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# Behind Closed Doors

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# Behind Closed Doors

A Media Analysis of Child sex trafficking



Behind Closed Doors

by

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requirements for the degree of

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### Abstract:

Child sex trafficking is an increasing problem among Black, Indigenous, and girls of color and the media is ignoring them. Most child sex trafficking victims are girls and women of color. Minority women and children are being sold like they are property and used for sexual activities. Using content analysis, I analyzed three different forms of media, including *Willamette Weekly* article *Portland Police's "Human Trafficking" Arrests Aren't What They Seem*, the film *Cuties* (2020) and a young adult fiction book, *The Life I'm in* (2021). Through a critical race feminist lens, I analyzed the connections between race, gender, and child sex trafficking. My research reveals criminalization in the sex industry, victimization, and law enforcement. In conclusion, the media as well as the confluence of social structures are responsible for the sexualization of and conflicting expectations on young women, especially women of color.

Keywords: media, children, and youth, child sex trafficking

### Problem Statement:

As stated by Callahan (2022), "Sex trafficking is a pervasive problem in the United States and around the world. For most of its history in the United States, the issue of sex trafficking has been hidden from the public and pushed into the back of peoples' minds." Child trafficking is defined as

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (Conradi, 2013 pp. 271)

If there is more media coverage about spreading awareness for child sex trafficking, there would be a decrease of trafficked children. Based on Deshpande & Nour (2013), between 14,500 and 17,500 people are being trafficked each year globally. Deshpande & Nour (2013) also mentioned about 50 percent of those people trafficked in the United States are children. From the increasing number we see how the number of people being brought into the sex trafficking ring are rising. The media must be accountable for coverage of cases, especially the vulnerable ones.

Underage girls represent 22 percent of the population as stated by *Domestic minor sex trafficking* (2022).

People of color are being considered as a “run a way” instead of a missing person in the media, especially youth of color. A runaway is defined as someone, or someone who has escaped control or proper confinement. This means, a human who has runaway is someone who wants to escape their house. The Tribune reports Ravikumar (2022) a missing 13-year old, Milana Li was first reported as a runaway on 5/13 in Beaverton Oregon. As reported by Farlex (2003) in an interview with Milana’s mother, the mother reported that Milana was completely trustworthy, and dependable. If Milana was dependable why did the police and media mark her as a runaway instead of a missing person.

Another example where the media misrepresents victims is Gabby Petito’s case. The news exploited her tragic case as entertainment. In line with CBS Interactive 2021 A “van life” vlogger was reported missing on September 11, 2021. Just four days after the missing persons report the person of interest is Brian Laundrie. Only four days after he was mentioned as a person of interest, Gabby’s body was found. She was a young white middle-class woman who was a travel blogger. Instead of the media covering vulnerable populations, she was on the air for a few weeks. The media’s lack of exposure of people of color really needed the media's attention. Infinity Barthiel, a 16 year old African American young woman was last seen in the Portland area on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. According to *A timeline of her disappearance* (2021), around the same time as the Gabby case. Infinity was prime age and vulnerability to have become a victim of sex trafficking. If the media spread more awareness for Infinity, there would have been a better chance of her being found. Since no one was looking for her, she’s still lost.

Since child sex trafficking isn't talked about much in the media, youth between the ages of 12-18 are going missing, and media isn't doing much to find them based on *The truth about child abduction statistics* (2022). The media's responsibility is to inform the public debate so the audience can make an educated choice, mentioned Selwyn (2013). This is problematic because it doesn't allow us to recognize who is truly at risk and why.

More often than not, the media is whitewashing the cases. An example of this is: Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women MMIW. According to Carson (2022) Anna Scott was a 23-year old, Indigenous woman who lived in Reno. Anna's body was found burnt in a car fire off the side of a Nevada Highway. Her tribal background led to minor coverage of her case, and minor coverage from law enforcement to find her killer.

Media is sexualizing our children through books, movies, and magazines. Child sex trafficking is exploited and sensationalized in film and TV shows. The system relies on power structures of gender, race, and class. The film *Taken* Besson (2008) is problematic because it makes us think it happens outside of the U.S. Children are being stripped of their humanity and being forced to endure sexual activities. The media is sexualizing our children by putting them into two-piece bathing suits at 2-years old (*Toddlers in Tiaras*), having a poster of 11-year old's in noticeably short shorts Doucouré (2020), movie poster), explicit music with degrading sexualized lyrics (*Dirty Little Secret*, this song talks about how a male wants to keep a girl his secret), and movies that portray women as sexual objects Klaassen & Peter (2015)

“Yes, our society- our media, our advertising, our television, our movies, our reality shows- influence the industry and the public's perception of it, with our sexually-oriented

culture.” Smith & Coloma, (2013). Our sexually-oriented culture goes beyond those listed above, it also includes video games. <sup>1</sup>

In my study, I analyzed the media's role in sexualizing youth, the mental health effect of being a victim and the impacts trafficking has on our community. I am interested in researching three questions. Those include:

- 1: What are the common themes around child sex trafficking within the literary texts?
2. What are the lived experiences and forms of resistance for youth sex traffickers?
3. What lessons and knowledge can service providers or victim advocates use to empower individuals?

## Literature review

### Historical background

What is human trafficking? According to Ross (2015) human trafficking is “the recruitment and movement—most often by means of coercion, deception or abuse of vulnerability—for the purposes of exploitation” This means taking a child or guiding them away from their family. Human trafficking started back in 1807 with the African slave trade. This led to white slavery, where a white woman, or girl would be sent to do prostitution in 1904. After white slavery, we went into World War One, this is the start of trafficking in women and children. After World War Two the United Nations adopted the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution of 1949. This was an Act to help with the White Slave trafficking of women and children. This brings us to early 2000's, modern human trafficking. Human trafficking is called a few different things

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the top hypersexualized women include Daphne, from Dragon's, Released in 1983 a slim, white, big bootied, busty lady in a one piece swimming suit. Another hypersexualized is Sally Mae from Leisure Suit Larry. Released in 2004 is a slim, white, big bootied, busty lady in short shorts and a low cut shirt. The last hypersexualized gaming character is Lara Croft, from Tomb Raider. Released in 1996 a slim, white, big bootied, busty lady in short shorts. (2017 Since there is a hyper sexualization of women in these video games.



including Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST). According to O'Brien, White, K., & Rizo (2017) DMST is "all U.S. minors engaged in commercial sex acts are legally considered to be victims of DMST", CST child sex trafficking According to Peterson (2022) CST is "Child trafficking occurs when a person engages a minor <18 years in a sex act involving an exchange for something of perceived value sex trafficking", and CSE commercial sexual exploitation According to Reid, 2011 CSE is "any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person". All three DMST, CST and CSE are all about sexual acts with a minor. During this literature review I talked about child vulnerability when it comes to sex trafficking, news, and law enforcement/legal protections/interventions.

### Child Vulnerability to Sex Trafficking

Who are the vulnerable population? According to *The problem* (2016) the vulnerable population is "Vulnerability factors that make individuals more susceptible to trafficking include low self-esteem, being abused, or neglected, poverty, homelessness, being in the foster care system and identifying as LGBT. Children's emotional and economic dependence on others and undeveloped ability to analyze decisions and understand consequences combined with their high 'market value' among buyers make them especially vulnerable to traffickers." This means, the people who were listed above have a higher chance of being forced into trafficking against their will. A common theme a crossed child vulnerability is that youth of color are one of the biggest groups impacted by child sex trafficking. As determined by *The role of the internet in the grooming* (2018) "In the United States, Black, Native American, Asian American and Pacific Islander youth are especially vulnerable to trafficking due to the particular histories of oppression and exploitation, including the sexualization, objectification, and fetishization of these girls." Since children are being objectified and sexualized and the media isn't speaking

against it, people think its okay to do this. According to O'Brien, & Li (2020) Youth of color, sexual minority youth, homeless youth, and transsexual youth are at risk for DMST. Leary (2014) mentions that traffickers often target particularly vulnerable youth as protentional victims. The population at risk to this source includes disenfranchised, economically vulnerable, runaway or thrown away children as well as children who are living in an unsafe environment. O'Brien, White, & Rizo (2017) Agrees, this source mentions that the people who are vulnerable include: racial and ethnic minorities, children who have past trauma or abuse, economics, homeless, and minors. It was also mentioned that abusers/pimps/johns will teach their victims that law enforcement is only there to hurt them. This ensures the victim doesn't speak with law enforcement about their situation. If the children are too scared to speak out against their abuser, they will forever be trapped in a circle trafficking.

There is also an issue when it comes to girls of color not being protected. The victim framing does not engage with racialized vulnerabilities. Since our society is more focused on white people, instead of people of color, many minorities are slipping through the cracks and not getting any media coverage.

### Media Representation

As claimed by Sobel (2011) "sex trafficking coverage in major U.S. newspapers and determined that stories were primarily framed as a crime issue" The media often criminalizes sex workers instead of protecting them. We blame the exploiter and end up blaming and punishing the victim, especially if they are a girl or woman of color. The systems accounts for why there are people of color in sex work and why we do not see them as victims.

### Law Enforcement/Legal Protections/Interventions

The William Wilberforce act was passed in 2008 to help protect sex workers. According to *Domestic minor sex trafficking* (2013) this act “stipulates that law enforcement should be aware of the victim's mental status and they may not be able to follow through with prosecution or other forms of questioning and interrogation regarding the subject” This is important so the person who had been trafficked doesn’t get scared and go back to their abuser. As mentioned by *Domestic minor sex trafficking* (2013) arresting youth in order to "help them" or becoming "the best friends they have" by putting them in jail, both aforementioned narratives deploy an arc of inevitability. Either way, the girl ends up behind bars while her abuser /pimp /john gets to walk away free. Rook (2014) said “There is a role for the law enforcement in addressing abuse and exploitation of the vulnerable. The reality however is that the law enforcement is often the source of violence and abuse, not only for the youth who are in the sex trade, but also for people who are profiled as suspected pimps.” To me this means, law enforcement are taking a toll on trafficking victims physically.

## Conclusion

Common characteristics of vulnerable people are children who are low income, minority, homeless, and have existing trauma or abuse. The police and or media would rather frame a sex trafficking case as a criminal case. As determined by *IAC Publishing* (2020) the role of the media is to “spread information from various news sources. This information comes from a variety of sources, including local, regional, national, and global news networks. In addition to politics, the news covers subjects like current affairs, sports, and a wide variety of subjects dependent on the interests of the individual viewers, listener, or reader. This means media’s role is to report current affairs which would include missing people. Instead of the media reporting

missing people they report people as runaways. The term runaway assumes the victim is choosing to leave, not being forced to leave. There is a lack of reports on child sex trafficking victims and a lack of awareness because the media is portraying these children as willing participants instead of victims.

### Methodology

I conducted a content analysis of three literary texts; those include a book *The Life I'm In* by Sharron G. Flake 2021, a newspaper article *Portland Police's "Human Trafficking" Arrests Aren't What They Seem* by Karina Brown published October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and a French film, *Cuties* by Maimouna Doucouré (2020). The selection criteria for the literary texts were: one. theme focuses on sexualization and objection 2. cross-representation immigration enclave in France, U.S. South, and Portland, OR a hub for sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, also known as "Pornland." Explained by Jones (2018) Willamette Week, in 2015, the state of Oregon had the highest number of strip clubs per capita. With fifty-four establishments, the Portland metro area also has the second highest number per capita among US cities. In recent publications within the last two years, and three. features female representation and intersectionality; and 4 uses counter-storytelling to express female agency.

For the content analysis of literary texts, I read all three of these sources and coded each source. and identified themes across sources. According to Bhasin (2020) content analysis is useful when using literary text because it helps identify the purpose and effect of communication. Iterative process of coding to identify three main themes. This means I analyzed my three forms of media in order to gain a collective understanding of child sex trafficking.

### Theoretical Framework

According to Butler (2015) critical race feminism is “a particularly useful legal framework for exploring how various types of sexual stereotyping, exploitation, and violence, including sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape, impact people of color” Critical race feminism (CRF) considers how race and gender intersect with other systems of oppression to marginalize people of color. As specified by Verjee (2012) “Critical race feminism seeks to understand how society organizes itself along intersections of race, gender, class, and other forms of social hierarchies” When looking through a CRF theory lens we can see that children of minorities are more likely to be trafficked. CRF is about how counter-storytelling legitimizes the voices of women of color speaking about social oppression.

Butler (2015) claims that CRF is used to combat sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape. The Critical Race Feminist perspective was the one widely used by scholars to investigate human trafficking while centering the voices and agency of women of color, examining racism and sexism, and illuminating the agency in the context of oppression. There are a few different tenets for the CRF, According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2017) the first one being not biologically natural. The second is racism in the US is normal, not aberrational. The third tenet is material determinism or legal advances. The fourth is differential racialization. The fifth is intersectionality. The last one, the sixth is voice of color.

The CRF framework provides a lens to answer the research questions. 1: How does the media represent child sex trafficking individuals? 2. What are the lived experiences and forms of resistance of child sex trafficked youth? 3. What lessons and knowledge can service providers or victim advocates use to empower youth?

## Data Analysis

For my data analysis, I analyzed three different pieces of mixed media. One news article titled *Portland Police's "Human Trafficking" Arrests Aren't What They Seem* By Karina Brown, the next mixed media is *Cuties* (2020) by Maimouna Doucouré, and the last mixed media I will be analyzing is *The Life I'm In* by Sharon G. Flake. All three of these media pieces are found by using the same scope as the literary analysis: this includes four 1 theme focuses on sexualization and objection; 2 cross-representation immigration enclave in France, U.S. South, and Portland, OR a hub for **sex** trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, also known as "Pornland" in recent publications within the last two years, and 3 features female representation and intersectionality; and 4 uses counter-storytelling to express female agency.

#### Portland Police's "Human Trafficking" Arrests Aren't What They Seem

By Karina Brown

Karina Brown is a news reporter for Willamette Week. She specializes in courthouse news and covering legal issues throughout Oregon. She has about forty-five articles starting in 2016. In 2016 is when Karina started reporting for Willamette Week. The *Willamette Week* is a local independent weekly newspaper published in Portland since 1974. Willamette Week is an alternative weekly newspaper with an online website that reports local news, politics, sports, business, and culture. According to Mary (1999).

The *Portland Police's "Human Trafficking" Arrests Aren't What They Seem* is about a 53- year old man named Dave Hunt (who was once one of the Democratic political speakers, and a former speaker on the Oregon House of Representatives) On April 28, 2021, at the Ramada Inn hotel near Mall 205 Dave was caught trying to respond to an online sex worker add. Dave thought he was meeting a women named Mandi who said she was nineteen, this was actually the Portland Police Bureau's Human Trafficking unit. Dave and "Mandi" agreed to meet for \$80.

While Dave entered the Ramada Inn five police met him and cuffed him. This was one of 102 arrests this unit made in the past 22 months. no other arrests were publicized like David's case. This is because the media knows smearing David's name will get people's attention. If the media spoke about someone who doesn't have any recognition, there wouldn't be as many views.

Dave pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor in court of commercial sexual solicitation. Jesse Sutton, a friend of Dave Hunt, and sex worker expressed that Portland police lack the resources to deal with an epidemic of shootings or even an investigation most property crimes. The story of Hunts arrest raises significant issues about city leadership. There is an issue not only with city leadership but what the law enforcement feels is "important" to share.

State representative Dacia Grayber says she's "bothered by police priorities." She continued by saying "When we have unmitigated gun violence and murder epidemic, I am disturbed to hear that's where the resources are being focused- **when it's a consensual act**" *Portland Police's "Human Trafficking" Arrests Aren't What They Seem* mentioned PPB Portland police bureau. This quote means why are we wasting the police time on an activity that two adults' consent to. In Mr. Hunt's cause he thought he was meeting a 19 year old. The age of consent in Oregon is eighteen. This brings us to question why Mr. Hunt got a misdemeanor, when he didn't do anything wrong. There are no laws that state you have to keep sexual relations in a certain age range.

Stings don't help- they scare off safe clients, which necessitates the risky task of taking in new customers. The PPB went to a new method called the Nordic Model. This model talks about how police and prosecutors seek to help sex workers leave the profession while arresting their clients. Emi Koyama (a sex worker and activist) says "sex work is often a way that people escape and survive something else. If you take away sex work, chances are they will be doing

something else that is also criminalized, like drugs or shoplifting, in order to survive. So, it's not going to be a solution to just get rid of the sex trade." This is saying that when we take away their safe clients, we are handing them over to a riskier client. When we take away the clients that are gentle, they are being forced to go to clients who are rougher thus being dragged down even farther in the sex industry hole.

"Dave Hunts arrest was unusual in one respect: He was white" This is strange for Portland because only 45 percent of the people arrested were white. In a city where over 77 percent of the population is white. Professor Mark Leymon from Portland State University says, "Research has shown that those who are [arrested for] buying sex in other places roughly mirror the racial composition of the population." This means, the Data arrests for solicitation in Portland do not match the pattern of the population. Leymon adds "They're skewed to nonwhite, particularly for Black individuals. It definitely raises a lot of red flags" Since the numbers say we are arresting more black individuals than white, why is that? Does our police favor people that are white?

In 2018 ,Congress passed the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking or SESTA/FOSTA. SESTA is an act to help combat online sex trafficking according to *Human Trafficking Search 2021* This bill attempts to remove protections for internet platforms that knowingly facilitate child sex trafficking. According to Sodeman (2018) FOSTA "clarifies that the law was never intended to give legal protections to sites that facilitate and promote prostitution and traffickers that advertise the sale of sex acts with sex trafficking victims" This means, before the SESTA/ FOSTA act, there was no one tracking/ monitoring online sites that are known to be used for trafficking. Since this law passed Natalie Weaver said, "We've had many accounts of sex workers being targeted by traffickers after that



law was passed because the traffickers knew the sex workers were in a more vulnerable position with the law change.” This means that not only are the traffickers being monitored, so are sex workers. This has led to less safe business.

Portland has a huge human trafficking problem. This article is evidence that Portland media isn't focusing the right resources. The article mentioned there was 102 other cases in the last year, but no other case was covered by the media. This is media bias, it distracts, and takes away attention to our vulnerable population. This article is all about slandering a political candidate in order to have more airtime on the media. It's strange that we are spending so many resources trying to hunt down people that are engaging in a consensual act, but we are missing what's happening to minorities.

*Cuties* Film (2021), Directed by Maimouna Doucoure

Maimouna Doucouré is the director and screen writer for *Cuties*. According to IMDB (2022), Doucouré is a French film maker who was born in 1985. She grew up in a polygamous household with two mothers. Her first self-made short film was *Hide-and Seek* released in 2013. Maimouna Doucouré has directed two other movies. *Mamans* in 2015 and *Hawa* in 2022. *Mamans* is a short film written for the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival and used again for the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. She also used it for the 2017 Caesar Award for Best Short Film. According to Haynes (2020) during this award ceremony, she mentioned how painful her experience was being a black, Muslim female director while working in a male dominated film industry.

An award-winning 2020 French film Maimouna Doucouré, director about an 11-year old girl named “Amy”, a Senegalese-French immigrant girl, who lives in Paris with her mother and two brothers in an extremely poor diverse neighborhood. Amy's mother prepares for the arrival

of her husband's new wife while she's at home tending to his children. This is accepted in their customs. She had to do this without any questions or arguments. Amy is fighting with her aunt who wants to press her strict faith into Amy. She also humiliates Amy's mom because her husband found a new wife.

This led Amy further from her Muslim faith after watching her mother cry. All Amy wants to do is become friends with her disobedient neighbor Angie. She watches how Angie acts and dresses, and Amy wants to be her. While trying to copy their every move (ex stealing, outfits) There dance squad's name is Cuties. They watch older girl's online dance; the Cuties strive to be like them, their name is the Sweet Swags. This means they adopt the Sweet Swags dance moves and their clothing choice. Since Amy notices the Sweet Swags get a lot of social media attention (See Appendix A), she tries to start posting things online as well. She wants other people to see how mature she is. After her selfie, she started posting other stuff including a picture of her vulva. All Amy wanted to do, is be taken seriously after the video of shows her wearing "baby" underwear. This did backfire on Amy, not only did she get a lot of hate from school and her group *Cuties*, but she got banned from performing with them. Amy was replaced with the former member Yasmine the girl who Amy replaced first Amy's mother also wasn't pleased with her actions. Amy also got back at a classmate by stabbing him with a pen, this lead to him making a rude gesture and calling her a derogatory term. Since Amy got in a lot of trouble, she wasn't able to dance in the competition. This filled Amy with anger.

The dance competition is on the same day as her father's wedding. Amy sneaks out of the house because she would rather go dance then be at the wedding. After Yasmine and Amy had a falling out, Amy is determined to dance in this competition. Amy watches and waits for Yasmine to walk to the competition. Amy pushes Yasmine into a nearby lake. After she pushes her in, she

realizes that Yasmine can't swim. She looks at Yasmine in horror, but she still contemplates whether or not to help. Is her popularity worth Yasmine's life? After thinking about if it was worth it or not Yasmine managed to grab onto a lifebuoy. Amy is now convinced Yasmine will survive, but Amy leaves to go to the dance competition. After the group realizes Yasmine is unable to make it on time, they had no other choice then to let Amy perform with them. While they were in the performance Amy freezes. She thinks her mother is singing to her in their native tongue. This causes her to run off of the stage and go home. She gets home right as her mother was going to her father's wedding.

Amy wanted her mother to show publicly her disapproval and not go to the wedding. Her mother advised Amy not to feel compelled to attend the wedding. She also mentioned that it was her duty as the first wife to attend her husband's wedding. After she sees her mother do the right thing she changes into her normal age-appropriate clothes and started skipping down the street with some other children.

This is a controversial film because of the sexualization of girls, especially girls of color, and the influence of social media on children. There is controversy with the trailer and accusations of child pornography. The critics being our society. The trailer shows the youth dancing and shaking their bodies provocatively. Parents try their best to protect their children from the horrors social media can bring from sexualizing children. *Cuties* seems to be a commentary on how hard it can be for children to navigate growing up in the landscape of social media, particularly since apps like Instagram and TikTok can feel hyper-sexualized and can sometimes communicate unhealthy and confusing messages. This coming-of-age story of a young girls are not told. The director is Senegalese immigrant herself, interviewed over one hundred Parisian girls about social media experiences.

*The Life I'm In* (2021) By Sharon G. Flake

The author of *The Life I'm In* Sharon G. Flake started her scholastic journey by going to school to become a pediatrician but ended up majoring in writing instead. Sharon writes children and young adult books. As mentioned by Flake (2020), Sharon takes hard topics about African-American youth and turns them into something light to help spread awareness. Sharon spent eight plus years as a counselor for teenagers at a foster placement agency. In her spare time, she wrote local publications and then published her first book, *The Skin I'm In*. The sister book to *The Life I'm In*. Now, Sharon has twelve books published. Some of which being, *Begging For Change*, *Who Am I Without Him*, *You Don't Even Know Me*, and *Money Hungry*.

*The Life I'm In* is about a 16-year old African American girl, Charlese Jones, or Char who encounters the world of sex trafficking. Char speaks the raw truth whether people want to hear it, or not. We follow Char on a train ride to get away from her aunt Juju. Juju sent her away for misbehaving. Char was misbehaving because she was upset about her parents' death. Before they died Char was the perfect little girl that everyone wanted. She never got in trouble, was polite to everyone and did everything that was asked of her. While Juju was raising Char, she pointed out how to spot someone who looks like they had money vs someone who didn't. This comes in handy on Chars bus ride. After her parents died, she started sneaking away, failing school, and even started to steal alcohol. On Char's bus ride to no where she sits next to a new mother named April. April has a daughter named Cricket who is three month old. Char cared for that little girl like it was her own baby. While on the bus she spots a man in \$400 jeans and nice shoes, she asks what he does for a living, and he says he's a college student. She knew he was lying but didn't ask any questions.

Char's first encounter with prostitution came from an old man on the bus. He told her to meet him in the rest stop bathroom and he would give her \$20. Since Char was on her own, she assumed that was a promising idea, but she didn't know what he wanted in the bathroom. Before the bus stopped, she changed her mind. She didn't want to meet anyone because she understood what he wanted. When Char went to the bathroom a random stranger offered her a bar of soap. On the back of this bar of soap was a trafficking hotline number. Char was upset by the lady assuming she would stoop to that level. Cricket's mother left Cricket on the bus and went to visit a trucker on the stop. This is Char's second experience with sexual acts for money. When Char gets to the end of her trip April decides Char would be a better mother and gives Cricket to Char. Char was excited because she knew she could be a better mother than April... Until she found out how much things cost.

Char found a place to stay for two weeks. After she settled into her new adult life at her own place, she started making lists about all the things her and the baby are going to need. After rent she had \$211 to spend on the things she needs. Her first stop was at the dollar store, there she bought snacks, books for the baby and a few essentials. The cashier told her it would be \$60, and Char was dumbfounded. Char put back a few things that she wanted but didn't need like chips, the book, and a mountain dew because she knew she couldn't find formula at the dollar store. During the time she was there she searched for jobs, since she had a baby, no one wanted to hire her.

After a while she started leaving the baby home alone. She justified this with wanting Cricket to sleep, and not wanting to wake her up. While searching for a job she found a remarkably high end hotel with the intention to get hired. She went in and asked if they were hiring, they said no because Char wasn't old enough. She waited outside the hotel to see what

kind of people came in, to see if one of those people could help her get a job. She saw a group of girls in tall red heels walk into the hair salon, she was jealous because the braids she had were old. On her search for a job, she ran into a good looking man who appeared to have money. He sweet talked her and made her feel like she was the only girl in the world.

While on her journey to find money, she runs into a pimp, but at the time he was just a nice guy. Anthony was a smooth talker, she liked that he would take her to dinner and spoil her. After not having much money it was nice to eat good. During dinner Anthony asks Char what her daddy used to call her “Charlie. He was the only one who could call me that.” Char said “Charlie. Maybe I could call you that.” Antony replied “if you call me that I’ll think about my dad. I used to think about him all of the time. Till it got too hard.” Char answered “Okay then I will not call you Charlie. Not unless you want me to.” Anthony said “thanks” Char replied, “You could call me Daddy, if you wanted” Anthony mentioned “no, I only got one daddy.” Char answered.

After Char rejected his offer, he called the server over to get the check. They left, and he didn’t talk to her till she reached out. Char called the next day because she felt bad, he didn’t answer his phone till he got a call saying “Daddy, I promise never to do nothing to make you mad at me again.” At this point Anthony knew, she was hooked. After Anthony tells Char that he got her a job. She thought it was cleaning up a hotel after guess leave, but it was actually a job to service the guests... This was the first time Char had sexual relations with someone. Anthony’s clients contact him online, via phone, text, or social media platforms to place orders for what kind of girls they want- like they are order food (See Appendix A).

After a bad beating from ‘daddy’ Char ran away. She missed her family and friends. She took refuge 11 blocks away from where she was staying and asked the lady to call the police. After this, Char finally made it back home to her family, and most importantly Cricket.

It took Char a long time before she could do simple things again like getting a hug, sharing her feelings, or not running from her fears any chance she got. After she was able to calm down, she mentioned going back to school and getting her GED with children her own age, trying to become a kid again. By the end of this book Char found her voice. She contacted the FBI and set a meeting place for them and Anthony. She also decided to speak against him in court to help all of the other girls who was stuck with him. She also got counseling to help retrain her brain, she now knows, nothing was her fault. He took an innocent girl and turned her into profit for him. Not caring about her feeling, fears, or thoughts. All he cared about was the money. The book ended with “never give up” Char writes that in all of her journals, and textbooks to remind herself of her worth. Char is a survivor of child sex trafficking and was strong enough to not only break free but take a stance. Since she was able to contact the police and FBI, she was able to set the other girls under his control free as well. One of those girls he controlled was nine years old.

Antony found Char when she was at her most vulnerable, when she needed to feed her child. He took that and used that to his advantage. After he took her most important memories with her father and made them his own. Because Char was able to stand up to her abuser, she was able to live a life outside of the sex trafficking ring, most aren’t that lucky.

## Findings

There were three main themes through my research. The first theme is vulnerable children, the next has been prevention and interventions and the last has been the lack of representation that vulnerable children are getting.

#### Survivors' vulnerability

There is a gap between protecting our vulnerable children and the media wanting to run stories they think people want to hear. We can see the lack of representation when it came to the Willamette Week article. Instead of the media spreading awareness about this issue, they choose to ruin someone's life instead. If our society put in as much effort in spreading awareness as they do smearing people, we would have fewer trafficking victims. Instead of spreading awareness our government tried to add new laws in order to "help" protect sex workers. Instead of helping sex workers they are hurting them. The government is taking away their safe clients, which only leaves them with the dangerous ones. This not only puts their life in more danger, but it also risks them becoming a victim to something worse than sex work.

#### Interventions/ preventions

There is a lot of numbers to call to get help, as seen in (Appendix E) but not a lot of places who spread awareness. An advocate for child sex trafficking we saw in the article of Willamette Week named Emi Koyama. She wanted people to know about the dangers of taking away sex work with the new laws. According to Rook (2014) Emi, once a runaway teen and sex worker is now an advocate against sexual violence, sex trade, and sex trafficking. Emi started a project called 'Rescue.' This project presumes that young people have a safe home to go back to. I have found service providers and advocates to help empower youth. There are a lot of things service providers can do, if people are in and out of the hospital do solo checkups, mental health



check ins and physical check ins. If they had a pamphlet to spread awareness on what survivors and victims can do, that would help as well.

### Representation

There is a lack of representation when it comes to the media spreading awareness about sex trafficking. There are people like Emi who are doing their best to spread awareness, but the media isn't doing their job to help spread awareness. I have identified the common themes surrounding child sex trafficking within the media. One of the biggest themes around child sex trafficking and the media is how vulnerable our children are. Another common theme is the lack of help media gives, one example is the Portland police article, instead of helping people that are trafficked they choose smear well known people instead to get a better audience *Cuties* was released at the Sundance festival in 2020. It won awards for the coming of age message. France thought the message was especially important. When it was released in America via Netflix, we thought it was inappropriate. Instead of America seeing this coming of age story we hyper focused the sexualization of children. According to DeLeo (2021) the biggest reason for this controversy is the dissonance between the trailer, which does have a big focus on the part of the film where the girls dance provocatively.

I have examined the lived experience and forms of resistance for youth. There isn't much when it comes to forms of resistance, which is why I did this thesis paper on child sex trafficking to help spread awareness. Emi K, an advocate for sex trafficking tries to spread awareness, but if you aren't looking for it, it's hard to find.

### Conclusion

Throughout my research I have shown many ways on how children are vulnerable and how the media isn't helping with there vulnerability. We can see there is a gap in the research

with the lack of support and the lack of assistance survivors get. Through my research I am spreading awareness about child sex trafficking victims (See Appendix B).

There is a lack of representation on the vulnerable youth. The only place in my area Portland, Oregon that had information on how to help victims on paper was a local women's shelter. That information wasn't ideal because all it had was a number to call if you need help, but when you call you are brought to an answering service. If a victim doesn't have much time to make a call, they are out of luck. As a hub for human trafficking the city of Portland needs to do better.

In my research I found that minorities get less attention than I once thought. Since people of color are the minorities, they don't get the media coverage they need. When looking through a few different news sources, there was only two news articles that were about someone of color. It says a lot about our society. We need to do better when it comes to what the media is talking about. The media needs to spread more awareness on the tough topics. Even if that includes someone who is a minority. When looking through a CRF lens we can see that female children of color are more likely to become trafficked. From the survivor's vulnerability section of the findings we can see, aligning with CRF theory who are the most vulnerable. From intervention/preventions section we can see there is a gap in the research. There are a few resources for victims but almost nothing when it comes to preventing child sex trafficking. Lastly, from the representation section we can see where the real disconnect is. Since the media isn't covering cases about children who have become missing, our society doesn't know child sex trafficking is a problem. When the media does mention a missing child they are usually marked as "a runaway" and in most cases, the child is white. The lack of representation has made it easier for children of color to become victims of the sex trafficking trade.

As part of my thesis, I wrote a lesson plan on how to better spread awareness within the human trafficking field. My lesson plan includes a book *Renting Lacy* by Linda Smith. This lesson plan includes weekly readings in class in order to talk about what's happening in the book and any questions that occur during the reading. It also includes a reading test to make sure the students are comprehending what they have read. The objective of my lesson plan is to for the students to be able to positivity identify a potentially dangerous situation and know what to do if a situation occurs. This happens while spreading awareness of the dangers of human trafficking. This lesson plan is designed to assist children with their rights as victims, culturally responsive, while developing appropriate services.

In the future I want to do more research on the mental health effects that child sex trafficking has. To do this I will analyze research from a more medical stance. Some questions I would like answers to would be: are child sex trafficking victims more perceptible to depression, anxiety, or PTSD? Does being a victim of child sex trafficking give you a better/ worse chance of being able to survive on their own. Can the mental health effects of a child who was trafficked be passed on to their children? Lastly are the victims more scared of leaving their abuser because of the death threats, or are they more scared of leaving because of what their family will think about them. Some affects of child sex trafficking victims are laid out in ( See Appendix D).

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## Appendix A

### Social media

“Specifically, internet provides traffickers an effective channel to identify and groom protentional DMST victims via social media applications.” O’Brien, 2020 Because of the increasing social media presence there has been an increasing amount of trafficking.

There are seven main social media apps that attract these people. The first app is snapchat, this can be used for innocent photos or for “sexting.” The next app that is commonly used is Facebook. This app can be used to send messages back and forth or creating a group chat. The next commonly used app is whisper. I haven’t personally heard of or used this app. Whisper is used for anonymous confessions. The confessions could be fears or vulnerabilities. The next app is What’s app. This app can be used to make local or international calls. Another messenger app is Kik. Kik can also send messages and photos. Kik can’t be traced through a phone company. The next application that is commonly used is TikTok. TikTok can be used to create and watch videos with music that either stays local or can go viral, viral means the video can be shared to anyone around the world. The last commonly used application is Roblox. Roblox is a game where you roleplay. This can be used to target children and experiment with virtual sex by avatars. Information found from Metzker, 2019 The best way to keep your child safe is to monitor their social media activity.

## Appendix B

### The cases of child sex trafficking:

**India:** 7 year old Sachi and her mother lived in a small room together. She was forced to stay under the bed while her mother serviced her clients. When she is slightly older, she wont be able to live in the small room rent free.

**Africa:** 10 year old Asabi walks into a brother alone. In her culture, this isn't stage. Everyone in her family do what they can to support their family.

**Ukraine:** 16 year old Karina just aged out of the orphanage. The staff at the orphanage alert traffickers when a girl is leaving by herself.

**Cambodia:** "Buying sex with a 12 year old in Cambodia takes less time and effort than changing money in a bank or paying a telephone bill." People born in the village of Svay Pak are forced to stay there. This village is known for sex tours for the sole purpose of having sex with children.

**USA:** 12 year old Maria's dad left. Maria's mother started sleeping with strangers to bring some money in. Maria felt safe in her bedroom because her mother would do all the work. She felt safe until her mother started pointing out her room to the men.

**USA:** 13 year old Shalonda has a fight with her mother and runs out of her house in anger. She walks to the local gas station. She doesn't have enough money to buy anything. A stranger walk up and starts talking to her about her fight in a matter of minutes she stranger learns every detail about her situation and offers a wat to make her mother mad and to make money. She agrees.

**USA:** Jill a plat- person who learns all of the information on someone, and gains peoples trust in order to bring them into the sex trafficking world was asking Carrie about her family, friends and even if Carrie had a boyfriend. After Jill learned all of the information, she could she lured out of the youth shelter.

Stories from Jordheim, 2014

These are a few examples of victim's stories. The suffrage they had to go to. It was stories like this that made me want to spread awareness for my thesis project.

## Appendix C

### Lesson plan

Smith, 2013

For my thesis paper I decided to write a lesson plan to help combat the child trafficking trade at the source. For this example, lesson, it will be written for children in early high school.

**Objective:** The objective if for the students to be able to positivity identify a potentially dangerous situation and know what to do if a situation occurs.

How to introduce:

**Overview:** For this I will have the class

Timeline: In class we will read a chapter a class. This will be in class reading only in case any questions occur.

#### **Guided scenario's:**

Example 1: If you were playing at the park and a stranger came up to you and asked you to help find their dog, what would you do?

Example 2: If a stranger came up to you and asked if you wanted some candy but you had to follow them to their van, what would you do?

Example 3: If you were alone at school waiting for you mother to pick you up and a stranger came up to you and told you "Hey your mom asked me to pick you up, she told you this morning, remember?" what would you do?

Example 4: If you were alone in a mall and a stranger came up to you and started asking about you, where you live and who lives with you, what would you do?

Example 5: If you were playing in your front yard and you notice the same car parked watching you every day, what would you do?

#### **Activities:**

Test questions: Fill in the blank

#### **Chapter 1**

What kind of dream similar to Star's would make a preteen girl more easily manipulated by pimps?

Is moving state lines required for sexual exploitation to be considered trafficking?

#### **Chapter 2**



Write about two different ways a situation or characteristic could make a child more vulnerable to the ploys of traffickers?

How do you think pimps ensure the buyer views the child as a commodity instead of a vulnerable person?

### **Chapter 3**

Why do you think pimps have the advantage when working with noticeably young victims?

How do Hollywood depictions of prostitution facilitate the commercial sex and trafficking industries?

Explain the significance of the term *Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victim*. Why should we use that term instead of child prostitute?

### **Chapter 4**

What conditions in a young person's life could cause him or her to be a target for sex traffickers?

The author wrote "what we had discovered was the existence of dark subculture which not only exists worldwide but is thriving at an explosive rate in the United States as well." Discuss what factors cited for its rapid growth.

### **Chapter 5**

What are some of the ways young victims of sex trafficking learn to cope with the trauma they have experienced?

What parts of their lives do trafficking victims have control over, if any?

### **Chapter 6**

What lies and threats prevent the victims from believing they can return home?

Can you identify a child being recruited or groomed into trafficking? If so, what do you look for?

Discuss how children are abducted. How can someone intervene appropriately to prevent a child from being abducted?

### **Chapter 7**

Most people mistakenly believe prostitution is legal in Las Vegas. If it's truly against the law, why do you think it continues to thrive?

What are some of the permissions giving beliefs held by society that makes it okay to buy sex?

Can you think of an adolescent you know who would match any of the risk factors that catalyze a child's recruitment into "the life"? Are there any opportunities where you could personally intervene in some way to protect the child before he or she is taken?

### **Chapter 8**

Discuss a situation that serve as a prime location for pumping girls.

Discuss practical solutions to ending the demand.

### **Chapter 9**

What factors would foster an environment for commercial sex at local truck stops?

What are some reasons that law enforcement officer opts to arrest the girl, but not the buyer?

In 2010, the United States was included in the Trafficking in Persons annual report. Do you think this will deter sex trafficking in our country?

Why are state laws that impact sex trafficking important?

### **Chapter 10**

How can men take a more active lead in the fight to end sexual exploitation of minors and women?

What can be changed in order to get victims the appropriate services instead of relegating them into the juvenile detention system?

Why is it unsafe/unwise to invite a trafficking victim into your house without involvement of an expert on service provision and appropriate training?

### **Chapter 11**

The way a victim is labeled can provide a pathway to services or create a barrier. Which of these labels would determine whether a child is treated as a criminal, and which ones a victim? What cases would be investigated?

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| A. Child prostitute    | H. Working girl                          |
| B. Juvenile delinquent | I. Commercially sexually exploited youth |
| C. Runaway             | J. Sex-trafficking victim                |
| D. Homeless youth      | K. Prostituted child                     |
| E. Sexual abuse victim | L. Hooker                                |
| F. Rape victim         |  |
| G. At-risk youth       |  |

Explain what you think the term "trauma bond" means?

Do you feel capable of making your own choices at the age of thirteen? What was important to you in seventh grade? How would you have managed being arrested at 13?

### **Chapter 12**

What made reunification with a family so difficult for Star?

Under what circumstances do you think it would be successful to reunite a trafficked child with her or his family?

### **Chapter 13**

What seems to hold the girls in the pimp's "stable" together? Why do you think the girls accepted the abuse from Bobby and his friends?

Why does sexual abuse predispose a child to the vulnerability of being groomed for "the life"?

List a few reasons why these victims may not run from their abusers?

### **Chapter 14**

What is it about Sugar that made Lacy start to view herself and Bobby more realistically? What things could motivate a victim to have the courage to attempt to escape?

### **Chapter 15**

Why is Jessica-Lacy "creeped out" by being adopted into the family life again?

Why do you think Jessica was concerned for her safety and Millie's safety even though she knew Bobby was in jail awaiting federal trial?

How can we find a balance between protecting our children and providing them freedom?

How would you be willing to make a difference in the life of "Lacy" -Jessica-

Round table:

After reading a chapter have the child write down what intrigues, bothers or confuses them thus far in the book. Have the child turn that in and the next time you read a chapter go over a few answers to help them understand better.

Dear author

This is where the child writes a note to the author about anything they feel is necessary questions, comments, and concerns.

Dear diary

Keep a diary as if you were a character in the story. Write down events that happen during the story and reflect on how they affected the character and why.

Second chance:

Talk or write about how it would change the story if a certain character had made a different decision earlier in the story e.g., what if Lacy hadn't met her pimp?

Guest speaker:

Having someone come in who has lived in the human trafficking world speak about the warning signs.

All of these activities are to help spread awareness about the danger of human trafficking.

## Appendix D

Potential adverse psychological consequences of CSEC Commercial Sexual Exploitation and sex trafficking

- Post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD
- Major depression
- Aggression
- Anxiety disorder
- Panic attacks
- Problems with affect regulations
- Oppositional behavior
- Dissociation
- Attention deficit hyperactive disorder ADD/ ADHD
- Somatization problems
- Self-harm behaviors
- Memory deficits
- Trauma bonds
- Eating disorder
- Attachment disorder
- Personality disorder
  - Borderline personality disorder
  - Antisocial personality disorder
  - Avoidant personality disorder
  - Obsessive compulsive disorder

Information found at Greendoum, 2015

## Recourses for trafficking victims

### Appendix E

#### **3Strands Global Foundation**

Phone: 916 365-2606

Email: [info@3sgf.org](mailto:info@3sgf.org)

<http://www.3sgf.org>

#### **CAST-Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking**

Phone: 213 365-1906

Fax: 213 365-5257

Email: [info@castla.org](mailto:info@castla.org)

<https://www.castla.org/about/leadership-team/>

#### **Center for Human Trafficking Awareness**

Phone: 727 341-4581

Toll-Free: 888 373-7888

Email: [ActNow@spcollege.edu](mailto:ActNow@spcollege.edu)

<http://halhth.spcollege.edu>

#### **Justice Planning Management Associates**

Phone: 207 377-8600

Email: [info@jpmaweb.com](mailto:info@jpmaweb.com)

<http://jpmaweb.com/>

#### **Love146**

Phone: 203 772-4420

Email: [info@love146.org](mailto:info@love146.org)

<https://love146.org/>

<https://love146.org/contact/>

#### **Male Survivor formerly National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization**

<http://www.malesurvivor.org>

#### **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**

333 John Carlyle Street

Phone: 703 224-2150

Toll-Free: 1-800-843-5678

Fax: 703 224-2122

<http://www.missingkids.com/home>

#### **National Children's Advocacy Center NCAC Child Abuse Library Online CALiO**

Phone: 256 533-5437

Fax: 256 534-6883

Email: [library@nationalcac.org](mailto:library@nationalcac.org)

<https://www.nationalcac.org/>

#### **National Human Trafficking Hotline**

Phone: 202 745-1001

Toll-Free: 888 373-7888

Fax: 202 745-1119

Email: [help@humantraffickinghotline.org](mailto:help@humantraffickinghotline.org)

<http://humantraffickinghotline.org/>

#### **National Sexual Violence Resource Center**

Phone: 717 909-0710

Toll-Free: 877 739-3895

Fax: 717 909-0714

<https://www.nsvrc.org/>

#### **Office for Victims of Crime**

Phone: 202 307-5983

Toll-Free: 888 737-7888

Fax: 202 514-6383

Email: [humantrafficking@ovcttac.org](mailto:humantrafficking@ovcttac.org)

<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/humantrafficking/>

#### **Office on Trafficking in Persons**

Toll-Free: 888 373-7888

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip>

#### **Polaris**

Phone: 202 790-6300

Email: [training@polarisproject.org](mailto:training@polarisproject.org)

<http://polarisproject.org/>

#### **Project REACH**

Phone: 617 232-1303 ex. 211

Fax: 617 232-1280

Email: [chopper@jri.org](mailto:chopper@jri.org)

[http://www.traumacenter.org/clients/reach\\_svcs.php](http://www.traumacenter.org/clients/reach_svcs.php)

#### **Safe House Project**

Email: [info@safehouseproject.org](mailto:info@safehouseproject.org)

<https://www.safehouseproject.org/>  
opens in new window

#### **Shared Hope International**

P.O. Box 65337

Vancouver, Washington 98665

Toll-Free: 866 HER-LIFE

Email: [savelives@sharedhope.org](mailto:savelives@sharedhope.org)

<http://sharedhope.org/>

#### **U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services/Anti-Trafficking Program**

Phone: 202 541-3000

Phone: 202 541-3021

Email: [lrymer@uscpcb.org](mailto:lrymer@uscpcb.org)

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/human-trafficking>

#### **Upper Midwest Community Policing Institute**

Phone: 651 917-2259

Toll-Free: 877 917-2255

Fax: 651 917-2253

Email: [dcusick@umcpi.org](mailto:dcusick@umcpi.org)

<http://umcpi.org/>

#### **Violent Crimes Against Children**

Phone: 202 324-3000

<https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/cac>

Sources from 2017