

ANALYSIS OF METHODS TO COMBAT SEX TRAFFICKING IN HUMBOLDT
COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

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There are multiple vulnerabilities that increase an individual's susceptibility to sex trafficking. These vulnerabilities include; poverty, fragile family or social circle, drug addiction, homelessness and previous physical or sexual abuse. Sex trafficking is considered by many scholars as modern-day slavery and is associated with horrific human rights violations. This is an ethnographic study, conducted to better understand which methods are most effective to minimize the impact of these vulnerabilities to sex trafficking. Participant observation was utilized over a two-month period, evaluating two nonprofits in Humboldt County, California. Data was gathered through observing, listening and recording events throughout the research. Formal and informal interviews were also utilized with relevant participants. Findings show that education on the topic was the most commonly used method by both nonprofits. A particular method of education utilized was contemporary slave narratives, which seemed to have a powerful impact on audiences. Another effective method found within this study was providing housing for the homeless. Although the nonprofit using this method is not aiming to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities directly, the outcome of providing the homeless with homes effectively combats vulnerabilities to sex trafficking.

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INTRODUCTION

Sex trafficking is considered by many scholars as a form of modern day slavery. This is due to the violent coercion and economic exploitation that is experienced by the victims (Androff, 210). Victims of sex trafficking are stripped of their personal freedoms and self-worth (Reid, 2012, Gallagher, 2010). The victims involved in sex trafficking do not have control over the money they earn performing sexual activities and are forced to participate in commercial sex acts at an unhealthy rate. According to *gameover.org*, the central page of an anti-sex-trafficking organization, sex trafficking victims can have up to ten or more clients in one day, resulting in countless physical and psychological problems for the majority of sex trafficking survivors (*itsgameover.org*). Recent anti-sex-trafficking campaigns aimed at educating the public about these human rights violations and the sex trafficking victims' experience, reveal a contemporary form of slavery that is more discrete and underground than previous forms of slavery in the United States. This study helps to analyze the effectiveness of methods utilized to fight the contemporary form of slavery that is sex trafficking and the vulnerabilities that allow people to become more susceptible to it.

This study was formulated to analyze strategies utilized by two nonprofits in Humboldt County, California, that help decrease vulnerabilities in individuals that make them more susceptible to sex trafficking. Vulnerabilities found in individuals who are targeted for sex trafficking include; homelessness, poverty, lack of supportive family

relationships or social circles, having experienced prior physical or sexual abuse, drug addiction, and a lack of educational and employment opportunities (Reid, 2012).

Both nonprofits that participated in this study provide help and resources to combat some of the vulnerabilities that pressure victims into the sex trafficking world. Strategies used by each nonprofit were examined in order to better understand what methods are most effective when working to decrease these vulnerabilities to sex trafficking. The first organization, a nonprofit I will call NP1 hereafter, is a survivor-led anti-sex trafficking agency located in Humboldt County, California committed to the abolition of sex trafficking and fighting its vulnerabilities. NP1's main strategy used to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities is prevention education. NP1 educates the public on sex trafficking and how to prevent it through community trainings, public forums, informative brochures, theatrical plays, informative websites and contemporary slave narratives. NP1 also provides resources for community members to report sex trafficking such as hotlines and other anti-sex-trafficking organizations. This use of preventative education discusses and explains vulnerabilities to sex trafficking, in an attempt to prevent those vulnerabilities through knowledge and spreading awareness. NP1 also works closely with local police by sharing any information to assist in understanding the issue or that could potentially result in the arrest of traffickers. Employees working for this nonprofit include survivors of sex trafficking, social workers and volunteers.

The second nonprofit (which I will call NP2 hereafter) is a nonprofit that aims at providing resources and programs to the homeless throughout Humboldt County, to help them get off the streets and find them a place at either a local shelter or low-income

housing within the area. According to NP2, there are over 1300 homeless people living in Humboldt County, California, which is 1% of the population. NP2's mission statement is; "We believe that housing is a human right. We support people experiencing homelessness while they build a more stable life. This may include a full continuum of services from engagement to permanent housing. We seek to educate the community about housing issues and advocate on behalf of our homeless neighbors." Although NP2's specific objective is to assist the homeless in obtaining housing not to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities, by providing homes for the homeless, NP2 is effectively battling a major vulnerability to sex trafficking. Homeless people live in desperate situations that make them more susceptible to sex trafficking. Thus, providing the homeless with homes is an effective tool when fighting sex trafficking. Employees that work for this nonprofit include social workers, volunteers and property management professionals.

Statement of Problem

Numerous global initiatives have considered human trafficking to be one of the most desperate issues in the contemporary era (Shih, 2016). Sex trafficking is a horrific human rights violation due to the violent coercion and economic exploitation experienced by the victims (Reid, 2012). Their personal freedoms are taken from them and they are treated as subhuman. Although it is the victims who are the ones participating in the commercial sex acts, the traffickers receive all payment and have complete economic control over their victims. This economic control pushes victims into such desperation

that they are left at the mercy of their trafficker, and are forced to live in abusive and life-threatening conditions. Traffickers are in charge of when victims eat, sleep and perform commercial sex acts. These conditions are so physically and psychologically damaging to victims that eventually victims become emotionally dependent and rationally complicit making them easier for traffickers to control. In extreme cases, victims may become so dependent that they begin to help traffic other victims, while being trafficked themselves.

According to GameOver, a survivor led anti-sex-trafficking organization located in California, those who survive sex trafficking, emerge from it with such psychological damage that they have trouble functioning in normal society. They are often incapable of concentrating on normal tasks or conversations and may be suicidal and/or experiencing shock (itsgameover.org). Common signs of the physical abuse sex trafficking victims experience include bruising, scars from a knife or bullet, burn marks, bad hygiene, undiagnosed diseases, malnourishment, unusual sleeping patterns, stunted growth and extreme genital trauma (itsgameover.org). Given the horrific realities of this form of slavery and global initiatives revealing its prevalence throughout the United States and internationally, there is a pressing obligation to protect vulnerable women and children that are susceptible to becoming sex trafficked. Sex trafficking is so prevalent and found everywhere throughout the globe, that even remote places in the United States like Humboldt County is presenting this problem.

Significance of study

Currently in the U.S., there is a widespread presence of sex trafficking of young girls between the ages of 12 and 14 (Orme & Sherrif, 2015), resulting in a global moral panic. Not only women, but children are being sexually exploited throughout the U.S., with the National Human Trafficking Hotline recording 5,551 cases of sex trafficking in 2016 (polarisproject.org). In Humboldt County specifically, two cases of sex trafficking were reported in 2016 (ucr.fbi.gov) These statistics do not represent all sex trafficking cases in the U.S. due to the illegal nature of the industry and lack of awareness of the crime resulting in significant underreporting (polarisproject.org). In terms of Humboldt County, California, it was reported by NBC5 that Humboldt County has the highest amount of missing people across the entire state of California (NBC5). Humboldt County, is notorious for their underground marijuana industry and although the industry is becoming legalized, there are certain permits needed in order to grow marijuana legally. Humboldt County Sheriff's department reported approximately 10,000 marijuana grows in Humboldt County in 2016, with only approximately 300 coming forward to participate in the legal permit process (NBC5). Growing marijuana is extremely labor intensive and requires a lot of people. Combining this need for labor with illegal operations, promotes the prevalence of human trafficking and sex trafficking in Humboldt County (NBC5). The Sherriff's department believes this to be the reason why Humboldt County has the highest number of missing people in the state of California (NBC5). In addition, Humboldt County, has a high homeless population composed of

over 1,300 people, exposing another major vulnerability to sex trafficking in the area. This combination of illegal markets and homelessness reveals the prevalence of this problem and explains why researching methods to fight sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities in Humboldt County, is crucial for preventing long term individual and social damage. Nonprofit organizations play a vital role in social services worldwide. They can provide emergency relief, promote advocacy campaigns or be a permanent feature of the social service landscape (Kosny, 2008). These organizations can be very influential not only for the public but for policy makers as well, proving their vitality to social issues (Kosny, 2008). With a recent awareness on sex trafficking, nonprofits are emerging across the globe in order to help the cause and potentially eradicate this form of modern day slavery. Therefore, this research is significant because it explores methods utilized to prevent vulnerabilities to sex trafficking and will provide insight and expose effective strategies for future anti-sex-trafficking campaigns and nonprofits to build upon.

Sex work vs. sex trafficking

It is important to make a distinction between sex work and sex trafficking. International dialogue on sex work or prostitution, in comparison to sex trafficking, is that sex work involves consenting individuals over 18 years old (Decker, 2013). While sex trafficking, by contrast, involves individuals that are forced into performing commercial sex acts through violence, fraud or coercion. When minors are involved, it is still considered sex trafficking even if force fraud or coercion are not applied (Polaris Project, 2012). The heart of this distinction comes down to consent and control. While important, this distinction is not always easy to determine. In this work, I will demonstrate ways in

which this distinction has shown to be problematic, especially after a sex trafficking victim has been abused and those involved often call it “brainwashed” extensively. As one sex trafficking victim working for NP1 explained, sex trafficking victims that have experienced immense psychological damage can become brainwashed to the point they believe they are voluntary sex workers. This person also explained that because voluntary sex work is an actual possibility, claiming to be an “independent” sex worker (a sex worker not working for a pimp/trafficker) is a way victims can protect their traffickers from arrest, making it nearly impossible for authorities to arrest traffickers.

Globalization

Globalization has immense influences on particular social components that push the facilitation and expansion of sex trafficking. These social components include globalization’s negative impact on women, the accessibility of transportation and the rise of the internet. Below I will describe how globalization accelerates the sex trafficking industry through the advancement of these social components.

Gender

Globalization has made possible a structural form of gender violence that promotes systemic gender discrimination, restricted access for women to education, little employment opportunity for women, along with the feminization of poverty (Orme & Sheriff, 2015). These repercussions of globalization all assist in the creation and amplification of vulnerabilities in women that allow them to become more susceptible to sex trafficking (Orme & Sheriff, 2015). The International Labour Organization estimated that there are 4.5 million victims of sex trafficking throughout the world, with 98% being

women and children (Orme & Sherrif, 2015). While many forms of human trafficking affect both genders, sex trafficking is a gendered social issue that specifically targets women and children (Houston, 2016). Assuming that cultural and institutional forces have the same impact on both genders overlooks extensive research and completely disregards basic biological distinctions between men and women, such as women being capable of childbirth (Reid, 2012). Globalization promotes more vulnerabilities to sex trafficking in women than in men, by pressuring a combination of vulnerabilities found in women, such as mothering, economic marginality and domestic violence, all which can force women into criminal activity (such as sex trafficking), in an attempt at survival (Reid, 2012). These particular vulnerabilities do not apply to men as they do to women, explaining why globalization supports women's susceptibility to sex trafficking.

Transportation

Despite the traditional idea of sex trafficking and prostitution being found predominantly in major city streets, globalization has accelerated sex trafficking into rural communities such as Humboldt County, California. Humboldt County is an extremely isolated northern California community that has California's longest highway (U.S. 101), along with two less smaller highways intersecting through it (cahighways.org). The force of globalization created these outlets enabling traffickers to easily transport victims from different locations. This explains, at least in part, how sex trafficking has found its way into this rural community. Not only do these highways make it easier for traffickers to relocate victims from city to city, but they also make it more difficult for authorities to locate sex trafficking activity as well.

Internet

The internet as a major facilitator of globalization, has caused sex trafficking to become even more accessible through free online adult service websites such as backpage.com and craigslist.org (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Traffickers use these websites as a tool to discretely sell their victims, and this turns out to be significant in smaller, rural communities such as Humboldt County, California (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). With the accessibility of the internet, traffickers are no longer restricted by geographical restraints (Remington, 2016). They are capable of selling sex trafficking victims online from virtually anywhere, making it difficult for authorities to track this illegal industry. This is the most popular way for traffickers to sell their victims today (Remington, 2016), detailing another way in which globalization has accelerated the sex trafficking industry.

Analysis of Methods used to Combat Sex Trafficking

When fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities, this study has shown that education on the topic is a common strategy, in turn allowing this study to be an institutional based study. This study examines two very different organizations that combat sex trafficking. One is a survivor-led-anti-sex-trafficking nonprofit, while the other is a nonprofit aimed at fighting homelessness, but both are engaged in institutional change. As in any advocacy work, the more the public is educated and informed about a topic, the more effective the community will be in supporting or fighting for that particular cause. Educating the community can also allow local citizens to identify sex trafficking victims along with traffickers and gives citizens the opportunity to report sex trafficking activities

or behavior in their communities. Below I will demonstrate, that both nonprofits use different strategies of education and spreading awareness in order to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities in individuals.

A method of education both nonprofits utilize involves the use of prevention education. Prevention education, in this case, involves informing the public about ways in which to prevent sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities. The nonprofits accomplish this by passing out informational brochures. In addition to providing brochures, NP1 utilizes

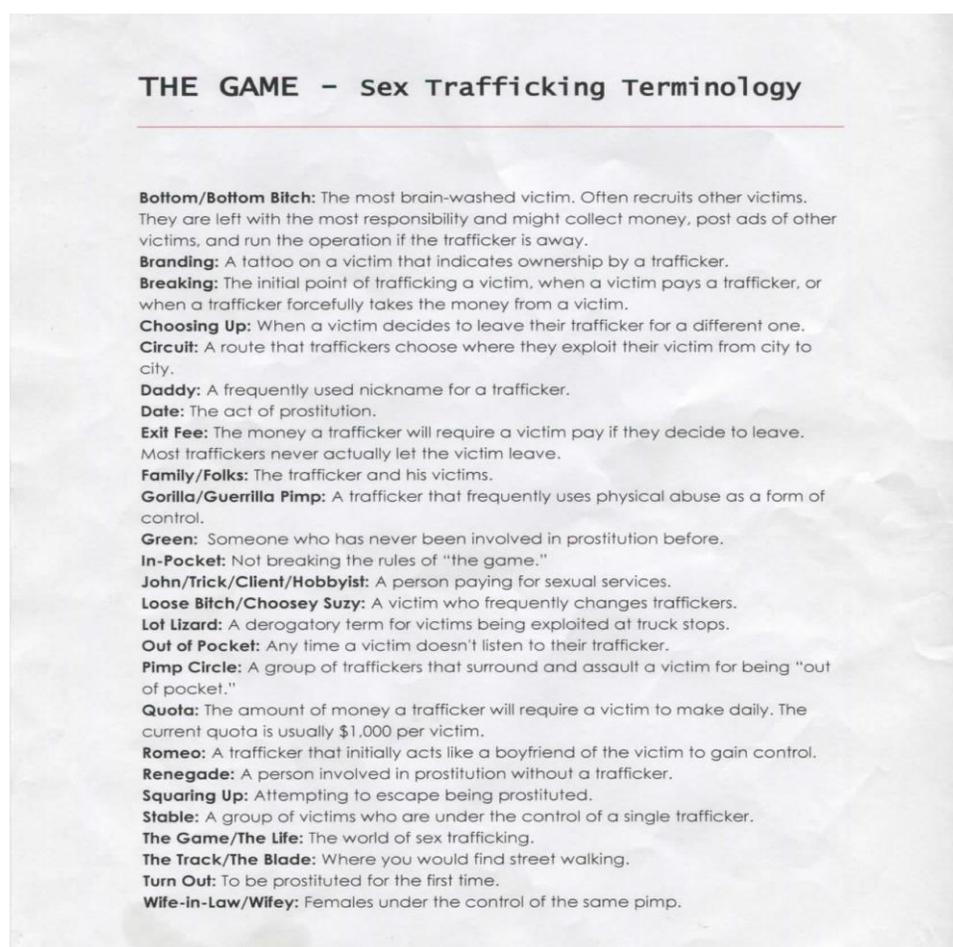


Figure 1

prevention education by holding public trainings and forums, publicly sharing contemporary slave narratives, performing theatrical plays and providing informative websites. The trainings used for prevention education are accessible to all community members. However, NP1 has special trainings for foster parents, community services such as health care providers, teachers and local authorities, because these populations have higher chances of coming in contact with sex trafficking victims. These special trainings teach community members and service providers victim identification, how to approach victims to sex trafficking and what resources to provide.

In the sex trafficking world, there is a certain terminology used by those participating. For example; a “pimp” is a term describing the trafficker, a “john” is a term used for the individual that is buying the commercial sex, and “brainwashing” is used to describe the state of mind those being sex trafficked are in when the trafficker has full psychological control. The term “sex worker” describes an individual that voluntarily chooses to work by performing commercial sex acts, while “victim” is someone who is forced or coerced into performing commercial sex acts. The term “the life” is used to describe the world of sex trafficking, while “real world” is used to describe life outside the control of traffickers. Below is a glossary of terms provided by NP1 that are commonly used in the sex trafficking industry and are also used by organizations working to fight the sex trafficking industry. There are other terms I will use that need further explanation, for example; “vulnerability” is used to describe certain characteristics that make individuals more susceptible to being sex trafficked, “victim” is

used to explain individuals who have been forced into commercial sexual exploitation, “trafficked” is the term used to describe the act of being sexually exploited, and “survivor” refers to an individual that has escaped a life of sexual exploitation. I will be using these terms and terms people in these organizations aimed at fighting sex trafficking use (Figure 1) for the remainder of the paper. I will demonstrate how important internal explanation of these words are to specific organizations below.

Sex trafficking victims

When recruiting victims, sex traffickers, also known as pimps (Chin & Finckenauer, 2011; Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014; Verhoeven, van Gestel, de Jong, & Kleemans, 2013; Zhang, 2011) target women and children that show signs of vulnerabilities such as; poverty, unemployment, drug addiction, little or no family support, minimal or absence of education or employment, and or women and children who have been physically or sexually abused (Meshkovska, 2015; Reid, 2012). Due to these vulnerabilities, potential victims are susceptible to sex trafficking and can be easily manipulated, brainwashed and or coerced into trusting their trafficker. Once trust is established, many victims become dependent on their trafficker, leading to a life of sexual exploitation and abuse. This trust and dependency allows traffickers to control their victims, making it easier to frequently relocate them to different cities and towns. Sex trafficked victims are often living out of hotels, performing commercial sex acts for strangers and are under heavy surveillance by their trafficker. All money victims receive from “johns” during sex trafficking activities, are given to the victim’s trafficker.

Although certain vulnerable characteristics attract sex traffickers to their victims, not all victims carry these vulnerabilities and some young girls and women get involved through voluntary sex work in hopes for a higher income (Meshkovska, 2015; Pajnik, 2013; Stoecker, 2000; Surtees, 2004). Once involved in this line of work, it is common for a trafficker to come in contact with independent sex workers and force them to work for him through violence, threats or other forceful behaviors.

Victim identification is an important tool taught by NP1 in this study to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities. Victim identification is a form of prevention education for sex trafficking and educates community members and service providers what to look for when identifying a potential sex trafficking victim. Prevention education is a common method used by NP1 that is aimed at educating the community in an attempt to prevent sex trafficking before it starts.

Traffickers

Pimps or traffickers, will often begin to romantically pursue their target in order to gain trust and achieve “boyfriend status” from their victim (Meshkovska, 2015). Once boyfriend status is achieved and trust is gained, the pimp will begin to control their victim through emotional dependence, intimidation and/or violence (Meshkovska, 2015). Even though the majority of sex trafficking cases recorded involve male pimps, sometimes the emotional abuse and brainwashing experienced by sex trafficking victims can result in the victim becoming the traffickers (Meshkovska, 2015; Zheng, 2011). Research also shows evidence of victims acting within recruiting and transportation roles for a male trafficker, while simultaneously being trafficked themselves by the same trafficker they

are recruiting and transporting victims for (Meshkovska, 2015; Surtees, 2008). This change of roles amongst victims shows how effective the trafficker's abusive manipulation and brainwashing tactics are while concurrently exposing the intense dependence victims come to have on their traffickers. The combination of the victim's vulnerabilities with violent coercion and manipulation are so intense, the victims may eventually become the traffickers.

During one of the interviews in this study, a sex trafficking survivor explained her vulnerabilities to sex trafficking included previous sexual abuse. She was abused by her uncle as a young girl. Years later, a trafficker began to recruit her by pretending to romantically pursue her. The trafficker's ruse was effective, and the victim ended up being sex trafficked for eight months. This personal narrative explains how traffickers target vulnerabilities in young women and use these vulnerabilities to gain trust with their victims.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the way in which to determine the success of these methods used by the selected nonprofits to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities. For example, NP2 works to provide housing for the homeless, which fights homelessness, a major vulnerability to sex trafficking. However, even if a client of NP2 does obtain housing, it is difficult to indicate if the client continues to avoid sex trafficking activities. Due to victims being so traumatized after being sex trafficked, and the nature of the subject with its underground and illegal characteristics, it is difficult to gauge how effective these methods for fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities really are.

Organization of remainder of study

Below is a literature review about the topic of sex trafficking, discussing what previous studies have discovered when working to fight sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities. Following the literature review is the explanation of the ethnographic study conducted, that focused on two different nonprofits working to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities in Humboldt, County, California. One nonprofit is led by a survivor of sex trafficking and works to spread awareness through prevention education, not only to the public, but to local human service agencies such as health care providers, law enforcement, social workers and teachers within the community. The second nonprofit works with the local homeless population and is actively doing their part to get people off the streets and living in either one of their shelters or low-income housing options in the area. The rest of this paper is an explanation of their strategies to help fight vulnerabilities to sex trafficking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are different strategies used throughout the globe in attempt to decrease sex trafficking vulnerabilities in support of the abolition of the industry. Some campaigns and nonprofits, focus on educating the public and spreading awareness about the topic, while other campaigns work to directly liberate those that are being trafficked. There is much research in contemporary literature discussing attempted methods utilized to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities and eradicate this underground industry. Below is a literature review discussing methods used by multiple nonprofits to fight sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities.

Kevin Bales, the president of Free the Slaves, an anti-slavery organization, is a contemporary human trafficking abolitionist that uses multiple methods for his fight against sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities. He spreads awareness on trafficking by educating the public, while also liberating those enslaved throughout the globe. He has been doing this humanitarian work since the early 1990s (Trodd, 2007). The methods Bales and his supporters use to help facilitate liberation to those being trafficked, involve a Socratic dialogue that pushes victims to recognize that they are enslaved (Trodd, 2007). This is accomplished by asking the victim questions about their lives until they recognize their enslavement (Trodd, 2007). Bales does not consider himself to be rescuing victims and instead considers himself a guide to assist vulnerable people into finding their own way out of enslavement while refusing to “buy” victims out of slavery (Trodd, 2007) as that process as well as the long term, legitimates the slavery model and destabilizes

agency. Another method Bales uses throughout his campaign focuses on a plan of action for the victim after liberation. Bales helps liberate victims only if there is a promising, fully funded plan of action after enslavement (Trodd, 2007). This particular method is extremely effective in keeping those that have been trafficked from returning to a life of slavery and abuse. When victims of sex trafficking escape, they are in desperate situations and have little or no resources to survive in normal society, in turn enhancing many of their vulnerabilities, which makes it easy to fall back into the sex trafficking world. Therefore, having a plan of rehabilitation and recovery is crucial. According to Bales, "It is the government's responsibility that no one is trafficked into slavery within our borders; therefore, when a victim of slavery is found, the government must be prepared to give that person whatever services are needed, and all the time required for recovery and readjustment. Each survivor of human trafficking is entitled to physical and mental health services, housing, language training, and legal and employment counseling. It will mean additional funding across the board, but considering how low the existing budget is, it would be money well spent." (Bales, 2009).

Bales' method is very similar to those used by NP1. NP1 provides contact information for those who believe someone they know is being sex trafficked or being targeted. Once NP1 receives that information, they then do their best to find the victim and explain to them what sex trafficking is, in an attempt to lead the victim away from enslavement. NP1 has also been successful with providing job opportunities to surviving victims so they do not get sucked back into the sex trafficking life (similar to Bales' plan of action after enslavement). For example, NP1 has hired survivors of sex

trafficking to work for the agency in an attempt to offer employment opportunities and keep the victim clear of sex trafficking activity. If NP1 is unable to hire survivors of sex trafficking, they then do their best to assist the victim in looking for employment.

Regional Accounts

San Diego, California has been ranked by the FBI as one of the top 13 cities with the highest rate of child sex-trafficking in the United States (Peet, 2016). In 2015, The San Diego Public Library (SDPL) conducted an anti-sex-trafficking campaign called Out of the Shadows, working to raise awareness about the topic (Peet, 2016). The SDPL used different methods including trainings to educate supporters regarding victim identification and how to begin a conversation with a victim or someone being targeted for sex trafficking. SDPL also provided resources and services to those in need, along with extensive out-reach and teen peer advocate programs (Peet, 2016). NP1 uses similar education tactics as SDPL campaign. NP1 also provides trainings for the public and community service providers to educate trainees on the topic, such as sex-trafficking signs, victim identifications and how to approach survivors.

In 2008, a San Francisco non-profit anti-sex-trafficking organization called Not for Sale, began a campaign to fight vulnerabilities of sex-trafficking with a method they called “backyard abolitionism” (Shih, 2016). This strategy involved educating local citizens about victim identification for sex trafficking and trainings on how to help liberate sexually trafficked victims in their daily lives (Shih, 2016), which is similar to the community education and liberation methods used by Bales and NP1. This method

also includes local civilian surveillance group with participating vigilantes patrolling neighborhoods suspected of having a high prevalence of sex-trafficking (Shih, 2016). The difference between the education and community involvement methods used by Bales and NP1, is they do not seek out sex trafficking activities in particular neighborhoods, and instead act when those activities are reported. In the last twenty years, similar methods of vigilante abolitionism and rescue attempts have become a common strategy for fighting sex-trafficking across the globe (Agustín, 2012; Shih, 2016; Soderlund, 2005). The problem with this method of “backyard abolitionism”, is when vigilantes seek out neighborhoods suspected of having high sex trafficking activity, these neighborhoods are usually non-white neighborhoods. This is due to the United States’ history of racism and oppression. With that in mind, many scholars consider this non-state civilian rescue and surveillance method, as an advanced form of state approved discrimination, directed towards the regulation and surveillance of immigrants in the United States (Shih, 2016). While Not for Sale’s intentions are good, profiling specific neighborhoods is unfair to the marginalized populations living within those neighborhoods.

Institutional Based Methods

Some scholars believe that the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is an effective method while working with sex trafficking vulnerabilities (Orme & Sherriff, 2015), which differs from methods used above because it emphasizes systemic problems and indirect methods. The ecological systems theory involves social workers working with victims using a multidisciplinary approach that involves micro, meso and

macro levels (Orme & Sherriff, 2015). At the micro or individual level, social workers can evaluate informal components that lead to sex trafficking vulnerabilities (Orme & Sherriff, 2015). Cecchet and Thoburn (2014), conducted a study while using the ecological systems theory in order to evaluate experiences of female survivors of sex trafficking (Orme & Sherriff, 2015). At a micro level, the study revealed individuals had poor relationships with their family, while regarding the meso level, poor or unsafe relationships with families increased emotional problems, in turn leading to increased vulnerabilities to sex trafficking (Orme & Sherriff, 2015). Evaluating the macro system, survivors inhabited environments where sex trafficking was prevalent (Orme & Sherriff, 2015).

Many scholars believe that multidisciplinary approaches to resisting sex trafficking vulnerabilities involve the collaboration of multiple social services including; medical services, law enforcement, housing services, legal aid, employment services, counseling services, social services, along with religious initiatives as well (Orme & Sherriff, 2015). When using this multidisciplinary approach, it is suggested that a single social worker should act as the main point of contact in order to gain trust with survivors and avoid a disconnect between desired services (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2014, Orme & Sherrif, 2015). Multidisciplinary methods are used by both NP1 and NP2. NP1 and NP2 work with medical personal, law enforcement, housing services, legal aid, as well as employment services in order to fight vulnerabilities to sex trafficking.

Another theory-based psychological approach to fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities includes a strategy called strengths perspective. This approach is

considered to be an effective tool when social workers attempt to build trust with sexually exploited victims or those vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Orme & Sherriff, 2015).

This approach seeks to change the discourse on the topic, avoiding degrading connotations such as “prostitute,” and replacing it with phrases such as “commercially sexually exploited” (Kalergis, 2009, Orme & Sherriff, 2015). This discourse is used throughout NP1 and NP2’s methods when talking with sex trafficking survivors.

A third institutional based approach to fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities includes the victim-centered approach. This method involves social workers becoming familiar with the needs and priorities of sexually exploited victims (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2014, Orme & Sherriff, 2015). Cultural competency, ethnic and racial awareness, language proficiency and trauma-informed practices are all required by social workers in order for this method to be effective (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2014, Orme & Sherriff, 2015). Combining these three theoretical models create a larger theoretical framework composed of effective methods to help victims of sex trafficking and those susceptible fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities (Orme & Sherriff, 2015). The victim-centered approach is also utilized by NP1 and NP2.

Online commercial sex advertisements promoting sex trafficking throughout the U.S. have become extremely prevalent, and in 2010 Craigslist’s adult service section was legally banned in order to prevent sex-trafficking activity (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Since this ban, advocates and police throughout the nation have been pushing for surveillance on other free advertisement websites such as backpage.com, in order to identify victims and arrest traffickers (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). U.S. law enforcement has identified free

online sex advertisements as the leading strategy used by traffickers to sexually exploit young women and children, therefore law enforcement has used these popular websites as a common method to identify victims, traffickers and traffic rings (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Although police have caught many traffickers using this website tracking method, some researchers believe the result has only allowed traffickers to form more secretive strategies to sell their victims, rather than resulting in the eradication of sex-trafficking (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Creating codes and using social media websites and less popular online services are all new and innovative ways in which traffickers are promoting their product, in turn making it harder on law enforcement to identify sex-trafficking activity online (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Therefore, the problem with the method of fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities online is that commercial sex advertisements are no longer saturated within two popular adult service sites like backpage.com and craigslist.org (Heil & Nicholas, 2014).

The internet can be used to support and combat sex trafficking activity (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). It is estimated that 25-33% of sex-trafficking cases are exposed through the use of internet searches and stings by U.S. law enforcement (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Police surveillance of these adult service websites are a common method used to search for victims of sex trafficking, however, many times police were pushed to search these websites after a community member had seen a victim advertised online (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). In 2013, the FBI's Operation Cross Country utilized the internet to reveal 105 child sex-trafficked victims, in turn, resulting in the arrest of 150 pimps throughout 76 U.S. cities (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2013, Heil & Nicholas,

2014). Thus, it is clear that these internet sites are an effective method to fighting sex-trafficking vulnerabilities and identifying traffickers, trafficking rings and victims online. However, when taking displacement theory into account, some scholars believe that advocates working to shut down these adult sites are only displacing criminal activity to other more concealed avenues, making it harder for law enforcement to identify sex-trafficking activity (Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Displacement theory explains that displacement is the movement of a crime from one place, offender, time, tactic or target, to another as a result of crime prevention (Guerette & Bowers, 2009, Heil & Nicholas, 2014). Although displacement seems inevitable when combating any form of crime, the results of the FBI's Operation Cross Country proves using the internet as a method to combat sex-trafficking can be successful. Therefore, instead of working to shut down these free online sites like many advocates promote, many scholars believe we should keep these sites active and use them to track sex trafficking activity (Heil & Nicholas, 2014).

METHODS

Research Approach

In order to identify effective methods to fight sex-trafficking vulnerabilities, qualitative research methods were used for this study. Qualitative research is normally conducted in a way that utilizes human interaction between the researcher and research subjects (Creswell, 2003). Thus, it appeared a more interpretive approach would be most efficient when identifying proper methods to fight sex-trafficking vulnerabilities.

Through this qualitative approach, I conducted an ethnographic research study on two non-profits in Humboldt County, California, to better understand effective methods used to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities. Ethnographic research is found on a set of methods in which the researcher to participates overtly or covertly in a person's life, a society, a culture or institution, in order to accurately observe and better understand its functioning (Seale, 2012). The overt approach to ethnography involves the participants being aware that they are being observed (Seale, 2012). For this project, I used the overt approach, informing all participants they were being observed.

The first nonprofit analyzed (NP1), is a survivor led anti-sex-trafficking organization that utilizes prevention education and informs the public, foster parents, health care providers, service providers and local authorities about sex trafficking, its vulnerabilities and how to help prevent sex trafficking in the community. Employers at this nonprofit include survivors of sex trafficking, social workers and volunteers. The

second nonprofit analyzed, is an agency that aims at helping homeless people in Humboldt County find a home, in either in a local shelter or low-income housing. Although the initial goal of this organization is to assist the homeless in acquiring housing, NP2 still manages to combat sex trafficking by indirectly fighting a major vulnerability that is homelessness. Employees working for this agency include social workers and volunteers.

While conducting research, I acquired data through watching, listening, discussing and obtaining any relevant information appropriate for the study at hand (Seale, 2012). Ethnographic methods used involved the participant observation method. The combination of social interaction within the subject field to observe, listen, record and ask questions when necessary were utilized (Seale, 2012). Four formal and multiple informal interviews with employees from each nonprofit were conducted throughout the study as well. Due to the nature of the research, interview questions were acquired based on information observed while conducting the research.

Population

Participants in the study were employees and volunteers working for two nonprofits actively fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities in Humboldt County, California. There are approximately five employees working for NP1 and about 15 employees working for NP2. Employees include sex trafficking survivors, social workers, volunteers and community members. Program leaders and presidents of each organization signed forms giving consent for their organization to participate in the study.

Documents to ensure confidentiality to participants and their organizations were provided as well.

Data collection methods

Data collection methods include field notes, recordings, observing, listening and formal and informal interviews with key informants. Key informant interviews allowed face to face interaction with important subjects involved in the organizations and was beneficial for any questions researchers had regarding the data (Seale, 2012).

Data management

Analytic memos, field notes and recordings were utilized to manage the data. Field notes and recordings were taken during participant observation or immediately after relevant events occur. Analytic memos were used in order for researcher to record ideas that emerge while conducting the participant observation method (Seale, 2012).

Data analysis

Regarding data analysis, I used constant comparison and coding during analyzation. Coding involves organizing the data obtained and categorizing similar information. Constant comparison requires the researcher to compare data findings and can support organization and relevance (Seale, 2012).

Research conducted

This data was acquired by conducting an ethnographic research study on two nonprofits located in Humboldt, County California. Both nonprofits provide services and methods that are used to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities throughout the county. Participant observation was the ethnographic method utilized during the study. The

ethnography was considered to be overt, meaning all participants involved were aware of their participation in the ethnographic study. The participant population involved in the study were employees of both nonprofits. The ethnography was conducted over a two-month period and focused on effective methods used to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities. Coding was used in place of the names of the nonprofits, along with the names of their president and/or program leader.

DATA

Methods Used by NP1 to Fight Sex Trafficking Vulnerabilities

The first nonprofit studied (NP1), is a survivor led organization, dedicated to spreading prevention education and awareness to the public regarding sex trafficking. NP1 provides trainings to local service providers, law enforcement, medical providers, foster parents and other community members, in order to educate them on how to identify sex trafficking activities, victims, and traffickers. NP1 trainings also advises trainees on how to approach and reach out to victims currently involved with sex trafficking, red flags that someone is being recruited for sex trafficking, and how to help victims after they escape their trafficker.

Website tracking

A significant method NP1 used in order to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities involves the documentation of commercial sex advertisements on a free advertising adult service website, backpage.com. Screenshots of all adult “escort” service advertisements on this website were taken each day of the week during this study for two months, between the hours of 8p.m. and midnight. Every night there were approximately 25-50 new advertisements on these adult websites. Screenshots were converted into files and labeled by date, time, name, race (as identified as NP1 recorder), physical description, location within the county and contact number. Files were saved onto a USB drive to be used to educate service providers during the organization’s trainings. Files were also

shared with local authorities to help them track sex trafficking activities throughout the area. During an interview, an employee of NP1 revealed that this method has helped local police with coming in contact with sex trafficking victims and traffickers, and has also given them a better understanding of transportation routes of sex traffickers throughout Humboldt County.

Informative presentation

NP1 used visual slideshows presented by public speakers working for the nonprofit, as a method to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities and educate service providers and community members on the topic. These presentations created by the organization, educate those being trained on what sex trafficking is, how to identify a



Figure 2

trafficker or pimp, potential signs of young women and children who are susceptible to sex trafficking, victim identification and how to assist victims who have been sexually trafficked. Public speakers employed by NP1 were in charge of displaying each slide and transitioning to the next slide, as they discussed each slide's concept in greater detail. Slide information was short and concise with very little text, in order to grab the audience's attention with main points (Figure 2). With the main idea displayed on each slide, the public speakers then filled in the gaps with more information, while answering any questions trainees may have during the presentations.

The first slideshow presentation that took place during the study, began with the participants and/or public speakers, explaining the extensive prevalence of sex trafficking that takes place on the website backpage.com. This website is a free adult advertisement website frequently used by sex traffickers for commercial sex advertisements. During the presentation, NP1 explained that Humboldt County's number one platform for sex trafficking is backpage.com. With Humboldt County, being an extremely rural community, the use of websites such as backpage.com, makes it easier for sex traffickers to sell their victims from a different location and then transport them using the major freeways or highways found in Humboldt County.

NP1 continued to explain that on the website, the "johns" reveal what town they are located in. Next, backpage.com displays all commercial sex advertisements within that area. Backpage.com and other adult advertisement websites make it easier for sex trafficking to reach rural areas due to the discreteness of ordering sex online. Because of

the rise of the internet, sex trafficking can reach all populations, not just those in metropolitan areas. Backpage.com is similar to Craigslist.org with free advertisements promoting adult services and/or escorts. The term “escort” is used on the website in place of prostitution due to prostitution being illegal in the state of California. NP1 continued to describe that majority of the time, young women displayed in the ads were attempting to conceal that they are being trafficked by advertising they do not have a pimp. Instead, they claim that they are independent sex workers to protect their trafficker from law enforcement. Trainees were also told throughout the trainings that many times these young women are minors.

NP1’s presentation proceeded to inform trainees that 70-80% of commercial sex advertisements on backpage.com in Humboldt, County and the rest of the U.S., are women of color, because marginalized and historically oppressed populations are more prone to sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities. With Humboldt County, California’s demographic being predominately white, with very little diversity (datausa.io), it is apparent that young women are being transported here for sex trafficking purposes. Systemic racism and historical oppression, both being major components of the United States’ history, are explained throughout the presentation as the central basis of why young women of color are predominantly the ones being sex trafficked. People who are oppressed and more desperate or insecure financially and socially than other groups of people, such as the African American community in the U.S., are going to be more susceptible and have more vulnerabilities to becoming involved in sex trafficking and sex trafficking activities. NP1 proceeded to explain, “this is not to say that white people are

not involved in sex trafficking, it is just more common within diverse communities because these communities have experienced more oppression and suffering than white communities and are therefore faced with more vulnerabilities such as poverty, drug abuse, lack of employment and education opportunities, homelessness, weak family/social support and prior experience of sexual abuse.”

The presentation continued to discuss different codes used on backpage.com advertisements to notify potential “johns” of specific sexual acts being offered, if the person being advertised is a minor, and/or what type of “john” the advertisement is targeting. These codes are utilized to make it difficult for law enforcement to get involved and to conceal the commercial sex activities being advertised. These codes support the prevention of law enforcement proving sex trafficking was taking place.

Another code used throughout backpage.com involves advertisements displaying fake pictures. The presentation discussed that fake looking pictures could potentially indicate the advertisement is offering a minor for prostitution. For example, if there is an advertisement on backpage.com, portraying a professional looking modeling picture or another photo that looks as though it may have been downloaded from the internet, that could possibly be code for minors being sex trafficked. Emojis and special phrases are also used throughout ads to give clues to particular sexual activities being advertised. Much of the information used in these presentations is information only a survivor of sex trafficking who has experienced this life knows and can explain (ie. code meanings and signs of minor activity). Therefore, this information provided by NP1 is much more

critical and in depth, discussing cultural guidelines used throughout the sex trafficking world that only victims who had been trafficked would know.

The presentation also consisted of multiple employees from the organization sharing their story of becoming sex trafficked and how they escaped their trafficker. Employees explaining how they became involved in the life of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation exposed a more personal approach to spreading awareness and education regarding sex trafficking. Listening first hand to a sex trafficking survivor's experience of being sexually exploited allowed the topic to become more of a reality to the audience. One participant explained that she was sexually abused by a family member at a very young age before becoming sex trafficked, revealing the connection of the vulnerability of previous sexual abuse associated with sex trafficking.

Another participant revealing their story of becoming sex trafficked, explained that their trafficker brutally beat them within an inch of their life to scare them from running away and escaping the life of forced prostitution. This survivor still struggles with their health and the repercussions of that beating years later. Every participant that spoke during the presentation had at least one of the previously listed vulnerabilities prone to sex trafficking and began their narrative explaining that vulnerability and how it led them to the sex trafficking world.

Locations where sex trafficking takes place was also discussed during the presentation. NP1 explained that hotels, bars, clubs, casinos, streets, internet, bus stops, marijuana grow scenes and brothels are all common locations used for forced prostitution and sex trafficking. Hotels were explained to be the most popular location for sex

trafficking activities. Malls, along with bars and clubs, are considered usual recruitment locations for traffickers targeting new victims.

During another presentation produced by NP1, the discussion of sex trafficker's and their tactics, was the focal point. NP1 explained some common characteristics of pimps and how to identify them in everyday life. People most susceptible to being targeted by sex traffickers was also discussed throughout the presentation. NP1 explained that vulnerable characteristics sex traffickers look for when recruiting victims include poverty, runaways or homelessness, poor family or social support, history of sexual or physical abuse, foster children and members of marginalized populations. Once these characteristics have been spotted by a sex trafficker, they then begin to recruit victims, many times acting as a boyfriend figure in an attempt to gain trust. The traffickers trick young women and girls by buying them materials things and promising them unrealistic lifestyles. Once the victim is emotionally attached to the trafficker and has been successfully isolated from their family and friends, the trafficker begins to sexually and economically exploit the victim, giving them little to no options besides forced prostitution. The victim is then living out of hotels and is frequently relocated to new cities while being under constant surveillance of the trafficker. If playing the boyfriend role is not a successful tactic, NP1 explained that traffickers will resort to violent coercion to force their victim into prostitution.

Contemporary slave narrative

NP1 has some employees working for the nonprofit that are survivors of sex trafficking. Having experienced this form of contemporary slavery, a favored method

used by NP1 to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities through prevention education and spreading awareness is allowing victims to share their personal stories of being sex trafficked. NP1 holds multiple public forums throughout Humboldt, County, California, where survivors tell their story. This method for fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities is called the contemporary slave narrative method.

Before every informative public sex trafficking training, NP1 begins the forum by having their main public speaker, a survivor of sex trafficking working for the nonprofit, explain their personal story of being sex trafficked. The speaker's story began with her explaining a major vulnerability to sex trafficking which is having experienced prior sexual abuse. It is common for this method used to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities, to begin with explaining a vulnerability that led to the survivor's enslavement (Johnson, 249). This survivor was abused by her uncle when she was a minor. Eventually, when she turned 19, she began being recruited by a trafficker. She explained all the red flags that are discussed throughout NP1's sex trafficking trainings, when identifying a trafficker. The trafficker was good looking, much older than her, buying her expensive material things and essentially courting her in order to gain trust and seclude her from her family and social circle. Being only 19, this tactic worked and soon NP1's speaker believed that the man recruiting her for sex trafficking was her boyfriend.

Early into their "relationship" the speaker's new boyfriend asked to take her on a trip for a long weekend. She agreed, due to the trafficker having gained her trust and she was soon taken out of town. The next thing she knew, the speaker found herself in a hotel room with her new "boyfriend" emotionally abusing her by yelling at her and explaining

that she was actually there to work for him and make him money by performing commercial sex acts. When she tried to leave the hotel room, the trafficker began physically abusing her and soon violently coerced her into becoming the trafficker's prostitute. Having no way out, NP1's speaker soon found herself being held hostage while performing sex acts for strange men. The trafficker never let the speaker out of his site, even if she thought she was alone, she explained he was always watching her. The money that was made during these sex acts was never her money and was immediately taken by the trafficker. She was violently coerced into becoming a prostitute and was being economically and sexually exploited (Androff, 210), which is why many scholars consider sex trafficking to be modern day slavery.

This method of contemporary slave narratives, is an essential tool for fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities and the industry itself, due to the magnitude and breadth of the information the survivors provide (Johnson, 246). Contemporary slave narratives explain to the public how real and urgent this issue is, allowing these narratives to have an impressionable effect on its listeners.

Website method

Another method NP1 used in order to help fight vulnerabilities to sex trafficking involves the use of an informative website. The website is used to inform the public about sex trafficking and provides dates of sex trafficking trainings taking place throughout the U.S. In order to attempt to attract all populations, NP1 created a website that was visually appealing to all genders so it would attract and inform men as well as women. An employee of NP1 explained during an interview, that many organizations working to

spread awareness about sex trafficking provide informative websites that are stereotypically and ascetically pleasing to women, saturated for example, with images of hearts and flowers, despite the disturbing topic. An NP1 participant went on to explain why this is a problem, “because men (who are the predominant buyers of commercial sex and prostitution) need to become informed about the topic in order to decrease the demand for the sex trafficking industry”, in turn, promoting the industries abolition, while fighting its vulnerabilities as well. Therefore, NP1 created a website during this ethnography, that was designed to be gender neutral. Colors and images were chosen to appeal to all populations and grab all reader’s attention in order to inform the public about the realities of sex trafficking.

Theatrical method

NP1 utilized the art of theater to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities as well. During the study, NP1 collaborated with a local art community to create a play that metaphorically depicts the life of a sex trafficking victim and explains how difficult it is to escape from their trafficker. This play was intended to be performed at schools throughout the county in order to give middle and high school students a better understanding of sex trafficking. This is a unique form of prevention education through theatrical performance and has the capacity to attract not only student populations, but art lovers as well. At each performance within Humboldt, County, NP1 provided free brochures and pamphlets that provided additional information regarding sex trafficking.

Informative brochures

NP1 supplies informative brochures throughout the Humboldt, County, discussing the dangers of sex trafficking and how to identify signs of sex trafficking in your community (Figure 3). This form of prevention education aims at getting the community

involved to help report sex trafficking.

Human Trafficking defined

"all acts involved in the recruitment, abduction, transport, harboring, transfer, sale or receipt of persons, within national or across international borders, through force, coercion, fraud or deception, to place persons in situations of slavery or slavery-like conditions, forced labor or services, such as forced prostitution or sexual services, domestic servitude, bonded sweatshop labor, or other debt bondage."

Are you dating a trafficker?

From our experience, usually a pimp will pretend to be the boyfriend...

He will "date" a girl for months. It is during this courting phase that a bond is established. Brainwashing and manipulation are used to seclude the victim.

Typically, violence and threats are then used to force the girlfriend turned victim into a life of prostitution, making it believe it was her choice.

How can you tell if your daughter, friend or student is dating a pimp?

If three or more of the following apply to the relationship, this should be seen as a red flag and cause you to look a little further into the situation.

Identifying Pimps

- Fancy car, clothes, or jewelry.
- Frequently spends nights away or out of town.
- Acts out the hip hop culture.
- No actual job that one could visit... (example: he claims to have a record label or his own magazine company, owns bill boards, restaurants, etc)
- He has dreams of making it big and being successful. He will encourage her to become part of HIS dreams.
- Her dreams and goals for life will be put on hold for his.
- He pulls her into it everything becomes "we" in her conversation. When a personal internalizes a dream they will work harder to achieve it.
- Secludes her from family and friends by moving away.
- Attempting to fast track the relationship (moving and talking of marriage within a short time frame should be a cause for concern.)
- Decreasing Relationships. Healthy relationships should be expanding her circle of friends.
- Gets to know HER dreams and fears and goals and dangles that carrot inevitably.
- Carries multiple cell phones

Identifying Victims

- Tired during the day from working at night.
- Suddenly has expensive things.
 - high end name brand purse (such as Gucci), diamond bracelet, name brand clothes or nails and hair done on a regular basis.
- Increasingly interested in or talks a lot about his dream, "we're going to..."
- Older boyfriend, usually one not in school.
- Morals and values have slowly expanded.
- New tattoo or "brand" of initials, his name or a saying.
- Carries multiple cell phones – sometimes unnoticeable.
- Keeps eyes down while in public
- Starts to become secluded: you see her less and less

Figure 3

Methods Used by NP2 to Fight Sex Trafficking Vulnerabilities

The second nonprofit observed in this study will be called NP2 for confidential purposes. This nonprofit's mission is aimed at helping the homeless population within the area. They provide open food pantries, clothes, self-help groups and toiletries for clients in need. Their main motive is providing the homeless with resources and programs in order to help get them off the streets and into housing, fighting sex trafficking is solely a byproduct of their initial motive. This nonprofit consists of local social workers, and volunteers working to help those in need throughout the Humboldt, County area.

Housing

NP2 provides the homeless with opportunities to live in one of their many shelters, or to acquire low income housing within the area. NP2 works to help the homeless into programs that requires them to take specific measures in order to become eligible for housing. Many times, these requirements include getting sober from drugs or alcohol, actively looking for employment, along with having no recent criminal activity. Once a client of NP2 has been placed in a shelter or home, weekly check ins are conducted by employees to ensure the client is transitioning well in their new environment. These check ins are also utilized to confirm the client is still employed or actively looking for employment, drug free and have no criminal activity. Getting young women and children off the streets fights a major sex trafficking vulnerability that is homelessness.

The limitations with this method is the fact that Humboldt, County has such a high homeless population, even when clients get clean, become employed and have no criminal activity, there is a long waiting list to get into shelters and low-income housing. The waiting list for housing at NP2 can be up to three years long. Another limitation is many clients do not have a way to be contacted when they are at the top of the housing list because they do not own a phone or have an address to be reached at. Because of this, many clients miss their opportunity to obtain housing.

Local Resources

NP2 also provides local resources for sex trafficking victims or those being targeted for sex trafficking. The resources provided include phone numbers and email addresses victims can contact when in need of assistance. These resources include local domestic violence services, rape crisis hotlines, along with the contact information of the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

DISCUSSION

The primary vulnerabilities that allow people to become susceptible to sex trafficking include; poverty, homelessness, weak family and/or social structure, previous sexual and or physical abuse, drug addiction and lack of educational and employment opportunities. After examining NP1 and NP2's strategies to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities, there are some obvious similarities and differences to their tactics. It is clear that spreading awareness and education on the topic is a common method used by both nonprofits. They both provide informative brochures to educate the public about the dangers and signs of sex trafficking. This informative strategy in fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities allows the public to become more knowledgeable and aware about the topic, in turn helping the community identify sex trafficking behavior or activity.

NP1 goes a step further, by using an additional education tactic called prevention education. Prevention education includes educating the public on signs of vulnerable targets for sex trafficking and indications of traffickers, in an attempt to prevent sex trafficking before victims are recruited. Through this method, NP1 encourages the public to get involved and report to local authorities if they see signals of sex trafficking vulnerabilities or traffickers in their community. NP1 accomplishes their prevention education through lectures, brochures, informative websites, along with theatrical plays. NP1 working to involve community members if they see sex trafficking activities is also promoting a form of vigilante abolitionism in the community, that is similar to the San Francisco nonprofit, Not for Sale's method of backyard abolitionism. Both NP1 and Not

for Sale are encouraging community members to get involved and report to authorities if they see any suspicious behavior that could be linked to sex trafficking activities. A major difference between NP1 and Not for Sale's community involvement, is that Not for Sale goes looking for signs of sex trafficking in certain neighborhoods suspected of having a high prevalence of sex trafficking activity. This method of profiling neighborhoods can become problematic and seems invasive to those living there. In comparison, NP1 only acts when sex trafficking behavior has been reported.

When reviewing the informative brochures provided by NP1, it is clear that their main focus is to explain how victims of sex trafficking become manipulated and brainwashed into sex trafficking. The brochures explain how to identify not only victims, but also traffickers as well. They inform readers of "red flags" and signs that someone is being trafficked. When the trafficker is targeting a victim, majority of the time their main strategy is to gain trust from that victim through posing as the young woman or girl's boyfriend. The brochure explains that traffickers will buy their targets material things such as jewelry, fancy cars or clothes to gain trust in their targets. Other signs of victims the brochure discusses include; potential victims being tired and lethargic during the day, has a significantly older boyfriend and discusses their "dreams", change in potential victim's morality, new tattoo with "boyfriend's" initials or name, becomes isolated and is no longer surrounding themselves with family and friends, owns multiple cell phones and has trouble holding eye contact in public (rebeccabender.org).

When identifying a trafficker, the brochure informs readers the signs to look for include; unemployment but still have flashy, material things, leaves town often, deeply

involved in hip hop culture, claims to have record label, isolates victims from family and friends, talks to victim about unrealistic dreams of “making it big” saying “we” instead of “I”, moves very fast in relationship, carries multiple cell phones, along with many other manipulative strategies (rebeccabender.org). Relaying this information to the public regarding signs of traffickers and their victims, can promote community members to intervene when they notice signs of sex trafficking. The brochures provide resources and hotlines the public can call to report signs of sex trafficking, in hopes to save local victims. This brochure encourages a vigilante abolition method to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities, similar to the strategies used by Kevin Bale and the nonprofit Not for Sale.

NPI went a step further with informing the community about sex trafficking and fighting its vulnerabilities by providing an informative website explaining the topic. Not only does the website educate the public on the topic, but it also provides hotlines and contact information to call to report sex trafficking behavior or signs. This shows a combination of both education on the topic and ways community members can conduct civilian surveillance and vigilante efforts to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities, which has been a common strategy utilized by multiple nonprofits.

NPI’s artistic approach to spreading awareness and education about sex trafficking involved helping create and perform a theatrical play about what it is like for a young woman to become sexually trafficked. Utilizing art for advocacy purposes is a newer strategy applied by activists that is aimed at allowing public audiences to potentially change their perspective or outlook on particular social issues. For this

particular play, NP1 used the metaphor of Alice in Wonderland, to explain how sex trafficking victims become caught in the sex trafficking world, by comparing it to Alice falling down the rabbit hole. The play became very popular in the area and has been shown throughout multiple schools and venues across Humboldt, County California. The popularity of the play seems to show the success of this particular strategy involving advocacy and spreading awareness through art. According to Campana, 2001 “The arts’ role in activism can include the communication of a movement’s or group’s worldview, opposition, and vision; facilitation of dialogue towards political and social consciousness for both participants and the broader public; creation and expression of collective identity and solidarity; and working towards “cognitive liberation”, a critical transformation from hopeless submission to oppressive conditions to a readiness to change those conditions “, (Campana, 287).

NP2’s programs to get the homeless into shelters or low-income housing aims to fight homelessness, which is a major vulnerability to sex trafficking. Although this method is effective at fighting a major sex trafficking vulnerability (homelessness), opposing sex trafficking is only a byproduct of the agency’s initial goal that is to get homeless people off the streets. Young women and children without homes are extremely vulnerable to becoming trafficked and are often the easiest to force into sex trafficking, most likely due to homelessness involving an intersection of multiple vulnerabilities to sex trafficking (poverty, weak family and social circle, lack of educational and occupational opportunities). In order to acquire housing through NP2, those in need must meet certain requirements in attempts to become eligible. These requirements include

obtaining or looking for employment, sobriety, along with no recent criminal activity. These requirements seem fair as they promote a more healthy, stable lifestyle and are characteristics that many homeless people do not have. After interviewing an employee from NP2, it was explained that having these requirements promotes positive lifestyle choices in clients of NP2 and also shows the agency that clients are serious about turning their life around. Once eligibility is gained, clients are then put on a waiting list in order to get into a local shelter or low-income housing in the area. After a client reaches the top of the waiting list, they are interviewed in order to prove they still have all the eligibility requirements. Once proven that requirements are met, then clients are placed into housing. After housing is obtained, clients experience weekly visits by case workers working for NP2. These visits are for case workers to analyze how their clients are adjusting to their new living situation and to assist clients with any advice or services they can, to make their adjustment easier. This method utilized to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities is extremely helpful as it aims at getting people off the streets and helping them stay off the streets with weekly check ins and providing resources such as food or toiletries when needed. This method is effective when fighting vulnerabilities to sex trafficking by helping the homeless get out of desperate living situations that could lead to sex trafficking.

While this strategy effectively fights one of the major sex trafficking vulnerabilities by providing the homeless with housing, some problems with this strategy include lack of space in homeless shelters and the low-income housing provided. This lack of space results in waiting lists for shelters or housing that could last three years after

a client reaches housing eligibility. During the study, it was very common for clients of NP2 to become extremely frustrated when receiving the news that they were on a waiting list that could take as long as three years to get housing. Some clients would become so frustrated, they would often leave the agency and not finish the proper paperwork to sign up for the housing programs. This situation leaves them with little hope at finding a home and makes those in need even more susceptible to sex trafficking.

NP1 reaching out to community members and service providers with trainings on sex trafficking, allows the nonprofit to thoroughly inform trainees on the topic in order to help fight vulnerabilities to sex trafficking. The trainings involved a public speaker who works for NP1, utilizing a slideshow presentation to get main points across while the speaker explains each slide in further detail. The appointed speaker was also a victim of sex trafficking herself and began the presentation with her personal story of falling into the commercial sex industry and how she escaped. Contemporary slave narratives involved in the education of sex trafficking, seemed to have an impressionable impact on informing the trainees of this social issue's urgency. The victim narrative part of every training promoted the most questions and comments amongst all audiences observed.

The trainings then go on to discuss what sex trafficking is, along with signs of sex trafficking in the community, common targets of sex trafficking and how to approach victims and survivors of sex trafficking. This educational strategy seemed especially important for service providers who may be working with sex trafficking victims, as it explains how to communicate and interact with traumatized survivors after they have escaped their traffickers. These informative trainings also include slides explaining

pimp/trafficker culture. The slides discuss pimp perspective on women, websites, books and documentaries that aim to teach pimp and trafficker behavior, along with how traffickers should recruit their victims and spot vulnerabilities. Educating the public on sex trafficking and the behavior of those involved such as victims and traffickers, can potentially allow the public to report suspicious behavior in their community and help fight vulnerabilities to sex trafficking. Problems with this method is that these trainings generally attract certain populations, such as service providers, which leaves out a large portion of the general public.

NP1 working with local authorities by tracking backpage.com and their commercial sex advertisements seemed to be a very effective method when fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities. When utilizing this method, NP1 logs onto the website backpage.com every night in order to track local sex trafficking victims looking for customers online. NP1 would record the advertisement's description of the victim, their name, location, number to reach them, race, tattoos, picture and codes, (which are many times expressed through emojis). After interviewing a victim of sex trafficking working for NP1, she explained that different emojis express different sexual acts the victim is willing to perform for their customers. Once NP1 records all the information, they then give it to local authorities so they can better identify victims of sex trafficking within the area, approach them and offer help.

When looking through the records of the advertisements and connecting patterns within the data, it was clear that these young women were being relocated often. For example, a woman advertising commercial sex in one city within Humboldt, County,

would then be advertised in a different city the next night with the same name, picture, contact information and description. This strategy was effective in locating whereabouts of victims and their routes throughout the Humboldt, County. After interviewing an employee from NP1, it was revealed that this internet tracking method used to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities, had been helpful to local authorities for coming in contact with sex trafficked victims. This method is effective because once in contact, authorities can attempt to reach out to victims and possibly persuade them into leaving the sex trafficking world. It was also revealed by an NP1 employee that this method has resulted in the arrest of traffickers in the Humboldt, County area as well.

A drawback with this method is recording one's race solely from a photo can become complicated due to many people being ethnically ambiguous. Another issue with this method is that it is difficult to differentiate between independent sex workers and sexually trafficked victims on the internet. According to an employer at NP1, claiming to be an independent sex worker is also a popular cover up for sex trafficking victims that want to protect their pimp or trafficker from arrest.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this study, it is clear that spreading awareness through brochures and informative websites is a popular strategy to fight sex trafficking vulnerabilities.

Education is an effective tactic involved in essentially all advocacy causes worldwide.

Putting a theatrical spin on getting the word out about sex trafficking, such as NP1 did with their play regarding the world of sex trafficking, is effective in reaching different populations such as middle and high school students, along with theater fans.

Contemporary slave narratives also proved to be effective when educating the public on sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities.

Tracking commercial sex advertisements on websites such as backpage.com and craigslist.org, allow NP1 to track commonalities and codes used in ads, along with victims the ads were advertising. Many times, while tracking these ads, the same women would be displayed multiple times within the same week. By recording their race, age, location and description, NP1 can track sex trafficking activities within the community and report information to local authorities, which has shown to result in the arrest of traffickers and the liberation of victims as well. One limitation with this method however, involves the recording of a victim's race. Many times, victims displayed in these ads are ethnically ambiguous, making it problematic when working to identify victims.

NP2's housing and shelter programs are utilized to get young women off the streets. In turn, fighting a major sex trafficking vulnerability. However, there are a couple limitations to this strategy as well. One limitation is how long the waiting list is to get

low income housing in Humboldt, County, or even a place in a local shelter. This waiting list can be as long as three years. Another limitation is when a client does obtain housing, contacting the client can be difficult because of their lack of resources i.e. address or phone access.

NP1 being an anti-sex-trafficking organization, utilizes some obvious methods to fighting sex trafficking vulnerabilities such as educating the public through multiple platforms, along with directly liberating sex trafficking victims within the community. Clearly these are effective methods for fighting sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities. NP2 has a more structural solution to the problem due to the nature of their agency focusing on the homeless population and not specifically sex trafficking. Providing the homeless with homes is the initial motivation for NP2, however, in doing so, NP2 fights sex trafficking vulnerabilities in a more indirect manner. Although there are drawbacks to this method, when NP2 is successful in providing housing, they demonstrate an equally effective structural method to fighting sex trafficking and its vulnerabilities, NP1 has a more educational approach.

Some recommendations I have for future nonprofits working to fight sex trafficking includes exposure to middle school students. Although some may argue that sex trafficking is an inappropriate topic for middle school students, the harsh reality is sex traffickers begin to recruit victims as young as middle school age. Therefore, it is important to educate children in middle school in an attempt to prevent the possibility of sex trafficking.

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