



DATE DOWNLOADED: Mon Sep 21 17:48:43 2020

SOURCE: Content Downloaded from [HeinOnline](#)

Citations:

Bluebook 21st ed.

Noel Busch-Armendariz, Maura Busch Nsonwu & Laurie Cook Heffron, A Kaleidoscope: The Role of the Social Work Practitioner and the Strength of Social Work Theories and Practice in Meeting the Complex Needs of People Trafficked and the Professionals That Work with Them, 57 INT'L Soc. WORK 7 (2014).

ALWD 6th ed.

Busch-Armendariz, N.; Nsonwu, M.; Heffron, L. ., A kaleidoscope: The role of the social work practitioner and the strength of social work theories and practice in meeting the complex needs of people trafficked and the professionals that work with them, 57(1) Int'l Soc. Work 7 (2014).

APA 7th ed.

Busch-Armendariz, N., Nsonwu, M., & Heffron, L. (2014). kaleidoscope: The role of the social work practitioner and the strength of social work theories and practice in meeting the complex needs of people trafficked and the professionals that work with them. *International Social Work*, 57(1), 7-18.

Chicago 7th ed.

Noel Busch-Armendariz; Maura Busch Nsonwu; Laurie Cook Heffron, "A Kaleidoscope: The Role of the Social Work Practitioner and the Strength of Social Work Theories and Practice in Meeting the Complex Needs of People Trafficked and the Professionals That Work with Them," *International Social Work* 57, no. 1 (January 2014): 7-18

McGill Guide 9th ed.

Noel Busch-Armendariz, Maura Busch Nsonwu & Laurie Cook Heffron, "A Kaleidoscope: The Role of the Social Work Practitioner and the Strength of Social Work Theories and Practice in Meeting the Complex Needs of People Trafficked and the Professionals That Work with Them" (2014) 57:1 Intl Soc Work 7.

MLA 8th ed.

Busch-Armendariz, Noel, et al. "A Kaleidoscope: The Role of the Social Work Practitioner and the Strength of Social Work Theories and Practice in Meeting the Complex Needs of People Trafficked and the Professionals That Work with Them." *International Social Work*, vol. 57, no. 1, January 2014, p. 7-18. HeinOnline.

OSCOLA 4th ed.

Noel Busch-Armendariz and Maura Busch Nsonwu and Laurie Cook Heffron, 'A Kaleidoscope: The Role of the Social Work Practitioner and the Strength of Social Work Theories and Practice in Meeting the Complex Needs of People Trafficked and the Professionals That Work with Them' (2014) 57 Int'l Soc Work 7

Provided by:

Tarlton Law Library - University of Texas at Austin

-- Your use of this HeinOnline PDF indicates your acceptance of HeinOnline's Terms and Conditions of the license agreement available at

<https://heinonline.org/HOL/License>

A kaleidoscope: The role of the social work practitioner and the strength of social work theories and practice in meeting the complex needs of people trafficked and the professionals that work with them

International Social Work

2014, Vol 57(1) 7–18

© The Author(s) 2013

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0020872813505630

isw.sagepub.com



Noël Busch-Armendariz

The University of Texas at Austin, USA

Maura Busch Nsonwu

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, USA

Laurie Cook Heffron

The University of Texas at Austin, USA

Abstract

This qualitative research study explored responses to trafficking in persons. Fifty-five ($n = 55$) interviews were collected and data were analyzed using qualitative iterative processes. The social worker and the utilization of social work perspectives provided a strong and effective framework for service delivery and effective interdisciplinary collaboration. The ecological, strengths-based, and victim-center approaches were a benefit to survivors and professionals specifically around coordinated efforts, trust-building, and increased cultural competence. Findings also support that individuals who are trafficked have unique needs and social workers' theoretical and practice modalities are well suited to respond to and coordinate these distinct circumstances.

Keywords

Ecological perspective, human trafficking, qualitative research, sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, single-point-of-contact, social work, strengths-based approach, victim-centered approach

Corresponding author:

Noël Busch-Armendariz, School of Social Work, Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin, 1925 San Jacinto Blvd, D3500, Austin, TX 78712, USA.

Email: nbusch@austin.utexas.edu

Introduction

Modern slavery is a major criminal, social justice, and human rights issue around the world (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2011; Polaris Project, 2012). In 2012, International Labor Organization (ILO) reported that there are 20.9 million people are trafficked worldwide; and ILO estimated that 1.2 million children were trafficked and still being exploited (ILO, 2009).¹ The National Human Trafficking Hotline estimates that 200,000 American minors are at risk being trafficked (<http://www.polarisproject.org>), the vast majority of whom are commercially sexually exploited and abused by adults. Since 2001, the US Department of State has published the *Trafficking in Persons Report* (TIP) to assess and rank governments' efforts to address the crime of human trafficking; in 2012, 185 countries were assessed (Somalia is considered a special case and was not ranked).

People are trafficked for two primary reasons: for the purposes of forced labor or sexual exploitation. Labor trafficking may involve exploitation through domestic servitude or forced labor in industries such as tourism and the service industry (restaurants, hotels, etc.), agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and other commerce. People trafficked in the sex industry are often forced into activities such as prostitution and pornography. Trafficking does not necessarily involve moving victims from one location to another, nor does it have to involve crossing an international or state border (Busch-Armendariz, 2012b).

Definitions and policy efforts

The Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) directed global anti-trafficking policy responses. The Palermo Protocol has been adopted by 128 countries worldwide and outlines an international anti-trafficking policy response that recognized a need to 'prevent and combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children, requires a comprehensive international approach in countries of origin, transit and destination' (p. 2) and also defines the provision of social services for trafficked persons. Later that year the United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) (Public Law 106-386) was signed by President Clinton in 2000 (and reauthorized in 2003, 2005, and 2008) to set domestic and international standards for anti-trafficking efforts, including Prevention, Prosecution of Traffickers, and Protection of Victims (considered the three pillars, or three Ps, of anti-trafficking efforts). The TVPA defines trafficking in persons as: 'the recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, slavery, or forced commercial sex acts' (TVPA, section 103[8]). Although trafficking in persons involves elements of force, fraud, or coercion under the TVPA, a case that involves a sexually exploited child does not have to meet these standards. In other words, laws criminalize any adult sexual activity or intercourse with a child. The forced prostitution of children and youth is sometimes referred to as domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) or commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

Clarification between the definitions of smuggling and trafficking is essential in understanding their oftentimes misused descriptions. The major difference between smuggling and trafficking is subjugation; smuggling involves willingness to cross an international border without proper documentation and is considered a crime (Albanese et al., 2004; Busch-Armendariz, 2012b). Smuggling may also involve deceit on the part of the smuggler; it is well known that people smuggled across borders are vulnerable to many types of victimization. Therefore some individuals who are willingly smuggled into the United States may later be exploited for the purposes of labor or sex services and thus considered to have been trafficked.

The TVPA protects certified foreign-born trafficking survivors from deportation. In the United States, foreign-born trafficking survivors are primarily eligible for a T or U Visa (Busch-Armendariz, 2012a, 2012b; Roby, 2012). T Visa eligibility generally requires survivors to cooperate in the criminal case (although minors are not compelled to cooperate) and provide the survivor with employment authorization and assistance through the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) programs. U Visas are awarded to victims of violent crimes who have endured substantial physical or psychological abuse that has been verified by a governmental entity; this provision provides for temporary legal status and work eligibility (Busch-Armendariz, 2012a, 2012b).

Law enforcement responses, traffickers, and demand

Over the past 12 years, a swift criminal justice system response to this crime has been a major focus. Americans and citizens throughout the world understand more about modern slavery because of anti-trafficking legislation and policy, the rescue of survivors, and the prosecution of traffickers. According to the 2012 US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, in 2011 41,210 victims of trafficking were identified worldwide; a 24 percent increase from the previous year (<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2012/192361.htm>). In those same years (2010 and 2011) there was a 17 percent increase in convictions of traffickers (3619 convictions versus 4239, respectively).

Although there are no universally agreed-upon cost estimates, most experts agree that trafficking in persons is considered one of the most profitable organized crimes in the world; profits are estimated in the billions of dollars every year (ILO, 2009; IOM, 2003). Thus, trafficking operations use strategies to conceal themselves. Law enforcement reports that human trafficking is often linked to other criminal networks such as illegal drugs. While traffickers who exploit US citizens tend to be associated with small criminal groups, gangs, and criminal entrepreneurs, human traffickers who move victims across international borders are more likely to be linked with national or transnational organized crime syndications. For a review of typologies of traffickers, see Busch-Armendariz et al. (2009).

Traffickers use a variety of methods to lure victims. Although there are similar methods of deception (Lloyd, 2010) some methods vary by survivors' characteristics (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2009). For domestic minors trafficked for sexual exploitation, the development of a direct relationship with the victim is common. The trafficker often coerces the victim by creating an emotional reliance and dependency (Lloyd, 2010). Thus, the exploitation and demand for prostitution typically follows trust, love, and attention (Lloyd, 2010). For foreign-born victims there are often promises of legitimate employment and wage-earning opportunities, frequently tied to victims' desires to pay off smuggling debts. In both cases, traffickers maintain control by using physical and sexual violence, isolation and entrapment, drug addiction, psychological and emotional abuse, threats to other family members' well-being; as well as exploiting victims' lack of knowledge of the legal process, their rights or available services. The intimidation of revealing a victim's legal status, possibly resulting in their deportation, is a significant coercion tool used against foreign-born victims. Psychological coercion cannot be understated; many victims have endured years of enslavement because traffickers use fear and threats of retaliation against them and their family members (minor children, parents, etc.) if they attempt to escape.

Trafficking in persons exists because it is lucrative and driven by the demand for sexual services and cheap labor. In particular, 'johns' (customers of people who are being prostituted) fuel the demand for sex with exploited adults and children (Shively et al., 2012). Moreover, events such as

sporting and entertainment venues, conventions, and business meetings that bring large numbers of people together may increase the likelihood of the demand for sex services and provide opportunities for minor victims to be exploited although this hypothesis has not been empirically supported.

Understanding survivors needs

Although the legislative response over the past 12 years to address trafficking in persons has been impressive, the literature about the needs of survivors of trafficking and the efficacy and effectiveness of services to meet those needs is relatively scarce. Current focus should be to develop and expand effective prevention strategies and responsive short- and long-term health, legal, and social services for survivors. Research is needed to better understand the impact of victimization including risk factors, vulnerability, impact of trauma and assault, resources for full restoration, and implications for survivors that cooperate in criminal investigations and prosecution. What is known is that individuals trafficked for sexual exploitation require both acute- and long-term services to rebuild their lives. Immediate needs include safety, housing, medical care, food, clothing, legal advocacy, crisis intervention, and trauma-informed mental health services, ideally delivered in the preferred language of the survivor. Research also indicates the continuing need for employment assistance, legal services, independent and permanent housing, and ongoing mental health care. It is also critical for professionals in understanding more about the impact of compelled victim cooperation with law enforcement and prosecution on victim's safety and well-being. For foreign-born survivors, English-language acquisition and family reunification are long-term needs. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) provides funding for critical services to newly identified victims and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides funding for long-term services for foreign-born victims (Roby, 2012). Specific funding for American citizen survivors (including domestic minors of sex trafficking) is less centralized and more elusive than funding for foreign-born victims. However, in 2012 US Department of Health and Human Service Secretary Sebelius announced a proposal for the FY 2013 federal budget to include \$5 million for grants and awards to combat domestic minor trafficking (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/03/185905.htm>). This financial and philosophical provision means that the field can more easily move forward with interventions developed through both evidence- and practice-based wisdom. (For a review of survivors' needs, see Busch-Armendariz et al., 2011).

This article reports findings from a four-year qualitative research study that explored the needs of trafficking survivors in the context of receiving post-victimization services by interviewing these survivors and the professionals that serve them. Findings indicated that survivors benefited from social work's ecological, strengths-based, and victim-centered perspectives; professionals that serve individuals who were trafficked benefitted from social work's unique interdisciplinary commitment, as well as the knowledge and integrity that the social worker brought to this collaborative process.

Methodology

Research project timeline

This research project spans four cycles of data collection (2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011). The project was initially developed to explore the utility of a newly formed coalition of service providers in the USA to address the needs of individuals who had been trafficked thus informing their

Table 1. Description of participants by year and category.

Year	Category	Number
2007	Survivors	5
	Professionals	14
2009	Survivors	9
	Professionals	0
2010	Survivors	11
	Professionals	7
2011	Survivors	6
	Professionals	3
		55

interdisciplinary processes. The coalition professionals included law enforcement, victim services, legal aid, medical services, education including English as Second Language (ESL), and many other governmental and non-governmental service providers delivering services of their respective organizations. Over the data collection cycles, the research project grew in scope and perspective based on findings from previous years. Findings are presented in the aggregate.

Guiding research questions

Given the relative lack of empirical data on trafficking in persons and the services developed to meet the needs of survivors, we began with four very broad research questions:

1. What are the needs of adults who have been trafficked?
2. What are the strengths and barriers to meeting these needs?
3. How should these services be delivered? (E.g. what model works best?)
4. What training do professionals need to adequately meet these needs?

Although the interview and focus group protocols were refined over the four-year cycle of data collection, the broad research questions remained relatively consistent. This article reports specifically on findings generated from research questions two and three listed above. For a review of needs of human trafficking survivors (research question one above), see Busch-Armendariz et al. (2011). Survivor participants were individuals trafficked and with the exception of one victim, who had been rescued by law enforcement; these survivors had experienced both exploitation for labor and/or sex. All had been, or were currently, engaged with social service providers.

Description of research participants and recruitment procedures

Fifty-five participants engaged in in-depth individual interviews or focus groups ($n = 55$) for this study (see Table 1). Purposive recruitment procedures were used for all research participants. Descriptive data were not gathered for participants because of the safety concerns of survivors and security issues related to the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

Victims/survivors. Survivors were included in this study to provide insight about the adequacy and delivery of services. All victims/survivors had received, or at the time of the study were currently

receiving, direct services through their single point-of-contact social worker and/or assistance through a variety of other professionals. The social worker, and later in the study a legal representative, regularly announced the study during meetings and appointments with survivors. Survivors were informed that their participation was voluntary. Researchers were given the telephone numbers of interested participants and contacted survivors to set up individual interviews or focus group meetings. All participants preferred to have interviews conducted in their homes.

Professional participants. Service providers and law enforcement participants were selected based on their membership in the professional coalition against human trafficking or their policy-making position with state government or non-governmental organizations (NGO). Representatives from local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies working in anti-trafficking efforts were included as were professionals from legal services, medical facilities, sexual assault, domestic violence, and other counseling agencies, and housing assistance. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in professional settings.

Informed consent, data collection procedures, and instrumentation

The Institutional Review Board at the university involved reviewed and approved this study during each of its four years. Data were collected from survivors and professional participants by interview or focus groups and were audiotaped and transcribed (97%). When participants declined ($n = 2$) to be audio-taped, the research team members took extensive notes. Interviews of survivors were conducted in English or in Spanish using bilingual Spanish-speaking researchers, depending on their preferences. All professional interviews were conducted in English. For safety issues, survivors only gave verbal consent; they were monetarily compensated for their time and participation (\$20 or \$50 depending on what year they participated). Professional participants gave written, informed consent and were not remunerated for their participation. Participation was voluntary. For both survivors and professionals semi-structured interview protocols were developed for each year and modified based on findings from previous years. The instruments were subsequently refined to reflect lessons learned in the early stages of our study and to seek a more clearly defined breadth and depth to our understanding.²

Data analysis and limitations

Data were analyzed using qualitative content and thematic analysis techniques. As defined by Ryan and Bernard (2003), we used qualitatively driven data analysis procedures that followed the decision-making processes that included identifying repetitions, similarities, and differences in the transcript data while cutting, sorting, and reordering data. Members of the research team read the interview transcripts and engaged in active discussion about codes and labels. Each transcript was also analyzed using line-by-line coding and additional codes were developed through this process. All codes were then clustered into themes that were analyzed horizontally within and vertically across transcripts for accuracy. The research team members met together regularly to discuss similar and divergent perspectives about these data and to reach convergence and consensus. Direct quotes are utilized to substantiate the data analysis processes and illustrate the experiences of participants in their own words.

This study utilized a non-probability convenience sample, and therefore the findings are not intended to be generalizable. The findings from this study are significant and break ground with regard to how social work theories and skills are responsive to survivors of this violent crime.

Therefore, findings may be applicable for practice and policy considerations across the anti-trafficking in persons field.

Findings

Unanimously all participants (both survivors and professionals) described the social worker as unmistakably and positively impacting all aspects of the interdisciplinary work of the coalition and survivor restoration. The overarching single point-of-contact social work perspective may be historically utilized in the field to provide casework services; however our study situates this model in a broader framework that encompasses casework, advocacy, interdisciplinary coordination of services, and cross-cultural competency. In sum, this research found that the social worker's attention to coordination of services (affirmative ecological approach in social work), understanding of trust building (affirmative strengths-based perspective in social work), and cultural competency (affirmation of survivor-centered focus) provide for a thoughtful and thorough catalyst towards survivor restoration. This section presents these findings utilizing three themes that involve specific social work skills and knowledge, and grounded them in direct quotes from the empirical data.

1. Marked improvement of coordination of services for survivors (affirming a social work ecological theory)

The most important milestone affecting services to survivors of human trafficking was the coordination and delivery of services by the social worker through the single point-of-contact model. Prior to the development of this service delivery model communication between professionals was difficult and fragmented. In the coalition, the social worker served as the single point-of-contact for the collaborating professionals as well as the case manager for survivors receiving services. Thus, she possesses an expansive depth and breadth of knowledge about the range of services available to survivors by professionals and the general community. Different from other case management models, the single point-of-contact social worker was privy to guarded and confidential law enforcement operations and other policy decisions. This insight allowed her to be proactive and initiate innovative strategies and new developments. This coordination of care led to improved consistency, efficiency, and effective delivery of services that ultimately resulted in better services to survivors. As a representative of federal law enforcement noted:

I do feel like because there is cohesion that there's been pretty good referrals for as much capacity as we have. Folks have been referred to legal services, to health screening, to therapeutic services. For what we have, I think people have been offered sort of that spectrum, and I think that is because the coalition [social worker] exists and we know each other and we know what the community has to offer.

On the importance of service coordination for survivors, a participant said:

If a client was [seeking services] on their own, I think it would be harder for them to know what is out there and what is available to them. With the coordination with the advocates, everything falls into place.

Pointedly, a survivor (several years post-rescue) reflects the difficulty of getting services on her own and her need for continued social work advocacy and guidance:

And I don't know how to make an appointment and ask off my job. If I call, they answer in English. And in order to get to the hospital, I don't know which hospital to go to. I only went once to the doctor with them. And I don't know if I should go to the same place or a different place or if there is a clinic I should go to. I didn't ask this. I didn't ask [the caseworker], and I don't know if I can still ask her. I don't know.

Another survivor reiterated this experience expressing:

I think that when you go by yourself, everything is delayed. But when you go with someone from an organization, everything goes more quickly. I submitted my son's Medicaid application 3 times before it was accepted. When just anybody goes, they don't pay attention to you. You have to go back many times.

2. Trust-building among coalition members and with survivors (affirming a social work strengths-based theory)

In addition to improving the complex coordination, the social worker was instrumental in the relationship-building processes among coalition members as well as relationship-building between survivors and providers of service. This trust-building should not be understated in its importance toward effective service delivery. A law enforcement participant affirmed the importance of this confidence stating:

I think that one thing that we [coalition members] have is really good. . . is having a single point of contact [social worker]. I am glad we have that, that makes all the difference in the world. . . Knowing that the law enforcement can call one person, that works for them. They love having it too, knowing that, who that person is, and trusting that person and being able to coordinate. . . That has been really a good deal.

The trust is of particular importance because it has not always been forthcoming between social service providers and law enforcement. The single point-of-contact model facilitates the trust-building process for this interdisciplinary collaboration.

Another participant noted:

I think that's helped, that us being together has helped us trust each other a little bit more, understand at least what everybody does. . . we [coalition members] communicate better than we probably would before. . . so that's been a big plus. . .

When asking survivors to identify the most helpful aspect of services, one participant declared:

It would be the support. To have someone to confide in, someone to support me. Someone to whom I can say, 'I want to go here, and I don't know how.' Or, 'I want to do this or that.' Or simply, 'I feel sad.' Or, 'I miss my family.' Or, 'I want to go to Mexico.' And they were there to listen to me, to advise me.

Additionally, a survivor concurred about the importance of the social work services in building trust for her future:

I know that I am not alone. There are other people here with me. Gracias a Dios. I am thankful that all these good people exist. I only know [from the social worker] where I go, but I know that there are other people that I don't know [from the coalition]. I want them to know I love them with all my heart. I don't know who they are. I don't know what their names are. But I know that I love them, because they have put a grain of sand in my life. My life has been, since my childhood, a hell. But here I am. And I know that I am here despite all that has happened, because of the good people God has put in my path. For this I am so grateful. I don't know how to repay all that they've done for me.

3. Value-added cultural competency (*affirming a survivor-centered approach*)

Participants also pointed to the need for culturally competent services for survivors. In addition to the need for bilingual professionals, cultural competence was defined broadly (extending beyond ethnicity and race) to encompass learning specifically about the crime of human trafficking and its impact on its survivors (psychological coercion and trauma, cultural practices of survivors and their families, risk factors of vulnerability, etc.). One participant described the complex nature of trafficking cases and the importance of continued cultural competence:

Somebody said one time and I'll never forget – if you work one trafficking case, you [have] work[ed] one trafficking case. You know what I mean, you haven't worked them all. Because they are so different, you know, . . . This is something that's really kind of new. You know I've done presentations on it, I've gone to this coalition for three years, [and] I still feel like I'm still learning about it.

Another professional participant gave a specific example related to the need for cultural competency:

I think they [survivors] encountered a psychiatrist that didn't speak [Spanish], and so there were some issues [for survivors] around not feeling comfortable with the service providers that they initially met, which is my sense from just getting to know them. And so you know if you give them a prescription for depression or to sleep, they're not buying into prescription medication, they're not going to take it. And if they are not quite sure how to take it or how to administer it because maybe that wasn't explained to them in their language. That's complicated too. So, early on I'm sort of seeing that just the basic needs weren't met with cultural sensitivity or just a better understanding of, 'if I prescribe this medication, will they even want to take it?'

Discussion

Nearly a century after Abraham Flexner's infamous challenge to social work and its expertise (Austin, 1983), the profession has developed durable and resilient theoretical perspectives on which to understand clients and systems and solidly draw conclusions. The ecological and strengths-based perspectives are two widely accepted social work tenets; conversely, a victim-centered approach closely fits with social work values and principles and is aptly utilized by the social workers involved in assisting individuals who have been trafficked. These perspectives shape the findings in this research and although not specifically named by professionals or survivors, these viewpoints are deeply embedded in their experiences with and expressions toward the social worker with whom they interacted. This research found that the ecological approach, strengths-based perspectives, and cultural competency framework through a victim-centered focus were all deeply rooted in the social work services provided to individuals who had been trafficked. For example, the coordination of services can be best understood with the application of an ecological perspective. Bronfenbrenner (1979) first described the ecological perspective as human beings 'nestled' in a set of influential structures (p. 3). As a social work perspective, this implies two things. First, our understanding is based on the notion that individuals and systems are in continuous interaction with each other and that this dynamic interaction is either overtly understood by clients and systems or may be more clandestine. Nevertheless, this implies that social workers must also focus the analysis of the impact of those dynamics and coordination of them as it relates to improving clients and systems. As noted by Germain (1973) the ecological perspective is the 'adaptive fit of organisms and their environments and with means by which they achieve dynamic

equilibrium and mutuality' (p. 326). In our trafficking in persons research, the social worker's ecological perspective aptly fits with survivors and the professionals that serve them as it seeks to analyze these structures and bring harmony through the increased understanding and coordination among coalition members and between survivors and professionals. The single point-of-contact social worker sits in a strategic position to see the nested environments of survivors and/or professionals. It is analogous to a kaleidoscope where the understanding of multiple reflections (perspectives and needs of clients, professionals, and systems) mirror and intersect (needs of clients, professionals, and systems) and provide a unique and optimal image. From this vantage point, social workers can understand how a survivor's experiences and needs may impact and be impacted by the criminal justice system, legal, social and medical service providers, the survivor's family, social service eligibility policies, and social and political movements about immigration, to name a few. This model also incorporates these impacts in a chronological manner, gaining insight into and preparing for how survivors' needs may change over time due to future employability, predicted changes in legal status, and possible reunification with children. Equipped with this information, social workers may then adapt service delivery and advocacy within and among other collaborative partners as needed, and on behalf of current and future survivors in developing practice-informed policy and legislation. The social worker is at the nexus of this transformation much like the view of a kaleidoscope prism changes as light is introduced and reflected, causing new patterns to emerge and develop.

One of the most widely applicable and noted social work perspectives is the strengths-based perspective (Saleebey, 2002) that 'relies heavily on ingenuity and creativity, the courage and common sense, of both client and their social workers' (p. 1). Implicit in this theory is trust. Saleebey (2002) writes, 'we are persistent in how we cling to our realities, our beliefs about how we see our lives with the world we occupy: They are our truths, and often our *raison d'être*. Still the beginnings of *trust* and hope offer at least some probability that narrow self-consciousness might gradually give way to greater openness' (p. 32, author's emphasis). Although generally considered an individual modality, in the case of this research the social worker built trust both individually with survivors of trafficking and the professionals that serve them, but also about the process to address this crime. The importance of this skill and its positive impact should not be understated. The success of the interdisciplinary team was in creating systemic trust and confidence among the collective group to work effectively and efficiently in addressing the three pillars of anti-trafficking efforts – prevention, prosecution of traffickers, and protection of survivors.

A victim-centered approach implies a level of cultural competence as culture is broadly defined beyond race and ethnicity. This approach is not well documented in the social work literature, but is found in the criminal justice field as it relates to survivors of violent crime (<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications>). In a practice setting, a victim-centered approach means that services and service providers develop and design services ideally to meet the needs of survivors. That is, the mission and program services are developed through a survivor's lens rather than what might be best for professionals or the structures in which they work. In this research, the single point-of-contact social worker maintained a victim-centered approach by broadly understanding the complex needs of survivors and being able to establish responses and structures to meet those needs. This wrap-around service delivery model allowed the social worker to easily pivot and meet the needs of their client as well as shift newly identified priorities as a result of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Our findings support the idea that individuals trafficked for exploitation have unique needs and social workers' theoretical and practice modalities are well suited to respond to and coordinate these distinct circumstances. The profession should take great pride in these underpinning theories and our utility in meeting the complex needs of survivors of trafficking and those that serve them.

This research certainly supports the statement by Roby (2012), ‘the social work profession has a responsibility and the tools to address human trafficking’ (p. 2).

Social workers have central and significant roles in future anti-trafficking efforts. As a profession we decidedly should be involved in primary prevention efforts that lessen the vulnerability of individuals targeted for exploitation; particularly women and children. There is also ample work to be done around early identification strategies for individuals already being exploited. Specialized, innovative, and evidence-based strategies are compulsory to ameliorate this crime. For example, social workers in counseling roles with homeless youth, in hospitals and health clinics, domestic violence shelters, child welfare departments, and other professional settings, have the opportunity to assess, identify, and intervene with individuals being trafficked and specific strategies should be developed for the most hidden among all survivors, people being exploited in private homes as domestic servants. To be effective, specialized intervention strategies need to be culturally grounded and consider age and developmental stage, type and length exploitation, relationship with traffickers, nationality, previous history of victimization, and many other factors. In a recent speech to the Clinton Global Initiative, US President Barack Obama (2012) said, ‘our fight against human trafficking is one of the great human rights causes of our time’. Given this call to action, social work’s commitment to social and economic justice, the utility and fit of our theories and practice, are squarely at the center of these efforts and therefore are challenged to continue shifting the kaleidoscope to best respond to the dynamic nature of this crime, those victimized by it, and its context in today’s society.

Funding

This project was supported by Grant Number 2006-VT-BX-K006 awarded to Refugee Services of Texas, Inc. by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Notes

1. In this article, survivors of labor and sex trafficking may be used interchangeably and referred to simply as ‘survivors or victims’ for narrative efficiency and in recognition of the criminality of this crime. However, this label is not meant to be demeaning or judgmental. The authors recognize that survivors/victims are individuals who have overcome a significant combination of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and trauma. We honor their stories and recognize them as individuals.
2. The interview protocols used open-ended questions based on the research questions and are available from the corresponding author.

References

- Albanese, J., J.S. Donnelly and T. Kelegian (2004) ‘Cases of Human Trafficking in the United States: A Content Analysis of a Calendar Year in 18 Cities’, *International Journal of Comparative Criminology* 4: 96–111.
- Austin, D. (1983) ‘The Flexner Myth and the History of Social Work’, *Social Service Review* 57(3): 357–77.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Busch-Armendariz, N.B., Nsonwu, M., Cook Heffron, L. and Mahapatra, N. (2013) ‘Trafficking in Persons’, in J.L. Postmus (ed.) *Sexual Violence and Abuse: An Encyclopedia of Prevention, Impacts, and Recovery*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Busch-Armendariz, N.B. (2012a) ‘T Visas’, in S. Loue and M. Sajatovic (eds) *The Encyclopedia of Immigrant Health*. New York: Springer.

- Busch-Armendariz, N.B. (2012b) 'The Trafficking Victim's Protection Act (TVPA) and the Trafficking Victim's Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA)', in S. Loue and M. Sajatovic (eds) *The Encyclopedia of Immigrant Health*. New York: Springer.
- Busch-Armendariz, N.B., M. Nsonwu and L.C. Heffron (2011) 'Human Trafficking Survivors and Their Children: Assessing Needs and Vulnerabilities and Strengths and Survivorship', *The Journal of Applied Research on Children* 2(1): 1–19.
- Busch-Armendariz, N.B., M.B. Nsonwu and L.C. Heffron (2009) 'Understanding Human Trafficking: The Development of Typologies of Traffickers', University of Nebraska-Lincoln Digital Commons, available online at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=humtraffconf>
- Germain, C.B. (1973) 'An Ecological Perspective in Casework Practice', *Social Casework* 54(6): 323–30.
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (2009) *The Cost of Coercion: Global Report on Forced Labour*. Geneva: International Labour Organization. Available online at: http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/WCMS_106395/lang--en/index.htm
- International Organization of Migration (IOM) (2003) 'IOM's Strategy for Counter-trafficking Activities in Southern Africa', available online at: <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/press-briefing-notes/pbn-2008/pbn-listing/protecting-victims-of-human-trafficking.html>.
- Lloyd, R. (2010) *Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls are Not for Sale, An Activist Finds Her Calling and Heals Herself*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Obama, B. (2012) 'Remarks by President to the Clinton Global Initiative', September. Available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/25/remarks-president-clinton-global-initiative>
- Polaris Project (2012) 'Sex Trafficking in the United States', available online at: www.polarisproject.org
- Roby, J. (2012) 'Human Trafficking in the United States: A Case Study of National Policy and Impact on Survivors', *Social Dialog: The Magazine of the International Association of School of Social Work*, available online at: www.socia-dialog.com
- Ryan, G., and Bernard, H. R. (2003) 'Techniques to Identify Themes', *Field Methods* 15(1): 85–109.
- Saleebey, D. (2002) *The strengths perspective in social work practice*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Shively, M., K. Kliorys, K. Wheller and D. Hunt (2012) 'A National Overview of Prostitution and Sexual Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts', available online at: <http://abtassociates.com/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=16b0e4c0-e5fe-46d9-9f0d-9aa29a880f1d>
- The Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) Available online at: http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf
- US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) (n.d.) Available online at: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/>

Author biographies

Noël Busch-Armendariz is the Associate Dean for Research, Professor, and Director of the Institute of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault at The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work.

Maura Busch Nsonwu is Assistant Professor, Interim BSW Program Director, and Assistant Chair of Department of Sociology and Social Work at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University and a Research Fellow with the Center for New North Carolinians.

Laurie Cook Heffron is a social worker, director of research with the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and third year doctoral student at The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work.