

Determinants of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

and the Urgent Need for a Global Cultural Shift

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### Abstract

In the United States, an overtly selfish and sexual culture contributes to the spread of human trafficking, thereby requiring a complete culture shift in order to diminish this modern day slavery initiated by the aberrant culture. Sex trafficking of minors in the United States encompasses a variety of factors that facilitate the bondage and brutal enslavement of American children. These children are bought and sold hundreds of times, with no regard for their personal well-being. Major factors such as demand, vulnerability, and America's induced culture of sex serve to increase the environment that trap children and youth in commercial sexual exploitation. The following contains an analysis of the contributing causes of sex trafficking in the United States along with a call to America's citizens to cease reveling in sexual immorality, in order to commence a heroic effort thereby creating a paradigm shift and bringing sex trafficking to an end.

Determinants of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and the Urgent Need for a Global  
Cultural Shift

Her name was Cassandra Rose Holiday, but her grandma called her Cassie. She was twelve years old when the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children plastered her face on a poster and marked her as an endangered runaway missing from Lincoln, Nebraska (Smith, 2009). After Cassie met an older male whom she called her boyfriend, she began dancing and wearing make-up. It was not long until Cassie ran away to be with her boyfriend. However, her boyfriend was more than he claimed; he was a known pimp from Las Vegas. As Cassie's story unfolds, it becomes evident that in the United States an overtly selfish and sexual culture contributes to the spread of human trafficking, thereby requiring a complete culture shift in order to diminish this modern day slavery initiated by the aberrant culture.

Upon arriving in Las Vegas, her "boyfriend" Bobby introduced her to the other working girls and gave her the name Star. She lost her virginity the first night of working, as multiple men raped her and videotaped their malicious actions. Star continued servicing hundreds of men, subjecting herself to rape and humiliation day after day in order to fulfill Bobby's quota, while never seeing a way out.

When Bobby obtained new girls, Star grew jealous of not receiving as much attention from Bobby. Star attempted to prove herself to him, hoping to receive his love, by offering to service another girl's client. That night two men took her purse and cell phone and drove Star out of town to a sheltered cabin. Star was raped for the last time. Officials found her body three months later in the hills of Las Vegas, two months

pregnant. Her dental records linked Cassie to her poster, allowing officials to contact her grandmother, who buried Cassie in Nebraska (Smith, 2009).

Sadly, the story of Cassie is true. Stories similar to hers portray themselves in a variety of ways throughout the United States and around the globe. The Department of Justice finds that an overwhelming 797,500 children were reported missing in a one year timeframe (Smith, 2009). A report conducted in 2001 by the University of Pennsylvania estimated that 293,000 American children are at risk for becoming victims of domestic minor sex trafficking (U.S. Department of Justice, "Trafficking," n.d.). The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that at least 100,000 American youth a year are victimized by sex trafficking and child prostitution and the number could reach as high as 300,000 (Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009). Americans need to take action considering so many children are at risk for victimization. When dealing with this topic, action begins with understanding the issue at hand and ends with engaging in change.

### **Part One: Definition of Sex Trafficking**

In order to grasp the definition and details of human sex trafficking one must be aware of the existing federal and state laws, which make human trafficking a crime punishable by law. Indeed, the federal law allows for traffickers and pimps to be sentenced from twenty years to life in prison if convicted of sex trafficking with a minor (Freedom Network USA, 2011). In addition to differing federal and state laws, one must also realize that sex trafficking includes a variety of sex acts.

To understand fully the complexities of sex trafficking regarding domestic minors one must begin by defining the crime. Under the United States federal law, Victims of

Trafficking and Violence Protections Act (VTVPA) of 2000, human trafficking refers to children under the age of 18 involved in sex trafficking or adults age 18 or older forced or coerced into commercial sex acts (Polaris Project, 2010,b.). Human trafficking also encompasses labor trafficking whereby a person is forced into “labor or services” by the use of “force, fraud, or coercion” (Polaris Project, b.). The federal mandate does not require proof of force, fraud, or coercion for any child sex trafficking victim under the age of 18. Instead, the definition highlights the commercial aspect necessitating an exchange of money, clothing, food, shelter, or other items for sex. Most often, this exchange is monetary, making human trafficking (including labor trafficking) a 32 billion dollar industry, third only to arms and drug trafficking (Help Stop Child Slavery, 2007).

State laws vary widely concerning human trafficking and prostitution. Some mirror the federal law and do not require proof of force, fraud, or coercion for minors, some include asset forfeiture for crimes, and others advocate for a safe harbor (Polaris Project, 2010, a.). Currently, there are still a handful of states without any human trafficking legislation to protect or assist victims. These states include Colorado, Arkansas, and West Virginia to name a few (Polaris Project, a.).

Sex trafficking can manifest in a variety of forms such as prostitution, pornography, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, stripping, prostitution performed exclusively for the military, massage parlors, spas, and sex tourism (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Other forms include escort and outcall services, which are able to hide behind seemingly legitimate business fronts (Shared Hope International, 2007). Since the federal law limits the definition of sex trafficking,

international and local laws have expanded the definition to include mail order brides, tourism, and stripping. However, each form is unequivocally harmful for the victim.

Everette Baker was a pimp running a seemingly legitimate business front in Brooklyn, Illinois. In 2000, Baker was convicted of money laundering and conspiracy to commit money laundering when his massage parlor business, a cover-up for prostitution, was brought under investigation. His massage parlors acted as fronts for prostitution, striptease bars, movie theaters, adult bookstores, and x-rated video arcades. His business lasted over nine years, employed hundreds of prostitutes, and earned him about nine million dollars (U.S. v. Everette O. Baker, 2000).

### **Part Two: Sex Trafficking Victims**

Sex trafficking victims incorporate a variety of ethnicities, ages, gender, backgrounds, and more. Due to these qualifying characteristics, sex trafficking does not exclude any party and therefore remains a global issue. While specifics may vary depending on country, there are many overarching similarities between sex trafficking victims.

#### **Victim's Gender**

Sex trafficking victims are primarily female; however, this does not exclude males entirely. A study from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) from 2003-2006 found that 65%-75% of trafficking victims worldwide were females, 15%-25% were minors, and 15% were male (UNODC, 2009). A statistic from Las Vegas Crimes Against Youth and Family Bureau found that the victims were heavily female: 1356 girls to 13 boys (Shared Hope International, 2009, p. 86). Another statistic finds that 80% of trafficking victims are women and children (Straker, n.d.). The high number of

females does not mean that males are exempt from commercial sexual exploitation; rather the numbers may not concentrate on males, or consider the fact that males often become trapped in labor trafficking (Straker). Consider for example that hundreds of children, ages as young as four and mostly boys, are trafficked, kidnapped, or sold by their parents to work as camel jockeys in Sudan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Mauritania. They are fed one meal a day and often are injured or die as a result of the dangerous work (Khartoum, 2006). Although the gender of victims may differ depending on types of human trafficking or their primary country of residence, age remains an important role in their victimization.

### **Victim's Age**

The ages of sex trafficking victims range immensely and do not discriminate based on maturity or lack thereof. Various sources confirm that the average age of entry into child prostitution and sex trafficking in the United States is 11-14 years old (Shared Hope International, 2007). Research conducted by the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work corroborates the fact that the average age is 12-14 (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Although these numbers represent the average ages, there have been stories and cases reported of much younger victims.

Cases from within the U.S. demonstrate that pimps and family members profiting off these child victims have no respect for age considering that children as young as five years old have been reported as sexually exploited (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.b). Just two years ago in 2009, the case of Shaniya Davis made national headlines, after authorities in North Carolina found this five-year-old dead. She had been missing for a week. Her mother, Antoinette Davis, was charged with child prostitution, after allegedly

trafficking Shaniya to pay off her drug debt (Netter, 2009). Some speculate that this story only made headlines due to the young age of the victim and subsequent death; however, trafficking victimizes all age groups.

### **Victim's Background**

The victims of sex trafficking in the United States come from all different backgrounds, including broken homes, Christian families, and foster care situations. A majority of domestic minor sex trafficking victims grow up in situations where families and parents are generally unresponsive and tend toward abandoning the children through various means (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.a). Many of the parents also act abusively toward their children (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.a). The child victims may be runaways choosing to run away from home voluntarily or throwaways who have been rejected or abandoned by their parents or guardians and live on the streets as a result of their home conditions (Farlex, n.d.c). Ernie Allen, of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, presented research conducted by Estes and Weiner before Congress, which estimated that 60% of the 250,000 U.S. children that are involved in commercial sexual exploitation each year, are runaway, throwaway, or homeless children under 18 years old (2010). Children who are intentionally placed in foster care programs as an alternative to living with parents or on the street are arguably no better off. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent Gregory Christopher estimates that 70% of the foster care children in the Tampa Bay, Florida area are involved in child prostitution (Velde, 2010).

Besides all the stories recounting cases of children from broken homes becoming caught in sex trafficking, Theresa Flores' story offers a different perspective. Flores came

from an Irish-Catholic, middle class family living in Detroit. When she was fifteen years old, a classmate date raped her and recorded it, using the tapes to blackmail her into servicing friends and clients for two years (Celizic, 2009). Flores is now a social worker spreading awareness that anyone can become a victim.

Additionally, groups focused on runaway children estimate that one third of teen runaways or throwaways will become involved in prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home (Allen, 2010). Furthermore, numbers inferred from statistics by the Justice Department's National Incidence Study of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMAART II) display even greater results showing that nearly 200,000 plus runaway or throwaway females less than 18 years of age are forced into prostitution per year (Allen). Susan Roske, Clark County chief deputy public defender, mentions that girls often return to prostitution due to their brokenness and ability to identify with the other working girls (Goldman, 2010). The girls see prostitution as their safety net. This is just one reason among many that these numbers for runaway and throwaway females remain high.

### **Part Three: Traffickers**

A trafficker can be anyone who profits, whether monetarily or materially, from using a minor for sexual purposes (Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009). Traffickers of minors fall under an array of disguises and relationships. Surprisingly, both men and women participate in the manipulating and controlling role of a trafficker, although the trafficker is usually a male (Straker, n.d.). Typically, the traffickers are referred to as pimps. After intensive research in multiple states, Shared Hope International found that a pimp could include family members, friends, boyfriends, and strangers (Smith, et al.).

According to research from a shelter in Nevada, family members exploited 30% of domestically trafficked youth who were seeking services from the respective shelter (Smith, et al.).

A recent case illustrates this percentage all too well. A man was sentenced to twenty years in federal prison in November 2010 after being convicted of prostituting his twelve-year-old foster daughter. Shelby Lewis, of Temple Hills, Maryland apologized to the court for the situation, stating that he was “trying to help them out” (personal communication, November 1, 2010). Judge Sullivan quickly rebutted Lewis’ statements: “You weren’t helping anyone out; you were gaining money from using those young girls and helping yourself” (personal communication, November 1, 2010).

It is rare to find a victim under 18 years old who is not under the control of a pimp. S.B. Satterfield reports that officials found 90% of prostitutes have a pimp and it is possible that the number could be higher since victims are reluctant to give up their pimp (Veronica’s Voice, n.d.). Sandy Skelany, program manager for Kristi’s House, an advocacy and rehabilitation home for rescued victims in Miami, Florida also finds that 70-80% of the girls have pimps (n.d.). The pimps exert their control over their victims thereby creating a pseudo-family, which correlates with the girls associating places of prostitution with safety.

There is no typical pimp. Pimps come from various ethnicities and ages and each incorporates his own characteristics and dynamics into the trafficking situation. However, pimps most commonly present themselves in the form of an older boyfriend. He will appear nice, caring, loving, and willing to shower the youth with material gifts, while slowly creating a dependency and trust between him and the child (Shared Hope

International, 2007). For example, take the case of Brianna, a Vancouver, Washington teen recently rescued by family from her traffickers. A man befriended her for a year as he visited her frequently at the restaurant where she worked. Eventually she went to visit him in Seattle where she believed her friends would be present to hang out. Instead, he kept her for three days and forced her to dance in a strip club (Tomlinson, n.d.).

Other pimps will pose as caretakers providing food or shelter to homeless youth. A study conducted by Fair Fund in Washington, D.C. shared a comment by a teen saying that the man who offered her shelter in exchange for sex was “nice” (Ali, 2009). In effect, he seemed nice to her since he offered to fulfill a necessary need.

Increasingly, pimps use their victims to recruit new victims and stimulate control (Shared Hope International, 2007). For example, a girl will befriend another girl and invite her to a party to meet a group of guys. When the girl arrives, the pimp immediately takes her and forces her to work alongside other girls under his control. One survivor describes a typical situation on the street that included “pimping partners” otherwise known as friends of the pimps who would watch the girls as they walked the streets to ensure they did not wander off (Cavanaugh & Murphy, 2010). Forcing youth to recruit and walk the streets under strict supervision contributes greatly to the psychological brainwashing and grooming processes.

#### **Part Four: Buyers**

Buyers of commercial sex in the United States are known as customers or *johns* (Jewell, 2008). Johns are men who come from every background possible, including every ethnicity and age. A study by Janice Raymond entitled “Legalizing the Buyers as Sexual Consumers” found many intricacies regarding the buyers of commercial sex with

adults (2004). Raymond found that adult women engaging in prostitution reported having customers ranging in age from 15-90 years old. Customers come from all occupations including military, businesspersons, dentists, police officers, truckers, and lawyers. Likewise, education backgrounds varied from a high school education to a doctoral degree. Perhaps most appalling is the statistic showing that 70% - 90% of the American men who bought sex were married. Additionally, African American prostitutes offer stories of having many white men or other foreign ethnicities as customers, due to the fetishes and curiosities of the men in regards to skin color.

In the book *Renting Lacy*, author Linda Smith shares the true story of Lacy's life alongside many other girls trapped in domestic minor sex trafficking (2009). One of Lacy's customers was a white, middle-aged American man, married with a wife and baby at home. After his friend convinced him that getting a prostitute would help him "blow off steam" and become a better "husband and father," he decided to choose a black girl to see what it would be like (Smith, p. 58-60).

### **Part Five: Main Causes Contributing to Trafficking of Minors**

There are multiple major causes that seemingly contribute to the rise and spread of sex trafficking in minors. The reasons discussed include demand, vulnerability of victims, and an overloaded American sex culture. Although other causes exist, the explanation and discussion of these three contributors will show how they influence the issue of trafficking.

#### **Demand**

As research and studies confirm, the strongest aspect and driving force behind sex trafficking results from the demand factor. Basic economic and business principles attest

to this with the concept of supply and demand. Demand simply refers to “how much of a product or service is desired by buyers” while supply equals the amount that “the market can offer” (Investopedia, 2003). Therefore, in terms of sex trafficking, the women become the supply, while the amount of sex desired by men determines the demand. Pimps thrive on this concept knowing that a higher demand will result in an elevated daily income.

An extensive research project conducted by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation in 2008 determined several reasons why the demand factor is so high and which components contribute to facilitate this heightened crime against women and children. Based upon the conducted interviews, roughly half of the men (54%) bought sex by themselves for the first time. Out of the men who did not buy sex alone, 36% of men bought sex with a friend, and 17% of men bought sex with a relative (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008).

The reasons for men wanting to purchase sex as opposed to finding a compatible and consistent partner varied. However, despite their given reasons, 62% of the interviewed men had consistent partners, either in the form of a wife or a girlfriend (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). The primary reason stated by 46-48% of men for buying sex was in order to obtain a sexual favor that their regular partner was either unwilling to perform or in which the male was uncomfortable in asking (Durchslag & Goswami). Another 36% of men said that they enjoyed the opportunity to have sex without any commitment or strings attached (Durchslag & Goswami). Some men purchased sex out of the belief that they would not receive it otherwise.

Some dangerous reasons contributing to the demand of commercial sexual exploitation come as a result of sexual addictions, pornography, and cultural influences. Concerning sexual addictions, 83% of men used individuals in prostitution as a way to compensate for their addictions (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). One interviewee compared his friend's prostitution addictions to the 90-day Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) challenge of attending 90 AA meetings in 90 days, or otherwise using 90 prostitutes in a 90-day period. Several men cited using prostitution as a means to release and re-enact scenes from pornography. Additionally, men admitted to engaging in acts with prostitutes after being encouraged and sometimes coerced by other people, such as in the workplace or military. Likewise, some men view their first time with a prostitute as an entrance into manhood or a rite of passage, rather than exploitation. Lastly, and perhaps the worst reason included a means by which to let off anger in a violent form. One man viewed prostitution as a way to let his frustration out: "Something at your job makes you mad, you can't beat your wife, you can't beat your kids, and so you go out and have sex to take your frustration out" (Durchslag & Goswami, p. 15).

Vidyamali Samarasingh conducted research regarding the demand aspect of female sex trafficking for the School of International Service in 2009. This research shows more reasons why men fuel the demand portion of sex trafficking. Samarasingh divides demand into three categories: male customers, an intermediary group (including recruiters, pimps, brothel owners, and others who form the link between client and service provider), and institutions and organizations (such as the military, state, and tourism). Each of these three categories combines to facilitate the growing industry.

In reference to the male customers, this research finds that more than 50% of the male customers are married (Samarasingh, 2009). Since these men view the women as commodities, they typically have no reservations against hurting the women and behaving violently toward them. In addition, culture informs men that it is normal to desire more sex than they are getting within a monogamous relationship; therefore, it becomes acceptable to search outside the home to fulfill this desire. This increased pressure to attain as much sex as possible causes men to want bodies that are more youthful, thereby fueling sex trafficking of minors. Other reasons as stated before include the men wanting to pursue a thrill, obtain sexual favors that they cannot receive at home, and reach a level of manhood. Samarasingh also suggests that new tourist packages encourage men to seek out a prostitute as part of their leisure vacation.

Melissa Farley, an anti-pornography and anti-prostitution clinical psychologist, adds her perspective to the issue of demand and culture's influence. She suggests that society views prostitution as normal and inevitable due to the realization that men want women whom are sexually available at anytime (n.d.). Samarasingh quotes Raymond with a similar remark regarding the way culture encourages men to promote buying sex saying that demand is not a problem because after all "men will be men" (2009, p. 37). According to these sources, it seems that culture believes it is acceptable for men to belittle women in order to satisfy their own selfish pleasures and wants. Culture cannot take all the blame though, since the pimps and profiteers condone the normalcy of trafficking.

According to Samarasingh, the intermediary groups primarily include the pimps, brothel owners, and others who directly profit from sex trafficking (2009). These

individuals participate and create supply for customers in exchange for the economic and monetary rewards. A majority of these profiteers are involved in other illegal businesses such as drug trafficking or smuggling. Therefore, these criminals are able to combine their efforts, which in turn greatly increase their habits, businesses, and profits. The second level within the intermediary groups surrounds hotels, internet service providers, and the tourism industry. This intervention with sex trafficking allows these groups to participate legally in the booming economic crime and consequently receive notable proceeds in return for promoting trafficking (Samarasingh).

Lastly, Samarasingh addresses the influence and contribution of the military and state (2009). Samarasingh points out that during the Korean and Vietnam Wars the United States military encouraged its deployed troops to seek sexual satisfaction in the form of prostitution. In addition to the military boosting demand and profits, states profit via their tourism and labor exports meanwhile denying assistance to the victims due to lacking legislation and negligent law enforcement advances. Despite knowing that sex trafficking occurs, some countries, specifically Thailand and Japan, prefer to dismiss the issue considering that the industry provides revenue and employment to numerous groups of people (Samarasingh). This action allows the demand for prostitution and sex trafficking to increase monumentally each day.

Research by various organizations and individuals, as previously stated, confirms the fact that demand is a leading facilitator for domestic minor sex trafficking. The demand often exceeds the supply of women and children, allowing traffickers the opportunity to exploit more and more victims each day (Shared Hope International, 2007). Since pimps realize that demand is their gateway to increased profit, they

understand that victim's bodies can be sold and used repeatedly, unlike drugs (Shelley, 2010). Consequently, this re-selling ability greatly increases the profit for a pimp in business. For example, a 2003 study in the Netherlands found that a pimp could earn at least \$250,000 a year from the exploitation of one sex victim (Skinner, 2008).

Similar to Samarasingh's perspective, Dawn Jewell also suggests that three levels assimilate to drive the demand for prostitution. The first level she refers to includes the men and occasional women who succumb to purchasing sex with a minor to fulfill their own lustful desires. The second level deals with those who profit from the exploitation of the trafficking victims, such as the pimps, brothel owners, corrupt officials, parents, relatives, and boyfriends. Without these facilitators and control mechanisms in place, the demand issue would quickly lose ground due to a freeing of victims out of the commercial sexual market. The third and final level places responsibility upon the culture in which the prostitution and trafficking occurs. In this case, America contributes to the ongoing exploitation by continually sexualizing the culture and its people, while desensitizing the inhabitants to suggestive, demoralizing, and dehumanizing images, often of female bodies (Jewell, 2008). Ultimately, without the demand for prostitution, sex trafficking of minors would cease to exist.

### **Vulnerability**

In the case of sexual commercial exploitation of minors, domestic or international, vulnerability paves the way for pimps and traffickers to gain control over victims. A child's vulnerable personality easily allows the pimp to create a friendship, offering and promising love, protection, shelter, food, and friendship. It is no surprise that the younger the child, the more vulnerable and readily accessible they will be to luring

traffickers. The average age for entrance into prostitution in the United States is 11-14 years old, although that age is shifting to younger years (Shared Hope International, 2007). Police officers in Seattle, Washington report seeing victims as young as 12 and 13 (Boyer, 2008). Consequently, the young age opens the door for pimps to take complete control and brainwash their child victim.

This young and impressionable age group is the primary target for traffickers, considering pimps know basic developmental psychology and use this to their advantage. Researchers and theorists have compiled numerous hypotheses and theories dealing with child maturity, psychosocial and cognitive development, and the impact one's parents and family have upon the child's development. Studies show that children begin to learn about their environment and surroundings as young as birth to two years old (Net Safe Kids, 2003). The learning and eventual shift to autonomy begins to display itself around the preadolescent ages from ten years to twelve years old. During this time, children begin to develop abstract decision-making processes as well as receive exposure to sexual topics (Net Safe Kids).

Abstract cognitive skills continue to develop during the ages of 13-15 (Net Safe Kids, 2003). Children are better able to form decisions, although they may act upon impulses. Additionally, as the child enters puberty, sexuality continues to play a bigger role in the child's overall development, including information seeking and sources (Net Safe Kids). Regarding these facts about child maturity and age, traffickers realize that they can prey upon the young girls more easily. Linda Smith, former congresswoman and President of Shared Hope International, states: "They [pimps] know how to target the

girls who are the most vulnerable. Her greatest vulnerability is her age. 12-to 14-year-olds are still naïve about the world...” (Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009, p. 30).

In addition to age (as previously mentioned), gender constitutes the next vulnerability of trafficked victims, considering that gender differences allow the pimp to create a specialized plan to lure the victim into his care. The FBI estimates that over 100,000 children and teens are sexually exploited in the United States each year with most of those being young girls (ABC News, 2006). For comparison, of the estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked internationally each year, 80% are female and up to 50% are minors (Jewell, 2008). With the heavy concentration on young girls, pimps are able to present themselves as boyfriends and gain the trust and affection of these young victims. Similarly, the more time spent toward enabling and creating this relationship of faux love, the more the pimp is able to psychologically brainwash and control his victim (Smith, et al., 2009). Increasingly, the pimps understand what their young female victims are searching for in terms of affection, love, attention, and material gratification. Once they figure out the girl’s wants and needs, they become easy to fulfill.

For example, Julie was 15 years old when she encountered a pimp after dropping out of school. She was previously gang raped and blamed herself, never confiding the situation to her parents. Her pimp Maurice MacFarland, a.k.a. “Genius” groomed her by offering love, giving her gifts, and supplying her with drugs. Once this grooming period was complete, she was beaten and raped before being trafficked to Washington, D.C. and required to make \$1,000 a day (Goodman, 2011). Thankfully, after returning to California, she and her pimp were arrested, leading to her rescue by Children of the

Night, an organization dedicated to rescuing teens trapped in prostitution (Goodman, 2011).

The next issue contributing to vulnerability necessitates an in-depth look into the backgrounds of the child victims, as briefly mentioned earlier. Overwhelming amounts of minors are categorized as runaways or throwaways, after leaving home or being kicked out of the home. Across America, 1.5 million runaway and homeless teens live on the streets (Invisible Youth Network, n.d.). According to this 1995 Family and Youth Services Bureau Report, 35% of these youth used drugs, 26% have attempted suicide, and 47% were kicked out of their homes. Increasingly, as reported by the National Runaway Switchboard the result for approximately 5,000 of these youth is assault, illness, and suicide (Invisible Youth Network, n.d.).

To complicate the matter further, a majority of runaway and homeless youth experience abuse in the home, often beginning at an early age. This abuse precipitates the youth running away to escape the pain and victimization. Sadly, running away frequently causes the child, usually around 12 to 14 years old to become engaged in prostitution or survival sex, as a means to provide for his or her basic needs; hence, another issue that pimps realize and use to their business advantage (Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009). Statistics and research by various juvenile justice facilities repeatedly find that commercially exploited children experienced previous sexual or physical abuse before being sold into prostitution and trafficking. The Letot Center in Dallas, Texas, found that 93 to 95% of the commercially exploited children they dealt with had been abused previously. Similarly, WestCare Nevada, found 71% of their domestic trafficking victims experienced sexual abuse as a child. The number is consistent with research conducted on

international trafficking in Canada, which finds that 80% of sexually exploited children experienced abuse (Smith, et al.). This history of abuse in the child creates an increased vulnerability and defenselessness, preventing the child from maintaining a guard required for surviving on the streets (Children of the Night, 2006). In turn, this lack of awareness and suspicion causes the child to welcome the attention and care of a pimp. Kristy Childs, survivor of domestic minor sex trafficking and founder of Veronica's Voice, sums up the issue concisely by stating: "We've heard where it's been said that incest is boot camp for prostitution. And I truly believe that. I think it sets women and girls up for that to be possible" (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 32).

Generate Hope, a safe house in San Diego, Texas offers other background factors that cause these youth to leave home in search of a better environment. Reasons include previous child abuse, domestic violence, low self-esteem, or an unstable home environment (Generate Hope). However, background factors typically return to previous abuse. According to Genesis House, the same holds true for adult victims of prostitution and trafficking; an overwhelming 75-95% of all prostitutes and trafficking victims were abused as children (Veronica's Voice, n.d.).

### **America's Overloaded Sex Culture**

Americans permit an astounding amount of sexual content into their daily lives. This includes mediums such as the internet, pornography, visual entertainment, and music. As a result, research points toward an increased awareness and acceptance of forced sexual content and information, even when particular aspects of the information may violate personal convictions or health and wellbeing for the culture.

**Internet.** As much as the topic of sex remains taboo in schools, churches, and families, the American media and culture has overtaken the topic and portrayed sex in a heightened level, while deeming it an appropriate and normal activity for all ages. Arguably, this un-nurtured and wayward fascination with sex contributes to the demand and facilitation of domestic minor sex trafficking. The internet is just one example of a medium used to display images and content to millions of users each day at the click of a mouse. As proof of the content contained online, a Google search on the word “sex” found 819,000,000 results, while a Yahoo search offered 2,190,000,000 hits on the word “sex.” Similar results are found when searching the word “prostitution.”

A major contributor to domestic minor sex trafficking online includes websites dedicated solely to the purpose of buying and selling human bodies for the pleasure of those willing to pay. The most common websites where a buyer can select a minor for prostitution include Craigslist and Backpage. It should be noted that Craigslist was required to remove their “erotic services” section on U.S. sites in May of 2009 after an upheaval including the testimony of domestic minor females who were sold via the website (Stone, 2009). However, Backpage continues to allow a section dedicated to “adult” services, including escorts, body rubs, and more. Their only protection involves a disclaimer page, requiring the viewer to confirm that they are at least 18 years old.

The facilitation of prostitution and trafficking continues with the vast amount of escort and erotic service websites available to any viewer in any part of the world. For vacations in any country, one can access the World Sex Guide (Jewell, 2008). For city specific pleasures, one just has to conduct a quick online search and undoubtedly, they will find something to their liking. A Google search for “erotic services websites in

Nashville” produced over two million results within 0.19 seconds. As proof of the immensity of online searches for these types of services, Steven Bagg analyzed eight major American cities and found that during February, Craigslist’s “erotic services” received 265,000 visitors per city. Interestingly enough, the only other venue that received so many visitors was “cars for sale” (2007).

**Pornography.** The link between prostitution, trafficking, and pornography is one that deserves special attention. Studies, such as the WHISPER Oral History Project, conducted on the link between trafficking and pornography find stunning results that a distinct and strong connection between the two atrocities exists (Peters, 2008). For example, it is common for youth and women in prostitution to cite situations where their pimps required them to watch pornography as a form of education, or where a customer demanded them to re-enact a scene. Eighty percent of prostitution survivors from the WHISPER Oral History Project reported customers showing them pornography as a means to demonstrate acts. Raymond found that 50% of international women were required to view pornography as education (Raymond, Hughes, & Gomez, 2001). In the same study, one U.S. woman remembered being used in pornography since age three (Raymond, Hughes, & Gomez). Furthermore, evidence shows that the more frequent users of pornography were also the more frequent buyers of prostitution (Peters, 2008).

Pornography is also used as a blackmail process, with pimps photographing the girls and threatening to send the pictures to family (Raymond, Hughes, & Gomez). In turn, the fear of their families seeing the pictures strengthens the control of the pimps over their young victims. In the case of Theresa Flores, as mentioned previously, her pimp threatened to show her family the photos of her rape. The fear of her family finding

out kept her trapped as a slave for two years (Celizic, 2009). Pimps realize that pornography can enhance their business; therefore, they use it to their advantage, whether in the form of blackmail, education, or other purposes.

Pornography infiltrates and touches the lives of most Americans in some way, as well as benefits greatly from American salaries. Contrary to popular belief that only men view porn, research shows that 72% males and 28% females view pornography in some form (Family Safe Media, 2007). One in seven youth receive sexual advances and every second 28,258 online users are viewing pornography (Family Safe Media, 2007). In Seattle, Washington, Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Church, called pornography America's favorite pastime after commenting on the money Americans spend watching and purchasing porn (2008). Pornography is responsible for 2.6 to 3.9 billion dollars per year spent on videos, websites, magazines, and more (Ackman, 2001). Other sources state that number could be as high as 10 billion dollars spent per year on sex (Leung, 2004). These numbers suggest that a majority of citizens participate in viewing pornography either passively or actively and may or may not realize the danger that this holds.

One of the many profound dangers in viewing pornography is the realization that it causes individuals to view females as objects that are to be used for sexual purposes, even against their desires. This view of females mirrors the concept of rape, where someone is forced into sexual intercourse against their will (Farlex, n.d.). Dorchen Leidholdt of Women Against Pornography argues that "the porn industry is growing and men are being acculturated and socialized to view women as sexual objects" (Goodman,

1994). Leidholdt also states that the primary issue behind pornography is the “harm to the safety and the status of women” (Goodman).

Besides affecting adults with negative responses, pornography greatly harms children and youth. Young children or youth exposed to pornography are reported as experiencing emotional trauma and antagonism toward marriage or having a family. These individuals will often have sex earlier and have a scarred worldview, believing that deviant sex practices are common and acceptable (Focus on the Family Issue Analysts, 2008). Therefore, no research is able to show a positive factor of pornography. Instead, Americans spend billions of money to degrade women and disfigure children’s viewpoints.

**Visual entertainment.** Americans enjoy entertainment in the form of television, movies, and videos. This enjoyment fuels the entertainment industry providing companies with 9.87 billion dollars of American money just for movies (Plunket Research, Ltd., 2010). Each year 14,000 sexual messages infiltrate the minds of children from the television alone (Meeker, 2002). Obviously, a majority of the content is not wholesome and instead offers visuals to children and youth who should not be viewing the content or have access to view such content.

Various polls and research find that the sexual content contained within visual entertainment has a profound effect on its viewers. In a sample of television shows from 2001-2002, 64% of all the programs displayed some form of sexual content. Numbers compiled from polls across the nation find that 77% of parents think there is too much sex before marriage on television (Parents Television Council, n.d.). A separate poll indicates that 62% of parents believe that the television shows and movies encourage kids

to have sex when “they are too young” (Parents Television Council). Indeed, surveys conducted by the Parents Television Council find that 46% of American high school students have had sex. Although not every child who watches a television show saturated in sex will choose to replicate the scenes, visual entertainment obviously still influences many decisions of children and teens each day.

MTV alone is responsible for producing shows that unconsciously teach viewers concepts related to accepting trafficking, prostitution, and casual sex. Take for example the show, *Pimp My Ride*, which ostensibly deals with improving cars to look *cool*. However, they are creating an atmosphere where the word *pimp* is equated with the concept of cool (Shared Hope International, 2007). Likewise, take a look at the current most popular MTV show, “*Jersey Shore*” rating in with 8.4 million viewers as of January 2011 (Hibberd, 2011). This show is considered reality television and frequently reveals actors wearing skimpy bikinis, drinking, engaging in casual sex, and using a plethora of cuss words (Plugged In Online, 2011). Reality television shows become just another way American entertainment teaches the younger generation how to conduct themselves in society.

**Music.** The situation of American music is becoming a slippery slope, as more music alludes to the degradation of women, exclusiveness of pimps and gangs, and acceptance of suicide and drugs. The lyrics run wild, securely placing thoughts, images, and ideas into a generation of impressionable individuals, despite their arguments that they are just listening to the beat (versus the words). Widely known rapper, 50 Cent, produces vulgar and explicit songs, which quickly become popular favorites among teens. His song, “*Peep Show*” features the following lyrics: “On your mark, get set girl

now here we go, Racing off to see your peep show, It turn me on to see you on the floor, When you're breaking it down, keep breaking it down..." (AZ lyrics, n.d.). The lyrics continue suggesting that he could make money if he recorded the scene. His song "P.I.M.P." is even worse, telling a woman, "B\*\*\*h hit that track, catch a date, and come and pay the kid. Look baby this is simple, you can't see, you f\*\*\*\*\*g with a P-I-M-P" (Metro lyrics, n.d., 50 Cent).

Lady Gaga, another very popular singer among teens worldwide, presents lyrics in her song "Beautiful Dirty Rich" where she talks about living a "cute life" and having no money, but being "beautiful and dirty rich" (Metro lyrics, n.d., Lady Gaga). The words encourage trading one's body in exchange for money- "We got a redlight, Pornographic dance flight, Systematic, honey, But we got no money..." (Metro lyrics, Lady Gaga). The music industry clearly is advocating for their agenda, including drugs, money, and sexuality, by sending it directly into the ears and minds of thousands of children globally.

**Result.** As this cultural acceptance of sex and sexuality focuses its prime advertisements on young children and youth, the numbers of children and youth caught in prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation, having unwanted teen pregnancies, and contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) begin to rise. On a positive note, data shows an 8% decline in teen births in 2009 (Lopatto, 2011). However, the number of teen births remains extraordinarily high, with over one million teen girls getting pregnant every year (Meeker, 2002). In addition, statistics find that the United States allows and performs over a million abortions per year, 50% of which are performed on women under twenty-five years of age. While teens under 15 years old only account for less than 1% of

all abortions, they have the record for the highest abortion ration; 773 abortions for every 1,000 live births (Abort73, 2010). These numbers continue to increase, as culture glamorizes and promotes abortion as an acceptable way of discarding an unwanted pregnancy.

Although statistics record high numbers of teenage pregnancies, the comparative number of abortions does not balance out evenly. One speculation in regards to the low percentage recorded for teen abortions is the result of faulty or corrupt record keeping. For example, a recently released video shows two college students acting as a pimp and a prostitute engaging in conversation with Planned Parenthood clinic manager Amy Woodruff, discussing abortion rights and STD testing for teens fourteen and younger. Woodruff coaches the pimp on how to sidestep the law in order to obtain an abortion for his 14-year-old sex slave, stating that if the individual or their partner is 14 and younger they (Planned Parenthood) are required to report. Woodruff is recorded on tape saying, “Even if they lie, just say, ‘Oh he’s the same age as me, 15’ ... it’s just that mainly 14 and under we have to report” (Ertelt, 2011). This undercover footage and research suggests that teenage abortions are more rampant than records may show.

The harsh reality and consequence of culture accepting an overload of sexual content demonstrates itself in the number of teens having sex, often at very young ages. A huge and devastating result of teen sex surfaces in the rise and spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Meg Meeker, a gynecologist and author offers perspective on the issue in her book *Epidemic: How Teen Sex is Killing our Kids* (2002). Meeker writes the following: almost one out of every four sexually active teens is living with a STD at this moment; teens acquire between 20 and 25% of all STDs although they only make up

10% of the population; and one in five children over the age of 12 tests positive for herpes type 2. Increasingly, most children, youth, students, and even adults do not know the full ramifications and health consequences that STDs bring about. Meeker attributes the outbreak of sex and STDs to a lack of education and experience clearly revealed as culture tries to fight the rise of teen sex by passing out condoms and oral contraceptives. However, these barrier methods do nothing to guard against STDs.

Children continue to participate in sex at younger and younger ages, not realizing the harm this brings. The younger the child begins having sex, the more partners he is likely to experience; hence the reason 12-20% of sexually active individuals have had four or more sexual partners (Meeker). America's culture continues to push sex onto the younger generation, promising that it will be full of pleasure, without providing the same audience the proper education and information necessary for making an informed decision concerning their actions. Meeker presents the educational guidelines proposed by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. These guidelines, introduced in public schools, teach children starting at age five what sexual intercourse and masturbation means. They continue to inform students at age nine that sexual intercourse "provides pleasure" (Meeker, p. 27). The education continues to age 18, advocating for abortions by stating that it "rarely interferes with a woman's ability to become pregnant or give birth in the future" (Meeker, p. 27). The education also informs that homosexual behavior is normal, and suggests using pornography and contraceptives when engaging in the act (Meeker, p. 28). Nowhere does it warn against STDs, unwanted pregnancies, or sexual guilt. Likewise, nowhere does it advise that sexual intercourse

should be saved for a man and woman within the covenant of marriage as a sign of intimacy and love for one another.

### **Part Six: Culture Shift**

Lastly, proponents who wish to end the crime of human sex trafficking altogether must advocate that the United States engage in a culture shift based on the presented facts dealing with sex trafficking inside U.S. borders. Without an immediate culture shift, human sex trafficking of minors will continue to grow in the organized crime sector and ultimately destroy thousands more young lives. America can begin her culture shift by understanding the need to change, concentrating on returning to a biblical foundation, changing her terminology to avoid further victimization, and educating her vulnerable citizens in an active prevention movement. All of these proposed methods require conscious effort; however, the results would be monumental and well worth the intentionality.

#### **The Need for a Culture Shift**

Hopefully by now it is clear that if America does not step up and regain her moral foundation, crimes such as domestic minor sex trafficking will continue to expand forces while reaping in millions of dollars from the selling of young human bodies. As discussed, the glamorized pimp and overall entertainment industry needs to undergo a massive reconstruction of ideas, morals, figures, images, and methods for educating a vulnerable audience. Without a swift change in teachings, the acculturation and acceptance of sex will continue to infiltrate the minds and decision-making processes of persons. Furthermore, the culture that presents sex as widely acceptable creates an

atmosphere where the providers of sex, in this case young children, are seen as merely objects, removing the personality, character, and personhood from the individual.

Astounding research conducted by Susan Fiske used brain scans to find that after men viewed images of scantily clad women, areas of the brain were activated that normally light up in expectation of using tools, drawing the conclusion that men were then more likely to view the women as objects (Sample, 2009). For some of the men the area that shows empathy for other's emotions and wishes literally shut down after viewing the images (Sample). Media advocate, Jean Kilbourne, underlines the issue of viewing women as objects, stating "women's bodies are often dismembered... reinforcing the message that women are objects rather than whole human beings" (Media Awareness Network, 2010). This message correlates to all females, whether they are legitimately over the age of 18 or dressed and presented as older than they really are.

The results of such a culture worldview present alarming statistics in reference to teens and children. If America does not begin a life-saving culture shift in the next two years, the numbers of children and teens that will experience life changing and death-causing consequences will be mind blowing. Consider the following truths. In the next two years, over two million teens under the age of 20 will get pregnant; resulting in 2,800 conceptions each day (Sound Vision, n.d.). Another 38 million STDs will arise, with almost half of them surfacing in those aged 15-24 (SADD, 2011). Approximately 10,000 teens between 13 and 24 years old will be diagnosed with HIV/AIDs (SADD). Additionally, estimates include that anywhere up to 245,100 abortions will occur in the next two years from teenage mothers alone (Pregnant Teen Help, 2010). Lastly, over 600,000 American children will be sexually exploited for profit within American borders

(International Crisis Aid, n.d.). With numbers this high, there is a good chance you will know someone who falls into this criteria, thereby becoming another American statistic.

### **Returning to a Biblical Foundation**

The Bible contains a wealth of information and advice pertaining to these worldly issues. Scripture includes commentary on issues of unnatural lust, rape, idols, adultery, and sex outside of marriage. Topics such as purity, training up children, and honoring parents receive discussion as well. However, the greatest commandment of loving God and loving others should be the precept for community interactions (Mark 12:28-31; New International Version). This greatest commandment has the potential to change worldviews and unbiblical foundations, even for those who do not accept the existence of a God.

In regards to unnatural lusts between man and woman, Paul comments on how God gave his people over to sinful desires:

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie... and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion (Romans 1: 24-25; 27).

Because the people were unwilling to submit to God, God allowed them to engage in the sinful desires of their hearts against his will. Often sinful desires and selfishness cause people to feel forsaken by God. On the other hand, some individuals try to blame God for their sin. James strongly refutes the idea that God is responsible for human's sin. "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil,

nor does he tempt anyone” (James 1:13). Instead of tempting people, God offers the Bible as an example of how to live properly.

Scripture shares stories of both honorable and sinful men and women. For example, Genesis 34 records the rape of Dinah by neighboring Shechem countrymen. After Dinah’s brothers discovered that she had been violated, they spoke deceitfully to the Shechemites and proceeded to kill every male in the city. God commands in Deuteronomy 22 that the man marry the woman as a consequence of the violation of rape. Verses repeatedly show that God does not deal with sin lightly.

Another prime area of concentration throughout the Bible centers on idolatry. Exodus 34:17 clearly records “Do not make cast idols.” An idol can be anything that one worships in place of God or in addition to God (Cauley, 2011). In Isaiah 44:9, Isaiah tells the idolaters the following: “All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless.” The end result of idolaters will be disgrace and shame (Isaiah 45:16). In the case of trafficking, money, fame, and women constitute idols in the minds of the pimps and buyers. God commands those who deal with idols to “put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5).

Just as rape and idolatry are not to be dismissed lightly, adultery carries negative reactions and consequences. Contained within the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 is the following explicit command: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). However, Jesus took this command a step further in the New Testament by issuing the challenge of not looking lustfully on a woman, which He equated with adultery (Matthew 5:27-28). In order to offer a personal testimony, Solomon urges his readers to adhere to

his wisdom and personal experiences. He writes “but a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself” (Proverbs 6:32).

In addition to the command to love God and love others, the next Biblical command that pertains most to sex trafficking is the command not to have sex outside of marriage. The writer of Hebrews states: “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Hebrews 13:4). A similar mandate alludes to this strive for purity – “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Romans 13:14). Paul sums up the biblical point explaining why God desires for humans to save the gift of sex for marriage in I Corinthians 6:18-20:

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought as a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Just as purity weaves throughout Scripture as a foundation for Christians to incorporate into their character, another command directly relating to victims and perpetrators of sex trafficking is the mandate to treat one another as family. Persons are to treat their younger men as brothers and their younger women as sisters, “with absolute purity” (I Timothy 5:1-2). Philippians 4:8 combines these ideas: “...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure... if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.”

Besides being pure and avoiding the aforementioned sins, the Bible offers advice for family functions. Fathers are in charge of training their children in the instruction of the Lord, while children are responsible for honoring their parents (Ephesians 6:4 & Deuteronomy 5:16). These commands of God lay the brickwork for living a pure life, one that honors God and respects people.

In exchange for following God's commands, God promises certain rewards. To better demonstrate God's promises, one should examine the real-life stories in the Bible. John 8:7 records the occasion when Jesus completely forgave an adulteress and offered her a second chance at life. Mark 1:40-45 recounts the story of Jesus compassionately healing a leper, the most despised and rejected people group in biblical time. I Timothy 1:15-16 shows Paul thanking God for his unlimited patience in forgiving him, "the worst of sinners."

Finally, in proving that America needs to return to a biblical foundation and impose upon a culture shift that incorporates God, one simply needs to look toward Scripture again. Jesus says, "All things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). Scripture warns that the destiny of "the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur" (Revelation 21:8). On the other hand, the destiny of those who follow God will be "a new heaven and a new earth... They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:1,3).

For those who doubt the existence of a higher God or remain skeptical of the change that could occur upon the return to a biblical foundation, one must understand the profound meaning and potential encapsulated in forming moral laws that could transform

an entire society. Imagine a society where individuals respected one another, acted in love toward one another, and truly believed there was purpose in life. This is not referring to utopia, but the fact that people will realize a God exists who offers a reason for living along with moral commands and foundations for successful and meaningful life.

### **Breaking the Terminology Myth**

In addition to returning to a biblical foundation, a widely proposed method of breaking the cycle of sex trafficking starts with an assessment and willingness to change common terms used for those in the business. These terms include pimp, child prostitute, and prostitution, as well as less enduring terms such as whore, hooker, ho, lot lizard (refers to girls forced to work at truck-stops), call girls, or stripper. Pimps use these terms strategically in the business to enhance dependency, while culture uses these terms to separate classes of individuals and offer an excuse for ignorance and rejection of victims. Therefore, people need to guard their flagrant comments and un-thought responses to ensure that their words are not leading to further stigmatization and destructiveness.

As previously mentioned, in American culture, the term *pimp* has become synonymous with something cool. Numerous song lyrics, computer games, computer add-ons, layouts, and images portray males making money, having fun, and getting whatever they want. To demonstrate teenager's views of pimps, notice the following definitions and words that culminated after a search of the word *pimp* from Urban Dictionary: "Person into marketing prostitutes, player, cool, gangsta, sexy, baller, fly, thug, tight" and the list continues (n.d.). Instead of these concepts associated with a pimp, culture should be displaying words such as panderer, abuser, liar, rapist, and profiteer. Perhaps a shift toward these words would introduce a more accurate picture of what a

pimp actually is and what he does, instead of allowing a majority of society to believe in a lie.

The other major terms are child prostitute and prostitution. The underlying issue with these terms is that it fosters an environment where society claims that the person is *choosing* to be involved in sexual acts in exchange for money (Smith, et al., 2009). In dealing specifically with children, one should realize that the child does not have the mental capacity to understand or choose this type of interaction. An even more important fact relays that social stigmatization only causes further victimization. Responders have found that victims of domestic minor sex trafficking disclose exploitation more quickly after being addressed as victims of a crime, rather than as a child prostitute (Smith, et al.).

Pimps realize that addressing their victims in derogatory manners furthers the psychological abuse and dependency, sinking the victim deeper into pain and further from rescue and healing. The words create a dependency on the pimp, considering no one else will accept them. For example consider the following situation: Bobby (Cassie's pimp) was prostituting Lacy when she decided she wanted to leave. Lacy said she would call her mom to come and get her. Her pimp, Bobby, quickly defused her idea of going home by saying,

“Your mom doesn't want a whore in her house. You'll disgust her, and she won't want you to *infect your sisters*. Look at you. You look like a whore, you act like one, you get paid to be one, and you certainly smell like one.” (Smith, 2009, p. 126)

In this situation, Lacy knew that her mother and her culture would condemn her if she returned home. Because she knew this, Lacy remained a victim of trafficking. Therefore,

society must do a better job in addressing this hidden victim group and it begins with a determination to change something as simple as everyday terminology.

### **Implementing Education Methods for Eliminating Trafficking**

The last proposed method for eliminating trafficking falls into the category of education, including public awareness and sex education. Education is extremely important in playing a vital role of prevention against domestic minor sex trafficking. With more education and public awareness beginning at a younger age, children would learn about the ploys and lies of pimps posing as boyfriends and the dangers of embracing these lies. One young interviewee put it this way:

“They’re [the girls involved] driving in cars, getting fake names, going to clubs, you know what I’m saying that’s the life to a 15 and 14 year old girl... and when they get older they realize that that’s not the way they want to go and they want to do something else.” (Williams & Frederick, 2009, p. 57)

Anti-human trafficking organizations and agencies are beginning to see the potential in using public awareness strategies to educate a varied audience concerning matters of human trafficking. These groups spend hundreds of dollars on billboards, posters, rallies, benefit concerts, and scholarly conferences in order to distribute vital information. In 2009, ten billboards containing the slogan, “hidden in plain sight” went up in New Orleans (Associated Press, 2009). In April 2011, Vancouver, Washington hosted a conference with the Northwest Coalition Against Trafficking (NWCAT). In September 2010, a benefit concert was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee to raise “awareness and funds” for TraffickStop, an organization with a goal to end trafficking in Nepal (Smith, 2010). The purpose behind each of these initiatives remains to raise

awareness in the public in hopes that in raising awareness, people will feel a need to get involved and make a difference.

Sex education has an important function in the proper development of a young child. Culture consistently pushes the lie that sex is for everyone, no matter the age, and that it is always enjoyable. However, the truth behind the matter includes facts not told by society such as the risk of getting pregnant and contracting a STD. Research finds that 80% of teens admit it would be easier to delay sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have conversations about sex and related topics with their parents. Sixty-three percent of teens avoid using contraceptives in an attempt to keep their parents from finding out about their behaviors (Albert, 2010). Additionally, 46% of teens wish they were getting more information regarding contraceptives and abstinence, while 65% of girls and 57% of boys who had sex as a teen wish they had waited longer (Albert). Evidently, culture is not presenting teens with the information that they both want and need; thus another great reason for America to begin her culture shift.

### **Conclusion**

In light of this pressing issue of domestic minor sex trafficking, America must move rapidly toward a culture shift in music, movies, entertainment, morals, terminology, and education. Although many other issues contribute to this pandemic situation, demand and culture are arguably major contributors that need to be addressed immediately. Without a change, America's demand for sex will continue to grow out of proportion, ultimately leading to the exploitation of millions more. In addition, culture must take a stand for morality and respect its people or expect to continue dealing with this crime.

One amazing response which challenges the foundation of sex trafficking is stated by Gary Haugen, President and Founder of International Justice Mission. Haugen states, “We’ve discovered that slave masters and traffickers expect their opponents to show up late and quit early – and they are simply not intimidated. What they do not expect is fearless, sacrificial love that does not go away” (Butler, n.d.). This is a challenge for responsible Americans to open their eyes to the hidden victims in their presence that are suffering each and every day at the merciless hands of pimps, traffickers, and buyers. Be willing to stand up for the voiceless, demonstrate sacrificial love, and take extensive measures to bring about the needed culture shift in America... today.

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