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Author(s): Michael Shively, Kamala Smith, Sarah Jalbert, Omri Drucker

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Project Summary

Human Trafficking Organizations and Facilitators: A Detailed Profile and Interviews with Convicted Traffickers in the United States

2011-IJ-CX-0017

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Prepared for:

John Picarelli
National Institute of Justice
810 7th Street NW
Washington DC 20531

Submitted by:

*Michael Shively
Kamala Smith
Sarah Jalbert
Omri Drucker*
Abt Associates
55 Wheeler St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

Project Purpose

On January 1, 2012, Abt Associates began a study of individuals and organizations involved in perpetrating human trafficking. The project, supported by a grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ),¹ was designed to advance knowledge of human trafficking operations and facilitation, and the motivations and decision-making processes of individual offenders. In addition to these substantive pursuits, the study explored the utility of data and records maintained by the United States Sentencing Commission (USSC) that are seldom used for research in the public realm, and are potentially valuable for studying individual offenders and criminal enterprises.

The portion of the study was designed to fill key gaps in the literature that is based largely on information provided by victims and by expert practitioners in criminal justice, social service, and healthcare systems. While human trafficking investigators, survivors, and victim service providers are invaluable sources, there are limits to what they can observe about people who engage in trafficking, the organizations and alliances they form, and how they operate. The valuable but often anecdotal information provided by those directly affected by human trafficking and available for research does not necessarily produce comprehensive or systematic data about the full spectrum of the problem.

Criminal justice policy and practice can benefit from a fuller understanding of the breadth and scope of human trafficking, the characteristics of the crimes currently identified as trafficking in the federal justice system, and facts about the people convicted under trafficking statutes. The key gaps in

¹ This project was supported by National Institute of Justice grant number 2011-IL-CX-0017. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions are those of the authors and do not represent those of NIJ or Abt Associates. Errors occurring in this report are the responsibility of the Abt Associates project team and report authors. We wish to thank the NIJ Project Officer for this study, John Picarelli, for thoughtful guidance throughout the study, and for the constructive comments of anonymous peer reviewers. We also thank Louis Reedt and the research staff of the United States Sentencing Commission; Jodi Klein-Saffran and the U.S. Bureau of Prisons; and the superintendents and staff of 21 BOP facilities. Finally, we are grateful for the time, consideration, and valuable input of the 91 inmates who completed interviews.

the literature include a lack of information about: (a) typologies and modalities of trafficking organizations derived from systematically collected data and evidence; (b) detailed descriptions of how organizations are structured to support trafficking operations, and how others facilitate their crimes (e.g., “fronts” provided by legitimate businesses, transportation, money laundering); (c) data on labor trafficking offenders, organizations, and facilitators; and (d) understanding motivations and decision making processes of traffickers, including offenders’ perceptions of risks and rewards—particularly, how law enforcement efforts are perceived by individual human traffickers and responded to organizationally. In part, these gaps exist because there is limited access to comprehensive data that could be used by researchers interested in investigating such issues.

Research Design, Methods, and Analysis

The main objectives of the project were to provide (a) typologies and modalities of trafficking organizations derived from systematically collected data and evidence, (b) detailed descriptions of how organizations are structured to support trafficking operations and how these operations are facilitated by others (e.g., legitimate businesses or storefronts, money launderers); and (c) an assessment of motivations and decision-making processes of traffickers, including perceptions of risks and rewards, as well as law enforcement efforts and strategies used to circumvent them. The design of the study pursuing these objectives was pursued in two phases. *First*, we examined public-use data and restricted documents held by the USSC to identify federally-convicted traffickers, gather detailed information about individuals and organizations engaged in both sex and labor trafficking, and provide a sampling frame for offenders to be interviewed. *Second*, we interviewed a sample of convicted traffickers held in Federal Bureau of Prison (BOP) facilities. The data, subjects, and research methods used in this study are described below.

Data Sources

This study used data collected and stored at the USSC to identify our initial sample of individuals convicted of human trafficking and related offenses (see appendix A for the list of statutes by USSC Title and Chapter number). The USSC maintains two sets of information relevant to our study: (1) a public use data file containing demographic, sentencing, and guideline application information on offenders sentenced in federal court and (2) Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports (PSRs) generated by federal probation officers for the judge's consideration at sentencing, and maintained by the Monitoring Division of the USSC.

Federal Sentencing Data Maintained by the USSC

USSC maintains a publicly-available data file that can be downloaded for research purposes. Access to non-public USSC data used in this study was arranged through a cooperative agreement with the United States Sentencing Commission itself, which maintains the data. The sentencing data are primarily used for application of the sentencing guidelines, but are also provided to the public in de-identified, limited form as a resource for research. However, the organization of the USSC data is not always ideal for answering research questions about a particular type or group of offense types.

The USSC dataset is offender-level and details the mechanisms by which an offender receives their sentencing guideline recommendations and why. It includes information codified from their PSR. Aside from demographic information, the USSC dataset also contains information determined by the court to be fact, including details of the crime and offender criminal history. Information not found elsewhere includes their nationality of origin, their plea, and whether or not they involved a minor in commission of the crime. The USSC data also houses the most comprehensive list of convictions and their relation to each other. As of 2013, it is possible for someone to have 395 distinct counts of conviction. This makes the USSC database a valuable source of information about offenders not normally found in other datasets, though with over 5,000 unique statutes and 630,000 records present in the USSC data, sifting through the data for potential traffickers is challenging.

Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports

The PSR is a report generated by federal probation officers for the judge's consideration at sentencing and includes summaries of the presentence investigation that aims to provide a timely, accurate, objective, and comprehensive report to the court. Access to USSC data and records is arranged through a cooperative agreement. The application to enter into a cooperative agreement was submitted to the USSC on February 1, 2012. The process took over one year, due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the data sought (i.e., PSRs can contain information such as victim identities and medical information about subjects) and to the novelty of our request. We were establishing a precedent for accessing PSRs through the USSC and it required several rounds of reviews by several institutional review boards to put the proper protocols, agreements, and assurances in place. The fully executed cooperative agreement from the USSC was received on June 17, 2013, and data collection occurred on-site at the USSC offices in Washington, DC.

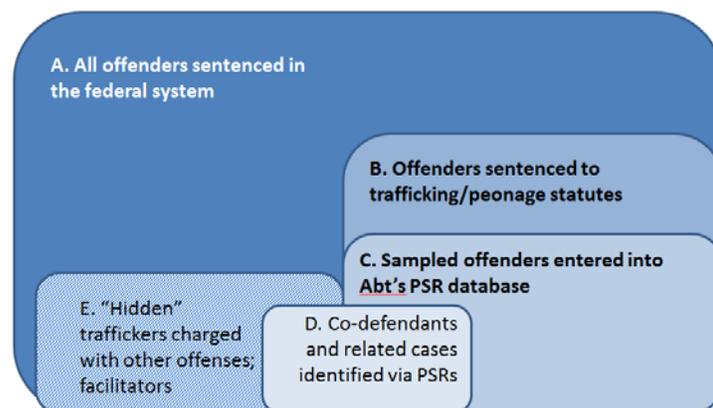
For this study, PSRs are a rich source of data about the offense and the offender convicted of trafficking. The PSR gives the court information about co-defendants and describes the role of the defendant in the instant offense. If there are codefendants in the instant case (i.e., same docket number), their names and the status of their cases (e.g., pending trial, pending sentencing, sentenced) are identified for reference. The judge may use this information to consider previous court findings pertaining to role in the offense, aggravators, mitigators, or other sentencing considerations. These reports allow the study team to understand the nature of the offense and systematically document the circumstances of the crime and the trafficking charge. The information in these reports allows us to quantify the universe of trafficking offenders in the USSC data and enables us to narrow the definition of trafficking to include only those defendants who meet specific criteria. Moreover, the PSR is one of the only sources of information on related cases. As with codefendants, the PSR provides for related cases the name(s), status of the cases, and docket numbers for the court's reference. A related case in the presentence report has a different definition than the concept of

“related cases” defined in the criminal history calculation procedures of the advisory guidelines, but is essential to identifying other participants in trafficking organizations and facilitators who are not charged with trafficking offenses but do have involvement in criminal enterprises. PSRs contain information that was systematically reviewed, coded, and entered in our study’s dataset, including any prior criminal record; the defendant’s financial condition; circumstances affecting the defendant’s behavior that may be helpful in imposing sentence or in correctional treatment; physical condition; mental health; substance abuse; educational, vocational and employment information; and verified information that assesses the financial, social, psychological, and medical impact on victims.

Sampling USSC Data and PSRs

This study relies on subsets of offenders within the broader USSC dataset of all individuals convicted of federal criminal offenses. The sentencing data are used primarily for application of the sentencing guidelines, but as we have described above, the data are useful for other inquiries. However, the organization of the USSC data is not always ideal for answering research questions about a particular type or group of offense types. Below we outline our sampling approach and identified offenders of interest, the logic of which is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: USSC Data Structure



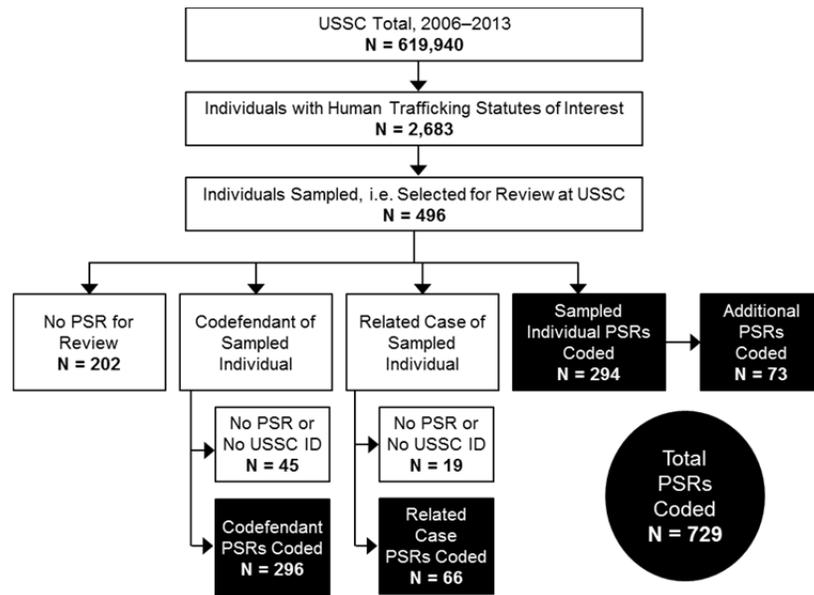
Within the broader dataset “A” we sampled offenders convicted of trafficking statutes as a first step. By reviewing PSRs for this sample, we identified a subsequent group of interest, those charged

as co-defendants with traffickers. Some co-defendants were also charged with trafficking offenses but some were only associated with trafficking through their co-defendant, so group “D” overlaps trafficking and non-trafficking categories. We then posited that there is an additional group, “E”, who are associated with trafficking operations but are only charged with facilitation crimes or have pled to less serious charges as part of a plea agreement.

Our final sample of PSR data included 294 sampled individuals convicted under the trafficking statutes of interest, who also had a PSR available for review. We also coded additional PSRs that were associated with human trafficking cases, either as co-defendants (296), or “related cases” (66). An additional 73 “associated” PSRs were coded because the offender was mentioned in the case, but coders were unable to determine the relationship to the sampled individual. These individuals may have been severed from the case or indicted separately and would be classified as a “related case” for this project. In several instances, we sampled individuals who we determined were co-defendants during coding, in which case we retroactively recoded the sampled offender as a co-defendant or related case to avoid double counting. In addition, co-defendants in a case are not necessarily charged with a human trafficking offense. Indeed, many in our sample of coded PSRs are charged with other offenses that reflect facilitation of the crime. Thus, our denominator for many of the following tables and figures is not the 729 total PSRs coded; it is the 472 sampled individuals convicted of a trafficking offense or the 286 cases with which they are associated. A *case* is comprised of the individuals linked together through their PSRs (as a related cases, codefendant, or as mentioned in the text).

Table 3 depicts the breakdown of offenders and cases by trafficking type along the data collection process. These categories are based on the federal statutes of interest. The last column shows the number of cases that emerged across categories by linking individuals to related cases or codefendants after coding their PSRs.

Figure 2. USSC Data and PSR Sampling Flow Chart



Interviews with Convicted Traffickers in BOP Custody

In the second phase of the study, we conducted interviews with a sample of individuals convicted for human trafficking offenses to collect information about their motivations, decision making processes, strategies, organization, and roles. As with Phase I of the study, approval of the protocols, assurances, informed consent processes, and survey instrument by various review boards required many months.

Interviews with convicted offenders were conducted that included discussions of how human trafficking is defined, their motivations for engaging in this criminal activity, their perceptions of risk and strategies used to mitigate risks, descriptions of their criminal enterprises and their roles within them, and how their trafficking operations were facilitated by others. Using data and records maintained by the United States Sentencing Commission (USSC), over 2,600 persons convicted and sentenced in federal courts between 2006 and 2013 for human trafficking offenses were identified. Federal records and data were sampled and analyzed, the sampled offenders who remained in Bureau of Prisons (BOP) custody were identified, and prisons with enough convicted traffickers to support efficient data collection were selected.

Table 3. USSC and PSR Sample by Trafficking Category

Trafficking Category Based on Federal Statutes	# in USSC Database	# Sampled	# PSRs Coded	# Cases
Labor Trafficking Only	77	74	74	45
Sex Trafficking Only	2518	360	356	222
Both Sex and Labor Trafficking	16	15	15	13
General Provisions Statute²	72	42	27	6
Total	2683	491 ³	472	286

Inmate Interview Sampling and Data Collection Strategy

While we worked to ensure that the persons interviewed were representative of the population of convicted human traffickers, the number and distribution of offenders made pragmatic considerations important for shaping the sampling and data collection strategy, and the sample of offenders who completed interviews cannot be considered representative. The sampling of offenders for interviews began with stratified random selection of cases for PSR review (with offense types defining strata), and all of the cases with trafficking convictions who remained in BOP facilities constituted the sampling frame for BOP interviews. However, that process introduces some bias: more recent convictions would be over-represented, as some offenders convicted nearer to 2006 would have been released while few of those convicted nearer to 2013 would have been released. More importantly, although we started with stratified random selection of records, the wide dispersion

² Title 18, Section 1594, is a general provisions statute that covers most offenses in Chapter 77: Peonage, Slavery and Trafficking in Persons, covering sections 1581, 1583, 1584, 1589, 1590, 1591 and 1592. Because these include both sex and labor trafficking, in the event that a person or case has been convicted of only section 1594, we have separated it as a category.

³ For exploratory purposes, 5 of the 496 individuals selected for review at USSC were sampled from statutes outside of those presented in this table here, leaving 491 individuals sampled from our trafficking statutes of interest. The exploratory statutes include:

of a relatively small number of offenders over a large number of widely dispersed federal prisons necessitated purposive sampling of prisons to make interviews feasible with limited resources.

As discussed above, we had coded the PSRs of 472 persons convicted of human trafficking who were sentenced between 2006 and 2013, and a portion of that sample were no longer in custody when we began conducting interviews in mid-2015. Using the BOP Inmate Locator, we found 276 convicted traffickers remaining in custody whose PSRs had been reviewed. It was important to sample only those offenders whose PSR had been reviewed so that we could determine whether they had been classified as “accepting responsibility” for their conviction offenses, which reduces the likelihood of potential respondents declining participation to avoid self-incrimination. With 276 cases across 122 BOP custodial facilities distributed throughout the U.S., each prison would average less than two targeted subjects.

Based on our prior research on drug traffickers and other research, we began sampling with an initial assumption of a 50% response rate among those available to be interviewed. Given the expense of deploying two-person teams and project resource limitations, we mapped the locations of facilities containing any of the offenders in our subject pool, and excluded facilities with less than three targets (unless the facility is part of a complex with others containing at least three targets). We identified 17 clusters of BOP facilities or complexes that collectively contained at least eight of our sampled offenders and whose facilities were within a 4 hour drive from one another.

The BOP has a range of facility types specializing in different offender types or stages in the criminal justice system’s processing of offenders. Most of our sample were found in Federal Correctional Institutions (FCIs) or U.S. Penitentiaries (USPs) housing a wide range of offenders that may be collectively described as the “general population” (although there is some specialization even among prisons in the same institutional designation and security levels, i.e., some prisons or cell blocks focus on persons requiring protection from the rest of the inmate population, such as sex offenders and gang dropouts). A small portion of our sample were found in other facility types, and

we excluded several types of facilities with populations that are atypical or would be less likely to (or less capable of) participating in the interviews. Detention centers (e.g., FDC Miami) were excluded because they generally hold un-sentenced offenders and those in temporary custody, and the presence of our convicted traffickers in those facilities may be due to previously released offenders awaiting trial or sentencing for subsequent offenses, or who might be transferred by the time we would be on site for interviews. We excluded Residential Reentry Management facilities (RRMs) since most of the offenders were either not residential (e.g., home confinement) or would be occupied in job placements or reentry programs during business hours. Privately-operated contracted prisons (e.g. CI McRae) house 12 percent of the BOP and were excluded due to concerns that the approval and access processes would be complicated by liability or other considerations not at issue in the publicly-operated facilities. We also excluded Administrative-Maximum U.S. Penitentiaries (ADXs) since security concerns preclude participation in most studies.

We did not exclude Federal Medical Centers (FMCs), but were cautious about conducting interviews there. Just six of the targeted offenders were distributed across three FMCs (Carswell, Devens, and Butner) and only one of those inmate was interviewed. Prior to approaching these offenders for the interviews, we discussed with treatment staff whether inmates had limitations that would interfere with their capacity to understand the informed consent process (i.e., potential risks, voluntary nature of their participation, absence of rewards for participating or penalties for declining), cause them distress, or call into question the veracity or accuracy of their responses. In two cases, prison staff responded that our subjects might not fully understand our questions or have the capacity to provide believable or intelligible responses, and we did not approach those inmates about the interview. In three other cases, FMC inmates declined to be interviewed.

After facilities and offenders were selected, we submitted lists to the BOP, whose staff then produced lists of equal numbers of drug offenders included to provide a “dummy” sample that would help to obscure from prison staff and inmate populations the offense types targeted by our study. A

concern for inmate safety motivated the BOP to require interviews with this oversample. The underlying assumption was that the trafficking sample's offense profile and the study's subject would be easy to infer if we only interviewed them, and that the nature of our targeted sample would carry risks to respondents. Many of the sampled traffickers had committed sexually-oriented crimes involving minors, and such crimes are held in low regard by other inmates. These offenders usually attempt to keep their crime type hidden to prevent assaults from other inmates, and calling out known sex offenders could allow others to infer that the whole pool of interview call-outs were sex offenders and place them at risk.

Obscuring the offense types of those called out for our interviews by diversifying the subject pool by including those known to have committed less volatile offense types is a step required by BOP to mitigate potential harm. Therefore, at all BOP facilities the sample of subjects was matched with the same number of randomly selected inmates convicted of drug trafficking (a very common offense type sure to be present in all facilities, and one that is not usually provocative to other offenders).

Outreach and Data Collection for Inmate Interviews

Approval for the interviews was granted by the BOP, NIJ, and the Abt Associates Institutional Review Board in May, 2015. Lists of subjects within each of the selected prisons and dates for on-site interviews were sent to BOP staff, who generated lists of the same number of randomly selected drug trafficking offenders at each prison. The BOP then reached out to each facility, obtained approval for our visit, and the research team then arranged logistics for the interviews.

Interviews were conducted from July to October, 2015, and occurred in 21 prisons located in 12 states. In these 21 prisons were 121 sampled traffickers, and on the days of the interviews there were 12 that we unavailable due to being recently transferred, in a prison lockdown, in segregated housing units, or because of medical issues. So the effective sample of targeted offenders was 109 who were approached by staff to be brought to the interview. Of these, 45 declined to show, and an additional 12 appeared but decided not to participate at the informed consent process. We completed

interviews with 46 subjects, for a response rate of 42 percent. Of the respondents, all but one was convicted of sex trafficking, and nine the 46 were female.

For the dummy sample in the same facilities, there were 101 targeted and available offenders. Of these, 44 refused to appear, and 12 refused at the informed consent step. Interviews were completed with 45 drug traffickers. While we intend to present findings from those interviews, the data they provided is not pursuant to the study's core objectives and are not discussed further in this first set of study products.

The instrument used to guide the interviews was a semi-structured set of questions and prompts pursuing the following basic topics: (a) background and criminal history; (2) offender definitions of human trafficking; (c) circumstances and motivations for entry into human trafficking; (d) methods and logistics of their trafficking enterprise; (e) structure of trafficking organizations; (f) facilitation of the core criminal enterprise; (g) perceived risks and understanding of methods used by law enforcement; (h) methods used to mitigate risks; (i) opinions about the level of harm their actions produced, and (j) whether they would have engaged in such activities if they could go back and relive those decisions.

Key Findings and Implications for Policy and Practice

Findings from this study have implications for policy and practice, and advance the body of knowledge capable of supporting the design and implementation of evidence based practices targeting human trafficking. Research on convicted traffickers provides important feedback about the U.S. justice system response to trafficking, the types of cases prosecuted as human trafficking, and the sentences traffickers receive in federal courts. Understanding and measuring the outputs of federal activity targeting trafficking is critically important, and the data and records maintained by the USSC are useful tools for doing this. As we have found, offenders convicted of these statutes have some of the lengthiest prison terms in the Federal system and their offenses span a very broad spectrum, from a single offender responding to police decoy advertisements for commercial sex, to large scale

international and domestic trafficking organizations using violence, intimidation, and fraud to compel numerous victims into commercial sex or labor.

Criminal justice policy and practice can benefit from a fuller understanding of the breadth and scope of human trafficking, the characteristics of the crimes currently identified as trafficking in the federal justice system, and facts about the people convicted under trafficking statutes. Among the key gaps in the literature addressed by this study are:

1. Information about *trafficking enterprises* derived from systematically collected data.
2. Detailed descriptions of how organizations are *structured* to support trafficking operations, and how these operations are *facilitated* by others (e.g., legitimate businesses or storefronts, money launderers).
3. Information about individual *trafficker's perceptions* of risks and rewards—particularly, how law enforcement efforts are perceived by individual traffickers, and how traffickers respond to these perceived threats.

While our findings reinforce the research and practice literature on a number of issues, such as documenting that the vast majority of federal human trafficking convictions are for sex trafficking committed by males, other findings are more novel and come from a broader cross-section of federal cases, and from the unique perspective of offenders. Among these findings are:

Federal Trafficking Charges and Sentences

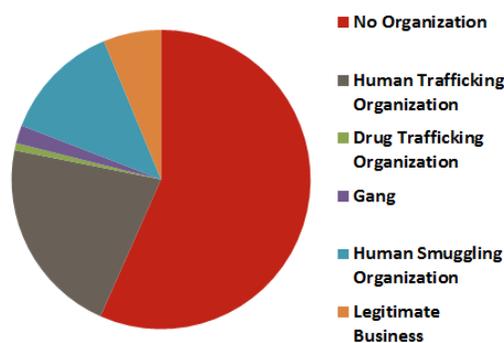
- Nearly half of the sample of persons convicted on federal sex trafficking charges were arrested in sting operations for trying to purchase or otherwise engage in sex with minors.
- Aside from proactive sting operations, the sequence of events leading to the arrest of the traffickers who were later convicted usually began with victims escaping and informing police or family members, tips to police about suspicious or known criminal activity, and investigations of online activity associated with prostitution and sex trafficking.

- We encountered no evidence in our case reviews that proactive sting operations have been deployed that led to apprehension and conviction of labor traffickers.
- The mean term of incarceration for federally-convicted human traffickers is over twelve years, and the vast majority of those convictions are for sex trafficking. Average sentences for sex traffickers are longer than most other major offense categories in the federal system, including assault, drug trafficking, and firearms offenses. Sentence length reflects the offender's role as a leader or individual, with shorter sentences for lower level conspirators, indicating that sentencing guidelines are working to distinguish leaders in conspiracies as they are intended.
- Most federal convictions are for domestic trafficking that involves interstate travel or online connections, and have no international component.

Characteristics of Traffickers and Their Enterprises

- Most federally-convicted traffickers either operated alone or conspired with just one to three other individuals whom they know through social or family ties.

Organization Type



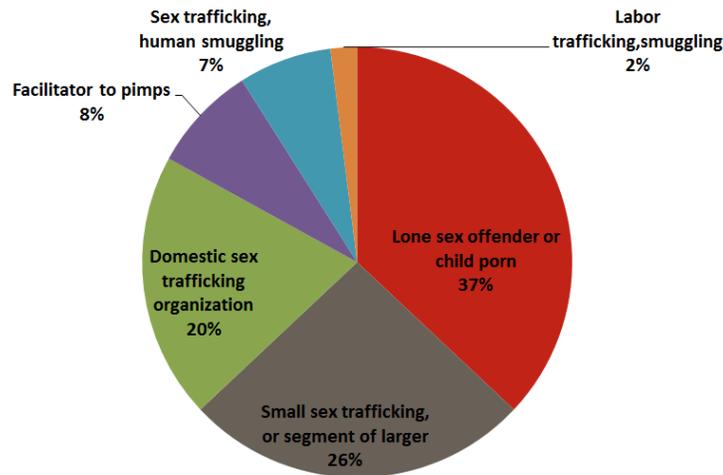
- 57% of human trafficking cases involved lone offenders, with no known organizational support or collaboration. Among cases that involved conspiracies, the most common were those focusing on human trafficking or human smuggling. Human trafficking committed by

criminal enterprises centered on other types of crime, such as gangs and drug traffickers, were relatively rare among cases with federal convictions.

- Among individual offenders involved in organizations (including non-trafficker co-conspirators), 32% were leaders; 50% were mid-level operatives; remaining 18% were low-level conspirators.
- The estimated average number of victims per case was from 8 to 11.
- We could ascertain methods of coercion in half of the cases for which re coded PSR data, and found that the most prevalent methods were threatening harm to victim (30%) and leveraging financial debt (15%).
- Female offenders frequently have served as both victims and offenders in commercial sex enterprises, usually in that order and sometimes simultaneously. Six of the nine female offenders interviewed had long histories of abuse and deprivation, and were drawn into assisting traffickers while also being victimized. The remaining three women interviewed approached trafficking in a manner similar to male offenders, as a criminal opportunity.
- Among the 46 convicted offenders interviewed, most were involved with sex crimes against children, and operated either alone or with a small number or conspirators.

Offender Type	N	%
Pimp (commercial prostitution/human trafficking enterprise)	28	61
Sex offender (non-commercial sex w/minor or child pornography)	17	37
Labor trafficker (smuggling for compelled service in US retail store)	1	2
	46	100

Type of Trafficking Committed by Interviewed Offenders



- Some of the organized trafficking operations were described as involving facilitation, usually in the form of logistical support (e.g., transportation, housing, finances), but also received assistance from loose networks of like-minded individuals in recruiting or referring victims, or by imparting knowledge that allows trafficking operations to be sustainable and profitable.

Offender Perceptions, Justifications

- Of 46 offenders interviewed, all but two readily admitted committing criminal offenses, but denied that those offenses constituted human trafficking.
- Most respondents readily offered justifications and rationalizations for their behavior. For example, those offending against adults claimed that the victims were engaged voluntarily, and those victimizing minors in commercial sex usually said that their involvement was motivated by the desire to help them, and that those having sex with minors argued that sex was either incidental or an unintended lapse in judgment, instigated by the victim. Other respondents claimed ignorance of the true age of victims, had assumed adulthood based on physical appearance, or argued that minors had lied about their age.
- Few convicted traffickers denied criminal involvement in commercial sex, sex with minors, or facilitating prostitution, but the vast majority did not believe that their behavior constituted

human trafficking, and they employed several methods of justifying, blaming, or rationalizing their behavior.

- Most sex traffickers admitting sexual contact or involvement in selling sex denied that the victims were coerced or forced, and most of those whose victims were minors denied knowing they were under aged.
- Many respondents freely admitted their role as pimps and facilitators described their operations as smart business and/or a means to street survival. Most admitted using psychological or financial coercion or deception to recruit and control victims, while very few admitted using force.
- While they usually denied trafficking or forcing individuals to sell sex, the interviewed offenders also usually expressed remorse about the offenses they acknowledge committing (most often, pimping or facilitating the prostitution of consenting adults, or their unwitting involvement with minors).
- Nearly all of the those interviewed who had been convicted of crimes related to commercial sex said their primary or sole motivation was to earn money, and they saw few options that were either possible or would earn comparable money. The leading additional motivation was feeling pressured by family or friends.

Offender Perceptions of Risk, Methods of Mitigation

- Most traffickers reported having some level of fear of being caught by police, but considered it an inherent risk and potential business loss.

Law Enforcement Tactics Mentioned as Presenting Risk to Traffickers

Police Tactics Mentioned as Posing Risk	Number of Mentions	% Offenders Mentioning*
Surveillance, investigation	18	39
Sting - online	15	33
Sting - in person	13	28
Confidential informant infiltration	11	24
Raid on brothel, escort service	3	7
Not worried about any specific police tactics	14	30

* Respondents could list more than one tactic, so numbers and percentages do not sum.

- Among the methods used by offenders to evade sanctions, the most frequently mentioned were learning how police operated and coaching victims to detect, avoid, and obstruct them.
- A variety of methods were employed to mitigate risk, such as minimizing the circle of confidants with direct access to them; specifically avoiding exploiting minors since that is of greater interest to police and carries more severe sanctions; and coaching victims to detect undercover police and sting operations and avoid the “triggers” allowing police to make an arrest.

Tactics Used by Traffickers to Avoid Apprehension by Police

Methods for Reducing Risk of Apprehension	Number of Mentions	% Offenders Mentioning*
No evasive steps taken – did not think about risk	14	30
Coaching victims	13	28
Learning to detect undercover police – in person	12	26
Learning to detect undercover police – online	5	11
Small “inner circle” to minimize informants	5	11
Hide sexual relationship with minor	5	11
Not discussed	5	11
Avoiding exploiting minors in prostitution	4	9
Frequently change locations	4	9
Hide pornography	4	9
Commit offenses abroad only	1	9

* Respondents could list more than one method, so numbers and percentages do not sum.

In addition to these substantive findings, our study makes a methodological contribution. We had very positive results from our inquiry into the utility of USSC data and PSR, which proved to be useful sources of information about human traffickers, criminal enterprises, and facilitators. While these sources are restricted to the narrow spectrum of offenders who are detected, prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced in the US federal system, they offer a unique combination of both breadth (i.e., a systematically collected, ongoing data stream with full, national coverage) and depth (i.e., richly detailed narrative case summaries as well as information about offenders, co-conspirators, and victims) of information about both individuals and organizations involved in human trafficking.

While the data and records maintained by the USSC are unusually comprehensive and systematically collected, there are several limitations important to emphasize when assessing the extent to which the findings from our study are generalizable, and what range of offenses and offenders they might represent. Data on convicted offenders cannot tell us about the latent population of undetected human traffickers, and publicly available USSC data can answer research questions about only a narrow subset of human traffickers (those captured and convicted for Federal offenses). Researchers must be very careful about counting the incidence of trafficking when using sentencing data since the files are person-, not case- based, and the Federal justice system often prosecutes cases with multiple individuals as co-conspirators. In addition, while the PSR provided considerable contextual information that is valuable for understanding human traffickers, these data have some validity challenges. Of primary concern is that they are narrative; an absence of information in the PSR does not imply a negative. Second, PSR data is difficult to obtain, requiring in-person coding by hand while viewing documents in person at secure terminals in USSC offices in Washington, DC. These access issues make systematic collection of PSR information with a national scope very expensive, and may limit sample sizes and the range of offense types that may be studied. Third, the purposive sampling of prisons, the low response rate (and probable self-selection biases), and the scarcity of

labor traffickers in BOP custody prohibits generalizing our offender interview findings. The interviews provide valuable intelligence and insights difficult to capture by any other means, but do not provide findings that can be regarded as representative of convicted offenders.

Dissemination of Study Methods and Findings

The study has gathered and analyzed data supporting the production of multiple publications and presentations. Following NIJ's policy on the production and dissemination of grant-supported research reports, we produced for NIJ peer review two journal article manuscripts and the present, brief project summary. By the project's end on March 31, 2016 we had received feedback from NIJ reviewers and had revised the three documents. We then submitted the two article manuscripts to peer reviewed journals, and the present summary document to NIJ for their records. The two manuscripts were entitled "*Identifying and Studying Human Traffickers in the Federal Criminal Justice System,*" and "*Offender Insights into Human Trafficking Decision-Making: Perceptions of Risks, Rewards, and Culpability.*" The eventual dates of publication and the journals in which articles appear are unknown at the time of the study's closure, and are dependent upon the results of peer review processes and editorial decisions.

In addition to the three documents, we provided a closed briefing for NIJ and other federal agencies in January, 2016, and had scheduled a presentation at an NIJ summit on human trafficking in June, 2016. We also had submitted an abstract for a presentation about this study at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, scheduled for November, 2016.

At the study's end, work on other products was underway. Given the depth of information gathered from the USSC data, PSRs, and offender interviews, disseminating important findings and methodological contributions requires the production of several additional articles for refereed journal publication. Working titles of papers we intend to write include:

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- *A Profile of Women Convicted of Human Trafficking in the United States*
 - *The Motivations and Roles of Women Facilitating Human Trafficking Organizations*
 - *The Structure of Human Trafficking Organizations and the Roles of Facilitators*
 - *The Value of Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports for Research on Individuals and Organizations Committing Federal Offenses*

All of the above topics will also be the basis of policy briefings, webinars, and/or conference presentations, which we intend to deliver. Finally, we also intend to publish a book designed to provide a full compilation of all of the important substantive and methodological insights gained through this study, and to present the complete methodology underlying them.