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Race and Gender in (Re)integration of Victim-Survivors of CSEC in a Community Advocacy Context

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Race and Gender in (Re)integration of Victim-Survivors of CSEC

in a Community Advocacy Context

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I use feminist ethnography at a nonprofit organization to analyze the racialized gender in (re)integration of victim-survivors of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Critical race feminism and intersectionality are the theoretical frameworks to guide the analysis of community advocacy. The analysis considers two themes with various subsections that capture CSEC at the site. The first theme analyzes the definition, challenges, coordination and rhetoric of reintegration at the site. The second theme highlights the site's racial identity, Black victimhood of victim-survivors of CSEC in the context of community, and racialized gender within reintegration. I discuss the strategic use of colorblindness within reintegration at the NGO and the child/adult dichotomy that shapes the organization's understanding of CSEC.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

The release of the 2008 action-thriller Hollywood film Taken garnered my participation in various conversations—in both academic and private sectors—about the phenomena integral to the plot. In a few conversations, there was an appreciation for the increased visibility of the issue of human trafficking—specifically the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)[1]. The film and its attention emphasized the phenomenon and preventative measures, but failed to highlight the aftermath of trafficking, especially for victim-survivors. Research on CSEC has a similar gap, with few scholars focusing on aftercare for these victim-survivors. To help address this gap in the literature, the goal of my thesis is to examine a non-profit organization's understanding of CSEC, their practices to (re)integrate victim-survivors, and racialized gender within their advocacy.

Unfortunately, the film's sensationalized nature also provides numerous misconceptions about CSEC. This includes the graphic scenes about the entry into sex trafficking through the kidnapping at the airport, the various portrayals of children being drugged in brothels, and the girl's interaction with a "human" auction. The film essentially misconstrues sex trafficking; it shows a means into the business, but belies the accurate and frequent pathways into sex

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[1] A Note on language: I choose to use CSEC instead of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) because my site of research uses this terminology. I am aware of the implications of "CSEC" discourse regarding the usage of "child" in anti-trafficking narratives which negates the youth's agency and treats anyone under the age of 18 as monolith. I substitute the word "child" for "youth" in my discussion.

trafficking recognized in international law. For instance, the United Nations' Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children defines human trafficking as:

> "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" (UN, 2000).

The film also does not account for other forms of commercially sexually exploited youth and presents sex trafficking as a "foreign" issue because of the framing of the social location where entry takes place.

Baker (2014) offers an intersectional, comparative analysis that discusses the misrepresentation and myths provided about sex trafficking in Taken, including the complete elimination of demographic patterns. Although age was implicitly heightened through the main character/victims' actions (i.e. jumping up like a child) to be perceived as innocent and virginal, the vulnerability of the victim is interwoven in the beginning of the film. The film not only ignores race, gender, class, and the complex structural issues that increase the risk of becoming a victim but continues the anti-trafficking "ideal victim" rhetoric. The "ideal victim" rhetoric stems from the conceptualization of a popularized, and politicized idea of "victim" centralized on a type of person in the anti-trafficking narrative: a young, white girl. I critique in this thesis the "ideal victim" rhetoric and ask: To what extent does racialized gender play a role in the discussion of CSEC?

Finally, the movie showed—within a few minutes—that the victim was affected, but relatively back to "normal" after her trauma. In the ending scene, the victim simply cries, and hugs her parents at the airport as she enters the U.S. Afterwards, she proceeds with trying to move on by pursuing her passion and meets a celebrity singer. As the film concludes, she is smiling and happy (signals of "normalcy"). (Re) integration of victim-survivors of CSEC in a community advocacy context motivates my research questions. I critique the film's lack of addressing trauma through (re)integration of the victim. Reintegration is the "holistic process involving practical, emotional, education/training, and social support of the individual with the aim of 'safe, dignified, and sustainable reinsertion into society and a normalised [sic] life'" (Asquith & Turner, 2008, p. 7). Asquith & Turner (2008) discuss the contested term "reintegration" by challenging the aspect of re-inserting a child into a community they belong too/never left. In agreement, in this thesis I put "(re)" in front of "integration" to challenge the assertion that a child must be "reintegrated" and thereby offer a more flexible understanding of "reintegration." I ask: How does one nonprofit organization (NGO) assist with (re)integration of victim-survivors of CSEC?

The purpose of my thesis, then, is to answer these two research questions by integrating discussions on (re)integration and race in the community advocacy context of CSEC. Little research has been done on centralizing race, gender, and the specific needs required based on social categorizations. Although there is literature regarding racialized gender in human trafficking, most research centers the historical aspect of white girls and their role in the anti-trafficking narrative. Contrarily, I intend to center race in all aspects of the agency, and emphasize Black girls throughout my research.

I conducted a feminist ethnography (Davis & Craven, 2016) to examine a nonprofit organization, Emeika[2], that offers foster-care group housing to numerous girls[3] including sexually-exploited youth. Emeika is a self-proclaimed "Black" agency that is "Black owned" and employs predominantly Black staff. The organization prioritizes the victim-survivors of CSEC and centralizes the girls' "self-sufficiency" economically, emotionally, and spiritually. I interact at Emeika to investigate how racialized gender is materialized, acknowledged (or not), and contested with the victim-survivor [4](specifically discussing Black girls), and how the agency racially impacts the girl (re)integrating. I document the interactions in the organization's programs, between the staff/administration, and through Emeika's events through participant observations. My theoretical frameworks include critical race feminism (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Wing, 2003), and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) which guide my thematic content analysis. My findings include two emerging themes present in my data. The first theme involves the contradictory definition and practices of the agency, and second is that Black principles guide racialized and colorblind understandings of (re)integration of victim-survivors of CSEC.

Below, I discuss the literature on CSEC, Black girls, and (re)integration. Then, I discuss my theoretical frameworks and methodology for analysis. Finally, I discuss my findings and provide further conclusions about research including its implications.

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[2] Throughout my thesis, I use pseudonyms to provide anonymity of the agency and the personnel/staff. By doing so, I am protecting the organization and maintaining the confidentiality in our agreement.

[3] The organization is a "girls-only" foster-care home, so all clients are considered "girls" based on their "biological sex." I use "girls," but will explicitly acknowledge numerous identities as transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and other identities not listed.

[4] Traci West (1999) conceptualizes "victim-survivor" to discuss the pathology of Black women and the "invulnerability" of victimhood trope associated with the resilience/strong Black woman trope that often dismisses their humanity. By using such, it acknowledges the girls as both victims and survivors in their respective positions. Throughout my thesis, I use "victim" solely when using the agency's understanding and language when discussing the girl.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

CSEC Statistics and Racialized Gender

Age and location are central to examining CSEC and the aftercare services for the girls. The United Nations' legal definition influences U.S. policymaker's distinction between a "child" and "adult" victim of sex trafficking. The context is contingent upon age, but can have significant effects on efforts to (re)integrate victims. Minors do not need to "prove" that "force, fraud or coercion" were present because of the child's "incapacity" to consent (Miller-Perrin & Wurtele, 2017). This notion originates from the implementation of laws and the action to "assist" victims instead of "incarcerate" minors (Barnert et al., 2016). Conversely, adults must provide "proof" because they are not granted instantaneous victimhood and often interact with the criminal legal system; therefore, commercially sexually exploited youth, are deemed not agentic (Goździak, 2016; Mir, 2013). Due to the laws' pervasive effects, (re)integration is shaped through such frameworks that create policies in community center contexts.

Addressing the statistics on CSEC is pivotal to understanding the pervasiveness of the phenomenon. In one significantly cited study, there are an estimated 200,000+ youth *at-risk* to become commercially sexually exploited victims within the United States, Canada, and Mexico (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Controversially, these numbers presented are often deemed inaccurate and merely "estimates" due to the "hidden nature" of the crime. At the same time, finding domestic minors—those born in the U.S.—is difficult because of a focus on foreign-born victims

(Bales & Soodalter, 2009). A subsection of CSEC is domestic minor sex trafficking, which focuses on the victim's citizenship within U.S. borders and their legal resident status (Moore, 2017). Although literature differentiates between "domestic" and "foreign" victims, few statistics highlight social categorizations besides gender, age, and citizenship status.

According to the 2017 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) Resource Guide: Crime and Victimization fact sheet, there were various agencies—on both state and federal levels—tasked with investigating and prosecuting about 5,544 potential human trafficking cases. Of those cases, more than 75% were sex trafficking cases, in which 33.3% involved minors as the victims. As for gender, 91.4% were women, 4.1% men, 0.8% transgender women, 0% transgender men, and 0.1% gender nonconforming. Lastly, 34.7% were U.S. citizens and 9.6% foreign nationals (Office for Victims of Crime, 2017). As for statistics, race (and ethnicity) is harder to account for because it is rarely mentioned explicitly. According to U.S. Department of justice from 2008-2010, out of 2,515 suspected cases, 40.4% were Black, 25.6% white, 23.9% Hispanic, 5.8% other and 4.3% Asian (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). The statistics stated highlight the racial and gender dimensions of victims[5].

Lutnick (2016) discusses the range of statistics when examining youth in "the sex trade." This includes a brief analysis on the heterogeneity of youth within the sex trade, but acknowledges the popular narratives of cisgender girls dominating the scholarly and media accounts. Critiques of the statistics detail the methodological flaws, the acceptance in various institutions including academia to perpetuate the statistics without further scrutiny, and the fluctuation of numbers to shape the anti-trafficking narrative (Weitzer, 2007). Although

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[5] Furthermore, sex trafficking by allegation includes 48.4% "adult prostitution," 40.4% "prostitution or sexual exploitation of child," 5.6% "sexualized labor," and 2.4% "other" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011; Office for Victims of Crime, 2013).

contested, the presentation of statistics can give an insight to the "overview" of inconsistent—or fairly nonexistent—racial demographics. However, those identified as the most frequently victimized—Black women/girls—are often eliminated from the anti-trafficking narrative. The anti-trafficking campaign is shaped around the "moral panic" discourse that permits one certain type of victimhood within the dominant narrative (Phillips, 2015).

The rise in the moral panic was centered around a common mythology of young, white girls in need of "rescuing" from sexual exploitation—not coincidentally similar to Taken in which her patriarch comes to save her from the "bad" men. These common ideologies of women and children being abducted and transported for "involuntary prostitution" led to efforts to garner religious organizations to participate in combatting sex trafficking (Goździak, 2016, p. 36). Furthermore, racialized (and classed and sexualized) gender is central to the narrative due to the elimination of non-girls and girls of color from the discourse along with a disconnect between the definition of human trafficking—and a more narrow and heavily gendered and racialized discussion about sex work (Phillips, 2015;Goździak, 2016).

With the [contested] average ages of entry into "prostitution" at twelve to sixteen-years-old, an emphasis on the psychosocial development phase (e.g. developing independence from parents, intellectual advancement, peer relationships, sexual experimentation, with combinations of risk-taking behaviors) is perceived to create room for traffickers to "prey" on "normal adolescents' vulnerabilities" that places all adolescents at-risk to be sexually exploited youth (Moore et al., 2017, p. 414). Additional risk factors for CSEC include, but are not limited to: child sexual abuse, neglect, involvement in the child protection services and/or juvenile legal system, runaway, homelessness, family dysfunction, LGBTQIA+ status, gang involvement, lack of awareness, sexualization of girls, law enforcement corruption and drug addiction (Fong &

Cardoso, 2010; Greenbaum, 2014; Todres et al., 2014; Bounds, Julion, & Delany, 2015).

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the structural causations linked to gender violence, poverty, discrimination and lack of access to education (Birkenthal, 2011).

The social concept of childhood shapes the initiatives of CSEC because of the centralization of perceptions of youthful innocence, dependence, and a clear distinction from adulthood (Ocen, 2015). The social construction of childhood gives social meanings of innocent vulnerability that establish and shape the law, although the boundary determination varies across time, geography, and political and historical context (Ocen, 2015). Furthermore, the westernized view of "childhood" creates a bounded space for youth to be addressed as "victims" only due to the popularized discourse in numerous institutions like nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies (Goździak, 2016). An emphasis on the rhetoric around women and girls' susceptibility is impactful for the anti-trafficking narrative (Goździak, 2016). However, these social meanings often have invisible adjectives of whiteness because projections of innocence are embedded in racialized and gendered ideals, further detailed below. Not only is gender influencing the paradigm, but the elimination of race in the narrative continues to perpetuate invisible adjectives when discussing elements of CSEC, like aftercare services.

There are traumatic outcomes presumed to be associated specifically with not only the experiences of commercially sexually exploited children/youth, but the continuous negation of the racialized aspect beyond ideologies of whiteness. The biggest consequences of CSEC noted are the psychological effects from trauma like post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, depression and anxiety (Greenbaum, 2014). Other immediate effects include physical trauma and sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS, brain injury, breakage of bones, anogenital traumas, and other untreated chronic medical conditions (Greenbaum, 2014; Todres, et al.,

2014). Moreover, depending on the age, victim psyche may be affected by "missed opportunities" for social development (Birkenthal, 2011). Additionally, limited or lack of access to various reproductive health care and medical care shape life expectancy. Many sexually exploited youth "die within seven years of first being exploited because of their vulnerability to murder and HIV/AIDS" (Phillips, 2015, p. 1649). Some of these consequences are correlated to the lack of identifying victims in different systems and institutions (Bounds, Julion, & Delaney, 2015); however, the politicization of "victimization" can lead to barriers for assistance (Lutnick, 2016).

It is important to note that stating every child is a "victim" may be a simplistic understanding of CSEC and denies the complex reality youth face. Greenbaum (2014) studies sex trafficking of children and acknowledges the difficulty in identifying victims due to their refusal to self-identify as a "victim." Those involved tend to self-blame, prefer exploitative "lifestyle" over their former life and want no interference from assistive services. The fear of ostracization by family and friends, distrust of authority, and the close monitoring by traffickers constitutes the small fraction of "victims" identified. Additionally, the lack of "confirmatory evidence (e.g. found by law enforcement)" can create barriers for care, and the victim may be hostile or withdrawn from those offering help to protect them (Moore, 2017). Information may be withheld because of previous interactions with law enforcement and child protective services, dread of further mistreatment or returning to dysfunctional home situation, and stigmatization associated with "prostitution" (Moore, 2017).

Goździak (2016) further challenges the public discourse linking "child" and "victim" explicitly by describing the harm to actual *victims*. The word *victims* entails a status because of the legal necessity to be eligible for assistance. Furthermore, the assistance is shaped by a "best

interests" criteria that requires a distinction between "child" and "adult," dictating the child's inability to make decisions, in turn, silencing the minor (p. 125). In challenging the popularized discourse of the child being a *victim*, the discussion of agency is challenging, as Goździak states:

> Acknowledging that minors—especially older teens—possess agency does not take away from the suffering they experience at the hands of traffickers. However, depriving them of the recognition that they are rational human beings capable of making independent decisions perpetuates the myth that child development is solely based in biological and psychological structures that are fairly uniform across history, class, and culture. In contrast to the notion of the universal model of childhood, anthropological research shows that childhood and youth are social and cultural rather than biological constructs. Children and adolescents are people, and therefore they do have agency. Agency is an intentional action that encompasses both intended and unintended consequences (p. 119).

The need to consider youth as agentic can further address the reality and complexity of sex trafficking that frames the laws, policies, and social services as a dichotomous and solitary perception of a "child-victim" and "adult-exploiter." That narrative perpetuates a "one-size-fits all" narrative that does not include the main reason of involvement in the sex-market being self-sustainment and survival (Ocen, 2015; Phillips, 2015). The conflation of sex work and sex trafficking does not capture the nuances of youth's lives in what seems to be the dichotomous relationship of "victim" and "agentic/choice" dimensions (Marcus et al., 2012). Complicating the complex phenomenon is the distinct space between victim and agent.

McCracken (2013) describes individuals in the sex industry narrative as "co-creat[ing]" themselves within their systemic and personal circumstances. Moreover, the discourse on whether to use "victim" of sexual exploitation, prostitute, or sex worker to discuss CSEC

addresses the political stances on the sex industry in popularized narratives. McCracken (2013) mentions the relationship of social services and the use of "victims" in achieving that status. McCracken states, "Social service agencies are central, perhaps even required, for a victim to transform into a survivor…In other words, she is named a victim by others and then offered services in order to achieve survivor status" (p. 103). This statement captures the politics that are deeply embedded in anti-sex work ideologies surrounding the "savior" discourse in assistance that is impacted by the view of sex work (Agustin, 2007). Within my thesis, I document how agency—or lack thereof—shapes the one programs' understanding of CSEC and (re)integration.

Black girls are excluded within the universalized concept of "child." Black girls are perceived and granted agency because of historical ideological concepts that render them sexually mature, and promiscuous in many social institutions (Butler, 2015; Ocen, 2015). Consequentially, the construction of the essientialized "child" is harmful for Black victim-survivors. Butler (2015) analyzes the racial roots of sexual exploitation that are deeply intertwined with the development of sexual ideologies used to sustain the racial subordination of Black girls. These stereotypes deem Black females as "Jezebels"—overly sexual and insatiable—to excuse sexual abuse and economic exploitation of children at the hands of white men.

Also, characterizing Black females as jezebels, the justification of the abuse has been economic to continue to enforce an image of Black women as "breeders of slave children" (p. 1467). These deeply influential stereotypes perpetuate the modern sexual objectification of Black girls under the guise of "consent" because they are "bad girls" who are rebellious and do not fit the constrained ideal; therefore, they do not fit the popularized "victim" within the anti-trafficking narrative, but do fit the criminalized "adult" (p.1472) The intersection of race, gender,

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class and age shape the mythologies of Black teen's "risky sexual behavior." Due to the mythologies of Black girlhood, numerous laws that are shaped to help "protect" victim-survivors instead continually "criminalize Black girls and ignore race under laws like the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)[6] and Safe Harbor laws (Butler, 2015; Ocen, 2015; Phillips, 2015). These laws focused on decriminalization and victim assistance, and thus are not applicable to Black girls because they do not fit into the "victim" paradigm.

As previously stated, the law highlights the "victim" aspect of CSEC. TVPA continues to further "decriminalize" youth by introducing Safe Harbor laws to enhance protection of survivors of CSEC. The goal was to decriminalize juvenile prostitution and create diversion programs to re-direct youth into appropriate services, including the child welfare system and services through the criminal legal system (Barnert et al., 2016). Barnert et al. (2016) examines the implementation of Safe Harbor laws in various institutions, including the juvenile legal system, social service providers, and community centers—similar to my intended research site. Programs focused on decriminalizing child prostitution, creating diversion routes, or doing both simultaneously depend on the jurisdiction and location. Lastly, the individual's age produces their route to assistance or further criminalization. Throughout the analysis, those implementing the programs mentioned the challenges specific to survivors of CSEC including running away, traumatization, child's agency and lack of training (p. 255). Nevertheless, contradictory to the law, there are youth (disproportionately Black girls, discussed below) being classified as

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[6] The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) passed in 2000 and reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2013 focuses on the 3 P's paradigm—the prosecution of the trafficker, the protection of the victim, and the preventive measures to combat human trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2000). TVPA states, "[V]ictims of severe forms of trafficking should not be inappropriately incarcerated, fined or otherwise penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked" (U.S. Department of State, 2000). Millions of dollars are allocated to local, state and federal law enforcement to center the prosecution aspect of the TVPA versus the "protection" element (Phillips, 2015).

delinquents and incarcerated for "juvenile prostitution," creating barriers for them to seek assistance, and underlies the ideological difference between the TVPA law and legal actions (Barnert et al., 2016).

In these laws, wide discretionary power is given to law enforcement and judges to determine whether they should provide diversion programs or punish them. If any rules are broken while receiving services, however, the girls are punished due to lack of adherence (Ocen, 2015). Ultimately, the continuation of the heavy reliance on the juvenile legal system contradicts the idea of "protection" and "assistance" for victims (Phillips, 2015). Although the laws are not explicitly racialized or gendered, the concepts of vulnerability and innocence are inherently just that (Ocen, 2015). Below, I discuss racialized gender and mention the limited literature regarding race, gender, and sex trafficking.

Is literature colorblind? Racialized Gender & CSEC

Above, the brief description of CSEC is not all-inclusive to the distinct experiences shaped by racialized gender. Although race is included in the literature, the focus is primarily on how "young, white girls" form the narrative (Butler, 2015; Ocen, 2015; Phillips, 2015). The biggest critique, and the basis for my thesis, is influenced by the elimination of accounts of Black girls within CSEC. To my knowledge, little literature centers Black girls—and racialized gender outside the ideal victim—as having a distinguishable experience of victimization. More specifically, the practice of neglecting Black girls from the discussion in human trafficking literature further disregards violence against them and perpetuates their invisible status within society to assist them (Smith, 2016).

Morris (2016) states, "a growing number of cases involving Black girls have surfaced to reveal what many of us have known for centuries: Black girls are also directly impacted by criminalizing policies and practices that render them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, dehumanization, and under the worst circumstances, death" (p.2). Black girls and women are viewed as the most vulnerable group resulting in experiences of sexual, physical, state and institutional violence (Collins, 2004; Richie, 2012; Smith, 2016). Black girls' vulnerable positionality is criminalized from their perceived "indocility" based on notions of white femininity. The stereotypes of Black girls do not account for the compounded trauma that results in harsh discipline and punitive measures within an institution (Smith, 2016). The denigration of Black girls is emphasized when discussing sex trafficking and the recurring issues of criminalization instead of supporting them through (re)integration.

In 2013, statistics show that "Black youth account for approximately 62 percent of minors arrested for prostitution offenses even though Black [people] only make up 13.2 percent of the U.S. population"(Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013; Ocen, 2015, p. 1645-1646). In 2016, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that 57.5 percent of Black girls are far more likely to be adjudicated through the juvenile legal system than their white counterparts, including being arrested for prostitution and detained in a locked facility (Ocen, 2015). As mentioned above, childhood shapes the perspective of victimhood because of a perceived elimination of agency due to the lack of maturity necessary to consent. On the contrary, Black girls are excluded and deprived of the opportunity to be children, or victims, because they are considered to be "sexually mature" and active participants of CSEC (Ocen, 2015).

Ocen (2015) conceptualizes "liminal childhood" in CSEC that describes the in-between positons assigned to Black girls: "Black girls exist at the border of childhood and adulthood,

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viewed as dependent for some purposes and independent for others. Black girls are include in the construct of childhood to the extent that they are deemed to be dependent and thus denied the right to full membership of polity" (p. 1599). Anti-trafficking narratives heighten the concept of childhood to increase protections for children of CSEC—in federal and legal aspects—while simultaneously excluding Black girls from the law.

Moreover, Black girls are at risk for their hyper-exposure to the sex commercial industry because of economic inequalities and disparities in communities of color, although there is a lack of acknowledgment of race in risk factors. The literature included above does not explicitly mention race, but has a variety of racialized implications. For example, Hurst (2015) mentions the potential risk factor of colorism and internalized racism that influences familial disconnections that result into potential pathways into CSEC.

Furthermore, advocates have coined the phrase "sexual abuse to prison pipeline" to express the criminalization and increased likelihood for kids sexually exploited to be vulnerable to prison without consideration of structural factors (Ocen, 2015, p. 1630). Phillips (2015) analyzes "racialized vulnerabilities" that serve as pathways into CSEC and looks at how the TVPA creates a limited understanding of sex trafficking. This includes the need to add "survival sex" into CSEC discourse to further grasp the "reality" of Black girls' involvement in CSEC. Although the law clearly states that commercially sexually-exploited youth are victims, the use of policing tactics creates an individualistic approach and dismissal of society's role in "turning a blind eye to the social, educational, and economic forces that provide youth with very few alternatives" (p. 1670).

Lastly, race has historically—and strategically—been eliminated from law. The anti-trafficking discourse is transparent throughout the law, centralizing the white unsuspecting,

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innocent girl as the primary victim. Seemingly, the victim is appreciative of law enforcement interventions because she possesses little to no agency in the narrative (Ocen, 2015). The framed "victim" is centered on whiteness and femaleness leaving Black girls to be further incarcerated and victimized (Ocen, 2015; Phillips, 2015). The victims' relationship with law enforcement can also create a skewed understanding of "agency" and "victimization." Mir (2013) indicates that when the victim does not share information about the trafficker, or is "uncooperative" in prosecution, they are understood to be compliant in their sexual exploitation and therefore, criminalized. The literature does not account for the historical relationship of distrust for authority between Black females and law enforcement (Richie, 2012; Smith, 2016). Black girls have been labeled as "prostitutes" and therefore, protection is deemed not needed; additionally, access to assistance is restricted due to the impossibility of the "victim" trope regarding Black girls (Phillips, 2015). Below, I review literature that is based on the social support of sexually exploited youth and the continued need to highlight the elimination of race (outside the dominant narrative) from the literature.

Colorblind (Re) integration in Community Service

As cited above, the consequences of CSEC require specific assistance due to the trauma individuals experience. Bales & Soodalter (2009) document the "atmosphere of terror" when discussing various aspects of sex trafficking. This terror includes the numerous beatings on a regular basis with objects, gang rapes, torture, "love" and feign[ed] affection, addictive drugs and serious physical injury or death. This atmosphere opens way for "misogynistic brutality, carried on for profit and power (90). The grooming process generally begins with abuse by someone close to the victim or family; sexual abuse by friends, boyfriends and acquaintances; and then results in desensitization to commercial sex (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Bounds, Julion &

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Delaney, 2015). This process shapes the victim's loyalty, and dependence on traffickers to "ensure their willingness," but victims are further manipulated through emotional attachments and coercion (Mir, 2013). Violence and emotional abuse are the norm and require a multi-disciplinary approach to assist victims through "rehabilitation" (Greenbaum, 2014).

These effects from CSEC require social service programs, including NGOs—such as my site of research. NGO participation has shaped narratives and contributed to developments like screening tools as they share "practical" information from their perspective (Greenbaum, 2014, p. 255). Due to the "high number" of sex trafficking victims— including CSEC—annually in need of services, finding these service is difficult (Bales & Soodalter, 2009). NGOs operate as integral parts of the (re)integration process, and focus on both economic and social conditions which cannot be carried out single-handedly (Tzvetkova, 2002). A continuum of services from both schools and community organizations need to work together not only on the preventive side, but the (re)integration as well (Grace & Clawson, 2015). The need for immediate and short-term housing for victims is crucial. Throughout the U.S., there are residential facilities that offer housing for victims, but there are inadequate amounts to support the number of victims (Grace & Clawson, 2015).The location of an NGO is an advantage due to the specificity needed to create programs and provide services to help the victims in that area (Birkenthal, 2011).

Fong & Cardoso (2010) examine challenges and successes of victim services. A large challenge is the eligibility of services dependent on "official classification," but a positive includes the increase in identification of CSEC through trainings through the child welfare system that opens the door for services at NGOs. Finklea, Fernandes-Alcantara, & Siskin (2015) analyze foster care homes' insufficiency to meet the child's needs and protect the child from traffickers if they are not specialized in CSEC. Furthermore, they state that residential facilities

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should serve "homogeneous populations" that benefit from smaller settings, must have 24-hour surveillance, unannounced room searches, drug screens, limited phone use, and include basic needs to meet physical as well as mental health needs (p. 72). Not only should the aftercare be centered on trauma, but it should include a children's rights framework.

Muraya & Fry (2016) discuss recommendations for aftercare and the "reintegration" process. Various components make up the process in which the child (re)integrates. Which includes: assessment, to offer details of the youth's mental and physical state; case management, to document the child's process and provide information about the child's needs; and recovery, which is person-centered to restore their physical and mental health. As mentioned above, "reintegration" is the holistic process of providing support in numerous realms including practical, social, emotional, and educational to help individuals "reinsert" into society to live a "normalized life" (Asquith & Turner, 2008, p. 215). Normalcy plans are designed for kids to participate in various activities that are "appropriate" to their age and development (Finklea, Fernandes-Alcantara, & Siskin, 2015).

(Re)integration includes assisted return/reparation, educational training, social support, family tracing, job placement, occupational training, long-term accommodation, and post-integration check-ups (Muraya, & Fry, 2016). This process can be difficult if the NGO is not centering the child and their identities as primary. The final point of consideration in the community advocacy discussion is the lack of funding. This aspect is a key issue when discussing NGOs approach to assistance. Funding is normally given to "advocacy groups, typically not service providers, who are aligned with the neo-conservative, values-driven anti-prostitution clique" (Bales & Soodalter, 2009). These core moral ideological values are routes to

understanding the phenomenon, but also guide the various NGO's approaches to CSEC

(re)integration—like my site of research.

Ultimately, service providers struggle with a lack of cultural awareness (i.e.

understanding how race impacts the child) and can be detrimental to youth of color (Hurst,

2015). It is imperative for trauma-informed child professionals to address their own perspectives

and to be aware of people's identities to offer effective support. "A provision of services and

resources must be tempered with insights of any privilege, authority or power that may

accompany these professional recommendations" (Hurst, 2017, p.7). Furthermore, there is a call

for comprehensive support that is addressed under the child's own terms that include continuing

education, securing housing and employment opportunities as well as access to various

nonjudgmental settings (Phillips, 2015, p. 1673).

CHAPTER THREE:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

My two theoretical frameworks guide my analysis: Critical race feminism and

intersectionality. Critical race feminism (CRF) derives from critical race theory (CRT) (Wing,

2003). CRT was developed as an "intellectual movement" to examine how law constitutes race

and more specifically, "the sum total of the pervasive ways in which law shapes and is shaped by

"race relations" across the social plane…and how law produces, [reflects] and is the product of

social power" (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, xxv). CRT argues that racism is

deeply entrenched in society and challenges the colorblind racism that permeates laws/ policies

under the guise of "neutrality" (Delegado & Stefancic, 2000;Carbado, 2011). CRT explicitly

aims to "recover" race-consciousness of people of color (specifically, African Americans) which

was dismissed within the rise of colorblindness as the "norm" within society (Crenshaw,

Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, xiv). Bonilla-Silva (2014) conceptualizes colorblind rhetoric

within four common frames (abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and

minimization of racism) white people employ within the new racial order to sustain racial

ideologies in law and policies.

Colorblind frames whites participate in have an impact on Black consciousness. Bonilla-

Silva argues the ideological dominances created and dependent on most member's participation

within a social system to accommodate the dominant's views. He argues that Black people are

straightforward in discussions of race and racism because of their status in the contemporary

racial order that offers them little to lose: "Blacks, for the most part, do not subscribe wholeheartedly to the frames of colorblindness" (170). Black people often times have oppositional viewpoints to colorblind semantic moves. I use these arguments in my analysis to critique the NGO's use of such colorblind rhetoric.

CRF emerged to critique the essentialist notions of the monolithic "female" and center women of color who have "fall[en] between the cracks and been rendered invisible in analysis (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Wing, 2003). CRF encourages interdisciplinary studies that "provide counter-stories/studies" that focus solely on women of color throughout the narrative and prioritizes an intersectional theoretical framework. Black feminist legal studies scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) coined the term "intersectionality" to analyze the interlocking oppressions that are materialized due to intersecting identities. The use of intersectionality has expanded to address a variety of social categorizations (i.e., class, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, etc.) to conceptualize injustices and inequities within social structures and institutions. For instance, Crenshaw's depiction of violence against Black women cannot be unpacked looking solely at either race or gender as separate entities. Instead, when racialized gender is recognized specific to individual experiences, society's understanding of violence against Black women is further analyzed (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Richie, 2012).

CRF and intersectionality are important frameworks because racialized gender and age are pivotal to my research. Intersectionality shapes the discussion and the lived experiences of the girls within the agency. CRF provides an intensive examination of how law and policy—specifically the NGO policies and practices I am studying—shape the girls' experience with social service and how racialized gender shapes the institutions' ideas about and actions toward (re)integration. I utilize CRF to challenge the dominant ideologies embedded in the anti-sex

trafficking narrative and analyze the NGO's understanding of sex trafficking to (re)integrate

Black girls into society. This analysis provides a counter-narrative to the popularized

construction of sex trafficking that does not demonstrate race in (re)integration.

Both CRF and intersectionality inform my study by guiding my critique and analysis. I

employ both to counter the organization's views of girls of color and colorblind rhetoric. I also

use CRF to code racialized gender and to counter dominant ideologies within the organization.

Below, I describe the methods to achieve the goals stated above and give background on my site

of research.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODS

I began interning at my site of research in early September 2017 and developed research questions from my experience at Emeika. As a researcher, I use these relationships to discuss the dynamics of the agency and their implementation of policies to assist in (re)integration. Feminist ethnography is suitable because I am able to both observe and participate in activities of the organization while acknowledging the power dynamics within the institution (Davis & Craven, 2016). Using feminist ethnography, I can look at (re)integration and collect data on how racialized gender shapes victims' assistance. Lofland & Lofland (1995) describe participant observation as "[an] investigator [who] establishes and sustains a many-sided and relatively long –term relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a scientific understanding of the association" (p. 18). As an intern, I attend meetings for the treatment team, participate in programs, and "hang around" at the group homes and offices. I spend at least 5-10 hours a week at the site and completed a 40 hour training to actively participate with victims. By both presenting myself as a researcher and intern, I have additional access and rapport with the agency personnel which helps me to analyze their ideas of racialized gender and CSEC. The organization's philanthropy and primary goals, including housing foster-care children and community-outreach development, is designed to work for the specific region where they are located and explicitly addresses the issues of interest in my thesis.

Once my IRB [7]was approved, to conduct my study I documented my own experiences as an intern, tutor, supporter, and confidant in appropriate situations. I took field notes about the policies, practices, and interactions—including language, responses (to me and to those within the agency)—I engage in. This includes discussing the girl's treatment plans, or casual conversations with the staff and administration. The causal questioning and ethnographic interviewing with the staff were to "seek to discover [sic] the informant's experience [sic]" regarding programs (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 18). By engaging as an intern and observing others, I detailed the elements of the agency that can help answer my research questions. The emerging themes arose from the observations and interactions regarding CSEC, racialized gender, and (re)integration.

Site of Research

The organization's social location is valuable because it is located within one of the top 25 areas of human trafficking cases reported from calls to the human trafficking hotline in the U.S. [8]Emeika offers programs that address trauma and create safety plans to aid in positive development. For "survivors" of CSEC, there is a "different" routine exhibited that focuses on (re)integration and on the "success" of the girls' transition into functional adulthood. Goals centered around sexually-exploited youth include addressing and overcoming Stockholm Syndrome, reducing juvenile delinquency (e.g. running away), and providing a safe environment for educational development. Emeika prides itself in providing a "secure" environment to help with the (re)integration process, I investigate these goals in my analysis.

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[7] In the "Appendix," I attached my IRB approval letter.
[8] In the literature below, I will address the difficulty in acquiring quantitative data and statistics regarding CSEC. The hotline is not necessarily accurate, but does offer a general idea of the regional differences and trends of possible places with high rates of human trafficking. Link to Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics: https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states

The agency houses diverse groups of girls across social categorizations including race, gender, class, and social backgrounds that shape their experiences and relationship with the agency. The majority of the participants in CSEC are documented through data as "white" and the average age is 16. As for the staff and administration, they are predominantly Black women. The programs at the agency include mentoring, after-school programs, tutoring, group counseling sessions, and independent living classes. The "trained staff" includes paid staff, volunteers, and interns. Fundamentally, the agency's goal is to build self-esteem, set realistic goals, and expand life skills for the girls.

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of South Florida and Emeika gave me consent to participate in programs and observe interactions. My range of responsibility gives me insight to the programs administered for (re)integrating the girls. I have to participate in all programs, attend meetings with administration, and have open availability to respond to "crises," if needed. One core requirement is to participate on a "treatment team" to discuss the case management and best outcomes for the girls. The goal for these discussions is to focus on the girls' needs, while recapping any issues or events at the houses. I focus primarily on the aspect of "reintegration" through the agency's programs. Whenever there are "certified' cases of CSEC in the house, I am automatically linked with the girl to contribute to the "best plan" for the "success" of the girl. Below, I address positionality and ethics to acknowledge my role as a researcher in this setting.

CHAPTER FIVE:

POSITONALITY & ETHICS

Early in my interactions at Emeika, I was introduced to a young, dark-skinned Black girl at my internship site. In one of our first few interactions, she looked at me and simply asked, "Are you mixed?" I instantly responded with, "No. Just Black." She continued to stare while pointing out my hair texture and skin. She stated that my hair and skin was "pretty," so I had to be mixed with something. In this moment, I came to realize that as an ethnographer, I am not only observing the girls, but they are also perceiving me in a distinct way. Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman (2017) discuss credibility and approachability in the field. Credibility is centered on the "familiarity and openness" of a culture, as well as an embodied process. The "embodied" process was highlighted during this encounter because not only was my racialized (and classed and sexualized) gender transparent, my appearance gives me privilege in spaces with the girls.

I note that particular interns, like me, are granted access to go to the houses freely and are often sent by the supervisors, while others have been limited in their engagement. Not only is this practice gendered, as in only women can go into the house with the kids, but it is also racialized in terms of who is seen as "being able to handle" interacting with the girls—with the presumption disproportionately seen as Black women. Because race is contested in a sense that it is interpreted differently across time and culture—as critical race feminist scholars have mentioned (Wing, 2003)—it is important to remember my role as a Black woman researcher and

reflect on my own understandings of race when interacting with the girls. I am a cisgender "Christian"[9] Black woman with piercings (that I was told to remove, but wore them after the first few weeks). Due to the site's religious affiliations and what I embody (physically and identity-wise), I have privilege to be in this space to conduct my research. Throughout my writing process, I was self-reflexive of my role as a researcher and my ethics in regards to that research.

Ethics within research are crucial to address when interacting with vulnerable populations because of the power dynamics within the relationship. More specifically, my topic deals with multiple layers of vulnerability, including that I interact, through participating in an NGO, with underage foster girls and victim-survivors of human trafficking. Siegel & de Wildt (2016) document the various forms of human trafficking and the numerous ethical dilemmas in researching this subject. First, confidentiality is key to protecting the victim-survivors' identity and could have detrimental consequences on the participants' lives if not taken into consideration holistically. Furthermore, Boyd & Bales (2016) notes the conflict with identifying "victims" when they don't self-identify as such, which can cause potential ethical issues within the researcher's work. I acknowledge that the youth have agency and may not identify with that term, but for the methods of my study, I focus solely on how the NGO identifies—through legal and other measures—who is a "victim."

Finally, as a researcher I must self-reflect due to the nature of my research. This includes addressing any vicarious traumatization through "empathetic bonding" with the participants (Bales & Boyd, 2016, p. 185). The empathetic aspect shapes the researcher's data and that may

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[9] I use "Christian" as a broad identifier that I am spiritual and wear a cross necklace every day

result in "unsubstantiated claims" that can arise from the bonds and relationships with those participating.

CHAPTER SIX:

FINDINGS

Below I identify two main themes with various topics throughout my data collection at Emeika that answer my research questions. My research questions are: How does an NGO assist with (re)integration of Victim-survivors of CSEC? To what extent does racialized gender play a role in the discussion of CSEC? The first theme addresses the organization's definition of CSEC and practices of (re)integration of victim-survivors. The second theme elaborates on race of the agency that guide the principles and practices to (re)integrate the victim-survivors along with the racialized assumptions, ideologies, and stereotypes within the organization's perception of victim-survivors.

THEME 1

Defining CSEC & Reintegration

While discussing commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), on the surface, Emeika adopts a broad, legal definition. They recognize CSEC as the exchange of sexual acts or favors for something of value (i.e. money, food, shelter, drugs, etc.). The definition guides the practices for both (re)integration and conceptualizations of victim-survivors. As mentioned in the site of research, Emeika has four housing units across the region to accommodate girls depending on their victimization status. The organization considers anyone who is under the age of 18 to be a "victim" because of the implementation of Safe Harbor laws, as detailed in the literature review. This guides their labeling of all children as "victims" and therefore they have

no agency. Emeika understands "reintegration" as a holistic process that centers the victim's needs and leads to self-sufficiency and self-care.

Emeika obtains information before the youth's arrival from child welfare services, and new girls are instantly screened for abuse, trauma, and prior designations of CSEC. A "normalcy plan"—which is a plan created to guide Emeika in creating "normal" and "positive" development experiences—is established alongside a service plan. A service plan includes various areas of the youth's life including medical, therapy, recreation, and education. These four elements manage the normalcy plan and is catered to the particular needs of the girl. For CSEC, the plan frequently includes strategies to address Stockholm syndrome and chronic running.

Emeika categorizes a victim of CSEC as either (a) suspected, (b) determined/verified, or (c) certified/confirmed. If the child is suspected, they are placed in a single room after intake and remain there for no less than 30 days to eventually be administered the human trafficking assessment tool. Following the administration of the human trafficking tool, if the child is determined/verified to be CSEC, they must stay in their single room for the length of time that a therapist deems necessary to address trauma. Only the therapist may provide approval for the girl to share a room with another person. They are determined/verified by the children's responses to the tool from a variety of questions like "How do you pay for where you live?" "What does your tattoo mean?" and " Sometimes, young people who are away from home can be taken advantage of and asked to do sexual activities in exchange for something of value. These activities can include dancing, stripping, posing for photos, or sex of any kind. While you were away, did anyone ever ask you to do something like that?" Furthermore, Emeika may discover information that reveals they are "victims" once the victim "develops trust." These questions guide potential verification of a victim through the agency's or system's standard. Lastly, a girl can be

certified/confirmed as a victim, based on evidence through the criminal legal system, child welfare system, and Emeika staff; and therefore, she remains in a single room indefinitely.

The CSEC designation dictates their housing arrangement; thus, identifying CSEC is a specified, complex process managed by the agency personnel with material consequences for the girl and the agency. Depending on the classification from the therapist and agency, the CSEC girl either is assigned to live in a room by herself or with another girl who matches her safety plans. This architectural separation is considered to promote safety guidelines that guarantee the protection of the other girls in the house and the victim. By segregating the CSEC or suspected-CSEC girls, the (re)integration process actually begins by isolating the victim-survivor, coupling this isolation with 24/7 surveillance. The definitions for CSEC and reintegration are important because they shape the policies and ideologies of the organization, and how the agency staff interact with the girls both daily and in terms of defining their success while in the program.

Challenges to Reintegration

Of particular concern are those CSEC girls who have a history of "perpetrating" on other children or "recruiting." Recruitment is defined as persuading other girls to engage in sexual interactions for something of value or running away to participate in sexual exploitation. Emeika's "most important" rules are: do not give out the house's location, and if you run, do not take anyone with you, especially anyone younger. To prevent running away, which is considered a pathway to repeated victimization or new victimization, depending on the girl's status as victim-survivor before running, Emeika believes in occupying the victim-survivor to avoid idle time. Ms. Simone "advocate[s] for activity and keeping them busy because if [the girls] are home all day they get into trouble and end up running away." This distinguishes Emeika from the safe

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homes dedicated to "rescuing" and maintaining the victims' "safety" through limitation in movement.

Various challenges arise with proposed normalcy and safety plans. The intake supervisor and housing manager, Ms. Simone, states, "Probation supersedes therapy instead of co-occurring therapy sessions. Probation is prioritized over drug or abuse therapy. We can't do anything until the drug abuse is out. If the child has a problem—we send them to a facility for drug treatment. But if they're on probation, that comes first." Thus, the agency, though interpreting the girls as victims, must first participate in their criminalization by the criminal legal system. This also contradicts the Safe Harbor law that is supposed to set "victimization" over "criminalization" and does not account for prior sentencing/convictions. Thus, the primary challenges identified by Emeika staff are rooted in management of the girls, physically (in terms of housing), and officially (in terms of their legal status). Girls who do not or have not acted like victims challenge the agency's strategies of rescues and goals of normalcy.

Coordinating Reintegration

A distinction between safe houses and Emeika is the utilization of various multi-lateral approaches alongside schools, jobs, and training centers. The collaborative assistances center trauma-informed care and the development of "success." Success is considered to be "up to the individual." Emeika prioritizes education as a key component in the reduction of girls running away. Whether the victim-survivors decrease the number of runs in a week, or the length of her time away from the agency, Emeika considers "baby steps" to be a "success." They often attempt to employ a "nonjudgmental" atmosphere to meet the victim-survivors "where they are at" to focus on the success of the girl from her entry point into Emeika.

Discussions with individuals at other institutions, like school and church, assist with the holistic process of (re)integration because Emeika considers collaborative efforts as essential to the success of the girl. They appoint various mentors and trainers from other organizations, job centers, and/or independent living instructors to guide the girls to "independence." For example, Ms. Simone emphasizes the need for school administration and staff to work with Emeika to build a relationship to exchange information about the girl. She states, "We let [the school psychologist] know that a new kid is coming to meet him on their own terms and they pretend to not know me." This creates a space for the child to develop "trust" with the individual, even though information is constantly being distributed with social workers, therapists, school psychologists, and Emeika. Moreover, this develops a cooperative relationship with other organizations for the girl's success.

Also, Emeika invites other organizations that offer resources about sex education to speak with the girls, with the caveat that the interactions are often abstinence-based because of Emeika's religious affiliations and sponsorships/funding that promotes an anti-prostitution agenda. This includes doing group sessions that discuss a range of issues like sex, drugs/alcohol, school, and "boyfriends." Further, there is continual contact with social workers and therapists from outside the agency to aid the organization in addressing the girls' trauma.

Another key (re)integration approach is the use of law enforcement for incidents when the child is "out of control." The agency works alongside the police as they try to assist in reducing the risk of girls running away in general, or more problematically with their "exploiter" (trafficker). In one instance, a law enforcement officer was called because a girl did not return home. The officer dropped the girl off after reprimanding her for running away from the agency and not "coming home" to "hang out with boys." Although the girl was not arrested, the action

of being in a police car while being reprimanded adds to the list of controlling mechanisms employed by both the state and the agency. Moreover, this incidents highlights police officers' presence within (re)integration. This conveys that criminalization and regulation are a part of (re)integration and challenges the "victimization" label.

Collectively, this multi-lateral approach can be advantageous in terms of a net of support for the girls. This includes having numerous resources to guide the girl in different realms of her life, but simultaneously—depending on the interactions—can be a net of control. For instance, when discussing resources during school can show support in a place that she spends majority of her time. On the contrary, this support can turn to control with the use of police presence to regulate the girls' behavior.

Language and Agency: Child/Adult and Victim/Prostitute

Throughout (re)integration, there are often contradictions, including the continuous conflation of the terms prostitution and trafficking. For instance, in one interaction with a young girl, Ms. Simone recounts a "crazy" conversation. She says,

> "[The girl] was in a house full of prostitutes. She said 'I am not no prostitute so I don't know why I'm here with them prostitutes.' I said, 'Let's think about this. Why did they put you in a house full of prostitutes? What is exchanging sex for money? What do you call that?' The girl replied with 'I know how to trick when I want to get something. There's a difference between tricking and prostitution. I had something I need to do and I needed money. I control him and he gave me money.' She didn't get it. She thinks she's in control. I had to explain why this is an issue or a problem."

The agency's understanding of CSEC is contradictory to the "victim status" especially when using a criminalizing term like "prostitution." Furthermore, the agency staff using "prostitution" instead of "victim" highlights the agency refutes the notion of 'victim" as automatic and without question—especially when the staff project terms that counter the automatic notion of "victimhood." Furthermore, the staff mention the distinction between past narratives of traffickers that are "pimps" and present ideologies of traffickers as boyfriends, family members, and friends. What they fail to realize is that oftentimes youth in the sex market economy work alone (Marcus et. al, 2012). This terminology and the conflation of the two terms suggest agency of the child by implying that there is "choice"—and opposes the faith-based ideologies and laws shaping CSEC.

Other factors shape the child/adult dichotomy Emeika's staff utilize with the girls' to perpetuate their nonagentic status during (re)integration. Thus, the designation of 'child' is the lens through which Emeika's staff understand the girls' identities (i.e. race, gender, age). Because of the western construction of children, the staff are often frustrated with the girls not responding to them in "appropriate" ways or for not "staying in a kid's place," while simultaneously acknowledging the girls' behavior is contingent on their prior "lifestyle." This "lifestyle" rhetoric is problematic because it insinuates choice, which contradicts the projected victimization of the girl.

In other words, while agency staff were quite willing to consider the girls to be "children," "nonagentic", and "victims," the girls' behavior while at the facility belied those easy labels. The agency's mechanisms of control/assistance (i.e. chores, rules/regulations, etc.) often led to conflicts with the girls' status of victimhood. Housing staff member, Ms. Lily states:

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They are too grown for the house; it's too slow paced for them. They go from running the streets and being grown to this controlled environment. Even getting them to turn in their phone is difficult because they're not like other kids. That's their lifeline for their traffickers, boyfriends, but most importantly, their money.

In Ms. Lily's statement, when the rules/regulations in the house are "disrespected," the girls are deemed to be "too grown" and crossing the line/boundary placed between children and adults. Administrative staff member, Ms. Higgins, confirms other staff member's perceptions by mentioning that children have "too many rights now"—specifically regarding the child's right to call caseworkers "over anything." Even though she agrees with youth having rights, she thinks it's "overboard" now. Taking the phone, then, is not about abridging those rights as much as it is an effort to assert the girls' childhood status.

The fluidity of "agency" and "non-agency" in the staff's understanding of the girls relies on the circumstances. For instance, the child is deemed nonagentic when discussing their "choice" in survival sex. Ms. Simone, repeatedly mentions that "there is no choice, legally, and because [the girls] are taken advantage of." In this situation, the staff confines the girls to a victim status, even if/when the girl resists such labels. Moreover, staff believe the girls are "the same" regardless of racialized gender, background, and experiences because their past automatically categorizes them as being "too grown." These contradictions and controversial use of language suggest that agency staff struggle, as do the girls, with the idea of agency and victimization. Though officially supportive of an assertion of child for their clients, they continually struggle to maintain that image when the girls themselves act or reject such a non-agentic label.

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In theme one, the organization's official understanding of reintegration and CSEC shape the interactions within the programs with the girl. At the same time, understanding is not unidirectional; the girls' participation in the programs and their interactions (such as running away or "acting grown) guide reintegration and staff's assistance and push back against the easy, narrow label of CSEC victim. Thus, agency staff shift their understandings and interactions, flowing between child and adult discourse and victim and agent discourse, sometimes turning to others to maintain the official designation through their multi-lateral approach. The next theme elaborates on an intersectional approach to (re)integration at Emeika. The next theme elaborates on an intersectional approach to (re)integration at Emeika.

THEME 2

Black Agency

Early on in my ethnographic fieldwork one of Emeika's founders stated that the organization was a "Black agency." Some of the organization staff identified with the term because the agency staff is majority Black. While others "didn't think about [race]" and it happened to be "coincident[al]" that everyone except for one staff member employed is Black, this identification was contested by the co-founder. The co-founder discussed how the organization is not meant to be known as a "Black agency." Ms. Marcia states, "[Emeika] wants to be known for the work that is done and what we do." Right afterwards, Ms. Marcia acknowledges that the agency is a Black agency, "but not on purpose. The white people never last and can't handle it. They can't handle the girls." This was a common theme whenever discussing the race and gender demographics of the staff. There are embedded ideologies that appear throughout the discourse about who is able to "handle" situations and why the staff is predominantly Black.

When discussing the white staff, Ms. Simone states, "I never thought of [Emeika being a Black agency]. We just hired Black, qualified people. We did have a white woman working here before and the girls did not like her. They tormented her. They called her an informant and once a few girls didn't like her, they all didn't. Brittany [only current white staff member] has sass in her. So, she can handle the girls." This language is coded with "race talk" in who is able to "handle"—and control—the girls. These Black women are deemed equipped to handle the girls because they are "culturally" equipped. Ms. Simone states, "We [Black people] just go about things culturally different than other organizations. We are faith-based organization [like the others], but it's a different conversation when they are call you bitch this and that. They're going to really be praying for them and not know what to do." Staff often link the inadequacy of other organizations to their "whiteness."

Simultaneously, agency staff acknowledge race when discussing racism against the organization as a whole. For instance, Ms. Marcia comes into the office one day to discuss the "hidden racism" at a service provider meeting of all agencies in the region with another Black founder of a different organization. She states, "That's why I talk to other Black folks to discuss how we are being treated, so we're not alone. We support other Black people. It's the racism you don't see." In this instance, she explicitly calls out hidden racism and continues to center the agency's racial demographics when discussing the challenges that the organization faces.

Although racism is a challenge for the organization, Emeika's co-founder contests the other founder's explicit identification as a "Black agency." Ms. Marcia states, "Just like the white ladies at the church I told you about asking us if we only serve colored girls. No, we service everyone. We have a rainbow of kids. People think because we are Black, we only service Black kids." She dismisses the identification because of the assumptions that she has

heard that is attributed to being a "Black agency." This shows the strategic nature of being colorblind because the founder sees the racial assumptions playing out just by her presence as a Black woman. Although the agency's founders disagree with each other on Emeika's identification, this institution operates and interacts in racialized terms. While staff do not explicitly talk about race in the context of (re)integration, they often discuss and maneuver with what they consider a "commonsense" framework built upon racialized perceptions. It is important to highlight Emeika's contested identity as a "Black agency" because the staff that operate in the institution are shaped by the ideologies and understandings of their own ideologies.

Understanding Black victimhood

When discussing CSEC, whiteness dominates the conversation in terms of victims, whether race is incorporated explicitly, or hinted at implicitly when discussing "who" the victims are. When asked about the race of the victims, Ms. Marcia states, "[Human trafficking] can happen to anyone. Even people who you least expect. I service more white kids than Black kids. They don't talk about the white girls involved in gangs and getting caught up." She dispels myths about who is associated with human trafficking by simultaneously playing into the other dominant rescue narrative of young, white (cisgender) girls needing to be saved. This isolates the conversation from LGBTQIA+* youth and/or other youth of color because the discussion continues to focus on white girls.

Staff also were shocked by white girls coming in and "leaving with large numbers of people." Ms. Simone stated, "We kept wondering why these blonde hair, blue-eyed girls kept coming in and leaving with the girls. We didn't expect them to be recruiters. They were gorgeous. Girls next door." This exhibits that the staff had preconceived notions of who the

victims were and what they were supposed to do. Also, the racialized and gendered implications are highlighted through the description of the girls. The girls were "gorgeous" and "girls next door" which is presumed to be white, young, and pretty. Such girls are not presumed to be recruiters for trafficking.

Although race may be explicitly neglected in terms of the (re)integration process, Emeika understands that the construction of Black victimhood is differentiated through racialized gender. For instance, when discussing the difference of the victims based on race, Ms. Marcia reduced Black girls to shallow beings. She stated, "They don't talk about white girls involved in gangs and getting caught up. Black girls are labeled as prostitutes and all they want is to get their nails and hair done. Which [the second part] is true." The issue is not only the misconstrued understandings of Black girls, but the fact that she distinctively used "prostitute" to convey the difference in white and Black "victims." In this context, she was comparing the different experiences of white girls who were "saved" and that of Black girls who are understood socially to be "prostitutes" (Collins, 2004). Here, she is countering the stereotypes of Black girls as agentic jezebels through a critical lens and compares the difference in terminology used for Black and white girls. Simultaneously, she reinforces the stereotype that all Black girls want to do is get their hair and nails done.

Colorblind and Racialized Interactions with the girls

A similar distinction emphasized how staff should interact with white and Black girls in terms of discipline and love. The staff sees love in racialized ways. Ms. Marcia states, "With white girls you can be gentle, ya [sic] know. Black girls need tough love." This statement exemplifies the need for a "disciplined" love as central to Black girl's assistance and "success" is reduced to control of Black girls. This is detrimental in some aspects because Black girls

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internalize the controlling and degrading discourse that staff often engage in with coded language. However, while this process appears to operate under a generalization that you cannot be gentle with Black girls because they "won't get it," this might also be rooted in how the racialized agency understands Black women's strength, ability to transcend adversity, and accept trauma (Collins, 2004). In other words, the staff of predominantly Black women as the primary caretakers of the house, is considered appropriate because of their perceived "strength." It may not be surprising, then, that the Black staff perceive Black girls as being strong enough to handle (or need) a tougher form of love/discipline.

The assumptions and generalizations used by staff often reify stereotypes of Black girls, and perpetuate the tropes that operate under the notion that Black girls cannot be victims. I witnessed several discussions on how "fast" the Black girls were. For instance, a fourteen-year-old Black girl who was a certified CSEC victim-survivor "caused problems" and the staff appeared exasperated when discussing the girl—as "troubling." Ms. Tracy said, "She's very argumentative. She has a really bad attitude. She has a smart mouth and her behavior is bad, but she is really, really smart. She's really intelligent to the point that you forget she is a child." Shortly after, while reviewing treatment plans and updates on the girls, Ms. Simone discussed some of the issues with working with the girl. She said, "She is extremely sexual. I mean we had to teach the girl to wear underwear. We applauded her when she wore a bra and underwear." The girl's sexuality was interwoven with her "assigned victimhood." Due to being labeled a confirmed victim-survivor of CSEC, which innately is a sexual case, her wearing underwear was a "positive" step in (re)integrating her. First, for being able to not only surveil her sexuality, but to control it by deeming it "inappropriate" for her not to wear underwear(Collins, 2004). By her gradually meeting the standards of what is "acceptable" and what is not as a "child," she is not

only being assisted in "normalizing" her life, but also learning what is "appropriate" for her, which inherently controls her sexuality.

There were various implications when discussing her behavior that linked to her racialized, gendered, and (projected hetero) sexualized being. The staff repeatedly complained about her overt statements regarding sex or sexual encounters. They mention "sexcapades" to explain her going on "sex sprees." House staff Ms. Tracy says, "It's a normal routine [for her to runaway]. *laughs* She calls you when she's done having sex with boys. She will call you when she's ready to be picked up and the sheriff will pick her up." These incidents result in staff assuming that when she is gone, it is solely to engage in sex with a boy. In redefining "success" for the girl, they emphasized her toning down her "sexcapades" as progress. Again, her racialized gender shapes her perceived sexuality because she was deemed "hyper-sexual" through their understanding of what the girl should and should not be doing with her young body.

Staff's assumptions and ideologies about Black girls are embedded in their interactions with victim-survivors. Staff member Ms. Wanda states,

"You already have society looking at Black girls as ratchet and, and [sic] ghetto. I tell the girls that you can be better than that. We can change society. Also, all this "turning gay" stuff. Everyone's just doing it and I tell them to do it with class. You know, I tell them to read the bible and go to sessions with open ears. I talk to them like their grandma. I sit and talk to them even though they don't listen. I have to tell them to learn to be independent. What are you going to do to survive and who is going to take care of you? You."

This statement has various implications, assumptions and ideologies that shape how staff interact with the girls. This includes acknowledging the harmful discourse that denigrates Black girls. Within the same sentence, she has religious (and homophobic) undertones that convey a spiritual message to the girls. She emphasizes the familial child/adult dichotomy by stating that she talks to them like their "grandma" and they don't "listen." The final sentence perpetuates the individualism that is highlighted within the conversation of (re)integration. She highlights the need for "independence" to "survive," but does not acknowledge the barriers to "survival" for Black girls.

Lastly, there are coded racial meanings and assumptions when discussing incentives. Emeika prides itself on being creative in both interacting with the girls and rewarding them for "good behavior." The incentives are used as support and motivation for the girls to follow the rules in (and outside) the organization. One of the incentives is a box full of straight hair extensions and weave. Not only does this highlight the beautifying of the girls' bodies but has various assumptions that tie into previous conceptions of CSEC victim-survivors. This includes the fact that weave and nails are deemed as an "incentive" because these items are automatically assumed to be interpreted as "good" to the victim due to their prior "lifestyle." Furthermore, they discuss alternative incentives that "work" for the girl specifically but are often reduced to individual beautification. A final point to note about the "incentive" is the fact that none of the hair extensions are blonde—even though white girls dominate the discussion of CSEC and are more frequently housed within the agency.

This theme highlights the racialized and gendered undertones of reintegration. Simultaneously, the agencies contestation of its official identification is strategic to perpetuate the colorblind approach to "trauma" and to not "categorize" Emeika. This could be not only for

the racialized assumptions they face, but for the hidden racism that is political in terms of funding. Furthermore, this theme highlights Black victimhood that is shaped by social categorizations like race, gender, age, and sexuality. As mentioned in the discussion of the girl who engages in "sexcapades," the agency grapples with deeming her "agentic" because of her "decisions" while simultaneously classifying her as a "victim" in CSEC standards.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

To further conclude my thesis, I use a railroad and a train as a metaphor to further explain the relationship between Emeika and racialized gender within (re)integration. In the metaphor, the tracks symbolize the direction towards a destination for the victim-survivor of CSEC. This destination can include a variety of different "achievements" including receiving a high school diploma, completing the GED, "acknowledging self-worth," and obtaining a job, etc. However, not all trains reach their destination because some tracks can abruptly stop. The train represents the girl who is traveling towards "success," which can be unclear because of the diverging tracks. The diverging tracks represent the ways in which racialized gender is discussed within the context of (re)integration. The tracks are not going in the same direction because racialized gender and (re)integration are not being discussed together, but rather as two distinct topics. Lastly, the tracks abruptly stopping could be from various barriers to "success" like aging out, switching locations, and running away.

The themes analyzed above interweave and coexist to produce an atmosphere of "assistance" that attempts to (re)integrate the victims while neglecting racialized gender. In doing so, they assert a neoliberal understanding of (re)integration. Emeika operates under the idea of individualism when conveying what "success" is to victims. Emeika highlights self-sufficiency through interactions between the girls and multi-lateral approaches, whether it is "economically, financially, or spiritually." These interactions center (re)integration on job

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trainings, resources, independent living classes, etc. Furthermore, success is not only about

"survival" but focuses on building self-esteem and doing everything on an individual level to

help the girls protect themselves. The material used to guide group sessions, "My Life, My

Choice" interactive booklet, focuses on how to identify an abusive partner that could eventually

exploit the girl or how to guide her to make "good choices."

Even when a victim-survivor enters Emeika, they are told to turn in their phone to "focus

on yourself." From intake, the girl receives the message that (re)integration is centered on her,

and her willingness to follow the rules. Often, staff discuss how the girls should be "happy"

despite adversity and trauma. This includes repeatedly telling the girls to be 'get over it' and

having decorations around the house with the quote "Happiness is a choice." Ms. Simone states,

"I tell the girls, victims are dead and survivors aren't. I'm not dismissing the trauma, it's just you

are a survivor. You get up and keep going, no matter what is thrown at you." This proclamation

of the difference between victim and survivor reinforces the idea that trauma is something that

shapes your approach to life, but does not control your life, with an emphasis on individual

choice.

By minimizing the situation down to just an "incident" or "choice" insinuates that the

girls who are agentic and in the street sex market have low self-esteem. Moreover, this continues

the ostracizing of victim-survivors who may not self-identify as such because this abandons the

more macro-issues that caused specific vulnerabilities (Lutnick, 2016). Furthermore, by focusing

on the self, Emeika continues to dismiss the structures in place that render young (Black) girls

vulnerable in the first place. What the agency staff fail to mention is the racist and sexist

structures that are interconnected and can hinder self-sufficiency of the girls in both economic

and social ways. This individualistic approach shifts the trauma and responsibility back on the

girl to "successfully" transition from "victim" status to "survivor" status. Furthermore, those who are often assisted on an individualistic level are sometimes neglected through the child welfare system.

Lastly, my data is particularly telling for the strategic usage of racialized gender in conversation, while simultaneously ignoring race in the victim's process to (re)integration. For Black women to constitute the majority of the staff and for the discussion of racism within the aspect of Emeika's interactions with other organizations, funders, etc., there is often a surprise dismissal of racial difference when discussing (re)integration of the victim-survivors. On one instance, there was an emphasis on the agency's Blackness through their understanding of cultural difference. The staff's interpretation does not engage critically Black girls' experience within (re)integration—and when they do—they emphasize a false ideology about Black victimhood. Moreover, being a "Black agency," there is an "inherent" expectation to address race in various contexts, which was challenged by Ms. Marcia's critique of identifying as a "Black agency." Finally, it can be considered advantageous to Emeika to take a "colorblind" stance when discussing (re)integration. Given the co-founders emphasis on helping all kids, she challenges preconceived notions about Black owned organizations.

When discussing racialized gender within (re)integration, the organization continues to ignore the importance of social categorizations. Throughout the explicit discussion of racialized gender, they often minimized the differences between white and Black victims. This could be the pervasiveness of colorblind rhetoric within different social structures, and/or the constant emphasis on "trauma" needing to be addressed, rather than racialized gender. Colorblind trauma can be seen within the dominant narrative about violence against women. Therefore, human

trafficking can be included in the discussion of combatting the issue without acknowledging how racialized gender shapes the victimization label, assistance, and access to resources.

Finally, I believe I would suggest numerous things to the agency to discuss what I have seen throughout my feminist ethnography. First, I would discuss the power of language when discussing Black girls as victim-survivors. For instance, the stereotypes like calling girls "fast" could be damaging to the girl who is reintegrating. Secondly, I would highlight how race is important and should be center to the discussion of (re)integration. I believe that there is more damage done at trying to separate racialized gender from the discussion because it does not acknowledge structural oppression. Thirdly, I think dominant ideologies like "children don't have agency" and "children are automatically victims" would not align with what the girls identify with. This could shift the staff's perception about CSEC and give a more "realistic" account of how the girls identify. Lastly, I think it is important to highlight the conflating usage of "prostitution" and "human trafficking." This shapes how victim-survivors are viewed and how society understands the two terms (as synonymous).

In my thesis, I have answered both of my research questions: How do community advocates assist in (re)integration of victim-survivors of CSEC? How does racialized gender impact (re)integration of victim-survivors of CSEC? Through feminist ethnography, I analyzed the emphasis on individualism as a key way to "assist" in (re)integration and discussed the acknowledgement of racialized gender in various forms excluding (re)integration, often times continuing a "colorblind" dynamic. The limitations to my research include the length of the study. Although I was at Emeika for a year, I was not able to officially track more than three girls' (re)integration from start to finish because of the continuous moving of the girls to a different group home, returning home to their parents/guardians, or running away. Furthermore,

another limitation would be how the girls responded to (re)integration, but that surpassed the scope of my thesis.

Although this is a start, we need more literature that centers Black girls, racialized gender, and (re)integration in the human trafficking narratives. There are larger questions including: how would assistance shift if we incorporate racialized gender? How would organizations' ideologies and policies alter based on acknowledging structural issues? Most importantly, how are girls of color impacted by not addressing racialized gender within their (re)integration?

Black victims are often isolated because they are not included in the conversation on a societal scale, and when they should be the center in spaces like NGOs, their racialized gender is not explicitly discussed. This erasure further marginalizes the girls or renders them invisible when colorblind rhetoric is employed to discuss "trauma." In my research, a pattern of dismissing the girls' racial differences to focus on trauma was salient because race was virtually never discussed directly within (re)integration. Focusing on girls of color, requires more discussion on the vulnerabilities and entryways into human trafficking. Lastly, centering Black victims can reveal the steps that are/not being taken from institutions—like Emeika—that is distinct by their intersecting identities. Black girls continue to be harmed by institutions perpetuating stereotypes within their practices and interactions. In order for anti-trafficking advocates and scholars to combat human trafficking, we must be inclusive and center Black girls or their inequality continues to be reproduced in both the phenomenon and the efforts to assist.

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APPENDIX 1

USF

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

April 2, 2018

Joshlyn Lawhorn
Women's & Gender Studies
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#: Pro00032813
Title: Race, Gender, and (Re)integration of Victim-Survivors of CSEC in a Community Advocacy Context

Study Approval Period: 4/2/2018 to 4/2/2019

Dear Ms. Lawhorn:

On 4/2/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
3-17-2018 Version #1

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Verbal Consent Form- Version 0.01

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.117(c) which states that an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context. (Verbal consent)

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board