them to do what they want to do, and the fear of what will happen if they don’t do it. [Dan]

The interactions regarding this kind of trafficker are similar to many other forms of sexual assault, as the assailant threatens harm to the victim if she says anything or tries to remove herself from the situation (Miller, 2003; Strautchler, et al., 2004; Umberson, Anderson, Glick & Shapiro, 1998). However, his coercion is taken further in sex trafficking because, as Dan noted, gorilla pimps may threaten harm to family members or loved ones outside of trafficking in order to keep control over them. Shelby, whose trafficker she labeled as a gorilla pimp, discussed how she was initially trafficked, her experiences being trafficked and her trafficker’s behavioral tendencies:

[My pimp] picked me up… and he said he wanted to stop at his mom’s house in North Portland… It was super ghetto when we got there. It’s a huge trafficking house. The people that still live there move drugs and women through there all the time. It’s just what they do. So he took me to there, but I didn’t know what the house was at the time…When we went in…I remember my pimp walking away from me like he didn’t know me…And when he walked away the guys in the house kept looking at me. I thought, ‘Why would he let those guys look at me like that? Why are they investigating me?’ …And those guys just started walking towards me with a syringe…They didn’t know [about my black belt in self-defense] though, but when there’s three of them and one of me, I’m a natural born fighter, so I’ll do my best, but they got me to the floor and injected me with it straight into my chest. I remember screaming at first, but instantly, my entire body couldn’t move…Then I felt pressure on my head, and they were literally dragging me down the hall by my head. They took me into that back room, and as my pimp sat in the corner, all the men in that house just raped me. And I remember thinking, ‘This is never going to end.’ For me, to be a fighter and come from such a strong family, that was the most devastating part of The Game for me. Only being able to watch and hear what was going on…

Like, there was violent beatings while he was making us do stuff together. He could literally be having sex with me and punching me in the face at the same time. No problem…My pimp was more well known…And he was known for the consistency of his girls. Girls would stay with him longer than most pimps because he was more violent than most pimps.
He also took pictures of my sister… She’s super oblivious and into the glamorous life. She’s very sheltered. So he took pictures of her getting out of her car, going to the gym, getting into her apartment. And she was completely oblivious. So when I threatened to leave…he was like, ‘That’s fine. I’ll just go get her.’ And there was no way she could have handled what I’ve been through… He also knew my home address, so he’d be like, ‘Don’t forget, I know where your parents live.’ Just a bunch of different stuff. [Shelby]

This narrative highlights how Shelby was coerced into trafficking. There was little manipulation by her pimp; rather, his way of maintaining control was through physical force or threat of force. Shelby’s trafficker also threatened to hurt her family members if she left. These characteristics and methods of social control are typical of a gorilla pimp, or a trafficker who uses physical violence to maintain control over women. Jody, who also labeled her trafficker as a gorilla pimp, had a similar experience:

So [my friend’s] brother comes over with a bunch of gang members… and they basically jump me into the gang by being raped by all of these guys… I didn’t feel like I was working for him, I felt like I was being forced to do something against my will, but my children were there, and he was filling my head full of ‘Don’t you want your children to have nice things? You don’t want to be a welfare mom. This is the only thing you’re good for.’…It wasn’t like [he said] for me, ‘Oh, you’re handsome. I want to be your girlfriend.’ It was never like that. It was what we refer to as ‘gorilla pimping.’ It was truly forced, it was not romancing, or any of that. It was not the loving relationship. [Jody]

As one can see, “gorilla pimping” is defined through how the male trafficker treats the female trafficked individual, and how the interaction from the trafficker to the trafficked is purely coercive and violent. Indeed, violence is a characteristic of how men may assert their masculinity (Kivel, 2007). This form of gendered interaction indicates that hegemonic masculinity is at play with regard to how traffickers behave toward women in sex trafficking.
The second category of trafficking that was found in participants’ narratives is “finesse pimping.” This kind of trafficker, rather than using force and violence, manipulates the trafficked individual and creates an atmosphere where she is unknowingly controlled by him. Indeed, Risman and Davis’ (2013) components of level two may be evident in the “finesse pimp” through how they altercast or manipulate women. Level two of gender as structure is also evident in the way finesse pimps are to create false gendered ideologies in order to exploit women. This suggests that traffickers are using macrostructures (level three of gender as structure) within their interactions with trafficked individuals in order to manipulate them into working for them. To highlight this, Dan explained how law enforcement defines a “finesse pimp”:

This is the kind of pimp that pretends or alludes to as being involved and caring about the woman. He’s the kind of pimp that will wine and dine you. A finesse pimp will look on Facebook and find a girl who just got out of a relationship. He’ll message her and be like, ‘Hey you’re cute. What happened with your boyfriend?’ Then he’ll start building on her insecurities. And all of a sudden he’s telling her all of the things she wants to hear: ‘You know what, I have a way to have you stop living with your parents and you can make enough money to live by yourself.’ And, ‘You’ve never been to Hawaii? Well, it’s amazing. We can go there and lay on the beach by ourselves…’ And the girl is sitting there thinking, ‘I’ve never been out of Oregon. I’d love to go there.’ Or, ‘I’d love to make enough money to live in a place by myself.’ I can tell you that almost without

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<td>“I thought we were a couple…” [Caroline]</td>
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<td>“Then he’ll start building on her insecurities…” [Dan]</td>
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exception that all of the women I’ve talked to who get brought into prostitution by a finesse pimp, it starts out just like this. He finds some niche in their life that’s going on – insecurities, self-esteem – and he’ll take advantage of it. [Dan]

The stark differences between “finesse pimping” and “gorilla pimping” are evident through how each treats trafficked individuals (see Table 1). A finesse pimp is likely to take advantage of females’ insecurities, build an unequal relationship, and upon building this relationship, he proceeds to exploit her for sex. Rather than coercing her into prostitution, he takes advantage of any vulnerability a woman may have, gets her to “fall in love” with him, and then begins trafficking her. It is ultimately a form of exercising hegemonic masculinity through gendered interactions; however, rather than using physical force (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Kivel, 2007), the “finesse pimp” exercises hegemony through a different form of control: altercasting (Risman & Davis, 2013; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Caroline’s narrative highlights her experiences with a “finesse pimp:

This pimp came and presented himself as a john to the heroin dealer, took me to a hotel, and then told me, ‘You shouldn’t be having to do this. I can tell you’re younger than you seem. I’m going to save you.’ And within a couple of weeks, he started to say things like, ‘Well, we don’t have any money. We can’t make it, so if you just do this…’ And it evolved…While I was being trafficked, I thought that we were a couple. Like, we were just going to do this to get us out of that situation that he was in. He was supposed to have saved me from what was happening…But that isn’t what happened. [Caroline]

I would like to point out here that Caroline’s trafficker also beat her, which indicates that not all “finesse pimps” are completely void of physical abuse:

One time, I remember we pulled up to one of his cousin’s houses…and I was just sitting there … I just was looking out the window, and he came up and just punched me…I never saw it coming, like, it was for no reason. He said that I was looking at some guy, but I don’t think I was.
Although these two categories cleanly illustrate the difference between control through coercion (“gorilla pimping”) and control through consent to hegemony (“finesse pimping”), Caroline’s story illustrates that trafficking (and gendered interactions within trafficking) cannot be cleanly placed into mutually exclusive categories according to how the trafficker treats trafficked individuals. However, putting these two trafficker behavioral patterns (that are subsequently categorized due to frequency of occurrence) helps one differentiate the patterns in which traffickers interact with the trafficked: The “gorilla pimp” resorts mostly to coercion, thus women are controlled through fear of abuse; the “finesse pimp” resorts mostly to manipulation, thus women are controlled through their consent to an ulterior hegemony that the trafficker perpetuates. Regardless of typology, however, both gorilla and finesse pimps who were described in these narratives were likely acting upon their notions of what it means to be a male in sex trafficking. This form of hegemonic masculinity (through controlling women in a multitude of ways) is evident within gendered interactions between male traffickers and female trafficked individuals.

Through studying the “interactional” level of gender as structure (Risman, 1998; Risman & Davis, 2013), it is evident that different types of gendered interaction lead to different kinds of control; however, it must be noted that these gendered interactions, although different, they nonetheless suggest the presence of hegemonic masculinity within level two of gender as structure. This is likely shown through either physical force, violence and abuse in “gorilla pimping,” (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Kivel, 2007), or altercasting and manipulation in “finesse pimping” (Risman & Davis, 2013; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Indeed, these trafficker typologies illustrate that the overall social
construction of masculinity (level three) may affect forms of social control that traffickers use within their gendered interactions with women.

_Mechanisms of social control._ Now that the typologies of traffickers have been established using level two of gender as structure, it is important to understand the details of how traffickers maintain social control. Within trafficker-to-trafficked interactions, one can find mechanisms of social control that the trafficker uses to maintain power, and as I argued in the previous section, these mechanisms are used to define the two different proverbial typologies of traffickers. Such mechanisms include how traffickers use surveillance to maintain power over women, how they reify powerless identities within women through putting them down and control is exercised within traffickers’ rules and regulations for women. Not only do these mechanisms shed light on how trafficking is perpetuated, but they also show how hegemonic masculinity (and the overall social construction of masculinity) is at play within level two of gender as structure.

Although there may be two distinct typologies of “pimps,” these mechanisms are not mutually exclusive to one typology; rather, these are general patterns that participants highlighted that are applicable to both “finesse pimps” and “gorilla pimps.” I argue that mechanisms of social control manifested through gendered interactions reflect an overall social construction of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity, thus indicating how level three of gender as structure affects gendered interactions (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2008; Kivel, 2007; Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). I also argue that because hegemonic masculinity is manifested through interactional mechanisms of social control, one can see that level two of gender as structure contributes to the perpetuation of trafficking.
One such mechanism of social control is how traffickers make women who are working for them feel as if they cannot get out. Indeed, the way women felt that they were unable to leave the situation they were in was likely manifested at the interactional level. The notion of inescapability is common within other forms of domestic violence and control (see Strauchler, et al., 2004). And, because male traffickers are likely the individuals to create this notion of inescapability within women, this suggests that sex trafficking is perpetuated within mechanisms of social control at the interactional level of gender as structure. The narratives highlight this – survivor participants reported that they “felt stuck” while working for their traffickers:

I was constantly butting heads with him, and the beatings would get more severe, and then I would try to fight back more severe…but then I would hit this low point, like, ‘This is my life. How will I ever get out?’ And then I would just sit there and wait for johns. Wait to go to calls…I thought, ‘My family isn’t looking for me, like, this is my life’…And then I’d hit this suicidal stage of, ‘Please, just kill me.’ [Shelby]

I had no power. I mean, I guess I could have left him but I didn’t know I could. I just needed to belong. I didn't have any original thought. I didn’t think that I could get out of that. I just thought I belonged to him. [Caroline]

Through these narratives, one can see the different ways in which traffickers create the notion of inescapability within trafficked individuals through gendered interactions: for Shelby, although she may have resisted her trafficker at first, through physical force, her trafficker subdued her resistance and replaced it with a feeling of “How will I ever get out?” It is understandable that Shelby labeled her trafficker a “gorilla pimp”: his mechanisms of social control almost always involved physical abuse and trafficking through coercion. Conversely, Caroline’s trafficker created a manipulative, highly one-sided relationship where she “needed to belong,”
yet “felt like [she] belonged to him.” This mechanism of control is similar to “finesse pimping.” Although her trafficker may have sporadically resorted to violence, Caroline said that the main reason why she stayed with him was because she thought that she was his girlfriend.

Jody’s situation also provides insight into how traffickers may resort to isolation as a way to prevent women from leaving, which is similar to other forms of domestic violence in how abusers maintain control over victims (Strauchler, et al., 2004).

You’re stuck in this bubble. You’re being locked in everyday, and so you’re stuck. And you can’t call anybody. Or, you don’t think you can call anybody. I look back sometimes and go, ‘Couldn’t I have called my parents and said what was going on?’ No I couldn’t because I couldn’t even do that when I was with my husband. I tried to call my parents once, and he broke the phone over my head…I started living in this bubble with my first husband…Because he was always raping me and always showing me snuff films, and he was beating me. So the violence and sexual violence was there. [Jody]

This narrative also sheds light on how previous abusive relationships contributed to her feeling “stuck in a bubble.” Because her trafficker locked her in her room when she was not prostituting, she felt completely removed from the outside world; thus, she felt that she lacked the ability to get help. Also, the fact that her husband “broke the phone over her head” when she tried to get help during her first marriage contributed to this isolation – a combination of her past and her trafficker’s methods of control likely contributed to Jody feeling that she was unable to escape trafficking.

Indeed, one can see how physical violence, manipulation and isolation may be at play in the interactional level with regard to the perpetuation of sex trafficking: all of these ways of social control likely kept women from fleeing their traffickers; thus, these interactional mechanisms facilitated the cycle of sex trafficking. One can also
see how level three of gender as structure, or the overall social construction of masculinity, is manifested in males’ behaviors toward women: traits such as aggression (Kivel, 2007), isolation (Strauchler, et al., 2004) and manipulation though heteronormative ideologies (such as “I love you,” or “You're my girlfriend”; Kivel, 2007; Risman & Davis, 2013; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009) suggest that males are likely “doing gender” in a way that reflects the overall social construction of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Thus, the way traffickers exercise interactional mechanisms of social control that create the feeling of inescapability for women indicate how levels two and three of gender as structure work together to perpetuate the cycle of trafficking (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Levels Two and Three of Gender as Structure affecting mechanisms of social control.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2 – Interactional Mechanisms of Social Control:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical violence/threat of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Manipulation through heteronormative ideologies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3 – The Social Construction of Masculinity and Hegemonic Masculinity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men are expected to be aggressive and violent, controlling of women and heterosexual. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Kivel (2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Traffickers’ behaviors when controlling trafficked individuals are affected by the overall construction of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity: The overall construction of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity are perpetuated in sex trafficking when traffickers exercise these mechanisms of social control.*
Another mechanism of social control is how survivor participants’ traffickers surveyed women through their interactions, thus creating a near-panopticon scenario for the trafficked women. This mechanism shows how traffickers likely perpetuate the overall cycle of sex trafficking through the process of surveillance at the interactional level of gender as structure. Participants’ experiences indicated that through trafficking, they were placed in a world where constant vigilance was required for survival. For trafficked individuals, one misstep meant that there were serious ramifications:

In the back of the women’s minds, they know what would happen [if they broke the rules]. They’d get beat. I knew one pimp who threatened to shoot his women if they didn’t follow the rules. And the girl never got beat at all for not doing what she was told, but in the back of her mind, she was thinking, ‘Oh, if I don't do what he’s telling me to do, I could be that girl he talked about that he stuck a gun to her head and pulled the trigger.’ But she doesn’t know that the gun is empty… They put this fear in them that something serious is going to happen… This kind of control is used so much that it has a name. It’s called ‘out of pocket.’ They’ll have it to the point that the woman can leave the city, but she still works for him… Again, it’s this fear: they know where her mom lives, they know who her family is. So if [she] leaves the city, she better text [her pimp] and tell me she made money that night… It is all about getting them to do what they want to do, and the fear of what will happen if they don’t… And the girls are there night after night. And the only work he has to do is instill this fear in them that if they don’t do what he tells them, they’re going to get beat. He doesn’t have to actually beat them. The fear just has to be there. [Dan]

I knew their process though, so I knew I couldn’t keep anything. If I tried to hide [the money], he would know. And sometimes he knew that some tricks would give tips, so he’d play this really smart game. He would count to the total the trick paid, and then be like, ‘Where’s the rest?’ Like he already knew that we got a tip. So I’d panic and be like, ‘Okay okay I’m so sorry, here’s the extra $20.’ But really he had no idea if we got a tip or not. [Shelby]

And the cops are trying to get me off clean…I actually know who [the prominent pimps and drug dealers] are, but I’m not going to tell [the police]… You don’t snitch… I’m sitting there, and my lawyer tells me that if I told them who the people are, I’d be out tomorrow. And I’m like, ‘Yeah well if I’m out tomorrow then that means someone would kill me and I wouldn’t be there for my kids.’ [Jody]
The mechanism of social control is evident through Dan, Shelby and Jody’s narratives: for Shelby, Jody and the woman in Dan’s narrative, there was a system of punishments set in place, and if they did not follow their trafficker’s rules, he exercised these punishments in order to maintain control. Dan’s narrative highlights how traffickers may exercise control over women through threats. He claimed that traffickers do not have to pull the trigger for women to understand the ramifications of “going out of pocket.” Shelby’s narration of how her trafficker collected the money she earned for the night illustrates such surveillance exercised by the gender in power. He had no idea whether she received any extra money for the night, yet he assumed she did in order for her to give him all of the money. By him saying, “Where’s the rest?” she knew that if he did find any extra money, he would beat her. Therefore, she had to succumb to his requests.

Jody’s explanation of why she never “snitched” to the police also highlights the control traffickers have over the trafficked, and because of this, there is extreme difficulty in persecuting traffickers through the law system. Because she had been told repeatedly that she and her kids would get hurt if she talked to the police, Jody refused to let law enforcement help her, and she continued to live in a world of isolation and violence. Therefore, through coercion, Jody was scared for her life, which likely contributed to her inability to help the police prosecute the real criminal. Instead, she was charged with the crime. Indeed, this narrative suggests how surveillance by males in trafficking may not only keep women from having power, but it also likely prompts trafficked individuals to perpetuate the system, and it displaces females’ agency to the trafficker who is exercising control.
In short, the interactional level of gender as structure may be manifested in the way traffickers survey women (through threat of violence [Dan and Jody] and mind games [Shelby]) in order to maintain control. Thus, this hegemonic, highly masculine cycle that constitutes the foundations of sex trafficking is likely perpetuated through surveillance, which is yet another interactional mechanism of social control that may displace power to male traffickers.

Another example within narratives of the manifestation of hegemonic masculinity within ways traffickers control trafficked individuals was how traffickers constantly put down women, which validated their own masculinity in the process. This mechanism of social control suggests that male traffickers validate their masculinity by associating negative traits with other gendered identities (see Pascoe, 2007), which is an indicator that the overall social construction of masculinity is likely at play in level two of gender as structure. Shelby, Caroline and Vivian’s narratives highlighted how men repeatedly treated them as unequal through discourse and interaction:

And he would tell us stuff like, ‘You can get out of [prostitution], but you will always be a hoe, don’t you ever forget that.’ [Shelby]

I woke up and I was laying on top of just a mattress...And when I walked out... I tried unlocking the doors, but the guys were like ‘Whoa whoa whoa, where are you going?’ One guy immediately picked up his gun and walked towards me...And he told me to take a seat... It was super degrading. They had me sit in the living room with no clothes on. And they just kept making remarks about my body and the night before. Just gross stuff. [Shelby]

He said that I was like a piece of trash because I kept wanting to smoke meth. Like, I couldn’t to this stuff and be okay without having drugs. [Caroline]

He was a wife beater. The whole relationship was very emotionally charged with him breaking up with me and putting me down all the time...He would tear the house up, and then leave a note saying, ‘Clean this house you whore!’ [Vivian]
One can see the connections between hegemonic masculinity and the way traffickers put down trafficked individuals: past research has shown that an indicator of hegemonic masculinity through interaction is how they interact with the opposite sex (Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Thus, the act of calling a woman a “hoe” (Shelby), a “whore” (Vivian) or a “piece of trash” (Caroline) is likely indicative of the manifestation of hegemonic masculinity in the interactional behaviors of traffickers. Through this interaction, traffickers ultimately exercised power over these women, and because traffickers repeatedly treated them in this manner, survivor participants proceeded to internalize (or believe) this as their identity. Therefore, not only is level two of gender as structure affected by the overall, hegemonic macrostructures (see Figure 2), but because these interactions also reify females’ powerlessness, survivor participants ultimately internalized this. Therefore, one can understand how the act of a male putting down a female affects the “construction of self” of a trafficked individual within level one of gender as structure. This suggests that within this internalization of being a “hoe” lies the perpetuation of sex trafficking: men’s interactional behaviors toward women are likely to affect the way women believe who they are, which in turn may perpetuate the cycle of inequality by reifying the unequal, gendered power structures that comprise sex trafficking.

Shelby, Caroline and Vivian all reported having been called negative things like “hoe,” “a piece of trash” and “whore.” This suggests that hegemonic masculinity is at play through males’ mechanisms of social control because, as these narratives highlight, men gave themselves power by putting down these women. Shelby even reported it was “super degrading” when she was forced to sit naked on a couch while men made remarks
about her body. It is evident that because men associate women with negative traits, this may validate their masculinity and the power they have within their gender, which is yet another indicator that the overall social construction of masculinity is likely at play in level two of gender as structure. This mechanism of control through interaction is yet another way men are likely to remove agency in women, and this shift in power may allow for control over the agent-less gender. It also is a factor in the perpetuation of the power dynamics in sex trafficking: narratives suggested that because men are likely to validate their masculinity through putting down women (and they are subsequently able to maintain power and control over them), the system of sex trafficking may facilitate the masculine, unequal structures it needs to function.

The last mechanism of social control is how traffickers create a system of rules and regulations for females to follow. Risman and Davis (2013) argue that one characteristic of level three of gender as structure is “organizational practices” (p. 746). However, it needs to be noted here that the implementation of “organizational practices” (or, in sex trafficking, traffickers’ rules for females) requires gendered interaction (or level two), which is why these rules are likely another form of an interactional mechanism of social control. Through this implementation of rules, traffickers may not only prevent women from gaining power, but they also are likely prevent other traffickers from threatening their masculinity. Indeed, the social construction of masculinity affects these rules, yet the process of implementation is most crucial: Kivel (2007) argues that one such way hegemonic masculinity is manifested is through males’ ability to control women (see also Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Thus, this precise interaction that
instigates control over trafficked individuals was most prominently highlighted in the way participants described traffickers’ rules.

The most noticeable rule that Dan and the survivor participants discussed was that women were not allowed to look at or interact with other African-American men. Dan explained why this was the case: “The people that we deal with, the majority of pimps are black males…If a girl looks at another black man…Pimps are fearful that this black man is another pimp and will recruit them out of his stable20…They don’t want to lose their money.” Survivor participants also highlighted how prominent this rule was in each of their traffickers’ systems:

So with my pimp, if I posted on Craigslist, he would always tell me, ‘If he sounds black you’re not taking him. If you walk into the room and he seems black you better turn around and walk out. If you walk in and he starts talking The Game to you, walk out…If I basically looked at another pimp, I’d get backhanded. [Shelby]

And the way the pimp world works, you’re never supposed to talk to another black guy… And the reason was, pimps would pose as johns and they’ll find women who are maybe new or girls who are new, so that’s what happened to me. [Caroline]

Heaven forbid if I looked another gang member in the eyes, he’d slap me… and say that was against the rules. There were all these rules that I’d never experienced in my life… If you broke them, then you got beat up. [Jody]

This rule suggests how hegemonic masculinity is likely present in traffickers’ systems of interaction: if a woman, whom the trafficker controls through interactional mechanisms of control, looks at another African-American man, she is likely threatening her trafficker’s masculinity. Why? Because the other African-American man could pose a threat to the trafficker’s “stable” by potentially having the ability to steal this woman. Therefore, not only would a woman be claiming power if she interacted with another

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20 A trafficker’s “stable” is the group of women who works for him.
African-American man, but through this interaction, she may also take power away from her trafficker’s masculinity if this African-American man recruits her to work for him. Because of this supposed threat of the displacement of power to females and other males with whom the trafficker is competing, it is understandable that the first rule that participants highlighted was that they were not allowed to interact with traffickers’ competition.

Another insight into these rules involves the concept of vulnerability within traffickers. Kivel (2007) notes that one aspect of masculinity is vulnerability: because men are expected to exercise complete control, this creates a certain form of vulnerability within their gendered identities. One such vulnerability within traffickers’ lives could be indicated in the creation and implementation of this rule, as men are likely creating safeguards to hide their vulnerabilities through gendered interactions with women and the implementation of rules in sex trafficking. In other words, if a trafficker feels threatened by men who could act upon his vulnerability, it is sensible that he would create a system of rules that keep him safe from other traffickers doing so. These rules that act as safeguards are likely kept in place through traffickers implementing interactional mechanisms of social control over women, which in turn may protect and displace power to masculine identities.

To conclude, the way traffickers use gendered interactions to exercise mechanisms of social control over trafficked individuals is evident in how traffickers may make women feel as if they are unable to escape the system, and in the way traffickers survey and threaten women. Additionally, the discourse of traffickers putting down women and associating negative traits with their gender, and the system of rules set in
place to keep women from gaining power, also highlight the gendered hegemonic force that is likely driving these social interactions to differentiate the powerful (males) from the powerless (females).

Additionally, one can understand the matrix of social control within the way all three levels of gender as structure intersect, and how these intersections affect the perpetuation of sex trafficking; however, the crucial level to the implementation of social control over trafficked individuals lies within level two. Highlighted in narratives were how physical violence, manipulation and isolation are at play in the interactional level, and how they may contribute to the perpetuation of sex trafficking within mechanisms of social control. Within participants’ narratives, the way traffickers implemented these mechanisms likely facilitated the cycle of sex trafficking: women were unable to escape, thus they were prompted to continue working for traffickers (creating the notion of “inescabability”); women also internalized a powerless, “hoe” identity through men’s interactional behaviors toward women, which in turn may have perpetuated the cycle of inequality by reifying unequal, gendered power structures; and lastly, the way traffickers exercised surveillance through their interactions with women contributed to the perpetuation of sex trafficking, as women feared the ramifications of what would happen if they challenged traffickers’ ways.

One can also see how level three of gender as structure, or the overall social construction of masculinity, is likely manifested in the interactional level: the social construction of masculinity is at play in traffickers’ behaviors of creating an inescapable, highly surveyed environment for trafficked individuals, and it may also be at play in traffickers’ name calling and treatment of women (see Figure 2). In addition, traffickers’
rules may not only reflect the underlying hegemonic structure upon which these interactional mechanisms of social control are exercised, but they also act as safeguards that protect traffickers’ vulnerable masculinities. Therefore, all mechanisms of social control, although highly intersected among all three levels of gender as structure, are likely exercised at the interactional level. This ultimately allows one to understand the complex matrix of sex trafficking and how power structures are created and reinforced within the system.

*How consumers of sex are perceived.* Participants highlighted noteworthy forms of interaction with regard to consumers of sex. Through these interactions, one can see how hegemonic masculinity is likely manifested by the creation of multiple masculinities with different levels of power based on hegemonic ideals (see McGuffey & Rich’s [1999] concept of the gender transgression zone). Therefore, because traffickers are likely to exercise more control over women, they may hold a higher status within the system than consumers of sex (who are also male), which ultimately differentiates two masculinities based on interactional behaviors: much like the adolescent boys who exercised more control within social situations that were mixed-gendered, male traffickers were likely to exercise more control than their male consumer counterparts because they exercised more hegemonic masculinity (McGuffey & Rich, 1999). To begin, between the traffickers and consumers, Dan said that it is purely a business transaction:

“It’s about whether they get their money…The pimp has the girl set up a date online, and the john agrees to pay her $120 for a half an hour. Now pimps know that it doesn’t take 30 minutes to do whatever goes on that room, so if it does go more than a half an hour she better have more than $120. More likely than not, if he goes over, the pimp is going to be knocking on the door saying ‘time’s up.’…[Displays picture of white man with swollen face and two black eyes] You see that guy right there? He didn’t leave money for the girl he tried to have sex
with, so the pimp chased him down and beat his ass...It’s all about the money between the pimps and Johns. [Dan]

Additionally, Shelby highlighted how traffickers do not think of consumers of sex highly:

And to pimps, tricks are like scum of the earth to them. Like, lowest, douchebags with a lot of money. They don’t care if a girl rips a trick off, and a lot of times my pimp would tell me to take anything of value that’s the trick’s if they go into the bathroom or leave the room or something. Pimps literally don’t care about tricks at all. [Shelby]

Through these narratives, one can see how the interaction between consumers of sex and traffickers is purely business, and because traffickers have total control over the product and transaction (i.e. they have total control over the woman), traffickers may feel that they are of higher status than consumers. Indeed, this notion that traffickers have more power than consumers through how they have more control over women is similar to McGuffey and Rich’s (1999) claims that there can be masculinities that have unequal levels of power in a social situation. Thus, not only does this interaction validate the treatment of females as commodities, but it also creates a system of masculine hierarchy within sex trafficking: the man who has more power over the woman is likely to have a higher status than the man who is purchasing her, and the woman is in a bind because she is working in a system that allows her little agency. Nowhere else are these two masculine statuses more prevalent than in Vivian’s narrative about a consumer trying to become a trafficker:

[Talks about one john in particular]... He was what you’d call a ‘Captain Save a Hoe’, so he’d rescue these girls and would set up an apartment, and he had a wife, so what he was doing was taking little bits out of their joint account and loaning it to girls, and when [the girls] would pay it back, he was getting his own account set up. To hide money from the wife. He set up several women in hotels. And I remember...he would start acting like her pimp. One time, something went wrong, and he was like, ‘You’re the one who is keeping our money!’ and I was like, ‘Us? We? You’re not the one with your legs in the air. You’re married. You’re just a trick.’ He was trying to pimp, and I was like, ‘Excuse me, No!’
Although this scenario was completely unique to Vivian’s experience, it still illustrates how the someone with a masculine identity with less power who tried to ascend to a higher masculine status (to a trafficker) could not do so because of his perceived identity by other characters in sex trafficking. For instance, because Vivian perceived “Captain Save a Hoe” as a consumer, she did not believe that he controlled her, as she believed about her trafficker. This consumer’s attempt to ascend to a trafficker’s status suggests that there may be a hierarchy of masculinities between the traffickers and consumers of sex.

**Conclusions.** Level two of gender as structure is evident in sex trafficking in the following ways: through traffickers’ recruiting techniques and creation of ideologies to pull women into trafficking, through the way traffickers use other women to recruit potential trafficked individuals, how the typologies of traffickers are defined through the way traffickers treat women, how the different kinds of mechanisms of social control that traffickers use maintain a system of gendered hierarchy and hegemony and how relations between traffickers and consumers of sex create a multi-status system of masculinities in sex trafficking. The “interactional” level builds upon the gender inequalities evident in the “identity” level of sex trafficking. One can see how social constructions of the “ideal” female identity (see level one) are likely used by traffickers in the recruitment process as they interact with the women – they may use these ideologies to convince women into sex trafficking, or they use women (who have less power and are less intimidating) to convey these ideologies to women whom they are recruiting. Additionally, one can see how the implementation of interactional mechanisms of social control contributed to
survivor participants internalizing powerless female identities, which also indicates how level two of gender as structure affects the formation of identities (level one).

The ways in which traffickers use interactional mechanisms of social control also suggest how levels one and two of gender as structure work within hegemonic masculinity to create a system of inequality (see Figure 3), however, I argue that it is at level two that the process of recreation and instigation likely takes place: traffickers’ behaviors when interacting with women may be the media through which unequal identities (level one) and social constructions of gender (Three) are perpetuated.

**Figure 3. Interactional Mechanisms of Social Control and their effect on Levels One and Three of Gender as Structure.**

**Level One** – Formation of Feminine Identities and Internalization of Powerlessness

**Level Two** – Interactional Mechanisms of Social Control
- Creating “inescapability”
- Surveillance of women
- Putting women down (“hoe,” “whore,” and “a piece of trash”)
- Women are not allowed to look at or interact with African-American men

**Level Three** – Social Construction of Gender

Traffickers’ behaviors instigate the perpetuation of inequality by reinforcing these overall social constructions through their interactions with women.

Lastly, traffickers’ perceptions of and interactions with consumers of sex also highlight how gender as a structure within sex trafficking likely creates a system of multi-status masculinities, which is indicative of hegemonic masculinity in greater society (see McGuffey & Rich, 1999). Participants’ narratives suggested that because traffickers
exercised more control over females, they were considered to have a higher masculine status than consumers, who had little power over females outside of purchasing them for sex. This interaction also suggests how hegemonic masculinity is likely exhibited among multiple masculinities: the person with the highest status may be the man who can exercise the most control over other gendered identities who have less power.

**Level three: gendered macrostructures.** Risman (1998) argues that the largest level of gender as structure is “institutional,” that is, gender is a macrostructure which contains mechanisms that affect gendered interactions and identities (Risman, 1998, p. 7). Some examples within level three that Risman and Davis (2013) highlight include, “organizational practices,” “ideologies,” and legalities or rules (p. 746). Gender as a macrostructure is also created by these interactions and identities (see Figure 1). Thus, the institutional level of gender is structured by and continues to structure the other two levels of gender – it is a system in which behaviors are simultaneously controlled by and recreate gender on all levels of society (Risman, 1998, 2004; Risman & Davis, 2013). Such a system was evident in participants’ narratives with regard to sex trafficking, especially when one applies hegemonic masculinity to the macrostructure of gender in this industry.

**Hegemonic masculinity in gender as structure.** Before analyzing the presence of level three of gender as structure within participants’ narratives, it is important to understand and conceptualize all of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity has affected gender as structure thus far. In level one, it is evident that the validation of power in masculine identities through financial success and control over women, and the perpetuation of feminine ideologies by men, are likely indicators of the production of
unequal gendered identities in gender as structure in sex trafficking. These concepts ultimately shed light on how hegemonic masculinity may be affecting the creation of identities: financial success, self-control and control over women as indicators for masculine identity formation suggest that men strive to have the most power in the workplace, and over other gendered identities, which likely fosters competition among other men and validates unequal levels of power between men and women. Hegemonic masculinity, as suggested in past research (see Connell, 1987, 1995, 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2008; Kivel, 2007) also affects certain ways women internalize powerless identities. Thus, there is a hegemonic ontology that not only makes trafficking likely seem as “glamorous, exciting and dramatic” for women, but it also simultaneously hyper-sexualizes the female, thus reinforcing hegemony in masculinity (see level one).

Hegemonic masculinity may also be evident within level two of gender as structure: traffickers’ recruitment processes may use ideologies and other females to portray less intimidation by the trafficker; trafficker typologies are likely determined through the way traffickers interact with women; and mechanisms of social control are maintained by men through interpersonal interaction (see Figures 2 and 3). In short, through studying hegemonic masculinity, one can see that gendered interaction (within the matrix of gender as structure) may create a system of inequality that gives advantage to the gender with the most power in sex trafficking: the man.

“The Game.” If the construction of gendered interactions and identities favors men, then the macrostructure may be how hegemonic masculinity affects the
“organizational practices” within the system of sex trafficking (see Figure 4). In other words, the system of sex trafficking (or the overall operations and organizational practices; Risman & Davis, 2013) is likely affected by the construction of hegemonic masculinity within sex trafficking. For example, Shelby’s narrative about “The Game” explains how hegemonic masculinity impacts sex trafficking as a system:

In The Game, let’s say I’m a pimp and you’re one of my girls. If you were to call... and you knew that you wouldn’t get caught or else you’d get beat up, if that pimp is saying, ‘I know all about your pimp. He doesn’t do you right.’ And for the girl, it goes straight into that smart mind game of talking... And then you ask, ‘Oh what if my pimp finds out. Could you protect me?’ And he goes, ‘Don’t worry about it. This is all part of The Game.’ And you could leave with him, and the pimp will call the old pimp and be like, ‘Oh, sorry bro. She chose me. She’s going home with me. Don't even come around her or fuck with her.’ And there’s nothing the old pimp could do about it. It’s just a part of The Game...I noticed that from pimp to pimp relations, it’s almost like they get to make the rules. And if one of them breaks the rules, it’s cool, like, ‘Oh sorry bro, she chose me instead.’ They might get mad at each other, but within a few months, they’ll all start getting along. They’ll go back to, ‘Hey bro can we come down and crash with you, and we’ll bring these girls. I’ll bring some too.’ And when they say that stuff, you know, it’s always a win-win for them.

Indeed, the way sex trafficking is labeled as “The Game” for three of the four survivor participants indicates that this industry is likely based on competition among males to get the most money and control the most women as possible, which suggests that hegemonic masculinity is at play (Kivel, 2007). “The Game” may ultimately symbolize the scope of power that men have with regard to the construction of gender in sex trafficking: not only are traffickers likely to use females as pawns in competition amongst themselves, but they also validate their own masculine identities through the unequal treatment of women. And through this treatment and hegemony, women are subject to internalize this

21 When applying Risman’s (1998) gender theory to macrostructures in sex trafficking, it is evident that level three of gender as structure contains many phenomena. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I only explore the effect of hegemonic masculinity on the institutional level, and I suggest how this level fits within the three-level matrix of gender as structure.
inequality and powerlessness. Thus they may start to believe that they deserve to be treated by men in this way, and this internalization only reifies the overall organizational practices. It truly is a “win-win” for traffickers: either women get punished by their traffickers for failing to follow the rules and adopt their powerless identities, or they internalize these identities and continue to work for the trafficker to perpetuate the system. Either way, the trafficker is likely the person who gains power in the system.

Figure 4. Risman’s (1998) multi-leveled gender theory as applied to hegemonic masculinity in “The Game.”

LEVEL 1
- Masculinity is defined by financial success, self-control, and control of women.
- Females internalize hyper-sexualized, powerless identities.

LEVEL 2
- Recruitment processes – interaction using ideologies and/or other women
- Pimp typologies – determined through interaction
  - Assert control over females through coercion (“gorilla”) or altercasting (“finesse”)
- Mechanisms of social control lead to female commodification.

LEVEL 3
Hegemonic masculinity within the macrostructure of sex trafficking:
- “The Game”
  - Fosters male competition
  - Creates a system in which females are commodified
  - Men who are in control of get all the power.

Individual identities, through behavior, reinforce overall hegemonies and inequalities that exist within society, which in turn shape how individuals feel they should perceive themselves.

Gendered interpersonal interactions also reinforce overall hegemonies and inequalities, which in turn affect how individuals interact with each other.
This figure highlights and suggests how hegemonic masculinity affects the organizational practices and ideologies that compose level three of gender as structure within sex trafficking. “The Game,” or the highest level of gender in sex trafficking (which is a system of oppression that facilitates competition among men), is composed of hegemonic ideologies that indicate how the overall social construction of masculinity is at play: men are expected to be aggressive, powerful, competitive, in control (of women and of themselves) and experienced in heterosexual sex (Kivel, 2007). Thus, all of these characteristics likely create the ontological foundations for “The Game,” or sex trafficking.

In addition to highlighting level three ontologies, narratives also indicated how “The Game” and the ideologies and organizational practices within this level fit among the other levels of gender as structure (see Figure 4). The ways masculine identities are defined in level one perpetuate gendered behaviors that reflect hegemonic masculinity within “The Game.” Additionally, the process of internalizing institutional, level three ideals (i.e. powerlessness and hyper-sexuality) within female identities affects how “The Game” is likely perpetuated. Within level two, recruitment processes, trafficker typologies and their mechanisms of social control suggest how the implementation of level three’s “organizational practices” occurs at the interactional level. In short, as one can see in Figure 4, perpetuation of sex trafficking cannot occur at one level; rather, it happens when phenomena of gender as structure interact with and recreate each other on all three levels. Indeed, “The Game” that is sex trafficking may be thoroughly explained through gender as structure, which highlights how the saliency of the construction of gender in society likely perpetuates a system of inequality.
**Other observations.** Although Risman’s (1998) multi-leveled theory of gender as structure may be evident within participants’ narratives about sex trafficking (and it is established as to how hegemonic masculinity likely perpetuates these overall structures), there were also other phenomena within these narratives that could not be placed neatly into this concept. These phenomena are worth noting due to the fact that the construction of gender plays part; however, I must stress that this study was not aiming to explore in-depth any of the following items. Therefore, although I will explain in detail what my participants discussed with regard to the following concepts, I recommend that they should be further studied in future research.

**The “bottom bitch” phenomenon.** The phrase “bottom bitch” was mentioned in three of the five narratives for this study. This term (see Footnote 13) refers to the individual who makes the most money for her trafficker within his group of women. This phenomenon highlights how traffickers may create competition within women in order to keep them working for him. The title “bottom bitch” is what women may strive to earn from their trafficker, and they compete to see who earns the most money in order to gain this title. Indeed, this capitalist-like phenomenon that the trafficker imposes upon trafficked individual indicates that capitalist ideals may be at play with regard to the perpetuation of sex trafficking. However, I suggest this phenomenon be further studied in order to understand how the “bottom bitch” title affects the inner-workings of sex trafficking. Dan described the part this woman played in a trafficker’s system:

And the reason the pimps do this is to make it so that the bottom doesn’t have to work as hard – she may only have to do one or two tricks every night, while the other girls are turning five or six. The bottom collects the money. The bottom makes sure the girls are following the rules, and she reports to the trafficker if somebody is out of line… All the money is still controlled by the pimp. There
may be less conditions that she has to follow because she doesn’t have to make as much money anymore, but she’s still controlled by the pimp. [Dan]

This woman, although her duties vary between traffickers, is the individual who works closest alongside her trafficker – she does all of the duties that the trafficker needs to be done outside of prostitution. Along with collecting money and making sure the women are following the trafficker’s rules, the bottom bitch also may recruit other women for her trafficker.

An important aspect to note is how Dan claimed, “she’s still controlled by the pimp.” Indeed, it may seem that this woman has more agency with regard to the way her trafficker treats her and lets her have a higher status among the group of women; however, this does not mean she has transcended the powerless female identity that is associated with trafficking. Shelby highlighted this as she described her experience being the bottom bitch for her trafficker:

But then I started watching how their whole system worked, and I’d see these girls become the bottom bitch. And I remember thinking, ‘Why does she get all that treatment? …Why does she get to eat? Why does she get to sleep in your bed and we have to sleep on a nasty mattress?’ So I finally said something, and my pimp [said], ‘You’ve got to do these things if you want to be a bottom bitch.’ And so then I tried to escape how I felt by saying, ‘Okay. This is my life. I might as well go for that.’ And so I did… So the girl who makes the most money gets to be the bottom. So I just tried to escape my life. I was always asking if I could go on the call. I’d be like, ‘Send me. I’ll go.’ … So pretty soon, I got to that point where I was the bottom bitch.

And I remember every time we went to sleep that night, [my pimp and I] would have sex. Or he would make me do things. Or if he wanted to bring over a girl that he liked who wasn’t a hoe…I would have to do certain things. He would make me…I was both of their bitch, and she could treat me any kind of way too…He would also have me check other girls if they didn’t give him all the money. I remember one time he made me check this 16-year-old girl, and he literally made me beat the crap out of this girl. He said, ‘Hit her harder. Harder. Hit her again. Harder. Kick her.’ And I knew what was going to happen if I didn’t.
So after that whole thing, you get tired of it. Once you realize that being a bottom bitch, there’s no better treatment…Once you realize what that role entails, you don’t even want it. And I remember after that, it’s hard to even trust girls because in The Game, it’s a huge competitive thing between girls. Girls would do anything to throw another one under the bus just to avoid what might happen to them… If a girl really wants to, she’ll do anything to throw you under if you’re the bottom because she wants it. [Shelby]

Shelby’s narrative illustrates the true nature of the “bottom bitch” phenomenon: it is not a way for women to gain power; rather, it is likely another manifestation of gendered inequalities through the system of competition that the trafficker creates between his women. This system involves rewards, and for Shelby, this was being able to sleep in the trafficker’s bed instead of on a “nasty mattress.” Another reward was instead of prostituting, she got to check the women after they finished for the night. Shelby’s narrative ends with her realizing that this system of rewards may simply be a way for the trafficker to maintain control. Through this phenomenon, Shelby highlights that her trafficker a) created competition among the women so they earn more money for him, b) created a luxurious ideology of what life is like for the bottom bitch so the women continued to work for him and c) perpetuated the overall industry of sex trafficking by manipulating his Shelby and the other women to continue working in an exploitative industry. In short, the bottom bitch phenomenon likely suggests that sex trafficking operates under a highly gendered capitalist system, where masculine figures are the proverbial bourgeoisie who create a system that takes advantage of and commodifies feminine, proletariat identities.

Hegemonic masculinity within law enforcement. Another pattern worth noting that relates to gender and sex trafficking was how hegemonic masculinity was evident in
narratives addressing law enforcement in sex trafficking. For example, Vivian described one instance where she came into contact with the police amidst an act of prostitution:

So the first trick I turned [in California], we did it out by the train tracks, and we saw this car coming towards us. And right then, I knew it was the cops… And the [john] freaked out. So once the cops got us out of the car, they told me, ‘This is your only time to come to Jesus. Tell us what you’re doing and we’ll go easy on you.’ So I just spilled… They let him drive off, but put me in the back of the car, and I said, ‘Why are you arresting me and not him?’ And they said, ‘Because he’s a good family man and you’re just a whore.’ And then, they wanted to know, ‘Whoa you were pretty quick. Is that because he’s just quick or are you that good at what you do?’ And I said, ‘I’m that good at what I do.’ Which was just, you know, come on, don’t fuck with me. [Vivian]

The way police let the consumer go and criminalized Vivian suggests which gender held the most power in that particular situation: not only did the police disregard the consumer, but they also criminalized the female involved, and they negatively remarked about her sexual talent in the process. They ultimately exercised hegemonic masculinity by letting the consumer (who was a male) go free without prosecution, and by putting down the female identity through criminalizing her and making remarks about her sexuality. Therefore, although the police officers were not actors within sex trafficking (as traffickers and consumers are), they continued to perpetuate notions of unequal power structures through their interactions with Vivian and the consumer whom they caught.

Dan’s narrative also elucidated an example of hegemonic masculinity within law enforcement. Dan’s extensive experience in the prostitution division at the Portland Police Bureau has allowed him to come across many different cases involving many different people. However, although he is currently apart of the movement to end sex

22 It is worth noting here that Vivian’s story took place in the late 1980s to early 1990s. Since then, law enforcement has become more aware and educated about prostitution and sex trafficking. However, this scenario still illustrates how hegemonic masculinity is at play even within the people whom society deems as the “good guys.”
trafficking in Portland, his narrative nonetheless suggests how general masculine identities within society hold more power than feminine identities:

[ Trafficked women ] are kept under control in a different way. I mean, if you can imagine a magic leash that is kept around these women, they know that if they get off that leash, they’re going to get beat. Just like a dog knows that if it leaves its owner’s property, it’s going to have to come back with its tail in between its legs… For the women it’s the same thing. They know that there are certain rules they must follow.

In society, men – and I don't mean all men, I'm just being general – are conditioned that prostitution is one of those things that is out there, and if you have a prostitute it’s no big deal…Whatever the reason…men and women are wired differently with regard to how they think about sex, obviously. And, men just look at it as something that they have the right to do or the ability to do. It’s something that society condones. [Dan]

Firstly, it is discouraging that Dan uses the metaphor of a “dog on a leash” to describe women in sex trafficking. Although he may not have known this, what he was doing was conveying hegemonic masculinity in his discourse: Dan, who is a man, used sub-human metaphors to characterize women in sex trafficking. Thus, by putting down feminine identities and associating females with sub-human characteristics, the use of this metaphor is another subtle way perceptions of masculine identities may contribute to the perpetuation of an unequal, gendered society.

The second part of Dan’s metaphor is also noteworthy because he claims, “men and women are wired differently with regard to how they think about sex.” The biological wiring of men and women has not accurately been connected to levels of sexual drive (Tolman, 1994). Thus, saying that men and women are “wired” differently likely creates an excuse for men to purchase sex. When placed in this light, Dan’s claim that “men and women are wired differently” seems like a way to legitimize males’ behaviors with regard to purchasing sex and perpetuating sex trafficking. This claim may
precisely be the problem among common beliefs about sexuality in men and women: through this statement, Dan is likely perpetuating current hegemony by legitimizing degrading, unequal behaviors that favor masculinity.

Although these two narratives highlighted how certain law enforcement may be behaving according to hegemonic masculinity, it is important to understand that these this is not indicative law enforcement in its entirety. This is why I propose further studies should explore hegemonic masculinity within the anti-trafficking movement and law enforcement.

Conclusion

A Brief Overview of the Data

Through the narratives of four survivors of sex trafficking and one law enforcement official, it is evident that gender as structure and hegemonic masculinity provide a possible explanation of the system of sex trafficking and its perpetuation. These conclusions, although only contingent to this study’s participants, are valuable in furthering the understanding of an industry that much effort has been taken to eradicate. This is because these conclusions shed light on how identities, interactions and institutions in sex trafficking are affected by the social construction of gender. They also illustrate the possible ramifications within sex trafficking when agents exercise behaviors according to these social constructions. Indeed, taking these data into consideration as the anti-trafficking movement proceeds will be important, as gender provides a possible explanation to why systems of inequality are established and perpetuated in sex trafficking.
In level one of gender as structure, females internalize powerless, hypersexualized identities, which partially suggests why they believe they must continue to participate in trafficking. Additionally, the ramifications of these internalizations are that women likely become susceptible in participating in their own oppression. Thus, “The Game” inherently becomes a system that may prompt the oppressed to maintain their status of powerlessness, which ultimately validates and perpetuates an unequal, polarized and gendered system.

Traffickers’ perceived identities also highlighted how hegemonic masculinity may affect level one: by likely identifying themselves through financial success, self-control and control over women, traffickers perpetuate a hegemonic cycle that displaces power to masculine identities. Lastly, it is evident that consumers, although lacking a universal demographic makeup, may be able to disassociate from identifying as “johns,” thus perpetuating sex trafficking because they likely believe that their behavior is legitimate (thus, their behavior is not associated with their gendered identities).

In level two, gendered interactions were illustrated in the following ways: through traffickers’ recruitment processes, the typologies of traffickers, the creation of mechanisms of social control by traffickers, and how multiple masculinities with different statuses are created between the traffickers and the consumers through the amount of control each has over women. This “interactional” level builds upon the gender inequalities evident in the level one of gender as structure in sex trafficking. One can see how traffickers likely use the social construction of an “ideal” female identity (see level one) in the recruitment process as they interact with the women. Additionally, one can see how the implementation of interactional mechanisms of social control
contributed to survivor participants internalizing powerless female identities, which also indicates how level two of gender as structure affects the formation of identities (see Figure 3).

I also argue that it is at level two that the process of instigation and recreation of control takes place: although mechanisms of social control may have been impacted by overarching, macrostructures of gender (i.e. level three’s organizational practices), the precise implementation of these tactics, and the way mechanisms perpetuate the system of control, were manifested within level two (see Figures 2 and 3).

Lastly, in level three of gender as structure, one finds how hegemonic masculinity is likely at play within the creation of “The Game” (see Figure 4). Thus, organizational practices and ideologies are affected by hegemonic masculinity, and the construction of these institutional practices and ideologies suggest how identities are formed, and how interpersonal interaction occurs. Thus, hegemonic masculinity may be evident in all three levels of gender through its effect on how “The Game” as an institution is structured: it is a system that creates expectations of behavior for both males and females, it fosters competition, and it transfers power to the masculine figure (the trafficker) who exercises the most control over women. Indeed, it is within “The Game” that one sees how gendered interactions, identities and macrostructures likely work together to facilitate an unequal, hegemonic and highly masculine system.

Other gender phenomena that could not be applied to the gender as structure model were also elucidated through participants’ narratives about sex trafficking. For example, I suggest that the title “bottom bitch” elucidates a highly unequal capitalist system that forces women to compete against one another, and therefore they
unknowingly contribute the perpetuation of sex trafficking, and they contribute to their traffickers’ power within his “stable.” Additionally, I also suggest that law enforcement officials unknowingly exercise hegemonic masculinity over trafficked individuals, which perpetuates an overall discourse that allows for masculine identities to have more power.

Applications for Future Research

Although the “bottom bitch” phenomenon and the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in law enforcement were evident within participants’ narratives, I suggest that future research should explore these two concepts further in order to affirm how gender affects sex trafficking within these two particular contexts. With regard to the “bottom bitch” phenomenon, I propose that future studies should theoretically address the concept of capitalism in sex trafficking. This would allow one to further understand how the system of gender inequality in sex trafficking is related to the economics of sex trafficking. Thus, it would bridge the gap between gender and past economical research, and it would help create a coherent, holistic conception of the industry. Additionally, within law enforcement and the anti-trafficking movement, it would be worth exploring how gender inequalities exist within these institutions, and how they could possibly hinder the movement from successfully eradicating trafficking.

I also propose exploring the political implication of gender in sex trafficking: Do gender inequalities exist within laws attempting to eradicate sex trafficking? If so, how are individuals involved in sex trafficking affected by these gendered laws? How can one apply gender as structure and hegemonic masculinity to create more effective policy? Indeed, if the anti-trafficking movement is to fully eradicate sex trafficking, it is important to take gender as structure into consideration on the political level. Thus, I
propose for an assessment of anti-trafficking policy that uses these data and the theories of hegemonic masculinity and gender as structure to deem whether laws are applicable and successful in aiding trafficking victims and prosecuting traffickers and consumers.

Lastly, I suggest that the structure of gender within sex trafficking should be further explored with a larger sample of survivor participants, law enforcement officials and other individuals involved in sex trafficking. Although my study found compelling results regarding the construction of gender in sex trafficking and how it may contribute to its perpetuation, I urge future research to explore this on a larger scale. For example, including more survivor participant narratives, along with incorporating narratives from traffickers and consumers, would allow one to collect more concrete data. As my sample was only five individuals, it is hard for me to fully relate this back to the system of sex trafficking; therefore, I suggest that future research build on this exploratory study by incorporating more participants from a wider array of backgrounds.

Final Thoughts

To conclude, this study explored the structures of gender and hegemonic masculinity within sex trafficking. This sheds light on the inner-workings of how sex trafficking is maintained, which is a crucial component to understanding how to combat its perpetuation. These data ultimately allow one to see how individuals are likely affected by gendered identity formation, interaction and infrastructures within the context of sex trafficking. However, this is a purely foundational study: academics must continue to explore other ways in which gender manifests itself in sex trafficking, anti-trafficking policies and the anti-trafficking movement in order to truly contest its existence and achieve eradication.
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The Role of Gender in Sex Trafficking


**APPENDIX A.** Interview questions for survivor and law enforcement official.

**Trafficked Individual Questions:**
- Tell me your story of how you became trafficked. In your own words, what is the reason as to why this happened to you?
- Describe your daily routine while you were involved in trafficking.
- Describe your relationship with the trafficker. What did you call him/her? Did you act differently around him/her than when you were without him/her? What was your “identity” according to your trafficker?
- How much power did you have during your time being trafficked? To what extent did you feel that you were in control? To what extent did your trafficker have control over you?
- What emotions did you have while being trafficked? Were there any situations where you felt these emotions very strongly?
- What was the extent of your emotional connection with your trafficker?
- When was the first time (if any) you were physically or verbally abused by your trafficker? What instigated it? How did you react to it?

**Law Enforcement Questions (for Dan):**
- How do pimps become pimps? Johns become johns?
- How much power do you think the johns and pimps have over their trafficked individuals?
- How do pimps continue to keep women working for them?
- What happens between a pimp and a trafficking individual if he/she is raped or hurt by a john? What happens between the john and the pimp? To what extent do pimps “protect” their trafficked individuals (if any)?
- If any, under what conditions do trafficked individuals change pimps’ minds, behaviors, emotions, etc.?
- What kinds of things do you see in pimps’ logbooks (call sheets, clientele list, documents about their women)?
- What are some ways pimps physically house trafficked individuals? Is there a connection between how they house them and how they treat them?
- What are some motivations behind pimps’ and johns’ abuse?
- From your experience, are there any emotions that pimps and johns say they have while being involved in trafficking? Towards the trafficked individual, john, etc.? In your opinion, do johns feel any particular emotions while being involved in this crime?
APPENDIX B. Excerpts from “How to Become a Pimp” Trafficker Manual\textsuperscript{23}

How To Become A Pimp!

A Pimp...
* keeps his emotions to himself.
* is his own best company.
* doesn't get paid for screwing. He gets his pay from always having the right thing to say to his females.
* never lets a female go who still has some trick in her.
* should be prince charming to the females. They should think you're GOD!!
* should control the whole female, be the boss of her life, even her thoughts.
* should always be determined in any and everything.
* should always recognize and respect other pimps.
* should never accept anything but his money.
* must be serious!!!
* could cut his dick off and still pimp his ass off!!!
* is the loneliest person in the world.
* wants any female who can make him money.
* cannot feel like a pimp with one female, raise a stable.
* has to use great pressure. A pimp with a fine female has to keep his game tight.

\textsuperscript{23} Information retrieved from Portland Police Bureau.
Women...
* Females always try to find a weakness in a pimp.
* A female will always leave you if she has money. Keep them broke.
* A pretty black female and a white female are alike. They will try to destroy your stable and leave you broke.
* The way you start with a female is the way you end with her. Pimps are hard from the start.
* Taking their money is an excellent way to keep women.
* Have your women give you your money every time you see them.
* Always keep your women on mental file.
* There is nothing more important than what makes a new female tick and why. Make her tell you her life story.
* Tell her to recruit for you.
* The tougher you are, the more she will love you.
* Make her convince you, that she should be your girl.
* If your women act up, put them in check quick.
* Have your main girl loyal to you because if she leaves the stable leaves. Keep your game the tightest on her.
* Team your women up and have them competing to see who can bring you the most money.
* It thrills women when their pimp makes a mistake. Don't make any.
* Never let your women break your rules.
* Protecting your women is protecting your money.
* Never let your women get loud with you.
* Never neglect your women.
* If your women get stolen the reason why is because your game was not tight enough.
* It's a good thing when you can trust your main girl with your women and your money.
* A pimp should always tell his women something new everyday to hold them.
* Make them work hard and fast.
* Run your women like a business.
* Keep your women well maintained.
Remember...
* pimping isn't a game of love. Your women should fear you.
* just like drugs, don't get high off your own supply and what you supply is women.
* the world is nothing but a bitch, and you are her pimp!!!!
* you are not a gentleman, you are a pimp!!!
* you only get great by pimping by the rules.
* it's a violation of the pimp laws to quit a female who is bringing you money.
* money over women.
* never confide in your women, keep your thoughts a secret.
* never count your money until it is in your hand.
* pimping isn't a sex game, it's a mind game.
* just like a company, downsize and upgrade if you have to.
* true friends mean more than any female.

Always...
* find ways to keep your women without kissing their ass.
* seek knowledge about the pimp game.
* keep your mind on your money!!!
* live by the rules you set down on your women.
* keep the pimp / bitch relationship well defined.
* remember a pimp's wardrobe has to be neat and clean, his ride must be eye catching. A playa only plays for so long, then he's played out. A hustler only hustles for so long, then he's hustled out. A whore only whores for so long before she's whored out. A PIMP only pimps for so long and that's for life! [...] To play this game on the field of life is a hard game to play. Pimping, somebody has to do it because a girl can give up the ass for free for only so long then she is called a whore. She might as well get paid for it, and she might as well bring the pay to [the pimp]! Somebody has to win at it because the game is never going to stop. [...]