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PRACTICES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERVIEWS OF POTENTIAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS: *A SCOPING REVIEW*



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**RESEARCH
REPORT**

**PRACTICES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT
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A SCOPING REVIEW

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This report was prepared under contract 15PNJD21F00000011 awarded by the National Institute of Justice in response to a call in the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, December 2021 for NIJ to create a literature review that provides information on “promising practices of law enforcement conducting victim interviews, including known victim-centered practices around selecting the interview location, working with interpreters, putting victims at ease, crafting interview questions, and recognizing trauma cues.”

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Executive Summary

Background

Victims of human trafficking play a key role in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers; however, their involvement in the interview process and the information they disclose largely depend on the quality of their interactions with interviewers. Victims of trafficking represent a challenging and complex subset of victims. Their characteristics, needs, and relationship with the police and law enforcement's ability to earn their trust and cooperation is unlike many other types of victims. Unfortunately, little is known about the effectiveness of interviewing strategies specifically with trafficking victims. Law enforcement agencies have limited evidence-based or actionable guidance to strengthen interviewing practices with this subset of victims.

Aim of Review

The purpose of this review was to conduct a systematic search of the existing literature on interviewing human trafficking victims in a law enforcement context to synthesize current knowledge, identify potentially effective practices, and define research gaps. Topics of relevance included victim-centered approaches, rapport and trust-building, selection of the interview location, working with interpreters, crafting interview questions, and recognizing trauma cues.

Studies Included

Systematic searching of 14 databases returned 2,660 articles. Forward and backward citation chasing identified another 892 articles. After deduplication, 3,432 unique studies were subject to abstract and title screening. Of the screened studies, 259 were retrieved and subject to full-text review. Of those 259 studies, 52 met the review's inclusion criteria and were subject to data charting.

Main Findings

Existing research into interviewing human trafficking victims has identified potentially effective practices and strategies. This includes overarching approaches (e.g., victim-centered processes) as well as more technical details about interviewing practices (e.g., use of soft interview rooms). Studies provided recommendations for developing effective victim identification strategies, addressing reluctance and improving victim reporting, overcoming cultural and language barriers, enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies and interviewers, and promoting collaboration between different stakeholders.

Despite these recommendations, there was an overall lack of supporting evidence and considerable gaps in existing literature. Much of the research had limited sample sizes and represented few jurisdictions or agencies. These characteristics make it difficult to generalize the findings to other settings. More critically, evaluation research was especially limited. For example, little is known about how an interviewer's use of certain interviewing techniques impacts the ability to obtain accurate and comprehensive information from victims, or the effects on more distal outcomes such as successful case prosecution. Existing research also focuses predominantly on sex trafficking. Far less research has addressed issues that may be unique to identifying and interviewing victims of labor trafficking.

Finally, we note that the representation of victims in existing literature is low. Authors cite difficulty with location and access, limited resources to conduct research, and ethical issues associated with victim contact. Unfortunately, these challenges produce a knowledge gap that limits understanding of how interviewing (especially as it relates to specific techniques, approaches, and training) affects important interview outcomes related to victim perceptions and their ability to minimize retraumatization.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Despite the limited body of evaluative research, law enforcement agencies can take immediate action on the following recommendations found in the literature:

- Focus on a victim-centered approach at all stages of a criminal investigation. This would include emphasizing empathy, respect, collaboration, and sensitivity to the victim's rights, needs, and preferences, and ensuring sensitive and nonjudgmental service delivery. A victim-centered approach requires acknowledging that traditional measures of criminal justice system success (e.g., arrests, successful prosecutions) need to be secondary to a victim's physical and psychological needs (e.g., their safety, as well as that of their children; means for subsistence; need for services and legal protections).
- Expand officer training both for victim identification and to improve investigative and interviewing skills when dealing with trafficking victims. Given the specific skills needed to conduct trafficking investigations, a first step toward skills improvement would be to expand or modify current investigative interviewing training curricula to be rapport-based and encompass victim-centered approaches. Moreover, law enforcement agencies should work toward having specialized interviewers with active training and experience in human trafficking. This approach may not be practicable in smaller agencies or agencies with fewer personnel and financial resources. Unfortunately, there is little guidance in the literature about the best strategy for addressing this challenge. Other policing strategies, such as crisis intervention teams, have been implemented regionally to adapt to similar resource constraints (Davis et al., 2021). Similar approaches may be appropriate for addressing interviews with victims of human trafficking.
- Develop strong and sustained partnerships within the criminal justice system and with victim support services. Recommendations in the literature included regional task forces, cross-disciplinary groups that included law enforcement and prosecutors, and incorporating victim service providers throughout the investigative process. This can improve case and investigative outcomes and reduce harm and retraumatization of victims.

Introduction

Victims of human trafficking play a key role in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers; their involvement in the interview process and the information they disclose largely depends on the quality of their interactions with interviewers. Victims of trafficking represent a complex and challenging subset of victims for reasons that include their strained relationship with the police, their variable cooperation¹ or participation with law enforcement, and their personal needs and characteristics (Lavoie et al., 2019). The purpose of this scoping review was to identify and synthesize literature² on interviewing potential human trafficking victims.

Background

The investigative interviews of human trafficking victims are a critical component in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases, as well as the prevention of further harm (Tiapula & Millican, 2008). Interviewers have three goals during these interviews: to facilitate communication, elicit important leads and information to advance investigations, and support victims' well-being (Risan et al., 2020). However, the quality of the information obtained from interviews largely depends on the quality of the interviewer's interviewing practice (Lavoie et al., 2019). Research indicates that law enforcement officers are often ill-equipped to interact with victims in a manner that uses efficient and effective information-gathering techniques (Schreiber Compo et al., 2012), while also supporting and meeting the needs of victims (Dichter, 2013). In human trafficking cases specifically, law enforcement officers lack adequate training on how to address the unique needs and circumstances of victims of human trafficking (Farrell et al., 2019). As such, there is a need to offer evidence-based and actionable guidance to law enforcement agencies to strengthen their interviewing practice with human trafficking victims (Farrell et al., 2019; Gallagher & Holmes, 2008).

To provide law enforcement with comprehensive guidance on interviewing human trafficking victims, it is imperative to understand the current state of the literature. To that end, systematic reviews and syntheses are the standard by which science demonstrates its findings, especially related to applying research to practice (Meissner, 2021). Unfortunately, although there is a robust body of research on investigative interviewing practices — of which several syntheses are available, including science-based interviewing (Vrij et al., 2014), techniques for interviewing suspects (Hartwig et al., 2014; Meissner et al., 2012), techniques for interviewing witnesses (Akca et al., 2021), and interviewing techniques such as rapport-building (Gabbert et al., 2021) — there are no reviews specifically related to investigative interviewing with potential human trafficking victims. Human trafficking victims represent a vulnerable community; as such, they need an interviewing approach that is informed by science, sensitive to the unique victimization context of human trafficking, responsive to individual differences, and supportive of an individual's rights and dignity.

Adequately addressing the reluctance of victims to engage with the criminal justice system is vital to the success of trafficking investigations,³ prosecutions, and victims' overall well-being. Extant research has discussed the reasons why victims of sex trafficking tend to not cooperate with the police, including having previous negative interactions with officers (Love et al., 2018), fear of arrest (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014), and fear of or dependency on their trafficker (Lavoie et al., 2019), as well as the belief that law enforcement will not be helpful or supportive. Moreover, victims of sex trafficking

¹ Cooperation (or lack thereof) is reflected in victim or witness behavior as witnesses, which, in the context of an investigative interview, is their willingness to engage with law enforcement and disclose detailed and accurate information (De La Fuente Vilar et al., 2020).

² We use the generic terms "research" and "study" throughout this review even though some in-scope documents were neither peer-reviewed nor original research. For example, two practitioner toolkits were included in the review. We use these terms to ease readability.

³ Researchers and justice professionals have highlighted the need to reduce reliance on victim participation in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking and other person-crimes. This requires ensuring that every effort is made to secure additional physical and digital evidence, such as cell phone and travel records. Although these efforts are important, victim testimony is still recognized as critically important in trafficking cases (National Research Council, 2014; Rodolph & Dunman, 2022; Scaramucci, 2020).

may not disclose information because they do not identify themselves as victims or do not want to share their stories (Lavoie et al., 2019).

Victims of sex trafficking often come into contact with law enforcement under sex work charges, and, unless they are minors, officers must find evidence of coercion, fraud, or force to legally identify them as victims.⁴ Research suggests that officers are less likely to recognize experiences of victimization when individuals violate other rules, such as engaging in commercial sex work (Haynes, 2004; Surtees, 2008). When officers fail to recognize or cannot obtain necessary information about coercion, fraud, or force, victims may be left without legal protections that would otherwise be afforded to them (Lavoie et al., 2019). Acknowledging the challenging nature of interviewing victims of sex trafficking, interviewers have noted that learning interviewing techniques consistent with a victim-centered approach is paramount to their success (Farrell et al., 2019).

Research on investigative interviewing has provided science-based interviewing protocols — informed by research on episodic memory, memory retrieval, cognition, communication, and the social dynamics between interviewers and interviewees (Dickinson et al., 2019; Hope & Gabbert, 2019) — to ensure the protection of vulnerable communities and the gathering of detailed and reliable testimonies. Examples include the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Protocol, developed for child sex abuse victim interviews. Studies have consistently found that interviews conducted with this protocol yield more forensically relevant details compared to traditional techniques (Benia et al., 2015). Moreover, interviewers employing the NICHD Protocol can effectively reduce children’s reluctance through the skillful use of supportive statements (Blasbalg et al., 2019, 2021; Hershkowitz et al., 2013). Similarly, the Cognitive Interview, originally developed for interviews of victims and witnesses (Fisher et al., 1989; Fisher & Geiselman, 1992, 2010), encourages the interviewee to tell their own story with as little interference from the interviewer as possible. Across laboratory and field studies, the Cognitive Interview has consistently outperformed other interview protocols, yielding between 30% and 80% more detailed information about events (Ashkenazi & Fisher, 2022; Colomb et al., 2013; Köhnken et al., 1999; Memon et al., 2010).

In science-based interviewing protocols, the interviewer begins by explaining their role and building rapport⁵ with interviewees by, for example, asking about the interviewee’s life and addressing any pertinent needs (e.g., need for water, cigarettes, changing interview locations). The interview expectations are set, including providing the interviewee with autonomy over the interview, asking them to report everything they can remember, and to not guess. Interviewers are expected to rely mostly on open-ended questions and follow with specific questions only to fill gaps in the testimony. Interviewers are also expected to not interrupt, to focus more on listening than asking questions, and to avoid leading or suggestive questions. Importantly, interviewers are taught about the inherently fallible nature of memory and to not rely on behavioral cues to assess deception and credibility (Brandon et al., 2018; Vrij et al., 2014). These interviewing techniques have been recommended for addressing the needs of victims of specific types of crime, such as domestic and interpersonal violence and sexual assault (see, for example, Risan et al., 2020). There remains a need, however, to optimize broad interviewing approaches for vulnerable subgroups, such as human trafficking victims.

⁴ The U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 recognizes and defines two primary forms of human trafficking:

- Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age. [22 U.S.C. § 7102(11)(A)].
- Forced labor is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, 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, or slavery. [22 U.S.C. § 7102(11)(B)].

⁵ *Rapport* refers to the quality of the interviewer-interviewee interaction (Neequaye & Mac Giolla, 2022) and has been defined as the working relationship between the interviewer and interviewee based on a mutually shared understanding of each other’s goals and needs (Kelly et al., 2013).

Objectives

The objective of this study was to systematically identify and describe the available literature on interviewing potential human trafficking victims in a law enforcement context. As such, we: (1) identified research literature within an information-gathering context relevant to the interviewing of human trafficking victims; (2) synthesized the review findings to inform the current state of knowledge regarding investigative interviewing of potential human trafficking victims; and (3) discussed interviewing practices and recommendations stemming from the literature, research gaps, and future research directions.

Review Protocol

This review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) standard (Tricco et al., 2018). To maintain transparency, the review protocol was pre-registered with the Open Science Framework (OSF; osf.io/842ay). The PRISMA-ScR checklist can be found in Appendix I.

Although scoping reviews have many similarities with systematic reviews, there are a few key differences. Both systematic and scoping reviews have a priori review protocols, comprehensive literature search strategies, articulated inclusion and exclusion criteria, and standardized data charting templates (Munn et al., 2018). The outcome of a systematic review tends to focus on synthesizing results across studies to guide clinical or policy decision-making. Scoping reviews, however, tend to have broader research questions and do not typically involve quantitative synthesis of findings across studies (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Because of the broad, foundational nature of scoping reviews, there is less emphasis placed on assessing the quality of identified research (Armstrong et al., 2011).

A scoping review was chosen for this review for several reasons. First, a preliminary review of existing research in law enforcement interviewing victims of human trafficking revealed few evaluative research studies that would be appropriate for quantitative synthesis. Second, the objectives for this review were broad. Search results returned research in a variety of domains including officer and interviewer training, agency policies, multijurisdictional coordination, and direct victim experiences. Given the wide range of topics, individual study outcomes were diverse, making it impossible to develop consistent outcome measures typically found in a systematic review. Finally, a scoping review allowed flexibility in addressing study objectives. Due to the limited research in this area, attention was focused on identifying knowledge gaps and limitations of existing literature to establish a more robust research agenda.

Scoping reviews consist of five separate stages: (1) identifying research questions, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting results (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Results of a scoping review are presented in a thematic structure to provide a narrative account of the reviewed literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Eligibility Criteria

There were no restrictions by study design, date, or country of origin. Research that consisted primarily of practitioner reviews, legal reviews, and toolkits were eligible for inclusion. In highly applied settings with vulnerable and complex populations, reliance on non-experimental studies (qualitative, quasi-experimental) for formulating recommendations can be necessary due to ethical and practical challenges. Studies in English or Spanish language were eligible. For a study to be included it must have been about interviewing victims or potential victims of human trafficking in a policing or law enforcement setting.

Sources and Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted in March 2023 with Boolean strings of the following keywords:

- Search 1: polic* AND interrogat* AND traffick*
- Search 2: law enforcement AND interrogat* AND traffick*
- Search 3: polic* AND interview* AND traffick*
- Search 4: law enforcement AND interview* AND traffick*

Primary search locations were:

- OVID – PsycInfo
- PsycNet
- Web of Science Core Collection
- ProQuest Criminal Justice Database
- Scopus
- Cochrane Library (including reviews and trials)
- International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)

Additional searches were performed on secondary resources to better identify grey literature (e.g., unpublished manuscripts and conference proceedings, briefs and technical reports, dissertations, and theses). Secondary search locations included:

- PsyArXiv
- Digital Commons
- Google Scholar⁶
- Research Gate⁷
- Australian Institute of Criminology (publication search)
- National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Virtual Library
- Global Policing Database

⁶ See Appendix II for more details on the modified search strategy for Google Scholar.

⁷ The first 100 references from each search conducted in ResearchGate were downloaded and considered for inclusion in the review.

Forward and Backward Citation Chasing

Both forward (articles that cite the article) and backward (articles that the article cites) citation chasing were performed on studies that were in scope of the review. Citationchaser (Haddaway et al., 2021, 2022) was used to perform this search. Of the in-scope publications, 27 contained Digital Object Identifier (DOI) information, 26 of which were searched successfully. Backward citation chasing identified 763 references corresponding to 616 unique DOIs. Forward citation chasing identified 462 references corresponding to 345 unique article DOIs. References from these searches were exported as Research Information Systems (RIS) files and imported into Zotero for reference management. After deduplication between backward and forward chasing, 892 unique references were identified. These references were loaded into Covidence, a cloud-based systematic review management platform, and screened using the same process used for references found in the primary search (detailed below).

Maintenance of Study Records

Zotero, a literature and reference management software, was used to track studies identified during the search process. A preliminary records merge was conducted in Zotero to join reference lists returned from different databases. Automatically identified duplicates were manually reviewed by one coder. Only records that matched on title, author(s), and DOI were merged. For each duplicate record set, the record that was most complete (for example, spelling out the full name of authors or the record that included the abstract) was kept.

Review and Selection

Review, selection, and charting were conducted in Covidence (Veritas Health Innovation, 2023). Record review and selection was a multistage process. First, two reviewers independently screened titles and abstracts for relevance. For records that appeared to meet eligibility criteria, full-text documents were sourced. Next, a full-text review was conducted to determine if they should be included based on the eligibility criteria described above. Disagreement on eligibility at either stage was resolved through discussion. Reviewers were not blinded to the journal titles or the identified studies' authors and institutions.

Critical Appraisal of Sources

Reflecting the differences in goals compared to systematic reviews, scoping reviews do not typically assess the quality of studies. A systematic review, for example, may assess for participant loss (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2023) or risk of bias in randomization (Chandler et al., 2016). Due to the broader purpose of scoping reviews, this type of quality assessment was not conducted. Instead, articles were critically appraised to determine if they should be included in the review based on their contribution to improving the understanding of how law enforcement approaches interviewing victims of human trafficking. For example, numerous studies noted the need to better improve officer identification of potentially trafficked victims.

Few studies, however, provided guidance on what that training would look like or how it would be implemented. Studies that made recommendations with limited direct support were excluded because of their inability to contribute to the evidence base for our study. Articles were only removed from eligibility if both reviewers agreed that the study provided no unique insight into interviewing victims of human trafficking. These were most often identified during the full-text review stage (see "Studies assessed for eligibility" in the PRISMA chart, exhibit 1).

Data Charting

Data charting was conducted in Covidence. A standardized form was developed to categorize data items and facilitate reporting and comparison across studies. To reduce potential bias and errors, the authors independently extracted data items for studies and then convened to discuss discrepancies. This resulted in a final record for each eligible study that contained study data agreed upon by both reviewers.

We extracted the following information from eligible studies: (1) reference information (e.g., title, authors, geographic location of study, year of publication); (2) purpose of the study; (3) methodological characteristics (e.g., demographics, lab or field study, study design, interview/interrogation approach studied, coding methods); (4) sample size; and (5) relevant outcomes and statistics. Details are provided in Appendix III.

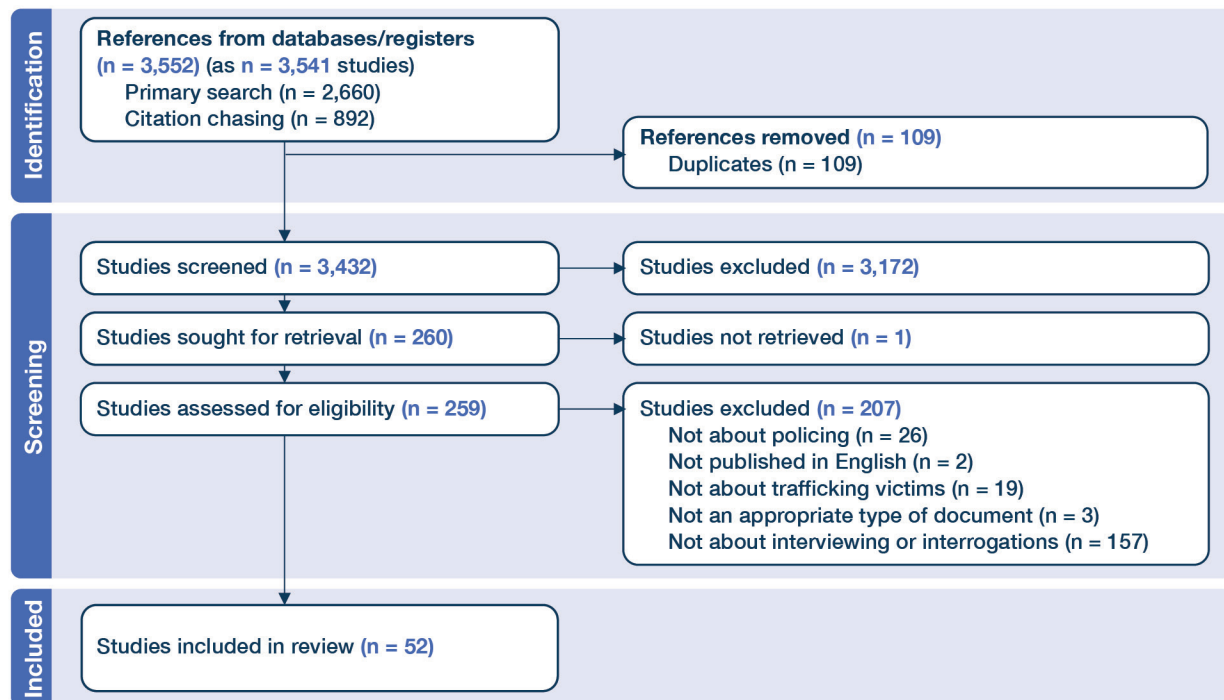
Data Synthesis

Given the depth and scope of the literature, summarization of study articles focused on narrative and qualitative approaches. The narrative summary was used to summarize the literature and identify potential practices and directions for future research. The quality of the information presented in articles was used to characterize and contextualize the strengths and limitations of the recommendations and provide guidance on opportunities for additional research.

Study Characteristics

The identification and processing of in-scope articles can be found in exhibit 1. 3,552 publications representing 3,541 studies were screened and reduced to 52 in-scope studies that were included in the review.

Exhibit 1. PRISMA



Despite having no restriction on publication date, the earliest in-scope study was published in 2005 (see exhibit 2). Most studies focused on sex trafficking ($n = 27$) although quite a few studies discussed trafficking in a general sense without specifying sex or labor ($n = 20$). Studies were predominantly based in the United States with fewer studies conducted in other countries. The primary methods of data collection included qualitative approaches, surveys, and literature reviews. Most studies (more than 75%) did not have a primary focus on interviewing.

Exhibit 2. Study Year and Country

Characteristic	Number of studies
Year of Publication	
2005	2
2006	4
2008	5
2009	2
2011	4
2012	4
2013	1
2014	2
2015	4
2016	2
2017	1
2018	2
2019	4
2020	4
2021	8
2022	2
2023	1

Characteristic	Number of studies
Country^a	
United States	24
United Kingdom	4
Canada	3
Australia	3
European Union	3
The Netherlands	3
Other ^b	4
Spain	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
Sweden	2
Germany	2
Bulgaria	2

Notes:

^aSome studies had multiple locations. Will not sum to the total number of studies included. Locations with only one study have been omitted from the table; locations with one study included Nigeria, Albania, Georgia, Vietnam, Finland, Turkey, Serbia, Kosovo, Russia, Belgium, Latvia, Estonia, Portugal, Poland, and Italy.

^bThe four studies in this category included one study that was a scoping review using all available literature, a study that provided a legal framework on trafficking that was not specific to any country, one study about peacekeeping operations in numerous countries, and one study that was broadly applicable to what the authors referred to as the “Global South (‘Developing’) Nations.”

The most frequent source of data referenced in in-scope studies was from law enforcement officers (see exhibit 3). This was frequently associated with surveys measuring officer knowledge of trafficking (e.g., the ability to detect key signs of trafficking victims; familiarity with state trafficking laws) and experiences with training related to trafficking. Studies have also focused on understanding victim needs based on insight provided by victim advocates.

Exhibit 3. Study Characteristics

Characteristic	Number of studies
Type of Trafficking	
Sex (including familial sex)	27
General ^a	20
Labor	2
Criminal exploitation	1
Orphan	1
Type of Victim	
Adult	21
Youth	12
General/unspecified	18
N/A	1
Data Source^b	
Law enforcement officers	19
Victim advocates	10
Victims of trafficking	9
Criminal justice system representatives	6
Administrative data	3

Qualitative	20
Literature review	11
Survey	11
Law or policy review	7
Case report	6
Guide/toolkit	6
Interview transcript analysis	4
Administrative data analysis	1
Case-control study	1
Cohort study	1
Experimental	1
Personal experience	1
No	
	40
Yes	
	12

Notes:

^a Includes studies that discuss multiple types of sex trafficking or approaches that do not distinguish between types of trafficking.

^b Studies can have multiple data types. Will not sum to the total number of studies included. Data types used in only one study were omitted from the table.

^c Studies can have multiple types. Will not sum to the total number of studies included.

Only nine studies collected data directly from victims of human trafficking. These studies were qualitative and typically focused on in-depth case studies with relatively few participants. Six studies collected data from non-law enforcement criminal justice professionals (e.g., prosecutors). Finally, only three studies explored administrative data associated with trafficking investigations and cases. These studies reviewed and analyzed court files, interview transcripts, and investigative case files.

There were only two studies that used experimental design for evaluative purposes. Luna et al. (2023) explored officer responses to systematically varied vignettes in which victims differed in their level of cooperation with interviewers. Castelfranc-Allen and Hope (2018) explored a novel method of improving recall among traumatized individuals. We found no studies that experimentally tested the impact of officer training or interviewing techniques on investigative or interviewing outcomes, nor could we identify any studies that used experimental research in a practice setting. An enumeration of in-scope studies can be found in Appendix IV.

Results

Following a thematic analysis of the extracted data, 13 topics related to the interviewing of potential human trafficking victims were identified.

Addressing the Needs of Victims

Directly addressing the needs of victims was highlighted throughout the included studies. This included taking a victim-centered approach to the overall investigative process and using a trauma-informed approach to understand victim behavior during interviews. Articles noted that interviewers must be prepared to properly address reluctant victims (including challenges at the earliest stages of victim identification). These challenges can be compounded by cultural and language barriers that hinder information exchange between interviewers and victims.

Victim-Centered Approach

Across all studies included in this review, adopting a victim-centered approach was the most discussed recommendation for law enforcement (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015; Arnold, 2008; Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; Bartunkova, 2005; Brotherton, 2012; David, 2008a; Deeb-Swihart et al., 2019; Dill, 2011; Herz, 2012; Hounmenou & O'Grady, 2021; International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2006; Lamonaca et al., 2021; Moosy, 2009; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018; Rijken et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2012; Tiapula & Millican, 2008; Villacampa & Torres, 2017; Ylinen et al., 2020). This was not limited to just law enforcement; victims generally lack support throughout the criminal justice process (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022).

Studies tended to define “victim-centered” as an approach in which law enforcement expresses concern for the overall well-being of victims by prioritizing their needs over obtaining statements, gaining their trust and confidence, and offering autonomy in decisions regarding their involvement in investigations (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; David, 2008a; Deeb-Swihart et al., 2019; Mossy, 2009; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018; Rijken et al., 2021). A victim-centered approach relies heavily on addressing victims’ needs upon first contact and throughout the investigation, including providing them with necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care (Deeb-Swihart et al., 2019); addressing psychological needs (Dill, 2011); providing safety measures against potential retaliation from traffickers (Brotherton, 2012; Tiapula & Millican, 2008); and time to process, recover, and consider their options and role in the investigation (also known as reflection periods; Bartunkova, 2005; David, 2008a; Rijken et al., 2021). Efforts to not criminalize the actions of the victim are also considered part of a victim-centered approach (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015). It was recommended that interviewers work alongside victim advocates to ensure victim needs are met (Dill, 2011; Herz, 2012; Moosy, 2009; Rich, 2020; Stephens et al., 2012).

In addition to supporting victims, research has asserted that a victim-centered approach is key for enhancing the likelihood of obtaining victim cooperation and eliciting accurate and credible statements (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; Brotherton, 2012; Dill, 2011; Moosy, 2009). Support for this approach has been derived primarily from qualitative studies exploring law enforcement and victim advocates’ experiences interacting with victims in sex trafficking investigations.

Trauma-Informed Approach

Studies frequently discussed the complex trauma that victims of human trafficking experience, and the need for police interviewers to engage victims through a trauma-informed approach (Farrell & Kane, 2020; Hounmenou & O’Grady, 2021; Lamonaca et al., 2021; Mapp et al., 2016; Middleton & Edwards, 2020; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018; Rich, 2020; Villacampa & Torres, 2017). Studies recommended interviewers become aware of the effects that trauma may have on victim behavior (e.g., nervousness, lack of eye contact, “inappropriate” affect; Rich, 2021) and ability to recall and report information (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; Bartunkova, 2005; Brotherton, 2012; Farrell et al., 2012; Lamonaca et al., 2021; Villacampa & Torres, 2017). For example, studies highlighted that trauma victims may experience memory fragmentation and report inconsistencies and errors, hindering the quality of their statements (Farrell & Kane, 2020; Lamonaca et al., 2021; Villacampa & Torres, 2017). Given the effects of trauma, it was recommended that interviewers refrain from making assumptions about victims’ credibility based on non-verbal and reporting behaviors because it is common for victims to make changes to their statements as they process their experience over time (David, 2008a; Farrell & Kane, 2020; Lamonaca et al., 2021).

Overall, although extensively recommended, no studies included in this review operationalized a definition of a trauma-informed approach. More importantly, with one exception (Lamonaca et al., 2021), the studies provided limited descriptions of how interviewers should implement trauma-informed interviews. Moreover, recommendations for a trauma-informed approach have primarily stemmed from qualitative data and literature reviews. This review did not identify any experimental or evaluative research that examined the use of the trauma-informed approach on human trafficking victims’ reporting tendencies, victim experiences with the investigative process, or evidence gathering.

Victim Identification

Studies consistently described difficulties associated with identifying human trafficking victims. Several factors contributed to this difficulty, including victims’ reluctance, unwillingness, and inability to self-identify as victims; complex dynamics between victims and traffickers; fear of negative consequences (including the possibility of deportation); involvement in criminal activity as part of being trafficked (e.g., sex work and drugs); and difficulty describing abuse (Brubacher et al., 2021; Villacampa & Torres, 2017). Law enforcement officers and interviewers also contribute to challenges with identification. Officers often have limited understanding of, and experience with, trafficking cases (Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Farrell et al., 2012). Officers’ lack of awareness about cultural factors, such as the use of juju oaths in West African countries to coerce victims, also added to the challenge of understanding and identifying victims in cross-cultural interviews (Dols García, 2020). Moreover, victims of trafficking cannot be equated to other crime victims — their stories, demeanor, and potential criminal involvement may conflict with officers’ expectations, thereby hindering the officers’ ability to correctly identify them as victims (Lindholm et al., 2014).

One strategy recommended in several studies was the use of standardized screening tools for victim identification (Clawson et al., 2006; Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Dabney, 2011; Farrell et al., 2012; Middleton & Edwards, 2020; Stephens et al., 2012). Macy and colleagues (2021) and Middleton and Edwards (2020) identified common categories of screening questions, including work and living conditions, physical and mental health, trauma, substance use, arrest history, and prior involvement with law enforcement. Unfortunately, there was a lack of evaluative studies on the effectiveness of screening tools for identifying trafficking victims. Only one study⁸ investigated the utility of an interview screening protocol. Dabney (2011) conducted a cohort study in which youth taken into a juvenile detention center ($n = 535$) were assessed via a tiered screening protocol consisting of known risk factors for youth sexual exploitation (e.g., living

⁸ Research conducted by the Vera Institute led to the development of a screening tool to identify victims of human trafficking. However, this research was conducted exclusively with service providers and was therefore outside the scope of this review. Additional information can be found in the Screening for Human Trafficking Guidelines for Administering the Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT; Vera Institute, 2014) or online at <https://www.vera.org/newsroom/new-tool-makes-it-easier-to-identify-and-assist-victims-of-human-trafficking>.

conditions, runaway and delinquency history, sources of and control over money). Each tier of the screening protocol was administered separately and progressed in the level of invasiveness so that the first tier served to uncover the presence of risk factors and identify youth in need of more in-depth assessment. Statistically significant differences were found between youth referred for additional screening and youth who were not. The results suggested that detention and probation staff identified the presence of risk factors in screen interviews and made referral decisions based on the presence of those risk factors (Dabney, 2011).

In addition to a lack of rigorous evaluation studies, step-by-step guidance on how to conduct screening interviews and respond once a victim is identified also remains poorly defined in the literature (Macy et al., 2021). A few governmental resources discussed potential trafficking indicators (e.g., restricted freedom, no identification or passports, stories that sound scripted) and steps for protecting identified victims (e.g., reporting case to the national hotline, contacting local advocacy organizations; Newman, 2006). Nonetheless, no comprehensive protocols for law enforcement on the identification and response to trafficking victims were identified in this review.

Addressing Reluctance and Victim Reporting

Factors contributing to victim reluctance include fear of retaliation from traffickers (Newman, 2006; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018); dependency on, or romantic feelings for, their trafficker (Dill, 2011); effects of trauma (Dill, 2011); effects of encountering the police through an arrest; and distrust of the police (Newman, 2006; Villacampa & Torres, 2017). Some victims may not self-identify as a victim (Rijken et al., 2021), meaning that law enforcement interventions may be seen as an interference rather than a rescue from an exploitative situation (David, 2008a). Importantly, law enforcement's response to victims can contribute to reluctance. For example, officers may use accusatory terms (e.g., whore, prostitute) without acknowledging the forced nature of these activities (Helfferich et al., 2011), conduct interviews in intimidating environments (Villacampa & Torres, 2017), treat interactions as an interrogation of a suspect rather than an interview with a victim (Helfferich et al., 2011; Lavoie et al., 2019), and use coercive techniques such as maximization (Henderson et al., 2021) and pressure (Lindholm et al., 2015). These approaches are likely to increase reluctance.

Research on how to address reluctant trafficking victims has generally relied on qualitative approaches. This body of works suggests that to foster cooperation, interviewers should build positive relationships with victims, provide support, take the time to gain victims' trust (Helfferich et al., 2011), and instill in them a sense of autonomy and ownership over their cases (Bales & Lize, 2005). Providing victims with services, legal protections, and residency permits has also been associated with greater levels of cooperation (Farrell et al., 2012; Helfferich et al., 2011; Herz, 2012; Rijken et al., 2021).

Few studies have analyzed interview transcripts to examine the relationship between interviewer questioning and victim disclosure. Results from these studies found that victims were more evasive when asked about specific topics, such as their involvement in the sex trade, and were more hesitant to provide crime-specific details or details about their relationships with others involved in trafficking (Lindholm et al., 2015). The use of option-posing or closed-ended questions (which elicit yes/no responses) had some positive benefits in eliciting responses from evasive victims compared to open-ended questions. Unfortunately, the information yielded from option-posing questions tended to be less valuable for investigative purposes (Henderson et al., 2021; Lindholm et al., 2015).

Despite the common acknowledgment that victim reluctance is a persistent challenge, there was a lack of empirical studies examining the effectiveness of various interviewing techniques — and the context in which interviews were occurring — for eliciting greater information disclosure. Even more limited was research looking at reluctance among victims of labor trafficking (as compared to sex trafficking). Such research can guide law enforcement on how to more effectively elicit disclosures and prevent the use of coercive and problematic behaviors (Farrell et al., 2012; Luna et al., 2023).

Cultural and Language Barriers

Given the international nature of human trafficking, investigative interviews often involve language barriers between interviewers and victims. Several studies discussed the importance of quality interpretation services when interviewing trafficking victims; poor interpretations (e.g., over-simplified, missing key information, changing information) can severely hinder victims' chances of being identified, the investigation process, and prosecution of traffickers (Bales & Lize, 2005; David, 2008b; Farrell et al., 2012; Ylinen et al., 2020). Research recommends that interpreters should be chosen carefully to ensure language and dialect proficiency, cultural experience, and capacity for working trafficking cases (see also, "Interviewer Characteristics," below). The need for interviewers and interpreters to have cultural sensitivity specific to victims of human trafficking to help them recognize cultural barriers was also discussed (Dill, 2011; Farrell et al., 2012; Stephens et al., 2012).

Despite these recommended best practices, there exist considerable practical barriers. In most circumstances, there is a limited pool of interpreters available to law enforcement (Brotherton, 2012; Sever et al., 2012; Ylinen et al., 2020). There was also a lack of an evidence base about how interviewers and interpreters can best be equipped with necessary cultural sensitivity, particularly when exposed to victims from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Law Enforcement Agencies and Interviewers

Evidence-based law enforcement strategies to address human trafficking victimization were limited. The most consistent recommendation was for agencies to develop multi-disciplinary teams, which includes partnering with service providers, other law enforcement agencies, and other government entities. Studies also highlighted the need for protocols and officer training, especially around the issue of victim identification. Interviewer characteristics were also noted as being important to the success of human trafficking investigations. Interviewers need training and experience, but research also highlighted how personal characteristics (such as gender and age) can impact the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

Collaboration

Several studies recommended the use of multi-disciplinary teams, by which law enforcement agencies regularly work with non-profit organizations and victim service providers to support victims throughout interviews and the investigation process (Aiesi, 2011; Brotherton, 2012; Dill, 2011; Farrell & Kane, 2020; Middleton & Edwards, 2020; Rich, 2020; Stephens et al., 2012). Integrated service providers have several benefits. First, victims of trafficking may be more willing to interact with, and disclose information to, service providers compared to law enforcement (Dill, 2011; Sever et al., 2012). Service providers may also be better trained to detect and respond to victims of trafficking, including in cross-cultural settings (Aiesi, 2011; Dill, 2011), and have the capacity to connect victims to services more readily (Farrell & Kane, 2020).

In addition to victim service providers, researchers have suggested that agencies develop partnerships with other law enforcement agencies, form or join regional task forces, and collaborate with other government entities (e.g., the Department of Labor) to enhance the capacity to identify, respond to, and investigate human trafficking cases. Other benefits of a multi-disciplinary approach included enhancing communication across jurisdictions as well as training and information-sharing opportunities (Bales & Lize, 2005; Middleton & Edwards, 2020).

Protocols, Training, and Toolkits

The need for protocols and specialized training on human trafficking was frequently recommended across studies. Lack of training may lead to damaging and ineffective first contact with victims; the use of improper investigation and interviewing techniques (such as pressuring the victim) can hinder all future steps of the investigative process (Mapp et al., 2016). For this reason, training officers throughout the agency regardless of their assignment has been recommended (Farrell et al., 2012). Recommendations for interviewer training tended to focus on the complex dynamics between victims and offenders, victim identification, interacting and conducting interviews with vulnerable persons, cultural considerations, and collaborating with other agencies and victim services (Aiesi, 2011; Alberola et al., 2006; Allert, 2021; Bales & Lize, 2005; Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; Bartunkova, 2005; Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Farrell et al., 2012; Kingshott, 2015; Meshkovska et al., 2016; Muftić, 2014; Tiapula & Millican, 2008). Studies consistently recommended that interviews with potential human trafficking victims be conducted by interviewers who have specialized experience and training to address the unique needs of human trafficking victims (Bales & Lize, 2005; Brotherton, 2012; Dols García, 2020; Farrell et al., 2012; Muftić, 2014; Sever et al., 2012; Tiapula & Millican, 2008). Interviewers should be skilled in developing rapport, showing respect and empathy, using active listening and appropriate questioning strategies, and recognizing and responding to signs of distress and anxiety (Kelmendi, 2015; Sever et al., 2012). Training on trauma and trauma-informed approaches (see “Trauma-Informed Approach,” above) was also recommended (Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Farrell & Kane, 2020; Mapp et al., 2016; Middleton & Edwards, 2020).

Unfortunately, research noted that both training content and training evaluations have been limited. Despite recent attempts at expanding officer training, considerable gaps still exist in training content (Farrell et al., 2012). In one study, victim service providers identified a difference between training and raising awareness; many efforts to “train” officers on human trafficking should not be considered actual training. Events that cover a wide range of information or are provided to a mixed audience may be effective at raising awareness about trafficking victimization but would not be effective in providing interviewers with the necessary tools to identify, interview, and assist human trafficking victims (Clawson & Dutch, 2008).

Evaluations of training efforts were similarly limited. Existing empirical studies examining training effectiveness were limited to assessing knowledge transfer (see Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Based on survey data, some studies indicated that specialized training increased interviewers’ self-reported knowledge about identifying and interviewing victims (Clawson et al., 2006) and conducting human trafficking investigations (Muftić, 2014) immediately following the training. No studies, however, actually explored the impact of training on behavioral outcomes (e.g., interviewing behavior) or result outcomes (e.g., improved victim perceptions of the interview/investigative process, case outcomes). This gap in evaluative research means that evidence-based practices for officer training are limited.

Two toolkits that guided the process of conducting interviews with human trafficking victims were identified. The “Protocol for Identification and Assistance of Trafficked Persons and Training Kit” (Bartunkova, 2005) is intended for front-line police and immigration officers, detention center workers, and service providers. This toolkit describes seven steps that interviewers should take when conducting an initial interview with a possible victim of trafficking. The steps included:

1. Opening the interview with introductions.
2. Providing victims with information about the purpose of the interview, transferring to a different location if needed, and the role of the interpreter or cultural mediator present.
3. Identifying the interviewee’s victim status by letting them tell their story and pointing out possible signs of trafficking.

4. Building trust by going over the victim's options, national policies on trafficking, and concerns regarding immigration status.
5. Jointly deciding the next steps.
6. Arranging for services needed to ensure care and safety.
7. Closing the initial interview by obtaining victim feedback and arranging to stay in contact.

The second toolkit, “Good practice tool for police hearings with migrant, applicant for international protection, refugee (MAR), trafficked, and LGBTQ+ victims of sexual violence” (Lamonaca et al., 2021), was developed to guide law enforcement on trauma-informed practices. The toolkit provided information across seven areas:

- Understanding the effects of trauma such as intrusive thoughts, avoidance, and changes in emotional reactions.
- Describing vulnerable groups, such as refugees, trafficking victims, and LGBTQ+ victims, and their unique barriers to disclosure (e.g., distrust of authorities, language barriers).
- Recognizing behavioral and emotional cues exhibited by victims and recommended responses by police (e.g., empathy, empowerment).
- Challenges to perceptions of victim credibility (e.g., statement inconsistencies).
- Trauma-informed interviewing techniques (e.g., using the Cognitive Interview, creating a non-threatening environment, providing adequate interpretation, adopting a victim-centered approach).
- Understanding body language (e.g., proxemics, mirroring).
- Creating a plan to make trauma-informed adaptations to language, behavior, environment, and practice when interviewing victims.

Unfortunately, we were unable to locate information about who used these screening tools or how often they were used.

Interviewer Characteristics

Studies highlighted the importance of interviewer demographic characteristics in facilitating interviewer-interviewee relationships. Factors such as age (especially in interviews with victims originating from countries that hold higher respect for elders; e.g., Dols García, 2020), language, race, cultural background (Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Sever et al., 2012), and sex can impact this relationship and the willingness to participate in the investigative process (Brotherton, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2020; Rich, 2020). For example, women may not feel comfortable disclosing explicit details of sexual assault to male interviewers. Men, particularly from cultures with a traditional view of masculinity, may not want to disclose victimization to female interviewers (Brotherton, 2012). Some researchers have gone so far as to suggest that victims should be allowed to choose the interviewer they feel most comfortable with (Brotherton, 2012; Rijken et al., 2021). This recommendation may be difficult to implement in practice — outside of the largest law enforcement agencies, the pool of qualified interviewers may be small (see also, “Cultural and Language Barriers,” below).

Interviewing or Questioning Strategies

Studies described the importance of rapport and trust-building during the interviewing process and the use of appropriate information-gathering techniques. Other practical guidance for interviewing victims of human trafficking included having safe locations for conducting interviews, the role of non-verbal communication, structuring repeated interviews, and recording victim statements.

Rapport and Trust-Building

Studies consistently agreed that obtaining victim cooperation and quality information requires law enforcement to prioritize building rapport and creating an environment of ease and support (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; Brubacher et al., 2021; Deeb-Swihart et al., 2019; Helfferich et al., 2011; International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2006; Meshkovska et al., 2016). Unfortunately, studies generally failed to define rapport in an interviewing context. They typically, however, identified the use of interpersonal and procedure-based behaviors to improve rapport. Interpersonal behaviors included demonstrating compassion, non-judgment, and understanding of the circumstances that may have resulted in the victimization (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022); displaying concern for the victims' wellbeing (Aiesi, 2011); using supportive language (Lindholm et al., 2015); and minimizing the presence of uniforms, badges, and firearms to reduce intimidation (Aiesi, 2011). Procedure-based behaviors included showing transparency by providing victims with comprehensive information about the interview and investigation process, their rights and options (Aiesi, 2011; Bartunkova, 2005; Rijken et al., 2021; Sever et al., 2012), appeasing concerns regarding legal repercussions (London Safeguarding Children Board, 2011), and attending to victims' safety and basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter; Dianiska et al., 2023; Helfferich et al., 2011).

Besides building rapport, gaining a victim's trust was considered a key factor in interviewing trafficking victims because victims need to first feel safe to divulge their experiences (David, 2008b; Kelmendi, 2015; Sever et al., 2012). Interviewer-interviewee trust must be built by demonstrating transparency and action in pursuing justice (Meshkovska et al., 2016). Importantly, researchers recommended that interviewing human trafficking victims be approached as a process — eliciting information often takes multiple interviews and long-term engagement because gaining trust is a gradual process (Brubacher et al., 2021; David, 2008a; London Safeguarding Children Board, 2011; Tiapula & Millican, 2008; Villacampa & Torres, 2017).

Information-Gathering Techniques

To elicit information from victims, studies recommended that interviewers encourage free narratives, engage in active listening, avoid interruptions, allow victims to do most of the talking, and use encouraging phrases such as “please continue” and “tell me more” (International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2006; Kelmendi, 2015; Lamonaca et al., 2021). To that end, a few studies recommended the use of specific interviewing protocols, such as the Cognitive Interview (Kingshott, 2015; Lamonaca et al., 2021) and the PEACE protocol⁹ (Rich, 2020), and, more broadly, the use of open-ended questions for eliciting information from victims (Brubacher et al., 2021). However, research has found that the use of open-ended questions leads to more evasive responses from youth sex trafficking victims compared to closed-ended questions (Henderson et al., 2021; Lindholm et al., 2015). Consequently, researchers highlighted the need to empirically examine the effects of open-ended questions and the combined use of other question types on victims' reporting tendencies.

Until further research is conducted, recommendations for using specific protocols and types of questions may be premature (Lavoie et al., 2019). Future research can begin by examining the use of well-established and developmentally

⁹ PEACE stands for Preparation and Planning, Engage and Explain, Account, Closure, and Evaluate. The PEACE protocol is the model of interviewing for police officers in Britain; it includes the Cognitive Interview and conversation management strategies (Clarke & Milne, 2001).

conscious interviewing protocols for child sex abuse victims, such as the NICHD protocol, for potential child trafficking victims (Lavoie et al., 2019). Overall, additional research exploring the effectiveness of techniques for interviewing both adults and youth¹⁰ (Luna et al., 2023), as well as different interviewing modalities (e.g., the use of alternative methods to face-to-face interviews; Castelfranc-Allen & Hope, 2018), are needed.

Other recommendations that emerged from reviewed literature included: believing victims until the investigation shows otherwise (Moossy, 2009); understanding that victims may lie for a variety of reasons, which should not deter the investigation (Moossy, 2009); using simple language when phrasing questions (Ylinen et al., 2020); and video-recording interviews, which can avoid inaccurate paraphrased material that deviates from the victims' original accounts, helps victims avoid repeated descriptions of their assault to multiple stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, prosecutors, victim advocates), and reduces the need to provide testimonies in court (Arnold, 2008; Rich, 2020).

Interview Location

Studies recommended that interviews with trafficking victims be conducted in environments that afford privacy and minimize disruptions (International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2006; Kelmendi, 2015). The design and placement of the interview location should facilitate the victim feeling safe and comfortable in a non-threatening environment (Aiesi, 2011; Brotherton, 2012; Rich, 2020; Sever et al., 2012; Villacampa & Torres, 2017; Ylinen et al., 2020). The use of soft interview rooms (spaces that include things such as soft lighting, rugs, and cushioned seating) and the removal of handcuffs and weapons (Nguyen et al., 2020; Rijken et al., 2021) were recommended.

Repeated Interviews

Eliciting complete disclosure from victims may take multiple interviews spanning over longer periods, in part because building trust takes time (Bales & Lize, 2005; Dianiska et al., 2023), and because multiple sessions may be needed to fully describe the victim's situation (Bales & Lize, 2005; Deeb-Swihart et al., 2019). However, while multiple interviews are often necessary from an investigatory perspective, some researchers have raised concerns that repeated interviews can be challenging and retraumatize victims (Arnold, 2008). To reduce the number of interviews, researchers highlighted the importance of taking detailed and comprehensive statements from victims (David, 2008b), and using multi-disciplinary teams so that all relevant information for both law enforcement and social services purposes can be gathered simultaneously (Allert, 2021).

Overall, there was no consensus regarding the appropriate number of interviews for victims of human trafficking. Nonetheless, interviewers were advised to approach interviews as a process rather than an instance (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022). Initial interview sessions may focus on rapport- and trust-building and allowing victims to tell their stories; once those are established, interviewers can begin asking for more crime-relevant information (Kelmendi, 2015). To facilitate ongoing victim participation, interviewers should prioritize victim engagement (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; Brubacher et al., 2021).

Non-Verbal Communication

Studies discussed the importance of interviewers' awareness of victims' non-verbal communication as well as their own (Dols García, 2020). Importantly, interviewers were warned against using body language or emotional responses to assess victim credibility (Lamonaca et al., 2021). Factors commonly associated with deceit and untruthfulness — such as nervousness, avoiding eye contact or looking into the distance, sweaty hands, evasiveness, and fear — can also be signs

¹⁰ In the U.S., evidence of force, fraud, or coercion is not needed to classify minors as victims of trafficking; however, their testimonies are still considered necessary by law enforcement officers for the investigation and prosecution of traffickers (Dianiska et al., 2023).

of trauma (Bartunkova, 2005; Villacampa & Torres, 2017). These behaviors may also be associated with cultural factors, the power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee, and fear of potential legal problems (see “Victim-Centered” and “Rapport and Trust-Building,” above).

The importance of non-verbal communication cues for interviewers was also highlighted. In engaging with victims, interviewers were recommended to use reassuring and appropriate body language (International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2006; Kelmendi, 2015). The interviewer’s approach to personal space, gestures, posture, facial expressions, and eye contact can enhance or damage their ability to build trust and connection with victims (Lamonaca et al., 2021). Similar to other areas, however, there was relatively little concrete guidance for practitioners. Additional practical guidance — for example through skills training courses and materials — would be warranted.

Discussion of the Synthesized Literature

This systematic scoping review synthesized current knowledge and identified research gaps in the interviewing of potential human trafficking victims in a law enforcement context. Despite the importance of effective interviewing techniques, limitations in available research inhibit the development of strong evidence-based recommendations and best practices. Nonetheless, potential practices supported by mostly qualitative studies, or recommended by law enforcement, victims, and victim advocates, were documented in the current review. These included the adoption of a victim-centered approach, building rapport and trust through long-term victim engagement, and working with multidisciplinary teams consisting of victim advocates and qualified interpreters.

Potential Promising Law Enforcement Response Practices

Although fuller evaluations of these practices are needed, the literature suggests that effective interviewing of human trafficking victims requires police to be aware of both the potential for exacerbating victims' state (e.g., retraumatization) and the opportunity to promote their empowerment and well-being (e.g., helping them come to terms with their experiences and establish a sense of control; Ellison & Munro, 2017; Herman, 2003; Risan et al., 2020). The existing literature consistently advocated for a victim-centered approach to interviewing. Rather than prescribing a single interviewing protocol, a victim-centered approach emphasizes principles of empathy, respect, and collaboration; sensitivity to the victim's rights, needs, and preferences; and ensuring a sensitive and nonjudgmental service delivery (Farrell et al., 2019).

Building rapport and employing victim-centered techniques were recommended for fostering victim cooperation and overcoming resistance, aligning with a broader body of research on investigative interviewing that emphasizes the creation of a supportive, collaborative, and non-threatening environment for eliciting information from victims (Chenier et al., 2022; De La Fuente Vilar, 2023; Hershkowitz et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2020). Qualitative research supports the assertion that addressing victims' needs, including offering victim services and assisting in obtaining residency permits, can enhance victim engagement and cooperation during the investigative process (Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022; Farrell et al., 2019).

Recommendations in Literature

To identify guidance for implementing some of these practices, recommendations from articles were abstracted to identify the most frequently suggested changes to current law enforcement practices (exhibit 4). The most recommended change for law enforcement pertained to officer training, with the most common training recommendation focusing on assisting front-line officers in the identification of potentially trafficked victims. Numerous authors also recommended that agencies have specialized interviewers or interview teams to address the complexity associated with human trafficking cases.

Multi-disciplinary teams were also frequently recommended. This typically focused on developing teams that included law enforcement, service providers, and representatives from prosecutors' offices. Along with multi-disciplinary teams, studies recommended multi-jurisdictional teams to ensure that offenders and victims can more readily be identified.

Exhibit 4. Study Recommendations

Recommendation	Number of studies
More officer training	36
Implementing multi-disciplinary teams	21
Improving protocols and policies	17
Developing specialized interviewers or teams	14
Implementing multi-jurisdictional teams	7

Note: Studies could have multiple recommendations and, therefore, will sum to more than the number of studies included.

Studies also advocated for improved protocols and policies. Recommendations for protocol improvements typically focused on how to identify potential victims of trafficking. Policy improvements tended to focus on processes agencies should implement to ensure that victims were treated according to best practices and included actions such as ensuring victims had access to medical care, reducing the number of law enforcement interviews, and connecting victims with service providers.

Research Gaps and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite recommendations for victim-centered approaches, there was little concrete guidance on how to implement this approach within an interview context. The limitations of existing research are further highlighted by the failure to differentiate between victims of sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Although all aspects of evaluation research were limited, more distal outcomes, such as impacts on case outcomes, were non-existent. Additionally, there was a lack of research directly seeking feedback from victims. Failure to fully capture information directly from victims creates several challenges. First, it fails to completely describe the negative impacts of human trafficking. Second, it over-emphasizes outcomes associated with official criminal justice case processing. A victim-centered approach may require deprioritizing official criminal justice outcomes (such as arrest or prosecution) if they create additional harm to the victims.

An important limitation in the current literature relates to understanding the effectiveness of specific interviewing techniques for enhancing victims' ability to recall and report information. Although decades of research on investigative interviewing have provided an array of recommended memory-enhancing techniques, such as "report everything" instructions, open-ended prompts, and context reinstatement (Fisher & Geiselman, 2006), it remains unclear which techniques may be best suited for eliciting information from trafficking victims (Luna et al., 2023). For example, emerging research suggests that open-ended prompts, which rely on cooperation, may be less effective for obtaining comprehensive information from minor victims of sex trafficking (Lindholm et al., 2015; Nogalska et al., 2021). Additional research is needed to optimize interviewing approaches specifically tailored to trafficking victims' memory, reporting decisions, and abilities.

Numerous studies recommended that law enforcement receive training and implement trauma-informed interviewing procedures such as the Trauma-Informed Victim Interview (TIVI) (Kelly & Valentine, 2018) and the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI) (Strand & Heitman, 2019). Trauma-informed protocols use trauma concepts (e.g., prefrontal cortex impairment, tonic immobility, collapsed immobility, and dissociation) to train interviewers about victims' behavior, memory, and ability to recall and report information (Lonsway & Archambault, 2019). Nevertheless, researchers have raised concerns about generalizations regarding the trauma response that underlies trauma-informed protocols (Davis & Loftus, 2019; Hunley & O'Donohue, 2022; Meissner & Lyles, 2019). At the time of writing, there has been one evaluation of a trauma-informed sexual assault response training and use of the TIVI protocol in adult sexual assault cases (Kelly & Valentine, 2018). This study found an improvement in the successful prosecution rate when using a trauma-informed

approach, but there were substantial limitations in the evaluation. More research and evaluations of trauma-informed protocols are necessary, especially considering their endorsement by organizations such as End Violence Against Women International (Lonsway et al., 2019) that explore multiple outcomes including those related to case processing and the well-being of the victim, which assess different goals of the technique being evaluated.

The literature reviewed here discussed several interviewing protocols or frameworks that apply to victims of violent crime. These include protocols derived from the broader literature on investigative interviewing, such as the NICHD, the Cognitive Interview, and the PEACE protocol, as well as protocols focused on the trauma-informed approach, such as the TIVI and FETI. These protocols all share the same basic structure. They emphasize the importance of engaging in an interview planning stage, starting interviews with an introduction, setting the expectations for the interview, prioritizing building rapport and trust throughout the entire interview, asking for a free narrative, and progressing from open-ended to specific questions. Addressing the interviewee needs, providing social support, avoiding suggestive and leading questions, and avoiding the use of behavioral cues to assess credibility are also encouraged. Differentiations mainly happen in the reliance on trauma concepts to teach investigators about victim behavior and variations in some questions (i.e., the trauma-informed use of sensory-specific questions, albeit this may be similar to the context-reinstatement instruction found in the other protocols). Future research must evaluate the unique components of each protocol on key metrics such as victim experiences throughout the interview, cooperation, the accuracy and completeness of their statements, and case outcomes, as well as investigators' acceptability and perceived use of techniques, to derive a comprehensive protocol and corresponding training curriculum.

Future research must also explore victims' decision-making to better understand how to reduce reluctance and promote cooperation in human trafficking investigations. Victims engage in a cost-benefit analysis when deciding how much information to disclose during interviews (De La Fuente Vilar, 2023; Kidd, 1979). The decision to cooperate is an iterative process influenced by factors both before and throughout the interview process; this includes fear of retaliation by the trafficker (Rajaram & Tidball, 2018), length of time between law enforcement intervention and the interview (Lindholm et al., 2015), and distrust of the police (Love et al., 2018). Law enforcement's use of coercion and pressure can decrease victims' motivation to engage in interviews, highlighting the importance of victim-centered and rapport-based approaches (Farrell et al., 2019). However, evidence supporting the use of these interviewing techniques with trafficking victims is limited. There is a need to design and evaluate techniques that reduce the costs and increase the benefits of reporting crime-relevant information, equipping interviewers to overcome initial reluctance without resorting to coercive behaviors (De La Fuente Vilar, 2023; Farrell et al., 2012; Luna et al., 2023).

Several areas relevant to interviewing potential human trafficking victims also warrant further attention. These topical areas include the effects of substance use, developmental disabilities, and repeated interviews on trafficking victims' memory and reporting behaviors, as well as the effects of interviewing victims about repeated traumatic events that occur over time. Examining alternatives to face-to-face interviews may also be beneficial. For example, research on the effectiveness of online reporting mechanisms (e.g., Loney-Howes et al., 2022) and remote investigative interviews (e.g., De la Fuente Vilar et al., 2022; Hoogesteyn et al., 2023) are gaining traction and may provide greater accessibility to victims who might find it difficult to attend in-person interviews due to physical or psychological barriers. Moreover, the inclusion of interpreters is crucial to ensure accurate and comprehensive information exchange during the interview process, but there is a lack of guidance on how to incorporate interpreters into the interviewer-interviewee dynamic. Some evidence suggests that simultaneous interpretation, rather than consecutive interpretation¹¹, may be optimal (Hale et al., 2022). More research is needed to explore strategies for managing power dynamics, building and maintaining rapport, maintaining cultural sensitivity, and promoting accurate interpretation without negatively impacting victim experience or

¹¹ Simultaneous interpretation requires that the interpreter listens to the speaker's words while also interpreting them into another language on the spot. Consecutive interpretation involves the speaker pausing between thoughts, allowing the interpreter to deliver the interpreted message.

compromising information sharing. Moreover, guidance on the selection of interpreters and how interpreter characteristics impact victims is also needed.

In sum, there is an urgent need to develop an evidence-based, specialized, victim-centered interviewing protocol for human trafficking cases. The need for further differentiation by type of trafficking involved (i.e., sex versus labor) should also be explored to determine if additional specialization is needed. To derive evidence-based recommendations for the interviewing of human trafficking victims, future research should consider several key factors:

- *Validity and Transferability:* The current state of research is fractured and inconsistent. Studies tend to be one-offs and conducted with limited victim and law enforcement populations. These limitations raise issues about whether the body of evidence available to date applies to other settings (i.e., external validity). Additional research is needed to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of effective practices that can be generalized to different interviewing contexts. Further disaggregation by sex versus labor trafficking would also help to improve evidence-based practices.
- *Lab versus Field Experiments:* Field experiments would provide the best insight into the effects of interviewing techniques. However, given the sensitive nature of the interviews, and the practical challenges of implementation, other evaluation strategies should be considered. One strategy would be to explore various interviewing techniques in a closed, lab-based setting or through quasi-experimental research using recorded interviews or interview transcripts. Lab experiments, in particular, should be designed to better approximate real-world conditions. Given the inherent limitations of lab experiments (e.g., inability to replicate trauma associated with being a victim of trafficking) their purpose must be clearly defined. It may be, for example, that lab experiments are used primarily to refine and optimize measurement techniques (e.g., refining the measurements of information disclosures, improved characterization of interviewee affect). Best practices from this type of research can help to improve quality and minimize disruption of field studies.
- *Research Collaborations:* Exploring the full impact of interviewing techniques will require partnerships and collaboration between researchers, law enforcement agencies, service providers, prosecutors, and survivor consultants. Each stakeholder in the interview and investigation process has unique insight into the impact of interviewing on victims. This diversity of perspectives will ensure that evaluative research is sensitive to victim needs, reduces disruption to law enforcement practices, and generates operationally relevant recommendations. Prioritizing collaborations will be essential for advancing the understanding of effective interviewing techniques, developing evidence-based guidance on how to interview these victims, and improving outcomes for victims of human trafficking.
- *Defining and Testing Outcomes:* Future research should identify, define, and systematically test outcomes associated with different interviewing techniques. These outcomes may include victim satisfaction and well-being during the interview and investigation process, the decision to participate in the criminal justice process, the type and level of detail in the disclosed information, as well as more distal outcomes such as successful case prosecution and the overall impact on victim-centered justice. Within these broader categories of outcomes, more work is needed to better define and measure specific outcomes. For example, additional clarity is needed on how to operationalize victim well-being within the context of trafficking-related interviewing. Even within the context of victim satisfaction, differentiation between short- and long-term well-being may be warranted. Evaluating these outcomes can inform the development of techniques, protocols, and training programs that promote effective and ethical practices in interviewing this vulnerable population. Following trafficking cases from investigation through prosecution would make a considerable contribution to understanding the process and outcomes associated with different interviewing techniques.

- *Diversity of Study Settings:* Most of the studies included in this review were conducted within the United States. Elements of United States law enforcement — for example, the highly decentralized and overlapping nature of law enforcement jurisdictions — may present challenges to generalizing findings to other cultural settings. Our understanding of victim response to human trafficking victims would be improved with research conducted in other countries.
- *Victim Representation and Diversity in Research:* Beyond general country representativeness, research should focus on improving the representation and diversity of victims that are included in studies. It is essential to understand how demographic characteristics — such as age, gender, and ethnicity — affect outcomes associated with different interviewing techniques. Cultural sensitivity may be especially important for understanding the effects of different interviewing techniques. By considering the diverse experiences and needs of victims, research findings can provide more comprehensive and nuanced insights into effective interviewing techniques and strategies. Greater diversity in victim representation will also improve understanding of the role of interviewer-interviewee dynamics.

Limitations

Some limitations of this review should be considered. First, because this was a scoping review, we did not evaluate the quality of the underlying research. Some of the research, especially those involving direct contact with victims, had a very small number of participants, thereby raising potential issues with generalizability.

Second, despite conducting extensive searches of potentially relevant databases, we cannot guarantee all relevant studies were included. Grey literature, in particular, can be difficult to locate even with systematic searches. We also note that despite having no time or location restrictions, a majority of the research was relatively recent and conducted in the United States. It is unknown if this was due to our search strategy (and the indexing used by underlying databases) or inclusion/exclusion criteria that were applied to content coding. For example, excluding studies that were not published in English or Spanish probably resulted in the omission of relevant studies.

Third, the scope of this review was limited to research on interviewing victims of human trafficking by law enforcement. Research in other domains or with other types of vulnerable victims, such as victims of sexual assault or other violent crimes, may be highly relevant to interviewing trafficking victims. Translational research to understand how best practices are used to address other types of vulnerable victims seems warranted.

Conclusion

Existing research into interviewing human trafficking victims has identified several recommended strategies. These include overarching approaches (e.g., victim-centered approach) as well as more technical details specific to interviewing (e.g., use of soft interview rooms). Despite these findings, limitations in available research inhibit the development of strong evidence-based recommendations and best practices. Little is known about the effectiveness of interviewing techniques on human trafficking victim interview experiences, reporting decisions, and quality of disclosure, or how officer and interviewer training impacts more distal outcomes, such as successful case prosecution.

Existing research also focuses predominantly on sex trafficking. Far less research has addressed issues that may be unique to identifying and interviewing victims of labor trafficking. Finally, we note that the representation of victims in existing literature was low. Authors cite difficulty with locating and accessing victims, limited resources for research, and ethical issues associated with victim contact. Unfortunately, these challenges produce a knowledge gap that limits our understanding of how interviewing (especially as it relates to specific techniques, approaches, and training) affects important interview outcomes related to victim perceptions and their ability to minimize retraumatization.

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Appendices

Appendix I: PRISMA-ScR Checklist

Exhibit 5. PRISMA-ScR Checklist

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a scoping review.	Cover
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary that includes (as applicable): background, objectives, eligibility criteria, sources of evidence, charting methods, results, and conclusions that relate to the review questions and objectives.	1–2
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known. Explain why the review questions/objectives lend themselves to a scoping review approach.	3
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of the questions and objectives being addressed with reference to their key elements (e.g., population or participants, concepts, and context) or other relevant key elements used to conceptualize the review questions and/or objectives.	5
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate whether a review protocol exists; state if and where it can be accessed (e.g., a web address); and, if available, provide registration information, including the registration number.	6
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify characteristics of the sources of evidence used as eligibility criteria (e.g., years considered, language, and publication status) and provide a rationale.	6
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources in the search (e.g., databases with dates of coverage and contact with authors to identify additional sources), as well as the date the most recent search was executed.	7
Search	8	Present the full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	7–8
Selection of sources of evidence [†]	9	State the process for selecting sources of evidence (i.e., screening and eligibility) included in the scoping review.	8
Data charting process [‡]	10	Describe the methods of charting data from the included sources of evidence (e.g., calibrated forms or forms that have been tested by the team before their use, and whether data charting was done independently or in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	9
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought and any assumptions and simplifications made.	Appendix III

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
Critical appraisal of individual sources of evidence [§]	12	If done, provide a rationale for conducting a critical appraisal of included sources of evidence; describe the methods used and how this information was used in any data synthesis (if appropriate).	8
Synthesis of results	13	Describe the methods of handling and summarizing the data that were charted.	9
RESULTS			
Selection of sources of evidence	14	Give numbers of sources of evidence screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally using a flow diagram.	10
Characteristics of sources of evidence	15	For each source of evidence, present characteristics for which data were charted and provide the citations.	10–12, Appendix IV
Critical appraisal within sources of evidence	16	If done, present data on critical appraisal of included sources of evidence (see item 12).	Not included
Results of individual sources of evidence	17	For each included source of evidence, present the relevant data that were charted that relate to the review questions and objectives.	Appendix IV
Synthesis of results	18	Summarize or present the charting results as they relate to the review questions and objectives.	13–21
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	19	Summarize the main results (including an overview of concepts, themes, and types of evidence available), link to the review questions and objectives, and consider the relevance to key groups.	24–26
Limitations	20	Discuss the limitations of the scoping review process.	27
Conclusions	21	Provide a general interpretation of the results with respect to the review questions and objectives, as well as potential implications and/or next steps.	28
FUNDING			
Funding	22	Describe sources of funding for the included sources of evidence, as well as sources of funding for the scoping review. Describe the role of the funders of the scoping review.	i

Notes:

PRISMA-ScR = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews.

[†] This is a more inclusive term to account for the different types of evidence or data sources (e.g., quantitative or qualitative research, expert opinion, and policy documents) that may be eligible in a scoping review.

[‡] The frameworks by Arksey & O'Malley (2005) and Levac et al. (2010) refer to the process of data extraction in a scoping review as “data charting.”

[§] Systematically examining research evidence to assess validity, results, and relevance.

Appendix II: Google Scholar Search

Google Scholar poses challenges for systematic reviews. It has been noted as having poor replicability between searches over time (de Winter et al., 2014), lacks transparency in indexed research (Orduna-Malea et al., 2015), and does not support Boolean search functionality. Evidence suggests that Google Scholar should be used as a supplementary search engine (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020) and that identifying grey literature requires reviewing the first 200 search results for every search term (Haddaway et al., 2015).

To use Google Scholar, we adjusted our search procedures relative to other reference databases. First, the application Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2016) was used to systematically conduct the searches. Publications and patents were excluded from the search. Search terms were modified slightly because the way that Google Scholar expands on wildcard searches makes it difficult to replicate. This resulted in eight search strings (see exhibit 6). For each search string, the first 200 search results were exported as an RIS file and imported into Zotero.

Exhibit 6. Modified Google Scholar search terms

Search number	Keywords
Search 1a	"police" + "Interrogate" + "trafficked"
Search 1b	"police" + "Interrogate" + "trafficking"
Search 2a	"law enforcement" + "Interrogate" + "trafficked"
Search 2b	"law enforcement" + "Interrogate" + "trafficking"
Search 3a	"police" + "interview" + "trafficked"
Search 3b	"police" + "interview" + "trafficking"
Search 4a	"law enforcement" + "interview" + "trafficked"
Search 4b	"law enforcement" + "interview" + "trafficking"

Appendix III: Data Charting

In-scope articles were coded using the structured charting template described in exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7. Data Charting Template

Variable	Categories	
Study characteristics		
Country in which the study was conducted	United States	Australia
	United Kingdom	Other (specify)
	Canada	
Document type	Peer-reviewed article	White paper
	Non-refereed article	Book chapter
	Unpublished article or pre-print	Other (specify)
	Dissertation or thesis	
Study aim	[Open-ended]	
Study design (select all)	Experiment/RCT	Qualitative research
	Non-randomized experiment	Prevalence study
	Cross-sectional study	Case report
	Case-control study	Survey
	Systematic review	Law or policy review
	Review paper	Other
Funding source	Federal	Not described
	State	Other (specify)
	Local	
Interviewing main focus?	Yes	No
Topics covered (select all)	Victim-centered interviewing	Victim identification
	Victim-centered processes	Victim needs
	Trauma-informed interviewing	Language barriers
	Cognitive interviewing	Police training
	Alternative interviewing methods	HT investigations
	Rapport-building	Other (specify)
	Reluctance/cooperation	
Disclosed conflicts of interest	[Open-ended]	
Study population characteristics		
Participant type(s) (select all)	Adult	Non-law enforcement criminal justice representatives
	General population	Victim advocates
	Students	Victims of trafficking
	Youth/juvenile	Victims of other crime (not trafficking)
	Officers/law enforcement	Other (specify)
Inclusion criteria	[Open-ended]	

Variable	Categories	
Exclusion criteria	[Open-ended]	
Sample size	[Open-ended]	
Results and findings		
Outcomes measured, if any	[Open-ended]	
Results, if any	[Open-ended]	
Conclusions regarding interviewing	[Open-ended]	
Main conclusion	[Open-ended]	
Recommendations for police (select all)	Training	Multi-jurisdictional teams
	Policies	Other (specify)
	Special investigators/task forces	Training
	Multi-disciplinary teams	
Notes	[Open-ended]	

Appendix IV: In-Scope Studies

Exhibit 8. In-Scope Studies

Author, Year	Type of Trafficking	Type of Victim	Primary Location	Type of Study	Experimental Manipulation	Population	Interviewing Main Focus?
Aiesi, 2011	General	General	USA	Qualitative Survey Law or policy review	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives	No
Alberola et al., 2006	Sex	Adult	Spain, Portugal, Poland, Italy	Qualitative Survey Law or policy review	N/A	Law enforcement officers	No
Allert, 2021	Sex (familial)	Youth	USA	Qualitative Survey	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives Victim advocates	No
Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015	Sex	Adult	USA	Personal experience	N/A	N/A	No
Arnold, 2008	General	General	N/A	Literature review Law or policy review	N/A	N/A	No
Bales & Lize, 2005	Sex	General	USA	Qualitative Case report	N/A	Law enforcement officers Victim advocates Victims of trafficking	No
Ballucci & Stathakis, 2022	Sex	Adult	Canada	Qualitative	N/A	Law enforcement officers	No
Bartunkova, 2005	General	General	The Netherlands	Guide or toolkit	N/A	N/A	Yes
Brotherton, 2012	Sex	Adult	UK	Qualitative Case report	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives Victim advocates	No
Brubacher et al., 2021	Orphan	Youth	Global South ("Developing") nations	Literature review	N/A	N/A	Yes
Castelfranc-Allen & Hope, 2018	General	N/A	Georgia	Experimental	Free recall vs. VCD narrative-graph	Students	Yes
Clawson & Dutch, 2008	General	General	USA	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No

Author, Year	Type of Trafficking	Type of Victim	Primary Location	Type of Study	Experimental Manipulation	Population	Interviewing Main Focus?
Clawson et al., 2006	General	General	USA	Qualitative Case report Survey	N/A	Law enforcement officers	No
Dabney, 2011	Sex	Youth	USA	Qualitative Cohort study	N/A	Juveniles Law enforcement officers	No
David, 2008a	Sex	Adult	Australia	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
David, 2008b	Sex	Adult	Australia	Qualitative	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives Victim advocates	No
Deeb-Swihart et al., 2019	Sex	Adult	USA	Qualitative	N/A	Law enforcement officers	No
Dianiska et al., 2023	Sex	Youth	USA	Survey	N/A	Law enforcement officers	Yes
Dilli, 2011	General	General	USA	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
Dols García, 2020	Sex	Adult	Nigeria	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
Drugan, 2019	General	General	UK, Belgium	Qualitative	N/A	Interpreters	No
Farrell & Kane, 2020	General	General	USA	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
Farrell et al., 2012	General	General	USA	Qualitative Case report Narrative review	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives Victim advocates	No
Hefferich et al., 2011	Sex	Adult	Germany	Qualitative	N/A	Victims of trafficking	Yes
Henderson et al., 2021	Sex	Youth	USA	Narrative review Case report	N/A	Victims of trafficking	Yes
Herz, 2012	General	General	Germany, Russia	Law or policy review	N/A	N/A	No
Hounmenou & O'Grady, 2021	General	General	USA, Canada, Australia	Qualitative Survey	N/A	Private investigators	No
International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2006	General	General	EU	Guide or toolkit	N/A	N/A	No

Author, Year	Type of Trafficking	Type of Victim	Primary Location	Type of Study	Experimental Manipulation	Population	Interviewing Main Focus?
Kelmendi, 2015	General	General	EU, Kosovo, UK, USA	Literature review Law or policy review	N/A	N/A	Yes
Kingshott, 2015	General	General	N/A	Literature review Law or policy review	N/A	N/A	No
Lamonaca et al., 2021	General	General	EU	Guide or toolkit	N/A	N/A	Yes
Lavoie et al., 2019	Sex	Youth	USA	Literature review	N/A	N/A	Yes
Lindholm et al., 2014	Sex	Youth	Sweden	Narrative review	N/A	Interviews conducted by law enforcement officers with suspected victims of trafficking	Yes
Lindholm et al., 2015	Sex	Youth	Sweden	Narrative review	N/A	Court files and interviews conducted by law enforcement officers of known sex trafficking cases	Yes
London Safeguarding Children Board, 2011	General	Youth	UK	Guide or toolkit	N/A	N/A	No
Luna et al., 2023	Sex	Youth	USA	Survey	Vignettes depicting varying levels of cooperation and victim age	Law enforcement officers	Yes
Macy et al., 2021	General	General	N/A	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
Mapp et al., 2016	Sex	Adult	USA	Survey	N/A	Law enforcement officers	No
Meshkovska et al., 2016	Sex	Adult	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Serbia, The Netherlands	Qualitative	N/A	Victims of trafficking Victim advocates	No
Middleton & Edwards, 2020	General	Youth	USA	Case-control study Survey Administrative data analysis	N/A	Victims of trafficking Review of child welfare administrative data	No

Author, Year	Type of Trafficking	Type of Victim	Primary Location	Type of Study	Experimental Manipulation	Population	Interviewing Main Focus?
Moossy, 2009	Sex	Adult	USA	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
Muftić, 2014	Sex	Adult	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Survey	N/A	Law enforcement officers	No
Newman, 2006	Sex	Adult	USA	Literature review Guide or toolkit	N/A	N/A	No
Nguyen et al., 2020	Sex	Adult	Vietnam	Qualitative Survey	N/A	Law enforcement officers	No
Rajaram & Tidball, 2018	Sex	Adult	USA	Qualitative	N/A	Victims of trafficking	No
Rich, 2020	Sex	Adult	USA	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
Rijken et al., 2021	Sex	Adult	The Netherlands	Qualitative	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives Victim advocates Victims of trafficking	No
Sever et al., 2012	General	General	Turkey	Literature review Qualitative Law or policy review	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives Victim advocates	No
Stephens et al., 2012	Labor	Adult	Canada	Literature review Case report	N/A	Victims of trafficking	No
Tiapula & Millican, 2008	Sex	Youth	USA	Literature review	N/A	N/A	No
Villacampa & Torres, 2017	Criminal exploitation	Adult	Spain	Qualitative	N/A	Law enforcement officers Criminal justice representatives Victim advocates	No
Ylinen et al., 2020	Labor	Adult	Finland, Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia	Guide or toolkit	N/A	N/A	No