

THE POLITICS OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN: SOCIAL  
MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE STATE OF GEORGIA

by

TAYLOR MARTIN HOUSTON

(Under the Direction of Patricia Richards)

ABSTRACT

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) has become a growing topic of concern among the public and broader anti-trafficking movement. Previous research focused on the causes and consequences of CSEC, but less attention has been paid to the social movement working to address the issue. While the movement has brought together a diverse group of seemingly contradictory bedfellows (e.g. both feminists and Christian conservatives), it has experienced a series of successes and failures. Why has the anti-CSEC movement's efforts not reached their potential? More broadly, how do intersecting inequalities, cultural ideologies, and public/private partnerships enable and constrain the movement's goals, strategies, and mobilization efforts? To answer this question, I draw from 48 in-depth interviews, a year of participant observation with two social movement organizations with different ideological foundations (e.g. faith-based and secular), and content analysis of movement documents from the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia. My analysis assumes a synthetic approach drawing upon and integrating insights from several theoretical perspectives, including intersectionality, multi-institutional politics approach, organizational field theory, and dialogic analysis. I examine the intersecting social, economic, and political factors within Georgia spurring the movement and informing its interactions with the state. I then analyze the discursive tactics anti-CSEC

organizations construct to create awareness, mobilize supporters, and advocate change, and explain how these strategies reproduced the very inequalities they were constructed to challenge. I also highlight the obstacles facing anti-CSEC organizations and discuss how these challenges are relational products of internal organizational dynamics and external institutional and cultural forces (i.e. economic, religious, criminal justice, and regional politics). Additionally, I examine the relationships between anti-CSEC organizations and the state. I show how public/private partnerships create opportunities and constraints, and identify how organizations cooperate and other times struggle with the state for control of the movement. Finally, I identify the structural, organizational, and individual level processes that led the anti-CSEC movement to be made up primarily of women. Broadly, I highlight how social (i.e. race, class, gender, sexuality) and cultural (i.e. religion, region) forces as well as public-private partnerships simultaneously create opportunities and constraints for collective action and public policy reform.

INDEX WORDS: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Trafficking, Social Movements, Intersectionality, Repertoires, Strategies, Culture, Fields, Gender, Race, Class, Sexuality, Religion

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **DRAWING OUT THE PARADOXES OF THE ANTI-CSEC MOVEMENT**

In 2010, Renee Unterman, a conservative Republican state senator from Georgia, proposed Senate Bill (SB) 304 on the floor of the Georgia capitol building. Known as a “safe harbor” law, the bill would set the minimum age of prosecution for prostitution to 16, and treat those under the age as child abuse victims in need of social services. In response, several hundred child advocates occupied the capitol building in support of the bill. However, the proposed law was eventually tabled after numerous national and state conservative Christian organizations lobbied against the bill, claiming it would legalize prostitution. In sponsoring the bill, Senator Unterman had gone from being portrayed as a defender of family values to supporter of prostitution. How did this come about? How did a conservative Republican senator come to support what many would consider to be a progressive bill concerning sex work, only to see it fail after a series of attacks by the same socially conservative organizations that would normally support her legislative efforts?

SB 304 was not the brainchild of a rogue Republican senator; rather, it was just one outcome of a decade-long social movement against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in the state of Georgia. The collective effort in Georgia is part of a growing national anti-CSEC movement that interacts with the broader anti-trafficking movement, but distinguishes itself by focusing solely on issues such as trafficked youth, child pornography, and juveniles involved in prostitution. The movement is a collection of private and public organizations with different and sometimes conflicting goals and ideologies that work together to create awareness, provide services, and advocate social change. Yet, the controversy over the

safe harbor bill is emblematic of the complexity that is the anti-CSEC movement. While the movement has brought together a diverse group of seemingly contradictory bedfellows (e.g. both feminists and Christian conservatives), the issues underlying CSEC, such as exploitative sex, child agency, race, class, and gender inequality, sexual morality, immigration, and criminal punishment are hotly disputed. As a result, the movement has experienced a series of concurrent opportunities and constraints for social change. In many instances, the social dynamics and strategies many would consider beneficial to the movement have simultaneously hampered the collective effort. SB 304 and the backlash it received is just one example of this phenomenon. Examining the structures shaping these outcomes and how anti-CSEC organizations have navigated, challenged, and at times reproduced these social and cultural dynamics are at the heart of this dissertation.

Currently, a diverse body of literature addresses sex trafficking, labor trafficking, prostitution, and sex work at the national and international level (Bernstein 2010; Gozdziaik and Collett 2005; Hodge and Lietz 2007; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Piper 2005; Schauer and Wheaton 2006; Zang 2007, 2009). There is also some research on anti-trafficking activists and movements. However, the literature primarily focuses on debates among international anti-trafficking movements, sex workers' rights organizations, and the state, or national anti-trafficking organizations, their ideological foundations and strategies, and efforts to reign in the commercial sex industry (Bernstein 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Doezema 2010; Weitzer 2005, 2010). Even while scholarship on the more specialized social problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children has increased, analysis of the social movement and organizations working to specifically address CSEC is lacking (see Saunders 2005 for an exception). In this dissertation, I explore the anti-CSEC movement in the state of Georgia. I go beyond a simple

description of the collective effort to analyze how the internal processes of anti-CSEC organizations interacted with the external opportunities produced by the state government. I also pay particular attention to the social (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality) and cultural (e.g. religion) contexts shaping the movement, two issues that scholars argue have been lacking in social movement analysis (Whittier 2002).

While Georgia is not the only state where an anti-CSEC movement exists, it is an appropriate place to study the movement for several reasons. First, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (2005) has identified Atlanta as one of 14 cities in the country with the highest rate of adolescents involved in prostitution. This rating reflects both the fact that a significant percentage of youth in Atlanta (and Georgia more broadly) experience multiple inequalities putting them at risk for commercial sexual exploitation, and there is increased awareness and reporting of CSEC cases compared to other states. This increased awareness is, in part, due to the anti-CSEC movement's activism. Second, Georgia is home to one of the longest running statewide taskforces of public and private organizations specifically created to address CSEC.<sup>1</sup> The taskforce is a diverse group of actors who advocate for commercial sexually exploited youth, provide treatment, housing, and legal aid, develop legislation on their behalf, and arrest and prosecute their exploiters. Third, the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia has been ongoing for the past 13 years and led to a series of legislative changes with bipartisan support. Finally, the organizations involved in the movement represent a broad range of ideological groups, from social progressives to religious conservatives. The diversity of organizations speaks to the breadth of the movement and the range of views concerning the topic. Georgia's anti-

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<sup>1</sup> Multiple state and national anti-trafficking taskforces and coalitions exist across the U.S. (e.g., Massachusetts Interagency Human Trafficking Policy Task Force and the FBI's Innocence Lost Initiative), where CSEC is one of many issues addressed (Klain 1999). However, there have been and are only a few CSEC specific taskforces.

CSEC movement is one of the most sustained and expansive collective action efforts on the issue in the country, making the state an ideal place to conduct research.

Even though Georgia's anti-CSEC movement is growing and has produced several legislative and institutional changes concerning trafficking and juvenile prostitution, commercially sexually exploited youth are still being arrested for prostitution and only a handful of trafficking cases have led to convictions. Furthermore, plans to develop a safe house for exploited youth are stalled and because the movement has focused primarily on the commercial sexual exploitation of girls the experiences of exploited boys have been ignored. Why has the anti-CSEC movement's efforts not reached their potential? How do the social and cultural forces of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and religion enable and constrain the movement's goals and strategies and who participates? What conflicts and compromises occur among anti-CSEC organizations? How have the goals and strategies of anti-CSEC organizations been restricted or supported by local and state officials and institutions? These are the questions I answer in this dissertation.

### **A Note on Terminology**

The language involved in conceptualizing juvenile prostitution, CSEC, or child trafficking has been one of considerable debate among researchers and lawmakers, leading to the creation of a number of concepts. In fact, one of the first issues scholars and child advocates addressed was how the law defined children linked to prostitution. Historically, the police and juvenile justice system have identified youth involved in prostitution as prostitutes, and subsequently prosecuted them as juvenile offenders.<sup>2</sup> Thus, academics and activists have worked

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<sup>2</sup> This is, in part, due to a conflicting criminal justice system that institutionally criminalizes sex with minors as statutory rape, while identifying children engaged in prostitution as offenders (Halter 2010). Further complicating matters, many state and federal laws do not correspond

to change the narrative around “child prostitutes” to “victims.” This language change has manifested in multiple ways. Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak (2010:19) have advocated for the use of the phrase “juveniles involved in prostitution” to address those who are both forced or willingly participate in prostitution. Nixon and colleagues (2002) define the prostitution of individuals under the age of 18 as “sexual exploitation.” Ennet et al. (1999) go another route and just describe the action children engage in as “survival sex.” Tyler (2008:148) uses the phrase “trading sex,” while Barry Flowers (2001) uses “the child sex trade” to explain the “commercial international sexual exploitation of children.” Campagna and Poffenberger (1988:4) utilize the phrase “sexual trafficking in children” to conceptualize “the sexual exploitation of a person under the age of eighteen for pleasure or financial gain.” However, others take issue with the word trafficking, because it implies that all youth involved in prostitution are moved around by someone, thus ignoring those youth who remain in one area and those who survive on their own (Mitchell et. al 2010; O’Connell Davidson 2005). I too am dubious of the “trafficking” term, especially since a majority of the youth commercially sexually exploited in Georgia are exploited where they were born and raised; thus, I will be employing variations of the phrase “commercial sexual exploitation” for the remainder of my dissertation. I provide further explanation for this choice later in the chapter.

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when distinguishing human trafficking victims from child prostitutes (Adelson 2008; Reid and Jones 2011). Although not the only state where this conflict is present, Georgia’s legal approach to trafficking and prostitution typifies this conflict in the criminal justice system. For example, according to the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008 and the state’s human trafficking law (Ga. Code Ann. 16-5-46), all individuals under the age of eighteen engaging in commercial sex are considered victims. However, the state’s prostitution law criminalizes both juvenile and adult prostitutes. Because Georgia’s prostitution law (Ga. Code Ann. 16-6-9) does not differentiate between adult and child prostitution, minors can still be charged as offenders rather than be understood as victims. These legal contradictions allow the “child prostitute” narrative—and its very real material effects—to persist institutionally.



Activists have also been integral to redefining the narrative surrounding child prostitutes. In particular, the terms “domestic minor sex trafficking” (DMST), or more commonly, “child sexual exploitation” (CSE), and the “commercial sexual exploitation of children” (CSEC) have gained significant resonance among local and national activists and state and federal agencies (Saunders 2005). Child sexual exploitation is defined as “practices by which a person, usually and adult, achieves sexual gratification, financial gain or advancement through the abuse of exploitation of a child’s sexuality,” while the commercial sexual exploitation of children is conceptualized as the “sexual exploitation primarily or entirely for financial or other economic reason” (Estes and Weiner 2001:34). CSEC is an expansive concept that includes child pornography, youth involved in prostitution, and sex trafficked minors.

Penelope Saunders (2005) traces the history of the term CSEC to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during the 1990s working to transform descriptions from “child prostitute” to “victim.” The CSEC concept draws on notions of childhood innocence, victimization, and children’s rights, emphasizing that children are developmentally unable to choose prostitution, do not benefit economically, socially, or emotionally from their exploited status, and are experiencing human rights violations.<sup>3</sup> The CSEC narrative creates opportunities for social services rather than criminal punishment, and places the blame for youth involvement

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<sup>3</sup> There are a number of social, physical, and psychological effects that commercial sexual exploitation can have on adolescents. The social effects include isolation from family, peers, and other social institutions, increased involvement with the juvenile justice system, higher likelihood of experiencing physical and sexual violence, and increased drug and alcohol abuse (Belknap 2007; Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Ennett et. al 1999; Nixon et. al 2002). The physical effects include increased risk of teen pregnancy, drug and/or alcohol addiction, contracting HIV or other sexually transmitted infections, and physical harm (Flowers 2001; Dunlap et. al 2003). Finally, emotional problems associated with sexual exploitation include “post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, dissociation, suicidal ideation, aggressiveness, social withdrawal... [and] social phobia” (Dunlap et. al 2003:75).

in prostitution on adult abusers. Since this narrative centers on the youths' experiences, it also creates opportunities for exploited youth to become anti-CSEC activists with expert knowledge.

However, some scholars argue that this “victim” narrative upholds an “agency-less” portrayal of youth, causing youth who do not fit a specific victim image to be ignored (O’Connell Davidson 2005; Saunders 2005). This is particularly the case for commercially sexually exploited boys as well as youth who do not identify as victims, independently engage in sex for compensation without coercion by adults, and/or identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (Dennis 2008; Mitchell et al. 2010; Montgomery 2010; O’Connell Davidson 2005; Saunders 2005). Julia O’Connell Davidson (2005:55) highlights the problems with ignoring adolescents’ agency:

To understand why many children end up selling sex, it is nonetheless important to think about children as agents, as existent rather than nascent social and emotional beings. It is only when children are recognized as such that we can begin to grasp the complexity of links between prostitution and factors such as poverty, neglect, abuse, homophobia and racism. Very often it is precisely because children—like adults—experience these factors as blotting out their subjectivity and individuality that they view prostitution as the lesser of two evils.

Additionally, referring to commercially sexually exploited youth as “children” holds its own connotations, not only because it infers a lack of agency, but also because how states define who is legally a “child” and an “adult” varies, particularly concerning matters involving exploitative sex. Some states consider 16 adulthood while others define being an adult 18 and over.

While I concur that too often the “victim” label ignores individual agency and the “child” term is socially constructed and arbitrarily used to determine who is considered legally a victim of exploitative sex or offender of prostitution, in this dissertation I use the term commercial sexual exploitation of children for several reasons. First, because it was the most common term activists and state and local officials used during my research, and a central goal of this

dissertation is to understand how anti-CSEC activists framed the social problem. Second, CSEC is a broad enough term to include both trafficked and non-trafficked youth, while still constructing them as victims rather than as criminals. Finally, while I do not want to ignore commercially exploited youth's agency, actions are constrained by structural inequalities on the basis of race, class, gender, and sexuality. In the case of CSEC, even for those youth who independently engage in prostitution, their choices are limited by systems of inequality in which exploitation is a significant outcome. Therefore, while I will take steps to recognize the diversity of youth and their pathways into this form of exploitation, victimization (in many different forms) is a common characteristic of CSEC, including when it takes the form of "voluntarily" engaging in prostitution due to limited life choices.

### **Estimating CSEC and Quantifying Conundrums**

Who are commercially sexually exploited youth and how many are there? The answers to these questions are complex and still up for debate. Some scholars have gone about answering these questions by identifying the macro and micro factors pushing youth in the United States and around the globe into sexually exploitative situations. The macro causes include poverty, unemployment, homelessness, inadequate social services, social isolation, educational inequality, family instability, and gender, race, and sexual inequality (Collins 2006; Dunlap et. al 2003; Ennett et. al 1999; Priebe and Suhr 2005; Tyler 2008; Tyler and Beal 2010). Among the micro-level risk factors associated with CSEC are: a history of mental, physical, and/or sexual abuse, weak family solidarity, neglect, limited and/or poor peer relations, poor academic achievement, the lack of feeling safe, increasing emotional distress, running away from home, abuse of alcohol and drugs, engaging in risky sexual behavior at an early age, having peers who trade sex, and

close proximity and exposure to crime (Boxill and Richardson 2007; Ennett et. al 1999; Nixon et. al 2002; Tyler and Beal 2010).

Other scholars have attempted to quantify the CSEC population and its demographics (Curtis et al. 2008; Estes and Weiner 2001). Estes and Weiner's (2001) estimate that 326,000 youth are at risk of being commercially sexually exploited is the most common statistic cited, but estimates as high as 2 million or more, like the 1982 Government Accounting Office report (now outdated, but still used by some) are also commonly cited. Additionally, some scholars and national anti-trafficking organizations, such as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and International Justice Mission (IJM), report even higher numbers and indicate that the problem is growing at epidemic levels (Farr 2005). Many of these estimations signify girls as those primarily commercially sexually exploited. However, more recent research has questioned this assumption, indicating that boys make up a significant proportion of the population, in some estimates half (Curtis et al. 2008; Dank 2011). However, these estimates are confined to New York City making them non-generalizable. Furthermore, critics highlight serious methodological flaws in CSEC estimations, including data based on "guesstimates," "gut hunches," arbitrary definitions of prostitution, a lack of methodological verification, and probabilities rather than reality (Stransky and Finkelhor 2008).<sup>4</sup> These empirical problems are not isolated to CSEC, but are a distinguishing problem for measuring trafficking in general. As Ronald Weitzer (2012:1348) points out in his critique of trafficking estimates:

The numbers and trends asserted are impossible to substantiate, given two fundamental evidentiary problems: (1) the clandestine nature of trafficking, and (2) the lack of a baseline from which to measure changes over time. Data are simply not available for drawing macro-level conclusions.

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<sup>4</sup> For three substantial critiques of CSEC and trafficking estimates see Stransky and Finkelhor (2008), Weitzer (2012), and Zang (2012).

Problematic estimations can lead to ineffective policy outcomes, as was the case for the Atlanta Police Department (APD), when the U.S. Department of Justice uncovered that a human trafficking task force set up in 2005 to identify victims and prosecute exploiters was based on an overestimation of victims. After spending several hundred thousand dollars, the police department issued a statement to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* admitting that the task force was “ineffective in identifying victims of human trafficking, and had not produced the expected results” (Mariano 2012). While Atlanta has not been the only city plagued by overestimations, relying on unsubstantiated estimates of CSEC as the foundation for intervention comes with many perils. These perils include wasting limited state resources on problems where there are little to no identifiable victims of exploitation, losing public and political support for change once the numbers are not verified, and distracting from the root causes of commercial sexual exploitation, like poverty and racism. Although developing more accurate ways of estimating the CSEC population and its characteristics is an important and necessary endeavor, this dissertation is focused primarily on the activism surrounding the issue. While establishing who and how many commercially exploited youth exist is not at the center of this research, this does not mean these numbers were not important to or used by activists. In Chapter Three, I discuss how estimates of CSEC were employed by activists in their efforts to raise awareness and spur legislative change.

### **Trafficking, Social Movements, Intersecting Inequalities, and the Anti-CSEC Field**

To understand how anti-CSEC organizations in Georgia operate and how race, class, gender, sexuality, and culture shape the construction of the anti-CSEC movement, its relationship with state and local officials, and its strategies for change, I employ what Whittier (2002:292) calls a “synthetic theoretical approach.” This approach moves beyond critiques

calling for a need to integrate the standard social movement paradigms (i.e. political process or new social movement theories) and accounts for internal and external dynamics, as well as how meaning and structure affect social movements. To do this, I situate my work within the literatures on trafficking, intersectionality, social movements, and organizational theory.

Broadly, this dissertation is about illuminating the ways social movement efforts are continuously and simultaneously constrained and enabled by social and cultural forces and the movement's interactions with the state. In the following sections, I discuss CSEC and the social movement response as a social problem situated within broader socio-historical and cultural concerns surrounding sex, gender, race, immigration, and morality. I then discuss the importance of taking an intersectional approach to the understanding of social movements, highlighting the processes that are uncovered that previous theories have been unable to account for. I also highlight how accounting for culture can add to this approach. Finally, I discuss the integration of organizational and social movement theory and the benefits this theoretical marriage has for our understanding of social movement analysis, and in my case, the organizational dynamics of the anti-CSEC movement and its relationship to the state government.

### ***Anti-Trafficking, Anti-CSEC - Movements from Past to Present***

One cannot discuss CSEC and the collective response to the problem without discussing the broader anti-trafficking movement. There is a long and well-documented history of anti-trafficking movements. Previous research has linked these movements to concerns over the institutionalization of state-regulated prostitution among Western European Countries and their colonies, industrialization, and the growing entrance of women into the economy; as well as moral panic over fears of foreign immigration, interracial marriage, and protecting the sexual

purity of women (Kempadoo 2005; Limoncelli 2010). Underlying many of these fears are notions of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, sexual morality, and ethnocentrism.

Those involved in anti-trafficking movements in the past and present have drawn primarily from two ideologically separate camps: liberal and neo-abolitionist feminists and conservative Christian missionaries. Yet, the two groups frequently have joined forces to work on the issue (Doezema 2002, 2010; Kempadoo 2005; Limoncelli 2010). However, they justify their position towards sex trafficking in very different ways. The Christian organizations assert that sex trafficking and prostitution are immoral actions that rob women and children of their sexual virtue and purity, and therefore need to be eradicated (Stone and Vandenberg 1999). In contrast, neo-abolitionist feminist groups assert that sex trafficking and prostitution are forms of sexual violence. They argue that patriarchy, globalization, and capitalism cause women and children to face social and economic inequalities leading to the violation and commodification of their bodies for the pleasure of (mostly male) consumers and sex industries (Doezema 2010; Rubin 1975; Shifman 2003; Stateva and Kozhouharova 2004). While certain individuals might still wonder how such an unlikely collaboration has been constructed, Smart (1995) contends that the two groups both maintain underlying hegemonic assumptions on sexual morality and female sexuality. While faith-based groups utilize religious rhetoric concerning sexual morality to advocate against sex trafficking, neo-abolitionist feminist groups address the issue as one of patriarchal power and the exploitation of women's bodies. For both, any form of sex work is seen as improper or non-consensual sexual activity.

Critics of anti-trafficking organizations assert there must be a distinction between those women and men who are forced into prostitution and those who perceive it as a legitimate form of labor. For example, they contend anti-trafficking legislation should clarify between

consensual and non-consensual acts of prostitution (Doezema 2002, 2010). Human rights and sex-worker rights activists also argue that many anti-trafficking campaigns construct foreign prostitutes as “othered” and helpless, in order to promote their own ethnocentric interests, which include eradicating prostitution, strengthening state intervention through punishment, reinforcing a cultural hierarchy, and imposing neo-liberal economic and social values (Doezema 2001). Additionally, critics assert federal and state anti-trafficking laws more often harm sex workers than protect them. This is because many anti-trafficking laws are constructed in tandem with immigration laws; therefore wrapping up political concerns over illegal immigration with sex trafficking and prostitution (Chapkis 2003). In the case of anti-trafficking legislation, access to economic, social, and citizenship support is primarily provided to girls/women who fit an ideal victim image, while poor, immigrant, women/girls of color, who make up the majority of sex workers, are primarily ignored and/or deported.

In an effort to address commercial sexual exploitation, but remain outside this politically contentious debate over trafficking, prostitution, consent, and immigration certain organizations have set their sights on commercially sexually exploited minors. This is because most groups in the anti-trafficking movement, even sex-worker rights groups, call for the prevention and protection of children involved in trafficking and prostitution (Doezema 2010; Farr 2005). Two international conferences, the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children I & II, were held in 1996 and 2001; however, only recently has there been a concerted effort by government officials, law enforcement, and private organizations to address CSEC in the United States.

Research on trafficking characterizes the social problem and collective response as a socio-historical construction that is racialized, gendered, and classed, as well as nation and age-



dependent. Furthermore, scholarly attention on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and its designation as a separate issue from adult trafficking is a more recent phenomenon. Yet, little is known about the organizations that interact with public institutions to bring attention to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and work to create social change. These organizations play a critical and influential role in determining how the commercial sexual exploitation of children is portrayed to the public and what goals and strategies should be supported to address the problem.

### ***An Intersectional Analysis of Social Movements***

Because race, class, gender, and sexual inequality are at the root of commercial sexual exploitation of minors and these same forces have shaped the broader social movement response to trafficking, it would seem pertinent to take an intersectional lens to the anti-CSEC movement. An intersectional approach draws from Crenshaw's (1991) original notion of political intersectionality, Hill Collins' (2000) matrices of domination, and Smith's (1987) materialist feminism. These approaches can be applied to draw attention to how social movements are situated within the broader structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality. A growing number of scholars have called for an intersectional approach to social movements in order to identify how race, class, gender, sexuality, and other dimensions influence the politics, culture, strategies, interactions, identities, and power relations within a movement (Naples 2002; Robnett 1997; Roth 2004). They do so to better understand how "systematic inequalities of gender, race, class, and sexuality shape movements and the institutions they confront" (Whittier 2002:295).

Scholars who have viewed social movements from an intersectional lens have highlighted a number of concerns and contradictions that occur within social movement organizations. In her seminal work on intersectionality and the law, Kimberle Crenshaw (1991:1252) asserts that the

“interests of those for whom activists are advocating can be obscured and sometimes jeopardized by political strategies that ignore or suppress intersectionality.” Roberta Villalon’s (2010) study of immigrant women’s experiences with a non-profit domestic violence program identifies how biases among advocates can privilege some immigrant women’s experiences over others, reinforcing many of the inequalities the agency was set up to address. Belinda Robnett’s (1997) research on women leaders of the civil rights movement highlights the ability of an intersectional approach to elucidate the construction of power relations that shapes and constrains who becomes a social movement leader. Finally, in her work on the co-optation of progressive social movements’ frames, Nancy Naples (2002:228) utilizes a materialist feminist approach to “analyze how movements construct their frames within the discourses that organize and are structured by, ruling relations.” She concludes that discourses produced by social movements reflect how organizations and other actors work within the hierarchical, interlocking social structures of race, class, gender, age, and sexuality.

This dissertation builds upon these scholars research by applying an intersectional approach to the anti-CSEC movement. An intersectional approach can acknowledge and explain the many conflicting and simultaneous realities, politics, and power relations leading up to the movement and shaping activists’ discourses, strategies, and participation. In the process, this approach highlights the race, class, gender, and sexual forces advocates encounter, challenge, and at times reproduce.

### ***The Importance of Accounting for Culture***

The forces of inequality are not the only influence on social movement organizations and activism; culture also plays a significant role. Social movement scholars have paid considerable attention to culture and the broad array of languages, ideologies, symbols, values, beliefs, and

rituals that the term encompasses (Hart 1996, 2001; Mische 2008; Polletta 1999, 2008; Swindler 1986). For Polletta (1999:67), culture is “patterned and patterning; it is enabling as well as constraining; and it is observable in linguistic practices, institutional rules, and social rituals rather than existing only in people’s minds.” In many instances, the intersecting social structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality are contingent upon the specific culture and therefore both must be accounted for. Therefore, when examining social movements, both an intersectional and cultural lens should be applied. Recognizing the regional culture in which social movements operate within can provide some clarity to the processes shaping activists’ identities, strategies, and organizational practices as well as enabling and constraining mobilization and activism.

Early work by social movement scholars distinguished between the cultural and structural influences on social movements and typically prioritized structural influences. Yet as Polletta (1999:64) points out “structures are cultural.” Building on this revelation, and as a critique to the political process model, Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) developed their multi-institutional politics approach. According to the authors (2008:82), the approach “offers the theoretical tools with which to investigate the shifting nature of domination (both material and cultural) in both governmental and nongovernmental institutions and collective efforts that arise in response to different types of domination.” The authors argue that society is comprised of numerous conflicting institutions and that culture is one of many powerful forces shaping collective action. Therefore, a multi-institutional politics approach not only recognizes the value in examining the seemingly contradictory ways institutions shape social movements, but also how investigating collective efforts can tell us much about the systems of power that organize our society.

In the case of the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia, it would be remiss to not account for the ways the dominant cultural forces of Christianity and cultural conservatism, which blanket

the Bible Belt region, shaped the movement. Christian churches and their congregants are prominent targets of anti-CSEC organizations' mobilization efforts, bringing with them a distinct set of sexual politics. These Christian sexual politics contribute to a broader southern culture of surface politeness and honor that prioritizes silence or reserve when discussing contentious topics such as politics, religion, sex, and race in public. Therefore, a social movement focusing on exploitative sex (a product of race, class, gender, and sexual inequalities) would have to navigate this hegemonic culture in its efforts for social change. Additionally, since many activists working in the movement were raised with this cultural etiquette, at times, these cultural norms should also be reproduced through the movement.

### ***Bridging Social Movement and Organizational Theory***

A distinct characteristic of the anti-CSEC movement is the number of relationships developed between non-profit organizations, activists, and state actors, such as law enforcement, Department of Family and Child Services (DFCS), and the Governor's Office. These relationships produced and are reproduced through the statewide anti-CSEC task force. Because numerous private and public organizations make up the taskforce, and each contributes to the broader anti-CSEC movement in a multitude of ways, an organizational approach can be beneficial for gaining a deeper understanding of the collective effort.

Relationships between social movements and the state have often been portrayed as either separate and in conflict or increasingly intertwined and institutionalized (Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978). However, some assert the relationship is more complex, arguing that at times movement actors and organizations can be intertwined and mutually constituted with the state, while other times separate and in conflict (Banaszak 2010; Whittier 2002). These authors contend that the relationships are not clear-cut or permanent and that who has more influence and power over the

other varies. Taking this more complex approach will allow me to discuss how the boundaries between the anti-CSEC organizations and state actors were often blurred and illuminate the way the taskforce was simultaneously a benefit and constraint for anti-CSEC organizations.

In order to examine the organizational complexity of social movements and their relationship to the state, some scholars have integrated social movement and organizational theory (Campbell 2005; Davis et al. 2005). These authors argue that many of the scholarly camps' theories, concepts, and methods are quite similar, and that insights from each can be applied to underdeveloped areas of the other in order to identify broad mechanisms influencing movements and organizations (McAdam and Scott 2005). One organizational concept that has been used to examine social movements is the "field." McAdam and Scott (2005:10) refer to a field as "an arena—a system of actors, actions, and relations—whose participants take one another into account as they carry out interrelated activities." Examining social movements through the field concept allows us to map out and distinguish between the multiple actors and organizations that make up the movement, highlight changes (including shifting relationships) within a movement over time and space, and identify which aspects of the movement have become institutionalized or not. A field approach also accounts for the changing influence social movement organizations and the state have over one another. For my own purposes, I suggest that a field approach not only identifies the processes through which certain aspects of collective action become institutionalized while others do not, but also the ways in which public-private partnerships simultaneously create opportunities and constraints for the advancement of movement goals. I also suggest that a field approach can help illuminate the processes that social structures, like gender, have on who participates and leads a movement.

## **Methods**

In order to map the anti-CSEC field and understand how social (i.e. race, class, gender, sexuality) and cultural (religion) forces as well as interactions with the state government simultaneously constrained and enabled the movement, I used a three-pronged research design. First, I conducted participant observations for a little over a year (from spring 2011 to summer 2012) with two nonprofit social movement organizations that have been influential in constructing and carrying out programs and policies addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia. I observed a faith-based (Nightlight) and secular (Demanding Justice) organization that were working both independently and in collaboration with one another to address the issue.<sup>5</sup> Both organizations were 501c(3) non-profit organizations. Second, I conducted in-depth interviews with forty-eight individuals, from both the public and private sector, who played key roles in Georgia's anti-CSEC movement. My respondents fell into the following categories: staff and volunteers from Demanding Justice and Nightlight along with several other nonprofit anti-CSEC organizations, staff of direct service providers for commercially sexually exploited children (e.g. health, residential, court advocates), city and state law enforcement officials (e.g. police, staff of district attorneys), and the staff of city and state agencies (e.g. DFCS and the Governor's Office) that focus on child safety. Finally, I collected and analyzed several hundred movement documents. This included the organizations' internal documents (e.g. staff meeting agendas and financial spreadsheets), multi-media campaigns, pamphlets, and training materials, as well as documents handed out during statewide task force meetings.

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<sup>5</sup> Each organization was given a pseudonym to protect the members' identities.

### ***Field Sites and Participant Observation***

My participant observations revolved around the two anti-CSEC organizations, Demanding Justice and Nightlight. I chose to observe these organizations for two reasons. First, I wanted to gain a better understanding of the ideological spectrum of organizations that exist within the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia. This allowed me the option to observe any differences/variation in how these organizations operate. Second, using the national anti-trafficking movement as a template, I hoped to gain some deeper context between the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia and the national anti-trafficking movement. Multiple scholars have discussed and critiqued the range of organizations prevalent within the national anti-trafficking movement, in particular the feminist and evangelical organizations that have been the most visible (Bernstein 2007b, 2010; Chapkis 2003; Chuang 2010; Doezema 2001, 2002, 2010; Farr 2005; Kim and Chang 2007; O'Connell Davidson 2005; Vance 2011; Weitzer 2012). In light of this, I strategically chose my organizations to better understand how they reflected and/or contrasted with their national counterparts.

The faith-based organization, Nightlight, was a non-denominational, Christian organization, whose staff members held a range of both conservative and liberal perspectives. The day-to-day staff was primarily white women. Halfway through my observation period, an African-American woman was hired as the receptionist. Two white men also worked for the organization, one as full-time staff and the other as a part-time IT technician (who had replaced an Asian-American woman graduate student volunteering with the organization). Nightlight's board of directors was made up primarily of white male church leaders from Atlanta and the surrounding areas (more recently they have added individuals from the business and criminal

justice sectors). While the board did have some authority over hiring and which churches the organization partnered with, the executive director and other staff members exercised a significant amount of autonomy in how they ran the organization and performed their roles.

In comparison, Demanding Justice was a secular non-profit, with no apparent ideological foundation. However, through my observation period it became clear that the women running the organization maintained politically progressive ideals in-line with many feminist values. Similar to Nightlight, Demanding Justice's core staff was primarily women, however they were more racially diverse. Over the course of my time with the organization, three black women and six white women made up the daily staff. In addition, the organization had a white woman attorney and two men detectives (one black and one white) who worked with the organization regularly when they conducted law enforcement trainings on CSEC. The organizational structure of Demanding Justice was also different from Nightlight. Demanding Justice was considered a "campaign," or one program, of a larger non-profit (Inspiring Excellence) working with minors in the juvenile justice system. Therefore, Inspiring Excellence, led by a black woman, did not just focus solely on commercially sexually exploited youth. However, I came to learn that Demanding Justice was the most visible and recognizable part of the non-profit. So much so, that when Inspiring Excellence changed names in a re-branding effort to facilitate more financial donations, the organization kept Demanding Justice as the name of their anti-CSEC program. Furthermore, while Inspiring Excellence had a board of directors, its contact with Demanding Justice members was less direct compared to Nightlight. Also, two of Demanding Justice's core staff were not directly employed under Inspiring Excellence, but rather worked for businesses with strong ties to the organization. Therefore, unlike Nightlight, Demanding Justice's formal structure was less hierarchical and its staff more subcontracted.



Because I wanted to study two organizations coming from different ideological standpoints, I sacrificed the depth that a single case study of an organization could produce for a certain degree of breadth. I believe this was necessary as I was interested in examining how the organizations interacted with one another and the larger anti-CSEC field. I also wanted to avoid portraying the organizations as independent from the broader movement context. Since I was unable to observe both organizations day and night, I made strategic choices concerning what I would observe. I focused my observations on the organizational practices and events that were critical to their maintenance and collective efforts. These areas of focus included their weekly staff meetings, CSEC awareness and training seminars, fundraisers, lobbying efforts, Demanding Justice's law enforcement trainings, Nightlight's monthly community meetings, and the organizations' participation in larger anti-trafficking events. Another strategic site of research were the statewide CSEC taskforce meetings. I observed the main meetings that were held on a quarterly basis, and when possible, the subcommittee meetings in which Demanding Justice and Nightlight members participated. More detailed information on my participant observations can be found in Appendix One.

### ***In-Depth Interviews***

I supplemented my observations with in-depth interviews of forty-eight individuals who played key roles in Georgia's anti-CSEC movement. Interviews averaged between one and two hours. I recruited participants through two methods. First, I used convenience sampling by approaching individuals at the statewide taskforce meetings and requesting interviews. Second, I utilized snowball sampling to contact interviewees, relying on references from members of Demanding Justice and Nightlight and my other interview participants. Respondents fell into the following categories: eleven staff and volunteers from Demanding Justice, ten staff and

volunteers from Nightlight, four child advocacy nonprofit representatives, six anti-trafficking activists, ten staff of direct service providers for commercially sexually exploited youth (e.g. health, residential, court advocates), four city or state law enforcement officials (e.g. police, staff of district attorneys) who handle cases of juvenile prostitution, and three representatives of city and state agencies (e.g. Department of Family and Child Services and the Governor's Office) that focus on child safety. All but one of the interviews was audio recorded. Interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to 2 hours. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect his or her identity.

The interviews covered the respondents' background, motivations for entering the movement, history in the movement, interactions with others in the movement, perceptions of CSEC in general and those involved (child, buyer, seller), obstacles perceived, and strategies for change. Demographic data (see Appendix Two) was also collected with participants' ages ranging from 24 to 66 years old, with a median age of 40. My participants predominantly identified as Christians (75 percent), were highly educated (58 percent had a graduate degree or higher), and had a median annual household income between 40,000 and 50,000 dollars. 40 women and 8 men were interviewed, reflecting the gender imbalance within the movement. Moreover, I conducted multiple informal interviews with activists during my time in the field conducting participant observations.

In-depth interviews were a key component of this research, because I wanted to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and beliefs people hold about those involved in the commercial exploitation of children (the buyer, the seller, the child), the explanations they attach to why CSEC exists, and how these explanations influence their goals, strategies, and practices when addressing CSEC. I also wanted to learn how each member perceived their role and

identity within the anti-CSEC movement, the relationships they viewed as most beneficial to their efforts, and the degree to which they feel they have been un/successful in influencing social change and advancing the movement. For Demanding Justice and Nightlight members in particular, I paid attention to how they discussed CSEC, their strategies, and organizational goals, cross-checking their language with my observation notes for similarities and differences.

### ***Content Analysis of Movement Documents***

The third part of my study consisted of collecting and analyzing a significant number of materials related to Georgia's anti-CSEC movement. This included movement documents, multimedia campaigns, and other materials used by the organizations to bring attention to the issue and to promote their agenda. Both organizations had created a "toolkit," or blueprint, for how to replicate the organizations in other cities and states. Included in these toolkits were instructions for how to implement collective action strategies that were successful in growing support for the movement, creating awareness about CSEC, and producing policy changes. Along with these tool kits, I analyzed each organization's website, Facebook page, and "email blasts" that updated supporters with new legislative developments, volunteer opportunities, and funding campaigns. I followed Demanding Justice's blog where they discussed research they commissioned on CSEC as well as awards and grants the organization had received for their service. I also examined materials handed out during CSEC training sessions, flyers distributed at events, public awareness and campaign videos, billboards, and in the case of Nightlight a short film. Outside of these organizational materials, I analyzed documents provided during the taskforce meetings, laws and policies that had been put into practice since the organizations were founded, and newspaper articles mentioning the organizations during my observation period. This produced several hundred documents for my analysis. Through grounded theory and the qualitative

computer program ATLAS.ti, I used open coding to identify themes within my interviews, field notes, and documents. The themes that emerged reflected an overlap in all three sources of data. I then engaged in focused coding to identify examples that best reflected the themes within my data. All three parts of this research study were appropriate for answering my research questions. Why have the anti-CSEC movement's efforts not reached their potential? How do the social and cultural forces of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and religion enable and constrain the movement's goals and strategies and who participates? What conflicts and compromises occur among the anti-CSEC organizations? How have the goals and strategies of anti-CSEC organizations been restricted or supported by local and state officials and institutions?

### **Outline of Dissertation**

In Chapter Two, I set up the socio-historical context for Georgia's anti-CSEC movement. I examine the social, cultural, and institutional factors that contribute to making CSEC a social problem in the state of Georgia. I then construct a timeline of the movement. I identify the legal shortcomings that spurred the movement, the initial activists who brought attention to the issue, the collective efforts to make social and legislative in the state, the relationship between the movement and state government, and the formation of the organizations I observed and their roles in the broader movement. Theoretically, I examine the internal and external contexts shaping the social movement and in turn the state's response to the collective action. Taking an intersectional and cultural lens, I show that intersecting inequalities and religious norms surrounding sex each contributed to the social problem and significantly structured how the state and criminal justice system responded to commercially exploited youth. Additionally, these social and cultural forces influenced who mobilized around the issue and the discourses and collective efforts employed. I then highlight how a change in the movement's dynamics,

particularly the movement's racial composition, increased support from religious organizations, and goals, shifted the state's response to the activism. These changes caused the boundaries between the movement and state government to blur with the formation of the taskforce. This historical context is important for the remainder of the dissertation, which examines how these internal and external dynamics simultaneously created opportunities and constraints for the movement during my observation period.

The background in Chapter Two sets the stage for Chapter Three, in which I discuss the discourse and practices, or collective action repertoires, that Nightlight, Demanding Justice, and other anti-CSEC activists used to raise awareness, mobilize supporters, and lobby for institutional and cultural change. Integrating dialogic analysis with a materialist feminist approach, the chapter examines the discursive processes anti-CSEC activists go through to produce their strategies. Activists' articulation of what is the problem, who is the victim, who is the perpetrator, and what is the most effective way to end commercial sexual exploitation of children is the main focus. Particular attention is paid to how notions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age, as well as dominant cultural narratives pertaining to trafficking and criminal justice shaped and limited the discursive strategies and their effectiveness. I also examine the activists' and their audience's social positions, in relation to those at the heart of the movement (exploited youth), and how this dynamic had both intended and unintended effects. In particular, strategies used to mobilize new supporters had the paradoxical effect of obscuring those youth most likely to be commercially sexually exploited. Finally, I make comparisons between the anti-CSEC movement's and the broader anti-trafficking movement's repertoires, showing that while there is some overlap there are also differences. Broadly, I show how efforts to increase mobilization through the use of broader and universal discourses can produce both productive

and counterproductive effects, especially when social and cultural forces are also taken into account.

In Chapter Four, I examine the obstacles, contradictions, and conflicts anti-CSEC organizations faced in their efforts to employ their collective action repertoires. Using Armstrong and Bernstein's (2008) multi-institutional politics approach, I discuss how these obstacles primarily reflected the socio-political, economic, and cultural environment within which the movement was situated. However, I also show that Demanding Justice and Nightlight's differing organizational structures and ideologies shaped which obstacles were more pronounced. Demanding Justice struggled to identify consistent funding, facing competition over finite resources due, in part, to the recession. Also, because of a decentralized state police force, the organization faced challenges carrying out one of its primary strategies, law enforcement training. Nightlight, in comparison, experienced an ideological paradox when it came to recruiting volunteers and raising awareness about CSEC. Because the organization's target audience was Christian churchgoers, it would seem the mass amount of churches in Georgia would mean a high mobilization potential. However, the organization had trouble finding consistent volunteers. Additionally, because Nightlight expounded a faith-based ideology in connection with their activism they were able to navigate a regional culture steeped in Christian conservatism. However, while their faith-based status provided them with cultural capital, this same culture created constraints on how they were able to discuss the topic, who they affiliated with, and how they operated the organization. Overall, I show that organizational characteristics that at first glance seem beneficial to collective efforts can simultaneously be constraints, once the larger social and cultural forces are taken into account.

Chapter Five broadens the view of the movement from Demanding Justice and Nightlight to the statewide task force. Using the concept of field, I map out the public and private entities involved in the state's anti-CSEC movement, the overlapping relationships and activities that occurred, and how these collaborations were places where certain movement goals were achieved. I also discuss how these same relationships became messy at times, particularly between Nightlight, Demanding Justice, and the state government, producing tension over ownership of the movement, policy implementation, and bureaucratic red tape. Specifically, I point out that through the task force, the boundaries were blurred between the state and the movement. Building on the field concept, I integrate a gendered approach into my analysis of the movement to show that gender was significant in structuring the anti-CSEC field. I show how gender permeated the institutional, organizational, and individual levels of the movement influencing who participated and lead the movement, and who was considered able to become an activist. As in my other chapters, I point out that once this more complex gendered lens is applied to the movement, it becomes clear that issues that were originally considered beneficial and enabling to movement efforts can simultaneously be constraints. Furthermore, taking a gendered approach to social movements not only expands our understanding of social movements, but also extends our knowledge of social inequality, by exposing the processes that define, and at times redefine, social differences in society.

In my final chapter, I consider both the practical and sociological implications of my findings. I first discuss how the intersecting inequalities and cultural ideologies at the root of the commercial sexual exploitation of children also shape and are reproduced through the movement to address the social problem. I also suggest that the blurred boundaries present within the anti-CSEC field were spaces for building the movement and making institutional change while

simultaneously areas of contention that constrained the movement from fully realizing some of their goals. I then make the broader argument that taking an integrative approach to social movements exposes the paradoxical nature of collective action; particularly, how many organizational arrangements, alliances, discourses, and strategies can be both continuously and concurrently constrained and enabled and thus why certain goals can not be fully realized. Next, I consider how my findings might be used by anti-CSEC organizations to address the obstacles and constraints they face. This will include suggestions for discursive changes and modifications to strategies, but also concerns that might be considered in future efforts. I will also offer a few policy changes that the organizations might support as they lobby for legislative change. I finish by discussing the implications of my findings for understanding other movements made up and led by those who are not directly impacted by the issue. I also identify future research questions concerning CSEC and the social movement response



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ANTI-CSEC ACTIVISM IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA FROM 2000 – 2011**

My objective in this chapter is to provide historical background for the social movement against commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia. I will discuss the formation of the movement and the social, economic, and political factors that spurred the movement in Georgia. I will also show how the social movement interacted with the state over the years. I frame this discussion within the idea that social movement structures and meanings are shaped at the intersections of internal and external contexts (Whittier 2002). Whittier (2002:289) writes, “state structures, dominant cultures, and civil society shape movements, and, in turn, movements can reshape the states, policies, civil societies, and cultures within which they operate.” Externally, I analyze how the structures of gender, race, class, sexuality, age, and religion shape not only the origination of the anti-CSEC movement and its organizations, but also who was incorporated into the movement and what discourses and strategies the movement produced over time. My analysis also looks at how internal movement dynamics played a significant role in how external state and criminal justice institutions responded to collective action.

Several important factors are highlighted in this chapter. First, race, class, gender, age, and sexual inequality played significant roles in why commercial sexual exploitation of children was occurring in the state and how it was viewed culturally and addressed criminally. In particular, the lack of institutional response by the criminal justice system to the problem was a major spark that created the social movement in Georgia. Second, participation in the movement over time was raced, classed, and gendered. This includes not only who collectively organized or supported the movement originally, but also who has recently engaged with the movement or

fought against it. Imbedded within this discussion is the unlikely partnership between Christian evangelicals and socially progressive organizations to address the social problem.

Third, the internal dynamics of the movement, including who participated and the goals of the movement, changed over time through its interaction with the state and religious institutions. More specifically, movement goals changed as activists began working more closely with religious organizations and the state government to construct laws, create victim services for commercially sexually exploited youth, and develop a statewide task force to address the issue. Fourth, the external state responded to the internal movement's efforts. This was most clearly visible in the passage of laws and development of a statewide task force specifically addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Furthermore, state actors actively became members of the movement, thus blurring the boundary between the movement and the state.

Because of issues both internal and external to the movement, Georgia currently maintains one of the only statewide task forces established specifically to work against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This task force organizes public and private actors in an effort to create individual and systemic change in the state. These changes look to address not only how the criminal justice system responds to victims, buyers, and sellers but also how the public views those involved in the social problem. Understanding the socio-historical contexts leading to this task force provides a deeper understanding of not only how movements are formulated, but also how they are both responses to and products of social structures.

### **Why is it Happening Here? The Intersecting Structures of Inequality at the Core of CSEC**

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is not a new phenomenon, and previous national and international movements have existed to address the issue (Limoncelli 2010;

Saunders 2005). However, the current movement that I discuss has its origins at the beginning of 2000 and is analyzed from the state level. Boxill and Richardson (2007:145) describe the efforts around the issue before 2000:

As early as 1997, the Fulton County Juvenile Court began thinking about ways to address the growing challenge of young girls who were appearing before the court as perpetrators of juvenile crimes but were in fact victims of prostitution. Girls as young as 9, 10, and 11 were being bought, sold, kidnapped, tortured, and prostituted on the streets of Atlanta. The early conversations between law enforcement and criminal justice officials heightened awareness within the juvenile justice system but did not stem the rising number of girls whose childhoods were being brutally stolen. There appeared to be no public will or interest in spending scarce resources on a group of girls who, in the mind of the general public and many in law enforcement, seemed to be the perpetrators, not the victims.

From accounts by movement activists and news reports from the time, a key moment initiating the movement came from an African American woman juvenile court judge. Judge Nina Hickson had penned an op-ed on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2000 in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* entitled “An Epidemic of Tragic Proportions” highlighting her disheartening experience of watching child after child brought into her courtroom charged with prostitution. The opinion piece was a public recounting of a discussion Hickson had begun the year before with two other women of color child advocates. Boxill and Richardson (2007:145) write:

In late August 1999, Nina Hickson, then chief judge of the Fulton County Juvenile Court, accompanied by Deborah Richardson, the director of programs for the Juvenile Court, visited with Nancy Boxill, a member of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners. The visit was to inform Boxill (a longtime child advocate) of what was by now an epidemic of young girls who were being prostituted. Judge Hickson was adjudicating an average of 30 such cases each month. Most of the presenting cases were status offenses (i.e., unruly conduct, curfew violations, or school truancy). Some cases were the delinquent offense of prostitution. The legal charges reflected the insult that the girls had ostensibly perpetrated against the community.

After the publication of the piece, Hickson, Boxill, and Richardson convened a task force to attract media attention around the issue and propose legislative change. As Jane Hansen of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* reported in 2001:

Juvenile Court judges and others have begun pressing for change in Georgia to bring harsher penalties against those who exploit children. They want the Georgia Legislature to make the pimping of children a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison. They want authorities to become more aggressive in arresting and prosecuting men who pay to have sex with underage prostitutes, as well as the adults who sell them. And they want some alternative for helping these girls other than putting them behind bars.

The dismay and subsequent action by the women was in response to the social, cultural, and institutional inequalities making commercial sexual exploitation of children a reality. These prominent women of color identified inequalities within the legal system that treated children, who were disproportionately young, poor, African American girls, as offenders rather than victims of sexual exploitation.

### ***Structural Inequalities***

Beyond the legal inequities in Georgia at the time, demographic inequalities presented opportunities for commercial sexual exploitation of children. Many of the issues facing children in the state of Georgia in 2000 are similar to conditions in Georgia today. Among other states in the South, Georgia has one of the highest poverty rates among children. The 2000 US Census found that of the over two million children under the age of 18 living in Georgia, 365,406 (17.1 percent) lived below the poverty line. This class measure also intersects with race, as a majority of those youth in poverty, 60.57 percent (221,332), were black. This figure represents 30.4 percent of the black youth population at the time. In contrast, the report found that only 9.1 percent of white children and 9.6 percent of Asian children lived in poverty, while Latino and Native American children were close behind Black children, with 24.6 percent and 23 percent

living in poverty. Census data also show that in 2000, the dropout rate among public school students in grades 9-12 was 7.2 percent, one of the highest in the nation. The dropout rate varied by race, with the Black and Latino dropout rates disproportionately higher (9.4 percent) than whites (5.7 percent) and Asians (3.7 percent). Along with the Census data for 2000, The Children's Defense Fund put out its annual *The State of America's Children* report. Relying on state and federal agency data, the report found 17.3 percent of children in Georgia were without health insurance (Martinez and Serafi 2000). Furthermore, while African American juveniles made up only 32 percent of the children age 10-17 in the state and Latinos made up 5 percent, a report by the Children and Youth Coordinating Council Georgia Detention Alternatives Initiative (2003:10-11) found that they disproportionately made up a majority of youth detentions in the state:

Minority youth consistently account for 58% - 60% of all juvenile arrests and the vast majority of serious violent juvenile offenses in the state. Minority youth comprise an even greater proportion of juvenile court referrals, and have constituted approximately 75% of all juveniles transferred to superior court since the implementation of SB 440 [The Juvenile Justice Reform Act] in 1994. Minorities also comprise a heavily disproportionate number of committed youth in the state and an even larger proportion of youth committed for serious and violent offenses. In 2001, for example, 69% of all youth committed to DJJ and 74% placed in YDCs [Youth Detention Centers] were minority. African-American youth account for nearly all minority youth in the state's juvenile justice, although the proportion of Hispanic youth is steadily rising.

All this data speaks to significant inequalities experienced among low-income youth of color in Georgia. In other words, at the beginning of the movement in 2000 many youth were (and currently still are) significantly affected by race and class inequality.

In Atlanta, where the movement started, these inequalities were ever present. The inequality was disproportionately present within the African American population. Atlanta is unique in that African Americans made up 61 percent of the population in 2000, while only

making up 29 percent of the total state population. Atlanta has garnered the name “Black Mecca,” due to a large influx of African Americans during the 1990s and early 2000s, and an economically diverse Black community is now present in the city. However, the city of Atlanta and its reputation as a hospitable Black destination city is not always reflected in the lived experience of its occupants. Morris and Monroe (2009:28) write about this paradox:

Perceptions and statistical data from Georgia present compelling and sometimes contradictory images of the state. Atlanta, the capital city, is a thriving national and international metropolis that is home to major corporations (e.g. the Coca-Cola Company), hosted the 1996 Olympic Games, and enjoys a long-standing reputation as a historical center for Black political, religious, educational, and artistic life...However, against this backdrop of Black success, the 2000 U.S. Census revealed that more than one third of Atlanta’s families lived below the poverty line. From 2000 to 2004, the city’s child poverty rate rose from 39.3% to 48.1%, making Atlanta the number one city in the United States in terms of percentage of children living in poverty.

Beyond the socio-demographic inequities, Atlanta, while highly diverse, is also significantly segregated along racial lines. The index of dissimilarity score ranges from 0 to 100 and measures how equally two racial groups are distributed throughout an area. For Atlanta in 2000, the index of dissimilarity score between blacks and whites was 63.9, indicating a very high amount of segregation between the two groups. Numerous scholars have shown a significant connection between residential segregation and race and class inequities (Feagin 2006; Krysan et. al 2009; Krysan and Bader 2007; Massey and Denton 1993). Through the production of a significantly large economic and socially vulnerable group of children, the ongoing geographic and socio-economic inequalities of the city and state played significant roles in creating the conditions for commercial sexual exploitation of children to occur.

### ***Institutional Inequalities***

Along with these structural inequalities, institutional inequities existed within the state. In particular, the criminal justice system and the child welfare system maintained significant holes,

contradictions, and lack of enforcement allowing commercial sexual exploitation of children to take place. Children at risk of exploitation or children who were exploited were more likely to have been a part of the state's family and child services system. Therefore, understanding how the system reacted to evidence or suspicions of exploitation is important. Boxill and Richardson (2007:144) highlight some of the deficiencies in the child welfare system at the time:

In 2000, there was a lack of coordination of services and little awareness among those who were charged with the care and protection of children. There were few conversations among child welfare and juvenile justice agencies about how to provide a concerted effort to address the needs of the victims. School social workers were reporting trancies and runaways, and teachers were observing older men picking up girls from middle- and high-school doorsteps without making the connection that there was more under the surface than the presenting issues.

The inadequacies of the state, and in particular, the city's Department of Family and Child Services in 2000, came to a head in a 2002 lawsuit *Kenny A. et al., v. Perdue*. The lawsuit exposed a history of systematic problems within the institution. Among those problems were excessive caseloads for poorly trained and supervised caseworkers; prevention of the placement of African American children in permanent homes based on race; inadequate health and educational services to children in the system; unsafe shelters; poor legal representation for the children; and a lack of any systematic management of child placement (The Barton Child Law & Policy Clinic 2006). Thus, the institutional failure of the state to provide for children already deemed vulnerable made the youth even more at risk for exploitation.

Adding to these problems, procedurally, the department was not required to investigate instances of commercial sexual exploitation. This was because the department only investigated problems among family members; therefore, the department did not investigate claims of exploitation unless someone in the family was commercially sexually exploiting the child (which does occur). This gap in the investigation was only recently addressed being remedied in part by

House Bill (HB) 200. However, at the end of my observation period, the department was still in the process of adding commercial sexual exploitation to their formal procedures as part of a larger overhaul of the management system. In particular, the department was under new leadership and implementing a differentiated response model, or a new way of reporting child abuse and casework, to address the institutional gaps in the agency. As part of this model, DFCS was creating a new protocol for mandatory reporters. This protocol provided state child advocates not only “what signs to look for” pertaining to abuse, but also two options for how to handle the situation. The first option involved removing the child from the abusive home. The second option was family centered, and provided state services to improve childcare and strengthen family bonds.

During this revamping of the DFCS’ protocol, information and policies specific to CSEC would be included. This would include DFCS staff being given training on CSEC similar to the trainings provided by Demanding Justice and Nightlight. The training was important to the implementation of the recent mandatory reporting law (HB 1176) among case managers. State advocate Stacey, mentioned another benefit to the DFCS’ protocol overhaul:

Another great thing about DFCS getting on board is that Georgia Care Connection and their staff has formed a great relationship with a select few DFCS case managers. So they’ve been able to work with those people on the ground, more local community based, instead of state based, because it takes a while to trickle down. And so those case managers sometimes will just pick up the phone and call the [coordination office] and say “hey I’ve got this girl. We’ve already talked about her. She’s CSEC. Help me. Where should I place her? Should I place her in a home or can you secure a residential facility for her? We’ll work with you.” And DFCS has paid for the girls that go into the CSEC residential program that’s been setup.

Stacey’s comments highlight the holes in the state’s child welfare system, and the measures being taken to address those deficiencies. These institutional inequalities, only recently addressed, helped foster an environment where children were more at risk of being exploited.



Along with the child welfare system, the criminal justice system, both adult and juvenile, played significant roles in perpetuating the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia. These institutional inadequacies were at the center of the critique by the originating movement members. In 2000, several laws on the books created a quagmire for law enforcement when responding to commercial sexual exploitation of children. The most criticized part of the law pertained to the paradoxical way the law handled statutory rape versus the prostitution of minors. All states possess statutory rape laws defining the age of consent for sex. Such laws assign legal culpability for sex with a minor to the party exceeding the age of consent. However, in 2000 (and currently), if a child was prostituted, the police would have arrested and charged the youth with prostitution rather than pursue the person purchasing sex with the minor for statutory rape. Also under the law, facilitating sex with or “pimping” a minor was only considered a misdemeanor and was therefore punished with a mere fine. Thus, in most prostituting of minor cases, the child was the only person punished by the legal system.

This inconsistency in the law is a reflection of the larger inequalities persistent within both statutory rape laws and the laws pertaining to prostitution. Cocca (2004:2) asserts that statutory rape laws were developed to “protect young people from engaging in potentially coercive sex that may not be recognized as meeting a legal definition or popular perception of forcible rape, before they are physically or emotionally ready.” Thus, these laws were constructed to address morality issues pertaining to sexuality and age. However, Cocca also points to class notions imbedded in the laws emerging in the 1990s. She highlights how much of the debate over the laws evolved around decreasing the sexual activity among low-income and poor youth, as well as the number of children born out-of-wedlock. In addition, the laws were originally gender-specific, targeting male offenders, and assuming female victimhood.

Nevertheless, Cocca points out, the laws have disproportionately been used against homosexual activity. Thus the laws were constructed to regulate age, class, gender, and sexual politics within society.

In Georgia, up until 1995, the law was gender specific, identifying male offenders, and females under 14 years old as victims. In 1995, the Child Protection Act was introduced. The bill raised the age of consent to 16, made the law gender neutral, and attached a 3-year age span (which would eventually become 6 years) to prevent criminalizing consensual teenage relationships. Cocca reports that opposition to the bill came in two forms. First, conservative Democrats wanted to change the age of consent back to 14 because they worried young men would be prosecuted for being enticed by young flirtatious girls, reflecting a blame the victim mentality among the law makers. Secondly, The Christian Right opposed the age-span provision because they believed it promoted premarital sex. The bill passed in 1995, and was revised in 1996 to expand the age-span to 6 years, making it only a misdemeanor offense if the youth fell within that age limit. Thus the current Georgia statutory rape law not only reflects larger ideals pertaining to age, gender, class, religion, and sexuality but also plays a specific role in defining who is and is not an exploited youth.

Similarly, the efforts to change the laws surrounding the prostitution of children in 2000 highlighted the prevalence of gender inequality within the institution. During my formal and informal interviews, as well as observations of social movement events, activists discussed the culture surrounding prostitution before the movement began. Phrases like “boys will boys” and the “good ol’ boy network” were used to describe lawmakers and law enforcement’s attitudes surrounding prostitution. These attitudes were linked to why the laws involving pimping and pandering a minor were weak and unenforced. In other words, movement actors identified the

gendered notions of male heterosexual privilege and entitlement to sex as significant causes for the prevalence of CSEC and lack of criminal justice response. Furthermore, many interviewees described how the child was often blamed for her exploitation and arrested by the police. In particular, girls were referred to as sexually or morally deviant by those in the juvenile justice system; thus justifying their punishment. Similar to news reports at the time (Hansen 2001), campaign literature from Demanding Justice described the limited options facing prostituted children in 2000:

[A judge] could sentence the girls to a detention facility. She could return them, under court supervision, to their “guardians.” She could send them to a treatment facility—but no such facility existed, and there was no legal precedent to say what they would be treated for.

Due to these institutional inequities in the criminal/juvenile justice system, the first two efforts made by early anti-CSEC activists were to introduce and lobby for legislation (SB 33 - The Child Sexual Prevention Act of 2001). The bill recognized the existence of commercially sexually exploited children, made pimping/pandering or solicitation of someone under the age of 18 a felony, and increased the jail sentences and fines for those convicted. It also aided in the creation of a safe house, called Angela’s House, for commercially sexually exploited girls. This therapeutic safe house would be funded by both public and private money, exemplifying the early public/private partnership that has become an integral part of the anti-CSEC movement. I will discuss the public/private relationship in further detail in Chapter Five. While SB 33 was gender neutral, exploited boys were not the focus of the lawmakers and neither was the safe house. This was in part because girls were the ones being identified within the juvenile justice system as prostitutes. However, the gender-specific safe house had the unintended consequence of ignoring exploited boys, thus reinforcing stereotypical gendered notions of who can be a victim of commercial sexual exploitation.

### ***Cultural Barriers and Geographic Opportunity***

One other issue leading to the institutional inequality prevalent in 2000 pertains to the way religion was and is imbedded into regional culture. Regional religiosity is relatively high within the state of Georgia as a part of the Bible Belt. In particular, conservative Christianity is quite prevalent. Among the norms consistent with this form of religiosity are notions of sexual piety, purity, virginity, and virtuousness. Therefore, sex outside of marriage is immoral, homosexuality is a sin, and strict patriarchal gender norms are professed (Gallagher 2003; Gallagher and Smith 1999; Petersen and Donnenwerth 1997; Woodberry and Smith 1998). In conjunction with this strong religiosity is a culture of “southern manners and hospitality,” which instructs privacy and courteousness be maintained in public. Thus, public/political discussions involving sex are seen as impolite, perhaps especially when those discussions involve something as taboo as commercial sex with a minor. These cultural influences allowed for the problem to be buried under a façade of sexual morality and politeness. A quote from Republican Senator Renee Unterman, a state advocate for anti-CSEC laws, in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (Galloway 2010:1B) emphasized the code of silence surrounding the topic and the majority of male lawmakers’ behaviors when the issue was brought before the legislature: “When I first brought it [CSEC] up in a caucus meeting, it was like they wanted to get underneath the table,” she said. “I’ve gently moved them along in the past three years. They can talk about the 50-year-old man who has sex with a 12-year-old, and say it’s not okay.” I observed Senator Unterman recount this story at several public events pertaining to commercial sexual exploitation of children and many of my respondents confirmed her experience. The inability of the legislators to discuss the topic highlights the strong gendered and sexual mores imbedded within Southern culture, which hinder men’s ability to discuss issues of sex in public. Because men made up the majority of legislators

and had the ultimate decision-making power to ignore or address the issue, activists had to hurdle an institutional gender barrier to create legislative change.

Scholars and my activist participants also linked the continuing social problem in Georgia to the fact that Atlanta was the southern region's largest transportation hub and there was a large adult industry presence in the state. Atlanta is home to one of the busiest airports in the world, Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, making it a destination site for buyers and a passageway to transport exploited children. In addition, four interstate highways intersect Atlanta, easily connecting buyers, sellers, and victims to other regions of the country. Atlanta is also home to a large adult entertainment industry. As Joyner and Matteucci (2010) reported in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*:

Like it or not, sex sells in Atlanta, where there are still more exotic and nude dance clubs in and around the city than anywhere else in the country, according to the Association of Club Executives, an industry trade group.

This is not even including the number of escort services and ads posted in local newspapers and online. Gloria, a white anti-trafficking advocate, acknowledged the enormity of the sex industry in Atlanta by saying:

We have over 400 strip clubs in Georgia, which makes us like a sex tourism destination. As Mayor Shirley Franklin said back in the day, "men fly in to have sex with a 9 year old and fly back home to have dinner with their family." I don't think that that's the norm, right? But it does happen. We're just in a place known for prostitution and for strip clubs.

Advocates and law enforcement argue the expansive sex industry and transportation system creates an atmosphere where commercial sexual exploitation of children becomes a tolerated facet of the adult entertainment economy. Suzzane, a white female victim services advocate highlights the link: "I think that we want people to come here for tourism and it seems that sex has been our tourism. I mean, if you go back to 2000, magazines, like *Atlanta*, were stating 'if you want to

come and pick up a girl, the easiest place to do it is in Atlanta’.” Shauna, a legal advocate, added to this statement:

Atlanta has traditionally had a pretty loose attitude about adult entertainment. We have strip clubs, we have illegal massages - not just Atlanta, but Georgia. We have illegal massage parlors, we have street prostitution and next to those things we have motels and people have let that go on. This one right here (points across the street at a building) is an illegal massage parlor.

In addition to the legal, economic, social, and cultural conditions discussed earlier, the geographic centrality of Atlanta and a budding sub-economy have added to the reasons why the commercial sexual exploitation of children exists in Georgia. These external dynamics not only created the social problem, but also influenced the internal collective action response that began in 2000 and persists today.

### **A Women-Run Movement from Multiple Arenas**

From its beginning, the anti-CSEC movement has been organized, led, and supported by women. In the beginning, three African American women, Judge Nina Hickson, Commissioner Nancy Boxill, and Deborah Richardson, were key initiators of the movement. Vickie, a member of Demanding Justice, highlighted the women’s importance in the movement:

Then there are examples like Deborah Richardson, like Commissioner Nancy Boxill, like Judge Nina Hickson who are corporate African-Americans...who are actually the founders of this [movement]. They’re the founding mothers. They actually saw this [CSEC] and said “wait a minute; we can do something about it.” So the community - the African-American community- initially stepped up and started a movement to do something about this in their community and outside the community.

These women publicly acknowledged the problem existed, and created the Women’s Task Force to Combat the Prostitution of Children to build a coalition. This task force eventually led them to host a town hall meeting. A piece of Demanding Justice literature described the relevance of the meeting:

An initial town hall meeting drew 80 participants interested in coordinating a response to this societal problem. One key strategy emerged from this meeting: persuade the daily newspaper, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, to investigate the issue and publish a series of stories about the epidemic of prostituted children in metro Atlanta. A second town hall meeting took place after the story ran in the paper, and this time more than 300 people participated. These early volunteers would end up playing pioneering roles that continue today.

The town halls helped organize a community around the issue, with several more women, from both public and private institutions, taking on leadership roles. These included private funders, communication specialists, policy specialists, public speakers, researchers, news media, as well as representatives from the city and state government. Along with the town halls and task force, The Atlanta Women's Foundation, a group of civic and business leaders, began raising funds for the movement's efforts (e.g. monies for victim services). This coalition of black and white women leaders played a significant role in the early efforts to strengthen laws against prostituting a minor (SB 33). They also played critical roles in the construction and maintenance of a safe house providing victim services to commercially sexually exploited girls. Whether this was purposeful or not, gender shaped the collective action response to the issue. Gender influenced not only who became involved in the movement, but also the way the problem was framed. The women constructed the problem as male pimps and buyers victimizing young girls through prostitution.

Throughout the middle 2000s, the movement persisted through non-profit organizations, which were developed to provide resources and care to at-risk youth (especially those in the juvenile justice system) and victimized youth. Atlanta's mayor Shirley Franklin (2002-2010) also supported the movement through her political agenda. Franklin, the first African American woman elected mayor of a major Southern city, and her staff, several of whom were members of

the Women's Task Force to Combat the Prostitution of Children, maintained the social problem's visibility during her time in office.

Two efforts highlight the mayor's endeavor to bring public awareness to the problem. First was a report issued by the mayor's office in 2005 titled *Hidden in Plain View: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls in Atlanta* (Priebe and Suhr 2005). The report provided a quantitative and qualitative portrait of the prevalence of commercially sexually exploited youth in Atlanta and the services available to victims. While the validity of the numbers utilized in the report are debatable (see discussion surrounding data in Chapter One), the report also provided qualitative descriptions of children who were exploited and highlighted geographic "hotspots" in the city where commercial sex was prevalent. The report was publicized to raise awareness around the issue and garner further support from the both the state and public. In fact, the report became a watershed moment for the future creation of Nightlight. The report also prompted the other major effort by Mayor Franklin. In 2006, the mayor launched a public awareness campaign, including television and billboard ads, as well as community and school events to highlight the pervasiveness of the problem and to draw attention to buyers. One ad read:

DEAR JOHN

You have been abusing our kids, prostituting them and throwing them onto the street when you're done. As Mayor of Atlanta, I have promised to listen to people. Kids are no exception. When you buy sex from our kids, you hurt them, you hurt our families and you hurt our city. It's over John. No more – NOT IN MY CITY.

-Mayor Shirley Franklin

This external political context thus had significant influence in the maintenance of internal movement dynamics (Whittier 2002). In this case, the city government provided public resources and credibility to the issue, helping garner more awareness and shape the narrative of who were victims and who was at fault. Also in 2006, the Georgia legislature passed an anti-human



trafficking statute as part of the larger Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act (SB 529). The statute made trafficking a person for sexual servitude a criminal offense, leaving the possibility for exploiters of children to be prosecuted under the law. In response to the 2006 campaign and law changes, the movement again began picking up steam in 2007 and developing in several distinct ways.

Members, from what would soon become the organization Demanding Justice, commissioned a research report from a private research firm quantifying the number of children exploited monthly in the state. In March, the state legislature approved \$140,000 in public funding to create a regional assessment center for commercially sexually exploited girls in Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett counties. Angela's House had become overloaded, and a long wait list meant the house was unable to address the needs of all the referred youth. At the beginning of 2008, Demanding Justice was created. The organization was part of a larger non-profit addressing at-risk children in the city of Atlanta. The organization's leadership was part of the original women's task force against CSEC in 2000; but other Demanding Justice members represented a new group of women involved in the cause. A private foundation initially funded the organization. The foundation had been providing financial support to efforts around the issue since the creation of Angela's House in 2001. The purpose of Demanding Justice was to go beyond just advocating for the victims of commercial sexual exploitation and to address the other components of the problem, the buyers and sellers. The organization began hosting community awareness trainings on the issue of CSEC, training police, and lobbying the legislature for more issue recognition and funding for the regional assessment center.

Demanding Justice's efforts resulted in \$560,000 more in public funding for the assessment center. The research they commissioned was used as justification for creating the

Joint Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors Study Committee within the legislature. Senate Resolution 445 created a 12-member committee of representatives from the House and Senate, local police, juvenile court, academia, and district attorney's office. Their mission was to "undertake a study of the conditions, needs, issues, and problems" related to CSEC "and recommend any action or legislation which the commission deems necessary or appropriate" (Fike and Johnson 2008; Unterman et al. 2008:2). A white, female Republican senator, Renee Unterman, headed the committee and the group produced several outcomes. First, a latent function of the committee was that it "educated our state's lawmakers on the issue. No longer were legislators looking at us with blank stares when we talked to them about the problem of prostituted children" (Demanding Justice campaign document). The committee also recommended further financial support for the regional assessment center through the state budget appropriations.

Other immediate recommendations by the committee were to revise Georgia's mandatory child abuse reporting law by making CSEC a reportable form of child abuse in all cases (before, only commercial sexual exploitation by a parent or caretaker was required to be reported). Also, the committee called for establishing an ongoing funding source to provide resources for CSEC victims through the taxation of patrons of adult entertainment establishments. They also called for changing the statewide minimum age to work at an adult entertainment venue from 18 to 21 years old. The committee posited that a minor could more easily pass as 18 than 21. This ease of passing created opportunities for minors to participate in nude dancing. The police perceived this problem as a gateway to becoming commercially sexually exploited. Several long-term recommendations were to "develop a state-wide system of care for prevention and treatment of CSEC," "increase treatment options for victims," and "ensure the police and prosecutors have

the tools they need to go after those who prey on children” (Fike and Johnson 2008:10-11). This committee, which came about because of Demanding Justice’s and other anti-CSEC activists’ organizational advocacy, led to certain legislative, legal, and financial changes from the state. These changes reflects Whittier’s (2002:293) assertion, “the structure of the state can change as it responds to movement demands to develop new programs or policies.”

In late 2008 early 2009, Nightlight was forming. Nightlight came about in response to the report *Hidden in Plain View: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls in Atlanta* (Priebe and Suhr 2005). The report hit too close to home for several of its founding board members; in particular, because of their congregations’ relative proximity to the geographical locations identified as hot spots for commercial sexual exploitation of children. Mark, a Nightlight member, explained the formation of the organization:

It was somewhat a process really of being drawn to this issue. Like a number of people in Atlanta, I read the letter to the editor in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* in the year 2000 that was written by the chief justice of the Fulton County Juvenile Court system Nina Hickson...I remember being haunted by that letter to the editor and just feeling disturbed by it, but just not sure how to engage it at any level. And so it was something that was in my mind but kinda in the back of my mind....Then Mayor Franklin’s report came out, *Hidden in Plain View*, and that more than anything else just slapped us in the face as a congregation and slapped me in the face so to speak. I heard about it through the report in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. It was shocking really and several people in the congregation had highlighted that part of the story from the newspaper and just left it on my desk on a Sunday morning. I remember that at the same time this was happening, we as a congregation were asking some questions about our own relevance in the city. We have been here since 1898 on the same corner. If we were gonna be relevant to the city and if we were gonna follow the mandate of the gospel, which is to love God and to love thy neighbor, then we needed to be able to address our neighbors. If CSEC was happening not just in our neighborhood but on our corner, then how could we not address it if we were gonna be faithful to our call?

In response to the report and Mayor Franklin’s call for the faith community to become more invested in the issue, two faith summits in 2007 and 2008 were held. The summits, supported by

the Regional Council of Churches, provided for collaboration among the black and white Christian community. Along with the mayor's report and summits, a budding group of evangelical churches located in the suburbs surrounding Atlanta began engaging with the commercial sexual exploitation issue. Mark described their involvement in the creation of Nightlight:

There were others that came along who had the organizational skills. Little did I know at the time there was a whole other movement within the faith community in Atlanta. There was a suburban movement of congregations that were uniting in geographic parts in the city to bring about social change in their part of the community and they'd actually been looking at the city as a place where they wanted to reach out in a united way across denominational differences to address important issues before us and one of those was CSEC. I didn't even know about that at the time that I began to speak on this issue and I began to have the meetings. It just so happened that group had the organizational gift that we needed. They really brought that organizational leadership to the table and it's because we were partnering with them that we're able to - they had the idea to bring in a consultant and come up with a model and to launch the nonprofit Nightlight.

From these summits and talks, Nightlight was developed and sponsored by several Christian faith leaders in the city of Atlanta, and became an official non-profit at the beginning of 2009. Religious institutions had played a role during the origination of the movement against CSEC, including the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church (where Martin Luther King Sr. and Jr. were pastors). Ebenezer Baptist Church held a candlelight vigil in support of exploited youth and creation of legislation that would eventually become SB 33. However, Nightlight was the first concerted collaborative effort by multiple religious organizations to develop a faith-based response to the issue.

Nightlight's board hired a white woman to lead the effort. Nightlight's entrance also highlighted a shift among supporters of the movement. While women of color initiated the movement, Nightlight and their supporters emergence has led to an increasing number of white,

middle-class women and men engaging the issue. Thus, there has been a significant racial shift in who have become the movement's forefront supporters. This is not to say that those original supporters have stopped supporting or are not working on the issue. In fact many are still heavily engaged in the movement. However, the number of supporters in the movement has grown and those women leading the movement have become more white and middle/upper class. This demographic shift also correlated with a shift in the way the victims of commercial sexual exploitation were framed. Specifically, the population of youth portrayed as being at risk was broadened to include any child, no matter race, age, class, gender, or religion. This universal discourse of the victim will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

In August 2008, the Governor's Office for Children and Families (GOCF) convened a statewide task force on the issue of CSEC. Over the next few years, the task force brought together public and private organizations, including officials from: city, state, and federal police forces (APD, GBI, FBI); state university programs; non-profit child advocacy centers; County District Attorneys and Juvenile Court officials, state agencies (Family and Child Services, Human Services, Juvenile Justice) and county governments; non-profit victims' service agencies; non-profit child service organizations; religious organizations; anti-CSEC and anti-trafficking non-profits (e.g. Demanding Justice and Nightlight); and several other socially oriented non-profits. From my observations of the task force's quarterly meetings, the overwhelming majority of representatives for this assortment of public and private organizations were women. The statewide task force is seen as one of the most significant accomplishments of the social movement. To provide some comparison, several states have enacted laws targeting CSEC (e.g. New York's safe harbor law), several city law enforcement agencies have created CSEC task forces (e.g. Dallas Police Department), and New York City, for a short period, had a city-wide

task force of public and private organizations focused solely on CSEC, however it dissolved (Curtis et al 2008). On the other hand, Georgia maintains one of the only public/private statewide efforts solely focused on CSEC. Carol, a Nightlight female member, described how the task force came about:

As there started becoming more and more awareness, you had all these different groups that were learning about the issue. Whether it was juvenile justice constantly seeing these cases come through their system and saying “Oh my gosh, we got to do something about this.” So they would be at the table, as far as when there were [legislative] hearings and stuff so they could say, “Yeah, this is what we’re seeing.” Then you had other groups that were just completely your community organizations going, “Yeah, we see this in our area. We see this with the kids that we’re serving.” There were all these different voices that I think, because of the lobbying for legislation, we got to know each other. From there it was like, “Well, we’re all doing this and we all see how big the problem is and it’s going to take all of us to be part of the solution.” After the Study Commission hearings in 08 I think people felt really good like, “Oh, look at all these recommendations, we’re actually going to have some things happen now.” There were three bills that were introduced and only one actually passed. I think for a lot of people it was kind of in that moment in 2009 of going, “We know all these changes have to be done, not just the laws, but people’s perceptions of the issue, and the only way we’re going to do that is if we all come together and continue to work on these issues.

Carol’s comments identify a unique interplay between the state and private organizations that was created by the task force, which now plays a significant role in the collective action against commercial sexual exploitation of children. The statewide task force exemplifies how internal movement dynamics and state government interact as a social movement progresses.

Furthermore, because “these interactions take place in a complex set of relationships among participants in multiple movements, branches of the state, other institutions political parties and factions within them, interest groups, and so forth, in what Raka Ray (1998) calls a political field,” Whittier argues (2002:294) “the boundary between ‘movement’ and ‘context’ can be quite blurred.” She highlights a similar instance of this blurring with the state-operated Violence Against Women Offices, which are run by domestic violence activists and a direct outcome of

the domestic violence movement. I discuss this public-private relationship in more detail throughout Chapter Five. Along with the task force, movement efforts by social movement organizations, like Demanding Justice and Nightlight, reflect a trend of community women leading collective action to address commercial sexual exploitation of children in the state. This trend demonstrates the gendered structure of the movement and the external, often state-driven, forces influencing the internal dynamics of the movement.

### **Slowly but Surely – Institutional Change and Conflict in the Movement**

In response to the creation of Demanding Justice and Nightlight in 2007 and 2009, and formation of the statewide task force in 2008-2009, certain institutional changes began to occur. Nightlight and Demanding Justice partnered up quickly and worked together to increase awareness, raise resources, and lobby for legislative change. In 2009, both organizations, along with other advocates, placed their efforts into not only community awareness trainings and events, but also supporting passage of the recommendations presented by the Joint Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors Study Committee a year earlier. These lobbying efforts led to a mixed outcome and reflected the internal and external conflicts occurring between a movement and socio-political and cultural forces surrounding gender, race, class, sexuality and religion.

### ***A Safe Place to Recuperate – The Unfinished Business Behind a Regional Assessment Center***

The recommendation to change the mandatory reporting law concerning child abuse was introduced as SB 69. The bill would eventually be passed in May 2009. However, the fates surrounding the adult entertainment surcharge, which would fund services for exploited minors, and the bill raising the age limit to 21 for exotic dancers statewide were much different. The surcharge became identified as SB 91, and once introduced began a slow procedural death within the senate. The response by the senate finance committee was “mixed,” leading the committee to

sit on the bill. This caused Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and other organizations to lobby the state legislators. They created an online petition and presented white roses to the legislators to signify community support for the bill. In response, the bill made it out of the Finance Committee, but was never brought up for a vote during the rest of the legislative session. A Demanding Justice advocacy update highlighted one reason the bill failed to gain support:

Surcharge fees collected go directly into the state Crime Victims Emergency Fund. The fund is only for victim assistance. (Some members of Senate leadership have criticized the surcharge as a new tax even though it doesn't flow into the state treasury and won't cost taxpayers ONE cent.)

The state economic and political structures shaped which financial and legislative resources were available to the movement. The state had supported institutional changes concerning who should report commercial sexual exploitation. However, certain legislators' business interests constrained the social movement's ability to secure state imposed financial support from an industry the social movement organizations identified as one of the root causes of the problem.

Political influence was also wrapped up in the movement's efforts to establish the regional assessment center. While they had originally been granted a total of \$700,000 in state funds to build the center, accessing those finances proved difficult. A Demanding Justice email update in 2009 highlighted the issue:

Regional Assessment Center money in the budget has been frozen since last session. The Department of Human Resources eliminated it from their budget for FY09 [fiscal year 2009] and FY10. Today the Governor's Office for Children and Families stepped up to fund the assessment phase for girls who've been commercially sexually exploited! This development means there is no need to advocate for restoration of the \$560,000 in the Department of Human Resources' budget.

However, fiscal concerns again prevented the funding from being utilized, causing the movement to redirect its efforts. This led the statewide task force and Governor's Office to create the Georgia Care Connection. The organization was developed to "provide statewide, independent



care coordination for commercially sexually exploited children. Using a System of Care philosophy with a family-driven, youth guided approach.” Two white, female state advocates discussed some of the history behind the organization:

Stacey: Yeah. They [Georgia Care Connection] were originally with Rockdale Newton Community Service Board [a community service initiative]. They used a mental health approach and took it on as a special project due to an interest from a state senator. They built the system of care and they were also, at that time, experts on what a system of care was (i.e. wrapping services around kids who are severely developmentally disabled.) Is that what it is or - I don't think its disabled? That's another word.

Joanne: Severely Emotionally Disturbed. SED kids.

Stacey: And so we felt like at that time, it was a good place because we wanted to have wrap around services and high intensity services for the girls and so they started it. They developed the programming, the office, the structure. They brought in the family advocate and the peer advocate approaches...it was all based on that whole system of care approach. Then it just came to a point where Rockdale Newton Community Service Board felt like it needed to be a statewide initiative and felt like they couldn't carry it to that. So they supported putting it into the CACs [Child Advocacy Centers] because that is a statewide approach.

T.H.: Okay.

Joanne: To add to that, I think the Rockdale Newton Community Service Board was built on CME (i.e. Care Management Entity). And at that time, the state was deciding behavioral health wise, with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, where they wanted to go with CME's...And again, Georgia doesn't have the greatest reports on it for the way it has dealt with mental health in the past and we're in the middle of being sued by the Feds for that. So they are trying to get in line with all that and the care management model was shifting at that time.

The Georgia Care Connection came about through a public-private collaboration, from a multi-county service initiative being hosted by the Governor's Office. This public-private link was also established in how the organization was funded. A private fund, known as the Safety Gap Fund, was developed in order to fund residential placement for the youth while they recovered from their exploitation. All the money raised by the private fund would be matched by the Governor's Office. While the agency created coordinated care for referred victims of CSEC, the regional assessment center, the initial goal proposed by the Senate Committee, has yet to be fulfilled and

is still an effort being discussed within the statewide task force. Consequently, while Georgia Care Connection exists to set up victim services for commercially exploited youth, the safe space needed to initially house minors still does not exist. This a key reason why many CSEC victims are still sent to youth detention centers. Shauna, a legal advocate, highlighted this reality:

We're still searching for that place-where it's the middle of the night and you pick somebody up and where do you put them? That place just hasn't happened. The assessment center was a direct result of talking to the head of Angela's House who said "we have a residential treatment center, granted, but it is only six beds and terribly small." What we need is somewhere to keep somebody for 30 days, that's not a jail. You have to keep them [exploited children] for a long period of time because otherwise they'll just go right back to the street and the police have to be able to drop them off. So that's what this assessment center was supposed to be. We got \$800,000 or something to put it together. I don't know exactly what happened but my understanding is it just didn't work... Yeah, that's a big, big part of all this. It's a big missing link and like I said, we have been working on that since 2006 or whatever it was. I don't know why its just - well its money.

The movement led to the creation of a task force, which produced the Georgia Care Connection to coordinate care for identified sexually exploited children. However, a central goal of the movement, since its beginning, is still hindered by economic forces within the state.

### ***HB 200 - The Long Way Around***

Another major accomplishment identified was passing HB 200 in 2011. I began my observations with the organizations just prior to the bill's signing. However, I learned pretty quickly the bill's passage was the product of a rocky two-year effort by the organizations; an effort that at one point was considered a significant blow to the movement's goals. In order to understand how the bill passed, an account of its origins is required.

With the success of SB 69 (mandatory reporting law) and the creation of a statewide task force, Demanding Justice, Nightlight, other non-profit organizations and several city and state representatives turned their attention in 2010 to amend the prostitution laws. The idea of amending the law came from proposals put forth by the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of

Minors Joint Study Committee in 2008. This amendment came in the form of SB 304, which proposed to:

Amend Chapter 6 of Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to sexual offenses, so as to mandate a minimum age for the prosecution of the offenses of prostitution and masturbation for hire; to provide for matters related to prosecuting certain sexual offenses; to amend Titles 19 and 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to domestic relations and social services, respectively, so as to expand the definition of prostitution; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

The bill would prevent children 16 and younger from being arrested for prostitution, in effect treating them as victims of commercial sexual exploitation and providing them with treatment.

Another bill proposed by the house, HB 582, set the age for prosecution of prostitution at 18.

Carol, from Nightlight, recounts how the bill came about:

I think the Study Commission findings in 2008 really shed light on the fact that prostitution is considered a victimless crime. And so girls were being arrested, charged with prostitution, treated as criminals, despite the fact that their pimps weren't the ones being charged, that the buyers weren't the ones being charged, it was the girls being charged with the crime.

Carol explained how stereotypes about the exploited youth, like “she’s a bad kid,” were challenged by the Study Commission’s findings. These findings also included expert testimony by judges, law enforcement, and academics about actual cases of exploitation. This led her and other activists to gain hope that the legal amendments would “sail right through” the assembly and become bills. However, as Carol reported, these aspirations were short lived:

And yet, I think the biggest hurdle is the fact that we were talking about sex and no one really wants to talk about sex. Because there are so many other things involved with that subject matter and it’s very uncomfortable for people. Especially when you’re dealing with a legislature made up of mostly older men. And you know, good Southern boys aren’t supposed to go around talking about what happens in the bedroom. So it was that hurdle of getting people to even talk about the subject. And you know, one of the bills in 2009 that didn’t pass was the one that would have raised the age for those employed by an adult entertainment establishment to 21...But, nobody wants to talk about that. Once you’re 18, you’re an adult, you can do what you want. [Mimicking an opponent of the bill]

“No, we’re not going to infringe upon the working rights of these women.” Not realizing the bigger picture.

Carol explained these setbacks led to their decision to lobby for SB 304, and to try and set an age limit on prosecuting prostitutes.

So from there it was more like, “Okay, we’re going to have to come at this a little bit more straight on.” And that was more so the reasoning behind, “Okay, let’s look at the crime of prostitution. If you can’t consent to having sex, how can you consent to selling your body for sex?” It’s just the logic doesn’t match up, and subsequently then, you shouldn’t be able to charge a minor with the crime of prostitution.

Carol’s comments highlight how the bills, but particularly SB 304, were an effort to address the paradox within state law involving the prostitution and statutory rape statutes discussed earlier in the chapter. With the failures of the adult entertainment age limit and surcharge bills, which affected the private business sector, SB 304 looked to alter the public (i.e. criminal justice) sector. The bill would have prevented commercially exploited children from being arraigned in juvenile court for prostitution, which would have addressed the initial issue facing Judge Nina Hickson that sparked her op-ed and the movement. The same woman who proposed SB 69 and headed the Joint Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors Study Committee in 2009, Republican Renee Unterman, introduced SB 304 during the 2010 legislative session. Nightlight, Demanding Justice, and multiple other organizations within the movement supported the bill. A 2010 YouTube video in support of SB 304 illustrates the organizations’ position on the bill: “Incarcerating children for their victimization is not only unjust, it simply doesn’t work. These young girls need support and care, not punishment and shame. Give judges the tools they need to help these *children* start over. Vote for SB 304.”

However, from the beginning, the bill had opposition. Opponents of the bill came from several conservative Christian organizations within the state including: Calling All Moms, Eagle

Forum of Georgia, Georgia Christian Alliance, Georgia Christian Coalition, Georgia Conservatives in Action, We Change Atlanta, and the Faith and Freedom Coalition. The majority of those speaking for these organizations were women. The opposition came as a surprise to some in the movement, in particular because a conservative, Republican woman senator proposed the bill. Also, because Nightlight and their alliance of influential Christian churches in the state were also supporting the legislation. A conservative newsletter, *Georgia Insight* (2010), highlighted some of the conservative organizations' leaders' reasons for opposing the bill:

*Eagle Forum of Georgia, President Nancy Schaefer*

"Atlanta already has sex trafficking and child pornography problems. If we decriminalize juvenile prostitution, every pimp, pedophile and panderer will be in Georgia."

*Eagle Forum of Georgia & Georgia Insight, Capitol Correspondent Sue Ella Deadwyler*

"S.B. 304 removes a strong legal barrier that deters minors, as well as adults, from engaging in prostitution, simply, because they don't want to go to jail or have a police record. It would increase their vulnerability to alternate lifestyles, including homosexuality. It would multiply the number of juvenile prostitutes just as providing birth control to children increased sexual activity."

*Calling All Moms, Leader Pat Tippet*

"We cannot repeal the prostitution law for children, because that law acts as a very real barrier that protects children from sexual predators that would, otherwise, feel free to lure them into prostitution. Removing this law is like taking down a guardrail that keeps cars from going over a cliff. Once the guardrail is gone, runaway cars will be over the cliff before their drivers know they're headed for trouble they can't get out of. Why would we want to stop warning children about the effects of prostitution, after we've spent our whole lives telling boys and girls to stay out of the street, because there's danger on every corner?"

There are several assumptions made within these arguments against the bill. Broadly, all of the organizations argued the bill would effectively decriminalize prostitution for minors. From that larger assertion, several conclusions were drawn as to the outcomes of decriminalization. The organizations argued that amending the law would: provide legal cover for exploiters (both buyers and sellers) to prostitute more children; entice more exploiters to travel to Georgia to

commercially sexually exploit children; and allow “child prostitutes” to abuse the law by engaging in prostitution then claiming victimhood when caught by the police. Furthermore, some argued that arresting “child prostitutes” was an effective deterrent to the problem; and that SB 304 would encourage other perceived “deviant behaviors” such as homosexuality, as well as unwed sex.

These arguments maintain several implicit assumptions about children, sexuality, and the law. First, commercially sexually exploited children are active participants in their exploitation and should be considered offenders in need of state sanctioned punishment to prevent them from becoming exploited again. This view characterizes CSEC as an individual decision rather than a structural problem. Second, amending the law would effectively negate all other state laws pertaining to pimping, pandering, trafficking, statutory rape, and child pornography. Third, amending the law would incentivize illegal behavior by adults (mostly men) and children adding to an ever-increasing dangerous society. Fourth, tough prostitution laws effectively deter exploiters’ efforts and children from choosing prostitution. Finally, “child prostitution” is one symptom of a larger moral threat to traditional notions of family, sexuality, and gender relations. These assumptions represented many of the essentialist ideas Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and other organizations within the movement had been actively challenging. They also reflected how “hegemonic culture constrains and influences movements,” in particular, the dominant cultural conservatism prevalent in the region and among the political elite (Whittier 2002:294). Furthermore, the disconnect between conservative political groups and Nightlight’s (including Senator Unterman’s) views on CSEC highlights how multiple meanings and discourses exist within diverse institutions (i.e. the Christian religion) influencing movements in a multitude of ways. In other words, even though Nightlight represents certain conservative Christian and

Evangelical groups within the state and broadened the coalition of support within the anti-CSEC movement, they did not reflect the entirety of the conservative Christian political voice. Thus, the Christian population was both a benefit and detriment to the movement.

This backlash by certain conservative Christian organizations effectively ended support for the bill. Demanding Justice's Jean, who advocated passing the bill, explained the opposition she experienced:

That was a surprise to all of us. We did not expect the amount of push back that we got, and we got it nationally. We had the Christian Coalition, national people, highlighting Georgia. Their argument was that we were legalizing prostitution. [They said that] if we tried to make [the minimum age of prostitution] 16, that [for those] under 16 it was then legal to prostitute somebody. Which, from a literal sense, it was, they couldn't be arrested as a prostitute. So their argument was that pimps would go after more 15 year olds because it was legal. Which was flat ass wrong, because we passed SB 69 before making it child abuse to prostitute someone. So they could be arrested on that law even if nothing else. So their arguments were wrong, but they were very vocal. It was hellacious. Over in the legislature, because it was an election year and you're in a conservative state, they were basically gonna go and lobby against somebody if they went for it. So it got nasty. The committee meetings, the Concerned Women of America were signing on to speak. It was horrendous. It scared the legislators and it hurt our issue in that regard. I think it worried organizations like Nightlight because they've got churches.

Jean highlights the legal inconsistencies in the argument put forth by the conservative Christian backlash. However, she also identifies how their opposition effectively stopped the movement's efforts to amend state laws defining commercially sexually exploited children as victims rather than offenders. In this case, political and cultural elites within the state and nationally vocalized an opposing conservative narrative connecting SB 304 to loose gender and sexual norms, moral degeneracy, and a weak on crime approach to law enforcement. The backlash to the movement underscores how external forces, in this case a competing discourse, play significant roles in the movement's ability to influence meanings and discourses publicly and throughout the state.

While the movement was working to shift the state's language and response to victims of

commercial sexual exploitation, they experienced outside opposition from groups initially perceived to be political allies.

However, while the loss of the bill was a setback, discussion around the bill would lead to HB 200, an amendment to the state's human trafficking law, in 2010. After SB 304's defeat, Demanding Justice and Nightlight, along with other legal organizations and state representatives, looked to revise the bill. The revision provided protections for commercially exploited youth and increased penalties for buyers and sellers. The increased penalties were an initiative Demanding Justice had been working on and an issue the conservative Christian opposition advocated for during their backlash. Several key aspects occurred to help pass HB 200. Demanding justice member Jean explained how changes in the discourse and legal language allowed HB 200 to address many of the issues SB 304 initially set out to do:

It [SB 304] was clearly stated that charging them as prostitutes was the victimizing behavior. Interestingly enough, we got it [the goal of SB 304]. It's all a matter of language. The next year in HB 200, most of the language that we wanted [was incorporated]. Because prostitution is a moral law and trafficking, well, you just use a different word and it's got "victim" kind of in it. So, it was an interesting thing that we didn't get the same push back for.

The shift in discourse surrounding commercial sexual exploitation of children from a prostitution problem to a trafficking problem provided an avenue for making legislative change. Because the word "traffic" implicitly maintains victimhood for those in exploitative situations, the movement was able to counter the narrative put forth by the conservative Christian opposition. Rather than minors being portrayed as active agents in their exploitation and in need of being treated as offenders to be dissuaded from engaging in prostitution, the youth were relabeled trafficking victims. The trafficking narrative helped shift the meaning of who the prostituted child was, from prostitute to victim. Phillip, a movement advocate also recognized this language shift as important, but highlighted other issues significant to the shift from SB 304 to HB 200:



It (efforts to pass SB 304) went pretty much as disastrously as I thought it would; because I knew it was just going to rub the very conservative voting blocks the wrong way. It was going to appear as the wrong solution to the right problem and it did. Now, the silver lining from that was that the people who opposed it eventually, I think, became quite embarrassed by the fact that they were opposing a bill that was designed to help child victims of a very violent form of sexual abuse. So in the end, I think it helped build some credibility, and at that time there was ushered in a new breed, a new generation of state legislators. It was a huge change over in the state house, and a lot of those new legislators coming in were able to say, “Hey, I’ll support you.”

Phillip asserted that while conservative resistance effectively ended SB 304, reconsideration among some of the opposition accrued overtime. This reassessment occurred alongside the entrance of new state political actors less opposed to the issue. In addition to these changes, Phillip went on to identify another issue influential to the shift in language:

At that time, immigration was more than hotly contested in Georgia. It was one of the governor’s main campaign themes. He was talking about how he was going to kick out everyone with brown skin or that’s what it felt like at least. So we thought bringing up something [trafficking] that frankly does touch immigration and touches it from a progressive angle, would be an enormous mistake. However, in the end, a [local legal organization] was able to very effectively leverage the embarrassment from the Minimum Age Bill before the fact that you have a bunch of new General Assembly members. They really framed it as much as they could as an issue of sex trafficking rather than labor trafficking and were able to do a lot of work behind the scenes. In the end, the thing slipped through, I mean, clandestinely.

Phillip identifies several key factors the movement contended with when gaining support for HB 200. Like Jean, he pointed to shifting the language from “prostitution” to “trafficking.” Legislatively, this meant amending the state’s human trafficking law rather than its prostitution law. Providing protections for the child, by framing them as trafficking victims, allowed for political cover against critics, since opposing the bill would be perceived as supporting human trafficking, in particular sex trafficking, and punishing victims of child sexual abuse.

Several scholars have discussed how national anti-trafficking movements conflated issues of prostitution with trafficking in their own efforts to gain state and federal support to end the sex

trade (Chuang 2010; DeStefano 2008; Doezenia 2012; Kempadoo et al. 2005; Kim and Chang 2007; O'Connell Davidson 2005; Vance 2011; Weitzer 2007, 2012). Many of these scholars are critical of this approach, arguing that trafficking and prostitution are separate issues, each with a continuum of realities that cannot be essentialized into one problem. Weitzer's (2007:455) critique of this conflation clarifies these problems:

There is no evidence that “most” or even the majority of prostitutes have been trafficked. Moreover, prostitution and trafficking differ substantively; the former is a type of work, and the latter is a means of accessing a new market. Both empirically and conceptually, it is inappropriate to fuse prostitution and trafficking.

While Weitzer and other scholars' critiques are important and valid, much of this debate has been confined to adult trafficking and prostitution, where the distinction is significant. Less discussion has specifically addressed youth involvement. This is because age muddles the debate. O'Connell Davidson (2005:52) reminds us “when children are imagined as a homogenous group, defined by their passivity, helplessness, dependence and irrationality, it is impossible to imagine them as either faced by or capable of making choices.” This view is reflected in the varying federal and state laws concerning the labor of minors, but more importantly, when minors can consent to sex. Debate around minors has also been limited because critics of conflating trafficking with prostitution generally limit their critique to adults in the sex trade, recognizing youth as the exception.

In addition, the anti-CSEC movement's failed effort to amend the state's prostitution laws, and subsequent amending of the trafficking law, complicates this debate. Rather than mimic efforts by national anti-trafficking organizations (e.g. CATW and IJM) by strategically and broadly targeting prostitution through the conflation of all sex workers as trafficking victims; the organizations in Georgia only began utilizing the trafficking narrative after unsuccessfully

amending the state's prostitution law. The shift to trafficking language came about due to political necessity. External forces, like the conservative Christian opposition and legislators who viewed commercially sexually exploited minors as prostitutes instead of victims, shaped the internal legal narrative advocated by the movement. In other words, the trafficking and prostitution link is not always the result of internal movement dynamics; rather, they are sometimes the products of interactions with external contexts.

In addition to this narrative change, Phillip highlighted a shift in the Georgia assembly and politics surrounding immigration reform laws as two other external forces affecting the effort to pass HB 200. First, the shift in the legislative makeup removed several lawmakers who opposed SB 304 allowing the movement to work with new legislators. These legislators were not present during the campaign to pass SB 304, but knew about the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia due to the movement's activist efforts over the past several years. This provided an avenue for arguments to be reframed from a "prostitution" narrative to a "trafficking" issue. This change, due in part to a shift in state representatives, is similar to Cocca's (2004) description of how Georgia's statutory rape laws were amended to include an age span provision. She contends that it was only after a conservative Christian legislator opposing the amendment left office and was replaced did the change pass through the assembly.

The other major force influencing how the trafficking bill was presented concerned debate around the state's immigration laws. Nathan Deal, the newly elected governor, had campaigned on passing legislation similar to Arizona's SB 1070 immigration law, considered one of the toughest laws pertaining to undocumented immigrants (the legislation would eventually pass as HB 87). Critics have argued these types of laws provide law enforcement with broad legal authority to undermine civil liberties and demand proof of citizenship from anyone

they suspect is undocumented (American Civil Liberties Union 2010; Romero and Serag 2005; Vidales, Day, Powe 2009). Because whiteness and citizenship have historically been intertwined, causing individuals of color to be labeled “foreigners-within” or “Other,” critics argue the law institutionalizes racial profiling while maintaining white privilege (Lowe 1996; Martinez 1997; Romero 2006; Vidales, Day, Powe 2009). The law had become popular among some conservatives in the state legislature in reaction to the increasing number of Latinos migrating to the state to work in the commercial farms and chicken processing plants and the increasing unemployment due to the recession. Deal campaigned on the view that undocumented immigrants were an economic threat and burden to Georgia residents. This idea was best exemplified in a campaign TV ad aired throughout the state. In the ad, he declares “illegal aliens are costing Georgia taxpayers over a billion dollars every year.” In conjunction with Deal’s campaign position, this anti-immigrant narrative was held by many of the legislators who supported creation of HB 87 and among a significant percentage of Georgia residents (Redmon 2010). Therefore, any proposals portraying immigrants as victims, especially victims of economic exploitation, would have been seen as suspect.

Because of this, the movement’s legal advocates emphasized sex trafficking over labor trafficking and youth victims over adult victims when framing the human trafficking bill in order to gain support from the legislature. In other words, the movement interacted with the external contexts of legislative change and a racialized and classed anti-immigrant rhetoric when developing legal protections for victims they were unable to gain through SB 304. Passage of HB 200 highlights the complex interactions occurring between collective action, political opportunities, and socio-cultural narratives. Much of the social movement literature (e.g. Political Process Theory and New Social Movements Theory) tends to recognize only one issue

as the determining influence on social movements. However, the process behind the bill demonstrates the important interplay and influence between internal movement dynamics (i.e. strategies and collective action) and external forces (i.e. the state, religion, and race, class, and gender politics).

Finally, while these changes did provide exploited youth with an affirmative defense and access to the state's crime victim's fund for treatment, the prostitution law is still effectively in conflict with HB 200. Also, exploited youth can be and are still initially arrested if discovered being exploited. Therefore, they are still initially sent to juvenile detention centers due to the lack of a regional assessment center. All of which, in certain ways, still treat the victim like an offender. The passage of HB 200 in 2011, the creation of the statewide task force, and the formation of the independent care coordination office for commercially exploited youth all represented a critical shift in the relationship between the state and social movement. In the past, movement efforts were mostly independent of the state. They consisted of raising public awareness, finding funds for victim services, and lobbying for legislative change. However, beginning in 2009 there has been a blending of the public and private sectors within the movement. This shift has provided the movement stronger influence, but also led to power issues between the state and private movement members.

### **Conclusion**

Since 2000, anti-CSEC activism in Georgia has produced several key changes in the state's response to commercially sexually exploitation of children. At the forefront of this movement have been women. These women have been at the intersection of the public and private sector. They have addressed both the movement's internal dynamics of membership, discourse, and strategies for collective action and navigated the external forces of the state's

political opportunities, dominant cultural ideologies, and structural inequalities. This chapter has described the socio-historical context surrounding these intersections. By understanding the historical progression and shifts within the movement and its relationship with the state, a clearer understanding of present day issues can be attained.

The structural inequalities facing Georgia's children—poverty, health and educational disparities, and a racially disproportionate juvenile justice population—provided the foundation for a group of minors to become at risk for commercial sexual exploitation. Furthermore, institutional inequalities within the law and child welfare system allowed for commercially sexually exploited children (and those most at risk for becoming exploited) to be ignored, underserved, or criminalized. Along with these structural and institutional forces, cultural ideologies surrounding religion and sexuality caused resistance to openly discussing the issue and passing legislation to address the social problem. All of these external forces also influenced the movement's political and social opportunities for collective action, including what discourses were used, what legislation was proposed and passed, who supported the movement, and what partnerships were developed. In particular, gender, race, class, and sexuality influenced both movement processes and external pressures, including who participated in the movement over time and the opposition to their efforts. By the beginning of 2011, the lines between the movement and the state had begun to blur, leading to new opportunities and also new challenges.

These past events and external forces provide context for the chapters to come. This chapter covers events from 2000 to the beginning of 2011, when HB 200 was signed into law and I began my observations of movement organizations and members. In the following chapters, I discuss internal movement dynamics and the relationship developed with the state. In Chapter Three, I examine the movement's collective action repertoires. I focus on how the

discourses surrounding victims, buyers, and sellers were strategically developed by anti-CSEC organizations, like Demanding Justice and Nightlight, and what solutions were offered. In Chapter Four, I identify the challenges facing the organizations and pay particular attention to how culture can both hinder and advance their efforts. In Chapter Five, I go into further detail about the relationships developed among anti-CSEC organizations and their public-private partnership with the state. I assess how the blending of the movement with the state has led not only to organizational changes and power struggles but also to new opportunities for social change.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### ANTI-CSEC REPERTOIRES: FRAMING THE PROBLEM AND PROVIDING SOLUTIONS

*It is hot and sunny outside as I help carry a case of water bottles to a conference room housed next door to Nightlight's office. Both places are part of a larger set of single-story offices making up a commercial office park owned by a nearby church. It is rush hour on a Wednesday and we are setting up for a training session, hosted by Nightlight. Inside the conference room a fake plant sits in one corner, while two 40" flat screen TVs hang on a wall facing four rows of chairs. White dry erase boards sit on easels between the TVs and a large silver clock hangs on the adjacent wall. At a little past 5:30, the last guests arrive, twenty-five in all. Some come as a small group, others by themselves. They are parishioners representing churches throughout the metro area. They are here to learn about the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia, Nightlight's role in addressing the issue, and how they and their fellow congregants can make a difference. Stephanie and Jenny are the organization's representatives for the training session. Stephanie, a white woman in her early 20s, passes out copies of a PowerPoint she is about to present along with some other organizational materials. Jenny, a white woman in her 50s, chats with some of the guests. They then go around the room asking people to introduce themselves and identify which church they represent. Once introductions are completed, Stephanie begins the presentation with a thought experiment. She has the audience name and describe children "they know and love." Members of the audience provide names and discuss their relationship to the children. Then Jenny asks them to tell her "what comes to mind when I say the word 'children'?" Someone in the audience says, "those we love." "Good," remarks Jenny, "What about the word 'commercial'?" The words "money," "profit," "business," "advertising," and "buying & selling" are offered. Jenny then asks, "what about for the words 'sexual exploitation'?" The room goes silent. Eventually, attendees begin to speak: "rape," "abuse," "crime," "profit from sex," "victims," "drugs." Jenny finally asks the audience how they would feel if the children they named earlier were being commercially sexually exploited. Members of the audience, now with concerned looks on their faces, begin commenting. "Outraged!," someone states firmly; "I would feel helpless," another person remarks; "angry," a woman exclaims. Stephanie then plays a short video from YouTube. The video, entitled "Making of a Girl," is produced by the New York based organization GEMS. GEMS (Girls Educational and Mentoring Services) is a pioneer organization in the national movement against commercial sexual exploitation of children. Set to a melodic, instrumental hip-hop beat, Rachel Loyd, the founder of GEMS, recites a poem describing, in detail, what life is like for a young exploited girl. Images of New York at night flash on the screen in between*



*footage of Rachel on a couch reciting the poem. Once the video ends, the room is again quiet. Stephanie asks, "How'd that video make you feel?" Eventually, some among the audience begin to respond: "A sense of despair," "vulnerable," "lonely," "sad," "surprised she didn't commit suicide."*

The training approach just described is but one of many strategies anti-CSEC organizations utilized to create awareness about the problem, empathy for the victims, and an emotional investment in their audience. Over the past several years, faith-based and secular non-profit organizations have been working separately and in collaboration to create awareness about "the problem our children are facing." These organizations are working in their communities to train fellow citizens on what they can do to spur change in the state. They play a key role in shaping the magnitude of the problem through activities such as training seminars, luncheons, speaking panels, movie screenings, political lobbying, and Saturday morning walks. They also help identify who is involved and what individuals, community service organizations, and the state should do to achieve change. These organizations are integral in bringing attention to US-born commercially sexually exploited children.

In order to gain recognition that commercial sexual exploitation of children is a domestic problem, social movement organizations like Nightlight and Demanding Justice, as well as state and local officials, are engaged in sustained community awareness campaigns throughout the state. These efforts have led to changes in legislation concerning penalties for trafficking a minor, more comprehensive laws mandating reporting of child abuse, police and prosecutor trainings, development of a public-private statewide taskforce dedicated to the problem, and legislators in both political parties actively championing the cause. These successes are a product of the organizations' and activists' long-term efforts. They are also the result of specific strategies, like the one described above, that were developed, tested, and reworked over time.

This chapter will focus on the collective action repertoires the organizations drew from to define who are the victims, buyers, and sellers, and what are appropriate victim services and criminal justice responses to create cultural change. Discursive repertoires are products of contentious relational actions between those in power and those pursuing collective change. As Tilly (1993:264) asserts, “repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle.” I will primarily be discussing the activists' discursive strategies, but I conclude with discussing other tactics they employed to create meaningful change. In the process of describing these strategies, I address several questions: What are the discursive strategies for change the organizations have implemented? How do social and cultural forces, like race, class, gender, age, sexuality, and religion influence these strategies? How do the activists' own social positions influence them? Finally, how do these discursive strategies address the larger social inequalities embedded within the problem?

Although such questions are complex, they can be attended to by examining the individual beliefs and day-to-day activities of Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and their fellow activists. These beliefs and everyday proceedings—the reasoning, cooperation, contestation, and strategizing—provide insight into the development of movement discourses and tactics. Anti-CSEC organizations and activists collectively construct repertoires, in order to address the complexities that exist within the commercial sexual exploitation of children. These interactive processes are prevalent within the anti-CSEC movement and between the movement, public, and state.

To better understand these processes; I identify the social, cultural, and institutional systems that have dominated the discussion concerning commercial sexual exploitation. I discuss

the structural forces of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age influencing the discourse and positions of power social movement actors are situated within. I also identify the competing hegemonic discourses and cultural forces influencing the strategies anti-CSEC activists engaged in to identify injustice, label those involved, and advocate for change. Throughout, I show how a social movement's strategies can be complicated by activists' own efforts if intersecting inequalities and the disparate degrees of privilege they, their audience, and victims possess are not taken into account.

### **An Integrative Approach to Anti-CSEC Discourse**

In line with the synthetic perspective described by Whittier (2002), I draw from and integrate two theoretical approaches, a dialogic analysis and materialist feminist approach, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the discursive strategies anti-CSEC organizations and actors construct. Marc Steinberg (1998:846) argues, "discourse [is] a collective and contested process of meaning production." Therefore, multiple meanings are present within the discourses produced by organizations like Demanding Justice and Nightlight. This allows for varying interpretations of the repertoires to persist among organizational members and their audience. Because of this, Steinberg calls for a dialogic analysis of social movement discourse. He argues that this type of analysis can account for the multiple and contested processes and meanings within a given discourse.

By focusing on discursive fields or what Koopmans and Statham (1999:228) call "discursive opportunity structures," a dialogic analysis identifies the cultural and structural boundaries both constraining and permitting certain meanings to be present within collective action discourse (in Steinberg 1999). Within these fields are political, economic, cultural, and social ideologies prominent within society (Steinberg 1999). Both social movement actors and

their challengers draw from these ideologies to develop their repertoires, leaving fields blurry rather than fixed. In this chapter, I examine the discursive processes—the fields, ideologies, and individual interactions—anti-CSEC organizations and activists engaged to produce their repertoires. Investigating these processes and the reasons behind their use can tell us a lot about the organizations’ motivations and barriers they face. They also reflect how social movement organizations work within the hierarchical, interlocking social structures of race, class, gender, age, and sexuality.

In order to identify the cultural and structural forces affecting how anti-CSEC organizations construct their discourse, I also draw from a materialist feminist approach. A materialist feminist discourse analysis goes hand-in-hand with a dialogic analysis. Both approaches investigate complex discursive processes social movement organizations and actors engage in when constructing strategies and implementing social action. On multiple occasions, Naples effectively utilized the approach to show how originally “progressive frames,” like community control and government support, are co-opted and delegitimized by conservative groups (Naples 2002, 2013).

My research draws from Naples’ approach, and extends it through a dialogic analysis. The discourses produced in and by social movements reflect how organizations and activists work within hierarchical, interlocking social structures. A materialist feminist approach is useful in identifying these intersecting structures of inequality. Therefore, I draw on this method of analysis, in conjunction with a dialogic approach, to identify *both* the cultural and structural forces anti-CSEC organizations contend with when framing the problem and providing solutions. While a dialogic approach identifies the cultural components (e.g. beliefs, ideologies, narratives) and various actors involved in a discursive field, a materialist feminist approach focuses on how

intersecting structures of inequality influence the “social and political context, subject positions, and power relations through which social movement frames are generated, circulated, and then reinscribed within different discursive and institutional practices” (Naples, 2002:226).

Furthermore, it considers how the subject positions of activists, their allies and challengers, and those benefitting from the movement influence the construction and reception of movement strategies. This is especially the case for movements where the majority of advocates and potential supporters are economically and socially positioned quite differently from those benefiting from the movement. In other words, there are a range of conflicting cultural narratives (hegemonic and competing) within discursive fields and power imbalances among activists that limit what they say and advocate.

For social movement organizations, power relations intersect to influence and constrain the processes and discourses activists engage in while working toward change. Utilizing a dialogic and materialist feminist approach adds to the theoretical discussion of social movements by accounting for how intersecting inequalities shape, challenge, and are reproduced through collective action repertoires, leading, at times, to paradoxical outcomes. By gaining a deeper understanding of the strategies and goals Georgia social movement actors pursued, we can recognize the deeper nuances of how race, class, gender, age, and sexuality influence, block, and/or counteract efforts for social change. In some cases, strategies that look like they are effectively counteracting these power inequalities can in fact reinforce them.

### **The Collective Action Repertoire of the Anti-CSEC Movement**

This chapter identifies seven strategies making up the anti-CSEC movement’s repertoire. These strategies articulated the injustice of the problem, what needed to occur, and how to make collective change. Anti-CSEC organizations in Georgia actively addressed misconceptions and

stereotypes about victims, held by the public and law enforcement. They countered hegemonic narratives by portraying victims as children of the community. They challenged discrepancies in laws, which more often punished the victims, while exploiters received few, if any, consequences. Furthermore, they identified the structural privileges allowing buyers to remain invisible in the discussion. This has led organizations to develop strategies emphasizing that perpetrators (those buying and selling sex with children) must meet justice in order for this issue to disappear. However, they also called for and engaged in prevention methods, recognizing cultural shifts as key to social change.

***“It’s Happening Right Here in Our Backyard” – The One of Our Own Discourse***

One of the prevailing narratives social movement actors initially faced was the perception commercial sexual exploitation of youth was strictly a foreign problem. “That only happens in Thailand or Russia” was a common statement activists heard when asking people what they knew about the issue; or the follow up question, “that happens here?” was asked when the topic was brought up for the first time. Indeed, these were statements I also experienced when people asked me about my research. These common responses reflect a limited understanding of the issue as well as feelings of confusion and, at times, disbelief. They are the result of a discourse concerning trafficking that is hegemonic not only within the state of Georgia, but also nationally. Julia, a white advocate, identified some of the assumptions she faced when trying to create awareness about the subject:

There are a lot of myths that go along with it [CSEC] that they [the public] don’t understand. I think so many people still see this as an issue that’s in other countries and not right here. They have a hard time believing their next door neighbor can pick up a girl on the street, because that would never happen. [She mimics] “Not in my community.”

The push back Julia and other activists faced reflects a narrative that acknowledges trafficking exists (sometimes even labeled an epidemic), but only in foreign locations. This hegemonic account of sex trafficking is rooted in ethnocentric beliefs and the notion of a foreign “Other” and produces several misconceptions. First, sex trafficking occurs, but in countries less politically and economically stable than the United States. Second, it occurs in these countries because crime is rampant, the politicians and police are corrupt, and their cultures either approve of or allow for this type of problem to exist without much resistance. Furthermore, this narrative lumps women and children into one group, ignoring the different ways age and gender intersect enabling certain individuals to be more likely targeted for commercial sexual exploitation. This narrative is commonly produced through popular non-fictions, films, and undercover TV news specials on trafficking. The federal government also institutionally reproduced this discourse through its 10-year omission of the United States as a source country of trafficking in the State Department’s annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

Even when sex trafficking is acknowledged as existing within the borders of the United States, the dominant narrative is one of foreign women or children being tricked, kidnapped, or sold into slavery and brought to the States to be exploited. Both of these narratives reflect very narrow understandings of who is commercially sexually exploited. They also uphold negative race, class, gender, and nation stereotypes by characterizing foreign women and children as helpless, socially destitute “Others” whose only hope is to be saved by the courageous and liberating U.S. news host, missionary, or law enforcement agent.

Therefore, one of the first discursive strategies social movement actors and organizations utilized was to challenge this narrative. They did this by identifying CSEC as not just an international problem, but also one affecting domestic girls and boys from Georgia and the rest

of the United States. I call this strategy the *One of our Own* discourse. This discourse draws from the hegemonic view that child sex trafficking is occurring at an alarming rate, but diverges from the foreign victim narrative by focusing on domestic children. Therefore, anti-CSEC actors did not deny people were exploited overseas, but maintained that attention was needed for homegrown victims too.

The *One of our Own* discourse was ever present during a Nightlight training seminar on CSEC for interested church congregants:

*During the training session, one of the first slides Stephanie presents is a poster for the blockbuster film Taken. She asks the audience, "Who here has seen this film?" About half of the audience raises their hands. She responds, acknowledging that while the film is suspenseful and full of action, it also reinforces a multitude of myths about who is commercially sexually exploited. She remarks "CSEC is not just a 3<sup>rd</sup> world overseas issue." She asks the audience rhetorically "who is the poster child for this movie?" She then immediately answers her own question, describing the female victim in the film as a rich, young, white girl with a father who will always save the day. Finally, she emphasizes to the audience, "CSEC is an across the board Georgia problem, and not every child has a father who can save the day."*

Stephanie's statements imply that children from all races and classes are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and that many of them are not saved from their exploitation. Stephanie also drew the discourse away from foreign victims in a foreign land and amplified the idea that U.S.-born children from all walks of life are commercially sexually exploited.

Nightlight was not the only organization working to implement the *One of our Own* discourse. During my interviews, but also within their organizational literature, Demanding Justice's members explained that gaining recognition from legislators and law enforcement for the movement claim was an important but difficult process. During several staff meetings, Jean emphasized that saying the problem existed, providing national statistics, and narrating survivor accounts were not enough evidence for some in the public. Specifically, she recounted several



public officials telling her she “needed numbers on Georgia” if she wanted the attention of the legislature. This led Demanding Justice to commission research estimating the number of children under 18 exploited each month in Georgia. An organizational document described the research process:

The study is designed to count adolescent girls using scientific probability methods when they are encountered through several sources: street-activity prostitution, Internet service postings on Craigslist, and escort services. These are the three main sources by which johns find girls to exploit sexually. The quarterly tracking study started in 2007.

The initial estimate was that 200 girls per month were being commercially sexually exploited in Georgia. By the second year, the estimated number was 295 girls, a 12 percent increase.

Demanding Justice described the response by the state to their findings in a campaign document:

The feedback we got from state leaders is that it was believable, and unacceptable. They were impressed by the fact that we actually counted the girls rather than just guessed. They knew that we could have tried to tell them there are “undoubtedly thousands, probably tens of thousands” of girls affected each month, but instead we chose a more conservative figure based on scientific research. The credibility Demanding Justice earned—and continues to earn—from the research is immeasurable.

Later on, the organization hired the same private research organization to estimate the number of men commercially sexually exploiting children in Georgia. These estimates played a key role in the organization’s discursive efforts to shift law enforcement’s focus from the children onto buyers, which I discuss later in this chapter.

After conducting the research, Demanding Justice began including it into their community awareness presentations. They provided it to lawmakers when lobbying for changes in laws. They also diffused the findings to other non-profit organizations to be used as a tool in their efforts to increase awareness about the problem. For example, Nightlight included the data in their training seminars, newsletters, website, and most popular medium, a short film on CSEC.

Nightlight described the film as a “family friendly” way to discuss the issue in a “non-salacious” manner. The film, created by a volunteer, is a short, well-produced, metaphorical depiction of commercial sexual exploitation as a childhood fairytale. At the end of the film, Demanding Justice’s statistics are shown in order to link the metaphorical victims to the real ones. By sharing information and discursive portrayals of the victim, the organizations were able to diffuse the *One of our Own* discourse to a larger audience. This research has now become a mainstay of the movement. Not only did Demanding Justice and Nightlight use these statistics in their awareness campaigns, trainings, and literature, but also the state government took over payments to the research firm to reproduce the data on a quarterly basis. The research was always a central talking point at the statewide taskforce meetings.

As I pointed out in Chapter One, quantifying the CSEC population in an accurate manner is still a contested idea, one that Weitzer (2007, 2012) among others, asserts has some serious methodological flaws. However, in order for the *One of Our Own* discourse to resonate among those in power, the organizations had to work within a culture where numbers, projections, and trends (whether accurate or not) are given more purchase than the lived experience of local survivors and past judicial cases. Jean exemplified this in the following account:

I know what it was like to go to the legislature the year before we did the research. We hardly got any attention. The very next year, after we had done the first count [of girls being commercially sexually exploited], people sat up, watched, listened, and paid attention. So research, research, research!

Therefore, the organization’s discursive processes involved purchasing and supplying statistics to gain acceptance from state authorities for their ideas about commercial sexual exploitation. Andreas (2010:23) has argued this reliance on trafficking statics is a national phenomenon as well: “there are strong incentives (e.g., for governments, activists and media interests) to accept and reproduce rather than challenge and critique them [the numbers].”

In addition to the research, the state's response to collective action, both in the past and more recently, came about after advocates from specific social locations began calling for change. In other words, while those in marginalized positions (i.e. commercially sexually exploited youth and survivors) are present in the movement, they have not accounted for most of the leadership. Rather, adults from more economically, socially, and politically privileged positions make up the majority of participants and leaders in the movement. Organizations with the economic clout to purchase research or cultural influence to create religious coalitions have had the most significant impact on public policy within the state. This is because the "dynamics of gender, race, class, and region, among other structures of inequality, shape whose voices are represented and heard in public policy debates, as well as in a social movement context" (Naples 2002:228).

***Challenging the Hegemonic Image of the Child Prostitute – The They're Victims, Not Prostitutes Discourse***

Along with establishing a narrative that children in Georgia are commercially sexually exploited, the organizations embarked on a much harder task: changing perceptions of who is and is not a victim. This has been an ongoing process since the beginning of the movement in 2000, and occurred throughout my time observing the social movement actors' activities. Specifically, the organizations were challenging a hegemonic discourse held among certain state and national law enforcement and elected officials, and reproduced through mainstream media. This narrative portrays commercially sexually exploited youth as prostitutes. In their challenge to this portrayal, the organizations redefined the child as a victim of prostitution. Saunders (2005) traces the history of this strategy to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during the 1990s working to transform descriptions from "child prostitute" to "victim." I call this

strategy the *They're Victims, Not Prostitutes* discourse. In order to understand how this discursive effort is used, I will first explain the context and origins behind the hegemonic child prostitute narrative.

The dominant narrative pertaining to the term “child prostitute” carries several assumptions: that the child chooses the lifestyle, that he or she makes a profit from his or her sex work, that he or she is morally and sexually deviant and therefore should be deemed a criminal, sinner, or at the least invisible. Beyond these assumptions are a common gendered perception that only women are prostitutes and a class perception that most prostitutes are poor, uneducated, habitual drug users. Cindy, a white law enforcement official, articulated this view, even admitting she believed this dominant narrative for some time:

When you say “child prostitution,” I mean the stigma that comes with the word “prostitution” in of itself is someone that’s using drugs or doing this because they want to. I’m ashamed to say that looking back a couple of years ago, when you talked about prostitution that was one of the big stereotypes I had. I was like, “well, those out there prostituting, most of them are probably doing it for their drug habit.” Ever since I’ve been doing this [working commercial sexual exploitation cases], it’s just the opposite.

Cindy’s statement reflected a dominant narrative drawn from a combination of carceral, individualized, gendered, and sexualized victim-blaming notions. This discourse emphasizes the child’s actions/behaviors as cause for their sexual exploitation and calls for criminalizing their “deviant” behavior. In Chapter Two, I discussed how conservative Christian groups successfully used a similar discourse in 2010 to prevent a movement-sponsored bill (SB 304) from becoming law. Their efforts added a religious morality undertone to the narrative characterizing “child prostitutes” as both publicly and morally deviant.

Historically, a conflicting criminal justice system has institutionally reinforced this narrative by criminalizing sex with minors as statutory rape, while identifying children engaging

in prostitution as offenders (Halter 2010). Such laws present a paradox for both the child and police. The exploited child has to experience arrest (many times charged with a status offense) and incarceration before receiving the legal assistance and victim services laws like HB 200 provide. Similarly, the officers (who may perceive the child as a victim) are obligated to detain and transport the child to a regional youth detention center to remove him or her from the exploitative situation and provide safety. This is in part because, as discussed in Chapter Two, a regional assessment center for CSEC victims has yet to be constructed in Georgia.

This paradox extends to how the laws address those selling minors for sex. For instance, the state's anti-pimping law (Ga. Code Ann. 16-6-11) lead to one set of penalties for those prosecuted, while the state human trafficking law leads to other, typically stronger, penalties.

Shauna, a white legal advocate, highlighted the problem:

I think the penalties for the trafficking law [HB 200] are pretty good. I don't understand what they did with the pimping/pandering law. I know there's some sort of political compromise, but it makes no sense at all. There's just a complete disconnect between the two. How could it be that if you *prostitute* a 16 or 17 year old, you get some ridiculous slap on the wrist, but if you *traffic* a 16 or 17 year old, you could go to prison for the rest of your life?

The dissonance between state and federal laws reinforces the hegemonic discourse surrounding prostitution, creating an opportunity for commercially sexually exploited youth to be treated as offenders and exploiters to be viewed with less concern. While HB 200 was seen as a significant legal step forward in how victims and perpetrators are treated, social movement actors and law enforcement officials still recognized the problematic inconsistencies in the law.

Along with the stigma attached to the label "prostitute" and inconsistent laws, anti-CSEC advocates also confronted a long history of racialized controlling images depicting women and children of color as prostitutes (Hill Collins 2006). Controlling images play a key role in how the subjects of social movement activity are perceived and portrayed. Hill Collins (2006:77) argues

these images “are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life.” In Georgia, the dominant image of a child prostitute has been of a poor, young black girl from the “inner city.” More recently, this image was extended to include Asian, Latino, and white inner city girls. As Andrea, a black female child advocate, explained:

So we had the disadvantage of silence and denial and I'll say unconcern, because of the population that [this] was thought to be happening to. When you think it's only poor, inner city children, there's something within our society that keeps us from being as compassionate as if it happened to a 12-year-old child in the suburbs. There's less of an uproar and so it's what we have.

This image is not new, but one in a long line of racialized, classed, and gendered popular images (Hill Collins 2006). At the root of this image is the idea of “a deviant black female sexuality” which portrays girls as sexually assertive and promiscuous, economically and educationally deprived, and thus willing to exchange sexual favors for profit (Hill Collins 2006:89). This characterization subsequently justifies their exploitation and treatment as offenders by the criminal justice system.

Hill Collins argues this controlling image is part of a binary. On one side you have the deviant, assertive, poor, black or brown, female sexuality and on another the normative, passive, middle-class, white, female sexuality. Andrea’s description above reflects the dominant assumption surrounding commercially exploited adolescents in Georgia: they are “poor, inner city” (i.e. low-income, urban, and predominantly brown and black) children and not a “child in the suburbs” (i.e. Middle-class and predominantly white). Hill Collins (2000, 2006) argues these images lead to the objectification, commodification, and consumption of black sexuality, and justify the sexual exploitation and degradation of young black girls’ bodies in the sex work industry. Furthermore, because this hegemonic discourse characterizes a minor “choosing” to

break the law with her “deviant hypersexuality,” it upholds the idea that she should be detained and punished. The controlling images underlying the notion of the child prostitute added an intersecting racialized, classed, and gendered component to the hegemonic discourse surrounding prostituted children. This created a significant hurdle for anti-CSEC activists, one they actively challenged, and at times reinforced, when constructing their collective action discourse.

Further complicating anti-CSEC strategies, the limited data available in Georgia indicate poor, black girls are disproportionately likely to be commercially sexually exploited. For example, one report, commissioned by the mayor of Atlanta in 2005, found: “Overwhelmingly, young African American girls are being identified as victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the city of Atlanta: ninety percent of cases referred to CEASE [a victims services center] in 2004 were identified as African American” (Priebe and Suhr 2005:14). Another report analyzing the first year of referrals to the statewide care-coordination office (i.e. the state’s central support services for CSEC victims) found that out of 101 referrals:

100% were female...and 72 became part of the tracking and monitoring system. Seventy eight percent (n=56) were confirmed CSEC victims and 22% (n=16) were considered ‘At-Risk’ for becoming exploited...Most of the girls were: African American (74% of actual CSEC victims and 94% of the At-Risk Children); either being raised by a single parent or in the Department of Family and Child Services custody, either detained in a youth detention center or living at home with family; not on the appropriate grade level; and receiving Medicaid insurance or were uninsured (Broomfield-Massey and Starnes 2010:1&12).

This was also the case for Demanding Justice’s prevention program for at-risk girls. All of the girls referred to the program through the county juvenile court were African-American. This became apparent during a weekly staff meeting I observed:

*Tina updates the group about what went on in last week’s session with the girls. One of the activities she had them do was make a collage with images and texts from popular magazines answering the questions: who am I? What do I want to be? Tina passes around a few of the girls’ collages for us to see. Many of them have photos of young black fashion models, singers and movie stars, images of*

*jewelry and other expensive items, and cutout words like “awesome,” “respect,” and “star.” Jean comments to Tina, “I know you haven’t had any yet, but make sure there are some magazines down there with white women, in case any white girls are referred to us.”*

I should note that there were cases of white, Latino, and Asian girls and boys, from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, who were commercially sexually exploited in Georgia. However, the few credible numbers reflect a disproportionate number of young, black, low-income girls showing up in juvenile detention and referred to victim services.

In the case of Georgia, the controlling images embedded into the hegemonic discourse led to several consequences for commercially sexually exploited youth. First, it was used to justify the invisibility of prostituted children as victims. Second, the image helped justify their sexual exploitation and incarceration in the juvenile justice system. Third, it masked those children who were commercially sexually exploited but not poor and black. Finally, it allowed, until recently, for the state and movement to ignore commercially sexually exploited boys. The advocates I observed and interviewed quickly admitted they initially focused only on sexually exploited girls and a more concerted focus on boys was needed.

Jeffery Dennis (2008) argues this slow inclusion of boys is an unspoken part of the anti-trafficking movement’s dominant narrative and reflects gendered and heteronormative assumptions of sexuality regarding who can be a commercially sexually exploited victim. This is because who is considered a prostitute or victim is a gendered and heterosexualized idea. In other words, the dominant image of a prostitute is a girl or woman who has sex with men. This image also reflects gender stereotypes that girls are passive, easily objectified and victimized, while boys are active, tough, independent, and self-sufficient. This makes it much harder for boys to be recognized as objectified victims of commercial sexual exploitation. This invisibility of boys also reflects the silence and marginalization homosexuality conjures in the highly religious



southern United States. The high rates of anti-gay sentiment in the South make discussing heterosexual and homosexual men paying for sex with boys a taboo topic. The intersecting heterosexism and regional conservative Christian sexual politics influencing the child prostitute image constructed barriers to holding public discussions regarding sexuality, let alone commercial homosexuality. This prevented boys, but also lesbians and transgender children from being included in the discourse.

All of these discourses are fashioned into a hegemonic narrative creating a racialized, class, gendered, and sexualized image of the child prostitute. This image on one hand blames the victim and justifies their exploitation and criminalization. On the other hand, it ignores those children who do not fit the model. Furthermore, those in positions of privilege in the state, including the predominantly white male legislators enacting laws, male police officers enforcing them, and juvenile justice employees administering punishment have played significant roles developing, maintaining, and enforcing the archetype. In response, members of Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and other anti-CSEC advocates drew from the same discursive fields as the hegemonic narrative to construct their strategies for change. These strategies counteracted the dominant views about the youth and positioned activists as experts on how best to treat the children and their exploiters.

In an effort to combat the stigma of prostitution and the race, class, gender, and sexualized controlling images victims faced, Demanding Justice and Nightlight developed a counter-narrative. The organizations' counter discourse, *They're Victims, Not Prostitutes*, was based on collectivist notions of childhood and victimization. It emphasized that children do not choose prostitution and do not benefit economically, socially, or emotionally from their exploited status. Rather, they were victims of unfortunate backgrounds and/or dangerous pimps. Social

movement scholars would identify this narrative transformation as movement actors challenging or redefining the normative definition of the situation (Turner and Killian 1987). The *They're Victims, Not Prostitutes* discourse was prevalent in a presentation Naomi, a black Demanding Justice member, provided at a quarterly community-training event:

*Projected on the screen behind Naomi were the phrases "CSEC victims do not choose their lifestyle; rather, they are manipulated into it by perpetrators. At all ages, the commercial sex industry is much more about lack of choices than it is about choice;" "Our language should reflect our understanding of these girls as victims;" and "Prostitute versus Prostituted." As the last phrase shows up on screen, Naomi emphasizes the difference in meaning these words possess. She explains the word "prostitute" implies choice, particularly on the part of the child, thus reinforcing the idea that he or she is complicit in the sexual transaction. In contrast, the word "prostituted" implies a lack of choice and portrays the child as a victim of prostitution. She urges those in the audience to stop using the word prostitute when describing a commercially sexually exploited child and, if necessary, use the phrase "prostituted child."*

This example highlights the tactics organizations used to develop the emergent repertoire among their audiences. Similar to the domestic violence movement that emerged in the 1970's, a central function of the *They're Victims, Not Prostitutes* discourse was to move away from a victim-blaming ideology and toward a victim label creating empathy. Berns (2004:153) writes the victim label has three intended effects: it "absolves victims from responsibility for the harm;" it "assigns causes and identifies sources of harm...that implicitly designates a perpetrator of harm;" and it "specifies responses to the harm" by implying support for the victim and sanctions for the perpetrator(s). For a critique of this "victim" narrative see Chapter One.

*They're Victims, Not Prostitutes* also reflects a therapeutic state perspective, similar to discourse used by activists and the government in the national movement against child sexual abuse (Whittier 2009). This perspective "uses therapeutic discourse and techniques to shape citizen's mental states—their beliefs, sense of self, emotions, and sense of moral order—in an attempt to direct their behavior in accordance with collective notions of what is acceptable,

desirable, and ‘normal’” (Whittier 2009:73). Many anti-CSEC organizations and activists supported a therapeutic state discourse because many of the leaders came from physical, clinical, and mental health backgrounds. In addition, these organizations were closely aligned with groups directly addressing child sexual abuse (e.g. Darkness to Light) through a public health paradigm. For example, Demanding Justice and Nightlight, as well as the state’s CSEC taskforce advised volunteers and the public to become educated on child sexual abuse, since it is a significant risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation. In line with this therapeutic state approach, the anti-CSEC repertoire supported state government-sponsored medical solutions to commercial sexual exploitation. This included calling for: case management of at-risk youth and their families through child welfare services, counseling for victims and their family members, state training programs on CSEC for adults regularly in contact with children (e.g. teachers, physicians, police officers), mandatory reporting laws, and public service announcements on the topic.

***“This Could Happen to Anyone” – The Paradoxical Effect of a Universal Child Victim***

***Discourse***

Organizations like Demanding Justice and Nightlight, as well as state agencies like the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, were using techniques similar to the one discussed above to challenge the hegemonic child prostitute narrative. In its place, they were incrementally substituting the image with what I am calling the *Universal Child Victim*. A black female advocate and victim services worker, Tammy, aptly described the universal image:

Well I think it [CSEC] has to be explained to them [the public] as if it [the victim] was *their child*. Because at the end of the day, it’s somebody’s daughter, it’s somebody’s son, it’s somebody’s child that’s being victimized.

“Our children,” “anybody’s child,” and “someone you know” were common descriptors I heard during trainings and public events. These depictions of the exploited minor reflect the notion that

anyone, no matter one's social, economic, or political circumstance, can become a victim. This gives the impression of a "universal" child victim. A Demanding Justice blog post to their readers also exemplified the *Universal Child Victim*: "These are little girls; they are daughters — they could be your daughter. Don't look at them in a judgmental way. They are the victims. Don't blame a child when an adult is controlling the situation."

Movement actors drew from notions of collectivism and childhood innocence to develop their alternative discourse and challenge the dominant child prostitute narrative. This universal discourse disregards the race, class, gender, and sexual status of the child, and instead focuses on their age, victim status, and community relation to garner support for the movement's goals. The purpose of the *Universal Child Victim* is to personalize the victim, or potential victim, to the public and, in turn, facilitate an emotional attachment to the issue across race, class, gender, sexuality, and religious lines. In other words, a universal child image implies someone's status and privileges will not protect him or her and the people he or she loves from CSEC, and therefore collective action is needed to prevent further victimization.

Efforts to universalize the child victim and spur collective action, however, can be problematic. Universal appeals can ignore the race, class, gender, and sexual beliefs and privileges of the people being mobilized. In particular, they create room for an "ideal victim" discourse. Christie (1986) describes the "ideal innocent victim" as someone who is weak, only engages in respectable behaviors, only interacts with others in proper spaces, was exploited by someone deemed "bad" or "evil," and had no prior relationship with any of his/her exploiters. Also, Madriz (1997) argues the "ideal victim" is racialized, classed, and gendered. She found white, middle-class, women (especially girls), who look naive and dress properly are considered the most ideal victim. Madriz (1997:353) adds, "Women of color do not fit classist and racist

stereotypical notions of the ideal victim.” Furthermore, O’Connell (2005) points out those children who do not play the passive, powerless victim role associated with their age are often viewed with skepticism and not allotted the same sympathy as those fitting the ideal victim stereotype. Thus, larger structural inequalities produce the ideal victim discourse.

Unfortunately, this ideal victim can create multiple problems for those sexually exploited children who do not fit its characteristics and are not situated within positions of privilege. As Weed (1990:462) notes “as the situation diverges from these characteristics, people are free to assign more culpability to the victim.” The *Universal Child Victim* is, as Steinberg (1998, 1999) might say, complicated by the ideal victim narrative. While perhaps drawing in a wider audience across race, class, and gender lines, the discourse simultaneously obfuscates the most likely victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Hence, one unintended consequence arising from this strategy is that children who do not fit the ideal victim archetype, which is the vast majority, can be ignored or overlooked. Several Demanding Justice members described this outcome as “falling through the cracks in the system.”

Indeed, as I indicated earlier, the limited data from Georgia showed low-income, African-American girls with prior juvenile records and a history of sexual abuse, as those children disproportionately more likely to be or at risk of becoming CSEC victims. These characteristics are not associated with the ideal victim image. Furthermore, even though some scholars have identified boys making up a significant percentage of the CSEC population, the dominant norms of masculinity diminish the notion that boys can be victims of sexual exploitation (Curtis et. al 2008; Finkelhor and Ormrod 2004; Mitchell et. al 2010). Consequently, these girls and boys are less likely to be perceived as ideal victims or as victims at all. This can result in them being offered less victim services, viewed more often as prostitutes, and charged more frequently as

juvenile delinquents (Finkelhor and Ormrod 2004; Mitchell et. al 2010). In sum, the activists' discursive efforts created a paradoxical effect. While the *Universal Child Victim* strategy initially challenges the hegemonic child prostitute narrative and broadens movement support, it also reinforces race, class, and gender inequalities.

This paradoxical outcome reflects the conflict Steinberg (1998) argues is embedded within social movement discourse. It reveals the competing discursive fields activists must work within and against when constructing appeals to gain a wider audience for their movement. Furthermore, while Naples (2002, 2013) and Steinberg (1999) show how opposing movement organizations and actors draw from these fields to co-opt the strategies of their opponents, I found an organizations' discourse can sometimes be counterproductive to their own efforts. In other words, in their efforts to counter hegemonic claims by broadening the appeal and scope of their effort, a movement's discursive strategies can potentially overlook the structural causes of injustice and those most likely affected, thus reinforcing the inequalities it set out to address.

Activists must not only account for the marginalized social positions of those they are advocating for, but also the privileged social positions of those they are seeking to mobilize for support. For Nightlight, that meant universalizing and personalizing the child victim to match their disproportionately white, middle-class audiences. Demanding Justice also had to consider the dominant controlling images influencing who "counts" as a victim when developing their discourse defining who is, in fact, a CSEC victim. Two observations that I describe below help illustrate this dilemma.

*It is Tuesday morning at 9:00 am. I am several stories up in a state-owned building in Downtown Atlanta. I am sitting in a large office at a conference table surrounded by cubicles. Jean, Alex, Nancy, Vickie, Linda, and Naomi of Demanding Justice are sitting around the table discussing an upcoming video they are planning to make as part of a new campaign to raise funds for the organization. Initially, the video was to be shot on a street corner in Downtown*

*Atlanta. Tina, a black woman in her early 30s who is a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation and a spokesperson for the organization, would say, "this is where I was trafficked." She would then describe her experience, specifically discussing the type of men and their mentality who exploited her as a child. However, several changes have been made since the first discussion about the video. The most recent changes include shooting a reenactment of the events leading up to the sexual exploitation. In the video, a white man will be shown online searching Backpage.com and ordering an escort. The video will then reveal a young girl walking up to the buyer's home in the suburbs. As the group reviews the changes, Vickie, a black woman in her late 30s, makes another suggested change. She brings up the point that if the video were to "go viral," which is the group's hope, they might want to consider the perceptions of the larger viewing audience. She is especially concerned with the race of the victim in the video. She suggests the victim's race "might be an issue" if the video goes viral. She points out that if the victim is black and the buyer white "It might turn some people off." In response, Alex, a white woman in her early 30s, proposes they make the victim a white girl. After an extended pause, as the group contemplates the change, everyone agrees this may be better. However, they decide they will still use Tina's voice to narrate the story.*

While the final version of the video did utilize a "young looking" white woman as the victim in the reenactment; it also showed Tina talking about her own experience as a survivor. Nevertheless, the changes made to the video highlight the competing discourses the organization faced and also drew from. The members of Demanding Justice actively constructed who were the victims of CSEC. While the group was equally mixed between black and white women, and all the girls attending the organization's at-risk program were black, they came to the agreement that the victim in their video should be white. They thought a white victim would elicit more national attention and they did not want to reinforce the idea that commercial sexual exploitation was, as Vicki put it, only an "African American problem."

Implicit in their process of constructing the *Universal Child Victim*, Demanding Justice members recognized using a black female victim might not lead to a robust response. This recognition reflected several underlying concerns. Concern people might not care about the child as much because she does not represent the ideal victim image (one that prioritizes the lives of

middle-class white children over poor, black children). Concern people would associate the problem with “black” culture rather than an issue facing society as a whole. Finally, concern that using a black victim and white exploiter might be racially contentious, irritating some in the public. Specifically, the depiction might deter support from certain white viewers who feel the video portrays them poorly. In light of these concerns, Demanding Justice worked within an ideal victim narrative to evoke public concern. However, in doing so, they were unintentionally reinforcing its gendered, classed, and racialized boundaries and acquiescing to the idea that black children are less worthy of compassion than white children. Therefore, Demanding Justice’s *Universal Child Victim* discourse was influenced by the dominant structures shaping who is understood to be an “ideal victim.”

However, Demanding Justice did not simply reproduce gendered, racialized, and classed notions of the ideal victim. They complicated these views by including Tina’s experience of exploitation in the video. As a young, black girl in Georgia with a history of abuse, poverty, and frequent interactions with child welfare services as a foster child, Tina’s story was much more representative of those likely to be victims or at-risk of commercial sexual exploitation. The inclusion of Tina’s experience illustrates the collective and contested nature of social movement discourse, where discursive repertoires are “produced, sustained, and transformed in the course of contention” (Steinberg 1998:857). Thus, Demanding Justice did not fully employ a monolithic image of the victim in their strategy to raise awareness and cultivate support for their efforts.

Likewise, my observation of Eddie, a black male police officer in his mid-40s and spokesperson for Demanding Justice’s police trainings, exemplifies how social movement organizations can promote the victim-label narrative without resorting to the ideal victim trope.



Having attended several trainings, the audience was generally made up of male police officers, detectives, and sometimes lawyers earning continuing education credits.

*During his presentation, Eddie, a direct and animated speaker, describes what officers can expect from victims of CSEC. He implores the audience “don’t judge a book by its cover, you gotta look beyond their attitude.” They will “cuss at you and not cooperate.” They will tell you “they don’t want your help.” He goes on to describe his first years on the police force working the city beat. The stretch of town he covered was known for prostitution. He explained to the audience the contentious, and at times civil, relationships he built with the sex workers during his time policing the area. Eddie finishes his story by admitting “I was guilty, I saw these girls as prostitutes. I wish I could go back and tell myself differently. I dealt with these girls on the streets” and “I was guilty” of looking the other way. “A lot of kids wake up every day with parents who don’t care.” These kids think “the police can’t kill me; my pimp will kill me” So they stay in the life. He again calls on the audience to “look beyond their nasty attitudes and dirty mouths. These girls are victims.”*

Eddie’s approach highlighted competing narratives present within Demanding Justice’s discourse. He told the officers that exploited youth would not look for their help, identify as victims, or act in manner reflecting ideal victim behavior. However, he stressed they should remember these youth are victims and recognize there are reasons why they act the way they do. Eddie challenged both the child prostitute narrative and the ideal victim myth that officers might hold. He did this by pointing to the actively defiant behavior of the children and inequalities (i.e. poverty, child abuse, and violence) they face. He provided his audience with a deeper understanding of why youth engage in actions that reinforced the controlling images law enforcement attach to children. Furthermore, Eddie used his privileged position as a male police officer to add credibility to his discourse. He created a relatable connection with his fellow officers by discussing his own experiences. Eddie also constructed a space for his audience to challenge their views and past practices regarding prostituted youth by acknowledging his own prejudicial beliefs about the children.

Previous research would suggest Eddie's efforts are necessary considering an officer's ideas about victimhood (i.e. who is a victim) were found to influence their treatment of victims. For example, Stephanie Halter (2010) found police were more likely to consider prostituted youth victims if they cooperate, have no juvenile record, and self-report being victimized. Her findings demonstrate a significant link between the ideal victim archetype and those children officers perceived as victims. Consequently, Halter's findings indicate, similar to Eddie's presentation, a strategic need to challenge the officers' image of the victim. This strategy contrasts with the *Universal Child Victim* discourse, by emphasizing youth as victims of their social circumstances, without inadvertently reinforcing an image ignoring those disproportionately victimized.

From a broader view, the organizations' discursive strategies brought to light the competing discourses and privileged positions of advocates and their audiences. In addition, they challenged the hegemonic child prostitute image in an effort to shift public perception and institutional responses to exploited youth. However, these strategies were also complicated by the larger structural inequalities influencing who speaks for victims, which communities are accessible to mobilize for support, and who qualifies as a victim.

### ***A Capitalist Strategy to End CSEC – The Stop Demand Discourse***

Anti-CSEC actors not only constructed discourses concerning exploited youth, they also developed strategies targeting those they saw as a root cause of the problem—the buyers and sellers. The *Stop Demand* discourse, drawing on notions of capitalism, equates commercial sexual exploitation to a product of supply and demand. In this equation, the child is the product, the pimp is the supplier, and the buyer is the demand. Activists argued that just helping victims will never truly end the issue, since the supply can always be replenished. Therefore, they

asserted focus be placed on the demand side. “If we stop demand, there will be no need for a supply,” was a common statement heard at anti-CSEC events, trainings, and during my interviews. Scholars like Bernstein (2007b, 2010), O’Connell Davidson (2003), and Weitzer (2012) identified this capitalist narrative as a common strategy used by national trafficking groups. Weitzer (2012) acknowledges this discourse has been successful in persuading government funding for more directed police efforts toward buyers. However, he is critical of the *Stop Demand* discourse arguing the strategy cannot fully address the issue because it ignores the structural reasons for why the child is exploited.

By emphasizing the buyer’s actions, the *Stop Demand* discourse draws from the notion of individualism. The assumption behind this claim is as follows: if not for the egregious choice the buyer is making, there would be no exploited child. Therefore, having the police target buyers (i.e. cutting off demand) rather than victims will end the problem of CSEC. Both Demanding Justice and Nightlight engaged in several efforts to draw their audiences’ attention to buyers.

Beyond Weitzer’s criticisms, I also identified two essentialist notions reflected in the *Stop Demand* discourse. These conceptions further complicated an assessment of the strategy’s usefulness. First, the discourse characterizes buyers’ actions as unjust but also normal. This is best reflected in an audience participation activity Demanding Justice utilized during their awareness trainings. The first time I witnessed this activity I was chosen to be a volunteer.

*About twenty-five minutes into the training Jean asks me to come up on stage with another male volunteer and two female volunteers. We are handed transcripts with dialog printed on them. Jean explains these are actual conversations between a buyer and a customer representative for a fake, local escort site. The transcripts are part of a research study the organization commissioned in order to identify and quantify the buyers of commercially sexually exploited children in Georgia. Jean then hands me a microphone and asks me to read aloud the lines of the buyer. The white female volunteer plays the part of escort service representative. I read into the microphone that I am looking to order an escort. The representative asks me what type of girl I am looking for. We then discuss my*

*racial preference. “Do I want a mixed girl? Black? White? Asian? Puerto Rican?” The representative begins asking me how old I prefer the escort to be. I read aloud the word “young.” This prompts her to begin gauging how young is too young. (This was a designed part of the study in order to see if the buyer would or would not purchase sex from someone underage.) After I make some coded comments about wanting someone young, she tells me they have a 16 year old available and asks if that will work? I read out-loud “No 15?” The script then directs me to laugh. The representative responds, “No, we don’t have any 15.” The transcript ends. It is now the other couple’s turn to read from their transcripts. A similar conversation transpires between the two volunteers. Once they finish reading the transcript, Jean asks me and the other male volunteer how the exercise made us feel. She then asks the women volunteers. Finally, she inquires how the audience feels about what they heard. After initially expressing shock and disgust, audience members begin discussing how it felt like someone just casually ordering a product over the phone. “Like ordering a pizza,” a woman calls out. Many comment that the conversation makes it seem like a “normal transaction.”*

Similar comments were made each time I witnessed this activity. The exercise gave the audience an insider look into buyer mentality, but also showed how these transactions can be routine. This activity reinforced the idea that while buying a minor for sex is problematic, it is also common economic activity for some men.

The second part of the *Stop Demand* discourse characterized the buyer as a normal individual.<sup>6</sup> This normality was routinely expressed during trainings, seminars, public events, and my interviews with social movement actors. When questioned about who makes up the buyers, the answer by Alex, a Demanding Justice member, reflected a common response among advocates:

It’s your every man. If there are 7,200 men a month just in this state that knowingly or unknowingly buy sex with underage girls, it could be anybody. It is anybody. It could be the person next to you. It could be your brother or your dad, your friend. It could be anybody. It’s the potential to be every man.

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<sup>6</sup> The limited and incomplete data we do have on buyers reports them to be disproportionately middle/upper class, white, heterosexual men (Curtis et. al 2008; Estes and Weiner 2001).

Many of my participants made it clear the men were “not pedophiles” and that care be taken with this label. This was because the label masks men buying sex with children who do not fit the “scary sexual predator” image associated with pedophilia. Therefore, the organizations articulated a message contesting the dominant image of the buyer, which has historically painted sexual predators as loner men from urban slums or isolated rural regions (Christie 1986). Christie (1986) also argued this image portrays sexual predators as poor, heterosexual, whites or people of color—unless the victim is a boy, in which case the man is deemed a homosexual deviant. This contested image was also prevalent during Nightlight events. Advocates were quick to point out buyers could be anyone, including church members and even religious leaders.

### ***Redefining the Buyers of CSEC – The Normal Guy Buyer Discourse***

In their efforts to challenge the dominant sexual predator image, anti-CSEC organizations thus constructed a *Normal Guy Buyer* discourse. This discourse emphasized the magnitude of the problem, the buyers’ often privileged locations, and that most buyers did not fit the stereotypical notion of a sexual predator. In particular, it highlighted the “normalcy” of the buyers’ lives and acknowledged their privilege to remain invisible in their role in the exploitation, much in the way McIntosh (1990) highlights how white and male privilege are made invisible through daily practices. At the same time, an implied assertion of the discourse is that while the buyers “seem like normal guys,” they are truly deviant and actively seeking sex with exploited children.

These notions of privilege were also manifest in the organizations’ target audiences toward whom they directed *Normal Guy Buyer*. Demanding Justice’s audience typically consisted of law enforcement, public citizens, and legislators. Both the Georgia legislature and police force were disproportionately male, and the legislature was also significantly white and upper middle class. Furthermore, individuals with the financial means to take time off work and

travel to events around the city were those most likely to attend Demanding Justice's public seminars and events.<sup>7</sup> In my observations, many events were held in middle-class areas, and an equal distribution of white and black women professionals were the most common attendees. For Nightlight, predominately white churches in middle-income areas disproportionately made up their core audience. Therefore, when Demanding Justice and Nightlight portrayed the buyer as someone their audience members might know, they implicitly recognized the race, class, gender, and heterosexual privileges of buyers in Georgia. The organizations emphasized these privileges should not be a protection from criminal punishment.

Thus, in conjunction with the *Stop Demand* discourse, the *Normal Guy Buyer* challenges the sense of normalcy and privilege benefiting buyers and calls for a stop to their behavior. While the *Stop Demand* discourse presents an individual solution to a systematic problem, the *Normal Guy Buyer* exposes the structural privileges partly producing CSEC. It did this by exposing privileged communities to the idea that their neighborhood and/or family members are disproportionately more likely to be buyers. The discourse also highlighted the economic ability and high social statuses concealing buyers' actions, preventing them from being associated with Christie's (1986) hegemonic image of the sexual predator. Therefore, activists' efforts employing these discourses together were not without merit, considering they did not completely ignore the structural causes of CSEC.

### ***A Carceral Solution to the Problem – The Punishment Discourse***

Along with the *Stop Demand* and *Normal Guy Buyer* discourses, anti-CSEC organizations utilized a *Punishment* discourse, which called for strong carceral penalties against the buyers and sellers of commercially sexually exploited children. This *Punishment* discourse is

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted some events were held on weekends and weekday nights to be more accessible.

the product of several notions drawn from the same discursive field as the hegemonic child prostitute narrative. Both support a carceral solution to the issue, emphasize individual behavior as the underlying concern, and make a moral argument against the person(s) of interest. However, unlike the dominant narrative, which focuses on the child, the *Punishment* discourse hinges on the exploiter's behavior.

The *Punishment* strategy is in response to the institutional (e.g. law and juvenile justice system) discourse and treatment of victims versus exploiters. In particular, it critiques the police and juvenile justice system's problematic efforts to address commercial sexual exploitation in the past and presently. For instance, during movement events, anti-CSEC actors would point out how, historically, minors were arrested for prostitution more often than "johns" for exploitation. They also described a historical legacy of lenience by the state towards those exploiting children. For example, until 2001 in Georgia, pandering a minor was considered a misdemeanor that only led to a 50-dollar fine. The *Punishment* discourse was often used in conjunction with *They're Victims, Not Prostitutes*, and the *Universal Child Victim* to draw the public and police's attention away from the child and onto the buyer and seller. By first identifying the child as a victim, the organizations were then able to make a stronger argument for why the buyers' and sellers' actions are criminal and deserving of punishment.

Anti-CSEC advocates drew from a narrative embedded in the broader sex trafficking movement - the ideology of carceral feminism - when constructing the *Punishment* discourse (Bernstein 2010). Carceral feminism is "the commitment of abolitionist feminist activists to a law and order agenda and...a drift from the welfare state to the carceral state as the enforcement apparatus for feminist goals" (Bernstein 2007b:143). Bernstein (2010) argues this ideology creates a space where abolitionist feminist and evangelical, Christian organizations find

opportunities for cooperation through mutual support of retributive justice as the proper method to mete out social justice. She (2010:58) writes, “a vision of social justice as criminal justice, and of punitive systems of control as the best motivational deterrents for men’s bad behavior, serves as a crucial point of connection with state actors, evangelicals, and others who have embraced the anti-trafficking cause.” Carceral feminism is an attempt to co-opt the hegemonic discourse supporting carceral solutions to crimes like prostitution. However, unlike the dominant perspective that focuses primarily on punishing/prosecuting the woman (or man) engaged in sex work, carceral feminism attempts to turn attention onto the buyer and seller of commercial sex.

While a vigorous debate exists among scholars, activists, and political officials concerning adult prostitution and a carceral solution for its procurers, there is less debate concerning children (Bernstein 2007b, 2010; Chuang 2010; Doezenia 2010; Farr 2005, Kim and Chang 2007, 2010; O’Connell Davidson 2003; Vance 2011; Weitzer 2012). As O’Connell Davidson (2003:23) writes, “there are few, if any, politicians or lobby groups who would actively argue against the principle of completely abolishing child prostitution.” Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and other actors in the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia appeared to heavily endorse the carceral feminist ideology. Ruth, a white victim services provider neatly summarized what many anti-CSEC activists advocated:

Even last night when I was with this group, wherever I talk, I say “I can tell you about what we’re doing [for the victims] but I also need to talk to you about the demand side. We need to stop the demand. We need to prosecute. We need to hold these men accountable.”

In addition, public officials and activists discussed strategies to indict exploiters on racketeering charges and garnish their funds as a form of victim restitution during state task force meetings. These efforts reinforced the central idea behind the *Punishment* discourse—the most effective



way to end commercial sexual exploitation of youth is through the law enforcement mechanisms of arrest, imprisonment, and monetary fines.

The perceived effectiveness of the *Punishment* strategy was mixed. Advocates successfully used a version of the discursive strategy early on in the movement to lobby state legislators to pass the 2001 Child Sexual Commerce Prevention Act, which made pimping or pandering a minor a felony with a \$10,000 fine. However, many pointed out the law has not been enforced consistently. More recently, social movement organizations again used the *Punishment* discourse to successfully call for passing HB 200 in 2011. This law increased penalties for buyers and sellers, making soliciting a felony attached to significant jail time (depending on the age of the minor), a fine, asset forfeiture, and no mistake-of-age defense. Those pimping/trafficking minors received even longer sentences and fines. However, similar to the 2001 law, certain activists have expressed concern over how extensive HB 200 will be enforced. Also, there has been no quantitative effort to measure the police's application of the law. Yet the discourse was effective, even if only symbolically, within the state's political institution. This was because it reinforced a carceral, "tough on crime," strategy popular among those in political power.

In an effort to go beyond the symbolic and address enforcement, for the past few years Demanding Justice performed police/prosecutor trainings educating law enforcement on what laws exist and how to implement them. They also articulated the *They're Victims, Not Prostitutes*, *Universal Child Victim*, *Stop Demand*, and *Punishment* discourses during the trainings. One research study has suggested these trainings can be useful (Ferguson et. al 2009). Ferguson and his colleagues (2009) conducted a CSEC intervention project in five U.S. cities to measure the effectiveness of CSEC training for law enforcement. Ferguson et. al's (2009)

training modules resembled Demanding Justice's police training modules in many ways, including language that advocated the *Punishment* repertoire. The researchers found the training positively impacted law enforcement's knowledge, skills, and attitudes pertaining to CSEC. However, due to design and sample limitations the study's findings were not definitive and cannot be generalized to other states' efforts. The results of Demanding Justice's trainings were also mixed. Since beginning the trainings, activists asserted there has been increased local and state media attention on CSEC cases, and increasing attempts to prosecute pimps. However, a recent survey of Georgia law enforcement by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, found that sixty percent of respondents agreed that law enforcement should be able to charge minors with prostitution (Bailey and Wade 2014). Additionally, buyers have remained mostly untouched. As one white legal advocate, Jill, stated:

I think talking to law enforcement and prosecutors, there is still a real reluctance to look at the nice guy with the good family who's your neighbor, who just did this [buy sex from a minor] and see it as anything other than a mistake or bad judgment. [Mimicking] "He's not the one pimping her ... He probably didn't know she was under 17." There's real reluctance, because it is so... I want say accepted.

Jill's account of law enforcement's treatment of buyers highlights the challenges organizations like Demanding Justice and Nightlight face in their ability to stop demand. In particular, the organizations' discursive efforts to change public perception of buyers conflicts with law enforcement's hegemonic narrative. This conflict is most evident in the divergent meanings of "normal" anti-CSEC organizations and police place on the buyer. Jill expanded on this conflict later in the interview:

When we do apprehend them [buyers], they are our neighbors. They are the guy-next-door with the nice wife and family and we don't want to ruin his life. So, 90 percent of the time when somebody is caught, more than that probably 100 percent of the time in Atlanta, he gets charged with disorderly conduct and the

guy walks away; because he's a nice guy with a good job. It's not the sort of person we like to prosecute.

Jill asserted the privileges inherent within the police's hegemonic buyer narrative as a "nice, normal, family man who just made a mistake" were connected to their hesitance to punish buyers.<sup>8</sup> Her description of the police mentality regarding buyers is also a view historically and institutionally supported by the lax state laws on soliciting sex from a minor. This dominant police discourse therefore confounds the *Normal Guy Buyer* discourse. As I discussed earlier, the purpose of the *Normal Guy Buyer* was to challenge public perception that buyers are just a few "scary sexual predators" and in its place construct the view that buyers are most likely "normal guys" capitalizing on their privilege and *should be* punished. For law enforcement, however, this same "normal" discourse justified why buyers *should not* be punished and, hence, reinforces their privilege. Thus conflicting understandings of "normal" in buyer portrayals reinforced the privileges of people anti-CSEC organizations wanted to punish. The organizations interacted with competing and somewhat conflicting discourses of the buyer when developing their *Punishment* discourse to persuade police intervention. Demanding Justice member, Nikki, articulated this dilemma:

Nikki: Law enforcement needs to step up on prosecuting "johns." I know these cases take a long time, but I think there'll be such a big return in the long run. I was at a meeting and the guy (a police detective) was like "well I really just don't want drag their (the buyer's) family through the mud."

T.H.: Yeah I remember that.

Nikki: I was like "families of murderers have to get dragged through the mud too. I'm really sorry that happened, but I want them to see what they're doing is wrong." I think law enforcement needs to stand up and support that.

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted this was not the narrative maintained by all law enforcement officers. In fact, I observed and interviewed several agents of the law actively targeting buyers. However, the legal advocates and officers I interviewed also acknowledged this narrative of the buyer has been and to some extent is still prevalent among Georgia's law enforcement community.

Nikki's recounting of an interaction she had with a local police detective (one I observed) highlighted the challenge she and others faced when calling for police to arrest buyers. She singled out the officer's sentiment that buyers should not be the targets of his investigation since their families might be negatively affected. She then challenged the officer's perception, exposing the double standard implicit within his narrative. This double standard privileges certain perpetrators and their families over others, and impedes enforcement of the law against exploiters. Nikki's interaction with law enforcement reflects the contested process of constructing repertoires. Anti-CSEC activists negotiated competing discourses when developing their strategies defining who are the buyers and what should be the proper social and legal response to their behavior. In particular, the organizations' own efforts in changing the perception about buyers comes into conflict with the hegemonic narrative of law enforcement. Thus the conflicting understandings of "normal" in portrayals of buyers worked at cross purposes for the movement, reinforcing the privilege of the people that anti-CSEC organizations wanted punished for their exploitative behavior.

Similar to *Stop Demand*, critics of the *Punishment* discourse assert the strategy is an individual solution to larger social problems (Weitzer 2007). They argue that concentrating on individual buyers and sellers, which is the focus of police officers and prosecutors, ignores the larger intersecting systems of inequality (i.e. racism, classism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism) producing this form of exploitation. For example, Julia O'Connell Davidson (2008:125) writes:

Indeed, an emphasis on punishing those who buy sex from children helps to discursively construct CSEC as a problem of individual morality, and to deflect attention from the global and national economic, social and political inequalities that underpin it... Without measures to address the conditions under which children make the decision to sell sex, criminalizing clients looks very much like window-dressing, for no one can seriously imagine that in a year's time, or even

five years' time, all the men who have ever bought or even would buy sex from a person under the age of 18 will be safely behind bars.

In addition, as Bernstein (2007a) argues, carceral feminism takes attention away from the ways neoliberalism creates structural opportunities for prostitution to exist within the capitalist market and distracts focus from how dominant institutions like the economy, government, and criminal justice system allow prostitution to subsist without much intervention. Instead, carceral feminism places all the blame on deviant men who are buyers and sellers in the sex trade.

Constructing the *Punishment* discourse from a diverse range of feminist, individualist, and carceral narratives reflects the contentious processes social movement organizations navigated to gain support for their cause. These processes underscored how competing discourses surrounding the buyer, varying structural positions of the intended audience, and underlying economic and institutional systems complicated the production of collective action discourse. Moreover, the *Punishment* and *Normal Guy Buyer* strategies illustrate how social movement organizations' discourse can contradict their own efforts due to conflicting meanings within the larger discursive field.

### ***Shifting to Structural Solutions: Prevention Strategies***

Similar to the national movements against trafficking and child sexual abuse, anti-CSEC organizations and activists in Georgia have and do promote carceral feminist and therapeutic approaches. However, these were not the only solutions activists advocated and practiced during my interviews and observations. Initially, in 2000, the movement focused on pressuring state government into providing victim services and strengthening penalties against exploiters. However, by the time I arrived in 2011, there were several initiatives addressing the structural inequalities underlying the commercial sexual exploitation of youth. In particular, public and private groups were producing prevention strategies. These strategies were based on a common

discourse, arguing that in order to stop CSEC our culture needs to change. I call this collection of strategies the *Prevention* approach. For activists, prevention was an elastic term for strategies that addressed how men and boys treat girls and women, the hypersexualization of youth, glorification of pimp culture, class inequality, educational problems, family instability, ideas about child abuse, and privilege.

In some ways, The *Prevention* approach discursively and strategically addressed the inequalities the *Stop Demand* and *Punishment* strategies ignored. At other times, the discourse and activities overlapped with a therapeutic state approach. Yet, unlike therapeutic state efforts, which rely heavily on state (public) social control, the *Prevention* approach advocated more private control through non-profits and local churches.

This approach was evident in both my interviews with social movement actors and activities they pursued. For example, during one of my interviews, Jean stated:

When I see us in five years, my hope would be that we've been able to move almost past demand to the prevention end. It seems like our focus now has been more on demand intervention, like getting Backpage.com down, getting Craigslist down, and getting people aware of the 7200 men a month buying. I have hope that we'll be able to move upstream looking at what messages we are sending to our young men and boys that make them grow into men who think it's okay to purchase sex for their own pleasure.

Jean's organization, Demanding Justice, has championed carceral solutions. Yet, here she asserts the need to shift from a carceral to a preventative solution. Her solution involves addressing gender inequality within society, which objectifies women and reinforces hegemonic masculine beliefs that encourage sexual objectification. In another interview, Andrea, a black female health activist, discussed the need for prevention by posing a rhetorical question:

We need to be in prevention mode. We need to...educational failure. You might have looked at the study *Hidden in Plain View*, and the nine common risk factors that make children more vulnerable to becoming victims? 22 percent of our children live in poverty. So, if we know that poverty makes a child more

vulnerable. If we know that educational failure makes a child more vulnerable. If we know that homelessness makes a child more vulnerable. Why did it take us until 2011 to realize that children who are on the street or who are runaways need to be able to walk into a shelter?

Similarly Mary from Nightlight stated:

I think we need to look at poverty. I think that's what we need to do. We need to be involved in the lives of children in the ways that they're most vulnerable and that is education, housing, food and appropriate mentorship...leadership.

Within their comments, both women pointed to and called for actions to address the structural inequalities of poverty, educational failure, and homelessness that make a child more likely to be exploited.

Not only did the activists advocate structural change, they made significant efforts to provide economic, social, and emotional support for those most at risk. For example, one of Nightlight's key strategies connected church volunteers with community and religious organizations serving socially disadvantaged populations in Georgia. Nightlight connected volunteers to more than 50 different organizations, both faith-based and secular, throughout Georgia. These organizations provided a variety of services, including shelter for homeless teens, educational support/tutoring to low-income children, child-care for low-income families (especially single mothers), food for the hungry, mentoring for at-risk boys and girls, support for children with incarcerated family members, adoption, job training, support for foster care children, and services for ex-juvenile offenders. Many of these programs provided services to parents and children at the intersections of race, class, and gender inequality.

One notable practice I did not observe during my time with Nightlight was a "rescue-and-restore" policy. "Rescue-and-restore," or what Bernstein (2010:61) calls militarized humanitarianism, is a form of activism where individuals mainly "male employees of the organization go undercover as potential clients to investigate brothels around the globe,

partnering with local law enforcement (as well as mainstream press outlets) in order to rescue underage and allegedly coerced brothel occupants and to deliver them to rehabilitation facilities.” This method of activism has gained popularity among some national anti-trafficking organizations (e.g. IJM), and other faith-based groups. The New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof has also contributed to popularizing this strategy by enthusiastically chronicling and advocating the rescues. Yet, what stood out was Nightlight’s refusal to perform this type of activism, even though many of their church volunteers requested pursuing this strategy. The organization’s reason for this was they did not want to endanger the child or volunteer. However, they also recognized the underlying importance of addressing structural problems. Nightlight addressed these inequalities by navigating their volunteers away from militarized humanitarianism and toward community volunteering projects. Jenny articulated this tactic when describing her experience recruiting volunteers for prevention programs:

Jenny: I think the prevention angle as a whole, and that’s a majority of the nonprofits we partner with, is much harder to get people excited [about]. People, even though they’re not qualified, really just want to go save people. Like, they want to throw on their superman cape and run around Atlanta, save kids, and get them off the streets. There are very few organizations that actually do that and some of the ones that do... there’s just a lot of stuff that goes into that. It’s difficult to do that and that’s not always the best way to approach it.

T.H.: Right.

Jenny: But anyway, the interaction between those two groups of people [volunteers and nonprofits focusing on prevention] is where I feel like I’m kind of the intermediary. I’m between them saying “let’s be friends.” It can be difficult and challenging in trying to get people to think outside the box and help them to understand how foster care can be related to CSEC. It’s difficult. I’m hopeful. It just takes a lot more time building the initial groundwork for people.

In this exchange, Jenny highlights the challenges her organization faces in their efforts to construct a *Prevention* approach. Nightlight’s prevention strategy promoted programs addressing the underlying problems related to commercial sexual exploitation but competed with the therapeutic state, militarized humanitarianism, and carceral feminist tactics. In other words, the



approach existed within a field where multiple purported solutions to the problem were present. There was also the challenge of explaining the link between programs addressing CSEC's correlating causes (e.g. mentoring programs for children with incarcerated parents) and ending exploitation. This was especially the case when comparing the volunteer programs to militarized humanitarian efforts. Actively rescuing a child from a brothel is a short-term solution, but provides the activist instant gratification for their efforts. However, tutoring underprivileged children who might be at-risk for exploitation is a long-term commitment with a less immediate payoff for the volunteer. Jenny, similar to Bernstein (2010), acknowledged militarized humanitarianism was not a sustainable solution. Nightlight and their partnering organizations instead advocated long-term social and cultural solutions to CSEC. Yet, they encountered competing discourses, and resistance, when constructing strategies to mobilize volunteers for their cause.

Demanding Justice, also engaged in prevention activities. As I mentioned earlier, several members managed a "direct service prevention program" for incarcerated girls identified as at risk for exploitation. While the girls were not exploited commercially, a majority of them had a history of being sexually exploited, abused, or neglected. Through an empowerment approach, the program educates them on CSEC and possible outcomes of commercial sexual exploitation. It also provides the girls with advice on lifestyle changes and life skills, including how to maintain healthy relationships, leadership skills, and emotion management. Demanding Justice's program in many ways overlapped with a therapeutic approach. They were working with a state institution (i.e. juvenile justice system) to modify the behaviors of socially marginalized girls with a history of exploitation and delinquent behavior. Additionally, their focus was to individually empower the girls to prevent them from becoming exploited.

Critics argue this form of social change relies too heavily on individualized efforts, self help, and state intervention; consequently, ignoring the collective activism needed to challenge the social and political power producing the inequality (Brown 1995). Yet, Whittier (2009) asserts this critique is too simplistic and overlooks the intricacies within a therapeutic approach. Supporting Whittier's argument, Demanding Justice's program was more than just an empowerment program. Tina and Naomi reported, over time, the girls created a community of support, and many "graduates" of the program returned to mentor new girls. Also, even though Jean, a therapist by training, advised from time-to-time, Tina, a CSEC survivor, led the program. This gave her authority over the topics and curriculum covered, allowing her lived experience to guide the program rather than state sanctioned "expert knowledge." Therefore, similar to the feminist survivor organizations Whittier (2009:42) researched, the CSEC at-risk program supported "the construction of experiential knowledge" which "countered and often preceded expert knowledge about the topic, which is a key weapon in the arsenal of the therapeutic state."

Finally, the program was not the only form of activism Demanding Justice performed. As I have discussed, the social movement organization engaged in a host of collective strategies, including lobbying efforts, community awareness campaigns and trainings, and police trainings. Additionally, their parent non-profit (Inspiring Excellence) provided social services to children whose parents have a history of substance abuse and to the families of youth within the juvenile justice system. This combination of activities presented a far more nuanced view of the activism present within the movement, countering the critique that anti-CSEC organizations place too much emphasis on individual solutions.

When I asked my interviewees "if you had unlimited funding, how would you use it to address CSEC," the most common response was prevention. Nightlight and Demanding Justice's

prevention efforts reflected a larger consensus held by a majority of the social movement actors I interviewed and observed. Everything, from increased childhood education and CSEC awareness programs for schools, to programs championing gender equality among girls and boys, were areas of focus. Therefore, the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia not only drew from the larger national movements to develop their strategies, but also constructed their own approaches to create meaningful change.

### **Conclusion**

My goal in this chapter was not only to identify the discourses and tactics that made up the anti-CSEC movement's collective action repertoire, but also gain a deeper understanding of the beliefs, discourses, practices, and subject positions influencing their creation and application. Furthermore, I sought to explain how systems of race, class, gender, age, and sexuality intersect through dominant discourses and controlling images to influence the discourses the organizations develop. I discussed the processes shaping social movement strategies, which have been understudied by social movement scholars. I highlighted the contested discursive fields social movement actors account for, negotiate, and sometimes challenge to mobilize collective action around their issue. I argued the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia utilizes multiple, contradicting and competing discursive and material strategies in their efforts to create social change. Finally, I emphasized how a social movement organization's discursive repertoires can at times be simultaneously enabling and constraining to their goals. This can occur in two ways: when their discourse overlaps with the hegemonic narrative used by those in power producing similar discourses but with different meanings, or, when their discourse unintentionally reinforces race, class, and gender inequalities during efforts to broaden movement support.

Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and other anti-CSEC advocates developed multiple strategies to transform the discourse surrounding who is the victim, who is the perpetrator, and what is the most effective way to end commercial sexual exploitation of children. These discursive efforts were constructed within a field maintaining ethnocentric and ideal victim and perpetrator narratives, as well as therapeutic, carceral, and militarized humanitarian solutions to the problem. These discourses also reflect the activists' ideas concerning race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and privilege and their positions within these social structures. They are the product of multiple discursive fields that influence the narrative behind who can and cannot be a victim or exploiter.

As anti-CSEC activists employed these strategies they ran into several challenges, which I describe in the next chapter. These obstacles reflected the socio-political, economic, and cultural environment the movement was situated within. While economic and political limitations influenced collective action, the strong regional culture was the most significant constraint to diffusing the repertoire throughout the state. The region's culture of religious conservatism, in particular concerning gender and sexuality, created a space where cultural norms made it impolite to talk about sex (Schwartz 2009). While harnessing this culture created the potential to draw significant support for their cause, the anti-CSEC organizations and activists learned it could also impose barriers to their collective action.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY ANTI-CSEC SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

“This is a broader church thing, but as a person who grew up in the church, I was raised in a very stereotypical protestant household. I’ve gone to church for most of my life. There are some subjects that are more difficult to talk about and I think those tend to be the ones we need to talk about the most. I think that CSEC is one of them. As we work in the Christian church community, I would love to see this be an issue and a topic that we talk about more openly. It wouldn’t necessarily always have to be hush-hush, and hear me when I say, it’s not in every church, but as just a culture overall. I also believe the Christian church should be the people that run first to solve social issues if they really are who they say they are and really are believers of Jesus. It’s my belief that they should be the first at the table. I feel like as the Christian community, as the church community, we fall short of that a lot, a majority of the time. We’re usually the last people there. I have a huge, huge problem with that and this issue is no exception. Just as a culture, a church culture, I would really like to see us more focused on volunteerism.” (Stephanie – Nightlight)

The statement above by Stephanie illustrates just one of the looming challenges anti-CSEC organizations faced in their collective action efforts. These obstacles are products of Demanding Justice and Nightlight’s organizational dynamics interacting and at times conflicting with structural forces and cultural ideologies. These challenges affected not only their strategies, but also how they related to one another. This chapter will focus on the political, economic, and cultural constraints Nightlight and Demanding Justice encountered.

Social movement literature is rich with examples of obstacles social movement organizations face. Access to resources, participants, and political power, conflicting social movement frames, ideological differences, and cultural and social divides among activists are but a few examples of areas where challenges to a movement’s maintenance and effectiveness can occur. As with the obstacles activists navigated while developing their repertoires, the challenges

I discuss in this chapter emerged from the interactions between organizational processes and larger social and cultural forces in Georgia.

In this chapter, I account for these internal and external forces by examining the obstacles Demanding Justice and Nightlight encountered. I argue these barriers are areas where interactions between organizational practices and social and cultural contexts are clearly evident. I highlight how organizational procedures, strategies, and ideologies influenced the types of obstacles each organization faced. At the same time, I draw from Armstrong and Bernstein's (2008) multi-institutional politics approach to show how institutional (i.e. economy and politics) and cultural forces (i.e. religion) affected what problems Demanding Justice and Nightlight confronted.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section briefly looks at the economic and political constraints Demanding Justice and Nightlight faced during their collective efforts. These challenges reflect the economic realities of limited funding and the political difficulties of a convoluted and conflicting system of law and building a volunteer network. The second section provides a more extensive discussion of how culture enables and constrains the movement. In line with Polletta (2008) and other scholars, I assert that culture plays a significant role in understanding social movements. This section pays particular attention to the way contentious religious and political beliefs related to CSEC dominated the political, social, and cultural ideologies of the region, thus shaping the organizations and their strategies, especially in the case of Nightlight. In both sections, I suggest reasons for these underlying conflicts. This chapter will show that while some constraints were straightforward problems, more often they were unintended consequences of political and cultural forces that, at first glance, would seem beneficial to expanding the movement and supporting its goals.

### **Limited Resources, State Inconsistency, and Unpredictable Volunteering**

In this section, I identify three economic and political obstacles affecting Demanding Justice's and Nightlight's efforts to carry out their organizational goals. I show how economic conditions internal and external to Demanding Justice produced conflicting relationships with other anti-CSEC movement organizations and the state. I also identify how a large and disconnected state bureaucracy limited Demanding Justice's criminal justice goals, while participation norms created difficulties for Nightlight's efforts to mobilize participants around a form of preventative collective action.

#### ***Funding, Funding, Funding!***

As a professional social movement organization and part of a larger non-profit organization, Demanding Justice consisted of several paid employees who performed multiple tasks requiring resources (i.e. time and money). Social movement scholars have discussed the importance of resources to the maintenance of social movements and organizations, in particular professional organizations (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Zald and Ash 1966). Most notable are resource mobilization theorists, who assert, "movement groups, no less than other types of organizations, require a steady input of resources to survive over time" (McAdam 1999:23). Therefore, a fundamental activity for Demanding Justice involved raising money to remain viable and effectively run the multitude of programs they had in place.

A brief history of Demanding Justice's funding will provide context for the financial challenges they experienced during my observations. Demanding Justice is part of a larger non-profit (Inspiring Excellence) that existed for several years before its inception. The Demanding Justice initiative came to fruition due to a single and sizable private donation. While the donation was their key source of funding in their initial years, it only made up half of their financial

backing when I began my observations in 2011. The other half came through a collection of public (at the state level) and private grants. Also, Demanding Justice did not have a formal membership list or collect membership dues. They just maintained a list of past volunteers and “ambassadors” who attended their free training sessions. Therefore, they could not rely on annual financial support from a distinct group of supporters.

Consequently, a common topic of discussion during weekly staff meetings involved efforts to raise revenue for their collective action. Because of this, applying for private and state grants was a priority. The need for resources was not only a constraint in and of itself, but it also led the organization to engage in relationships and competition that produced conflicting outcomes.

In their efforts to maintain sustainable funding, Demanding Justice applied for and utilized state monies. While the state government provided a needed source of revenue to sustain their efforts, the funds, at times, led to tension between state agencies and Demanding Justice (which I discuss at length in Chapter Five). Here I will focus on how these state grants constrained certain internal dynamics of Demanding Justice. Multiple scholars have identified how NGOs, private funders, and the state use granting and donor opportunities (i.e. access to resources) to influence or co-opt the goals and strategies of foreign aid recipients, community organizations, and social movements (Brinkerhoff 2002; Carruyo 2008; Edwards and Hulme 1996; Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Ezekiel 2002; Hedeem and Coy 2000, 2005; Johnson 1981; Stromquist 2002). However, it was not state pressure to utilize content, materials, or strategies inconsistent with Demanding Justice’s mission that was problematic. In fact, members of Demanding Justice co-authored much of the CSEC material promoted by the state. Rather, what Demanding Justice found problematic was pressure to end certain programs early and perception



that they defer to the state as “leader” of the anti-CSEC movement. This was especially relevant when deciding what efforts were made to create social change. Jean explained this constraint in response to a question about instances of conflict between her organization and the state government:

I don't think I would say that the [state agency] is necessarily better at doing it, but the whole training issue. Because we had been training for so long and now we were training under them. There was a whole thing about how we had to have their nomenclature on every single slide, and when we finished the curriculum, we had to run it by them for approval. It really became a case of we had to always say their names [Laughing]. I got okay with it as we kept going. But, there became a time when I don't think the [state agency] wanted us to keep training law enforcement. I think they wanted it to be all under them in some way and basically the [state representative] said, “Well I don't think we really need to do anymore trainings.” I said, “I disagree.” I said, “I don't think we're done yet. I think there's more to be done. I understand if you don't want to fund it, but we're gonna go ahead and do it.” So, the way I handled it was, where I needed to give them credit, I would. When they started trying to dictate what we should or shouldn't do, I pushed back. Interestingly enough, they came through with next year's grant for the trainings. So I think they wanted to still have control over it.

For Demanding Justice, state funding gave them increased resources and authority, providing one of their strategies, police training, further legitimacy. However, this additional credibility and financial support came with a price. In their efforts to carry out their strategy, Demanding Justice had to navigate the state's influence that came with their funding. Some of the influence was minimal. This included crediting the state for sponsoring the training performed by Demanding Justice, and running changes to the curriculum by the state for approval. Jean admitted, in these cases, it was more of an “ego thing,” rather than a serious constraint. However, once the state began funding trainings, it also secured their right to end them. When the state decided to cut funding for trainings, Jean felt the state was trying to dictate the organization's collective action efforts. Only after Demanding Justice responded, saying they would continue

the trainings independently (as they had originally done), did the state back down and begin refunding the project.

This conflict illustrates the way opportunities can unintentionally become constraints for social movement organizations. Political and economic forces can intersect to simultaneously produce the necessary avenues to address movement goals (e.g. provide funding for training) while limiting an organization's clout within the movement (e.g. compromising authority for needed funds). In addition, the tension shows how external contexts, like state monies, interact with internal meanings behind who "owns/controls" certain social movement strategies and when they are deemed "successfully" implemented. A complex relationship is produced between social movement organizations and state institutions when independently identified organizations rely on the state for support (economic or political). For social movement organizations, whose goals include transforming a state that simultaneously is funding their efforts, their ability to function independently is limited (Piven and Cloward 1979). Also, due to this relationship, the potential for co-optation of movement goals becomes greater. However, this does not mean the relationship is without its benefits; it can still be an avenue to transform the state, albeit narrowly (Banaszak 2005, 2010).

Another challenge Demanding Justice experienced in their quest to accrue funding to remain operational was competition with fellow anti-CSEC organizations. Multiple organizations applied for the same grants, and at times vied for the same private donations. For instance, Jean recalled a case when the head of a fellow anti-CSEC organization began competing for donations from a private donor:

I've had some fundraising issues with [a fellow CSEC activist] and there was one funder. I felt that if it's a funder of one of the others, we shouldn't be going after it without letting them know. And I voiced that to [the CSEC activist]. I later found out [he/she] still approached the [private funder] for fundraising.

This struggle for funds grew due to two diverging social trends. First, there were the growing number of agencies, organizations, and activists participating in the anti-CSEC movement. This was evidenced to me by the increasing number of organizations attending the statewide task force meetings. Second, there was a decline in the number of funding sources due to state and federal budget cuts and an economy still stagnant from the recession. This exemplifies another way in which an initial political opportunity can have inadvertent consequences. While more participating organizations provided the movement with greater political power and influence; they also produced more competition for funding. Thus, an unintended consequence of the movement expanding was that resources became harder to secure. At the same time, the economy and state economic policies played a significant role in the mobilization process “by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action” (Jenkins 1983:552). Nancy, a Demanding Justice member, identified this larger economic force as a significant factor in fundraising:

T.H.: What do you see, from an organizational standpoint, are some of the challenges you are constantly working on right now?  
 Nancy: Well, I gotta give the most basic and obvious answer which is money. We are doing some really amazing work. And *yet, we are in an economy right now that's very challenged. I think its (the challenge) money to fuel the work that we do* (my emphasis).

Funding was such a concern that in the last few months of my observations, Demanding Justice's parent non-profit (Inspiring Excellence) hired a marketing firm to rebrand the organization in hopes of stimulating new interest and investment. This led to changing the non-profit's name, reframing their mission statement, and developing a campaign to get their name out to the public, especially potential funders. In their effort to remain solvent, Demanding Justice dealt with organizational practices and economic and political structures constraining their ability to raise

funds, highlighting how the resource mobilization process is fraught with interacting macro and micro forces.

### ***Law Enforcement Bureaucracy and State Ambivalence About CSEC Awareness***

Another area where obstacles arose concerned the state's law enforcement. One constraint was the sheer number of law enforcement agencies present within Georgia. According to the most recent Bureau of Justice statistics, Georgia has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest number of law enforcement agencies in the country, 628 (Reaves 2011). This is in part due to the significantly high number of counties. There are 159 in Georgia, second only to Texas, and the most per square mile. Each county contains its own sheriff's office. Along with these sheriff agencies, multiple city, college/university, school, marshal, and transit law enforcement agencies exist. Finally, the state maintains several agencies including the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, state patrol, capitol police, and port authority. This all adds up to 38,926 full time employees (part-time employees were not included in the count) who make up the state's law enforcement network (Reaves 2011).

Initially, the large number of policing agencies might be considered an advantage to addressing CSEC within the state. More police could mean more efforts to arrest buyers and exploiters and identify and rescue exploited youth. However, the sheer magnitude of these numbers alone can also be daunting. This was the case for Demanding Justice's efforts to train law enforcement, considering the organization was made up of only a few full time staff members and handful of trainers. Adding to this challenge was that many of these policing agencies were independent of one another. In other words, they did not interact with each other reliably. Therefore, training officers in one county did not mean the information was shared with law enforcement in neighboring counties. This independence was not only problematic for

Demanding Justice's efforts; it was also a problem for law enforcement officers and prosecutors investigating intra-state cases of commercial sexual exploitation. Jody, a white female law enforcement agent, highlighted the challenges created by this lack of unification:

It's hard because in Fulton County we have maybe 20 different small agencies within one county. But they don't talk to each other. Then you have the DA's office, which is supposed to be central for all these cases to come. They don't always come though because maybe an arrest hasn't been made or the investigation can't get to the point of an arrest or it stalls out, whatever. There is no cohesiveness because nobody is talking to each other and a lot of our crimes cross boundaries into other counties. So this county may have some information that we need and we may have something that they need but nobody talks. We have no idea what each other is doing. That's so frustrating.

These challenges, caused by the high number of law enforcement agencies, were compounded by intra-agency politics creating barriers to disseminating information. Several scholars have acknowledged the state and its ancillary organizations (i.e. law enforcement) have significant influence on social movement organizations' efforts (Amenta and Young 1999; Kriesi 1995). Kriesi (1995) argues that when states are "strong," meaning highly bureaucratized, social movement efforts are deterred, while "weak" states create opportunity for social movement mobilization. However, Demanding Justice's problems with Georgia law enforcement's disconnected system do not support this idea. A "strong" unified system would have benefitted Demanding Justice's efforts to disseminate their information to a larger audience. This is because, as Amenta and Young (1999:161) point out in their criticism of Kriesi's argument,

It is unclear why bureaucracies without the capacity to implement policy would spur social mobilization, as they would minimize the chances of a movement achieving its goals...If strong bureaucracies increase the chances that challengers will win substantive gains, as Kitschelt (1986) suggests, we would argue that strong bureaucracies should spur movement mobilization.

This rings true for Demanding Justice and the larger state anti-CSEC movement, since its efforts to make social change at times relied on state support, rather than just viewing it as a hindrance.

A second problem for Demanding Justice was the ambivalent stance the state government had requiring law enforcement be trained on CSEC. In their efforts to counteract this lack of cohesiveness, Demanding Justice began “training the trainers” at one of the state’s central Safety Training Centers. They also created an online version of the training. They did this to establish a sustainable and cost-effective model for training (in case they lost grant money or decided to shift their efforts to a new project). They also incorporated the training into a location that many new (rookie) and seasoned officers, from across the state, attended. While this effort was seen as a practical solution to the dissemination problem, the state legal code and legislators’ ambivalence about requiring training created confusion regarding how far to enforce the training. This ambivalence was most noticeable in the paradoxical efforts made by state actors to implement the training. On one side, an office within the state government was financially supporting Demanding Justice to train police.<sup>9</sup> In addition, several Senate and House assembly members publicly called for increased training of law enforcement at press conferences during the lead up to and after passage of HB 200. Also, included in the bill, in subsection 8, was a provision for law enforcement officers and agencies to establish guidelines for incorporating training materials that provided “methods for identifying, combating, and reporting” CSEC.

However, even with Demanding Justice’s inclusion of this material into the state’s central training centers and HB 200, nowhere in the bill did it mandate training. In other words, providing officers an opportunity to access the materials and making it an obligation to be trained are separate actions. Separate requirements that can lead to different results. In particular, mandatory training creates a much greater probability the information will be dispersed throughout state law enforcement. However, offering the training, as one among many courses to

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<sup>9</sup> I have not included the name of the state office in order to protect the identities of my participants and their organizations.

choose, will only have a selective effect. Thus, there was ambivalence on whether the trainings would become part of the general curriculum for future police cadets or remain an elective topic (which was the case during my observations of trainings). Since the passage of HB 200, one of the bill's outcomes was transferring responsibility for the trainings from Demanding Justice to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. On several occasions, I asked Demanding Justice staff whether or not they thought the training would become mandatory. Several members expressed hope that, even if HB 200 did not explicitly mandate CSEC training, the police would perceive the bill as necessitating training since the Georgia Bureau of Investigation was taking over.

Demanding Justice was able to lobby the state legislature to pass HB 200, which led to greater law enforcement involvement in matters of CSEC, and integrated training into the state's regional training facilities. However, they faced obstacles to their efforts to disseminate CSEC training among state law enforcement, including a large and disconnected police force and vague state laws. The contradictions between the Georgia General Assembly's views on training, certain agencies within state government, and the criminal justice system reflect how society is, as Armstrong and Bernstein (2008:82) state, "composed of multiple and often contradictory institutions."

### ***"We Need Dedicated Volunteers"***

Whereas Demanding Justice faced problems acquiring financial resources, Nightlight faced a different resource barrier: committed and reliable volunteers. Not all social movement organizations rely on large memberships to be effective. For some organizations, reaching one's goals does not require accumulating movement adherents for mass collective action. Some focus on legal challenges or lobbying efforts. However, a central purpose of Nightlight was connecting Georgia's Christian community (i.e. churches and their congregants) to local and state

community service organizations focusing on at-risk children. This objective called for a specific form of collective action, prevention. Rather than working directly with exploited youth, the organization's goal was to connect volunteers with non-profits addressing certain structural causes of CSEC: poverty, homelessness, educational disparities, and foster care inadequacies. These types of volunteer opportunities required Nightlight to find individuals who were not only committed to the issue, but also reliable volunteers.

At first glance, Nightlight's successful efforts to increase their church membership since their inception in 2009 would suggest an increase in their potential volunteer pool. For example, at the end of my observation period, Nightlight reported 85 church memberships and 2,000 volunteers.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, this recruitment technique would seem like a recipe for success. Churches provided Nightlight with new networks of potential volunteers, a key source of movement recruits. Furthermore, the coalition of churches Nightlight served was disproportionately made up of individuals with moderate to high socioeconomic status. This coincides with those more likely to volunteer (Wilson 2000). Therefore, adding church partners caused their followers to become prospective volunteers. Additionally, with several thousand more Christian churches in the state, there was significant potential to grow the volunteer pool.

Christian churches also have a historical legacy of addressing social justice issues such as poverty, hunger, homelessness, drug addiction, and civil rights. Thus, it would seem as if Nightlight could sit back and wait for the volunteers to arrive. However, just because an

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<sup>10</sup> This number was derived from a combination of sources. The majority (1,500) came from a list the organization compiled over the years deriving from their website. Potential volunteers signed up on Nightlight's website and their names were added to the list. Members of church partners connected with community service partners made up the rest. However, it was unclear if all of these people were consistent volunteers. Since the number could potentially represent anyone who had at one time signed up to volunteer. Also, during our interview, Jenny explained, not all of the individuals who signed up actually volunteered.



institution has a history of social activism, does not mean that all its members were and are equally involved in volunteering to make social change. In other words, identifying as a Christian and attending church, does not automatically translate into highly engaged volunteer. In fact, the literature on volunteering shows “the relation between values and volunteering is weak and inconsistent (religious and civic values do little to encourage volunteering)” (Wilson 2000:219).

This became clear in my observations and interviews with Nightlight members. For Nightlight, convincing church leadership to join their organization and pay yearly member fees was only half the battle. They could not assume church members would automatically begin volunteering once their church joined. The disconnect between gaining church support (i.e. institutional support) and individual member’s support was apparent during a Nightlight staff meeting I observed:

*One afternoon in April, Carol, who recently started working for Nightlight, discusses several “meet and greet” lunches she is hosting for their church partners. She explains the events are for churches that signed up to be members, but not yet connected with any community partners. The events will give them a chance to identify volunteer opportunities for their congregation. However, Carol expresses some concern, because she has a “very low sign up rate” for the lunches. She quickly lists off the number of people signed up for each lunch: “five for this Tuesday, four for this Thursday, and then eight for next Tuesday, and three for next Thursday.” Mary calmly replies “That’s OK, we want the church groups to develop strong relationships with the partners.” Nodding in agreement, Jenny adds, “We have a lot churches who have paid their dues but not gotten their feet wet yet (i.e. volunteered).”*

By the time Carol was scheduling meet-and-greets, Nightlight had accumulated around 80 church memberships. However, as Jenny pointed out, “a lot of churches” and their members had yet to begin volunteering. This created a challenge to attaining full mobilization potential of the churches’ membership networks. Nightlight’s efforts highlight how characteristics such as moderate to high socio-economic status, strong values, additional free time, and members of

institutions with a history of civic engagement are not always good measures predicting mobilization potential.

Once Nightlight was able to interact with a church congregation, they faced further challenges gaining commitments from people to become reliable volunteers. Mary and Jenny mentioned instances where, after giving a presentation on CSEC and Nightlight's relevant volunteer opportunities, congregants offered prayers for exploited youth as their contribution. Similarly, financial assistance (i.e. donations) was offered rather than personal time. In both situations, the women thanked the individuals, but emphasized the need for active engagement with their community service partners. Mary and Jenny's experiences recruiting volunteers in certain ways align with the free-rider problem phenomenon, or individuals who support the ideas behind a movement but do not participate (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Oliver 1984; Walsh and Warland 1983). In both cases, prayer and donations were efforts allowing individuals to engage the issue without having to interact with those most directly affected. While prayer was a key component of Nightlight's mission, a broader goal was to recruit those who would *both pray and volunteer* with their community service partners.

One final challenge Nightlight encountered in their volunteer efforts concerned an issue I discussed in Chapter Three. Specifically, there was a disconnect between Nightlight's volunteer opportunities and certain volunteers' expectations to perform militarized humanitarianism (Bernstein 2010). Members of Nightlight reported some volunteers having a hard time connecting the volunteer opportunities with ending CSEC. This was because many Nightlight opportunities were with organizations working with at-risk children, rather than commercially sexually exploited children. In particular, they found more enthusiasm among people wanting to

go out and “save” exploited children from the streets, rather than addressing the structural causes of CSEC like poverty and homelessness.

Nightlight’s church partners provided high mobilization potential. They supplied multiple networks of people, who were mainly middle and high socio-economic status, and their leadership supported the organization’s cause. Yet, Nightlight members reported difficulty mobilizing individuals into committed volunteers, even those expressing interest in the issue. Nightlight’s challenges recruiting volunteers highlight how social movement organization’s dynamics interact with individual’s preferences on volunteering. Individual choices that prioritized financial or spiritual support—efforts involving no actual contact with those marginalized groups—over daily interactive support. Their challenges also reflect support for individual solutions, while efforts addressing structural change are met with resistance.

With that said, it should be noted the volunteers I met and observed exhibited significant dedication to both Nightlight and the community service organization with whom their church partnered. They consistently came to Nightlight’s monthly meetings and events. They volunteered to become Nightlight community speakers, spreading awareness about CSEC beyond their church and into their community. They volunteered to staff Nightlight events. Also, during informal conversations, they discussed their enjoyment working with their community service partners.

I should also note that while I attended events where Nightlight recruited new churches and their representatives (liaisons), I was unable to attend events held for newly joined churches. Nightlight used these events to discuss CSEC and mobilize new volunteers for community service opportunities. Thus, I was unable to speak with potential volunteer recruits and cannot

discuss the motivations for why some were willing to volunteer while others were not.

Nevertheless, recruiting volunteers remained a priority for the organization.

### **The Paradoxes of Navigating the “Culture Wars”**

Along with economic and political constraints, Demanding Justice and Nightlight encountered resistance from the larger cultural ideologies (specifically, religious conservatism) permeating the region. In line with Polletta (1999, 2008) and Armstrong and Bernstein (2008), I find that economic and political structures were not the only source of power influencing social movement organizations dynamics, but that culture also played an essential role. These scholars argue that culture can enable political opportunities as well as be a “powerful and constraining force” (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008:82). I build upon their insights by showing that culture can *simultaneously* be a benefit and detriment to social movement organizations, creating unexpected problems originally thought to be advantages. My findings illustrate another way of “making sense of the internal contradictions within movements” (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008:86).

### ***Raising Money for CSEC without Saying “Child” or “Sex”***

In their quest to acquire the funding they needed to sustain the organization, Demanding Justice members were constantly bouncing ideas off of one another on how to raise money. One idea that received considerable attention was the annual walk/run they hosted. This event held the dual purpose of raising awareness about commercial sexual exploitation of children and providing a source of potential funding. Discussions revolved around finding public and private sponsors for the event, as well as identifying someone notable (politically or culturally popular) within the state who could be an “honorary host.” The host’s purpose would be to attract more attention and supporters. Sponsorships by major businesses (e.g. the Coca Cola Company) were

also desired, and Jean routinely asked Demanding Justice staff to provide a list of potential sponsors.

However, one major issue they ran up against when discussing fund raising was the topic of CSEC itself. Jean and the other staffers recognized, from past experience, certain businesses were less likely to support the issue because of the stigmatized subject matter (i.e. commercial sex with children). In particular, the intersection of “sex” and “children” and larger social meanings behind those words were contentious topics in a region where cultural norms about sex were driven by religious conservatism and sexual purity. Also, having the words next to business’ names were visually problematic for some potential sponsors. Therefore, a challenge Demanding Justice faced vying for resources was cultural stigma surrounding issues of sex and age.

***How do You Talk about CSEC without Saying the Word “Sex?”***

From time to time Demanding Justice navigated the strong regional culture of conservative Christianity in their collective efforts to change state law, spread awareness, and raise funding. However, Nightlight was embedded within the culture and exemplified the way culture can, as Polletta (1999) would assert, be an enabling as well as constraining force on social movement organizations. Religion provided Nightlight several opportunities to expand their organization and influence. It was a primary motivation for Nightlight members’ collective action. Paul’s reported reason for working with Nightlight epitomized this motivation:

With my own personal relationship with God I really try to emulate what my faith talks about in helping the most marginalized and really looking at how do we do that in a very practical manner? How do we emulate the work of Jesus Christ in our day and in working with those that are in need the most?

Furthermore, even though Nightlight experienced trouble recruiting volunteers from church partners, this challenge was in no way a “death knell” for the social movement organization; because just having the churches become members provided Nightlight serious political capital.

In fact, Nightlight held significant political power due to its connections with certain prominent churches within the state. Several political actors, from the house and senate assembly, supporting the anti-CSEC movement’s policy objectives, were members of partnering churches. Therefore, Nightlight’s social influence was not solely connected to the number of volunteers it mobilized. Rather, the presumed number of supporters Nightlight gained due to their association with a church provided the organization status. The state’s location within the Bible Belt, its abundance of Christian churches, the strong religiosity within the region’s culture (in particular, Protestant conservatism), and the importance of religion among the state’s political elite all contributed to Nightlight having an influential role in the state’s anti-CSEC movement. While Nightlight’s faith-based status and connections created opportunities for political and social influence, it also became clear they led to organizational and ideological constraints.

Many living in the states that make-up the Bible Belt recognize the contentious relationship between high religiosity and issues pertaining to gender and sexuality. For example, Andrea, a black female anti-CSEC activist reported:

Andrea: There’s also the silence. There's the silence of you don’t talk about sex, and especially sex with children and so...

T.H.: What do you think that's about?

Andrea: That's a cultural thing, you know. I grew up in the South, and I grew up in South Georgia. That's just not something you walk around talking about. If you thought something was happening, it was handled internally. So, it's the culture. I haven’t lived in New York or California or Wisconsin, but I have a feeling that in New York and California they talk a little bit more about it. But it's an embarrassing topic. We have a problem in Georgia just teaching sex education in school. To go out and start talking about sexual exploitation of children, that's just a huge leap to have to make. So, for years it was just thought not to happen—“that kind of stuff doesn’t happen where we live”—and it’s thought that it only happens

to people of a certain caliber. It's only happening to *those* people and there's something a little shady about them anyway. So you're not as likely to be in an uproar about it.

Andrea's description is supported by multiple scholars' findings highlighting the congruence between high religiosity and conservative ideology within the South. As Dillon and Savage (2006:2) assert, "In the South, for example, most people are Protestant (77 percent), and by and large they are Baptists, mostly Southern Baptists, whose conservative theology has long made a mark on Southern Culture and everyday life." Associated with this conservative religious ideology are strong views concerning gender and sexuality, including traditional gender norms, sexual purity, as well as anti-gay and anti-abortion beliefs. These views make topics about sex and sexuality taboo to discuss (Bartkowski 2001, 2004; Glass and Jacobs 2005; Wood and Bartkowski 2004).

Research on the South and the state of Georgia also find this cultural ideology plays a significant role socially and politically in the region. For example, in 2004, Georgia politicians and the public, like several other Southern states, held and overwhelmingly passed (76 percent for to 24 percent against) a referendum codifying into the state's constitution a limited heterosexist definition of marriage (Chapman, Lieb, and Webster 2007). Additionally, Barth and Overby (2003) examined whether increasing contact with gays and lesbians among heterosexual Southerners led to more accepting views on same-sex relations. They found that unlike other regions in the country, this was not the case for the South. They (2003:462) concluded:

Because younger Southerners do not display significantly warmer affective attitudes toward homosexuals than their parents and grandparents do, time may not be a friend to Southern gay and lesbians... While not appropriately viewed as a new "threat," Southerners' attitudes toward gays and lesbians, and their resistance to having those attitudes changed through contact with homosexuals, is further evidence that no matter how much economic and social change has occurred in the region in recent decades, the South remains more traditionalistic than the rest of the country.

Furthermore, Dillon and Savage (2006:5&7) in their study on regional attitudes toward abortion and same-sex relations, found Southerners are significantly less likely to “support abortion across the various circumstances that women confront;” and are far more likely (75 percent) to disagree with same-sex relations compared to individuals in other regions. In addition, Landry and colleagues (2003) found school districts in the South were much more likely to impose abstinence only sex education policies as the only option for school districts. In Georgia specifically, while state law mandates sexual education, abstinence is stressed in many parts of the state (Stanger-Hall and Hall 2011).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the same state office supervising the statewide taskforce on CSEC is also in charge of applying for and distributing Title V federal funds to abstinence-only programs throughout the state. They not only provide funds, but as their website states, “provide abstinence education and youth development programming, training opportunities, conferences and community events, educational resources, and a statewide media campaign, benefiting youth, families, educators, advocates, and communities statewide.”

Recently, it was also discovered taxpayer funds were utilized through a tax credit program to provide scholarships to private schools with explicit anti-gay policies. These policies included prohibiting openly gay students from attending the school and expelling students who, at some point, “come out” about their sexuality (Severson 2013). A report by the Southern Education Foundation (2013:1) found that

At least 115 private schools participating in Georgia’s tax-funded scholarship program have explicit, severe anti-gay policies or belong to state and national private school associations that promote anti-gay policies and practices among

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<sup>11</sup> While Georgia law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-143) requires that sex education and AIDS prevention be taught in the public school system, the state provides local school boards significant discretion on what the sex education program looks like. This has led certain school boards to provide comprehensive sex education programming, while (many) others only meet the bare requirements and stress abstinence-only policies.



their members. These schools constitute approximately one-fourth of all private schools that are currently affiliated with SSOs [Student Scholarship Organizations] in Georgia's tax-funded scholarship program.

Along with these attitudinal data and state policies, Barton (2010, 2012) found in her qualitative research on gays and lesbians growing up in the "Bible Belt" that homophobia was prevalent in their everyday lives, especially within the dominant social institutions in their communities (e.g. church).

These beliefs are at the center of the "culture wars" within southern, state and national politics, and can and do easily cause potential legislation, policies, and practices to become problematic if they are seen in any way linked to these social issues. This is problematic for the anti-CSEC movement because each of these issues is either directly or indirectly linked to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. As Mimi, a white Nightlight member put it in our interview:

Well, we're in the Bible Belt. We got a lot of Baptist churches. You just don't talk about sex. I know that it sounds so basic, but you just don't talk about sex in church and people don't have sex. It's just amazing that we're all immaculately conceived. But, I think it's just the sexual undertone. You can see it on people's faces when they ask, "what does your organization do?" And you say, "The commercial sexual exploitation of children." They're just like, "Did she just say sex?" So, it's just not a topic we talk about in the South.

The conservative viewpoints surrounding gender and sexuality maintained by many of the religious institutions and their congregants created barriers for Nightlight in their efforts to spread awareness about the issue of CSEC. These obstacles illustrate how culture can constrain collective action and produce symbolic boundaries that maintain inequality and social and political distinctions between men/women, heterosexual/homosexual, and sexual purity/promiscuity (Polletta 2008; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Cherry 2010). The boundaries are evident in the inability to discuss issues surrounding sex and sexuality, making it harder for

organizations, and particularly faith-based organizations, to address the socio-political questions surrounding the topic. These questions include: How should the state treat commercially sexually exploited minors? How should policies and victim services be developed that address minors who are pregnant due to their sexual exploitation? How should the state and victim services respond to LGBTQ exploited youth? How should the commercial sexual exploitation of children be discussed within schools, when sexual education consists of abstinence-plus or abstinence-only programs? How should the state address buyers? How do we discuss the commercial sexual exploitation of children in church without discussing the topic of sex? All of these questions are either at the heart of the anti-CSEC movement or are concerns that arise in the process.

Nightlight faced these questions and others in several ways. Nightlight members dealt with questions about their stance on these contentious issues when developing awareness about the issue among church parishioners. Nightlight also had to address certain questions when deciding with whom they would partner. Other times these questions became salient in which legislation they supported and lobbied. Finally, some of these questions became salient through the internal dynamics of the organization's employment policies.

In all of these cases, Nightlight and its members had to strategically present themselves as neutral when it came to politically divisive issues pertaining to sexuality, abortion, and sex. This was done for two reasons. First, reflective of the organization's own employees' views, Nightlight represented a Christian coalition with diverse views on these contentious topics. Nightlight, like the broader anti-CSEC movement and similar to many other social movements, has ideological diversity among its staff and its members when it comes to social and cultural values (Turner and Killian 1987; Westby 2002). Thus they had to navigate these issues while trying not to offend a certain contingent of their supporters. Second, there was a sense within the

organization that these issues could easily take over the discussion, pushing CSEC to the side, and causing the movement's efforts to be derailed. Therefore, the group worked to emphasize and centralize the efforts that focused on the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and in the process, relegated those contentious topics to the outskirts as unimportant to the goal of the organization. This was exemplified in a movement-oriented document that Nightlight supplied to individuals and organizations looking to set up a branch of Nightlight in their own community, as part of the organization's broader effort to become a national organization. Among other things, the document identified specific behaviors that individuals were to uphold as representatives of Nightlight. Listed in a table entitled "What Nightlight Does and Does Not Do" under the "Does Not Do" column were the instructions:

Address controversial issues such as abortion, birth control, chastity, sexual education, politics, sexual orientation or family planning.

This directive was also discussed during several staff meetings that I observed. However, one particular staff meeting neatly highlights the challenge Nightlight members encountered trying to maintain this policy:

*It is a sunny Tuesday afternoon on the last day of May. I am sitting around the staff table in Nightlight's office. Mary has just wrapped up talking about a local church radio station that wants her to send someone to be interviewed and explain the organization's mission on air. Switching topics, She brings up the fact that one of Nightlight's Catholic church partner's wants them to insert a "statement of faith" into a document they are devising. This document will provide interested organizations step-by-step instructions on how to create their own local chapter of Nightlight. However, Mary says she is hesitant about the request. She explains that, as an organization, Nightlight is "trying not to get into theological discussions" and therefore, "might not provide one." She believes the mission statement and core values/facets within the manual are suitable substitutes and Nightlight "did not want to be limiting" with whom they work. Assuming a statement of faith might be taken as problematic by other Christian organizations. A few minutes later a discussion breaks out among the staff about what is the key focus of the organization. Mary asserts, "At some point, there has to be a line" on what issues we address. She points out "there's a lot of grey*

area” within the issue of CSEC/trafficking, and “We are a narrowly focused organization.”

Mary then rhetorically asks everyone at the table “What should our answers be about issues like abortion, birth control, chastity, sex education, and homosexuality?” She looks to the staff for their answers. The room fills with silence as they think about their responses. Jenny is the first to respond stating, “Our focus is on the sexual trafficking of children, that is our primary focus, that is what our organization is about.” “Yes” responds Mary, “we can’t get involved with these other divisive issues or we’ll lose our message.”

Jenny then adds, “People have different views on those issues.” Paul, reiterating Jenny’s comment about differing opinions, cautions “we might have issues with certain community partners.” In particular, “those partners that might be providing controversial (abortion) services to CSEC victims.” He brings up a hypothetical situation where a commercially exploited child is in need of an abortion, or wants access to condoms or other medical services because they cannot get out of their current situation. Paul suggests certain community partners of Nightlight might provide these direct services. Jenny acknowledges Paul’s comments, but replies that many of their partners utilize volunteers. Adding, since direct service providers typically do not use volunteers, the likelihood of this occurring is minimal. Paul agrees that because Nightlight is not a primary care facility, the issues he is raising shouldn’t occur. However, he also points to the potential for a community partner to provide transportation to service providers performing the controversial services.

Paul and Mary’s discussion leads Mimi to say “then there needs to be a line that Nightlight draws on who we will partner with.” [This line was never fully defined during the rest of the meeting.] Mary interjects, adding that Nightlight members “needed to be careful.” They did not want to prevent any child from being helped. She stresses the need to provide trafficked children any services needed to get them out of their current situation. In response, Mimi acknowledges Mary’s statement, but reiterates that there needs to be a line. Jenny then chimes in, observing “even within Nightlight, people are going to have different opinions on these issues,” and that it “is understandable and everyone’s right to do so, and we need to respect that.” She goes on to say “different staffers go to different churches with different opinions on these issues. There’s a lot of grey area in these issues.” Mary concurs “I agree, but because everyone is a figure of Nightlight, they have given up their right to provide their personal opinions on these issues [in public], since anything they say can be attached to Nightlight.”

During this discussion, Stephanie asks if there should be a list of issues members stay away from? She brings up LGBTQ issues as an example. Mary replies, that is another issue Nightlight should not focus on. Stephanie and Jenny then construct a hypothetical situation where a community partner is providing services to a LGBTQ, trafficked child. They ask Mary how should they respond if someone asks them “What about LGBT kids, do you serve them?” Mary replies, “we should say ‘a child, is a child, is a child’ - we advocate saving children.” Reiterating, “this organization needs to have a narrow focus.” Mary wants to

*make sure Nightlight stays focused on commercially exploited children, and cautions that these issues are “very divisive” and can lead Nightlight away from its message. She advises the staff to only discuss their opinions on these matters with close family members or friends. Mary warns that as Nightlight grows as an organization, these issues will repeatedly resurface. She instructs the staff not to attend or agree to present at events openly addressing abortion or LGBTQ issues, since Nightlight cannot be associated with these divisive issues. Reminiscing, Mary describes several attempts made by legislators to attach riders addressing “divisive issues” (e.g. immigration and abortion bills) onto HB 200, which jeopardized passage of the bill. Referring to potential problems arising from staff statements on the divisive issues, Mary avows, “That can only happen, if we let it happen!”*

Because of the strong stigma attached to issues surrounding gender and sexuality, they were seen as contentious and poisonous to Nightlight’s social and especially political efforts. Mary perceived the mere mention of these issues, in connection to CSEC, as a threat. This threat caused her to enforce strict guidelines onto the other members’ discourse pertaining to the topics in order to prevent any unintended problems from arising. This was in response to past experiences she had faced when working to pass HB 200 and when engaging in casual conversation with other members of the religious community. For example, during our interview, Mary recounted a conversation she had with another religious leader:

I realized that as a leader of this organization, I have to stay away from this [contentious topic]. [Thinking to herself] I remember I made some comment about JC Penny’s changing their branding, because we were talking about rebranding Nightlight and I love what they’ve done with it. I love Ellen DeGeneres, and she was doing the whole hat thing. So we were talking about rebranding, and they brought up JC Penny. I said, “Did you see Ellen’s commercial?” And they said, “Yes, I cannot believe they used her.” And I’m like, “Oops.” I thought, “You know, I need to stay away from this.” What I did say was, “you know, I actually liked that commercial” and then I let it be. But after that encounter I said to myself, “You know, I cannot have this conversation. Even in this innocuous type of setting, because I’m in this for the benefit of somebody else.” I’m a leader that’s talking to this other leader. My personal anything cannot come into this conversation. It is striking how restricted my speech gets when I’m representing Nightlight, and I’m okay with that. Because it doesn’t change who I am, but I know that anything that detracts from our mission is a failure.

For Mary, even being perceived as slightly supportive of an openly gay celebrity could be a distraction for certain religious institutions which whom Nightlight was hoping to partner. She pointed out how strongly held beliefs around contentious issues were a key organizational challenge to bringing about social change. The threat of these culturally contentious issues detracting from the organization's goals caused Mary to regulate Nightlight policy, the staff, and her personal discourse surrounding these topics. This illustrates Polletta's (2008:90) assertion that "activists struggle with the cultural schemas that are institutionalized in the spheres in which they contend." In Nightlight's case, rigid ideologies surrounding issues of gender and sexuality, which were entrenched within church doctrine and state politics, constrained the activists' efforts.

Along with maintaining a narrow focus and strict discourse on which issues the organization addressed, Nightlight also encountered religious constraints with which churches the organization partnered. This hindrance was expressed during a staff meeting where Mary reported to the rest of the group about at a recent discussion at the board of directors meeting:

*Mary is updating the staff on her recent meeting with the board. She mentions one issue discussed was Nightlight needing stricter rules for who can become community partners and church affiliates. This became a concern for the board after several interactions with religious organizations expressing interest in joining Nightlight. The first case involved Nightlight accepting a donation check from a Unitarian Church wanting to become a member. This was problematic for the board because Nightlight is a Christian specific organization. To prevent any further misunderstandings about who is able to become a member, the board wants Mary to formally state on Nightlight's website and movement documents a Christian requirement for church affiliates. However, Mary is weary about the "Christian only" distinction believing their policy needs nuance and "shouldn't get too deep into theology." She says the board is also advising the "Christian only" distinction in response to a Mormon church in town wanting to join. Mary reports a debate erupting between board members over how to respond to the church. She says the debate revolved around ideological differences between the Catholic and Mormon Church. Eventually, the board advised her to come up with eligibility criteria for potential church affiliates. However, she thinks the board recognized Nightlight needs broad accommodations to work with multiple*

*churches. Finally, a third case concerns a black mega church. The church, specifically its leader, recently came under public scrutiny due to state and national media reports accusing the pastor of sexually abusing several boy parishioners. The board expressed concern over how it might look if the church decides it wants to join Nightlight. While the church is not expressing interest in joining, Mary says the organization's membership policy would, in no way, prevent the church from joining. However, the board advised her Nightlight did have a choice in who they pursued, implying the church would not be at the top of the list. I ask Mary, "if they sent a check to join, would you accept the check?" Mary responds "yes."*

In their efforts to mobilize church partners, Nightlight walked a tight line between prioritizing membership to Christian churches, and remaining ideologically moderate to prevent alienating potential partners in the diverse Christian community. Nightlight navigated requests by church members to incorporate language other churches might deem too restrictive or specific to one denomination. Furthermore, disagreement among Nightlight's board members created contention over with whom the organization partnered. The board, most of whom were religious leaders, held diverse views on Christian doctrine, creating long-term debates over who were acceptable church partners. These debates reflect the larger external, cultural influences shaping Nightlight's internal processes developing their mobilization strategy. The activists struggled with the diverse Christian ideals institutionalized within their organization. These religious differences reflect how culture can be used for increasing mobilization and asserting collective claims, but simultaneously constraining movement expansion by restricting the pool of potential partners.

Religious and conservative ideals also hindered Nightlight's efforts to spread awareness about CSEC among their church affiliates. Discussing sex, let alone exploitative sex with children, flew in the face of certain church affiliates' taboos concerning sex, gender, and age. During her interview, Stephanie highlighted the challenges she faced trying to spread awareness to new church members.

T.H.: Can you give me an example of a way you've tried to create awareness while working within the confines of church culture?

Stephanie: Right. Well, it really depends on the church because some are open to it [talking about CSEC] and others are not. Definitely, in the way we broadcast what we're going to talk about, [the word] "sex" is usually not used. We don't say, "Come learn about child sex trafficking." Which is a lot of times how we have advertised in the past, because there's the shock value and people automatically know what that is, opposed to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Normally, I've had churches just use "human trafficking." So, we take "sex" out of the phrase, because we are under the greater umbrella of human trafficking. I recently went to an event where I spoke and it was after a church potluck. There were kids there and so we waited until everybody finished eating and they dismissed the children. Then we started talking about it. Obviously, there's just a lot of people who are worried about talking about it [sex], which I find incredibly ironic. But I'm not a parent so maybe I just don't know. They just don't want to introduce the subject to their child.

T.H.: Okay, in fear that...

Stephanie: I don't really understand what the fear is. It's just the fear that it's inappropriate or they're going start asking questions the parents are not ready to answer. I think, they think it will lead to questions about "what is sex?" And parents don't want to have that discussion with their children yet. So if they don't want to have the initial discussion of what is sex, then they don't want to have to talk about any kind of perversion of that. I understand wanting to protect the innocence of your child, but I think there's a way that we need to start talking to our children about what this is and how they need to be on the lookout.

Jenny also recognized this challenge:

T.H.: Can you give me an example of an obstacle?

Jenny: Yes. At one of the churches this summer, one of the girls, her name was Linnette. Linnette is bought and sold on this issue. She comes to the meetings. She's been to the trainings. She asks questions. She wanted to have an awareness event. Her church became a partner, so she would have an awareness event about the issue and have a couple of community service partners there to speak and partner with. Plus, Stephanie [Nightlight staff] would come. But, the church wouldn't allow an announcement of the event on their bulletin. They wouldn't let her put up posters. They wouldn't put any kind of information out. How do you have an awareness event if they won't let you publicize it? So sometimes those are obstacles that people come up against. It's like they're on board, but "no you can't publicize it."

T.H.: Why do you think there was such a push back?

Jenny: I have no idea, and so Stephanie is working with Linnette to figure out how to go around it. If it's just going through Facebook to do the invites that way. Each church has its own bent and rhythm on how they do things and that's why it's such a full time job for Stephanie. And then some of the churches get on board and they go gung-ho.



A few minutes later in the interview, Jenny alluded to why they sometimes come into interference with their ability to recruit volunteers:

But it's for some reason, every church has their own rules and regulations for why they can and can't promote something. In some churches you can't say the word "sex." For some, the use of the term "child sex trafficking" just sends everybody over the edge.

While not the case for all churches, Nightlight staff reported discussing sex did create barriers between them and some churches they mobilized. At the center of this reluctance were conservative religious norms preventing them from actively discussing the issue. In fact, just mentioning the word "sex" created problems for some churches. As Polletta (2008:90) points out, "culture constrains not by limiting what people can think but by limiting what they can say." The cultural conservatism surrounding the topic of sex for some of Nightlight's church members constrained the organization's strategies to create awareness about the topic and mobilize potential volunteers. While Nightlight's faith-based status opened access to religious institutions, the dominant beliefs within certain churches were also a barrier to fully integrating them into the movement.

One other facet where religion constrained Nightlight revolved around their employment practices. In particular, religious and conservative politics held by some church members and board of directors influenced who could work for Nightlight and how employees should act. These issues played out throughout my tenure observing the organization, and are exemplified by two observations occurring at different times during the year.

*It is the second to last day in February and Nightlight's staff is sitting around the conference table discussing daily matters. Jim, Nightlight's computer technician, is explaining his interest in setting up a Google Grant account for the organization. He details how the grant is part of a package deal Google specifically provides non-profits. The grant allocates 3000 e-mail addresses to the nonprofit and access to Gmail and other Google services for free. However, when*

*reading over the grant's requirements, he says one grabbed his attention. The grant calls for nonprofits to pledge not to discriminate against any person during their hiring process. Jim believes this might be an issue for Nightlight. He references Mary, on several occasions, discussing the board of directors' hiring policy debates. Jim also reports a requirement preventing churches from becoming grantees, however he believes this will not be an issue.*

*Responding to Jim's concerns, Mary details the reoccurring discussions during board meetings concerning hiring and employee policies. She says it is still not clear who can be a church partner. Some on the board are still calling for only Christian organizations to be able for membership. However, several Jewish synagogues offering membership fees approached Cheryl. She believes these memberships will further Nightlight's goals. Because of this, she reports talks between her and the board about creating "safe memberships" for other religious institutions. They are still deciding what will be the requirements for these non-Christian members.*

*Mary also describes discussions among the board concerning whom Nightlight can and will employ. She reports some board members wanting hiring restrictions. Specifically, they wish to stipulate that one's faith must be Christian and staff will have to sign a sexual purity clause before being hired. Mary finds this requirement very "problematic," commenting, "that would not work." Mimi adds, "Why are we singling out one sin? I can't work for an organization that focuses only on one issue." Mary also thinks the clause will be hard to enforce concluding, "I would not be able to monitor this issue." Additionally, she worries the proposed job qualifications might be discriminatory and become legal issues. Sally, Nightlight's recently hired legal counselor, confirms there would be legality issues if they create a hiring policy incorporating those qualities. Subsequently, Sally brings up a series of hypothetical questions: what would happen if a survivor of CSEC were to apply? Would the sexual purity clause prevent them from working for the organization? Would the organization need to develop a "path to redemption" or an addendum process for survivors wanting to be employees? After listening to the problems a purity clause could produce, Cheryl deduces the monitoring process to be problematic and arbitrary. Reflexively, she wishes more than just religious figures were on the board. Specifically, she wants more business and community board members, so doctrinal issues will not dominate the conversation. Finally, Cheryl mentions this whole conversation is ongoing, and first came about last December around the time Paul left Nightlight.*

Internal religious debates concerning doctrine among the board were issues Mary contended with when developing the organization's employment practices. The debates were a distraction for the organization. They caused Nightlight to spend time on legality concerns over potential hiring policies, rather than explicit goals like grant opportunities and expanding their church membership. Furthermore, the sexual purity clause, which reflects the rigid gender norms of

conservative Christian culture, was seen as a deterrent to hiring staff and unmanageable from a leadership perspective. Ironically, the policy would also potentially discriminate against the very people the organization was collectively advocating for. These internal policy debates highlight the interaction between culturally dominant religious beliefs and social movement organization processes. These cultural constraints also became a liability for the organization in the aftermath of a staff member leaving the organization.

As I pointed out in the last observation, internal struggles among the board were an ongoing issue for the organization. In particular, Mary mentioned the question over who could be hired became more relevant after Paul, a Nightlight staff member, left the organization. Paul became aware of Nightlight after his church became a member of the organization. Wanting to be involved in the effort to address commercial sexual exploitation in the state, Paul offered his services to the organization. He was eventually hired through a private foundation grant to help write and develop a manual Nightlight planned on using to expand their organization nationwide. The manual provided interested parties in other areas of the country a blueprint on how to set up their own chapter of Nightlight. It explained the strategies Nightlight performed to cultivate community service partners and church memberships, as well as to lobby legislative change in their state.

Paul was uniquely skilled for the task. He had multiple years of experience working with national and international agencies and non-profit organizations addressing child poverty and exploitation, including helping develop their organizational documents. Furthermore, compared to some of the other Nightlight staff, who only recently learned about CSEC and whose previous educational and employment backgrounds were not specific to child exploitation or child

welfare, Paul had an extensive resume on the issue. Paul also identified as gay, yet this did not seem to be an issue of contention among the staff.

After finishing the manual, which completed the grant's terms, there was some informal discussion and a sense that Paul might stay on and help with the national expansion plan. However, Paul abruptly left a few weeks after the document was finalized. In fact, when I interviewed Paul, I was caught off guard after he told me our interview would be the last thing he did before leaving the organization. While the formal reason given for Paul's departure was the grant funding running out, there were some murmurs and offhand comments suggesting someone on Nightlight's board had issue with his sexuality. As I pointed out earlier, there was significant ideological diversity among Nightlight staff, their church and community partners, and board of directors. Some held religiously progressive views on social topics while others significantly conservative views. Thus you had staff making the comment "I can't do doctrine. I don't think my God worries about who people love. He's worries about people doing bad things to one another;" as well as members openly asserting homosexuality a sin. Within this context, months after Paul left, his church confronted Nightlight over his departure. This confrontation became apparent through a survey Nightlight sent to all its church members. The questionnaire asked how Nightlight might better serve the churches' efforts around CSEC. After receiving the survey completed by Paul's church, Mary discussed the conflict during a staff meeting one afternoon in April:

*Announcing to the staff, Mary reads aloud from the survey that United Church "would be resigning over the perceived homophobia at Nightlight." Mary says this has to do with Paul's contract not being renewed. She reveals United Church is threatening to tell other churches in their network about Nightlight's "perceived homophobia" and asserting Nightlight's prejudice is preventing them from pursuing research on commercially sexually exploited boys in Georgia. The conference room is quite, and several staff look stunned by the accusation. Mary declares a letter was drafted rebutting the church's claims. She reads out loud,*

*“We received your letter about our policy and practices” but disagree with your assessment. “Paul’s separation was mutual.” “Paul was not our employee.” “He was a contracted employee,” and “he was well compensated” for his work. We did not renew his contract because of his “life style preferences.” “We do not take sides” on contentious issues. In response, to your accusation that we do not want to study exploited boys, we are in fact “commissioning a research group to study boys.” Finishing up the letter, Mary tells Sally she wants to include a legal warning with the letter cautioning United Church that if they talk to other churches there could be legal ramifications. She also directs the staff not to distribute the letter to anyone outside Nightlight warning that doing so can lead to their termination, adding, “We need to have a strict framing of this issue. With any divisive issue, it can distract from our mission.” She reminisces about how something similar happened during the organization’s first year with the issue of abortion. She recalls, “We got questions like ‘well, what is going to happen with all those pregnant girls?’ We need to just stick to message - that we are here to stop CSEC.”*

Mary wanted to “stick to the message,” and saw contentious topics surrounding gender and sexuality as distractions to organizational efforts. However, the religiously conservative beliefs held by some within the organization’s leadership and network created instances where she and other staff were forced to deal with the conflict it produced. In the observation above, anti-gay views were not only connected to the loss of a highly qualified staff member, but later a church membership. Managing these culturally contentious episodes distracted the organization from their original goals constraining both their internal efforts to expand as an organization, and their mission to spread awareness by growing their volunteer base. Thus, while the strong religiosity present in the South, was a significant cultural benefit to Nightlight’s mobilization efforts expanding their membership and political capital, the conservative ideals about sexuality and gender connected to that religiosity distracted and constrained the organizations efforts. As Polletta (2008:80) reminds us, “culture sets the terms of strategic action,” and there are compromises for social movement organizations when reinforcing and challenging cultural schemas surrounding gender, sex, and religion. Hence, organizations benefiting from the strong networks of churches the Bible Belt produces must also contend with a cultural conservatism that

constructs symbolic boundaries. These boundaries can silence one's awareness efforts around contentious topics and/or create organizational conflict over who participates and what can be said.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I highlighted several challenges Nightlight and Demanding Justice encountered in their efforts to mobilize resources and collective support, operate efficiently as an organization, and bring about social and institutional change. Drawing on Armstrong and Bernstein's (2008) multi-institutional politics approach, I identified how economic and political, as well as cultural forces concurrently shaped and constrained social movement organizations. In particular, I have shown how culture can be an equal if not greater source of constraint for social movements. This provides support to those scholars calling for culture to play a larger role in the study of social movements (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Polletta 2008).

Demanding Justice encountered economic roadblocks when acquiring adequate financial resources to fund their operations, and political limitations when providing law enforcement training on CSEC. Nightlight, on the other hand, did not lack financial resources, but rather human resources (i.e. dedicated and consistent volunteers). The other consistent obstacle came in the form of the dominant culture in the region, Christian conservatism. This hegemonic ideology created certain fundraising problems for Demanding Justice but more significantly a paradox for Nightlight. On one hand, it provided the faith-based organization significant mobilization potential as well as political and social capital in the movement. On the other hand, it constrained their internal organizational politics and efforts to spread awareness about CSEC, attract certain church partners, and bring about institutional change through certain legislation. While these

issues were specific to the organizations, they speak to a larger point: that social movement organizations must deal with the interactions between constraining macro forces like the economy, state, and culture and the micro organizational processes producing goals and policies. By accounting for the cultural/political taboos and the symbolic boundaries produced by rigid ideologies, I show how culture can concomitantly constrain and enable social movement processes and outcomes.

The issues discussed in this chapter were specific to Nightlight and Demanding Justice. In the following chapter, I extend my analysis to the relationship between these two organizations and their public/private partnership with the state government. I utilize a multi-dimensional approach and incorporate organizational theoretical concepts to analyze the relationship. I show how the organizations' public/private partnership with the state created both opportunities and constraints to expand the movement and make meaningful change. I identify how, at times, the organizational practices of Nightlight, Demanding Justice, and the state were identical and in cooperation, while other times they were in conflict jockeying for control of the movement. Finally, I highlight how gender played an underlying role in the leadership of both the public and private partnerships.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PUBLIC/PRIVATE: MESSY RELATIONSHIPS AND A GENDERED FIELD**

As the anti-CSEC movement grew, activists began having more interactions with and influence over state policy makers and agencies. Along with passing HB 200, their collective effort produced the Georgia Task Force on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. The task force became a site where the relationship between the private nonprofit movement and public sector developed. The relationship expanded opportunities for social movement organizations like Demanding Justice and Nightlight to make institutional change and connected them with service providers and state and local agencies dealing with children. However, it was also a site of contention where ownership over the movement, policy implementation, and bureaucratic red tape were in constant conflict.

Demanding Justice and Nightlight's relationships with the state government provides a window into the messiness that is public/private partnerships. At times, the relationships led to fulfilling anti-CSEC movement's goals, while other times they resulted in disagreement, exclusion, and frustration. This complex partnership played out within the broader field that was the statewide anti-CSEC task force. The task force brought together a network of private organizations—Demanding Justice, Nightlight, other anti-trafficking nonprofits, child advocacy groups, private foundations, medical/behavioral health providers, and faith based programs—with public institutions like law enforcement, juvenile justice, child protective services, prosecutors, and state agencies. It was through the task force that these complex relationships played out. The task force produced strong collaborations between some public and private



groups, but also a nonprofit counter effort to maintain control of the movement from becoming institutionalized.

Understanding the multifaceted relationships constructed between the state and social movements have been an area of interest for both social movement and political science scholars. Much of the research asserts movements and the state are separate actors typically in conflict with one another (Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978). However, some authors have identified the way movements intersect with the state (Banaszak 2005, 2010; Meyer, Jenness, and Ingram 2005; Smith and Lipsky 1993). Desai points to how the women's movement in India has a fluctuating relationship with the state government. Whittier (2009) highlights how the state's therapeutic politics shaped the movement against child sexual abuse and vice versa. Other scholars have analyzed the way movements become institutionalized, demobilized, or co-opted by the state (Coy and Heeden 2005; Kriesi et al. 1995; Piven and Cloward 1979; Tarrow 1998). Feminist researchers have taken a leading role in identifying movements', particularly women's movements', interactions with the state. They describe the state as a non-homogenous entity that provides entry to "femocrats" who are able to influence public policy and implement movement strategies (Banaszak 2010; Eisenstein 1996; Mazur 1995; Richards 2004; Stetson and Mazur 2001). In many cases, these scholars show how movements consisting of multiple organizations worked to influence the state in myriad of ways.

Another line of research integrates social movement and organizational theory to explain the complex ways "social movements emerge and develop" (Campbell, 2005:41; Davis et al. 2005). For instance, Armstrong (2002) applies a cultural-institutional approach to the gay identity/rights movement in San Francisco to examine the multiple activist organizations/projects, associations, and tactics that transpired between the years 1950 and 1994.

Utilizing the concept of “field,” Armstrong is able to explain the processes through which segments of the movement became institutionalized while others did not.

Building on and integrating these scholars’ work, I highlight how the boundaries between the anti-CSEC movement and state government were often blurry. The boundaries were constantly being redrawn to incorporate new partners into the task force or exclude certain public or private actors’ from becoming involved. I argue that formally the objectives, associations, and outcomes of the public/private partnership were unambiguous, but in practice they were not always clear-cut. Child welfare agencies that were integral to implementing the task force’s plans were conspicuously slow to respond. State-movement partnerships sometimes led to interagency conflicts, while other times previous alliances became contentious. Furthermore, even as the movement showed signs of institutionalization, there were simultaneous efforts to revitalize the “grassroots” identity of the movement.

In order to describe this “messy” partnership, I draw on the concept of “field” to detail the “system of actors, actions, and relations” that make up the anti-CSEC task force and to identify the sociopolitical and cultural influences shaping their interactions (McAdam and Scott 2005:10). A field approach will allow me to explain more clearly the ways in which the state can become “the target, sponsor, and antagonist” of a social movement (Desai 2002:67). I also draw on the notions of cooptation and institutionalization in order to explain the opportunities and constraints produced by the state-movement relationship. However, I show that labeling the anti-CSEC movement as institutionalized would be too simplistic. Finally, I discuss how gender segregation within the anti-CSEC field and nonprofits’ organizational structure combined with essentialized gender beliefs to produce a women-led movement.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section delves into the public/private alliances that made up the anti-CSEC field, paying particular attention to Demanding Justice and Nightlight's relationships with the state government. I identify certain opportunities produced by the task force to explain the growth of the anti-CSEC field and the goals that were pursued. The second section highlights the constraints produced by the partnerships and the ways Nightlight and Demanding Justice navigated these complications as they occurred. In the third section, I provide a discussion about how gender structured the anti-CSEC field, advocate organizations, and activists' beliefs to produce a women-led movement.

### **The Anti-CSEC Field**

In Chapter Two, I described the origins of the task force. The task force started out small, but over time grew to incorporate numerous public and private actors. Similar to McAdam and Scott (2005) and Armstrong (2002:9), I utilize the concept of field to take account of the "culturally and politically constructed arenas," actors, affiliations, and institutional logics that impact a social movement in a variety of ways. The anti-CSEC field primarily includes the public and private organizations involved in the task force, but also certain state legislators as well as out-of-state and national child advocacy groups that had developed personal connections with certain state anti-CSEC organizations. Accounting for the field allows me to describe the conflict and change within the task force, distinguish between task force members and their actions, and highlight the ways in which certain aspects of the movement became institutionalized while others did not.

Many of the leading anti-CSEC activists and organizations supported the task force's implementation because it provided opportunities to create institutional change around the juvenile justice system's treatment of victims, law enforcement's prosecution of exploiters, and

social services' handling of at-risk and victimized youth. The task force provided a governing structure to the anti-CSEC field, creating a space, time, and formal authority to movement member interactions, collaborations, and strategy implementation. It was originally broken into work groups focusing on the topics of prevention, protection, and prosecution, with a smaller fourth group attending to performance measures and evaluation.<sup>12</sup> The titles of these sub-committees resembled the 3P's of the national anti-trafficking law (TVPRA), which is no coincidence. Mimicking the 3P's format was a strategy to access federal granting opportunities for task force projects and to legitimize their efforts. Demanding Justice had representatives in each of the work groups, and a Nightlight representative participated in the prevention work group and the main task force's quarterly meetings. Each work group brought together members from the public and private sector to draft a "logic model" identifying the goals, strategies, and ways of measuring the outcomes. According to the Task Force's Operations Manual, all of the sub-committees and their projects were under the guidance of the Governor's Office of Children and Families.

The task force brought to the table public organizations that had been the focus of many of the social movement organizations' collective action repertoires, including law enforcement, juvenile justice, and the Department of Family and Child Services. The task force provided the opportunity for certain members of these public agencies to become active supporters of movement goals. Members of the county district attorney's office and Georgia Bureau of Investigation routinely sat on panels with activists at anti-CSEC events hosted by private

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<sup>12</sup> Later on the number of work groups increased to seven – Keeping Children Safe, At-Risk Youth Identified, Youth Connected and Supported, Youth Recovering and Thriving, Youth Ready for Work and College, Adults Aware and Knowledgeable, Demand Reduction: Targeting Buyers and Sellers. However, the overall purpose of the groups remained similar to the original three groups.

advocacy groups. These public actors, along with social workers, city and state child advocates, public health personnel, and current and former judges, attended Nightlight's monthly meetings, Demanding Justice's community trainings, and both organizations' fundraisers. This created close relationships among certain task force members. For example, a member of one county district attorney's office became quite close with Demanding Justice, speaking at their events and utilizing the activists as expert witnesses for her CSEC cases.

The task force eventually became modeled on a collective impact approach in an effort to create a central anti-CSEC agenda, streamline collaboration among numerous organizations, and implement effective projects (Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer 2012). Similar to the movement against child sexual abuse, the anti-CSEC field consisted of organizations with varying degrees of relationship with the state (Whittier 2009). Some received partial funding from the government to provide victim services, while others subcontracted work (e.g. CSEC training) from the state. Other organizations challenged the state's law enforcement efforts while simultaneously supporting the strengthening of its criminal justice enforcement. In some instances, organizations worked alongside state agencies to implement public health initiatives to address CSEC. In many cases, organizations maintained more than one of these relationships with the state government, and for others, their relationship changed over time.

The task force's work groups were sites where these organizations came together to promote specific methods for addressing CSEC. Both the prevention and protection subcommittees supported a public health approach to CSEC. Public health initiatives focus on prevention by educating the public about a problematic social behavior and providing resources through public policy to create cultural change around an issue. Whittier (2009:200) argues:

Despite the language of "choice," public health campaigns are undeniably a form of social control, in which the state attempts to bring citizens' behavior in line

with its goals, not by imposing external controls, but by changing how people think, feel, and behave. They work upon people's interior lives and are thus a hallmark of the therapeutic state.

The prevention work group developed educational and awareness strategies (e.g. public service announcements), along with assessment and outreach tools for identifying at-risk youth (e.g. for educators). The subcommittee also produced community strategies to assist vulnerable youth and prevent exploiters from working an area, and plans for better cooperation between public and private institutions that come in contact with commercially sexually exploited youth (e.g. school, Department of Family and Child Services, Georgia Care Connection, and victim services).

The protection work group's goal, according to their logic model, was to "develop a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary continuum of care" for exploited youth. This included identifying and developing "best practices" for mental and physical health treatment for commercially sexually exploited children. Along with these health services, the group worked on locating, building, and connecting community services for victims and their families. This involved identifying potential public and private funding sources.

In contrast, the prosecution group developed carceral approaches to CSEC. They focused on strategies that would produce a "victim centered investigation," including law enforcement training, forensic interviewing protocol for victims, plans for a receiving center, procedures to identify and refer at-risk and victimized youth to victim services, and decreasing the number of arrests/charges of CSEC victims. The group also worked on efforts to increase prosecutions of exploiters and civil litigation for victims against their exploiters. In addition to shifting law enforcement's treatment of commercially sexually exploited youth from offenders to victims, the intended goal of these efforts was to prevent and end CSEC through prosecution and punishment. As I discussed in Chapter Three, anti-CSEC activists employed the *Stop Demand*,

*Normal Guy Buyer*, and *Punishment* discourses to encourage carceral solutions to CSEC. Calls for stronger penalties, increased prosecutions and convictions, and more law enforcement attention were similarly advocated by “enforcer” organizations in the movement against child sexual abuse (Whittier 2009). Whittier (2009:199) argues that a criminal approach, while initially an activist claim, became a prominent form of state intervention since it “reinforced state interests in incarceration and regulation, rather than social change.” This was also evident in the anti-CSEC field. However, I would add that the state government’s interests was only one source of support for criminal solutions, the other being the carceral feminist ideology present among many of the advocates. As Jean, of Demanding Justice, pointed out during our interview:

In 2007, when Demanding Justice started, it was [a private family foundation] who was supporting [the safe house for CSEC]. [One of the founders] basically said “I want to put [the safe house] out of business.” What he meant was, as a community we should not stand for the fact that we have these victims. So that turned us here at Inspiring Excellence and Demanding Justice toward the demand side, shifting our focus.

The statewide task force and its work groups produced multiple and complex interactions between anti-CSEC activists, child healthcare workers, and the state’s criminal justice and social service agencies. The borders between the work groups were blurry as public and private actors participated in more than one sub-committee. Due to the overlapping and compounding relationships existent within the anti-CSEC field, like the movement against child sexual abuse, “the boundaries between official state and autonomous agencies” were “indistinct” (Whittier 2009:189). This relationship with the state created both opportunities and constraints for addressing anti-CSEC movement goals.

### ***Anti-CSEC Field Opportunities***

The creation of the task force and subsequent growth of the anti-CSEC field was largely a response to the advocacy of social movement organizations like Demanding Justice and

Nightlight. Many of their efforts pushed for changes in the institutional response to exploited youth and their exploiters. This involved lobbying state legislatures and bringing state organizations like DFCS, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and the Governor's Office to the table. The entrance of these state actors provided several opportunities for the anti-CSEC movement to further their goals.

From a symbolic standpoint, the task force provided institutional legitimization to the anti-CSEC movement's call for change. While organizations like Demanding Justice and Nightlight had gained recognition and influence with certain state law makers and a growing number of community supporters, establishing the task force symbolized the state's recognition of CSEC as a social problem. Beyond the institutional legitimacy, the task force provided the anti-CSEC organizations with access to other youth-serving nonprofits, state agencies, and in some cases funding sources, thus expanding the anti-CSEC field. As Rebecca, a white medical health advocate, remarked:

I think the Governor's Office has done an awesome job of just getting everybody to talk. I've never been in a task force where they've had this much cohesion for so long. It's usually one meeting and everybody breaks up.

Similarly, Wendy a white anti-trafficking advocate, asserted:

I love the collaboration between the organizations. I've got probably 10 or 12 people I could call right now from 10 or 12 different organizations and they would do virtually anything for me. We need each other. We have to stand with each other. We're all nonprofits or government agencies. We all are lacking funds and yet I don't sense there's that sense of competition so much. I really don't.

Scholars have asserted that increases in heterogeneous partnerships, and thus more weak ties, are correlated with higher diffusion rates of collective action, greater movement success, and extended movement longevity/survival (Beamish and Luebbbers 2009; Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Granovetter 1973; Strang and Soule 1998). Actors representing state agencies, health care



providers, and child welfare organizations that came in contact with exploited youth and their exploiters were now interacting with, developing relationships with, and being trained by activists. This created multiple opportunities to diffuse movement claims, strategies, and ideologies to those involved in the newly formed alliances. For example, the research Demanding Justice commissioned estimating the number of exploited youth per month (and their subsequent research on buyers) became common talking points at the quarterly meetings and manifested in the language task force members used during conversations with me and in our interviews.

Demanding Justice was also able to address their goals of shifting law enforcement's treatment of victims, sellers, and buyers, because the task force provided them access to the police and government funding to train them. For Nightlight, the task force created the initial opening to the Department of Education. Gaining access to Georgia's schools in order to develop student awareness and prevention programs was extremely difficult. Demanding Justice, along with other private child advocacy organizations, had previously tried with little success. The "holy grail" was to gain access the public school system. However, the popular wisdom was "if they won't talk about sex in school, how do you talk about exploitative sex?" With the Department of Education participating in the task force, there were greater chances to collaborate.

The opportunity to collaborate with the Department of Education eventually came about. Jenny, of Nightlight, recalled learning that the Department of Education's newly elected Superintendent personally knew a woman who, when she was young, was sent to foster care and became a trafficking victim. The superintendent's interest in the topic, accompanied by the department's representation at the task force, provided the opportunity to learn about Nightlight

and their interest in developing awareness/prevention campaigns for schools. Jenny recalled being asked by the superintendent to meet with his chief of staff. During the meeting, Jenny called for a plan to educate school officials including teachers, counselors, principals, and the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) about CSEC. She advised that school officials take child abuse training and mandatory reporting training so they knew what the signs were for exploited youth. She also expressed interest in talking to the students, offering Nightlight volunteers to speak with them about the common tactics being used to recruit and exploit youth. The chief of staff said he was on board and would set up a meeting to develop the plan. The alliance with the Department of Education, eventually allowed Nightlight and a few other nonprofit advocacy groups to generate a project that trained teachers, school staff, and PTAs on CSEC and the mandatory reporting laws. This was considered a significant success with hopes that it would eventually lead to programs for students. Recently, the Department of Education announced a pilot program for Georgia high school students to learn about child sex trafficking (Lee 2013).

It should be noted that while the task force created the opening for Nightlight to access the Department of Education, several other factors played a role in their partnership. For one, the task force has been in existence since 2008, yet it was not until early 2012 that the Department of Education became part of the task force and showed interest in developing a statewide awareness initiative. Also, it is no coincidence that a private, faith-based organization was able to partner with the department. In states with high rates of religiosity (especially the South), faith-based (predominantly Christian) organizations have had a much easier time accessing the educational curriculum, especially in cases concerning topics of sex and gender (Luker 2006; Irvine 2002). Therefore, it was a mixture of the task force providing an institutional setting supportive of public/private partnerships, the superintendent having a personal connection with the topic, and a

regional culture more accepting of religious intervention in school policies/curriculum that created the opportunity for movement claims to diffuse into the public school system.

The task force not only created opportunities for diffusing anti-CSEC movement's discourse, it also produced a multi-disciplinary approach to victim services (a hallmark of a collective impact strategy). A multi-disciplinary approach to CSEC brings child welfare services, law enforcement, and healthcare together to work collaboratively rather than independently, improve victim care, and prosecute exploiters. A similar approach exists to address child sexual abuse. Whittier (2009) argues the strategy creates new funding opportunities for advocates, increased networking capabilities, and reinforces a therapeutic approach to law enforcement. She also asserts (2009:88) these techniques are "a challenge to state power over children who enter the legal system and to the process by which child sexual abuse cases are prosecuted." In Georgia, a private child healthcare organization's relationship with law enforcement and DFCS exemplified the multi-disciplinary approach. Specifically, when either law enforcement or DFCS identified or suspected juveniles of being commercially sexually exploited they were taken to a nonprofit advocacy center for "Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy" and forensic interviewing. The collaboration provided the child with free mental health treatment, while supplying law enforcement with information pertaining to their case. In general, task force members viewed the approach as a progressive step in how the state treated CSEC. Susanne, a victim services provider, described her experience with the multi-disciplinary approach:

They're open to hearing my feedback. I'm open to hearing theirs. Once a month we all meet. That includes the Georgia Care Connection, FBI, Governor's Office, and other individuals who are all on the same page of wanting to help the girls. We go over every child that's been sexually exploited and placed [in a residential home] in Georgia and we talk about their progress or what services they need. For example, we had a child who was in private placement and there were some things going on in her home. Outside of her being sexually exploited, there were things going on at home that made us concerned about her going home. Being

able to sit at a table with a person who works at DFCS on a higher level, the D.A.'s office, as well as DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice), we were able to come away from that meeting with a plan to keep the child safe as well as give the mom additional services, versus me sitting in this one office trying to figure out how to do it myself. So that form of communication and that form of meeting once a month is essential to the growth of making the community aware as well as being able to service the girls that we have.

Even with this positive view of the approach, there was still some ambivalence among certain activists, including Nightlight and Demanding Justice, about the state government's new role in providing victim services. Similar to the child abuse movement, anti-CSEC advocates viewed the multi-disciplinary approach as a needed challenge to the state's previous efforts at addressing juvenile prostitution (i.e. arrest and prosecution). However, this view was complicated by a simultaneous perception critical of the state's involvement in victim services, preferring private sector control over the services. These complex views became most apparent when the Georgia Care Connection, the state's CSEC care coordination office, was incorporated into a private child advocacy organization. Originally, the office was an initiative under the direction of the GOCF and located in Atlanta. In order to make the office more accessible throughout the state, it was placed under the direction of the nonprofit Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia (which are partially funded by the GOCF and Department of Human Services), because there are more than forty locations throughout the state.

This effectively dispersed child safety services across the state so that CSEC cases outside of Atlanta would not have to travel to a single office for care coordination. It also signaled the resurgence of privatized control over victim services. Since 2001, most victim services (residential, mental/physical health) for exploited youth were under the direction of nonprofit and religiously affiliated organizations. The creation of the Georgia Care Connection office brought a stronger public presence in the role of determining victim services. However, by

incorporating the office into the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, the direction of services has shifted back to the private sector.<sup>13</sup> The push to privatize victim services is part of neoliberal governance (Robinson 1999; Kohl 2002). The argument for privatization is that it establishes more democratic community control over the services, reduces burdensome regulations that slow down the administering of services, and produces more fiscal responsibility by eliminating state agents' ability to purchase unneeded services for political support (i.e. corruption) (Werlin 1992; Williamson 1993). However, critics point out that neoliberal approaches, in particular privatization, increase inequality, shift corruption from the public to private sector, increase the price of services making them unattainable to many who need them, and diminish vital state supervision (Kohl 2002; Robinson 1999). In the case of the anti-CSEC movement, privatization reproduces the blurry and unstable boundaries between the movement and state. In some ways, privatization benefited the movement's goals. For example, it allowed for the expansion of victim services across the state. However, privatization also produced tension between activists and the state, and does not address the structural inequalities at the root of commercial sexual exploitation.

### ***Anti-CSEC Field Constraints***

The task force and growth of the anti-CSEC field provided new avenues for movement organizations to spread awareness and institutional credibility to influence the state agencies involved in deciding the outcomes of CSEC and their perpetrators. Yet, conflict occurred between the private advocacy organizations and the state government as certain aspects of the movement became institutionalized. This conflict was ever present during my year of

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<sup>13</sup> Recently, I learned that after only a year under the direction of the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, the Georgia Care Connection applied to become an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit, known as Georgia Cares.

observation with Demanding Justice and Nightlight, and led the organizations to develop plans for a private, nonprofit consortium to gain back control of the field as it moved forward.

Social movement scholars have described multiple outcomes for collective action becoming institutionalized within the state. Meyer (1993) and Meyer and Tarrow (1998) argue that institutionalization typically leads to a movement's end. Other scholars highlight the positive impacts that institutionalization has on movement outcomes (Andrew 2010; Banaszak 2005, 2010; Kriesberg 2003). Researchers have also focused on the specific processes by which movements are co-opted by the state (Coy and Hedeon 2005; Ezekiel 2002; Johnson 1981; Piven and Cloward 1971). Coy and Hedeon (2005) devised a model of co-optation to explain the multiple stages movements go through as they become institutionalized. However, they (2005:409) assert:

The overall process and the progression between stages are depicted in our chart as somewhat linear. But, in reality, there are often loop-backs, mutually or unilaterally aborted processes, and both short-term as well as extended periods without significant new developments.

In other words, co-optation is not always a successful, comprehensive, or definitive outcome of movement institutionalization. Nor is institutionalization always a problematic outcome, considering many social movement goals require institutional change. Interaction between social movements and the state government does not always signify cooptation. It can also mean social movements are accomplishing their goals. Similar to the movement against child sexual abuse (Whittier 2009), the anti-CSEC movement's relationship with the state government was complex. In light of this, to argue that the movement was co-opted by the state through the task force would be too simplistic and overlook the institutional changes the movement brought about. The conflicts produced by the task force highlight the complexity of the public-private relationship.

Several issues arose during my fieldwork, but the overarching public-private conflict concerned the “ownership” of the movement. With the GOCF leading the task force, there had been a shift in power concerning who had final authority to decide the policies, strategies, and discourse to address CSEC going forward. Because this authority was originally held by the grassroots movement, members of Demanding Justice and Nightlight saw, as Jean was fond of saying, “a pendulum shift” in who was leading the anti-CSEC effort. Jean described how this shift occurred:

This whole issue [anti-CSEC movement] started out a hundred percent in the private sector. Then, in order to move forward and really have the presence it needed, we needed the public sector. They got on board and the GOCF is clearly the public sector... When the GOCF came on to the scene, it shifted to where the power was in the public sector a hundred percent. It felt like they were telling me what I could and could not do. That didn’t feel right. It was like, “I’m not your minion.” I felt that [power] shift and I felt the private sector has got to have more parity.

Along with the shift in power, the contentious relationship was also the result of previous political decisions by the Governor’s Office to withhold support for movement efforts. In response to the question, how do you think the public-private relationship here in Georgia is working, movement advocate Phillip responded:

I think it all started to fall apart with the Minimum Age Bill, when the public sector did not want to get behind the bill and the private sector did. That caused some major problems. I think that started to sow the seeds of distrust. I think ever since, we’ve reconciled, but right now there is a hiatus. I think the public sector is trying to figure out what it’s doing right now with the change in administration [election of Governor Nathan Deal] and where it’s going from a funding standpoint. The private sector is basically trying to reload their weapons and figure out where to start shooting next.

Phillip points to the public sector’s lack of support and eventual failure of the Minimum Age Bill (SB 304), which would have prevented minors from being arrested and prosecuted for prostitution, as a point of contention between the two sectors. This, along with the shift in power,

created tension between several of the nonprofits, including Demanding Justice and Nightlight, and the GOFC. In response to the pendulum shift in power, a self-selected group of anti-CSEC organizations began planning a private sector association to gain back ownership of the movement. Jean described how the collaboration came about:

I think all of us in the private sector began to feel like “we don’t like it [the power shift].” The initial impetus for [the collaboration] was to look at how we can end this [power imbalance], and that means money. The public sector had the money, because of all of the federal moneys they could bring to this issue. All of the money resided in the public sector, except for the private moneys that each of us had to run our organizations. We didn’t have any private moneys that were “issue” [CSEC] money, like the public sector did. That is why I said, “we need to talk.” It almost felt subversive like we were somehow doing something that nobody should know about for a while.

In addition to the financial motivations, Mary, of Nightlight, discussed their reason for joining the collaboration at the end of a staff meeting in June 2011:

*Mary explained to the other members that she had been working with Jean (Demanding Justice) and some other nonprofit heads to create a management organization for all of the nonprofits in the movement. She talked about the fact that as the organizations grew and the collective effort progressed, there was a need for management, in order to get things done and hold people to their obligations. But the most important goal of the association was to gain back some of the control, planning, and strategy over creating change and awareness around CSEC. She explained how the need for this became apparent early on when the nonprofits began partnering with the Governor’s Office. Overtime, the Governor’s Office had asked Mary to take on certain tasks and support specific initiatives that she believed did not fit with Nightlight’s mission. This eventually led her to say no and receive push back from the Governor’s Office. This came in the form of warnings that Nightlight’s input on the task force’s direction would be diminished without their support. However, she reported that her relationship with the GOFC changed as Nightlight grew, remarking, “The Governor’s Office recognizes what we were doing and they realize that we have a lot of people/volunteers.”*

Both Jean and Mary highlighted the need to organize the nonprofits in the movement in response to the perceived control the GOFC held over funding and the direction of the anti-CSEC effort.

The collaboration eventually turned into several meetings between six organizations. Individuals



from Demanding Justice and Nightlight, along with two victim service providers, a conservative think tank, and a private foundation were represented. At the first meeting, the group discussed the reasons behind establishing the collaboration, what the mission and goals would be, and how they would entice other nonprofits into joining. Those in the room expressed the feeling that nonprofits had been marginalized by the public sector, that the Governor's Office had all the power and was dictating what the nonprofits should be doing. Disenchantment with the task force's progress implementing the projects devised in the work groups was also expressed. Jean complained, "all we do is meet" and work on the logic models. The goal of the meeting was to create plans for an executive committee to better organize the nonprofit sector, and have a stronger voice in the discussion on what should be done about CSEC. The issues brought up concerned questions about what the committee and its membership would look like. Would there be membership rates? How would the board members be elected to office? Who would be a part of this new executive committee? Why would anyone want to participate considering the task force already existed? And, what would the committee produce? On this last question, suggestions included providing a clearinghouse for information and data on CSEC, establishing a legislative agenda, promoting member organizations' achievements, and identifying funding opportunities. Also during the meeting, it was recommended to not have the same goals as the public sector, in order to prevent it from giving input or taking over. The group met several more times to work out the specifics of the organization, but eventually dissolved.

The reasons the group dissolved were never made explicit, and tension remained between the nonprofits and the GOCF. However, several changes did occur at the time of the meetings that might allude to reasons for the disbanding. As was noted earlier, the Georgia Care Connection office was placed under the direction of a nonprofit network of child advocacy

centers. This was to expand the direct services operation because they were underfunded and lacked personnel to address the issue statewide. The nonprofits considered this a victory since direct management of the Georgia Care Connection was now privatized, even though the GOCF still provided partial funding for the child advocacy centers. Another change was that the GOCF had recently brought in an outside consultant to “streamline” the task force. This led to restructuring the work groups from four to seven in order to identify small but achievable group goals that would have “measurable impacts.” In other words, they engaged in projects whose outcomes could be quantifiable in order to provide “objective” accomplishments to policy makers and justify the task force. This change addressed some of the nonprofits’ concerns about the task force’s ineffectiveness. Nightlight was invited to take a leadership role in the newly formed work groups, which contrasted with its role in the past. For example, during several staff meetings months and weeks before the shift in the task force, Mary commented that she had stopped attending the meetings (sometimes sending someone else) because they were unproductive. Finally, the nonprofits were invested in multiple other projects that competed for their time to create a new managing nonprofit organization.

Even with the private sector group disbanding, conflict persisted. This created complex relationships between the nonprofits and the state. For example, while Demanding Justice was receiving state funding to train law enforcement, they were simultaneously not being invited to speak at law enforcement events hosted by the GOCF. However, it was Nightlight’s collaboration with the Department of Education that best exemplified the complexity and conflict present between the public and private sector. Mary discussed the tension during a Nightlight staff meeting at the end of February 2012:

*Mary announces to the staff that Nightlight is working with another nonprofit organization to provide the Department of Education with a statewide group of*

*trained speakers on the topic of CSEC. She is also talking with the department about the curriculum the speakers will present. Mary reports that Nightlight, along with several other child advocacy organizations, has been meeting with the department to develop the curriculum. Originally, Nightlight asked the Governor's Office if they could use their training materials on CSEC for the Department of Education training. Initially, the Governor's Office agreed, but since then, has taken back their training materials. Mary calls it a "turf war" between someone in the Department of Education and someone in the Governor's Office. She goes on to say "we invited them (Governor's Office) to come on board, and then they are going to tell us what to do and when to do it? We invited them to the meeting with Department of Education, not the other way around. They do not have to be a part of the conversation." Mary also reports that during the same meeting with the Department of Education, the Governor's Office representatives stated they needed to sign off on the final CSEC curriculum that would be utilized. Mary is critical of this, commenting that it is wrong for them to think that because the task force is under their name that they have final say and approval on everything in the movement or produced by a task force member. She describes how this has been a long-standing tension since the beginning of the task force, and that the GOCF approval procedures have caused a lot of task force processes to be inefficient. She recalls when the anti-CSEC organizations were trying to pass the Minimum Age Bill, some in the Governor's Office said "they could not talk about politics or legislation" which Cheryl thought was contradictory to the purpose of the task force.*

Mary elaborated on the conflict during our interview:

Mary: There is an agency [Department of Education] that Nightlight is working with, where there are multiple parties at the table. Because we're a faith-based organization, we were called into the meeting to work on the project. We invited the other organizations as a courtesy, [because the project is] something we could've done on our own. Some government organizations [i.e. GOCF] decided that because the objectives of the project aligned with their agenda it was supposed to be incorporated into their agenda. There was a lot of arguing back and forth about how to inform the project, about how to incorporate, until we literally had to end the meeting because we couldn't get any further with meeting the objectives of the person that asked us to do the project. It was very frustrating. T.H.: Have these meetings - are they stalled or are people trying to work behind the scenes to get it fixed?

Mary: Right now it's stalled. But, what is probably going to happen is the person who brought Nightlight into the meeting is going to schedule another meeting and tell us whom they want there. Certain people will be invited and others will not be in order for us to be able to move forward. That's my expectation.

In the end, the GOCF was allowed to review the curriculum but did not have final say on the program. The collaboration between Nightlight, the Department of Education, and several other

nonprofits to develop and implement CSEC awareness within the school system is a private nonprofit accomplishment that will have institution wide effects. Yet, it was also rife with contention over what curriculum would be developed and who had final say over the project. The conflict also exposed interagency tensions (i.e. Department of Education and GOCF), showing how the government is not homogenous but rather a group of agencies with varying interactions, allegiances, and policies (Pringle and Watson 1998). This tension became clearer later on when the head of the Department of Education (Superintendent John Barge) announced he would be running against sitting Governor, Nathan Deal, in the GOP primary in 2014. The conflict highlights how government agencies can complicate, and at times inhibit other agencies' effort to co-opt a social movement, revealing the messiness that is movement institutionalization.

Two other interrelated conflicts exposing the constraints within the anti-CSEC field involved the bureaucratic process and DFCS slow response to address the issue. Many task force participants considered the sluggishness of bureaucracy (particularly the GOCF's management of the task force) a key restraint in moving ahead with anti-CSEC efforts. Linda, a victim services advocate, articulated this constraint:

I think the more people that you can get at the table, the better. However, we're struggling with that to be honest. We've got a few issues and because it's the Governor's Office's task force we have to get approval for everything. That can bog it [task force strategies] down a lot... Definitely the approval process [is a roadblock] and that's not really something that we have any control over... Some people, because the system is bogged down by the approval process, they just want to go off and do their own thing, even though they're a member of the task force and they've been contributing to it.

Even the state advocates I interviewed acknowledged the bureaucratic constraints:

Jo-Anne: Government moves slow.

Stacey: Yeah.

Jo-Anne: Well that's just the nature of the game, the bureaucracy in it. I don't think that's anything necessarily to hide. But that's where I think some frustration

comes in, where the advocates are ready to go, go, go; move, move, move and we're like "okay, wait. We've got to get approval. We've got a contract." Stacey: Its not that we don't want to move forward. It's that there are things in place that a nonprofit wouldn't have to go through to get things up and moving. We move as fast as we can, but things take time on the government level. I think that's why you said in your interviews you hear public *and* private. The good thing is, we have the task force to bridge [the two sectors.] That's why [the task force] is so important because without it, we're almost against each other sometimes. We know that this [the CSEC issue] is important. It's like, [Mimicking a nonprofit task force member] "How come you won't come forward?" And we're like "you have to give us some time. We want to do it but there's a process for us to go through."

The bureaucratic process created tension among the task force members, causing nonprofit groups to view the government's slow implementation and support for anti-CSEC strategies and policies as a sign of uncooperativeness, intransigence, and in some cases power hogging. The disconnect between the nonprofits' expectations and government's protracted response could reflect bureaucracy's dysfunction and inability to adapt quickly to shifting conditions (Merton 1940).

However, it could also exemplify how "street-level bureaucracies encounter conflict and ambiguity in the tensions between client-centered goals and organizational goals" (Lipsky 1980:44). In their efforts to follow organizational procedures (e.g. requiring approvals for everything) and achieve the Governor's Office's goals to maximize efficiency and cost-productivity, the clients' goals (in this case those of the nonprofits) come into conflict. During my time interviewing and observing, the Governor's Office was in a period of transition as the new governor (Nathan Deal) and his staff was entering the office. Because the governor had run on a small government, fiscal conservative platform, this could have led his staff to be politically cautious when approving policies. This would slow down the bureaucratic process and consequently, the partnering nonprofits' efforts. In either case, bureaucracy produced friction between the nonprofits and government agencies.

In addition to the GOCF's approval process, the other quintessential example of bureaucratic sluggishness was the Department of Family and Child Services' response to CSEC. This became apparent during the beginning of the first quarterly task force meeting I attended in 2011. A GOCF representative began the meeting with some opening remarks about the transformations of the task force, how membership had grown, and the progress made since the task force was formed. She then exclaimed, "I am happy to announce that DFCS is represented here today." There were a few cheers and claps from the crowd. I found this odd because similar announcements were not made about the other organizations present at the meeting. I later found out that having DFCS in the room was a big deal, since the organization had mostly been absent during the first few years of the task force. I remember wondering how the chief state agency for child welfare could have such a little presence? The answer to this question turned out to be quite complex.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, malfeasance, institutional racism, underfunding, and lack of adequate staff characterized the recent history of Georgia's Department of Family and Child Services. Because of this, the department was being sued by the federal government and in a period of restructuring. This created problems for identifying CSEC cases. Jody, a law enforcement agent, highlights how this problem played out in her CSEC investigations:

Jody: DFCS has a lot of issues. DFCS has always had a lot of issues. I mean way back. They are understaffed. They are overloaded. They are not paid anything for what they do. They are not trained. They are not educated to where they need to be. I had a DFCS worker say to me once "well if the family member didn't commit the offense, then we don't need to be told about it [CSEC]." [Even] when we know [they are suppose to report CSEC.] I think it's HB 69 or one of them?

T.H.: The mandatory reporting law?

Jody: Right. It says that anyone who exploits a child needs to be reported. So they don't know [the law] yet. They don't get updated on things and they don't get trained because of resources, because of funding, because of money. It's just this vicious cycle. And they don't know what to do with these girls at two o'clock in the morning. I mean, you pull a girl off the street and she's strung out on

cocaine and she doesn't want to be in anybody's custody. They don't know what to do with her either. So I think everybody is in this learning curve with this issue. DFCS is probably one of the departments we struggle with a lot. Sometimes they're not sure if they can tell us things. So they do not know what their legal grounds are for telling us things and giving us records.

Jody describes the “cracks in the system” that cause commercially sexually exploited youth from receiving DFCS' attention. In many cases, the department's slow response to address cases of exploitation came down to questions of where to house exploited youth and who were considered persons of interest to a social worker's investigations. In her response to a question concerning law enforcement, Demanding Justice's Naomi elaborated on the barriers to providing victim services to commercially exploited youth:

When I hear law officers' complaints. When I'm in these task force meetings, I can hear their voices. I know what they're saying [mimicking police officer's voice] “DFCS can do all they want to do right here, but at 2 o'clock in the morning, when I'm trying to take that girl somewhere safe and not lock her up, like you guys want me to, that intake worker doesn't know what to do.” So one of the main things that we realized, very early on, maybe 2 years ago, [was] the intake workers didn't have a box that said “CSEC.” [Instead,] they had a box that said “sexual abuse.” So when the intake worker checked that box, sexual abuse, the social worker who goes into the home, the investigator, did not look for CSEC. They looked for sexual abuse by a parent or caretaker. So that was one of the main things [that needed to be changed]. What we have to do is make sure that the officer tells DFCS to specify in their “other” box, or wherever they need to put it, that this child is a victim of CSEC or victim of child sex trafficking. That will change the entire track of how she gets cared for, because they'll be looking at her as a victim. Then that CPS [child protective services] worker will be able, when they go out, to look for exploitative activity. Not necessarily grandpa sitting there with his hands down a little girl's pants. There is regular sexual abuse versus CSEC. They go hand in hand, but they're two different things [to look for].

Naomi identified two issues creating bureaucratic constraints to providing exploited youth victim services. The first concerned the lack of a receiving/assessment center for those youth the police identify as sexually exploited. In Chapter Two, I discussed how, due to economic constraints, the anti-CSEC movement was unable to produce a 24-hour assessment center to house minors. This caused police to continue sending them to youth detention centers, until they could be placed

somewhere more permanently. A latent consequence of this practice of providing “safety” was that the youth were treated as offenders.

The second issue got to the heart of the bureaucratic dysfunction that existed within DFCS’ policies (or lack thereof) for exploited youth. Naomi highlighted the lack of a specific CSEC box to check on DFCS’ intake forms as a barrier to identifying commercially exploited youth as victims and performing a proper investigation. During my year of observing the anti-CSEC field, Naomi and other activists actively worked with DFCS to revise their intake form to add CSEC as an option for CPS workers to select. This became part of the department’s larger retooling effort prompted by the federal investigation. However, at the end of my time observing the movement, the procedure had yet to be formally changed. This was because DFCS wanted to pilot the policy in a single county, before expanding it statewide. However, identifying which county would be the best fit (i.e. have the right resources and not be overwhelmed with cases) was stalling implementation of the pilot program.

The task force brought numerous public departments/agencies and private organizations together to create an anti-CSEC field supportive of a multidisciplinary approach to victim services and therapeutic and carceral approaches to CSEC. This created multiple avenues for the anti-CSEC organizations to expand their influence, develop new partnerships, diffuse their discourse, and create institutional change. Nevertheless, this growth was contentious and led to paradoxical relationships, bureaucratic tension, and efforts to reclaim power over the movement. Saying the anti-CSEC movement was institutionalized or co-opted would be a mistake, yet there are places where the state government became an integral, if not controlling, influence on the anti-CSEC effort, such as the GOCF heading the task force. There were also areas where this influence was waning (e.g. Georgia Care Connections placement under Child Advocacy Centers



direction), restrained (e.g. Nightlight's collaboration with the Department of Education), or rejected (e.g. efforts to develop a nonprofit network).

The anti-CSEC field highlights the messiness that is produced as social movement organizations' relationship with the state walks the line between adversary and partner. While these complex relationships can be fraught with tension and power struggles, they can simultaneously be sites where institutional change can occur. Furthermore, these messy relationships create opportunities for the institutionalization of movement goals without the inevitability of cooptation. This is because bureaucratic complexity (e.g. subcontract work) and internal state politics provide social movement organizations chances to develop semi-independent relationships with state agencies, accomplish movement goals, and remain confrontational at times.

### **The Gendered Anti-CSEC Field**

Surveying the anti-CSEC field, it became quite clear women were the primary activists. I argue there are three key reasons for this gendered field. First, the types of workers exploited youth come in contact with operate within highly segregated occupations. For instance, occupations concerned with the protection and well-being of youth, like social work, are branded "women's work," assigned lower economic value, and thus dominated by women (Reskin 1988; Reskin and Roos 1990). Second, the organizational structure of the nonprofit advocacy organizations allows for "family friendly" work policies. Policies that provide flexible work hours and emotionally and socially supportive work environments created opportunities for women (especially those with families) to work and volunteer.

Third, a gender essentialist ideology asserting women's "natural" abilities to address children's issues permeated the movement, thereby reinforcing men's relative absence. Gender

essentialism is “the notion that men and women are innately and fundamentally different in interests and skills” (England 2010:150). For example, a gender essentialist ideology associates women with the “private” sphere of childcare and men with the “public” sphere of work. This ideology also labels certain social problems like rape, domestic violence, and access to childcare as “women’s issues.” While both men and women experience these problems, women are typically the ones people associate with these issues. This is due to empirical realities, but also social beliefs about who can be a victim or primary caregiver. In a similar fashion, even though both girls and boys are commercially sexually exploited, because the movement focuses on children, it has been labeled a women’s issue. Activists drew from these essentialist views to explain why women dominated the anti-CSEC field, and why they should lead the movement.

### ***The Gendered Organizational Structure of the Anti-CSEC Field***

The gender segregation of the anti-CSEC field became apparent during my first few observations of Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and the task force. The first day I visited Demanding Justice’s staff meeting I was the only man in the room. Nightlight was only slightly different with one man on their day-to-day staff (although there were several men on their board of directors). At my first task force meeting there were between 50 and 60 participants. The majority of those who showed up were women. Including me, only seven men were present in the room.

With the exception of law enforcement (which is disproportionately male), women make up a disproportionate number of the workers in occupations most likely to come in contact with exploited youth. For example, 80 percent of social workers, 91 percent of nurse practitioners, and 73.5 percent of community health workers are women (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014). As Kate, a white victim services advocate, put it “most people who work in social services are

women.” Historically, these predominantly “female” jobs have been devalued and underpaid, creating less incentive for men to enter the fields (England 2010; Reskin and Roos 1990). Furthermore, these jobs have remained gender segregated because they are stereotyped as feminized labor, dominated by women, and therefore low paying (Charles and Grusky 2004; Reskin and Roos 1990). Consequently, the anti-CSEC field consisted primarily of women in part because of gender segregation within the labor force.

Along with occupational sex segregation, the organizational structure of nonprofits was another reason for women’s preponderance in the anti-CSEC movement. Both Demanding Justice and Nightlight provided and practiced family friendly organizational policies. This was exemplified in numerous ways during my observations of the organizations. For both organizations, there was no rigid “9 to 5” workday. The organizations provided flexible work hours for their members. This was in part because some events (e.g. trainings) were held at night, but also because many of the women had children. The flextime allowed them to address issues involving school, health care, and childcare. For example, during a staff meeting discussing the development of their employee handbook, Mimi of Nightlight remarked, “we have a very liberal family leave policy.” As long as the work got done on time, there were no problems. Nightlight members relied on this flextime policy, as one member was a single mother and another had a child with chronic health problems. It was not uncommon for the women to come in to the office after 9, leave “early,” or take time off (in one case for several weeks) to address transportation issues, school functions, or health emergencies. In each of these cases, the women received support, prayers, and understanding from their colleagues. It was also not uncommon to see children at Nightlight’s office if access to childcare was unavailable for the day (especially during the summer months).

Demanding Justice also had a flexible work schedule, and similar to Nightlight, maintained a work atmosphere that was both socially and emotionally supportive of their members' public and personal lives. This was considered important to the advocates because of the emotionally charged/difficult subject matter (i.e. CSEC) their work involved. Naomi highlighted the supportive atmosphere when describing a "typical" workday at Demanding Justice:

I think we have probably the best working family relationship anybody's seen, because you can really tell working here that we care...At any given time the executive director can come and say "you're busy, let me fix you a cup of tea. Or, let me make these copies for you." She's not beneath that, because we help each other in many ways. So I think the laid back and truly loving atmosphere that we have really helps to do the work.

The supportive environment described by Naomi manifested in multiple ways. Tea was made, but also hugs, words of encouragement, and impromptu discussions about family or the emotional strain of working with at-risk youth were common gestures practiced by the members to provide encouragement. Nightlight members also engaged in these practices, offering emotional, spiritual, and social assistance to one another.

Joan Acker (1990) argues the organizational work structure is gendered, and the organizational logic and ideal worker is based on assumptions surrounding masculinity and the male body. This logic includes a rigid work schedule, clear separation between the public and private sphere, and an emotionless work environment. Acker argues this is a key cause for sex segregation within many organizations and the workforce, and the maintenance of gender inequality. The anti-CSEC organizations did not follow this organizational structure. Demanding Justice and Nightlight's work environment provided the emotional and social support (e.g. flex-time) that made working for the non-lucrative organizations enticing. This created more opportunities for women to work and volunteer for the anti-CSEC organizations. The mix of the

gender segregated labor force and organizational structure and logic of advocacy organizations created the environment for a women-led anti-CSEC field.

***“That’s Just Part of Our DNA” – Gender Essentialist Beliefs as a Strategy to Lead***

Besides the gendered structure of the labor force and nonprofits’ “family friendly” organizational settings, anti-CSEC advocates employed a series of gender essentialist beliefs for why women dominated the field and were able to and should lead the effort against CSEC. The majority of my interview respondents, including the eight men I interviewed, expressed these beliefs. While on the surface, these statements seem to reinforce the gender system; they were simultaneously a form of resistance to hegemonic views that men are “natural leaders” and the problem solvers of society’s ills. Yet, these beliefs were also a constraint to growing the movement. This was not because the beliefs reinforced gender inequality for women, but rather because they prevented gender integration and cooperation within the movement.

Research on gender and leadership, gender and authority, and gender segregation from a micro perspective can shed some light on why these activists’ gender essentialist arguments are unique. Historically, leadership and authority have stereotypically been traits attributed to men. Drawing on expectations states theory, researchers assert these stereotypes remain an entrenched part of people’s gender status beliefs, significantly impacting their views on who can be considered a legitimate leader (Berger et al. 1998; Ridgeway and Bourg 2004). Ridgeway (2011:80) asserts,

The essential hierarchical element of gender status beliefs attaches greater status worthiness to men, as well as greater general competence [and]...causes men to seem like more socially expected, appropriate, and legitimate candidates for authority and leadership.

In contrast, women are typically viewed as less competent and their ability to lead is called into question. In addition, stereotypical views associate women in authoritative positions with being

“unfeminine” and “domineering,” thus creating an additional barrier to women taking on leadership roles (Ridgeway 2011). Gender essentialist beliefs not only impact women’s ability to lead, but also the types of work they perform. Research by Kennelly (2002) found that women in gender segregated and gender integrated occupations relied on traditional gender beliefs to explain their job choices and devalue other women’s work. In the process, the women upheld the system of gender inequality.

Alternatively, several scholars have identified women in male dominated occupations emphasizing their femininity as a strategy to succeed in their work (Britton 2003; Harris and Giuffre 2010; Williams 1989). For example, in their interviews with women chefs, Harris and Giuffre (2010:66) highlight how women chefs employed “discourses of feminine strength” by emphasizing the gender differences between themselves and male chefs to explain their successful careers. Verta Taylor (2000:277) also identifies activists in the women’s postpartum self-help movement attributing their success to a “distinct set of ‘female values’ that include egalitarianism, collectivism, and ethic of care, emotional expressiveness, and respect for experiential knowledge” which they attach to their identities as mothers.

I build on these authors’ work by showing how statements of gender difference were also utilized to explain women’s leadership positions and prevalence within the anti-CSEC movement. Rather than employ gender stereotypes to argue against women leading the movement, the activists drew upon gender essentialist beliefs to argue for a women-led movement. Therefore, the activists’ statements of gender difference were used to challenge gender norms concerning leadership and explain women’s participation and leadership in the movement. However, these essentialist beliefs also may have contributed to the minimization of men’s participation in the movement. The activists’ essentialist views were expressed in three

separate but overlapping themes. First, women are biologically, or naturally, better suited to work on issues involving children because of their “motherly instincts” and ability to address complex problems. Second, women can better relate to the victims and work with them because they are more likely to sympathize with victims of sexual abuse. Finally, men are unable to relate to commercially sexually exploited youth and are more likely to empathize with those who make up the demand (i.e. the exploiters).

### *Caring for the Victim*

In their explanations of why women made up the majority of anti-CSEC advocates in the field, the advocates emphasized “natural” differences between men and women that gave women a special advantage. Mimi, of Nightlight, highlighted these differences in her answer for why women dominate the anti-CSEC field:

Well first, because women get out there and do the work...ha-ha...so we'll get that out of the way. That's not always true, but I do think women are more open, more sensitive to issues like this. I think they feel compelled to help, especially when it comes to children. *I think that's just our nature* to help those who are hurting, and I think that they will push even into uncharted territory, to where men need more so to come in and take over and fix the problem and move on. Where I think women are a little bit slower and not frustrated by the slow progress. They see progress, but they will hang in there and stick with it. They don't need to necessarily to come in, conquer and move on. I know I'm being very...well not dogmatic. I mean not all men fit into that [category], and not all women fit into that, but overall I do think that they're just more sensitive and more willing to hang out longer.

Even though Mimi recognizes her comments are generalizing statements about women and men, she asserts that women are “naturally” more sensitive to issues of child abuse and suffering in general. She argues that this allows women to address issues that tend to be ignored or seen as too complicated. She adds that women are able to address complex social problems that take time to resolve, while men are more utilitarian problem solvers who become easily frustrated and quit when their solutions do not eradicate the issue quickly. Paul, of Nightlight, also highlights

women's ability to address complex problems in contrast to men's "black and white point of view":

Working with women, it's not [just] about feelings, but it's also been about understanding the nuances. It's not just cut and dry, there's also many externalities that come into play, more environmental factors that come into play than just—"these kids are poor, they need assistance, here is the assistance, why isn't it working?" In many cases women are much more attuned to the nuances of a situation such as a single family home, what's the education level of the parents? How much time does the child spend with the parents? How involved are they in the education system? What kind of neighborhood are they living in?

Both Paul and Lisa draw on gendered views of women as better oriented to deal with issues that are complicated, involve situational and personal relationships, and include multiple forms of inequality. In comparison, they argue men tend to view and solve problems in a linear and dichotomous manner that is ill suited to address the complexities of CSEC.

Several other respondents emphasized that because women are "naturally nurturing" that they are more likely to "jump into action" (Tina, Demanding Justice) and endure the time it takes to make social change. They argued that men "lack the patience" (Carl, Nightlight) to address the problem, and tend to provide short-term solutions. The law enforcement officer, Eddie, epitomized this belief when he stated: "As a man, we identify from the standpoint of a father. You see what I'm saying? If that was my daughter, I'd go and I'd kill. But women, because of their motherly instinct, have a natural tendency to reach out and want to protect." Eddie argues that men are more likely to see the solution to CSEC through an individual and violent lens (in this case attacking the exploiters), rather than address the social inequalities at the root of the problem. Eddie, along with several of my other male respondents, asserted men were more likely to engage in violent retribution towards exploiters as a solution to CSEC. This upholds the stereotypical notion of men as protectors and the link between violence and masculinity.



Fortunately, the men recognized this was not an effective or reasonable solution, and therefore why women were more adept at addressing the issue.

Even though many respondents recognized they were making generalized statements about men and women, they consistently asserted that women's ability to bear children (a strength men are unable to access), caused them to be more passionate, concerned with, and capable of creating solutions to children's issues. In other words, they argued that women have a biological advantage to lead and dominate the anti-CSEC field. Harris and Giuffre (2010) identified a similar argument made by female chefs for why they were better able to handle the stress of working in a kitchen than men. The women chefs argued they were used to multi-tasking and seeing the "big picture" of the task, which they attributed to being mothers. Harris and Giuffre (2010:71) note this an "interesting juxtaposition to the common discourse that suggests women in physically demanding and stressful careers are ill suited for such work (Britton 2003; Yount 1991; Zimmer 1987) or that, once they have children, women's work will suffer."

### *We Can Relate*

Another way anti-CSEC activists employed essentialist language was to justify why women were more effective than men at working with exploited youth. The activists argued that women were more compassionate and could envision themselves as the victim. For example, Alex, a white Demanding Justice member said:

I think as a woman and thinking about if it were me - for me and any woman, the thought of rape is probably one of the worst things to think about. I just think, when women think about themselves in that situation, if we were like that [commercially sexually exploited], it just outrages us and makes us want to save these girls. I mean we're women. Girls should be respected and girls should respect themselves. But these at-risk girls, I don't think [they] have a whole lot of that [respect from others and for themselves]. Nobody's told them they're worth anything. And women naturally—we're supposed to have that compassion for

other females. So I think we just naturally want to hold them and help them and make sure they know that they're loved and they're worth something. I'm not saying men don't do that, but I think that's just the way we're wired.

Alex believes women are “wired” to identify with exploited youth because they are able to walk a mile in their shoes. Similarly, Nikki, of Demanding Justice remarked, “I can empathize and sympathize more because I have a lot more ability to understand what exploitation feels like as a woman.” Both activists draw on gendered beliefs that women are intrinsically empathetic to being exploited while men are not. Even though boys make up a considerable number of exploited youth, the women’s view reinforces the ideas that girls are easily objectified and victimized, while boys are tough and independent. They argue this empathy gives them greater advantage in relating to commercially exploited youth and provides them with the compassion they need to help heal the child’s psychic wounds. In some ways, these advocates’ views reflect a feminist standpoint perspective, which argues that groups have “shared histories based on their shared location in relations of power” (Hill Collins 1997:376). Therefore, women’s historical experiences of sexism (through the form of sexual violence and exploitation) would allow the women activists a greater opportunity to recognize, relate, and respond to CSEC.

The ability to emotionally relate with the victims was considered a motivating factor for becoming an activist, but also something greater, a deeper sense that bonds women around issues of sexual assault. Demanding Justice’s Jean illustrates this sensation in graphic detail:

Women get it [CSEC] on a visceral level. I mean...at some level, I think we know what it would be like to be 12 or 13 and have to lay down with some strange man and have your body invaded that way. There’s just a sense of, “oh God, no!” So I think it pulls us that way viscerally. The only way I think it pulls men viscerally is if they have a daughter and they can imagine it happening to their daughter.

Jean believes that women are able to embody the feelings of the exploited youth, causing them to take action to prevent others from experiencing the exploitation. She sees men as unable to relate

with the victim from an individual standpoint, only through the lens of a parent. Even though boys are also victims of sexual exploitation, Jean was not alone in her comment about men only being able to relate through their daughters. Several of my respondents mentioned developing discursive strategies that utilized men's relationships with their daughters/granddaughters to involve more men in the movement. For my respondents, being a woman gave them the extra benefit of connecting with commercially sexually exploited youth at a deeper level. This allowed them to passionately advocate for better treatment of the youth by the juvenile justice system and more prosecutions of their exploiters.

*We Need More Men, But...They Can't Relate*

From the activists' perspective, women had the natural ability to relate to the victims, however, the same was not true for men. Many of my respondents advocated more men joining the movement. It was common to hear "we need more men at the table" at movement events, task force meetings, and staff meetings. Strategies to draw men's participation were a key focus of the prevention work group. In fact, after expressing their gender essentialist views during our interviews, many respondents would quickly contradict their statements by saying not all men are the same and they should not be discouraged from joining the movement. Mark, of Nightlight, exemplified this double talk:

I think women have felt, for the sake of women and girls, that they must speak, they have to speak. Why in the world would men feel the same compulsion? I don't know. What I will say, it's a really good thing that more and more men are coming to the table. The more men that come to the table, the more empowering it is for women.

Even for Mark, a male advocate, it was a quandary why men would not get involved in the movement. Mark supports the idea of men becoming advocates, but also reinforces the gendered

notion that men do not have the “compulsion” or ability to relate to CSEC youth and thus be inspired to become an advocate.

Going one step further, Jody a law enforcement agent, believed men lacked the emotions required to view the youth as victims:

I think it's empathy. I think historically, men do not see a 16-year-old prostitute as a victim. Historically, men think she chose to do it and she gets what she deserves. We are with this issue where domestic violence was 40 years ago. Understanding the cycle of violence, understanding trouble-bonds, and understanding why girls are exploited is difficult for black-and-white thinkers. I think that's why women tend to be in this field more than men, and the men that are in this field burn out real quick. I think that's the empathy for the victim and the belief that they are the victims. Of course, I don't believe all men feel that way but overall, in general terms, that's one of the reasons.

For Jody, men's inability to empathize with the victim and their calculated and dichotomous, good or bad child, mentality prevents them from working on the issue. Tonya, a Nightlight volunteer, also alluded to this belief when describing her interaction with a male police officer:

I just walked up to him (police officer) and asked, “What do you think? Why is it so hard to get men to participate in this?” What he told me was that they don't see this as [their issue], because they are not naturally intuitive. Unless it's happening to them personally, they don't see it as their issue. They see it as a woman's issue or a girl's issue. And so it's hard for them to feel like this isn't something that they're responsible for getting involved in, unless it's directly affecting somebody they care about.

These ideas reinforce gender stereotypes that men cannot empathize with victims, because they cannot be victims; and that they are emotionless and individualistic persons who lack the capability to care for children. At the end of her statement, Jody recognized her essentialist statement, but concludes that, “in general terms,” men's lack of empathy made them unsuitable for the work.

Not all of my respondents attributed men's lack of empathy as the reason for their inability to relate to commercially sexually exploited minors. Others argued that men were

uncomfortable working on issues where the perpetrators were predominately men. For example, victim services advocate Ruth said, “I think since men are a lot of the perpetrators, this issue is still difficult...It’s not an easy topic for them to talk about.” Similarly, Tina of Demanding Justice reported, “I think a lot of men might feel that we will judge them, because this issue portrays men as the perpetrator. I don’t think that this is fair, because not all men are perpetrators, but in this issue men are the ones harming the victims.” Both women’s statements reveal the assumption that men are unable to discuss or advocate against CSEC because they do not want to be associated with or labeled exploiters. This supports the ideas that men cannot distinguish their behavior from other men, or be critical of other men’s sexual behavior, since “boys will be boys.” Phillip, an anti-CSEC activist, reported encountering this belief regularly during his time as an advocate:

I can’t tell you how many...[there’s not] a single meeting I’ve been to where I haven’t had to make some stupid little joke, because someone invariably says something about blaming men or makes it sound like men are evil. And then they realize there’s a guy in the room and they try to joke it off. They don’t mean anything bad by it ...and I think to myself this is fine. I personally could care less. I’ll make whatever joke I need to. I don’t care. But in the end, that makes it not a conducive space at all. [Pauses] But truthfully, ninety percent of the perpetrator population is male too, so it’s a very gendered problem. It is an inherently gendered problem. So I think it’s not a conducive space for men.

For Phillip, managing his situationally marginalized status within the field and his fellow advocate’s generalized statements that imply men are the problem made it a difficult environment for men to participate. Nevertheless, he too attributed men’s disproportionate role in the exploitation as a reason for men’s unwillingness to participate in the movement. The belief that men are unable to address social problems where they make up a majority of the perpetrators is problematic, however. This perception ignores the fact that men disproportionately perpetrate most crimes (e.g. violent crime - rape, assault, gun) and those tasked with addressing these

problems, the police, are predominantly men (Cordner and Cordner 2011; Langton 2010; Lauritsen et al. 2009). Disregarding this reality suggests that gender essentialism, and not the gendered dynamics of the crime, is an underlying reason for men's absence in the anti-CSEC field.

While gender differences in the ability to empathize with victims was used to explain why women were able to lead the effort against CSEC, one of the unintended causes of emphasizing femininity as an activist strength was the lack of participation by men. This was one reason gender segregation persisted within the movement. Because boys and men make up a significant number of those exploited and a majority of the buyers, having male allies would benefit the movement. As noted earlier, activists expressed the need for more male participants. Challenging gendered views that boys and men cannot be victimized and that violence and sexual objectification are ideal traits of masculinity are critical components to addressing commercial sexual exploitation. Men talking critically with other men and boys about the harms of exploitative sex, social inequality, and sexual objectification are necessary to cultural shifts in the relationship between masculinity, sexuality, and exploitation.

In addition, the anti-CSEC movement could be a site where rigid definitions of masculinity are challenged. This could be the case for men who find hegemonic characteristics of masculinity destructive and unrealistic and/or who find commercial sexual exploitation socially or morally repugnant. Advocating for girls and boys and challenging exploitation and inequality could counter beliefs about gender difference by highlighting how men do and can care for children as well as empathize with victims. Additionally, participation in anti-CSEC activism could develop men's relational (as father, brother, partner, friend, Etc.) interests in caring for those they love (Connell 1998). While men do not have to lead the movement, they are

an important component to its success. Andrea, a child advocate, recognized men's importance when she reflected:

I'm not sure why caring can only be something women can do. I do think that's why sometimes we get stuck in the mud, because it gets a gender label. And once you apply the gender label then the other half of the world won't participate. So I think we have a lot of work to do in opening the doors or making them [men] feel comfortable or making them feel more uncomfortable for not participating. It's [the female dominated anti-CSEC field] not a benefit. It's actually a hindrance. When you don't have everybody in the room, and you don't have everyone seeing eye to eye, it just makes it more difficult. So I wish, I really do, I wish there were more men who would be involved. It's getting better, but like yesterday's training, there were two men out of about 25 people. And that was a *good* number.

What Andrea and I are suggesting is what Connell (1998) calls "alliance politics." In her description of alliance politics, Connell (1998:232-233) writes,

The project of social justice depends on the overlapping of interests or commitments between different groups. The overlapping may be temporary, but can be long-term (a perfectly familiar situation in politics)... Given that patriarchy is a historical structure, not a timeless dichotomy of men abusing women, it will be ended by a historical process. The strategic problem is to generate pressures that will culminate in the long run a transformation of the structure; and any initiative that sets up pressure in that direction is worth having.

Gender segregated movements, like the anti-CSEC movement, have the potential to be one project that is comprised of overlapping interests and to produce pressure to change. This could begin to be accomplished by recognizing the complexity of masculinities present in society and many men's relational interests in keeping boys and girls safe from exploitation, rather than taking a gender essentialist view of participation and leadership.

The women and men I interviewed drew on gender essentialist notions to explain men's absence from the movement. Men were viewed as being unable to relate to and empathize with victims, as well as less critical of buyers since they shared the same gender. These views about men and masculinity were used in relation to explanations for women's preponderance in the movement and why they should lead the movement. They reflect Kuumba's (2001:57) assertion,

“Not only do socially embedded constructions of gender impact the justifications for protest, gender is also constructed and reconstructed in the process of movement participation.” Similar reasons have been drawn on in past moral reform movements, such as the temperance and social purity movements of the late 1800 to early 1900s, to justify women’s prevalence (Evans 1989; Limoncelli 2010). Unfortunately, these beliefs reinforced gender segregation within the movement, hindering its ability to mobilize male activists.

Identifying activist’s gendered beliefs about leadership and collective action illustrates how gender difference can be employed in unpredictable ways. Gender essentialism is typically used to uphold gender inequalities; however, it can also be used as a strategy to challenge age-old stereotypes about women and leadership and support women in positions of authority. Nevertheless, these same gender essentialist strategies can simultaneously reinforce stereotypes about men and women’s abilities and reproduce gender segregation within society. In the case of the anti-CSEC movement, gender essentialist views conflated activism with femininity, thus mobilizing women to lead the collective effort. Yet in the process, this mobilization of femininity may have deterred men’s entrance into the movement and limited the movement’s scope of influence.

## **Conclusion**

The anti-CSEC field consisted of numerous organizations, both public and private. These groups developed diverse relationships, particularly through the statewide task force, that produced opportunities and constraints to grow the movement and create social and institutional change. In this chapter, I drew on the field concept to explain the complexity that existed between anti-CSEC advocates and the state government. A more multi-faceted perspective of the state-movement relationship was gained by highlighting how the anti-CSEC field grew when the



movement intersected with the state through the task force. In particular, focusing on both the benefits and conflicts that this relationship produced exposed the blurry boundaries between the movement and state. These blurry boundaries challenge the notion that movement institutionalization and cooptation are permanent outcomes. I also discussed how gender shapes the anti-CSEC field, focusing primarily on participation. Specifically, I argued that viewing the field through a gendered lens allowed me to explain who participated in the collective action, the organizational structure behind that participation, and the advocates' motivations for participating in the movement.

The relationships developed through the task force benefited social movement organizations, like Demanding Justice and Nightlight, in several ways. Broadly, by partnering with state agencies in an "official" task force, the organizations gained significant institutional legitimization for their issue. The public/private partnership also grew the anti-CSEC field, providing the organizations, in some cases, with funding and access to the populations they were hoping to influence. Other times, the task force created an opportunity for state agencies to identify and partner with activist organizations to develop institutional policies and practices. Growth of the anti-CSEC field also created space to develop multi-disciplinary approaches to CSEC. This approach advocated a more complex understanding of CSEC and departed significantly from the state's previous methods for handling exploited youth and their exploiters. However, even with this push for a multi-disciplinary public/private approach to CSEC, there was push back from certain private nonprofits, to prevent a complete institutionalization of victim services.

The anti-CSEC field also produced its fair share of constraints on the movement. These constraints were commonly reflected in conflicts over who "owned" the movement and certain

state agencies' bureaucratic practices. In particular, disagreements took place over who had the authority to decide which movement strategies should be funded and what were the most effective ways to address CSEC. These conflicts eventually led to a brief effort by several nonprofits to develop a private consortium. The purpose of the group was to regain some control over the movement from the state. While the private network never materialized, the struggle over ownership persisted. Conflict also existed over certain state agencies' lethargic bureaucratic approval processes for task force efforts and policy changes concerning CSEC. Interagency disputes within the state government were additional problems the social movement advocates managed in their efforts to broaden the movement and spread awareness about the issue.

Focusing on the anti-CSEC field not just from a public/private standpoint, but also from a gendered lens imparts an additional dimension to our understanding of social movement's organizational processes. The anti-CSEC field was highly gender segregated. This was due to several intersecting factors. Those most likely to come in contact with CSEC already worked in highly segregated occupations. In addition, the social movement organizations' family-friendly and emotionally supportive policies created an attractive atmosphere for the women to work. In order to explain that segregation, the advocates employed gender essentialist beliefs about who were "naturally" more capable of caring for/protecting children and empathizing with commercially exploited youth. These beliefs created opportunities for women to become movement leaders, but were also barriers to men's involvement in the movement.

Analyzing the opportunities and constraints as well as gender processes that transpired within the anti-CSEC field provides for a more nuanced understanding of how social movements interact with the state and are organized. Through a field approach, this chapter highlights the complexity of state-movement relationships. Sometimes social movement organizations

benefited from their relationship with the state, and other times the state was able to use the movement to uphold social control. In some instances, the relationship was mired in disagreement. Rather than characterize a movement's relationship with the state as distinctly conflicting or completely co-opted, these outcomes paint a messier picture of what occurs when a movement interacts with the state. Adding a gendered lens to the field concept provides a deeper analysis of the system of actors, actions, and relations involved in this complex relationship. Focusing on the gender dynamics of the field extends our knowledge of who participates, interacts, and leads collective action and the motivations behind collective action.

Not only does a gendered analysis of fields expand our understanding of social movements, it also extends our knowledge of gender by exposing the processes that define, and at times redefine, gender differences in society. Social movement fields create space for multiple views of gender. Gender essentialism can be used to challenge gender inequality while simultaneously upholding notions of gender difference. Furthermore, gender difference can be used to justify participation and leadership, but can also be a deterrent to social activism. Identifying the multiple ways in which gender difference operates within social movement fields exposes the plasticity of gender and its ability to shape individual interactions as well as institutions. In the case of the anti-CSEC movement, one's gender was considered a benefit for women activists, but a barrier for men. While contention is sometimes necessary in the development, maintenance, and effectiveness of a movement, coalition-building is also a worthwhile component for movement sustainability. The possibilities (and possible roadblocks) for creating a more productive movement-state relationship and socially diverse anti-CSEC movement will be addressed in the Conclusion.

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I began this dissertation with a paradox. How could a conservative Republican state senator champion a progressive bill involving juveniles involved in prostitution, only to see it defeated by conservative Christian groups with which she is typically allied? I went on to show that this was just one of many paradoxical outcomes for the anti-CSEC movement in Georgia. In this final chapter, I argue that these paradoxes are made visible when synthesizing intersectional, cultural, and organizational approaches to social movement analysis. This synthetic approach exposes the dynamics that simultaneously enable and constrain collective action. These concurrent and conflicting phenomena may seem specific to the anti-CSEC movement but they are, in fact, the result of broader intersecting inequalities, cultural ideologies, and public/private partnerships.

Like many other movements, the anti-CSEC movement has seen its share of successes and failures. Accounting for the broader social and cultural forces as well as organizational processes shaping the movement's strategies, discourses, and alliances can help explain these mixed outcomes. Past social movement research has examined factors that *either* facilitate or constrain collective action, or recognized these influences' coexistence but treated them as separate effects. However, I contend that taking a synthetic approach highlights how these social, cultural, and organizational dynamics can be simultaneous and conflicting, causing social movements to experience progress but also the inability to reach their full potential. Using the case of the anti-CSEC movement, I identify three social movement dilemmas that arise as a result of these concurrently enabling and constraining forces. First, universal discursive

strategies can broaden movement appeal but reproduce the very inequalities they were constructed to challenge. Second, drawing upon the dominant cultural norms of a region can build political and social support, but also narrow organizational membership and strategies for change. Third, public/private alliances can expand the reach of social movements, but lead to power disputes and lopsided participation. After discussing these conclusions, I suggest how anti-CSEC organizations might move forward and navigate some of these obstacles while capitalizing on the opportunities. I provide several discursive, tactical, and policy changes that account for these paradoxes and begin to address some of the underlying factors of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Finally, I discuss the implications for other movements made up and led by those who are not directly impacted by the issue, and identify future research questions concerning CSEC and the social movement response.

### **Universal Appeals and Troubles**

In their attempts to raise awareness, build support, and promote policy change, anti-CSEC organizations developed a discursive repertoire that universalized the victims of commercial sexual exploitation and normalized their exploiters. They wanted those who heard their message to identify with the victim and not overlook those who benefit from their exploitation. However, viewing these discursive strategies from an intersectional lens reveals the hegemonic narratives and intersecting race, class, gender, and sexual assumptions shaping anti-CSEC movement claims.

The purpose of universalizing the victim was to broaden movement support by implying any child, no matter their social status, could be commercially sexually exploited. However, this overlooked the reality that low-income African American girls made up a majority of the known CSEC cases in Georgia. Therefore, universal discourses create the potential for those most likely

to be exploited to be overlooked. In addition, activists' portrayals of those who exploit youth for sex as "normal" convey notions of a moral panic, creating an unrealistic view of who and how many exploiters there are, in order to mobilize support for the cause and increase police intervention. However, the police's privileged assumptions about customers constrained the normal guy discourse. The divergent meanings of "normal" held by activists and the police allowed for customers to remain protected from prosecution and perpetuated their privilege.

Portraying problems as universal, or something that could potentially affect anyone, can cause those most affected and at risk to be overlooked. Additionally, movements that tackle issues where activists and the media maintain dominant images and narratives of the victims and perpetrators, like domestic violence, child abuse, rape, or drunk driving, must recognize that racist, classist, sexist, and heterosexist ideologies can constrain discursive strategies and undermine movement goals. This is especially the case when individuals do not fit the ideal victim or perpetrator image, such as victims of drunk drivers who are also found to be intoxicated, battered women who are undocumented immigrants or participate in the violence, sexual assault victims who are intoxicated and/or assaulted by someone they know intimately, child abuse victims who make accusations later in life or when no witnesses were present, or perpetrators who are relatives, famous, or highly regarded in the community (Berns 2004; Loseke 1992; Matthews 1994; Villalon 2010; Weed 1990; Whittier 2009). Universal strategies are likely to overlook the complexities these cases present, causing those who do not fit the ideal image to be ignored in practice and their maltreatment justified.

The dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexuality must be considered in efforts to understand the discursive strategies social movements use to effect change. Many times these forces can confound what seem to be all-inclusive forms of activism and logical solutions to

social problems. Movement claims that account for structural forces and hegemonic narratives can provide a more nuanced understanding of the problem. Such claims would also allow for more targeted prescriptions for change that are social rather than individual, and acknowledge the complexities, obstacles, and ambiguities inherent to solving a social problem at the practical and policy level. In the case of the anti-CSEC movement, only when movement claims begin to target the gender, race, class, and sexual inequalities that are at the root of both the exploitation and the criminal justice response will meaningful social change occur.

### **A Funny Thing About Culture**

As in many states in the south, Christian conservatism is a dominant cultural force, and Georgia is no exception. Both Nightlight and Demanding Justice contended with this hegemonic ideology in their efforts to raise awareness about CSEC, mobilize resources, and create social change. While Demanding Justice primarily ran into fundraising obstacles due to the cultural silence and stigmatized assumptions surrounding issues involving sex and children, it was Nightlight's experience that exemplified the way culture can simultaneously enable and constrain collective efforts. Nightlight's faith-based orientation came with a number of advantages. The organization's faith-based mission gave them an insider reputation among many religious organizations and followers, providing them access to populations and resources unavailable to other groups. The organization had connections with multiple churches throughout the state, which provided them with significant social capital. For example, many of the state legislators supportive of the anti-CSEC effort were members of Nightlight's church partners. Additionally, Nightlight's ability to claim they represented the state's faith-based (primarily Protestant) community provided the organization with significant political clout. Finally, due to

the strong presence of religion in the state, there was the potential to mobilize many of the churches and their members around the issue.

However, the same hegemonic ideology that provided Nightlight an influential role in the state's anti-CSEC movement and among the political elite, was also a source of constraint for the organization's internal politics and efforts to expand, spread awareness about CSEC, and make certain legislative changes. In particular, the rigid definitions concerning gender and sexuality, which are central tenets of conservative Christianity, became barriers to discussing commercial sexual exploitation of children with certain groups. Additionally, many of the issues that are pertinent to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, such as sexuality, age, abortion, sex education, prostitution, and immigration were seen as distractions or threats to the collective effort. As an organization, Nightlight also had to navigate pressures to incorporate ideological statements and organizational policies that would have limited who they were able to mobilize and work with. This became most evident when they lost a valuable staff member and church partnership due to the religiously conservative anti-gay views held by some within the organization's leadership.

The controversy over the minimum age bill that was discussed at the beginning of this dissertation is emblematic of the way culture simultaneously enables and constrains collective action. Nightlight was a key advocate of the bill and had used its cultural capital to garner support from legislators, many of whom were conservative Christians. However, the bill was tabled after other conservative Christian groups from inside and outside the state lobbied against it, portraying it as morally corrupt, weak on crime, and a gateway to other concerns such as homosexuality and teen pregnancy. Culture, in this case conservative Christianity, creates symbolic benefits and boundaries for social movement organizations. The ability to highlight



how these opportunities and restrictions occur concurrently can help explain why some social movement efforts gain considerable social and political influence but still come up short in the end. Ann Swindler (1986:273) argues that culture is a “tool kit of symbols, stories, rituals, and world views which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems.” The hegemonic culture of a region can be an effective mobilizing tool and political weapon for social movement organizations. However, the rigid and contentious attitudes and beliefs associated with certain cultural ideologies can simultaneously work as a deterrent resulting in more headaches than positive outcomes for social movements. This may be of particular concern for social movement organizations addressing social problems involving gender, race, class, and sexual inequality such as sexual assault, intimate partner violence, child abuse, and environmental inequality (Bell and Braun 2010; Berns 2004; Loseke 1992; Villalon 2010; Whittier 2009).

In their attempts to understand how social movements address these social problems, scholars would be remiss to ignore the strong cultural ideologies, like Christian conservatism, anti-unionism, or the “culture of silence,” present in the region in which the movements they study reside (Bell and Braun 2010; Freire 1970/2000). More importantly, examining the interplay between collective action, culture, and structures of inequality can help explain how external forces shape internal social movement processes. Accounting for these social and cultural dynamics also helps clarify why social movements can, at some times and in some locations, grow and garner significant influence, but in others come up short in their attempts to make significant social change. Culture may be a “toolkit” for social movements to utilize, but it can also be a straight jacket, especially when structural inequalities are embedded in the tools for success.

### **The Public/Private Conundrum – Who’s in Charge?**

In the process of growing the movement, anti-CSEC organizations built relationships with the state government, which eventually culminated in the statewide anti-CSEC task force. The task force brought significant public and political interest to the issue and opportunities for institutional change, but also conflict and constraints for anti-CSEC organizations. Utilizing the field concept, I mapped out the complex, or as I put it “messy,” state-movement relationships. These relationships were typified by a set of distinct and indistinct boundaries between the movement and state. At times, these boundaries became blurry, like in the case of the state subcontracting Demanding Justice to carry out law enforcement training on CSEC. Other times however, the boundaries were clear, such as when Demanding Justice, Nightlight, and several other non-profits began planning a private network in order to regain some of the power and influence they felt had been lost to the state due to the taskforce.

The blurred boundaries between the state and movement meant that relationships between anti-CSEC organizations and state agencies could be spaces for building the movement and making institutional change. The taskforce institutionally legitimized the anti-CSEC cause, brought state agencies (e.g. DFCS and Department of Education) to the table, redirected state resources to the issue, and implemented a multi-disciplinary approach to CSEC that many anti-CSEC activists had been advocating for years. At the same time, the public/private partnerships became areas of tension within the movement. Conflicts over “ownership” of the movement, what strategies should be funded, bureaucratic red tape, and inter-agency politics constrained the movement from fully realizing some of their goals. The concept of field exposes this messiness and the concomitant conditions that can come about due to state-movement relationships.

Taking a field approach to social movements not only clarifies which portions of a movement have been institutionalized or coopted by the state, but can also highlight the blurry boundaries between state and movement—boundaries that simultaneously constrain and enable movement goals. Exposing the processes through which these boundaries are blurred is critical to gaining a deeper understanding of movements, their effectiveness, and their limitations. This is particularly the case for movements advocating changes that require working with the state, like movements against child abuse, mass incarceration, and police violence.

Going one step further and applying a gender lens to the anti-CSEC field exposed the highly gender-segregated character of the anti-CSEC movement. A gendered analysis of the anti-CSEC field provided further understanding of how broader social structures shape the organization of social movements. This included the ability to identify the macro, meso, and micro level processes influencing participation in the movement. Women were the primary actors of the anti-CSEC field for several reasons. The occupations from which many of the activists originated were made up largely of women, due to gender segregation within the labor force (Charles and Grusky 2004; Reskin and Roos 1990). The workplace policies of the social movement organizations also created a supportive and accessible atmosphere that was inviting to many women activists. Finally, essentialist beliefs about who was more capable and suitable to work with and advocate for commercially exploited youth were prevalent among the activists. These gendered processes created opportunities for women to participate and lead the movement, while simultaneously constructing barriers to men's involvement. Overall, integrating organizational and gendered approaches to social movement analysis not only helps clarify how movements become organized, but also the ways in which they can concomitantly challenge and reproduce gender inequality within society.

In addition to highlighting how gender can both constrain and enable social movement processes, a gendered analysis of fields also illustrates the plasticity of gender and its ability to shape individual beliefs and actions (Kuumba 2001). Social movements can create spaces for multiple views of gender, yet they can also reinforce rigid definitions of gender difference. More specifically, gender essentialism can be used to challenge gender inequality while simultaneously upholding notions of gender difference. Gender essentialist ideology has been a significant mechanism for women's participation in movements to address social problems deemed "women's issues," like affordable childcare and sexual assault. It may also make the ability to relate to a movement possible for some individuals, even when there is no direct link, or compatibility, between the people for whom they are advocating. However, once this strategy is scrutinized, it becomes clear that essentialist solutions, which are based on notions of difference and inequality, consist of the same beliefs that are at the root of the social problem the movement is working to eliminate. As bell hooks (1998:278) argues, "Separatist ideology encourages us to believe that women alone can make feminist revolution – we cannot." Any separatist ideology, including gender essentialism, may be seen as the easy answer. Some have argued that applying essentialism strategically can benefit marginalized groups' social and political goals (Spivak 1988). However, real change occurs when notions of difference are challenged and shown to be a fundamental cause of inequality.

### **Strategy and Policy Recommendations Going Forward**

This dissertation not only examines the understudied subject of the anti-CSEC movement, but also illuminates the paradoxes that exist within social movements due to larger social inequalities, cultural norms, and public/private conflicts. Therefore, it seems fitting to begin this section with a policy paradox and how change would benefit the broader anti-CSEC

cause. One of the primary goals for both Nightlight and Demanding Justice has been to gain access to Georgia's public schools to raise awareness about CSEC among the staff and students. Nightlight recently made some headway in their partnership with the Department of Education. If all goes according to plan, school staff and local Parent Teacher Associations will be provided CSEC training, including basic knowledge and tips for identifying youth who are at risk for or currently being exploited. Yet, discussing the topic of commercial sexual exploitation with students is a whole other matter. This is primarily due to the strong cultural opposition to sex education held among many Georgians and institutionalized within the state through local school board decisions that offer minimum sex education and prioritize abstinence-only policies. The dilemma facing many anti-CSEC activists comes in the form of a question, "how can we talk about exploitative sex with students, if we are not allowed to talk comprehensively about sex in the first place?" This predicament becomes even more relevant when you consider who is in charge of implementing the sex education protocol for the state. The same state office, the Governor's Office for Children and Families, that runs the statewide taskforce and, until recently, partially funded the organization in charge of coordinating victim services for exploited youth, is also responsible for disseminating funding and abstinence programming to communities throughout the state.

This reality is just another reflection of how the anti-CSEC movement is enabled and constrained in their efforts to address the social problem. The taskforce has been critical to growing the movement and providing organizations, like Nightlife and Demanding Justice, with access to the institutions that have direct contact with the population they are trying to protect, children. However, the same office that oversees this effort to build relationships is also heading an educational effort seen by many as a barrier to preventing the commercial sexual exploitation

of future children. Many abstinence programs provide little to no information on safe sexual practices or relationship advice (particularly in terms of abuse); focusing instead on ways to remain abstinent and in some extreme cases providing false information about prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and the physical, emotional, and social outcomes of sex.

The inability to discuss with youth what are healthy sexual relationships, a core component of comprehensive sex education, can be a barrier to them recognizing whether or not they are in exploitative relationships. In addition, the inability to talk about sex, which is seen by both politicians and anti-CSEC organizations as a deterrent to making legislative changes and mobilizing supporters, can have unintended effects. These include marginalizing the issue and strengthening the cultural wall of silence surrounding the topic that the movement has worked so hard to bring down. Therefore, an important step in preventing commercial sexual exploitation from occurring in the future would be to advocate for comprehensive sex education in the classroom throughout the state. Sex education can not only be a platform for teaching what a healthy relationship looks like, but also a space for discussing gender and sexual stereotypes, double standards, and exploitation. Sex education can challenge the ideas and images of inequality that not only support commercial sexual exploitation but also justify punishing exploited youth and ignoring exploited boys.

A broader issue of concern is the race and class inequality many youth experience within the state. While the data presented in the Georgia Care Connection's first year report are by no means representative of the total CSEC population, certain similarities were present among the youth. Many of the exploited youth reported educational deficiencies, receiving Medicaid insurance or being uninsured, and living in single parent households or under the guardianship of the Department of Family and Child Services. In light of this, gaining a clear picture of who is

economically, socially, and culturally marginalized in the state and the state's response to these inequalities should be of central concern for anti-CSEC activists. From 2000 to 2014, the percentage of children under the age of 18 living in poverty has increased from 17.1 percent to 25 percent (National Center for Children in Poverty). Even as the percentage of impoverished youth has increased, it has done so unevenly, with 14 percent of white children and 15 percent of Asian children living with families who live below the poverty line compared to 37 percent of black youth and 41 percent of Latino children living in poverty. In terms of educational disparities, for the 2011-2012 school year, the high school graduation rate also varied by race and class, with 76 percent of white teens, 60 percent of black teens, 58 percent of Hispanic students, 79 percent of Asian students, and 59 percent of "economically disadvantaged" students earning their diplomas (Stetser and Stillwell 2014). Furthermore, 3.9 percent of state's high school students dropped out, which is higher than the national average of 3.3 percent. These disparities are not an aberration, since Education Week (2015), in their "Quality Counts 2015: State Report Cards," gave Georgia a C- for the quality and financing for childhood education, highlighting the lack of educational funding as a serious problem. Finally, a significant percentage of Georgia's youth lack access to adequate and consistent healthcare. The 2011/2012 National Survey of Children's Health found that 14.8 percent of youth under the age of 18 lacked consistent insurance coverage. Highlighting these measures is important because they tell us something about who is at greater risk for commercial sexual exploitation and where to direct education and resources to diminish the chances of exploitation.

With these underlying issues in mind, the policy directives under the current governor are in many ways in conflict with his strong support for ending commercial sexual exploitation of children. Although the governor has signed critical legislation to strengthen the laws concerning

CSEC and directed state resources towards victim services, he has concurrently resisted expanding Medicaid through funds from the Affordable Care Act. Additionally, while the governor has increased the education budget each year he has been in office, these increases have not offset the 8.3 million in austerity cuts to education imposed by the legislature beginning in 2003. These broader cuts in funding have led to greater class sizes, shorter school years, teacher and staff furloughs, the elimination of electives, music and art programs, and support programs for low-performing students (Suggs 2014). As for child safety, certain county DFCS offices are still under judicial supervision due to the 2005 *Kenny A.* lawsuit discussed in Chapter Two. Also, from 2009 to 2014, the state's child welfare budget has been cut by 67.7\$ million dollars, even though caseloads have been increasing, especially since 2012. These budget cuts have led to staff furloughs and the inability to hire new staff to meet the rising case load demand, which in turn can cause more exploited youth to fall through the cracks (Johnson 2013; Richie 2012). Finally, though the state has cut 6.3\$ million dollars from the state's low-income support services (i.e. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and eligibility workers who help residents access TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid) since 2009, the number of food stamps, TANF, and Medicaid cases have increased by 68 percent (Johnson 2013). The doubling of low-income support workers' caseloads from 379 cases per worker in 2004 to 793 in 2012 reflects the effects of the recession, but also the state's high unemployment rate<sup>14</sup> and stagnate wages (Johnson 2013).

All of this is to say that those who are most at risk for commercial sexual exploitation remain so, in part, due to the state government's inability to address the multiple institutional

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<sup>14</sup> While the unemployment rate in Georgia is down from its peak at 10.4 percent in 2009, in August of 2014, it had the highest state unemployment rate in the country at 8.1 percent, compared to the national average at 6.1 percent (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014).



inequalities prevalent within the state. If the state government is serious about addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children, then there is a need to move beyond legislation that only addresses those who have already been victimized or engaged in exploitation. Equal efforts need to be directed at the root causes of why certain youth find themselves in situations ripe for exploitation in the first place. This means expanding health coverage, allocating greater funds to schools both rural and urban that primarily cater to marginalized youth, and directing more resources to DFCS and low-income family support programs so they can run properly. Correspondingly, I suggest anti-CSEC activists' broaden their discursive strategy from one that focuses primarily on stopping demand to addressing the reasons for the supply.

My final two recommendations concern specific strategies that anti-CSEC activists engaged in during my observation period. The first of which is how to portray exploited youth. As I discussed above, universal portrayals of victims can have the unintended effect of ignoring those most likely to be exploited. This being the case, even though a majority of anti-CSEC activists employed a universal victim discourse, not everyone engaged in this tactic. In Chapter Three, I highlighted the strategy of one Demanding Justice volunteer, Eddie, and his unique way of portraying exploited youth when training law enforcement officers. Rather than draw on an ideal victim image, Eddie asserted that many youth would not trust nor actively seek out the help of law enforcement. He then presented a more complex understanding of the youth, highlighting the multiple inequalities and abuse they have faced over their life-course, the negative interactions they have had with law enforcement in the past, and the reasons why from their standpoint their current situation might be better than the alternative. I contend that the dominant discourse surrounding commercially sexually exploited children needs to move towards this more complete and complicated depiction of exploited youth. Through this perspective potential

movement supporters and representatives of the criminal justice system will gain a better understanding of the social contexts shaping commercially sexually exploited youth's choices and the ability to address the stereotypes, prejudices, and privileges that have led many exploited youth to be devalued, ignored, and criminalized. Additionally, this portrayal opens up the possibility for recognizing boys as victims. Because the ideal victim image is gendered, it is necessary to complicate that image in order to acknowledge that boys are also exploited. By doing so, we can begin to investigate and unmask the ways in which masculinity not only becomes a source for boys' and men's exploitative behavior but also disguises their own exploitation.

The second recommendation follows in the footsteps of previous anti-trafficking scholars who have been critical of carceral-heavy strategies (Bernstein 2007b, 2010; O'Connell Davidson 2003; Weitzer 2007, 2012). Even though HB 200 did not fully address the criminalization of exploited youth, it did significantly increase the prison sentences and fines as well as shift the burden of proof onto those who engaged in purchasing, selling, or facilitating the procurement of sex from minors. Moreover, as I was leaving the field, there was discussion among activists to advocate for even harsher penalties against buyers and sellers. However, there was little mention of re-introducing a safe harbor bill.<sup>15</sup> Directing one's attention to only one set of actors involved in the social problem is not a balanced approach. More importantly, going forward, anti-CSEC activists must understand that relying solely on the criminal justice system to "fix" or eradicate the commercial sexual exploitation of children is an inadequate solution. Not only are criminal justice efforts typically singular solutions to systemic problems, but they also have little to no ability in addressing the multiple institutional inequalities that youth experience which put them

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<sup>15</sup> This stance recently shifted, as both Demanding Justice and Nightlight are lobbying the General Assembly for the 2015 legislative session to pass a safe harbor law.

more at risk for being exploited. Criminal justice reforms cannot provide youth with quality educations, sustainable jobs for their parent(s), adequate healthcare, or comprehensive advice on what a healthy relationship looks like. Nor can they address the underlying racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism that is still prevalent within the culture and is drawn upon to silence discussion, ignore exploited youth and their privileged exploiters, and justify the commercial sexual exploitation and criminalization of children.

Moving forward, anti-CSEC activists need to challenge the strong cultural silence surrounding sexual behaviors. They need to become part of the larger conversation around redefining hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Activists should acknowledge the growing wealth and income gaps, stubbornly segregated neighborhoods and schools, and inadequate funding of state institutions and agencies that directly and indirectly create the environment for exploitation to exist. Advocates need to critically inspect the ways in which a neo-liberal free-market system actively supports the structure needed for maintaining the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Finally, activists must remain reflective in how their own participation and actions may unintentionally reproduce the inequalities at the root of CSEC.

### **Final Thoughts**

Although it is not the only one of its kind, the anti-CSEC movement is unique in that a majority of those who are advocating social change have not been directly impacted by the social problem. The globalization of politics and the ability to more easily connect people who might not have had much interaction before has led to a number of movements where many of the activists are not the direct benefactors of their collective action. Examples of these movements include the social purity movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, past and present anti-trafficking

movements, the more recent Invisible Children Movement, “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign, and the United to End Genocide effort. These types of collective action provide new opportunities for examining the ways activists’ social locations and inequality intersect with social movement processes to shape the outcomes. They also beg the question, can activists with truly different lived experiences from those they are advocating for effectively advocate on their behalf, or are they destined to reproduce the inequalities they set out to address?

I suspect the answer is the former, but there is a particular need to illuminate the barriers that scholars and activists must account for when advocating for marginalized populations. Social movement scholars must consider the subject positions of activists and those benefitting from the activism, especially when they diverge socially, economically, politically, and culturally, as this can produce problems for a social movement’s strategies and long-term goals. Scholars are already beginning to show how activists working to reduce inequalities can unintentionally reinforce them, including white anti-racists reproducing white supremacist beliefs through the collective construction of their racial identities; pro-feminist men reinforcing gender inequality through their participation in “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes” marches; and Invisible Children activists perpetuating “exotic” narratives of Africans and ignoring indigenous activism in their support for US military intervention in Africa (Bridges 2010; Finnegan 2013; Hughey 2012). Thus, it is essential to examine the unintended consequences of collective action and the social and cultural disparities that might be at the heart of these outcomes.

Finally, there are still significant questions to be answered about the anti-CSEC movement that this dissertation was unable to address. I established that men make up a small minority of the activists. How might they become more integrated into the movement and how do notions of masculinity enable and constrain their entrance into the movement? Furthermore,

what lessons can we learn from the men who do participate? How do they negotiate their gender and activist identities, and what might their experiences tell us about how men can become allies in other social movements made up primarily of women? Just as women have constituted a preponderance of the movement membership, commercially sexually exploited girls have received a majority of the attention from activists, politicians, the media, and law enforcement. However, exploited boys are beginning to be recognized as victims. What are the race, class, gender, and sexual forces, as well as political and cultural (e.g. religious) structures shaping their experiences with law enforcement and victim services? How have activists' portrayals of exploited boys, or lack thereof, challenged or contributed to their exploitation? Just as important is the need to examine LGBT youth's experiences and the social movement response to their unique problems and needs? Youth who are most at risk for exploitation have historically fallen through the cracks, thus for a social movement to be effective there is a need to recognize the multiple and intersecting barriers these youth face when navigating the world around them.

The issues of trafficking and CSEC have received considerable attention from both the government and public, providing ample opportunities and resources to build the current anti-trafficking and anti-CSEC movements. However, like all social problems, the popularity surrounding these issues will eventually fade, and other social problems will take center attention. Moving forward, it would behoove anti-CSEC activists to recognize that many of the social and cultural inequalities at the root of the problem can also be linked to a number of other societal concerns. These inequalities not only create the environment for CSEC to thrive, but are also at the heart of social problems like social inequality, mass incarceration, sexual assault, and educational disparities. Accounting for these structural inequalities in isolation or only giving them short shrift will not only prevent scholars from understanding the processes through which

collective action is simultaneously enable and constrained, but also limit activists to superficial strategies and solutions. One of the more unique aspects of the anti-CSEC (and broader anti-trafficking) movements is the broad coalition of actors and organizations who have come together to address the problem. Similar coalitions are also beginning to form around these other social problems. Scholars and activists must begin to make the theoretical and material links among these issues. Not only might this help expand mobilization efforts, but also sharpen their focus onto the systemic inequalities at the root of these social issues. Some day the anti-CSEC movement will dissolve, as similar anti-trafficking movements have in the past. If the inequalities at its core are not addressed, the movement is destined to repeat itself.

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## **APPENDIX ONE METHODOLOGY**

In this appendix, I provide detailed information about the focus of my observations and certain ethical concerns I had during the course of my fieldwork. For a majority of my observation period, both Demanding Justice and Nightlight held weekly staff meetings. These meetings provided an opportunity for rich data collection, as members provided a recap of the past week's events, discussed issues they were facing in mobilizing volunteers and accessing funding opportunities, and planned for the upcoming weeks and months. I soon came to understand that this was also a time for informal therapeutic discussions. Members of Demanding Justice would "vent" about the issues facing the girls they worked with in their prevention program for at-risk commercially sexually exploited youth, the difficulties they were having booking police trainings, or their involvement in the state-wide task force and relationship with the state government. Similarly, members of Nightlight talked about their frustration getting people to volunteer more than once, the headaches they were having transitioning their old donor list to the new website, the social politics shaping what they could and could not discuss in relation to CSEC, and other family issues that would arise from time to time (e.g. care taking responsibilities and health concerns). The staff meetings provided an abundance of knowledge about not only Demanding Justice and Nightlight's organizational dynamics, but also the political, social, and cultural forces shaping the activists' identities, discourse, relationships, and strategies.

In addition to weekly staff meetings, I also observed the organizations' awareness and training seminars. Demanding Justice hosted community awareness and training events on CSEC every couple of months around the city of Atlanta. The organization describes these events as:

A one-time 3 hour training session where you will be educated on the commercial sexual exploitation of children here in Georgia and the demand for those children, as well as learning the red flags to look for and services available for any child in need of help, or how to report this crime to law enforcement.

Nightlight hosted similar events for church members with whom they were hoping to partner. They implemented a tiered strategy where they hosted a lunch and CSEC awareness session for church representatives, or "liaisons," who were invited or expressed interest in becoming Nightlight church partners. After the initial training, and with the church's approval, Nightlight also conducted an awareness event with the entire congregation.

The beginning and end of Demanding Justice's and Nightlight's awareness presentations differed, because they used this time to explain the purpose and goals of their organizations. Additionally, the organizations employed different audience participation activities (see Chapter Three for descriptions and analysis of these events). However, the information pertaining to CSEC—the statistics, risk factors for youth, portrayal of the victims and perpetrators, who to contact if you suspect exploitation, and solutions for change—were identical. This reflected the organizations' close partnership and access to the same information. In addition to the trainings, I attended a CSEC community-training event hosted by the Governor's Office and administered by members of the anti-CSEC task force. To my surprise, while their training materials were more detailed, there was significant overlap in Demanding Justice and Nightlights' materials. I would learn later that a member of Demanding Justice was one of the original committee members who drafted the CSEC information/training for Nightlight. These observations provided me with a unique understanding of the organizations' relationship with the state

government as well. I gained insight into how their discourse and strategies differed yet overlapped, and also reflected their organizational ideologies and assumptions about race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Two other regularly scheduled events I attended were Demanding Justice's law enforcement trainings and Nightlight's monthly (and eventually quarterly) community meetings. Subsidized by the state government, Demanding Justice traveled across the state to train law enforcement and at time prosecutors on CSEC. I attended several of these trainings, which primarily consisted of patrol officers, new recruits, and special victims detectives; however, at two of the events county prosecutors and police chiefs were also in attendance. A law enforcement officer or practicing attorney who volunteered for Demanding Justice was the primary trainer at these events. They covered a variety of information, including who was most at risk for exploitation, and who were their likely exploiters, as well as the laws related to CSEC and trafficking. Examples of previous convictions were provided as successful criminal justice strategies that law enforcement could employ for CSEC cases. These strategies included police tips for how to interact with potentially exploited youth, conduct "victim-centered investigations" that focus on the best interests of the child, and forensically interview commercially exploited youth. Tips for prosecutors were also discussed, including what charges to file against exploiters, how to educate juries on the issue of CSEC, and how to treat victims as a chief witness. These observations provided me a clearer understanding of the carceral strategies supported by the organization (which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three), how they discursively framed victims and exploiters, and law enforcement's response to the information.

A central part of Nightlight's community outreach strategy involved monthly meetings. These meetings were open to anyone in the community and provided organizational updates,

including recaps of the activities they participated in over the last month, announcements of new events or trainings they were hosting, state legislation they were supporting, and the addition of any new church partners. Afterward, they spent several minutes praying for both the victims and exploiters, and then began the second part of the meeting. This was a time when one or two local community service organizations would present about who they were, the population they served, and the opportunities for volunteering they provided. This was one of Nightlight's key objectives, to bring together their church partners (and members), community partners, and frontline service providers "in order to positively impact the lives of children in their communities." Examining these meetings provided insight into who made up their network, the social and cultural strategies they believed were critical to ending CSEC, and the way religion shaped their activism.

In addition to these CSEC training seminars, I also observed members at a variety of anti-CSEC related events. This included fundraisers (e.g. Demanding Justice's charity 5K run and Nightlight's art gallery opening and sale), community "town halls" and forums on CSEC, and events co-hosted with other CSEC and trafficking organizations (e.g. a book signing with Rachel Lloyd of Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) and Shared Hope International's release of Georgia's grade reported in their annual Protected Innocence Report). I also participated in the organizations' yearly lobbying effort at the state capitol. Lobby day, is hosted by several anti-CSEC organizations and is described as an "event to join other community members, advocates, survivors, and elected officials to show our support of legislation protecting children from commercial sexual exploitation and also to thank them for their hard work." I gained helpful insights into how the organizations interacted and discussed CSEC with

individuals in the broader community not associated with the movement, other anti-CSEC activists, and state actors.

A final, but just as important, site of research was the statewide CSEC taskforce meetings. The Governor's Office for Children and Families hosted the meetings on a quarterly basis. The meetings were spaces where representatives from all of the organizations that made up Georgia's anti-CSEC movement could organize, update one another about current projects, bring in "experts" on child abuse and trafficking to provide knowledge surrounding the issue, and plan a broader statewide response to CSEC. Meeting participants included Demanding Justice and Nightlight members along with representatives from the Governor's Office, local and state law enforcement, certain district attorney's offices, the Department of Family and Child Services, Department of Education, child advocacy organizations, anti-trafficking organizations, public and private hospitals, foster care centers, and other direct service providers of at-risk youth. During my time observing, the taskforce was organized into four subcommittees—prevention, protection, prosecution, and a smaller group performance measures and evaluation. These groups met outside the main meeting and developed strategies in concert with their group names. When possible, I attended subcommittee meetings in which Demanding Justice and Nightlight members participated, in order to examine their interactions with other subcommittee members along with their input and influence on the direction of the meetings and strategies developed. Overall, the taskforce meetings gave me a greater understanding of the anti-CSEC movement's depth and complexity and how certain movement strategies and discourses became institutionalized while other issues were ignored.

### **Methodological Concerns in the Field**

One issue that provided a methodological dilemma for me as a researcher was the significant gender segregation within the movement (women made up the majority of the participants and leaders in the movement). Because of this gender dynamic, my gender might have shaped the responses and interactions I had with activists. In many cases, I was the only man in the room. My social position as a white man and the gender and racial power relationships this creates in some cases might have been a barrier to learning about certain information or getting access to participants' true feelings. Therefore, I tried to create an open and trusting space for my respondents to engage with me, but was also aware of my social location and continuously reflected on how my social position affected my perspective as a researcher and the research process. I tried, as Haraway (1988:583) advises, to "become answerable for what we learn how to see."

Finally, as a feminist, I seek to provide voice to marginalized groups who lack social, economic, and political power, while recognizing the subjectivity of my own analysis (Mauthner and Doucet 2003). I concur with Mauthner and Doucet (2003:423) who write, "We suggest that subjects are reflexively constituted between the researcher and the researched, and that while they are therefore always incompletely unknown, it is possible to grasp something of their articulated experience and subjectivity through a research encounter." Because anti-CSEC organizations play an essential role in advocating for marginalized youth, it was important to understand their involvement in providing support, safety, and opportunities to the adolescents. Understanding the groups who focus on the intersecting oppressions that these children face is an important step in addressing the larger, structural inequalities that they face in society. However, like all knowledge, this project is situated and partial (Haraway 1988). Thus, in this dissertation,

I try to let those who address the commercial sexual exploitation of children speak for themselves rather than speaking for them, all the while rigorously analyzing what they say and do. Furthermore, I am particularly troubled by the historical practices of many social scientists who collect data from their respondents and then do not share their results. As Joey Sprague (2005) points out, this has led to power inequalities between scientists and their subjects, and at times caused subjects to be exploited and marginalized. In order to address this issue and to make sure not to create problems between the organizations and their public collaborators, I plan to make portions of my dissertation available to my respondents and to discuss my findings with them.

## APPENDIX TWO

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTI-CSEC ACTIVISTS\*

	Number	Percentage
<b>Race</b>		
White	32	67%
Black	14	29%
Multi-Racial	2	4%
<b>Education</b>		
HS and below	3	6%
Some College or College Degree	16	33%
Graduate	28	58%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	18	37%
Married	28	58%
Widow	1	2%
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	36	75%
Catholic	2	4%
Jewish	2	4%
Spiritual	3	6%
Non-Religious	4	8%
<b>Household Income</b>		
0 – 20,000\$	1	2%



20,000 – 40,000\$	5	11%
40,000 – 75,000\$	13	27%
75,000 – 100,000\$	10	21%
100,000\$ and Above	15	31%

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\*Three interview participants did not fully fill out there post-interview survey; therefore, there is some missing information.