Breaking the Invisible Chains - Exploring How Police Officers in the UK Identify and Respond to Signs of Psychological Coercion in Human Trafficking Victims

Scott Campbell Cumming

Supervisor: Samantha Fletcher

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Contents

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Abbreviations

CKP	Certificate in Knowledge of Policing
CSU	Community Safety Unit
DV	Domestic Violence
FoI	Freedom of Information
MSHTU	Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit
MSA	Modern Slavery Act
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCALT	National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
OIC	Organised Immigration Crime
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UKVI	Home Office Immigration and Visas
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Abstract

There are an estimated 10,000 to 13,000 victims of human trafficking in the UK, the vast majority of whom come from overseas. The government has recently stepped up its efforts to tackle the issue with the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act (MSA) and a commitment to dedicate more resources to the problem. However, the ability of the police to rise to this challenge has been called into question and little research has been conducted on their understanding of psychological coercion, which is deemed to be one of the most effective forms of control used against victims. Consequently, this dissertation explores how police officers in the UK identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in human trafficking victims. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with tactical advisors from the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU) of the National Crime Agency (NCA) and police constables from the Metropolitan Police borough of Newham. In addition, quantitative and documentary analyses were employed to form a mixed methods approach to the research. It was found that the introduction of the MSA appears to have increased awareness of human trafficking amongst the police and that officers' understanding of the issue in general seems to be improving. The research also showed that the police face significant barriers when attempting to identify and communicate with victims and appear to have particular difficulty dealing with those implicated in criminal offences. However, this problem isn't considered as challenging as the cultural and gender barriers officers face when engaging with the multitude of ethnic groups that reside in the UK, especially those that do not welcome outside interference. In addition, the demands of the job and organisational factors appear to be hampering officers' ability to overcome these barriers. Moreover, awareness of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) amongst the police seems to be poor, as does the standard of completion of referral forms. In relation to this latter issue, it is concluded that the NRM in its current format is ineffective in dealing with victims who have been psychologically coerced.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Background

The global trade in human beings is now estimated to be worth approximately $35 billion per year and in criminal terms, is reportedly eclipsed only by the drugs and arms markets (Craig, 2014a). Although the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade suggests that this isn't a new phenomenon, it could be argued that the international community only recently started to take the problem seriously with the adoption of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons in 2000 (Campana, 2015). This was followed by the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2005, which requires members to provide victims with "legal protection and minimum standards of care" (In Brief, 2017; p.1). Despite the introduction of these international agreements the number of trafficking victims is reported to be increasing, although it is acknowledged that exact numbers are difficult to quantify (Scullion, 2015). This is exemplified by the US Trafficking in Persons Report, which in 2004 estimated the number of people trafficked worldwide as anywhere between 600,000 and 800,000 individuals (United States. State Department, 2004). In 2010 it stated that 12.3 million individuals were being exploited for their labour or bodies globally (United States. State Department, 2010), and in 2016 it merely states that "it is difficult to amass reliable data" (United States. State Department, 2016; p.10) and refrains from giving even approximate figures.

Despite difficulties estimating the global size of the problem, the UK is regarded as a common destination point for victims of trafficking and is increasingly being used

as a transit state (Obokata, 2006). Those trafficked into the country are reported to be routinely subjected to "sexual and labour exploitation, forced labour, cannabis farming, domestic servitude, organ sale, forced begging and pickpocketing" (Craig, 2014b; p.159). In terms of numbers, there are estimated to be approximately 10,000 to 13,000 victims in the country (Silverman, 2014) although it has been acknowledged that the true extent of the problem is difficult to quantify (National Crime Agency, 2017f). In addition, 2456 of the 2527 adult victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2016 were not from the UK but from 96 other countries (National Crime Agency, 2017e), which provides some indication as to the transnational dimension of the problem.

Initially, the Government were alleged to have been largely ignorant of the problem and hesitant to implement the UN Protocol (Craig, 2015), yet high profile cases such as the deaths of 23 Chinese cockle pickers at Morecambe Bay in 2004 have since helped raise the issue on the national agenda (Shelley, 2010). Arguably, the UK is now doing more than ever to combat human trafficking following the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, the establishment of the post of anti-slavery commissioner, the creation of a governmental task force, the launching of a HM Inspectorate of Constabulary review, and a commitment to spend £33 million on tackling the issue over the next five years (The Telegraph, 2016).

Need for Research

Some have argued that the border is a poor environment in which to identify trafficked persons (Pickering & Ham, 2014) and that their greatest hope of being

discovered lies with local police officers, given that victims are often reluctant to approach the authorities (Finckenauer & Lui, 2006 cited in Dalton & Wilson, 2007; Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013; Sergevnin, 2015). This means that the police have a crucial role to play in the Government's fight against human trafficking. However, concerns have been raised about the police's ability to recognise victims (Centre for Social Justice, 2013), their understanding of human trafficking (Obokata, 2006) and their lack of language skills and cultural knowledge in dealing with the issue (Shelley, 2010). Furthermore, it has been alleged that cases of human trafficking are not being investigated correctly (The Guardian, 2016a) and that victims often remain unidentified when encountered by the police (Great Britain. Home Office, 2014).

Equally, it is important to note that human trafficking is a complex subject that warrants "specialist and advanced investigation techniques" (OSCE, 2013; p.132). This is acutely reflected in the account of one police officer who has some experience of dealing with persons suspected of being trafficked:

> *"We do ask if they are a victim of trafficking, but have been told 'no'. Whether that's true or not, I'm not sure" (Centre for Social Justice, 2013; p.87).*

This quote highlights that officers may struggle to comprehend the psychological aspect of human trafficking, and that what they are told by victims isn't necessarily congruent with what they see. Yet psychological coercion is considered by many to be a primary method of control exerted on victims by traffickers (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2006; Kim, 2007; Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013) and in some instances has completely replaced the need for more physical

forms of control (Chandran, 2011). Therefore it could be argued that police officers must have an understanding of psychological coercion if they are to effectively tackle this issue. However, research on the effects of psychological coercion on trafficking victims is limited (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2006; OSCE, 2013) and there appear to be very few studies which analyse police officers' understanding of the matter. Unsurprisingly, some have called for more research to be conducted on psychological coercion in human trafficking, specifically focusing on the knowledge and perceptions of first responders[1] (Dando, Walsh & Brierley, 2016).

Research Aim and Objectives

Considering the gap in existing research, the aim of this study is to explore how police officers in the UK identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in victims trafficked into the country. In order to achieve this aim it is first necessary to consider how human trafficking and psychological coercion are defined legally and elsewhere, especially given that the law is an important source of information for the police. Therefore the study will critically examine official definitions of these terms and the extent to which inherent weaknesses impact upon officers' ability to combat human trafficking. In addition, the assertion that local police officers are considered the most likely to encounter victims during the course of their duties implies that meetings can happen by chance and take place anywhere and at any time. As a result, the study will assess the nature of these encounters and how the environments in which victims are found affects

[1] First responders hold a responsibility to refer victims to the NRM and include: all police forces in the UK; NGOs; the Border Force; Home Office departments; the National Crime Agency (NCA); the Gangmasters Licensing Authority; local authorities; and the NHS (College of Policing, 2017a).

communication between them and the police. Moreover, the supposed lack of knowledge in the police about human trafficking means it is important to consider the extent of officers' understanding about victims and the source of any knowledge they hold. Consequently, the study will identify any factors which influence police officers' perceptions of victims and analyse the degree to which these perceptions determine their response to potential incidents of trafficking. Finally, if victims are identified by the police it still does not mean they are officially recognised as a victim by the state; this is ultimately determined by the NRM process which requires the full cooperation of the identifying officer. The study will therefore also assess the effectiveness of this framework in dealing with victims who have been psychologically coerced.

The objectives of this study are thus as follows:

1. To critically examine official definitions of psychological coercion and human trafficking and the extent to which ambiguities inherent in these definitions impact upon efforts to tackle this form of criminality.

2. To critically assess the nature of trafficking victims' encounters with the police and how these experiences and the settings in which they take place affect communication between the two groups.

3. To identify factors which influence police officers' perceptions of trafficked persons and analyse the degree to which this determines their investigative response to potential incidents of trafficking.

4. To critically assess the effectiveness of the National Referral Mechanism framework in dealing with victims who have been subjected to psychological coercion.

Parameters of the Research

It is important to outline the parameters of the study before embarking on any research, given that trafficking can take place within and across borders, affect adults and children, and as a term be used interchangeably with people smuggling and modern slavery (Elliot, 2011). Firstly, the research will focus purely on non-British victims that have been trafficked into the UK from another country, as it is hoped this will provide an opportunity to examine how culture, ethnicity, nationality and language affect the identification process. Secondly, it is assumed that psychological coercion in the context of human trafficking is not well understood by the police and many officers cannot understand why those subjected to this form of control simply do not 'walk away' from their traffickers (Centre for Social Justice, 2013). It can also be argued that child victims are not perceived in this way and instead are generally viewed as being easier to control and manipulate. This is recognised in the NRM process in that adults have to consent to their referral whereas children do not (Great Britain. Home Office, 2016a), which implies that the former are considered able to exercise some sort of free will. Therefore, given the objectives of this research only adult victims[2] will be studied. Thirdly, human trafficking has been described as "an imprecise and

[2] In the NRM, Adult victims are classified as individuals aged 18 or over (Great Britain. Home Office, 2016b).

highly contested term" (Lee, 2007; p.3) therefore it is important to clarify how it will be defined in this study. When used, 'human trafficking' will also represent the term 'modern slavery' and incorporate the form of exploitation[3] which the victim is subjected to after being trafficked from one location to another. However it will not incorporate the term 'people smuggling', which the UN considers to be "the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident" (UNODC, 2000; p.54 & 55). In other words, the smuggled person largely consents to their movement whereas the trafficking victim does not, although it is acknowledged that the lines between the two are often blurred and that the former are also frequently exploited against their will (Elliot, 2011).

[3] Sexual exploitation (including prostitution), forced labour, slavery, servitude and the removal of organs (Centre for Social Justice, 2013).

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction

Prior to researching psychological coercion in human trafficking in more detail it is first necessary to critically review what has already been written on the subject. This chapter will therefore examine how human trafficking and psychological coercion have been defined and the ways in which the latter is used against victims. It will then analyse the circumstances in which police officers normally encounter victims, highlighting the barriers which often complicate victim identification. The chapter will also examine factors that can influence police officers' perceptions of trafficking victims, such as the nature of these encounters, training issues, media representations and governmental imperatives. The effect these factors have on victim identification will then be investigated and police officers' ability to perform this crucial role will be assessed, taking into account the potentially limiting factor of police culture. Finally, the ability of the NRM to formally recognise psychologically-coerced victims will be evaluated and the dangers of using prescribed human trafficking indicators will be discussed.

Official Definitions of Human Trafficking and Psychological Coercion

One of the key themes identified in the review is that definitional issues around psychological coercion and human trafficking can present problems for police officers, so much so that it can hinder victim identification (Roth, 2012). The 2000 UN Protocol[4] defines trafficking in persons as:

[4] Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

> *"the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" (UNODC, 2000; p.42).*

This definition does mention coercion and its variants but it does not explicitly outline what constitutes psychological coercion, which is a significant omission given that it is generally considered a more effective and commonly used form of control than physical coercion (Roth, 2012; Centre for Social Justice, 2013). Additionally it has been argued that the Protocol is ambiguous and can lead to inconsistencies in national legislation (Munro, 2006). Unfortunately the UK seems to have incorporated the weaknesses inherent in the UN's definition into the Modern Slavery Act (MSA), which contains no references to psychological coercion; instead it makes vague references to individuals being a "victim of behaviour" or having "something" done to or in respect of them "which involves the commission of an offence" (Great Britain. Modern Slavery Act 2015: Elizabeth II. Chapter 30, 2015; p.3). Indeed, the closest the Act comes to defining coercive behaviour is when it refers to persons "subjected to force, threats or deception designed to induce" (ibid, p.3). Considering that the lines between the trafficked and smuggled are blurred and at times indistinguishable (Elliot, 2011) and that police officers in the past have struggled to prove psychological coercion in victims (OCSE, 2013), this new piece of legislation offers little to suggest that identification rates will improve.

However, the MSA does note that consent "does not preclude a determination that the person is being held in slavery or servitude, or required to perform forced or

compulsory labour" (Great Britain. Modern Slavery Act 2015: Elizabeth II. Chapter 30, 2015; p.2). This implies that even if individuals do openly state that they have consented to their situation the law can still recognise them as victims, indicating a tacit acknowledgement that some sort of psychological coercion has taken place. Moreover, the MSA is still a relatively new piece of legislation and is yet to be truly tested, therefore it is possible that the inclusion of this consent clause might benefit victims and increase their chances of being identified.

Theoretical Models of Psychological Coercion in Human Trafficking

Although psychological coercion in human trafficking isn't defined in a legal sense it has been theorised to some extent in the academic literature. Hopper and Hidalgo (2006) postulate that there exists a cycle of psychological coercion which comprises four distinct phases: environment of threat; shot-term response to threat; consequences of chronic stress and trauma; and impact.

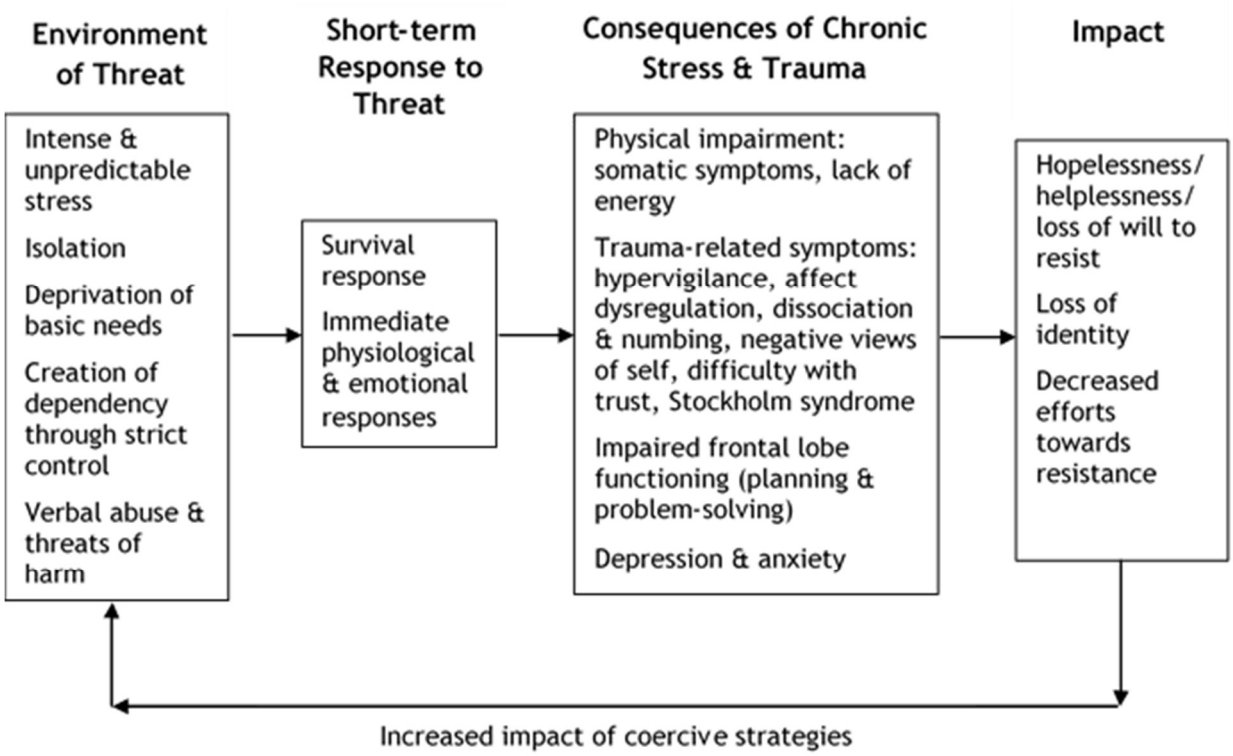

Diagram 1. Cycle of Psychological Coercion (Hopper and Hidalgo, 2006: p.208)

During the first phase the victim is subjected to extreme stress, isolated, deprived of their basic needs, threatened, verbally abused, and strictly controlled in order to make them more dependent on their traffickers. This initiates an immediate survival response in the victim (phase 2), which over time can lead to physical impairment, mental health problems, trust issues, depression, anxiety, and even Stockholm syndrome (phase 3). Consequently this creates a sense of helplessness in the victim and results in a loss of identity, which in turn reduces their ability to resist and fight back (phase 4). At this point the victim is caught in "a cyclical psychological trap" (Hopper and Hidalgo, 2006; p.207) and has little hope of escape.

Similarly, Baldwin, Fehrenbacher and Eisenman (2014) assert that Biderman's Framework[5] can be used to interpret and understand how psychological coercion is used against trafficking victims. Although Biderman's eight methods were initially formulated whilst studying how captors manipulate prisoners of war, they suggest that the principles are equally applicable in a trafficking context. In addition, they highlight that the psychologically coercive methods used in human trafficking are comparable to those used against victims of domestic violence, which is a common theme in the literature (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2006; Korzinski, 2011; Elliot & McCartan, 2013).

There is much evidence to support these two theories. For instance, the table below highlights that there are numerous examples which align nicely with the methods identified by Biderman, indicating that his framework is a useful tool for analysing and explaining psychological coercion in human trafficking. However, despite the apparent utility of the framework it is unclear whether it is used in practice by the police to better understand how traffickers psychologically coerce their victims.

Biderman's Methods	**Examples**
Isolation	Moving victims to a country where they don't speak the language or know the culture (Bales & Lize, 2005; Shelley, 2010) and preventing them contacting others, including their family (Shelley, 2010).
Monopolisation of Perception	Constructing a negative view of the local authorities and exacerbating fears of deportation (Bales, 2005; Jobe, 2010).

[5] Biderman (1957 cited in Baldwin, Fehrenbacher & Eisenman, 2014) states that control is established using eight methods of coercion, which include: isolation; monopolisation of perception; induced debility and exhaustion; threats; occasional indulgences; demonstrating omnipotence; degradation; and enforcing trivial demands.

Induced Debility and Exhaustion	Forcing victims to work long hours (Dandurand, 2014; Unseen, 2016) and subjecting them to dismal working and living conditions (Dando, Walsh & Brierley, 2016).
Threats	Declaring that they will hurt victims or their families back home (Bales, 2005; Shelley, 2010).
Occasional Indulgences	Allowing victims to call their families (Dandurand, 2014).
Demonstrating Omnipotence	Placing victims under constant surveillance (Bales & Lize, 2005) and exploiting cultural and religious beliefs so that the victim believes they are continually under the control of their trafficker (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013; Dandurand, 2014).
Degradation	Spoiling a victim's appearance (Bales & Lize, 2005) and forcing them to violate their own value system by facilitating the abuse of others (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2006).
Enforcing Trivial Demands	Setting unrealistic rules that victims are unable or unlikely to adhere to (Perrin, 2010).

(Table 1 - Created by author)

In addition, research into victim responses to these abuses illustrate just how difficult it is to break free from the cycle. For instance, the majority of victims rarely come forward and seek help from the authorities (Farrell, 2012; Roth, 2012), some represent themselves "as per the trafficker's instructions" if they do encounter the authorities, even when their trafficker isn't present (Jobe, 2010; p.170), and astonishingly, others have returned to the UK after being freed from exploitative conditions when their trafficker vowed to treat them better (Skrivankova, 2011). Furthermore many victims are permitted to enter public spaces unaccompanied yet still do not attempt to escape as "the trafficker's psychological grip is so strong" (Bales & Lize, 2005; p.47), indicating that they truly are imprisoned in a cyclical trap. However, it is important to mention that there are other factors which contribute to victims being unable to escape this trap, such as an intrinsic fear of the authorities (Shelley, 2010), fear of deportation (Dandurand, 2014), and the assertion that victims are carefully selected by traffickers because they are vulnerable (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring

Group, 2013), which suggests that some individuals are potentially more at risk than others to becoming victimised.

Victim Encounters with the Police and Barriers to Identification

Unfortunately, the hidden nature of human trafficking and psychological coercion makes it difficult for the police to identify and help victims (Kingshott, 2014; Dando, Walsh & Brierley, 2016). Yet at the same time many argue that police officers - particularly those at the local level - are the group most likely to encounter victims (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013; Palmiotto, 2014). It is reported that these encounters often happen when victims are referred by NGOs (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 2003) or discovered during investigations into other offences, such as prostitution, kidnap, assault and domestic violence (Bales & Lize, 2005; Clawson & Dutch, 2008). In addition, proactive investigations are considered one of the best ways to find and identify victims (Farrell, 2012; Roth, 2012). However, despite their vital role it is widely argued that police officers frequently miss opportunities to identify victims during these encounters (Bales & Lize, 2005; Emerton, Laidler & Petersen, 2007; Great Britain. Home Office, 2014).

There are a number of barriers which explain why victims often remain unrecognised. Firstly, many are wary of engaging with the authorities due to negative perceptions of the police and other law enforcement agencies in their home countries (Shelley, 2010). These fears are regularly exacerbated by traffickers, who state that the authorities will arrest, deport or even kill victims if they report they have been trafficked (Bales, 2005; Jobe, 2010). Secondly, victims

fear that if they do approach the authorities their trafficker will physically harm their families back home or will burden them with the victim's 'debt' (Shelley, 2010). Thirdly, victims often act as enforcers for their traffickers (Bales & Lize, 2005), enter into close relationships with them (Broad, 2015), or become traumatically bonded to them (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2006; Korzinski, 2011). Similarly many are forced to commit crimes linked to benefit fraud, drug cultivation, begging and pickpocketing (Centre for Social Justice, 2013) which makes it very difficult for the police to distinguish between victim and perpetrator, especially when considering the aforementioned issues surrounding the "consensually trafficked" (Elliot, 2011; p.360). Fourthly, the environment in which victims are found is unlikely to be conducive to identification as trafficked persons sometimes work alongside the legitimately employed (Skrivankova, 2011) and the presence of traffickers can deter victims from speaking freely (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013). Fifthly, men are often reluctant to admit they've been victimised as they do not want to be perceived as weak (Bales & Lize, 2005). And finally, victims frequently don't know their rights or understand the local language (OSCE, 2011), are suffering from PTSD and other psychological disorders (Jobe, 2010; Turner-Moss et al, 2011 cited in Ross et al, 2015), and in certain cases are addicted to drink and drugs (Shelley, 2010), all of which can significantly hinder their ability to communicate with anyone who enquires into their situation.

It has been reported that victims discovered through police actions such as raids often initially give accounts to officers that later conflict with accounts they give to NGOs (Jobe, 2010). In addition, the traumatic experiences they have gone through mean that many have difficulty forming relationships and trusting others,

especially the authorities (Korzinski, 2011). Considering these points and the barriers mentioned above, it isn't surprising that tackling human trafficking has been described as requiring "specialist and advanced investigation techniques to overcome the potential barriers" (OSCE, 2013). However instead of being identified and helped, victims are regularly arrested for offences they have committed after being trafficked (Centre for Social Justice, 2013), which raises important questions about the ability and willingness of the police to tackle this complex issue.

Knowledge and Perceptions of Human Trafficking Victims in the Police

At the beginning of the century the Home Office acknowledged that most police forces in the UK lacked knowledge of human trafficking and did not give it much attention (Great Britain. Home Office, 2000). It appears that the situation has not improved much since then, with some asserting that the authorities still do not understand this complex issue (Obokata, 2006; Centre for Social Justice, 2013). It is also alleged that many forces do not have adequate resources to tackle the problem (Laczko, 2007 cited in Shelley, 2010) and that officers generally lack training (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013), particularly in relation to the "cultural, social, educational and linguistic" differences that are characteristic of many trafficking cases (Bales & Lize, 2005; p.85; Shelley, 2010).

Consequently some have suggested that police officers acquire their knowledge of human trafficking "through a sensationalized, media-informed lens" (Wilson, Walsh & Kleuber, 2006 cited in Farrell, Pfeffer & Bright, 2015; p.317). This might explain why those who present as 'ideal' victims are more likely to be identified and

helped by the authorities than those who do not conform to stereotypes which emphasise vulnerability and helplessness (Lee, 2011). This is particularly true in instances where female victims are implicated in offences or involved in relationships with male traffickers, as often they are perceived not as victims but as "women who have transgressed… fundamental norms of gender role behaviour" (Lloyd, 1995 cited in Broad, 2015). Equally it is argued that there is an expectation by officers that victims will 'self-identify' (Emerton, Laidler & Petersen, 2007) and that they are to some extent responsible for their own victimisation (Farrell, 2012). Thus it is reported that instead of being viewed as victims, many trafficked persons are perceived as being "outside the norm, as alien, and even as potentially dangerous" (Jobe, 2010; p.171) by the UK authorities and are often treated as illegal immigrants, criminals or prostitutes (Bales & Lize, 2005; Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013; Centre for Social Justice, 2013).

A lack of training and education only partly explain why victims are perceived in this manner. Some have argued that the police and law enforcement agencies are more concerned with tackling illegal immigration than trafficking (Jobe, 2010) and that initiatives to combat the issue are merely used to obfuscate attempts by the state to intervene in the lives of migrants for security reasons (Nieuwenhuys & Pecoud, 2007 cited in Ford, Lyons & Van Schendel, 2012). However in recent years Theresa May has moved responsibility for trafficking from the immigration to police minister and has made the issue a priority for her government (Craig, 2014a; Connolly, 2016), which suggests this argument is less plausible than it might have been a few years ago. Yet it has also been argued that in the past the police have

been reluctant to implement the will of their politicians as they do not consider human trafficking as a serious problem or priority (Obokata, 2006; Centre for Social Justice, 2013).

The points raised so far indicate that the police are unaccustomed to dealing with human trafficking victims when they encounter them and often struggle to understand the effects of psychological coercion. This is articulated well in the accounts of two officers who have engaged with potential victims:

> *"We do ask if they are a victim of trafficking, but have been told 'no'. Whether that's true or not, I'm not sure" (Centre for Social Justice, 2013; p.97).*
>
> *"We're experts at enforcement; we're not experts in identifying people who've been trafficked" (ibid, p.107).*

These comments highlight that although officers might understand that something is wrong, they do not have the tools at their disposal to do anything about it. This is supported by recent research which suggests that the police are finding it difficult to move away from their traditional raison d'être of fighting crime and catching criminals to accommodate a more victim-orientated approach (Aas & Gundhus, 2015 cited in Hadjimatheou & Lynch, 2017). The preeminence of suspicion and pragmatism in "cop culture" (Reiner, 2000 cited in Carrabine et al, 2014; p.350) is one reason why change might prove so difficult in these circumstances. Casting suspicion and uncovering lies is a fundamental part of police officers' work and in practice, they regularly have to make quick decisions in order to move onto the next job, leaving little time to consider the more intricate details of the incidents that they attend (Reiner, 2000 cited in Carrabine et al, 2014). Therefore, whenever they encounter trafficked persons these tenets

arguably inhibit their ability to identify these individuals as potential victims, especially when the latter are often hesitant to cooperate with the authorities (Shelley, 2010). Moreover, the issue is compounded when victims are implicated in the commission of criminal offences, as "there are few preexisting schema in policing that require officers to consider why an individual is involved in criminal activity, and even fewer models in which police may relabel an individual who has committed a criminal act from a suspect to a victim" (Farrell, Pfeffer & Bright, 2015; p.326). Although section 45 of the MSA does provide victims who commit certain offences with a statutory defence, it is unclear whether many police officers are aware of this provision. The aforementioned points thus indicate that a major cultural shift in the police is required if victim identification rates are to improve.

Recognition of Psychologically-Coerced Victims by the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

In the event that victims are identified by officers they still are not officially recognised by the state, which is ultimately determined by the NRM process. As a result, the officer who initially encounters and identifies the victim plays a crucial role in this process, as their referral will impact upon the final decision made by the competent authority[6] (Jobe, 2010). Despite this, it is reported that many officers are unaware or have limited knowledge of the NRM (Harvey, Hornsby & Sattar, 2015; United States. State Department, 2015) and those that are, often are not fully cognisant of the fact that the whole process begins with them (Great

[6] Currently, the two competent authorities in the UK are the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU) and Home Office Immigration and Visas (UKVI). These two units decide on whether those referred to the NRM are officially recognised as victims of human trafficking or not (Great Britain. Home Office, 2016b).

Britain. Home Office, 2014). Additionally, concerns have been raised about the standard of completion of the referral forms and a general reluctance by victims to engage with the process (Centre for Social Justice, 2013). Moreover referrals from law enforcement don't always necessitate an interview with the victim (Great Britain. Home Office, 2014), meaning that in many cases decisions are based entirely on the content of the form.

This reliance on the form is worrying because of the assumption that most officers generally have a poor understanding of the effects and symptoms of psychological coercion; if they do not understand this issue then they are highly unlikely to be able to articulate this in writing. The referral forms do provide guidance to officers in the form of trafficking indicators[7], however it has been argued that sometimes these do not work in practice and often fail to take into account the ambiguities inherent in many cases (Skrivankova, 2011). For example, Elliot and McCartan (2013) have shown that traffickers often provide victims with mobile phones in order to monitor and control them, yet conversely the absence of personal possessions is considered a key trafficking indicator, meaning that victims found with a phone may be incorrectly assessed as not being trafficked. These points highlight the weaknesses of the NRM process in recognising psychologically-coerced victims and support the Independent Ant-Slavery Commissioner's assertion that the number of victims identified are merely "the tip of the iceberg" (Great Britain. Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, 2016; p.2).

Summary of Literature Review

[7] See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms.

In summary, although psychological coercion isn't explicitly defined in UK legislation, the cycle of psychological coercion and Biderman's Framework are two models which outline the methods traffickers use to control victims. Police officers are considered the group most likely to encounter these victims and arguably offer them their greatest chance of rescue, however research has shown that when given the opportunity, officers regularly fail to identify trafficked persons. This is partly due to a number of barriers which can hinder identification, such as victims' fear of the authorities, their implication in criminal offences, environmental factors, gender issues, and the presence of psychological disorders.

Instead of being identified many victims are often arrested and prosecuted, which raises important questions about the ability of police officers to tackle this complex issue. Some argue that many officers lack knowledge of human trafficking and that they receive insufficient training and resources to help them find victims. This has led others to assert that many officers gain their understanding of human trafficking through sensationalised media accounts, which in turn reinforces stereotypes of the idealised vulnerable and helpless victim. As a result, it is argued that those who do not conform to these stereotypes are often viewed by officers as immigrants, criminals and prostitutes. In addition, it has also been suggested that the state's preoccupation with tackling illegal immigration can influence how officers treat victims, however recent pledges by Theresa May indicate that this is now less relevant than it may previously have been. Arguably, the most convincing argument that explains why officers struggle to comprehend

this issue stems from deeply ingrained police practices which prioritise catching criminals over identifying victims.

The review also highlighted the vital role that officers play when initially referring victims into the NRM process, yet their recognition as trafficked persons by the state is potentially impeded by a number of factors. These include a general lack of awareness of the NRM by officers, poor quality referrals, and case decisions based exclusively on the content of the referral form. Moreover, recent research suggests that an overreliance on using prescribed trafficking indictors, such as those found on the NRM referral form, can lead to simplistic assessments and the subsequent misidentification of victims.

Chapter 3
Research Methodology

Introduction

The literature review conducted in the last chapter highlighted that relatively little research has been conducted on law enforcement officers' understanding of psychological coercion in human trafficking. Consequently, there is a need to conduct further research if the following objectives are to be met:

1. To critically examine official definitions of psychological coercion and human trafficking and the extent to which ambiguities inherent in these definitions impact upon efforts to tackle this form of criminality.

2. To critically assess the nature of trafficking victims' encounters with the police and how these experiences and the settings in which they take place affect communication between the two groups.

3. To identify factors which influence police officers' perceptions of trafficked persons and analyse the degree to which this determines their investigative response to potential incidents of trafficking.

4. To critically assess the effectiveness of the National Referral Mechanism framework in dealing with victims who have been subjected to psychological coercion.

This chapter will therefore outline the reasons why an exploratory study was selected as the basis for the research strategy, before describing the benefits of adopting a mainly qualitative approach to data collection. It will then detail how the research was carried out and discuss issues surrounding sampling, ethics and analysis. The chapter will conclude by contemplating the limitations of the research as well as matters concerning validity, reliability and positionality.

Choosing a Research Strategy

Babbie (2013; p.91) asserts that exploratory studies are often used in the research of new subjects and that they "almost always yield new insights" when they are utilised. These assertions are supported by Stebbins (2001), who states that this type of research is undertaken to uncover new ideas and generally increase understanding of a phenomenon. Given the scarcity of research in this subject area the exploratory study was considered the most suitable approach through which to meet the research objectives.

The main drawback of the exploratory study is that results derived from this approach aren't generalisable and that consequently, they do not provide conclusive answers to research questions (Babbie, 2013). Nevertheless, this study doesn't intend to deliver such answers; it merely seeks to obtain insights and develop hypotheses that might help inform future research. Additionally, a large-scale study that aims to provide answers representative of the wider population being examined was deemed too resource intensive. Therefore, although this shortcoming is acknowledged, it was assessed that it will not greatly detract from the research objectives given the scale and aim of the study.

It was also assessed that the research should be conducted using predominantly qualitative methods as they focus on how "social meanings, definitions and labels are generated and applied within social interactions and social processes" (Jupp, 2002; p.29). This is important as Mahdavi (2011) has argued that the word 'trafficked' is interpreted by many as relating to women who have been coerced into working in the sex industry. In addition, the literature review highlighted that police officers may acquire their knowledge of human trafficking from exaggerated and sensationalised media accounts, and potentially are more likely to identify and assist 'ideal' victims that portray signs of vulnerability and helplessness. As a result, a mainly qualitative approach was preferred as it provided an opportunity to test these hypotheses and investigate why and how these labels are constructed. Furthermore, qualitative methods offer "an 'appreciation' of the social world from the point of view of the… victim or criminal justice professional" (Noaks & Wincup, 2004; p.13), which is very relevant to this research as these are the two groups primarily being studied. Simultaneously, the benefit of undertaking some quantitative research as part of a mixed methods approach was deemed appropriate, as it complements qualitative methods and provides "stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; p.21).

Data Collection and Analysis

The majority of the research was conducted through five semi-structured interviews with tactical advisors from the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU) of the National Crime Agency (NCA) and police officers from the

Metropolitan Police. This method was selected ahead of others as it allows the researcher to probe further into areas of significance that emerge during the interview (Noaks & Wincup, 2004), which arguably is vital in the conduct of an exploratory study. Moreover, this type of interview "seeks depth and detail which are specific to a much smaller number of cases" (Pole & Lampard, 2002; p.131) and thus was deemed appropriate for use in this study given the subjective nature of the research objectives and the overall size of the project.

A mixture of quota and convenience sampling was used to select the two MSHTU tactical advisors and three Metropolitan Police officers who took part in the study. The exact criteria used to select the participants is outlined below.

1. **MSHTU Tactical Advisors**. These advisors provide advice and support to the 43 police forces in England and Wales, Police Scotland, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and they often deploy with officers on operations. In addition, they regularly advise police officers at inspector level who are responsible for coordinating and leading investigations (National Crime Agency, 2017a). As a result, they were selected for their breadth of experience and for the insights they could offer in relation to the priorities, perceptions, knowledge and understanding of human trafficking at multiple levels in the police. Moreover, the MSHTU play an instrumental role in the NRM process and have oversight of all referral cases, therefore their advisors are well-placed to speak about this aspect of the victim identification process. It should also be noted that that the researcher is a fellow NCA officer and these participants were partly selected due to ease of access.

Nevertheless, it was assessed that their position allows them to speak authoritatively on the research topic, hence their selection.

2. **Metropolitan Police Officers**. It has been argued that police officers at the local level are the representatives of the state most likely to encounter victims (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013; Palmiotto, 2014), therefore three constables with varying levels of experience of human trafficking were selected for interview. All of the officers were selected from the Metropolitan Police borough of Newham because of the ethnic diversity of the area: 51.8% of the population were born abroad (Greater London Authority, 2015) and approximately 147 languages are spoken in the borough (Nagesh, 2016), which arguably make it one of the most ethnically-diverse places in the UK. In addition, it also has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in London[8]. It is hoped that these selection criteria will offer insights into whether officers' experiences of dealing with domestic violence incidents inform their understanding of human trafficking and psychological coercion, and whether the multi-cultural environment poses any issues in terms of victim identification. It should also be noted that the Metropolitan Police force area was chosen for two reasons: the first being that almost a third of the approximate 4500 victims supported by the Salvation Army in the last five years were trafficked to London (The Guardian, 2016b); and the second owing to the same resource and travel issues mentioned in the last paragraph.

[8] Rates of Domestic Violence (DV) were calculated per London borough by dividing the number of DV crimes in the borough over the rolling 12-month period to Sep 2016 (obtained from the website http://www.met.police.uk/crimefigures/) by the population of the borough in 2016 (obtained from the website https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-borough-profiles). Figures for the percentage of the population born abroad in each borough were also derived from the latter source. The spreadsheet which contains this data can be found at Appendix A.

It is acknowledged that access to research participants is often dependent upon 'gatekeepers' (Noaks & Wincup, 2004), therefore authorisation was sought from the head of the MSHTU and the Newham Borough Metropolitan Police Commander to interview their personnel. Once access was secured, volunteers from both groups were sought and informed consent from all participants was obtained prior to interviews taking place, using the form at Appendix B. In addition, all the interviews were conducted at the research participants' place of work and were audio recorded with their consent. Moreover, prior to each interview the participant was given one of the information sheets at Appendix C, which provided brief details of: the interview process; confidentiality arrangements; and sources of further support, if required. Appendix D contains the question plans that were used by the researcher when interviewing participants from the two groups.

Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed and their contents classified into categories that aligned with the research objectives and any emerging themes. The description-analysis-synthesis-evaluation model (Biggam, 2015) was then used to interpret the output; specifically, the responses of the two interview groups were compared against each other and any significant differences were highlighted. The cumulative findings were then compared against the literature review and the data acquired from other research methods were used to help support any conclusions that were made.

The participants' names have not been disclosed in the research findings and any comments or references are not attributed directly to the individual; instead a

subject identifier code has been used and assigned to each participant. The documents that link specific participants to each code as well as all interview audio recordings and documentation are kept securely by the researcher. It is believed that these measures, together with the process of gaining informed consent make this research complaint with the ethics principles outlined by the Economic and Social Research Council (2016), which stress the importance of confidentiality and minimising potential harm to participants.

The table below summarises the experience held by each participant, as well as their gender and the subject ID code assigned to them.

Subject ID Code	Organisation	Years in Law Enforcement (Approx)	Further Details
A1	MSHTU	Over 30	Male. Spent most of career investigating serious and complex crime. Worked in HT area for approximately 4 years.
A2	MSHTU	Over 30	Male. Spent most of career investigating serious and complex crime. Worked in HT area for approximately 7 years.
B1	Metropolitan Police	2	Male. Relatively new to policing. Spent most of career in frontline policing. Little experience of HT.
B2	Metropolitan Police	22	Male. Spent majority of career in the following areas: frontline policing, antisocial behavior and drugs. No experience of HT.
B3	Metropolitan Police	9	Female. Spent 3-4 years in current role, tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Considerable experience of HT.

(Table 2 - Created by author)

As alluded to above, other research was undertaken as part of a mixed methods approach. Firstly, a Freedom of Information (FoI) request was submitted to the Metropolitan Police requesting details of the human trafficking training they deliver to their officers. Secondly, NRM statistics in the form of quarterly and

yearly reports were downloaded from the NCA website and subjected to quantitative analysis. Finally, Google Alerts and regular searches of the internet and library databases were utilised to keep track of any new material that was generated, which was subsequently used in a documentary analysis.

Research Limitations and Considerations

One of the main limitations of the research is the failure to obtain the perspective of victims and explore the nature of their encounters with the police. Volunteers were sought from the staff of two human trafficking NGOs to provide this perspective after contact was established with gatekeepers, but despite frequent requests no one elected to take part. This is disappointing because they work closely with victims and could have given an authoritative account based on the experiences that had been recounted to them. However, since the study focuses on the perceptions, knowledge and responses of police officers, the impact isn't considered overly detrimental given that this group has been sampled.

Another limitation has already been acknowledged, in that the results of the study cannot be generalised due to the sample size and method that has been used. Instead, in-depth accounts were sought from a small number of authoritative sources in order to develop new ideas, hypotheses and avenues for future research. Although the sample limits the generalisability of the results this shouldn't detract from the research considering the aims of the study.

The validity of the research has already been commented on to some extent; semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary method of data collection

because they allow the researcher to probe into topics raised by the interviewee and often provide responses which are rich in depth and detail. Observation, case studies and questionnaires were also considered as research methods however they were rejected for a number of reasons. Resources and time are needed to conduct observational research (Pole & Lampard, 2002) therefore this method was quickly eliminated due to the small scope of the study. A case study was deemed inappropriate as it generally centres around "an individual unit" (Cohen & Manion, 1995 cited in Biggam, 2015; p.151) or organization, thus restricting the number of subjects that can be researched and limiting the potential for multiple perspectives. Questionnaires were rejected as response rates are often criticised for being low (Brennan & Charbonneau, 2009), thus making them unreliable. Therefore given the aims of the research and the exploratory nature of the study, the semi-structured interview was deemed the most appropriate research method.

Yin (2003) has argued that to make research reliable it should be conducted as if it were under constant observation, therefore this study aimed to ensure that the research process was entirely transparent and open to scrutiny. Details of which sampling methods were used and how the samples were selected have been provided, as have consent forms, information sheets and question plans. Audio recordings of interviews and written transcriptions are also available to be scrutinised, however this material will only be provided to research supervisors and examiners in order to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Tied to reliability is the concept of bias and positionality. Although this study doesn't draw generalisable conclusions it is still important to consider these

aspects as use of the semi-structured interview format offers a certain amount of discretion to the researcher and is arguably more susceptible to bias or prejudice than the structured interview. Becker (1967) famously argued that sides must be taken when conducting research and that those in a position to label others must be challenged. This is especially pertinent in this study given that police officers are the main subjects of the research and that trafficking victims are frequently treated and labelled as illegal immigrants, criminals or prostitutes (Bales & Lize, 2005; Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2013; Centre for Social Justice, 2013). Consequently, it could be argued that when conducting interviews of this nature, the experiences of trafficking victims should be prioritised and used to interrogate officers.

However, it has also been argued that the police in particular are "very sensitive about opening up their world to social researchers" (Jupp, 2002; p.150), therefore adopting the victim's perspective could potentially exacerbate any latent reluctance on the part of the officer and have a negative impact on the interview. This was a genuine concern given that the researcher can create emotion in those being researched and *vice versa*, with both sides often monitoring the actions and reactions of the other (Bennett, 2004). Furthermore, interviewing colleagues might make it more difficult for the researcher to remain objective during the research process, as well as jeopardise professional relationships if the results do not meet expectations (Biggam, 2015). Therefore, taking either side didn't appear to be risk-free.

Instead, a more balanced approach was taken. The research aimed to appreciate the position of both sides, yet at the same time highlight any issues that impacted upon how police officers identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in victims of human trafficking. This approach was selected as it has been argued the synthesis of various perspectives is not optional, but necessary in empirical research (Liebling, 2001). It is considered feasible in this study as the researcher occupies the unique position of being both practioner and academic student and thus sympathises with and understands both perspectives. However, taking this approach wasn't without risk. Conducting research in a manner which is sympathetic to both sides might lead to accusations of duplicity, especially when some of the participants work in the same field as the researcher. Therefore in order to minimise the risk of this happening, the responses and identities of those taking part in the interviews have been kept confidential and questions that were asked prioritised the experiences and understanding of the group, thus averting focus from the individual. This just leaves the issue of objectivity when conducting research using colleagues as participants. The researcher has never worked alongside the MSHTU tactical advisors and is employed at a different geographical location, therefore problems concerning familiarity were arguably minimised. Moreover, contact with these participants was avoided until their interviews had taken place.

Summary

The research conducted wasn't designed to seek results that are representative of all police officers, but to obtain fresh insights into what is a relatively understudied topic. Consequently, an exploratory study that employs

predominantly qualitative methods was chosen to try and achieve this, in part by interrogating existing hypotheses and social labels.

The semi-structured interview was the primary method used to collect research data as it provides the researcher with an opportunity to probe responses given by interviewees and promises to offer rich, in-depth accounts that hopefully helped to inform the research objectives. A combination of quota and convenience sampling was used to select the research participants, who were drawn from the following two groups: MSHTU tactical advisors and Metropolitan Police officers. Informed consent was sought from all participants and their identities have been kept confidential, in line with the Economic and Social Research Council's ethics principles. In addition, other research methods were employed to form a mixed methods approach as this promises to offer more conclusive findings than qualitative methods alone.

Other qualitative research methods were contemplated but rejected as the semi-structured interview was deemed the primary means by which to best achieve the study's objectives, therefore this research is considered valid. It is also believed to be reliable as the research process has been outlined in a transparent manner and all documentation compiled during the course of the study is available for verification purposes.

Finally, as the emotion and conduct of researchers and participants can impact upon each other's responses in the interview process, it is important to acknowledge issues of bias and positionality. Given the dangers of adopting one

side or the other, the researcher attempted to take a neutral stance and appreciate the positions of the police and trafficking victim. This is deemed a reasonable approach to take as the researcher occupies the unique position of being both practitioner and student.

Chapter 4
Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the research outlined in chapter 3, which are explored using the description-analysis-synthesis-evaluation framework (Biggam, 2015). Initially, the responses provided by the MSHTU tactical advisors are described and analysed, before the accounts given by the Metropolitan Police officers are introduced in order to conduct a comparative analysis. The results are then synthesised with the findings of the literature review and evaluated at a more strategic level, to check whether any conclusions or hypotheses might be applicable across the police. Throughout the discussion, data from the FoI request, open source documents and figures from the NRM are used to validate the findings and help determine whether any topics might deserve further exploration.

Interviews: Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU) Tactical Advisors

MSHTU tactical advisors are expected to provide guidance to police officers on all aspects of human trafficking and often field questions in relation to legislation. Consequently, both respondents were asked whether they think the current legislation helps officers identify victims, particularly those showing signs of psychological coercion. In response they stated that the introduction of the MSA in 2015 was a positive step as it consolidated existing, miscellaneous legislation into one act, whilst at the same time raised awareness of human trafficking amongst the police to new highs. In relation to psychological coercion and whether it is adequately defined in the MSA, one of the advisors suggested that the lack of a

prescriptive definition was in fact a good thing as it reduced the scope for legal challenges during the prosecution phase of a case. Given both points, it could be argued that any rise in the number of victims identified by police might be a result of heightened awareness and publicity surrounding the introduction of the MSA, rather than the legislation itself.

The responses given by the advisors highlighted two main scenarios in which victims are regularly encountered by the police: the first is through proactive operations at places such as car washes or travellers' sites, and the second during enquiries made into other forms of criminality and/or anti-social behavior, such as organised immigration crime, pop-up brothels, and begging. Notably, there was barely any discussion about victims approaching the authorities and declaring that they had been trafficked, other than in historical examples.

An example of a recent proactive operation discussed by one of the advisors illustrated the problems often faced by police during encounters with potential victims. In this operation, hundreds of staff from multiple agencies and teams were deployed to 5 car washes in the South East of England and 20 individuals were identified as potential trafficking victims. However, despite there being signs of trafficking not one of these individuals consented to being referred through the NRM; instead, many indicated that they were generally content with their lives and stated they were better off in the UK than in their home country, even though their pay and living conditions were far from the standard expected by UK citizens. This acceptance of their situation was a common theme in the responses given by both advisors and seems to be a major barrier for the police

and other agencies in their efforts to identify victims. Of course, there is always the possibility that in this example the level of psychological coercion was so effective that all 20 individuals spoke out of fear and represented themselves as per their traffickers' instructions. Though it could also be argued that this is unlikely and that many of them were merely unaware of their rights in the UK. The example also highlights the resource-intensive nature of human trafficking operations and the potential for achieving very little, despite the vast expenditure. It could therefore be argued that if further operations yield similar results, many senior police officers might become reluctant to commit resources to tackling the issue, thus impacting upon frontline officers' ability to identify victims.

As well as the clear linguistic divide, cultural and gender factors were mentioned as potential barriers that deter individuals from reporting their situation. Both advisors commented that identifying victims in the Roma community was particularly difficult, given this groups' secretive, closed-off nature and their complex hierarchical structure and customs. In addition, it was alleged that in the UK there is only one law enforcement officer from this ethnic group and that this individual is reluctant to engage in these issues. These comments indicate that the police lack the cultural expertise to deal with instances of trafficking in particular ethnic groups, and is evidenced by a recent BBC investigation which identified many girls being trafficked into Glasgow from Roma communities in Slovakia and Romania but remaining undetected by the authorities (BBC, 2017). According to one of the advisors these cultural issues are often compounded by gender factors; for instance, men are more likely to portray themselves as alpha

males and generally are more reluctant to admit that they've been victimised, especially in the presence of females.

Another barrier identified was the increasing prevalence of victims that conduct criminal acts and the difficulty the police have in dealing with them. It was mentioned that during 2015/16, there was a tendency for law enforcement to disregard the criminality of any trafficked person and treat them exclusively as victims, but that this was no longer the case. This change in approach seemed to stem from surveillance operations which observed individuals socialising at football matches, casinos and restaurants, yet these same individuals later claimed to be victims when they were encountered by the police. Identifying victims amongst Vietnamese cannabis growers was considered particularly challenging as it is suspected that some found on these farms actively choose to cultivate the drug to pay off large travel debts. Recent reports of genuine victims working on Vietnamese cannabis farms being prosecuted by the UK authorities (Craig & Burland, 2017 cited in The Guardian, 2017) demonstrates that this and forced criminality in general is an ongoing problem for the police.

Each advisor also stressed that the *modus operandi* of traffickers is becoming more sophisticated and that many now regularly employ psychological coercion in order to condition and control victims. Examples were given of traffickers from the travelling community presenting police with photos of them and suspected victims drinking beer and spending Christmas together, with the intention of demonstrating a healthy employee-employer relationship. The reality was that many victims were actually exploited and living in squalor at these travellers' sites

but were occasionally 'treated' so that these photos could be taken, thus providing the traffickers with a prepared defence when the police came calling. Further examples were given of victims remaining undiscovered on travellers' sites for up to 20 years, indicating that the psychological coercion and tactics employed by this group of traffickers is highly effective.

These issues highlight the difficulties police face when they encounter potential victims of trafficking. At the same time, other responses given by the advisors suggested that officers are often hamstrung by organisational factors which limits their ability to overcome these difficulties. In the case of uniformed response officers one of the main constraints identified was time, as many are under pressure to get from one call to the next. Similarly, it was mentioned that the competing demands of the job require officers to be trained in multiple disciplines so that they can respond to various forms of criminality, and that the practicalities facing the officer on the ground do necessarily correlate with the politician who has decreed human trafficking a priority. Burdened by these constraints it is easy to see how a response officer might miss clues of victimisation or conduct insufficient enquiries when confronted by someone who doesn't speak to them, or asserts that they are content with their situation and not a victim.

Police officers' understanding of human trafficking and psychological coercion, as well as their ability to deal with it was assessed as improving, with an increase in referrals to the NRM offered as evidence. The introduction of the MSA and greater media attention were credited with raising awareness of the subject area, whilst prior experience and training were believed to form the foundation of officers'

knowledge. However, it was argued that the current NCALT[9] computer-based training they receive is insufficient as it doesn't test officers understanding of the material and allows those that aren't interested to skip through the slides. Instructor-led training was considered more effective as it allows the personal experiences of the victims to be articulated in greater detail and thus is more impactive on the audience, although it was acknowledged that to deliver the training in this format to all officers was unrealistic. In relation to officer perceptions, one example demonstrated the shift in attitudes that has potentially occurred over the years. Previously, victims that visited a police station to report (in broken English) that they were being underpaid were referred to the Citizens Advice Bureau, however it was asserted that this is no longer the case. Nevertheless, the advisors did still encounter some misconceptions amongst officers with a considerable number questioning why victims didn't just walk away from their exploitative situation.

Awareness of the NRM was identified as an issue and described as 'pretty bad' but improving, which correlates with the assertion that victim referrals are increasing. The indicators listed on the NRM forms were considered useful, particularly when formulating questions to ask victims. However, their use was not without caution, with some knowledge of the subject area being deemed necessary in order to properly interpret the responses to questions. The main problem raised in relation to the NRM was the poor standard of form completion. It was alleged that many officers write the bare minimum and potentially see them more as a

[9] The National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT) work with the College of Policing and provide e-learning training packages in a number of subjects, which can be accessed by officers across the UK (College of Policing, 2017b).

mechanism for referring the victim to social services, rather than an investigative tool that helps determine the individual's status as a victim. Moreover, the forms were considered overcomplicated and unpractical, especially for frontline officers that encountered victims on a night shift. In this scenario, it was suggested that the priority of these officers was to help victims to safety, yet their job was often made more difficult as they tended to lack support and were unable to access services out-of-hours that were available to their daytime colleagues. Therefore, to some extent it was considered understandable that these officers' forms wouldn't be completed sufficiently. Nevertheless, this is concerning as evidence which could prove victimisation might potentially be lost if not recorded properly at the scene, especially when considering the impact of cultural, linguistic and gender barriers.

Finally, it was acknowledged that there are similarities between the forms of psychological coercion used in domestic violence and that used in human trafficking, which the advisors often highlighted when teaching the subject to officers. However, it was also made clear that psychological coercion manifested itself differently in each context. In domestic violence, it was argued that the relationship between the coercer and coerced is more explicit and cyclical, resulting in regular 'flare-ups' or altercations followed by periods of affection; whereas in human trafficking the psychological coercion used was considered subtler, resulting in fewer, more hidden altercations as victims enter an acquiescent state to survive. It was also asserted that domestic violence victims were more likely to request that 'something be done' following an altercation than human trafficking victims. Although the advisors didn't comment on police

officers using their knowledge of domestic violence-related psychological coercion in a human trafficking setting, their delineation of the two suggests that there are potentially fewer opportunities for identifying trafficking victims, especially when the cultural, language and gender barriers are taken into account.

Interviews: Metropolitan Police Officers

At the beginning of the interviews, all three officers were asked to explain their understanding of the terms human trafficking and psychological coercion. Their responses indicated that they understood the subject area well and didn't confuse the former with people smuggling, a common misconception. In addition, when asked what a trafficking victim looked like all three did not offer traditional stereotypes but instead stated they came from a variety of backgrounds, races and ethnicities, with the most inexperienced officer further explaining that not every victim will realise they've been trafficked.

The basis of their understanding appeared to come from a number of sources, including media campaigns, police internal communications, training, and past experience. One recalled being given a handout and seeing posters in police stations whilst another remembered a recent television campaign on the issue. In relation to training, all were familiar with the NCALT computer-based package but had received different levels of instruction during their probationary period. The longest serving officer didn't recall receiving any training on joining, whereas the most recent joiner stated that he had attended an instructor-led session and undertook computer-based training, with the experience of the third officer lying somewhere in-between. This correlates with the information provided by the

Metropolitan Police in response to a Freedom of Information (FoI) request which states that since 2014, new recruits have been given approximately 2 hours of instructor-led training. This does not include the training that they receive when undertaking the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP), a self-funded qualification that all new recruits must obtain before starting their formal training[10]. Moreover, the FoI request revealed that those already in service are required to complete the computer-based NCALT package, which is mandatory but not recurring and only needs to be completed once.

The level of understanding displayed by the officers indicates the tactical advisors' assertion that the police's awareness and knowledge of the area is improving has some basis. Although, it could be argued that the diverse nature of the borough these officers operate in mean they are more attuned to this form of criminality than their counterparts in areas where this isn't the case. In addition, the level of training received by officers and the extent of internal communications on the subject may differ across forces, leading to some having a better understanding and awareness than others. It could also be argued that an increased level of training for new recruits might have a positive impact on the amount of victims being identified by forces, given that the vast majority of new officers tend to spend their first two years on the frontline. For instance, in the Metropolitan Police the introduction of the pre-requisite CKP in 2013 and instructor-led training in 2014 correlates with a general increase in referrals to the NRM by the force from 2014 onwards (see figure 1). However, assuming this hypothesis it could be expected that the figures would continue to rise after 2014 as the number of new

[10] This joining pre-requisite was introduced by the Metropolitan Police in July 2013 (Blundy, 2014).

recruits entering service grew, but they didn't. Moreover, the rise could simply be attributed to senior officers prioritising the issue and authorising more trafficking-related operations in response.

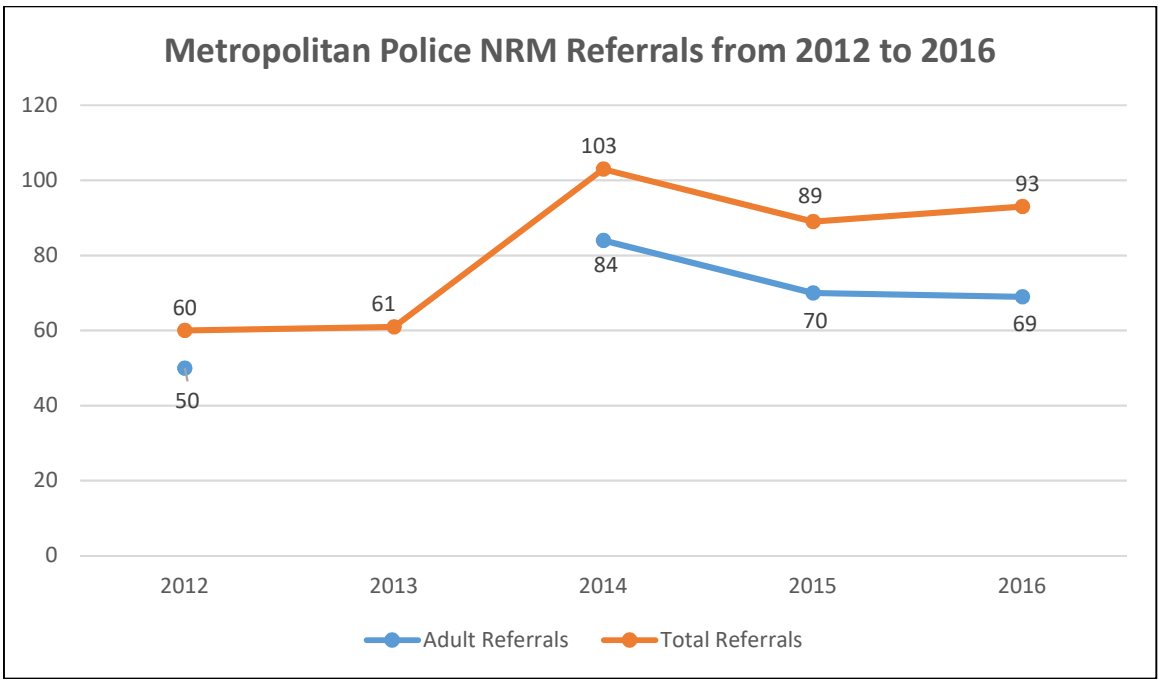

Figure 1. Please note, only figures for total referrals in 2013 were available in the NRM source data (Serious & Organised Crime Agency, 2013c; National Crime Agency, 2014c, 2015c, 2016c, 2017e).

In the case of two of the officers, professional experience appeared to play an important role in developing their understanding of the subject area. The more inexperienced officer (B1) stated he had dealt with one potential incident of trafficking as a frontline officer when he was required to attend a hospital treating a female in labour. This female had been dropped off the back of a lorry at a petrol station with her two young children a couple of hours prior to arriving at the hospital. When dealing with the situation the officer had to communicate with the female through one of her children, as the mother's standard of English was poor. Although he couldn't speak directly with the mother he stated that he tried to empathise with her situation and used non-verbal communication to show that he

was there to help. He was unable to clarify whether the female and her children later turned out to be victims of trafficking but confirmed that he knew the circumstances surrounding the situation when he was called by the hospital staff. Although this might have been a case of Organised Immigration Crime (OIC), the officer's account highlights that no assumptions were made before arriving at the scene. As previously mentioned, the line between OIC and human trafficking is blurred and cases of the latter are often uncovered when enquiries are made into the former. In this instance the officer seems to have adopted the right approach; however, it is easy to see how other officers with less training and a different mindset might have taken a different approach. Furthermore, the language and cultural barriers evident in this example only complicate matters further for investigating officers. The fact that this officer had to use one of the mother's children to interpret suggests that those on the frontline do lack support and are not adequately resourced to deal with this complex form of criminality.

The other officer (B3) that had dealt with instances of trafficking and encountered victims had much broader experience, particularly in the field of public protection and vulnerable populations. In addition, she was able to provide a more authoritative account on instances of human trafficking in Newham having worked in the area for over 9 years. In her experience, frontline officers or their non-uniformed colleagues in the Community Safety Unit (CSU)[11] were the most likely to encounter victims, who typically were found in locations such as brothels, nail bars and hairdressers. The migration levels, population and diversity of ethnic groups

[11] CSUs deal with cases of hate crime, domestic violence and honour-based violence (Metropolitan Police, 2017).

in the borough were identified as potential barriers for officers in terms of victim identification. It was alleged that one in five of the population had entered the country illegally and that many in the borough were living in multi-occupancy accommodation. Consequently, it was claimed that these factors and the cultural diversity of the population made the area a 'human trafficking dream', given the relative ease with which people could be hidden. Although it is difficult to verify the levels of illegal immigration quoted, Newham has been reported as suffering from the highest levels of overcrowding in the country, with 26 people having been found living in a three-bedroom house alone (Butler, 2015). Moreover, these claims correspond with the concerns raised by the tactical advisors regarding the challenges faced by the police when trying to detect instances of human trafficking in isolated, closed-off communities, indicating that this might be a problem the police are yet to overcome.

The difficulties faced by female officers when attempting to engage with these communities are exemplified by this officer's experiences of working in Newham:

> *"Being a white woman cop in this borough's really, really tough… really tough. A lot of the, a lot of men don't want to talk to you anyway, let alone about anything so difficult."*

Considering this account and the comments made by one of the tactical advisors about the cultural and gender influences that often act upon men in these groups, it is easy to see how female officers might face significant barriers when investigating instances of male victimisation. However, other comments made by this officer indicates that being a female officer might be advantageous in some situations:

> *"The adult females that I've dealt with have been quite eager to kind of tell their stories and mostly they've been very scared, mostly they don't really want any kind of prosecutions to happen, I imagine because they've been threatened before about families and all the rest of it. And just, yeah, quite, quite kind of passive and not, not a lot of resistance is how I would describe the adult women that I've worked with."*

It is doubtful whether a male officer would have responded in the same manner, therefore these victims' willingness to speak to the police suggests that female victims are more likely to engage with female officers than their male counterparts. In addition, these victims fear of retaliation and their 'passive' nature indicates that they have been subjected to some form of psychological coercion. It is encouraging to see the police are able to establish a degree of trust with victims in this vulnerable state and reassure them that their victimisation is being taken seriously, given that the literature indicates this does not always happen and that victims might take a significant amount of time to establish this trust.

The lack of prescribed definitions in the legislation and elsewhere didn't seem to impact upon the officers' ability to do their jobs. The less experienced officer (B1) stated that there were Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for dealing with reports of trafficking and that supervisors and specialist teams were available to provide further guidance, if required. Despite the support available, all three officers commented that those on the frontline had to deal with a significant volume of calls and that supervisors were often under pressure to get these calls dealt with. One described the situation as 'fireman policing' whereas another responded:

"It's a sad and lonely thing to be a frontline response officer now because you are expected to know everything and do everything."

Other comments made by the officers indicated that cuts to resources, lack of morale, and mental health issues were potentially exacerbating the pressures and having an impact on their ability to do the job. These accounts support the assertions made by the tactical advisors in relation to the various demands placed on frontline officers and are particularly worrying given that the literature considers them the most likely to encounter victims. Therefore it could be argued that these pressures, combined with the aforementioned cultural, language and gender barriers could result in situations which aren't conducive to victim identification, especially if the individual affected is oblivious to their victimisation.

Awareness of the NRM was only evident in the officer who had extensive experience in this area as a non-uniformed constable in a specialist unit, with the other two stating that they may have encountered it during their careers but couldn't be sure. This suggests the allegations that many in the police are unaware of the NRM holds some truth, and that those in uniform working in a more localised, general policing role are potentially less conscious of this than their specialist colleagues. Again, the assertion that the former are more likely to encounter victims than the latter makes this a concerning hypothesis and is possibly one explanation why the forms are often completed poorly.

Further Analysis and Discussion

The literature review highlighted that ambiguities in the legal definitions of human trafficking and psychological coercion could potentially have an adverse impact on the identification of victims. However, the research findings suggest this is not the case and that the introduction of the MSA may actually have increased awareness of the issue amongst police officers. A review of this piece of legislation conducted one year after its introduction supports this assertion (Haughey, 2016), as does the increased number of adult referrals to the NRM by the police (see figure 2) since the publication of the draft Modern Slavery Bill in December 2013. Equally, it could be argued that it is too early to judge this aspect of the legislation and that ideally, an assessment of its definitional qualities should only take place when it is no longer a 'hot topic' and has fallen down the policy agenda.

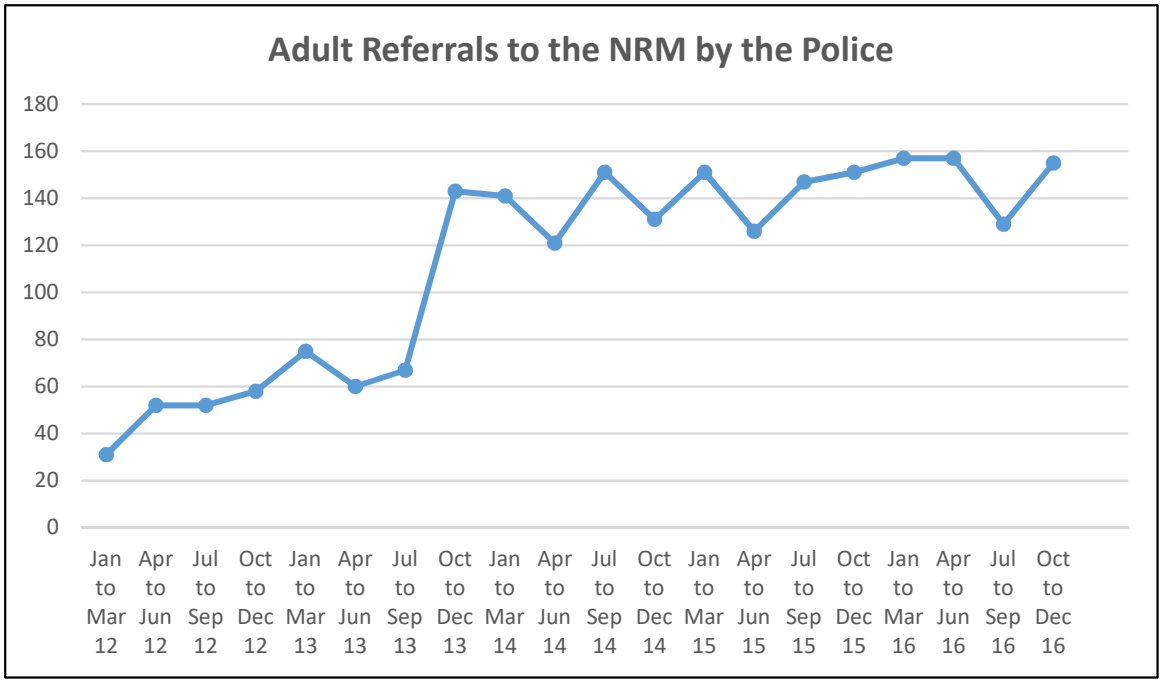

Figure 2. Figures taken from the quarterly NRM statistics' reports found on the National Crime Agency website. Please note, these figures include referrals from Police Scotland, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and the British Transport Police, but exclude those from the NCA/SOCA (Serious & Organised Crime Agency, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2013d; National Crime Agency, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014d, 2014e, 2015a, 2015b, 2015d, 2015e, 2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d).

The responses given by the interviewees also support the claim that the police usually encounter victims on proactive operations or when investigating other forms of criminality. In addition, the aforementioned increase in police NRM referrals suggests that the accusation officers frequently miss opportunities to identify victims during these encounters is less applicable than it previously might have been. Moreover, this increase is more impressive given that several issues out with officers' control often hinder their efforts at victim identification, such as: cultural, linguistic and gender factors; the increasingly sophisticated techniques employed by traffickers; victims' acceptance of their circumstances; and their apparent increasing complicity in criminal offences. Therefore this accusation could also be deemed unfair given that it seems to insinuate officers are largely to blame for these lost opportunities, especially when considering the pressures many of them face in their day-to-day roles.

Some of the barriers identified in the literature appear to cause the police particular difficulties when dealing with potential victims. The ethnic diversity of Newham borough and segregated nature of the Roma community highlighted that in certain parts of the UK, negotiating access to certain groups and grasping the cultural nuances inherent in them is extremely challenging. It could also be argued that a lack of cultural and linguistic expertise in the police is inhibiting officers' ability to overcome this barrier. The Met officer's account of having to use a potential child victim as an interpreter and the assertion that there is only one serving Roma officer in the entirety of the UK police supports this hypothesis. In relation to the latter, the continual underrepresentation of ethnic minorities

across the forces (Rawlinson, Bengtsson & Franklin, 2016) lends further credence to this argument, although it is important to acknowledge that the proportion of minority officers in England and Wales rose from 3% to 6% during the period 2004 to 2016 (Allen & Dempsey, 2016).

Similarly, defined gender roles in some of these ethnic groups often aggravate the problems faced by officers. The reluctance of men to admit their victimisation appears to be a common occurrence, one which is potentially linked to claims made by several victims that they are content with their circumstances. Conversely, the experience of the female police officer in Newham highlights how these gender roles can hamper investigation of trafficking offences and thus the identification of victims. However, it appears that the opposite can also be true given that female victims seem more likely to respond better to female officers. Although this isn't a groundbreaking revelation, it does suggest that not all victims are wary of the authorities and that trust can be established in some circumstances.

The challenge of engaging with these ethnic groups and the police's lack of cultural and linguistic expertise is particularly worrying in relation to officers' ability to identify and interpret signs of psychological coercion in victims. This task is difficult enough when dealing with individuals who speak the same language and come from the same ethnic group as the officer. However, it could be argued that the task is infinitely harder when the officer does not have the baseline knowledge to be able to distinguish between behaviour that is culturally-influenced and that which is psychologically-coerced. Without this knowledge, it

could be argued that there is a reduced chance of officers identifying victims who have been coerced in this manner.

Moreover, the reported increase in the number of victims implicated in criminal offences only exacerbates these issues and is one barrier the police seem to have considerable difficulty with. This is acknowledged in the 2016 review of the MSA which states that many officers are finding it hard to distinguish victims from criminals, and that occasionally the former are mistakenly charged and prosecuted as the latter (Haughey, 2016). As mentioned previously, the police appear to find individuals working on Vietnamese cannabis farms particularly difficult to deal with, as evidenced in a recent study of 39 victims:

> *"Despite the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the judges knowing in around half of the cases that they were victims of modern slavery, and despite the commissioner stating that they are not prosecuted, nearly all were in fact sentenced to prison terms, some for as long as 20 months" (Craig & Burland, 2017 cited in The Guardian, 2017; p.1).*

It is important to remember that determining victim from foe is very challenging, especially when considering that surveillance operations have been used in the past to help make this distinction. However, if the allegations made by the study are correct then it suggests the police and wider criminal justice system really struggle with these groups. In this case, it could also be argued that the police are much more experienced investigating drug offences than cases of human trafficking and that when they encounter these farms, they're merely reverting to established practice. Therefore, perhaps the conclusion drawn from the literature

that officers are more orientated towards fighting crime than safeguarding victims is to some extent true.

The source of officers' knowledge and understanding of human trafficking appears to come from a number of areas, with training and experience arguably being the most prominent. The accounts provided by the Metropolitan Police officers and the results of the FoI request indicate that new recruits are receiving more training on this subject than their more experienced colleagues did when they joined. However it is unclear how many officers across the UK have undertaken the NCALT e-learning package referred to in most of the interviews, which seems to be the preferred training format for educating the majority. Moreover, the challenges faced by officers in relation to the cultural and linguistic aspects of human trafficking suggests that training in this area is still lacking, as outlined in the literature. The importance of prior experience was evident in the responses given by the officers; yet conversely, testing the hypothesis that those without this experience might utilise their knowledge of psychological coercion in domestic violence to help inform their responses to human trafficking proved difficult, particularly in an interview setting.

The level of understanding demonstrated by the Metropolitan Police officers and their avoidance of victim stereotypes is rather at odds with the allegation that some obtain their knowledge of the subject through sensationalised media accounts. In addition, the tactical advisors' assertion that understanding of human trafficking in the police is improving, together with the aforementioned rise in NRM referrals implies that officers are actually becoming more informed.

However, it is important to note that not all individuals referred to the NRM will have been trafficked; one of the officers interviewed noted that a number of males discovered during UK Border Agency raids in Newham had claimed to be trafficked and under 18 yet appeared to be adults, which was later proved to be the case. It seems that these claims were motivated by attempts to access the support and assistance provided by the NRM, as child victims are referred automatically without the need for consent. The extent of this problem is unknown and the cultural and linguistic challenges facing officers, together with the difficulty of quickly proving the age of these people in the circumstances which they are found suggests that it is not one they are equipped to deal with.

On the topic of the NRM, the supposition that awareness of it is low amongst the police appears somewhat true, as do claims that many of the forms are completed to a poor standard. Worryingly, it could be argued that some trafficked persons are not being recognised as victims by the state because of this latter issue. For example, individuals referred to the NRM must go through two stages before receiving this recognition; firstly, they must receive a positive reasonable grounds decision, which grants them a minimum reflection period of 45 days during which they are entitled to support from the state. During this first stage, investigation is undertaken to determine whether "on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the individual is a victim of modern slavery" (College of Policing, 2017a; p.1). If this condition is satisfied then the referred person receives a positive conclusive grounds decision and is entitled to further support from the authorities, which arguably is the point at which they are officially recognised by the state as a victim. However, if the referral form which initiates this whole

process is completed inadequately then it could be argued that the subject of the form is less likely to be recognised as a victim, as their case hasn't been presented in the best possible manner.

More detailed analysis of the NRM figures partially supports this argument and suggests that the competent authorities are struggling to cope with the sheer volume of referrals. Figure 3 shows that positive conclusive grounds decisions remained fairly constant from 2012 to 2015, despite a steady rise in the number of individuals being referred to the NRM. In addition, the amount of conclusive grounds decisions yet to be made rose at a similar rate to the total number of adult referrals. The figures thus indicate that those making these decisions have potentially been overburden by the increased number of referrals and that this might be impacting upon their ability to determine who is and isn't a victim.

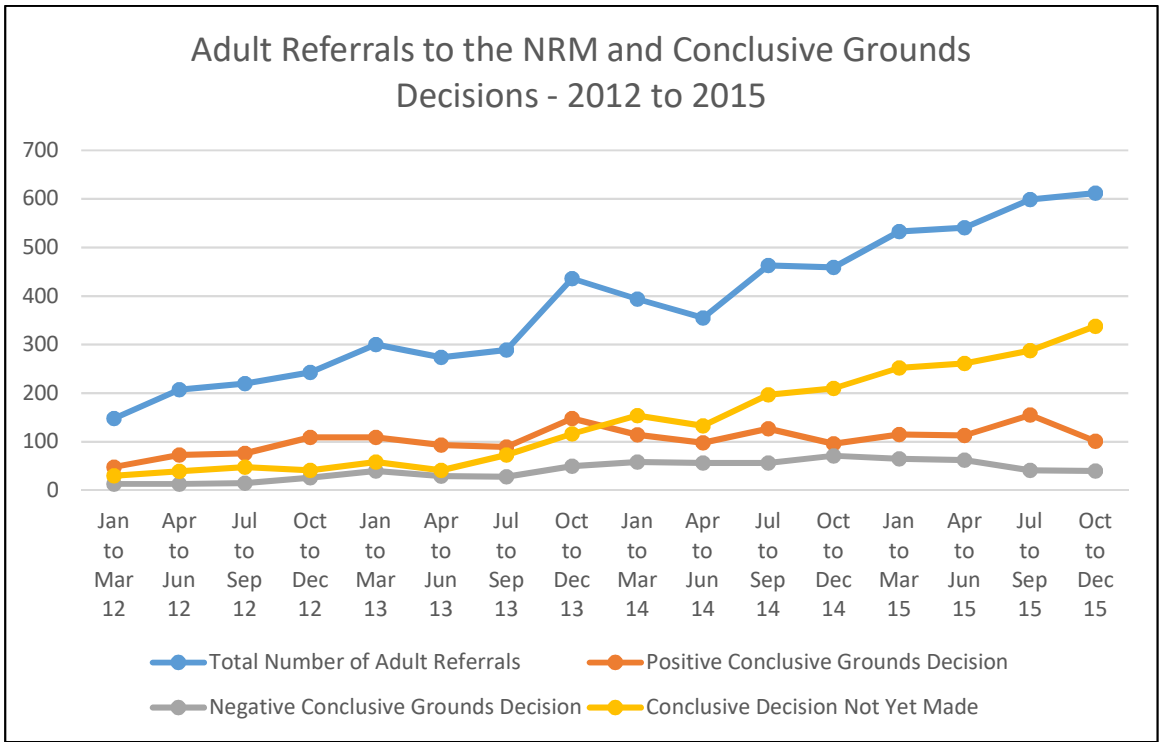

Figure 3. Figures taken from the quarterly NRM statistics' reports found on the National Crime Agency website. Please note that conclusive grounds figures for 2016 were not available (Serious & Organised Crime Agency, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2013d; National Crime Agency, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014d, 2014e, 2015a, 2015b, 2015d, 2015e, 2016a, 2016b).

It is important to note that the figures include referrals from organisations other than the police, as well as persons that have been trafficked within the borders of the UK. Moreover, the false claims submitted to the NRM mentioned previously highlight that there are possibly other reasons for the variations. However, it is easy to see how poorly completed forms might impact upon the entire process and potentially deny victims from being formally recognised by the state.

Summary

This chapter highlighted that the introduction of the MSA seems to have increased awareness of human trafficking to new highs in the police, although it is too soon to tell whether the legislation helps officers improve their understanding of the issue. Instead, their knowledge appears to come largely from media campaigns, internal police communications, training, and experience, with the latter two the most prominent. An increase in referrals to the NRM, enhanced training for new recruits, and the responses given in interview does suggest that officers' understanding of human trafficking and its victims is improving. However, it might also be that senior officers are dedicating more resources to combating the problem given its current prominence on the policy agenda.

Two main scenarios were identified in which police normally encounter victims: through proactive human trafficking operations and during enquiries into other forms of criminality. Unfortunately, efforts to identify victims during these encounters are often hindered by barriers, with officers seeming to have particular

difficulty dealing with those implicated in criminal offences. More sophisticated methods of exploitation by traffickers and the assertion made by some victims that they are content with their circumstances are other examples. Yet arguably, the main barrier faced by officers relates to the cultural and linguistic aspects of dealing with different ethnic groups, especially those that are secretive in nature. Similarly, the reluctance of some men to admit victimisation and the challenges faced by some female officers when engaging these groups indicates that gender can also be a barrier, although it is important to mention that in some instances this can also be an asset.

In addition, the demands of the job and organisational factors appear to be hampering officers' ability to overcome these barriers. The sheer volume of calls in places like Newham and pressures to get them answered means that those on the frontline regularly face competing demands on their time. Complaints of resource depletion and a lack of morale potentially compound the issue, as is an apparent lack of cultural and linguistic expertise across forces. However, it was difficult to assess whether officers harness their knowledge of psychological coercion in domestic violence as a way to overcome some of these problems, when dealing with human trafficking victims that have been coerced in a similar manner.

Finally, awareness of the NRM does seem to be poor amongst officers, especially those in uniform that don't work in specialised roles. Furthermore, those familiar with the system don't appear to be completing the referral forms to the required standard, which is potentially impacting upon victims' chances of being formally recognised by the state.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

Introduction

This primary aim of this study was to explore how police officers in the UK identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in human trafficking victims. In order to achieve this aim the following research objectives were set:

1. To critically examine official definitions of psychological coercion and human trafficking and the extent to which ambiguities inherent in these definitions impact upon efforts to tackle this form of criminality.

2. To critically assess the nature of trafficking victims' encounters with the police and how these experiences and the settings in which they take place affect communication between the two groups.

3. To identify factors which influence police officers' perceptions of trafficked persons and analyse the degree to which this determines their investigative response to potential incidents of trafficking.

4. To critically assess the effectiveness of the National Referral Mechanism framework in dealing with victims who have been subjected to psychological coercion.

This chapter will therefore summarise the findings of the study in relation to each research objective as well as make a number conclusions. It will also offer several

recommendations by suggesting avenues for future research and highlighting how the NRM process could be made more effective.

Research Objectives: Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The literature review highlighted that definitional issues surrounding the terms human trafficking and psychological coercion can create problems for the police in relation to victim identification. It also revealed that ambiguities inherent in the UN protocol can lead to inconsistencies in national legislation, an example being the MSA which doesn't contain any references to psychological coercion. However, the research suggests that the introduction of this piece of legislation may actually have improved, rather than complicated matters. It has been credited with raising awareness of the subject amongst officers to new highs and has coincided with an increase in police referrals to the NRM. Moreover, it consolidated the existing disparate human trafficking legislation into one act, thus making it easier for officers when searching for guidance on human trafficking in the legal databases. The research also hinted that the majority of officers' understanding of human trafficking and psychological coercion doesn't come from the legislation, but from other sources. Therefore the main conclusion drawn from this aspect of the study is that official definitions of these terms and any inherent weaknesses in them do not seem to have impacted upon the ability of the police to tackle this form of criminality. Instead, publicity surrounding the introduction of the MSA and prioritisation of the issue appears to have played a more important role in this respect than the content of the legislation *per se*.

The study also highlighted that police officers are most likely to encounter victims during proactive operations and investigations into other forms of criminality. The increase in police referrals to the NRM indicates that the allegation victims often remain unidentified during these encounters might not be entirely true. However, this is difficult to assess given that the number of victims is hard to predict and those figures that are available potentially do not reflect the actual scale of the problem.

What is clear is that officers face substantial barriers whenever they encounter potential victims, which include: a fear of approaching the authorities; language and communication difficulties; individuals that are unaware of their rights and appear content with their circumstances; psychological disorders and problems with addiction; increasingly sophisticated methods of control utilised by traffickers; and victims implicated in the commission of criminal acts. Consequently, these barriers impact upon the extent to which trust can be established with victims and affects their chances of being identified. Furthermore, organisational factors and the exigencies of being on the frontline seem to be hampering the ability of officers to overcome these barriers.

The police seem to have particular difficulty when dealing with victims involved in criminality and reportedly arrest these individuals on a regular basis. However, it has been concluded that the main barrier facing officers are the challenges linked to culture, language and gender when engaging with the multitude of ethnic groups that reside in the UK, especially those that do not welcome outside interference. This is because the vast majority of victims are non-British and

trafficked into the country, yet the research suggests that the police to not possess the expertise to communicate effectively with these groups. Arguably, this has a direct impact on victim identification rates as it is difficult to envisage officers being able to spot subtle indicators of psychological coercion – a key enabler of human trafficking - when they do not have the baseline knowledge to be able to distinguish between behaviour that is culturally-influenced or psychologically-coerced.

In the literature, many accusations are leveled against the police in relation to the way they perceive victims of human trafficking. For instance, their understanding of the issue has repeatedly been called into question and any knowledge they do have is alleged to have been acquired through exaggerated and stereotypical media portrayals. In addition, it is suggested that many officers believe victims will self-identify and that they are in some way responsible for their own victimisation. Another claim is that victims are regularly perceived as being different, alien and dangerous, which might explain why some argue they are treated as criminals or illegal immigrants. Similarly, it has been pointed out that ingrained organisational and cultural practices in the police conditions officers to focus primarily on casting suspicion and identifying suspects, meaning that they often struggle to deal with victims implicated in criminal offences.

The research suggests that officers obtain much of their knowledge on human trafficking from prior experience and training, with media campaigns and police internal communications also playing a role. Equally, it seems that misconceptions amongst the police in relation to victims might not be as prominent as alleged,

although it is acknowledged that some officers still appear to question why victims simply don't just walk away from their situation. The hypothesis that officers might use their knowledge of psychological coercion in domestic violence to help them identify human trafficking victims remains untested, but feasible.

Nevertheless, there are two main conclusions which can be drawn in relation to the third research objective. The first is that officers' understanding of human trafficking and psychological coercion and their response to victims does seem to be improving, as evidenced by a rise in police referrals to the NRM. The reason for this improvement appears to be multifold, including: a greater awareness of the issue amongst officers resulting from the introduction of the MSA; its prioritisation by politicians and senior officers; and training developments. Secondly, the number of trafficked persons committing crimes seems to be a real problem area for the police and their response appears to fluctuate between two extremes, namely treat these people as victims or arrest them. This suggests that they do not have an alternative approach and that ingrained police practices might be limiting officers' ability to deal with this specific type of victim.

Finally, many of the assertions made in the literature regarding the NRM are supported by the research. Awareness of the mechanism does seem to be poor across the police but might be improving, with the increase in police referrals again offered as evidence. It also appears that the NRM forms continue to be completed to a poor standard, which indicates that those officers making the initial referral do not fully comprehend the importance of their role. In addition, the impracticalities of completing the form and the pressures facing frontline

officers suggest that signs of psychological coercion are unlikely to be adequately recorded at the point when victims are discovered. Therefore if evidence is lost at the scene it weakens their case, meaning that many victims are potentially in danger of not being recognised by the state. Moreover, the figures suggest that the competent authorities are struggling to deal with the sheer volume of referrals and that victims are being left in limbo whilst waiting for a conclusive grounds decision. Considering these points, it is concluded that the NRM in its current format is to some extent ineffective in dealing with victims who have been psychologically coerced.

Recommendations

Given the conclusions outlined above, a number of research opportunities have been identified that would merit further exploration. The findings of this research are not generalisable across the police therefore a similar study that samples a much larger population could offer more definitive results. In addition, it might offer more insights on whether the demographics of force areas impact upon officers understanding of human trafficking and how they perceive victims. Likewise, a study that employs other research methods could help test the hypothesis that officers' knowledge of psychological coercion in domestic violence might help them identify victims of human trafficking.

Continuing the domestic violence theme, trials have shown that body-worn cameras have helped the police capture evidence in these types of case (Peachey, 2016). It is therefore proposed that a similar measure could be adopted to help overcome the problems with the NRM, as it makes the whole process less reliant on

form filling and potentially offers compelling visual evidence that can later be reviewed in detail by the competent authorities.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Rates of Domestic Violence and International Migration per London Borough (Calculated in November 2016)

London Borough	Population (2016)	Police Recorded DV Crimes (Rolling 12 months to Sep 16)	Ratio Incidents per Head of Population	DV Crimes per 1000 people	Net international migration (2014)	% of resident population born abroad (2014)
Barking & Dagenham	205,773	2,443	0.011872305	11.87230536	2543	37.4
Barnet	385,108	2,522	0.006548818	6.54881811	4770	35.9
Bexley	243,303	1,793	0.007369424	7.369424081	699	16.1
Brent	328,568	2,727	0.008299659	8.299658704	6717	56.2
Bromley	326,560	2,427	0.007432028	7.432028056	728	17.2
Camden	240,595	1,664	0.006916182	6.91618156	6288	42.4
Croydon	383,408	3,829	0.00998676	9.986760312	2189	29.7
Ealing	348,533	2,950	0.00846406	8.464059838	2291	45.5
Enfield	330,968	2,931	0.008855848	8.855847551	2983	32.8
Greenwich	275,868	3,125	0.011327861	11.32786121	2793	32.9
Hackney	270,912	2,743	0.010125067	10.1250668	2592	38.9
Hammersmith & Fulham	183,354	1,602	0.008737208	8.737207991	1277	41.5
Haringey	274,803	2,949	0.010731332	10.73133231	5559	39.6
Harrow	250,703	1,666	0.006645315	6.64531518	3030	50.7
Havering	251,611	2,248	0.008934436	8.934435968	673	11.9
Hillingdon	299,474	2,575	0.008598418	8.598418448	3970	33.1
Hounslow	272,102	2,684	0.009863961	9.863960933	3607	47.8
Islington	228,397	2,324	0.010175257	10.17525665	4620	36.8
Kensington & Chelsea	158,447	937	0.005913642	5.913641737	1059	54.7
Kingston upon Thames	173,853	1,029	0.005918781	5.918780837	2136	29.2
Lambeth	325,455	2,738	0.008412847	8.412846623	2645	33.6
Lewisham	299,817	3,202	0.010679834	10.67983435	3234	30.9
Merton	207,141	1,457	0.007033867	7.033867374	540	41.1
Newham	337,378	3,394	0.010059927	10.05992739	9518	51.8
Redbridge	301,022	2,236	0.007428038	7.428037989	3403	40.1
Richmond upon Thames	196,602	1,040	0.005289869	5.289868824	426	24.2
Southwark	310,642	2,892	0.009309742	9.309741503	4210	35.9
Sutton	201,751	1,356	0.006721163	6.721163063	465	26.4
Tower Hamlets	297,805	3,106	0.010429645	10.42964508	8467	37.8
Waltham Forest	274,139	2,815	0.010268498	10.26849814	5075	36.0
Wandsworth	318,253	2,182	0.00685617	6.856170317	-241	32.8
Westminster	239,862	1,495	0.006232763	6.232762779	8886	51.3

Appendix B – Participant Consent Form

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

Consent form

Title of the research: Breaking the Invisible Chains - Exploring how police officers identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in victims trafficked into the United Kingdom.

I agree to take part in the above study/research via a one-to-one interview.	☐
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet provided for the above study/research.	☐
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. I also understand that I can refrain from answering any question put to me, yet still continue with the interview by asking the researcher to move to the next question.	☐
I understand that any personal information collected during the study/research will be anonymised and remain confidential.	☐
I understand that although the interview will be audio recorded, at any time I can request the recording device to be switched off, including before the start of the interview.	☐
I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim but that such quotes will be anonymised.	☐

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
.....	.....	.....
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
.....	.....	.....

Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet

Research Participant Information Sheet

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

Title of Project

Breaking the Invisible Chains - Exploring how police officers identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in victims trafficked into the United Kingdom.

Name of Researcher and School

Scott Cumming - School of Journalism, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Introduction and Purpose of the Study

You are being invited to take part in a research study that aims to explore psychological coercion in a human trafficking context, specifically focusing on police officers' understanding of the issue and the extent to which this impacts upon victims. As potential first responders to incidents of human trafficking police officers play a vital role in identifying victims and helping them to safety, yet the hidden nature of psychological coercion and its effects on victims can hinder this process and present a number of challenges for law enforcement. Given that efforts to tackle human trafficking have recently been prioritised by the Prime Minister it is important to consider how police officers identify and respond to victims, however little research has been conducted on the subject to date. Consequently, this study aims to address this omission and obtain insights that might help inform future research. Furthermore, it will provide the basis of a dissertation that the researcher intends to submit to Staffordshire University in partial fulfilment for a degree of Master of Arts in Transnational Organised Crime.

Participation, Consent and Confidentiality

To help meet the aims of the study you are requested to take part in a one-to-one semi-structured interview and answer questions on the aforementioned topic. It is important to note that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and your written consent will be sought prior to the beginning of the interview. Moreover, this consent can be withdrawn at any point during the interview and you do not have to answer any questions posed by the researcher that you do not wish to give a response to.

The interview is expected to last 30 to 60 minutes and will be audio recorded, should you give your consent. Your responses will be kept confidential and any documents bearing your details will be secured and seen only by the researcher and dissertation supervisors. Although it might be necessary to breach this confidentiality if anyone is at risk of harm, the researcher will work with you to reduce this risk and find a solution that balances any concerns you might have.

Following the interview the audio recordings will be transcribed, analysed with other participants' responses then used to inform the study's results. Any references in

Appendix C (Continued) - Participant Information Sheet

the written dissertation to responses you give during the interview will be anonymised and kept confidential. Finally, all primary research documents created as a result of the interview will be destroyed when the researcher completes the study and the degree is awarded.

Further Support

If you have any questions, queries or concerns about this study then please direct them to the researcher at the email address [redacted]. Additionally, if participation in this study causes you any distress or harm it is highly recommended that you take one of the following actions:

- Inform the researcher of your distress.
- Inform your work supervisor of your distress.
- Seek support from one of the following charities:
  - Blue Light Programme (visit http://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/bluelight/ or call 0300 303 5999).
  - Call4Backup (visit www.call4backup.org or call 0300 121 0999).
- Seek help, advice and support from your doctor.

Appendix D – MSHTU Advisor Question Plan

MSHTU Tactical Advisor Question Plan

Pre-Interview Process

- Confirm that participant has read the information sheet.
- Ask if they have any questions about the study.
- Reiterate aims of study, emphasising that it will form a dissertation submission.
- Remind participant that they can withdraw at any point during the interview.
- Confirm that participant has read consent form, then ask them to sign a copy.

Section 1 – Personal Details and Demographics

1. Note down name and gender.

2. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

   ☐ 18 to 24 years
   ☐ 25 to 31 years
   ☐ 32 to 38 years
   ☐ 39 to 45 years
   ☐ 46 to 52 years
   ☐ 53 to 59 years
   ☐ 60 years or over

Section 2 – Details of Role/Experience

3. How long have you worked in law enforcement?

4. How long have you worked in the specific area of human trafficking/modern slavery?

5. As a tactical advisor in the MSHTU, what does your role involve?

(Ensure the following areas are covered:

- Number of UK police forces you work with/have worked with.
- Rank of officers you normally advise/speak with.
- What kind of support do you provide?
- Training/education you have undertaken to perform the role.)

Section 3 – Main Questions

6. In your experience, how well do police officers identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in human trafficking victims?

(Clarify whether there are any differences in terms of rank and experience, uniformed response officers versus plain clothes detectives etc.)

7. What level of understanding do police officers have of human trafficking? … psychological coercion?

(Probe further:
- Where do you think they get their knowledge on the issue from?
- Do you think they receive adequate education/training?)

8. To what extent are the definitions of human trafficking and psychological coercion fit for purpose in helping the police to identify victims?

(Probe further:
- Does the Modern Slavery Act adequately define both terms? Do you think the definitions offered help police officers tackle this form of criminality?
- If not, how helpful are the academic/state definitions? Do you think these definitions help police officers tackle this form of criminality?
- Are there any ambiguities in any of these definitions? If so, what impact do these ambiguities have on the police's ability to identify victims? Do these ambiguities impact upon the police's ability to identify and respond to signs of psychological coercion in victims?)

9. It has been argued that police officers frequently miss opportunities to identify victims when they encounter them. How does this compare with your experience? Why do you think this might happen?

(Probe further:
- Do environmental factors play a role? If so, how do these factors affect communication/interactions between the police and victims?)

10. Other research has shown that victims discovered through police actions such as raids often initially give accounts to police officers that later conflict with accounts they give to NGOs. How does this compare with your experience? Why do you think this might happen?

(Probe further:
- Do the police understand why this happens?
- How do they normally react to this situation when it happens?)

11. Research has also shown that instead of being identified as being trafficked, many victims are instead arrested for offences linked to prostitution and immigration. How does this compare with your experience? Why do you think this might happen?

12. It has also been shown that many victims do not approach the police and report their situation. How does this compare with your experience? Why do you think this happens?

13. It has been suggested that many police officers acquire their knowledge of human trafficking "through a sensationalized, media-informed lens". How does this compare with your experience?

(Probe further:
- How many police officers do you think acquire their knowledge in this way?
- In your experience, what do police officers think a victim of human trafficking looks like?

- What impact does this have on how they deal with potential incidents of human trafficking?)

14. How do the police normally deal with victims who:

- Are involved in relationships with their traffickers?
- Are implicated in criminality (both trafficking and other offences)?

(Probe further:
- Are they adequately prepared to deal with these instances?
- If not, why not?)

15. It has also been argued that there is an expectation among many police officers that victims will self-identify. How does this compare with your experience?

(Probe further:
- Why do you think officers might hold these views?
- How widespread do you think this view is in the police?)

16. Others have argued that many police officers believe that victims are to some extent responsible for their own victimisation. How does this compare with your experience?

(Probe further:
- Why do you think officers might hold these views?
- How widespread do you think this view is in the police?)

17. It has been argued that law enforcement agencies are more concerned with tackling illegal immigration than trafficking and that initiatives to combat the latter are merely used to hide attempts by the state to intervene in the lives of migrants for security reasons. How does this compare with your experience? Do you find this to be a reasonable conclusion?

(Probe further:
- Have many of the victims you have dealt with been treated in this way? I.e. as illegal migrants?
- The Prime Minister has seemingly made tackling human trafficking and modern slavery a priority for her Government. In your opinion, how will this affect victims?
- Do you think this will change the way in which the police treat and deal with victims?
- How seriously do the police take this problem?)

18. It has been suggested that the police are finding it difficult to move away from their traditional raison d'être of fighting crime and catching criminals to accommodate a more victim-orientated approach. How does this compare with your experience in the context of human trafficking? Do you find this to be a reasonable conclusion?

19. Some have argued that many police forces do not have adequate resources to tackle the problem of human trafficking and that officers generally lack training, particularly in relation to the cultural, social, educational and linguistic differences that are characteristic of many trafficking cases. How does this compare with your experience?

(Probe further:
- How does this impact upon victims?)

20. It has been argued that human trafficking victims are psychologically coerced in a similar manner to victims of domestic violence. Therefore, police officers should theoretically be able to draw on their experiences of dealing with domestic violence victims to help them identify and help trafficked persons. What do you think about this?

(Probe further:
- Have you seen any police officers adopt this approach?
- If not, given the similarities, why do you think police officers might identify more victims and instances of domestic violence than human trafficking?
- Do you know of any police forces that attempt to educate their officers about human trafficking and psychological coercion by utilising prior knowledge of domestic violence?)

21. How effective do you think the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process is in identifying and dealing with victims who have been subjected to psychological coercion?

(Probe further:
- Do the NRM forms adequately communicate the signs of psychological coercion?
- What factors determine whether the subject of a NRM form is interviewed about their alleged victimisation?)

22. What level of awareness is there in the police of the NRM process?

(Probe further:
- Are some areas/departments/forces/ranks better than others?
- Why is awareness low/high in these areas?)

23. In your experience, how useful are the prescribed indicators on the NRM form in helping police officers and others identify victims subjected to psychological coercion?

(Probe further:
- It has been argued that sometimes these indicators do not work in practice and often fail to take into account the ambiguities inherent in many cases. Do you find this to be a reasonable conclusion?)

24. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

<u>Post-Interview Process</u>

- Thank participant for their help.
- Explain what happens next and how their data will be used.
- Signpost support agencies.
- Ask if they have any questions.

Appendix D (Continued) – Metropolitan Police Officer Question Plan

Met Police Officer Question Plan

Pre-Interview Process

- Confirm that participant has read the information sheet.
- Ask if they have any questions about the study.
- Reiterate aims of study, emphasising that it will form a dissertation submission.
- Remind participant that they can withdraw at any point during the interview.
- Confirm that participant has read consent form, then ask them to sign a copy.

Section 1 – Personal Details and Demographics

1. Note down name and gender.

2. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

□ 18 to 24 years
□ 25 to 31 years
□ 32 to 38 years
□ 39 to 45 years
□ 46 to 52 years
□ 53 to 59 years
□ 60 years or over

3. What is your ethnic group? Choose one of the following options that best describes your ethnic group or background:

a) White
   i. English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
   ii. Irish
   iii. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
   iv. Any other White background, please describe

b) Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups
   i. White and Black Caribbean
   ii. White and Black African
   iii. White and Asian
   iv. Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, please describe

c) Asian / Asian British
   i. Indian
   ii. Pakistani
   iii. Bangladeshi
   iv. Chinese
   v. Any other Asian background, please describe

d) Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
   i. African
   ii. Caribbean
   iii. Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, please describe

e) Other ethnic group
   i. Arab

ii. Any other ethnic group, please describe

Section 2 – Details of Role/Experience

4. How long have you served in the police?

5. Which areas have you worked in?

6. Which unit/department in Newham Borough do you work?

7. What does your role involve?

8. How long have you worked in this role?

Main Questions

9. What do you understand by the term human trafficking?

(Probe further:
- Does it differ from people smuggling? If so, how?)

10. What do you understand by the term psychological coercion?

11. How is psychological coercion used against victims of human trafficking?

12. Where did you acquire your knowledge of human trafficking and/or psychological coercion from?

(Prompt: legislation (e.g. Modern Slavery Act); policy; training/education; colleague; media; films; other source?)

13. What information/guidance on human trafficking and/or psychological coercion are you given in your role as a police officer?

(Probe further:
- How useful do you find this information/guidance?
- Is it clear or ambiguous?
- Do you think it helps officers identify victims of human trafficking?
- Do you think it helps officers recognise signs of psychological coercion in victims?)

14. Some have argued that police officers operating at the local/community level are the group most likely to encounter victims. How does this compare to your experience?

(Probe further:
- If they disagree, ask where they or their colleagues normally encounter victims.)

15. **For officers with experience of dealing with human trafficking only**. In what circumstances and locations have you encountered trafficking victims?

(Prompt: on patrol/response; during an investigation into another offence; during a pre-planned operation into human trafficking; from a referral by NGO; from a self-referral by a victim; from a referral by a victim's family; other).

16. **For officers with experience of dealing with human trafficking only**. How did you identify an individual as a victim of human trafficking?

(Prompt: using indicators; an aide-memoire; specialist advice (MSHTU or NGO); prior knowledge; other)

17. **For officers with experience of dealing with human trafficking only**. How have trafficking victims responded to you and your colleagues?

(Prompt: were they cooperative, hostile, withdrawn?

Probe further:
- Why do you think they responded in this way?
- How did you subsequently respond to them?)

18. **For officers with experience of dealing with human trafficking only**. Have you or your colleagues faced any problems/challenges when dealing with victims?

(Probe further:
- How did you deal with these problems?
- Why do you think these problems arose?)

19. It has been argued that law enforcement officers frequently miss opportunities to identify victims when they encounter them. Why do you think this might happen?

20. It has also been shown that many victims do not approach the police and report their situation. Why do you think this might happen?

(Probe further:
- What problems does this pose for the police?)

21. Other research has shown that victims discovered through police actions such as raids often initially give accounts to police officers that later conflict with accounts they give to NGOs. Why do you think this might happen?

(Probe further:
- What problems does this pose for the police?)

22. Research has also shown that instead of being identified as being trafficked, many victims are instead arrested for offences linked to prostitution and immigration. Why do you think this might happen?

23. What does a victim of human trafficking look like?

(Prompt: where are they from? how do they act? how do they come to be trafficked? male/female? age? vulnerable?)

24. Why do you think victims are trafficked into the UK? (I.e. how are they exploited when they get here?)

25. How prevalent/common is human trafficking in the UK?

26. How seriously do the police take human trafficking?

(Probe further:
- Do you think enough resources are devoted to combating it?)

27. It has been argued that law enforcement agencies are more concerned with tackling illegal immigration than trafficking and that initiatives to combat the latter are merely used to hide attempts by the state to intervene in the lives of migrants for security reasons. What do you think about this? How does it compare to your experience?

28. In your force, how do you deal with victims of human trafficking when they are discovered? (i.e. does your force follow any specific processes?)

29. Have you heard of the National Referral Mechanism?

(Probe further:
- If so, what is it and how does it work?
- Have you ever completed a referral form?
- What did you think of the form?
- What happened after you completed the form? I.e. were you given any feedback? Were you contacted by anyone requesting further details about the victim?)

30. Have you or your colleagues ever been given or used prescribed indicators to help identify victims?

(Probe further:
- In what format were these indicators given?
- Who provided them to you?
- Do you feel these indicators are fit for purpose based on your experience?)

31. Do you have experience in dealing with incidents of domestic violence?

(Probe further:

- How many domestic violence incidents have you attended/dealt with?
- How do you normally deal with incidents of domestic violence?
- What do victims of domestic violence look like?
- How are victims of domestic violence controlled?)

32. How does a victim of domestic violence compare to a victim of human trafficking?

33. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Post-Interview Process

- Thank participant for their help.
- Explain what happens next and how their data will be used.
- Signpost support agencies.
- Ask if they have any questions.