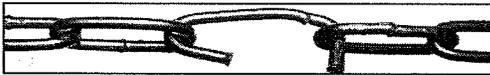


**Invisible Chains:
Psychological Coercion and Trauma
in Sexual Exploitation
and Human Trafficking**



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Project REACH
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Human trafficking is the second largest criminal industry in the world today, after drug dealing, and it is the fastest growing.

The International Labor Organization estimates that 3 out of every 1,000 people throughout the world have been trafficked.

International Labor Organization, ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour, (Geneva, 2012): 13.
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/-declaration/documents/publication/wcms_081882.pdf

Over 20 million people are estimated to be held in modern-day slavery across the world.

Free the Slaves, "Top 10 Facts About Modern Slavery," <http://www.freetheslaves.net/Page.aspx?pid=215>, 27 million

International Labor Organization, ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour, (Geneva, 2012): 13.
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/-declaration/documents/publication/wcms_081882.pdf, 21 million

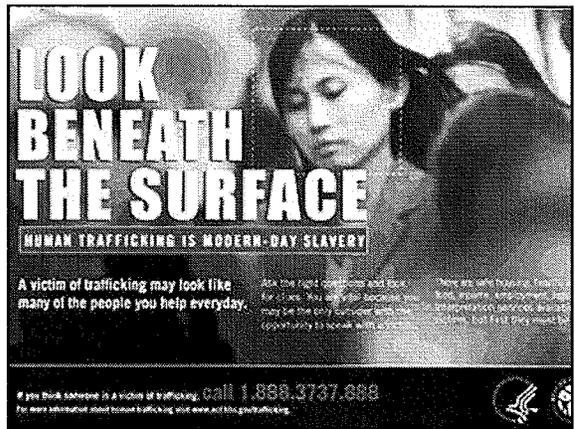
Every half an hour, another person is trafficked into the United States.*

*Based on State Department estimates of 14,500-17,500 persons trafficked into the U.S. annually

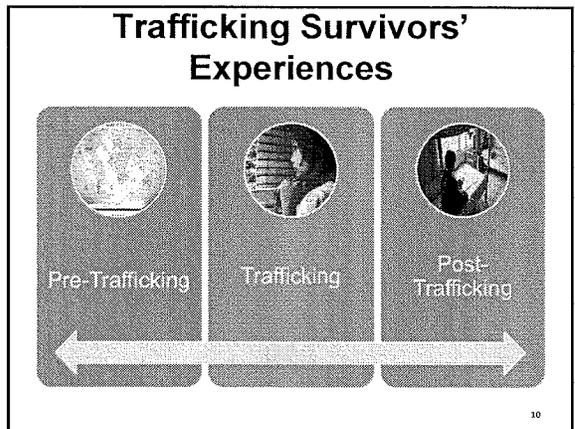
An estimated 100,000 - 300,000 children and youth are prostituted in the United States

xxviii ECPAT International, "Europe and North America Regional Profile," End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and the Trafficking of Children for Sex, (Stockholm: World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation against Children, 1996), 70, http://www.state.gov/worldcongress/en/sts/stockholm/Reports/Regional_Workshops.htm

*Hidden in Plain Sight:
An Invisible Crime*



Unseen Vulnerabilities



Vulnerabilities

- Poverty/financial stressors/downward mobility
- Lack of an education/ opportunities
- Gender-, racial-, and ethnic -based discrimination
- Environments torn by war and political unrest
- Displacement/ separation from support system
- Family dependents
- Prior traumatic experiences

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Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: Who is Targeted?

- Vulnerabilities
 - Youth (on average, recruited between 13-16 years old)
 - Emotional vulnerabilities (feeling scared, lonely, desperate to belong, and needing love)
 - Lack of resources (poverty)
 - Aspects that make the person “different” can be vulnerabilities: sexual orientation (GLBTQ), disabilities (physical, cognitive, emotional), new to a setting, victim of bullying or social rejection
 - Limited supports: are “on the run” or have “disappeared”; issues with caregivers; lack of stability in placement

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•325,000 children are reported as being sexually exploited in the United States annually: of those, 121,911 ran away from home and 51,602 were thrown out of their homes by a parent/guardian

•Among runaway and homeless youth, approximately 30% of shelter youth and 70% of street youth engaged in prostitution in order to meet their daily needs for food, shelter, drugs, etc.

Estes & Weiner (2001). The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U. S., Canada and Mexico



Trauma Histories in Trafficked Youth

•40% of the girls who engaged in prostitution were sexually abused at home, as were 30% of the boys.

•Immigrant children are often at risk of exploitation due to poverty and separation from their caregivers.



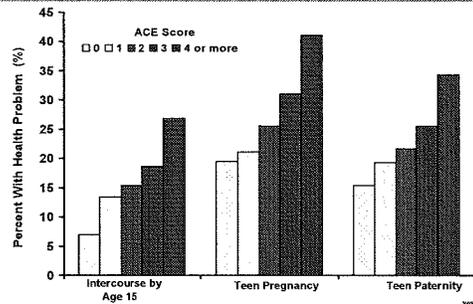
Estes & Weiner (2001). The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U. S., Canada and Mexico

Cycle of Trauma

- Child abuse is associated with high-risk behaviors in adolescents, such as truancy and running away. Many of these children may become homeless or live in shelters (Briere, 1992)
- Homeless children and youth are at risk for further victimization, such as repeated abuse, exposure to violence, and forced prostitution (Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Yoder, 1999)

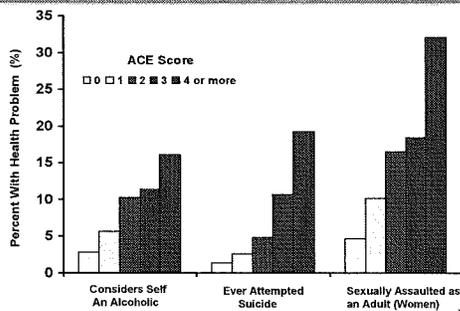


ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Score and Teen Sexual Behaviors



Anda et al: Sample of 17,000 subjects in medical clinic @Kaiser

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Score and Alcoholism, Suicide Attempts, or Sexual Assault



Anda et al: Sample of 17,000 subjects in medical clinic @Kaiser

Layers of Trauma

- Poverty
- Discrimination (race/ethnicity, SES, education, gender, disability, etc.)
- Attachment disturbance
- Emotional, physical, sexual abuse
- Community violence
- Losses (death, separations)
- Other violence, trauma exposure, stressors
- Lack of opportunities
- Coping strategies- negative feedback loop

Invisible Chains: Psychological Coercion

Force, Fraud, and Coercion



- **Force** involves abduction or the use of rape, beatings and confinement to control victims. Especially used during the early stages of victimization (the 'seasoning process' is used to break victim's resistance)
- **Fraud** often involves false offers that induce people into trafficking situations (promising good work conditions, good pay, education, that they will be taken care of or treated like family)
- **Coercion** involves more subtle psychological techniques used to manipulate another person (threats, verbal or psychological abuse, etc)

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Pre-Trafficking

Push Factors

- Prior trauma-laden experiences
- Poverty/financial stressors/downward mobility
- Lack of an education
- Environments torn by war and political unrest
- Gender,- racial- , and ethnic - based discrimination



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Pre-Trafficking

Pull Factors

- Hope for a job that can help change the situation
- Desire for an education and training
- Wish for a better living environment for family
- The American Dream ideal



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How do traffickers recruit youth?

- Often a grooming process
- Recruited by pimp or "catcher"
- Tactics:
 - Love con (affection, gifts)
 - Indebtedness/guilt
 - Befriending
 - Fraud (modeling career, money/glamour)
 - Foot in the door technique
 - Peer pressure (gangs)
 - Substance abuse
 - Force (threats, kidnapping, etc)



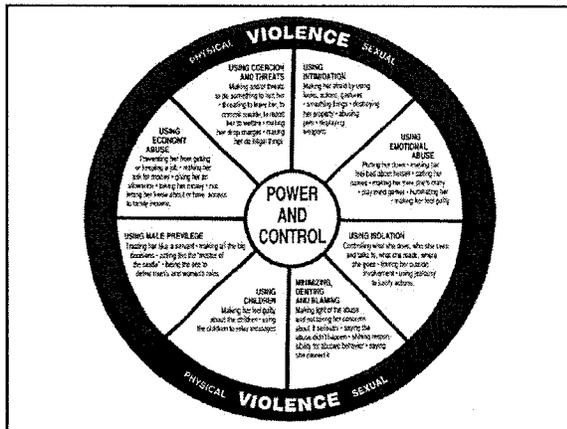
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Relational distortions and Identification with the Perpetrator

- Perceived threat to physical/ psychological survival
- Perceived inability to escape
- Perceived small kindness from the abuser
- Isolation



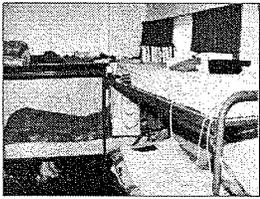
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Group Dynamics

International:

- Recruitment by in-group
- Use of victims as instructors, monitors, enforcers
- Normalization of trafficking
- Group trafficking settings
 - Cantinas
 - Massage parlors
 - Factories, farms



Domestic:

- Sense of "Family" ("Daddy," "wives-in-law")
 - Pitting girls against each other ("Bottom Bitch")
 - View of anyone outside of "the Life" as the enemy

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Trafficking



Coercion:

- Disorientation, unfamiliarity
- Excessive work
- Few resources
- Lack of medical and dental care
- Lack of basic necessities
- Social isolation
- Use of the relationship
- Psychological abuse
- Threats to family
- Dependence on trafficker
- Threats (police, immigration)
- Forced to witness violence or hurt others
- Forced to disavow cultural values
- Physical abuse, rape

Force:

- Kidnappings
- Physical abuse
- Rape
- Locked in

Fraud:

- Broken promises
- Wage retention
- False documents
- Feigned relationships

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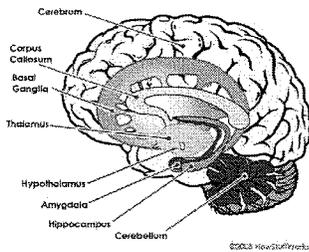
Invisible Scars

"The Body Keeps the Score"

-Bessel van der Kolk

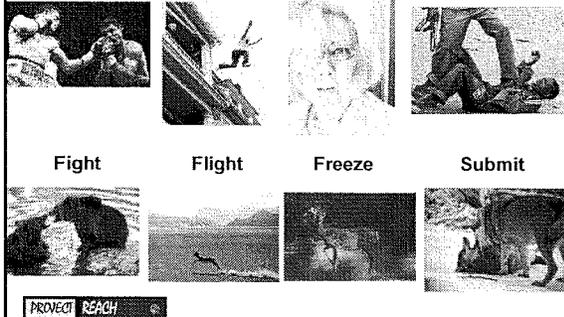
The Biological Basis of the Trauma Response

Basal Ganglia and Limbic System



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Danger Avoidance: Universal Danger Response



Fight

Flight

Freeze

Submit

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Neurobiological Consequences of Trauma

Chronic Trauma & Fear Conditioning

Alarm System no longer working as it should

Stress Response Unleashed to Neutral Stimuli

Shutting down of non-essential tasks (frontal lobe)



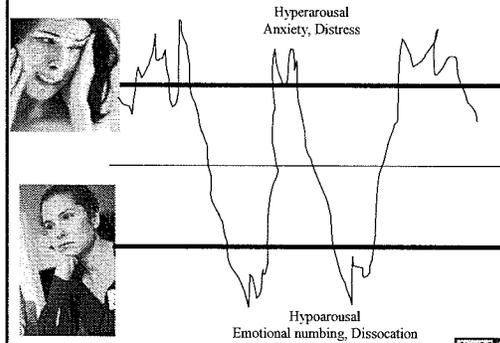
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Triggers:

- **Trigger:** Any stimulus which acts as a reminder of a traumatic experience, and leads to a set of behaviors/actions designed to cope with the original experience
- A trigger may be:
 - **Internal** (e.g., an emotion; a physical sensation)
 - **External** (e.g., someone's facial expression, a crowded situation, a smell/sound/sight)
 - **A Combination** (e.g., an interaction that leads to a person feeling vulnerable/trapped/frightened/etc.)
- Triggers are not always obvious!

Adapted from Blaustein curriculum

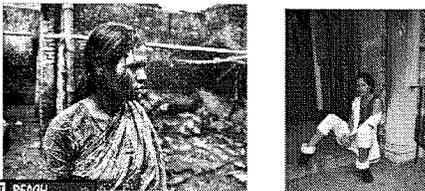
Window of Tolerance for Emotional Distress



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Dissociation

- Disruptions in attention & memory
- Triggered re-entry into dissociative state
- "Lying"
- Chronic numbing/ depersonalization/derealization
- Disruptions in identity/integration



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Affect Regulation Challenges with Survivors of Sex Trafficking

- Living under condition of constant threat and danger can feel exhilarating (endorphins) and make someone feel "alive."
- Constant threat masks feelings/ trauma symptoms
- Body's natural hormonal response to touch and sex (opiates)
- Some people may feel a sense of competence, mastery, and power in "the life"
- Feeling of being loved, belonging, being important
- Difficulty with removal of substance use that is often associated with sex trafficking
- After escaping, may experience a loss/ void/ depression, plus an increase in trauma symptoms.

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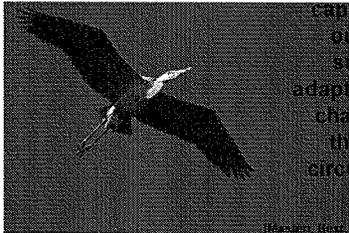
Common Trauma Responses

- Emotional
 - Trouble with calming down or quickly changing emotions
 - Guarded/constricted affect/numbness
 - Using emotions to communicate needs
- Cognitive
 - Trouble concentrating, processing information
 - Changes in systems of meaning ("The world is dangerous")
- Physiological
 - Trouble regulating the body (eating, sleeping)
 - Physical complaints
- Behavior Control
 - High-risk behaviors (sexualized, aggressive, self-injurious)
 - Impulsive behaviors
- Social Relationships
 - Problems with identity and boundaries with other people
 - Giving in to other people too easily
 - Trouble forming and keeping relationships

Blaustein curriculum

Unseen Strength

Resilience:



"The process of, the capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances"

Resilience: Connor & Garmezy, 1990, p.426

Blaustein Curriculum

Look Beneath the Surface

- To identify and help trafficking victims in our communities
- To understand each person's unique vulnerabilities and the means of psychological coercion that were used to exploit them
- To understand the psychological impact that the trafficking experiences have had, so that we can provide trauma-informed services
- To highlight resiliency & empower survivors



Project REACH

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"I beg you to remember that wherever our life touches yours we help or hinder... wherever your life touches ours, you make us stronger or weaker. There is no escape- man drags man down, or man lifts man up."

Booker T. Washington