A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURE VERSUS AGENCY IN THE PARTICIPATION OF MINORS IN THE COMMERCIAL SEX MARKET

Courtney Thrash, UNL
Kirk Dombrowski, UNL
Bilal Khan, CUNY

University of Nebraska Lincoln

Thesis Statement

- Prevailing belief that underage sex workers are young girls being controlled and coerced into prostitution by male pimps
- Attention to male prostitution assumes that they have agency in their decision to stay or leave the life, while research on female prostitution focuses on their lack of agency

Literature Review

•Dennis – “Women are Victims, Men Make Choices: The Invisibility of Men and Boys in the Global Sex Trade”

•Female Sex Workers
- Emphasis on victimization
- Precursors:
  - Childhood sexual abuse and neglect
  - Running away

•Male Sex Workers
- Lack of attention on possible victimization
- Emphasis on:
  - Drug use
  - Sexual orientation
  - HIV/AIDS status/risk

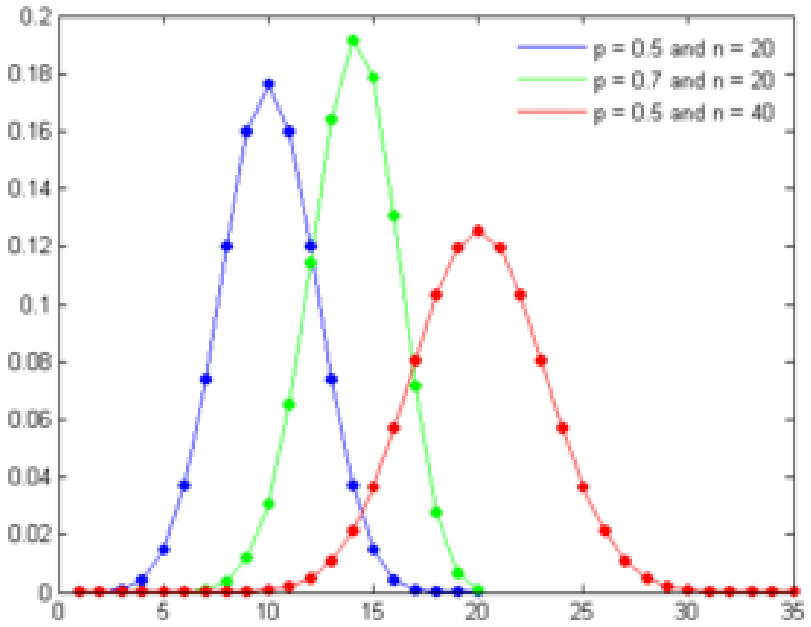
Thesis Statement

- Determine if the levels of agency and constraint experienced by male and female sex workers differs
- If levels of agency and constraint are the same
  - Possible Research Bias
- But, how can we measure the levels of agency and constraint experienced by underage male and female sex workers?

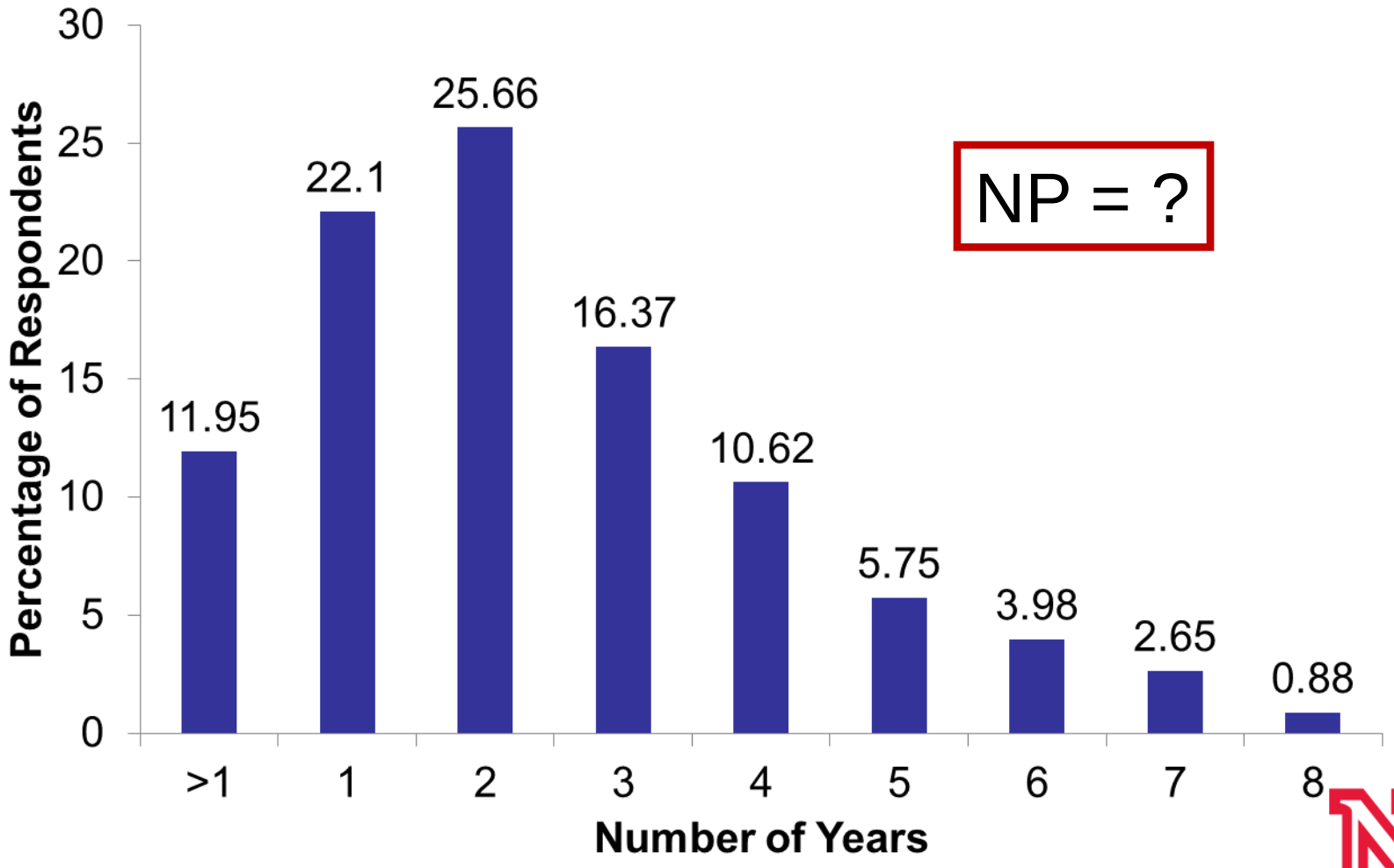
Thesis Statement

- Bernoulli Distribution involves constant rate of stochastic, exponential decay
  - A biased coin is flipped
  - Heads=Success
  - Tails=Failure

Graph of Bernoulli Distribution with Different Ns and Ps



Time in the Life for All Respondents



NP = ?

Thesis Statement

- Use Bernoulli process of decay to examine time in the life for respondents
  - The frequency at which the coin must be flipped is the level of agency that a respondent experiences
  - The bias in the coin corresponds to the level of constraint that a respondent experiences

Methods

- NYC CSEC – Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
  - Respondent Driven Sampling
  - N – 249 Respondents
  - Male, Female, and Transgender Youth

- Analysis
  - N – 226 Respondents
  - Females – 118 Respondents
  - Males – 108 Respondents
  - Transgender – Not included in analysis due to small number of respondents

Methods

- Three-way computational fitting of curve to data
  - Obtained the mean, standard deviation, and variance for number of years in the life for male and female respondents respectively
  - Using Excel spreadsheets, we determined which corresponding values of N and P matched the data
  - Found multiple values for each measure – identified the matching value across all three measures

Mean = np

	N →				
P ↓	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05
0.02	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.10
0.03	0.03	0.06	0.09	0.12	0.15
0.04	0.04	0.08	0.12	0.16	0.20

Standard Deviation = $\sqrt{(np)(1-p)}$

	N →				
P ↓	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
0.01	0.10	0.14	0.17	0.20	0.22
0.02	0.14	0.20	0.24	0.28	0.31
0.03	0.17	0.24	0.30	0.34	0.38
0.04	0.20	0.28	0.34	0.39	0.44

Descriptive Results

	Time in the Life		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
All Respondents (N=226)	2.43	1.80	3.24
Male Respondents (N=108)	2.56	1.88	3.52
Female Respondents (N=118)	2.31	1.73	3.00

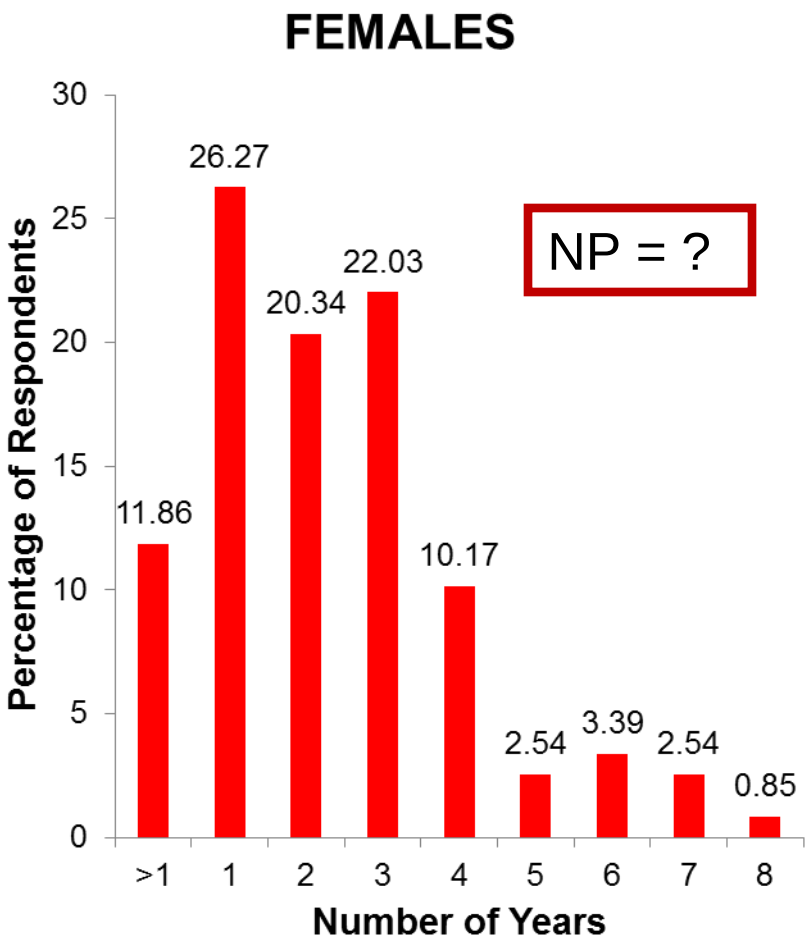
Mean = np

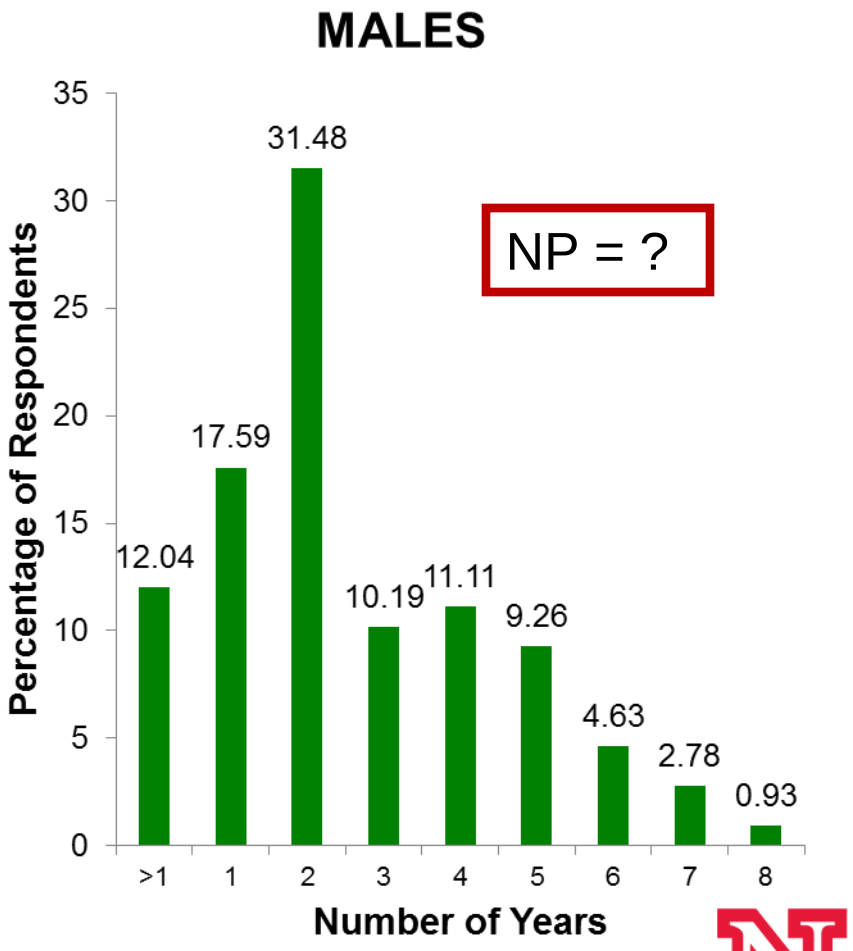
	N →				
P ↓	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05
0.02	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.10
0.03	0.03	0.06	0.09	0.12	0.15
0.04	0.04	0.08	0.12	0.16	0.20

Standard Deviation = $\sqrt{(np)(1-p)}$

	N →				
P ↓	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
0.01	0.10	0.14	0.17	0.20	0.22
0.02	0.14	0.20	0.24	0.28	0.31
0.03	0.17	0.24	0.30	0.34	0.38
0.04	0.20	0.28	0.34	0.39	0.44

Years in the Life for Females and Males





Results

Results of Analysis				
	N	P	1-P	F
Male Respondents	63-64	0.04-0.06	0.94-0.96	1.56-1.59
Female Respondents	77-78	0.03-0.04	0.96-0.97	1.28-1.30

N: Number of trials that would result in a 50/50 chance of initial set now containing zero elements

P: Probability that an element will disappear from initial set for a single stochastic toss

1-P: Probability that an element will remain in initial set for a single stochastic toss

F: Frequency at which respondents think about leaving life

Results

Comparison of Agency and Constraint			
Agency		Constraint	
$\frac{F_{female}}{F_{Male}}$	0.81-0.83	$\frac{(1-P_{Female})}{(1-P_{male})}$	1.00-1.03

- Females are considering leaving the life at a rate 0.81-0.83 times that of their male counterparts
- Females experience less agency
- Females are experiencing between 1.00-1.03 times the level of constraint of their male counterparts
- Females are experiencing greater constraint

Discussion

- There is a difference in the agency and constraint experienced by male and female respondents
  - Males experience more agency
  - Females experience more constraint
- Major Finding
  - The constraint experienced by males and females is very close

Discussion

- Limitations
  - Did not explore alternative methods of curve-fitting
  - Data from NYC – Possibility that these results are not generalizable
  - Respondent Driven Sampling
- Future Research
  - Look at the factors that are found in research that act as constraints on female sex workers and their decision to leave the life (ex: pimps, income, dependents)
  - Determine if systematic deviations exist between female and male respondents on these factors

University of Nebraska Lincoln