

TECHNOLOGY AND CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE UNITED STATES, VENEZUELA, AND
THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

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The global sex trafficking industry – with profits over \$150 billion annually – will eventually become the number one crime in the world. It exists on a global, planetary scale and primarily affects the most marginalized populations of society. The numbers are staggering, and the statistics provide only a glimpse into the reality of the epidemic that is sex trafficking. Because sex trafficking touches the most vulnerable populations, it largely preys on children in every country and in every city. Modern day slavery far surpasses any of the past slavery in both number and scale, while most of the public remains seemingly unaware of its presence. However, as the paradigm of child sex trafficking gradually shifts towards greater uses of technology, it seems possible to leverage what appears as an enabler to also become an inhibitor. My thesis seeks to define technology's role in both the perpetuation and the prevention of child sex trafficking globally. It aims to shed light on progress made in the developed world, specifically the United States, and apply that to countries in the developing world, specifically Venezuela and the Philippines. The thesis will compare the roles of technology in these places in order to identify any possible anti-trafficking solutions. It looks at the various degrees to which technology fuels trafficking in each of the three countries and seeks to pinpoint the places where it can serve to deteriorate the supply and demand industry of child sex trafficking.

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This thesis is dedicated to the children around the world trapped in sex trafficking.
I will never stop fighting for you.

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A Note to the Readers:

This thesis stems directly from a passion for fighting child sex trafficking, but it also emerges out of an interest in learning in past, current and future trends of the industry as affected by technology. Criminals globally exploit vulnerable, marginalized and unstable populations, and I believe this serves as a paramount example of such activity. However, I see unique opportunities in technology to fuel the anti-trafficking movement and provide tools to international law enforcement agencies to efficiently combat the industry.

I do want to warn you. It provides insight into what I believe is one of the darkest crimes in existence on the planet today. In complete transparency, it was hard to write at times, but I believe in the importance of awareness. I think that as citizens of the world, we ought to understand what forces deteriorate morality and inhibit our children from living out their childhoods. It matters and like it or not - it affects us, whether directly or indirectly. It is our duty to play our part in fighting child sex trafficking. We must do our part in understanding it, so that we can continue to fight it and to find viable solutions to end it.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“You may choose to look the other way,
But you can never say that you did not know.”

-William Wilberforce

Slavery. Most people hear the word and are reminded of an antiquated institution, an era in which through brutal and obscene acts of the worst kind, the white race ripped Africans from their homes and transported them through the Atlantic slave trade to the West to work in cotton fields and sugar plantations throughout the Americas. While all of this is true, and these unimaginable times must not be forgotten but remembered as lessons for the future, slavery did not exist only in this isolated period of time.

According to the legal definition of slavery, “a slave is a person owned by someone and slavery is the state of being under the control of someone where a person is forced to work for another.” While slavery today has generally changed forms, modern day slavery far surpasses the African slave trade in magnitude and scale. Today, both labor and sex slaves around the globe work under the cruelest of conditions without any possibility of escape. An unsettlingly large percentage of these are children, most often working as child sex slaves.

Today, far more slaves exist around the globe than ever before. It remains difficult to assess the exact number, but The International Labor Organization estimates it is around 40.3 million, about 4.5 million of whom are exploited for sex. UNICEF estimates that of these, 2.1 million are children, yet few people understand the magnitude at which slavery functions globally. In an age of globalization, one of the world’s most horrific crimes remains hidden from the outside world. Do we know why slavery, as it transitioned from the Atlantic slave trade to

today's modern version, seems as if it has disappeared from the public eye? This thesis explores the technologies involved in the perpetration, perpetuation and prevention of what is arguably one of society's more horrific crimes against humanity: child sex trafficking.

Man's capacity for cruelty and reprehensible behavior is timeless, but the exploitation of children is singular in its depravity and opportunism. The power balance between a child and an adult will never be fair, will always be subject to a win lose proposition, and will lay rampant the possibility for exploitation. And when money is involved, the dynamics are further lopsided. In the sex trafficking industry, children become tools, products, and revenue streams who through no fault of their own find themselves trapped - products in a booming industry. Furthermore, as the internet expands into almost every industry on the globe, it spurs an evolution in businesses, including trafficking. Thus, it provides windows of opportunities for anti-technologies, while at the same time enabling sex trafficking to flourish through cryptocurrencies, the dark web, and social media.

In countries where the driving force is survival, the idea that children can be protected anywhere is a bold and overwhelming aspiration. My thesis begins with defining some of the basic terms related to this industry, because make no mistake it is an industry. Whether it is on the smallest scale possible with one pimp and one underage child or a gang enterprise with multiple products and services to sell, which could be in the form of the victims themselves or various packaged formats in which it is packaged, sex trafficking is a business. It is an industry with promoters, products and services to be sold, distribution channels and markets to grow developed, marketing tools to grow the business, and a marketplace that establishes the cost of services.

The classic story subsists consistently around the globe. It may appear slightly differently depending upon the region of the world, but the general outline remains. A child becomes the victim and the property of a pimp who, through psychological and physical manipulation, forces him or her to believe that prostitution is her only option. In most cases, this occurs through some form of force, fraud, or coercion, although these are not requirements for child sex trafficking. Often, the pimp convinces them that are loved and that his twisted version of family is the real version. Thus, a child grows to believe she does not have another option, and when rescue comes -if it even does, she still believes her pimp, and often attempts to stay or to run back, still fully believing she has little value and belongs nowhere else. Often, locating child sex trafficking victims can be the easiest part of fighting trafficking, because the pimp, through the most invasive of psychological maneuvers, has manipulated the mind of his victim. Then, he hides behind a screen and sells the child through the internet to men, who buy him or her, just like any other internet purchase. Today, criminals use the internet to sell children. Historically, trafficking victims walked the streets to find customers, in other words they “worked the track.” However, now, instead of walking the streets, traffickers increasingly use internet ads and adult websites to attract their customers. At the same time, traffickers, child pornographers, and customers protect their identity with highly encrypted software. Criminals have used the internet for illicit activity for years, and sex trafficking’s rate of growth is predicted to surpass that of the drug trade.¹ A child can be sold over and over again.

Today, the sex industry continues to evolve. In the developed world, criminals utilize the internet to exploit children at ever-increasing levels of anonymity, complicating prosecution attempts by law enforcement. Software services such as Tor and Bitcoin make tracking of

¹ Cassandra DiRienzo, “Compliance with Anti-Human Trafficking Policies: The Mediating Effect of Corruption,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 70, no. 5 (December 1, 2018): 525–41, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-018-9780-0>.

criminals practically impossible. This thesis seeks to address and define the internet and other technologies' role in the child sex industry in the United States. It then will compare this to the countries of Venezuela and the Philippines, both places with explosions of child sex trafficking, to attempt to predict the future of sex trafficking in these places and apply lessons learned within the developed world to the developing world.

I plan to provide a general understanding of the industry followed by an in-depth evaluation of the technologies involved. I then will identify the nuances and variations as they occur in each country. Who are the victims who become the products and services driving the profits? How do they enter this industry and what cultural and economic variables sustain it? Where do they come from, what are their demographics and what are the social and cultural and political context within which this industry continues to thrive? What is the role of technology and how has it contributed to the expansion of underage sex trafficking and how might it possibly be a part of reducing this crime? What is this technology? What are the services available, and how are they marketed? How can technology stem the ever-growing tide of this phenomenon?

CHAPTER II: THE INDUSTRY

“There can be no keener revelation
into a society’s soul than the way
in which it treats its children”

-Nelson Mandela [address at the launch of the Nelson
Mandela Children’s Fund, Pretoria, May 9, 1995]

The Traffickers

Although exceptions exist, the majority of child sex trafficking victims enter into the industry when the conditions that surround their childhood make them vulnerable to manipulation and abuse. In its essence, instability in various forms creates the ideal environment for children to become tools for abusers. Whether economic, environmental or political, instability fosters insecurity within a child and increases his or her likelihood to search for a source of stability outside of her home environment. Traffickers exploit this need for stability, using manipulation and deception to capitalize on these circumstances.

For the purpose of this paper and its argument, this chapter address the traffickers within the sex industry in the United States. Eventually, the nuances between the United States and those countries in the developing world will be further defined.

While the general paradigm remains the same – an unstable child falls prey to the fate of an abuser – each individual story typically contains some alteration of the paradigm. Thus, defining roles in recruitment for a trafficker and a victim proves difficult. However, many of the cases typically follow similar patterns. Alisa Jordheim in her book *Made in the USA: The Sex*

Trafficking of America's Children outlines the various relationships a trafficker initially has with the child. She writes about three different types of trafficking: that of the “lover boy”, “familial trafficking” and “survival sex.”²

Her explanation of the “lover boy” addresses the initial relationship that occurs countless times throughout first-hand accounts of sex trafficking. A trafficker seeks out a relationship with a child, most often through some form of social media or interactive internet page, although the relationship can initiate face-to-face, and attempts to fill a void with promises of a job opportunity, a new life, material possessions, love, and attention. Through the internet, the trafficker can pose as anyone and promise anything. He can directly contact a child, spotting vulnerability and initiating manipulation. The formed relationship often leads to face to face interactions, and eventually, the child begins to trust the trafficker, as the trafficker temporarily provides attention, love, security, finances, even the satisfaction of a drug addiction before exploiting the child for his or her own financial gain. In many cases, a male trafficker feigns love and devotion to create a relationship. NBC news recently interviewed an ex-pimp, who revealed many of the common tactics of pimps. He explained that in order to captivate the trust of his prospect, he understood that he could not approach stable, confident women. Instead, Harper sought out those who appeared to lack either love or familial stability – those who seemed vulnerable.³ Harper would then attempt to satisfy these needs through a stream of empty promises. According to an undercover agent on the scene, pimps become so well versed in their manipulation techniques that they often study textbooks, write down their notes and produce

² Alisa Jordheim, *Made in the USA: The Sex Trafficking of America's Children* (Oviedo, Florida: HigherLife, 2014).

³ “A Pimp’s Playbook: How a Former Pimp Talked His Way into Women’s Lives,” KING, accessed February 25, 2019, <https://www.king5.com/article/news/i-section/selling-girls/a-pimps-playbook-how-a-former-pimp-talked-his-way-into-womens-lives/281-490720568>.

Powerpoint presentations on the subject. Traffickers or pimps have perfected their recruitment to a science, a challenging escape for a child in the midst of an unstable environment.

In some cases, the trafficking of a child stems directly from within a family. These cases in contrast to many others do not leverage the internet or manipulative forms to develop the relationship. Instead, the relationship exists from the moment the child enters the world. These trafficking cases take many different forms, but generally, the cases prove the most difficult for law enforcement to identify. This is because the child, having never experienced a life outside of abuse, often does not understand the abnormality of his situation. Furthermore, feelings of guilt, fear and shame prevent the child from seeking help outside of his home. His body often becomes the means of income for other family members. Familial trafficking cases display the complexity of the child sex industry.

Lastly, Jordheim writes about survival sex. She states that “within forty-eight hours of running away, one in three adolescents will likely be solicited for commercial exploitation.”⁴ This highlights the connection between instability for a child and child sex trafficking. A child on the streets faces far greater odds of being trafficked, and often her entrance into “the life” begins as a result of a lack of survival means and a relationship with someone who can provide for both her emotional and physical needs. This is not to say that these children choose trafficking. By United States law, a child under the age of eighteen never chooses trafficking (although the courts sometimes to this day continue to treat them as criminals). Traffickers actively seek children in vulnerable situations in order to exploit their vulnerability, oftentimes convincing their victims that they owe them a debt that must be repaid through commercial sex acts. As noted by the *Polaris Project*, the pimp will require a sum of money to be made each

⁴ Jordheim, *Made in the USA: The Sex Trafficking of America's Children*.

night, enacting severe punishments if their demand is not met.⁵ In return for money, food and shelter, the child continually attempts to repay a debt, deepening a complicated abusive relationship between trafficker and child.

All of that being said, overwhelmingly, research and interviews point to sexual abuse in a pimp's childhood. Raphael and Myers-Powell highlight the strong ties between childhood sexual abuse by family members and the entry into career trafficking. Many of the interviewed ex-traffickers spoke to their abuse as children and cited "watch[ing] their mother[s] being physically assaulted by their father, stepfathers or boyfriends."⁶ These pimps often sold their own bodies prior to selling the bodies of others. A large majority of the interview participants grew up in homes where trafficking served as the family business. Mothers, fathers, stepparents and others often trafficked the youngest members of the family and then expected these members to eventually run the business. Still others, referred to their neighborhood environment as influential to their trafficking inception.⁷ Clearly, traffickers pass on their trade.

Traffickers manipulate and exploit. They identify the needs of a child or the lack thereof and use those as means to achieve their ends. The commercial sex industry thrives and flourishes because a supply - demand business always has a supply – children, whose instabilities and vulnerabilities leave them available for exploitation – and a demand that seems endless.

⁵ "Domestic Sex Trafficking: The Criminal Operations of the American Pimp" (Washington D.C.: Polaris Project, n.d.), <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/publications/victims/domestic-sex-trafficking-criminal-operations-american-pimp.pdf>.

⁶ Jody Raphael and Brenda Myers-Powell, "From Victims to Victimiziers:," *De Paul College of Law*, September 2010, 12.

⁷ Raphael and Myers-Powell.

The Customers

In popular imagination, a buyer of commercial sex with a child, otherwise known as a “john,” does not fit the profile of the average American male. In one’s imagination and Hollywood’s portrayal, these men do not appear similar to fathers and businessmen, but they would seem to be a group of pedophiles seeking to molest children. While these can be true, the average “john” actually would not fit into the pedophile category or generally appear differently than most other men. In fact, categorizing a john as a pedophile reduces the category to which these buyers belong and furthermore isolates their actions to only those who are “twisted” or “perverted.” In reality, these men do not seek any abnormal forms of sex or sex specifically from a minor. On the contrary, men who buy sex from children tend to claim a blissful ignorance of the child’s age. They often claim they genuinely believed their purchase of sex came from an adult who of their own volition exchanged sex for money. Even if underlying their claims of naivete, the john lies and deep down understands that the girl he buys for the night actually does not even reach eighteen years of age, he agrees to purchase her. Most likely, these johns do not categorize as child sex offenders or pedophiles because they will not abuse just any minor. Instead, the child’s presence in a trafficking ring to them seems to justify their decision to purchase, regardless of whether or not the child has a choice in the matter or any manner of escape.

Shared Hope International released a study in 2014 identifying the criminal justice consequences to buyers of commercial sex with children. Within this report, the organization profiled the buyers of commercial sex with minors. Of these, the organization reported 99% males of an average age of 42.5, although ages ranged from 18-89. A striking 8.4% of these were

teachers or school employees and 5.2% first responders. These relatively small percentages indicate that buyers come from all places, backgrounds, races.⁸

The Technology

Recruitment

Defining the role of the internet and other associated technologies constitutes the essence of my thesis. This chapter lays a foundation for the rest of my argument. It provides a fundamental understanding of the ever-increasing role of technological devices and the internet in perpetuating the child sex trafficking industry. Although child sex trafficking has existed for centuries, research indicates a strong evolution toward internet-based trafficking and child sexual exploitation in pornography.

Research denotes three major points at which the **internet** functions to promote child sex trafficking: recruitment, sale, and purchase. Along with these, internet and similar technologies serve as a platform for child pornography, a form of child sex trafficking that in recent years has seen explosive growth. These forms of trafficking coexist as this thesis will clarify. Most often, one does not exist without the other, and if they do, both constitute trafficking in the case of children. Although child sex trafficking's survival in the twenty first century largely depends on its ability, like other industries, to adapt to technology's growth and presence in society, its abolition also requires a leveraging of counter-crime technology to alleviate and eventually terminate the industry.

⁸ "Demanding Justice Report 2014" (Vancouver, WA: Shared Hope International, n.d.), http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Demanding_Justice_Report_2014.pdf.

Recruitment, in recent years, often begins with the internet. Although, countless cases exist in which traffickers identify their victims via already formed relationships or personal encounters, the overarching trend highlights a shift toward recruitment through **interactive webpages and online job postings**. A study by Thorn in collaboration with Texas Christian University surveyed over two hundred survivors of trafficking and found that although the majority of trafficking victims already knew their trafficker prior to entry into the life, the second largest group met their trafficker online.⁹ Susan C. Mapp in her book *Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* highlights the trafficker's use of the internet and **social media sites** like Facebook, illustrating how social media provides an easy access point for exploiters. She writes, "They [perpetrators] are able to reach out to many more vulnerable youth, and if their profile is not set to 'private,' the youth's vulnerabilities are there for the world to see: a fight with their parents, feeling unaccepted at schools, low self-esteem, and many others."¹⁰ This information directly feeds into the pimp's ability to adjust his own recruitment efforts to meet the needs of a specific child. If the child desires love and affection, he will make every effort upon initial contact and relationship development to fulfill those needs. Furthermore, the internet allows pimps to cast a wide net, meaning they can send out mass messages, connecting only with those that respond. A 2013 study connecting grooming online and vulnerable youth indicates changes in youth behavior online. It shows heightened risk behavior online as opposed to more normal behavior

⁹ Vanessa Bouché, "Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking" (Thorn, January 2018), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5501fe78e4b004aea0df799c/t/5a5d71379140b7de43a7a1f2/1516073298068/T_horn_Survivor_Insights_DMST_2018.pdf.

¹⁰ Susan C. Mapp, *Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

offline. Online communication appears to reduce inhibitions especially among adolescents.¹¹ In this way, the internet directly fuels the recruitment process.

Although pimps often recruit through relationship building, often sparked online, sometimes they capitalize on young adolescents through **false online job advertisements**. A trafficker may captivate his victims with a potential modeling career or otherwise. The internet allows traffickers to access far more potential victims and disseminate job advertisements to many more adolescents. These artificial jobs lead to a meeting place with the trafficking, which often marks the beginning of a life in trafficking for a victim.¹² In places like Venezuela and the Philippines, these job opportunities present the hope of a better life and the escape of poverty. Thus, the power of these advertisements in the developing world can exponentially increase.

Sale and Purchase

It seems obvious in today's world that an industry would advertise online, except when it comes to the commercial sex industry involving children. How is it possible that a trafficker can explicitly advertise sex with a child in a public domain?

The internet's draw for traffickers lies not only in its ability to network across the globe but its potential to hide a criminal, providing anonymity to an unimaginable degree. The internet, has disrupted industries around the globe, but its disruption of traditional street trafficking, girls "working the track," alters everything about the industry from its perpetuation to its abolition. This means that suddenly traffickers have access to far more children and far more customers all from the privacy of a computer with internet connection.

¹¹ "A Review of Young People's Vulnerabilities to Online Grooming - ScienceDirect," accessed February 27, 2019, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/science/article/pii/S135917891200122X>.

¹² Mapp, *Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking*.

As discussed earlier, traffickers use social media, interactive webpages, and false job advertisements to entice their victims. However, technology's role in sex trafficking does not stop with recruitment. Traditional trafficking involved what most would imagine when thinking of prostitution - something like the well-known scene from *Pretty Woman*. Today, street trafficking, although still in existence and widely used, gravitates to online trafficking. If a trafficker can advertise his product without risking exposure on the streets, he has a far greater chance of a success. More commonly, traffickers sell children through the internet. According to Thorn's study of technology, "...those who entered the life more recently are significantly more likely than those who entered the life further in the past to engage in online prostitution."¹³ Its more recent survey respondents indicated higher online prostitution engagements as compared with those victims who entered trafficking prior to 2004. Furthermore, it is important to note that in trafficking, online advertisements make disguising a child's age much easier than street advertising. Statistically, the number of customers continues to increase with the influx of online advertisements.¹⁴ In recent years, Craigslist and Backpage.com, websites previously used to advertise for commercial sex opportunities, have received public backlash. Eventually, the Congress signed a bill prohibiting sexual opportunities on websites such as both Craigslist and Backpage. While many praise this as a step towards preventing the child sex industry, others argue that this move drives trafficking further into the dark web.¹⁵ Some newspapers even report an increase in online advertisements in general as a result of the shutdown as escorts and other online sex services expand into the open market.¹⁶ While these laws mark significant progress

¹³ Bouché, "Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking."

¹⁴ Bouché.

¹⁵ Niraj Chokshi, "Craigslist Drops Personal Ads Because of Sex Trafficking Bill," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2018, sec. Business, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/23/business/craigslist-personals-trafficking-bill.html>.

¹⁶ Ryan Tarinelli, "Online Sex Ads Rebound, Months After Shutdown of Backpage," NECN, accessed February 27, 2019, <http://www.necn.com/news/national-international/Backpage-Down-Online-Sex-Ads-Rebound--501487242.html>.

towards the abolition of child sex trafficking, this paradox clearly indicates the concomitance of supply and demand, a phenomena that makes abolition much more challenging.

Pornography

Interestingly, a report by The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation affirms a link between men's use of pornography and their purchase of commercial sex. In interviews with 113 men who purchased sex, interviewees frequently indicated pornography as a reason for their purchase. Increased use of pornography at younger ages to these men blurred the lines between pornography and reality. One such interviewee stated "Porn makes more men try things. Men who are shown porn at a younger age categorize women more and see it as a harmless crime because they don't see them as a person."¹⁷ Pornography encouraged the men to perform sexual acts that prior to their purchase of sex only existed online. These men described trafficked girls as prostitutes with a choice and products for purchase. In their minds, "prostitutes are like a product, like cereal. You go to the grocery, pick the brand you want, and pay for it. It's business."¹⁸

Child sex trafficking and child pornography have become inextricably linked. Thus, one cannot discuss child sex trafficking without entering a conversation about the growing demand of child pornography. Catharine A. MacKinnon in her article for the University of Michigan Law School wrote that "In material reality, pornography is one-way women and children are trafficked for sex... From the standpoint of the person used to make the materials, the image of the person is still that person"¹⁹ Images and videos produced by traffickers become extra sources

¹⁷ Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, "Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex," n.d., 33.

¹⁸ Durchslag and Goswami.

¹⁹ Catharine A MacKinnon, "Pornography as Trafficking" 26, no. 4 (n.d.): 21.

of income and further methods of exploiting the child sexually while the media enter as the middle man between the trafficker and the customer.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, “United States federal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor...” Since November 20, 2018, the NCMEC has received 42.9 million reports of child abuse imagery.²⁰ Between 2013 and 2017, these reports increased from 1 million to 10 million. These statistics indicate the sheer growth in child pornography within the United States, a fraction of the growth around the world.

As indicated above, traffickers and customers alike increasingly indicate a blurring of reality and pornography with greater use of pornography. Customers often come to traffickers seeking a sexual experience outside of the norm - one they could only achieve through commercial means.²¹ It seems that the child pornography industry not only exists concomitantly with the child sex trafficking industry, but it feeds the demand for commercial sex as well. Both industries in recent years have experienced exponential increases, despite law enforcement attempts to shut them down. In the case of children, any child abuse imagery or videography indicates a form of illegal trafficking.

The internet has provided an ideal platform for these abuse images to disseminate across the globe. While a child can be recruited and sold through the internet, at the same time images of their abuse can be accessed by anyone willing to pay a price.

²⁰ “Sexual Abuse Imagery,” The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, accessed March 6, 2019, <http://www.missingkids.com/theissues/sexualabuseimagery>.

²¹ Durchslag and Goswami, “Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex.”

CHAPTER III: CYBER CRIME

“Concern for man and his fate must be the
chief interest of all technical endeavors.

Never forget this in the midst of
your diagrams and equations.”

- Albert Einstein

Cyber Crime Globally

In the age of globalization and the internet, crime along with other industries utilizes online platforms, and online platforms provide massive networks and anonymity at unparalleled levels. While the World Wide Web allows users to access to vast amounts of information and communication as never seen before, the publicly available portion of the web only makes up about 6-10 percent of the internet. The other 90-94 percent of the internet contains privately held information in what is known as the “Deep, Hidden, or Invisible Web.” These are “holdings on corporate Class B and C internal networks (intranets), email and/or databases, academic journals or individually held information.”²² The Deep Web contains a further encrypted portion of the internet, which is referred to as the Dark Web. Here, criminals circulate in an area of the internet that provides complete anonymity, often using online market places as platforms for their activity. According to The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, “A cryptomarket is ‘an online marketplace platform bringing together multiple vendors and listing mostly illegal and illicit goods and services for sale.’”²³ These cryptomarkets encompass a large

²² G. Hurlburt, “Shining Light on the Dark Web,” *Computer* 50, no. 4 (April 2017): 100–105, <https://doi.org/10.1109/MC.2017.110>.

²³ Judith Aldridge and David Décary-Héту, “The Internet and Drug Markets” (Lisbon, Portugal: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2016), http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/2155/TDXD16001ENN_FINAL.pdf.

majority of the underground criminal ecosystem. Annually, cybercrime costs between about \$0.3 to 1.4 trillion, which is equivalent to about 0.4 to 1.4 percent of the global gross domestic product.²⁴ This deeply embedded network has reached vast levels of sophistication even containing “its own search engines, community forums, and rating systems just like the WWW.”²⁵

Anyone can access the Dark Web. An online downloadable software called the “The Onion Router” (TOR) allows anyone to privately search the internet by hiding a user’s IP address. It originally served to protect privacy and freedom, but it has evolved to allow users to freely perform illicit activity online.²⁶ As Tor software continues to improve, it becomes increasingly difficult for law enforcement to identify criminals.²⁷ This means that while law enforcement may know about the crimes occurring on the dark web, TOR’s software makes it impossible for law enforcement to identify the criminals themselves. One source discussing the Tor’s role in enabling the proliferation of pedophile dens and child abuse imagery quotes a law enforcement officer who says “Imagine watching in the real world a child you know being abused behind an impenetrable glass as law enforcement just stand there watching it happen on a daily basis...some law enforcement even describe watching a child age through the abuse images.”²⁸ Tor’s software, among others, represents the nuance of child abuse in today’s era. It enables law enforcement to know about crime yet renders them powerless to stop it. In 2014, the Technology Innovation Management Review identified “three facilitating technologies in

²⁴ Mahmoud Gad, “Crimeware Marketplaces and Their Facilitating Technologies,” *Technology Innovation Management Review*; Ottawa 4, no. 11 (November 2014): 28–33.

²⁵ Hurlburt, “Shining Light on the Dark Web.”

²⁶ “Shielded by Technology, Child Sex Abuse Epidemic Festers on Darknet | Child Sex Abuse | Pedophiles,” accessed September 21, 2018, https://www.theepochtimes.com/shielded-by-technology-child-sex-abuse-epidemic-festers-on-darknet_2641611.html.

²⁷ Hurlburt, “Shining Light on the Dark Web.”

²⁸ “Shielded by Technology, Child Sex Abuse Epidemic Festers on Darknet | Child Sex Abuse | Pedophiles.”

crimeware marketplaces: anonymous e-currency (e.g., Bitcoin), anonymity networks (e.g., Tor), and mobile computing technology.”²⁹ Tor provides the cover needed for criminals to operate without involvement by law enforcement, while Bitcoin allows for an untraceable monetary exchange. Lastly, mobile computing technology increases the sheer number of devices available to operate these technologies. The combination of these three technological innovations makes cybercrime both possible and successful.

In 2013, the Federal Bureau of Investigation hacked and shut down an online criminal network called the Silk Road. In 2014, the FBI along with law enforcement from 17 other countries again shut down the Silk Road 2.0 and “...413 other underground marketplaces...” This online market place for “drugs, stolen credit cards, and other crimeware” represented a major portion of the criminal activity within the dark web. However, experts predict that crimeware in the dark web continues to evolve away from large central marketplaces like the Silk Road and toward a decentralized crime network. These individual marketplaces present a far more difficult problem for law enforcement.³⁰

Anonymity and Cryptocurrencies

As online criminal networks exchange goods and services, they must remain anonymous and untraceable. At the same time, because these goods and services often transcend country borders, criminals need a currency to avoid the complexity of exchange rates between international currencies. Thus, e-currencies, such as Bitcoin, have emerged “as enabler[s] of the

²⁹ Gad, “Crimeware Marketplaces and Their Facilitating Technologies.”

³⁰ Gad.

digital criminal enterprise.”³¹ They do not require regulation by any central bank or authority, and instead use a peer-to-peer computer network for regulation. Because of this, Bitcoin and its competitors maintain the privacy of both the buyer and the seller.

These e-currencies have evolved as the foremost method of exchange for underground criminal networks. For example, when the FBI crashed the Silk Road, it found that “...more than 100,000 buyers had used it to conduct \$1.2 billion worth of bitcoin transactions for illegal drugs and other unlawful goods and services ranging from pirated media to forged documents to murder for hire...”³² A recent study evaluated the threat that Bitcoin posed to increasing illicit criminal enterprises. It concluded that of all Bitcoin exchanges, “...users engaged in illicit activities account[ed] for 44.38% of the share of total Bitcoin transactions...”³³ This indicates Bitcoin’s influence in facilitating online criminal ecosystems and preventing law enforcement from acting on known crimes.

Although Bitcoin maintains a significant presence and influence in the world of cryptocurrencies, its competitors also provide many of the same services. These include Litecoin, Ripple, Monero, Ethereum, and ZCash. Bitcoin represents the predominate form of cryptocurrency used in online marketplaces. Thus, most sources only refer to Bitcoin in discussions of cryptocurrencies although many other currencies exist. While most cybercriminal networks use Bitcoin and it becomes increasingly difficult for law enforcement to track, eventually the user must exchange Bitcoin for real money. Research indicates that “New

³¹ Rolf van Wegberg, Jan-Jaap Oerlemans, and Oskar van Deventer, “Bitcoin Money Laundering: Mixed Results?: An Explorative Study on Money Laundering of Cybercrime Proceeds Using Bitcoin,” *Journal of Financial Crime* 25, no. 2 (March 7, 2018): 419–35, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-11-2016-0067>.

³² Hurlburt, “Shining Light on the Dark Web.”

³³ Stearns Broadhead, “The Contemporary Cybercrime Ecosystem: A Multi-Disciplinary Overview of the State of Affairs and Developments,” *Computer Law & Security Review* 34, no. 6 (December 1, 2018): 1180–96, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clsr.2018.08.005>.

regulations can be implemented at these ‘exit points’...such as Bitcoin to cash ATMs.”³⁴ In the face of little hope in terms of ending online illicit crypto markets, these exit points provide a possible solution to identifying criminals.

³⁴ Gad, “Crimeware Marketplaces and Their Facilitating Technologies.”

CHAPTER IV: CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES

“She likes swimming, SpongeBob, Mexican food, writing poetry, getting her nails painted (light pink is her favorite color), and Harry Potter books (plus she thinks Daniel Radcliffe is “fine”). This Christmas, she really wants an iPod but would settle for some sweat suits, preferably pink. Sometimes she petulant – pouting and sullen – but mostly she’s open and eager to be loved. When she smiles, huge dimples crease her chubby face and are still capable, as she moves into awkward adolescence, of melting hearts. She’s much like any other eleven-year-old girl in America, except for one critical difference. Over the last year of her life, she’s been trafficked up and down the East Coast by a twenty-nine-year-old pimp and sold nightly on Craigslist to adult men who ignore her dimples and her baby fat and purchase her for sex.” – Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*

Definition of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

According to the United States Office on Trafficking in Persons, sex trafficking is “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.” This paper will adhere to this definition of commercial sexual exploitation of children for all countries studied here.

Furthermore, this paper affirms the link between pornography and commercial sexual exploitation. While arguments exist to separate the two, commercial sexual exploitation after the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act and its reauthorizations in 2003, 2005, and 2008 does not require force, fraud or coercion in the case of minors. Furthermore, according to the *Human Trafficking Collaborative Network*, “...any situation where a minor is involved in pornography, regardless of whether the minor is forced, coerced, manipulated or otherwise enticed into

engaging into child porn, is an act of sex trafficking.”³⁵ Therefore, this paper asserts that the creation of child pornography falls under the category of child sex trafficking. Another source further supports this statement in asserting that child sex trafficking “...includes using a minor to produce child sexual exploitation materials (‘pornography’), using a child in a sex-oriented business (e.g. exotic dancing/strip club). Soliciting a child for commercial sex (in person or online), and having a child perform a sex act with another person(s).”³⁶ Thus, this paper in its arguments will refer to these forms of sexual exploitation of children as child sex trafficking, understanding that in the case of minors, any sex act performed has been influenced by force, fraud, or coercion.

Child Sex Trafficking in the United States

Prevalence of Child Sex Trafficking in the United States

In United States alone, 34,700 calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline since 2007 have reported cases of sex trafficking.³⁷ These vastly underrepresent the population of sex trafficking victims in the United States, but they provide a glimpse into the epidemic that is sex trafficking. Unfortunately, most cases go unreported. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports that of all human trafficking victims, about one third of those are children.³⁸ While exact data of this illicit crime does not exist, the National Center for Missing and Exploited

³⁵ “Child Pornography Is Sex Trafficking,” *Human Trafficking Collaborative Network*, 01312017, HTCN_ChildPorn.pdf.

³⁶ V. Jordan Greenbaum, “Child Sex Trafficking in the United States: Challenges for the Healthcare Provider,” *PLoS Medicine* 14, no. 11 (November 22, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002439>.

³⁷ “Typology of Modern Slavery: Defining Sex and Labor Trafficking in the United States” (The Polaris Project, March 2017).

³⁸ “Almost a Third of Trafficking Victims Are Children: UNODC Report,” accessed December 12, 2018, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2016/December/almost-a-third-of-trafficking-victims-are-children_-unodc-report.html.

Children assumes that about one in every seven reported endangered runaways became victims of child sex trafficking. On average, a victim's first experience in the life of commercial sexual exploitation occurs at age fifteen, and some studies report an average age of entry into "the life" as between twelve and sixteen years of age.^{39 40} One in six of these reported victims were under the age of twelve and about a third are boys. Of these likely sex trafficking victims, 88 percent had been in the foster care system or other social services. In 2001 a study by the University of Pennsylvania estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 children in the United States each year are at risk of sex trafficking.⁴¹ While information outlining the prevalence of child sex trafficking in the United States will likely remain estimations due to the nature of the crime, it becomes increasingly clear that the crime has infiltrated into the lives of an enormous percentage of the nation's most vulnerable population. Unfortunately, as demand increases for sex with the "innocent," supply increases at the same rate, as seen by the UNODC report that the number of child victims in the past three years increased by seven percent.⁴²

Populations at Risk in the United States

Generally, instability in a child's life highly contributes to their propensity to enter into commercial sexual exploitation. A 2019 report by the University of Texas at Austin report details factors that contribute to instability which include: "...violence or abuse [past or present]; financial strain; ongoing substance misuse; or exiting a child welfare system such as foster care,

³⁹ Bruce Kellison, Melissa I.M. Torres, Matt Kammer-Kerwick, Dixie Hairston, Noel Busch-Armendariz, Mckenna Tailey, "To the Public, Nothing Was Wrong with Me' Life Experiences of Minors and Youth in Texas At Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation" (The University of Texas at Austin, March 2019), <http://sites.utexas.edu/idvsa/files/2019/03/CSTT-HT-Final-Report-3.26.19.pdf>.

⁴⁰ "What Is Human Trafficking?," Traffick911, accessed December 12, 2018, <http://www.traffick911.com/what-is-trafficking/>.

⁴¹ Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011).

⁴² "Almost a Third of Trafficking Victims Are Children: UNODC Report."

and/or the juvenile justice system.”⁴³ Furthermore, the report indicates that while these factors contribute to their vulnerability to trafficking, “...it should be noted that the youth participants live in complex realities; risk factors do not occur in silos, but often overlapped.”⁴⁴ The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children identifies children who consistently or chronically disappear as far more likely to fall victim to sex trafficking. Furthermore, those children with histories of sexual abuse, assault, or rape increase their risk of target by a trafficker, especially if these cases of abuse go unreported or unaddressed. A child who identifies as LGBTQ and rejected by their family also experiences a higher risk for sex trafficking. Lastly, substance abuse increase vulnerability. Of the children reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a disturbingly large percentage are of African-American and Hispanic descent. Rachel Lloyd in her memoir *Girls Like Us* describes the factors that produce youth at high risk for entering into the life. Most people readily acknowledge that foreign women and children in dire socioeconomic or political situations abroad often enter into the life due to a lack of other options. However, in the United States, the public questions those whose circumstances often place them in the sex trafficking industry. The pathologies that lead to child sex trafficking are viewed somehow differently in the United States as if the victims of the industry can just exit at any given moment of their own volition. The abuse, poverty, and rejection by society that frame these children’s lives often remain overlooked. Children, separated from their families, often lose sight of other options in life. When someone who profits from their innocents notices their lack of options, they become easy targets. Thus, the most vulnerable of the population became pawns for profit. According to Lloyd, “When children who have witnessed or experienced abuse and

⁴³ Kellison et al., “‘To the Public, Nothing Was Wrong with Me’ Life Experiences of Minors and Youth in Texas At Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.”

⁴⁴ Kellison et al.

neglect are removed from their families, they often bounce from placement to placement, perhaps experiencing fresh abuse from a new family. When you grow up three blocks away from a track, got to school in overcrowded, under resourced classrooms, and see violence in your community, it's hard to feel as though you have other options." Oftentimes, as children age out of the foster care system, they graduate from school and end up on the streets. These formal systems in the United States leave children without safety nets to fall back on upon exit from the system, leaving them immediately vulnerable for traffickers.⁴⁵

Regardless of socioeconomic background, children in general present vulnerable targets to pimps. Children of any race, culture, socioeconomic status can and have been trafficked. However, when a child with loving parents with the enough resources goes missing, the police are called and the news plasters their story through every media channel possible. A University of Texas at Austin study recently indicated this phenomenon, noting that the lack of a healthy and trusting relationship in a child's life created the ideal circumstances for trafficking.⁴⁶ It means that a trafficker can easily garner the trust of the child with very little effort, so the children who lack these healthy relationships fall victim to the pimp far more easily. This explains why when a runaway child or a foster care child, a child whose disappearance goes unnoticed goes missing, the world doesn't know. It does not get media attention... "There's no Amber Alter, no manhunt, no breaking news story... no police investigation, no prosecution. It's just another 'teen prostitute,' another one of the nameless, faceless, ignore, already damaged 70 percent."⁴⁷ The number seventy percent refers to the percentage of children in commercial sexual exploitation coming from low income backgrounds. As the March 2019 University of Texas

⁴⁵ Kellison et al.

⁴⁶ Kellison et al.

⁴⁷ Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*.

study indicated, economic necessity serves as a primary driver for entrance into the life of commercial sexual exploitation. In light of this, the children at risk remain at risk due to their vulnerability as children. However, their pathologies into the life most often stem as a direct result of their poverty, race, and socioeconomic status that often leave them feeling as though few other options exist.

Recruitment and Grooming in the Life

Historically, pimps recruited their victims solely through face-to-face interactions, luring the child or teenager into a relationship of utter dependence, eventually to the point of no return. Even more, to a child with a background of abuse and neglect, the pimps seemingly promise a safe place to sleep, food, shelter and clothing to tempt the child and make them feel loved and cared for. 50 Cent, in his platinum-selling song “P.I.M.P” writes ““I ain’t gotta give ‘em much, they happy with Mickey D’s.”⁴⁸ Although, he claims the line refers to adult women, clearly the line addresses the desires of a child, a child whom a pimp may occasionally buy McDonalds for. This song paints the picture of recruitment for the abused and hurting children of the United States.

In the past, traffickers recruited their victims through face to face contact and relationship building. However, with the growth of the internet, traffickers can now hide behind a screen to do their work. This enables them to remain anonymous while recruiting multiple girls at a time. According to a study performed by Texas Christian University, “...respondents who entered the life in 2015 noted much higher uses of technology in this process. Across the sample, 84% reported meeting their trafficker for the first time face to face, but only 45 % of those entering

⁴⁸ Lloyd.

the life in 2015 reported meeting their trafficker face to face. The remaining 55% reported use of text, website, or app.”⁴⁹ While grooming relies heavily to this day on face to face contact, it appears that the role of technology in communication between the trafficker and the child continues to increase. Face to face contact no longer exists as the only method of grooming and recruitment.

Although on average, children recruited into sex trafficking enter at about fifteen years of age, significant proportion of those children enter at much younger than fifteen. According to the study by Texas Christian University, 76% of children who started before the age of ten were recruited by a family member, typically a father or stepfather. One such quote seems to resonate throughout the entire study: “My father was my abuser when I was 4 to 7. He sold me for his own gain to use drugs.”⁵⁰ Those whom should supposedly love a child the most, sell their children to feed their own drug addictions. These children’s circumstances determine their fate before they can even make a decision themselves, and the more one analyzes their situations and the factors playing into their pathologies into the life, the clearer it becomes that from the perspective of the child, they had no other option. Only about 8% of respondents met their trafficker online, for the most part these meetings occurred in person.

Online, traffickers target webpages frequented by children and teenagers such as social media and chat rooms, searching for a vulnerable child – one who will respond to their messages, receptive to a new relationship. A pimp can send out thousands of mass messages to children, waiting for the few who will respond. The nature of the internet allows them to remain anonymous, often posing as another person, in order to access their victims. Eventually, they move the conversation to far more sexual topics, sending sexual photos or asking for some. In

⁴⁹ Bouché, “Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking.”

⁵⁰ Bouché.

turn, these photos act as blackmail or promote an in-person meeting between the two.⁵¹ Survey results report that within one month of a first meeting, 42% of victims trusted their trafficker. Another 28% trusted them within four months. Clearly, the combination of the desperate and hopeless child with a pimp's psychological manipulation creates a bond that will eventually prove difficult to break.

Once trapped, most often pimps leverage extreme forms of abuse to prevent their victims from attempting to leave the life. This extreme violence often reaches the extent of witnessed homicide or forcing a victim to participate in homicide, as cited by participants in the University of Texas study. Oftentimes, the violence against the victims results in a "...need, both actual and perceived, to protect people they [love] from being harmed or trafficked instead."⁵²

Interestingly, this also often forms a bizarre psychological bond between the pimp and his victim. This psychological phenomenon was first studied in Stockholm, Sweden, where a group of bank robbers broke into a bank, tied up its employees and tortured them. In short, when police attempted to rescue the survivors from their captives, the employees actually defended their captors.⁵³ Their emotional attachment to their captors formed out of an abusive relationship became known as the Stockholm Syndrome. Today, the Stockholm Syndrome can explain much of the abusive and bonding relationships between pimps and the children they recruit into the life. Rachel Lloyd, a survivor of domestic abuse and trafficking illustrates the emotional attachment to her abuser in her writing at the time of the abuse. She writes: "Sing me a pretty love song as I start to cry / Tell me you love me as you wipe the blood from my eye / Tell me

⁵¹ "The National Strategy for Child Exploitation and Prevention and Interdiction: A Report to Congress," August 2010, <https://www.justice.gov/psc/docs/natstrategyreport.pdf>.

⁵² Kellison et al., "'To the Public, Nothing Was Wrong with Me' Life Experiences of Minors and Youth in Texas At Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation."

⁵³ "What Underlies Stockholm Syndrome?," Psychology Today, accessed December 13, 2018, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-peek/201203/what-underlies-stockholm-syndrome>.

why the only one who can wipe away my tears / Is the only one who's the source of all my fears.”⁵⁴ Clearly, the pimp develops a close relationship and emotional bond with their victims. Recently, more often children report their relationship as occur through technological means such as chat, texting and phone calls.⁵⁵ However, while traffickers of today increasingly use technology for communication, they continue to develop personal relationships with the children, convincing their victims that not only are they not forcing them into prostitution but they deeply care for their well-being. This explains why many children even when rescued return to their pimps after sometimes even years of freedom. Not only do pimps extremely abuse the children, but they typically force them into drug dependence and continue to fuel that addiction. This addiction ensures dependence on the pimp for supply and allows the pimp to maintain control through a reward system. He will teach the girls to lie about their age and carry around false identification, avoiding law enforcement and protecting him. When law enforcement comes, if it does, the children, taught to act as criminals, do not present themselves as victims. Thus, the law often treats them as such.

Experience in Child Sex Trafficking

Once in the life, a trafficker forces the child to sell him or herself through various platforms including street prostitution, online prostitution, massage parlors, brothels, strip clubs and sexual abuse imagery (pornography). A report by *The Human Trafficking Institute* indicates that 84.3 percent of federal cases of human trafficking in the United States in 2017 occurred via an online platform.⁵⁶ Their report in 2018 indicated an increase in the use of the internet as a selling platform

⁵⁴ Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*.

⁵⁵ Bouché, “Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking.”

⁵⁶ “The Human Trafficking Institute: 2017 Annual Report” (Washington D.C.: The Human Trafficking Institute, 2017).

from 84.3 in 2017 to 87.7 percent in 2018.⁵⁷ While these percentage increases remain relatively small, the general trend shows an undeniably greater usage of the internet per year. In the midst of selling the child, the pimp continues to verbally, emotionally, sexually and physically abuse the children to ensure their complicity in his business and then takes virtually all the money they make each night. As the age of a child decreases, the number of buyers per child also typically decreases. However, for a child of at least thirteen years of age, the number of buyers per night typically averages around eight or more. Receiving little to none of the income they produce for their pimp, the children unable to escape and trapped in the horrific cycle of prostitution, continue night after night, used and abused by their adult predators.

Case Study: Playpen

In 2014, the Federal Bureau of Investigation hacked the world's largest online criminal network of child sex abusers. This online platform, called Playpen, hosted a child pornography network with over 200,000 users. In order to hack the website, the FBI, after receiving a tip from a foreign law enforcement agency, operated the website for over two weeks, allowing and enabling a continued exchange of child abuse imagery in order to eventually shut it down. Furthermore, complications arose that questioned the legality of the hacking when child abusers claimed the FBI hacked their personal computers without a warrant. Although the FBI considers the operation successful, only 1 percent of its users faced criminal charges.⁵⁸ The Playpen Case highlights the difficulty in tracing criminals online. Using Tor's software, Steven W. Chase of Naples, Florida had created and controlled the Playpen website. This website allowed users to

⁵⁷ Alyssa Currier et al., "Federal Human Trafficking Report" (The Human Trafficking Institute, 2018), <https://www.traffickingmatters.com/wp-content/uploads/legal-resources/tip-reports/TIP-Report-2018.pdf>.

⁵⁸ "Shielded by Technology, Child Sex Abuse Epidemic Festers on Darknet | Child Sex Abuse | Pedophiles."

instantly access thousands of images and videos of child pornography and sexual abuse. Once the website had been hacked and its creator identified, the FBI began Operation Pacifier, its effort to prosecute the child sex abuse users of the website.⁵⁹

Chase had permitted only members of Tor’s software security system to enter his website. Then, upon entry, these users could upload images of their choosing. These child sex abuse images were categorized by “victim, age, and gender, as well as the type of sexual activity...”⁶⁰ The Playpen website represented a highly organized criminal enterprise with hundreds of thousands of users and an example of the power of Tor and cryptocurrency to facilitate child sexual exploitation. The prosecutions crossed international borders, involving law enforcement agencies around the world and entangling different legal frameworks in an effort to bring justice to the victims of Playpen. Unfortunately, the Playpen case also serves to show the lengths that law enforcement must reach to successfully prosecute and identify victims. It reveals the complexity of the crime and the difficulty in solving it. In one of the most successful FBI cases to date, only 1 percent of the offenders were caught. Clearly, there is much to be done in terms of developing counter crime technology to fight illicit criminal activity and online child sexual exploitation.

Current Anti-Trafficking Methodology in the United States

In 2017 The Human Trafficking Institute compiled a report of the federal cases of human trafficking in the United States in order to further understand the efforts by the United States

⁵⁹ “‘Playpen’ Creator Sentenced to 30 Years,” Story, Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed March 8, 2019, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/playpen-creator-sentenced-to-30-years>.

⁶⁰ “Florida Man Sentenced to Prison for Engaging in a Child Exploitation Enterprise,” May 1, 2017, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/florida-man-sentenced-prison-engaging-child-exploitation-enterprise>.

government to combat human trafficking. Among 695 cases of sex trafficking in the United States, 435 pertained to only child victims and 102 pertained to both child and adult victims. Only 116 of these were of only adult victims, speaking to the incredibly young age at which victims of human trafficking enter into the industry. In cases of child trafficking, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) played a primary role in defending and rescuing the child. Changes in the law since 2015 now target purchasers of commercial sex. Thus, in 2017 cases involving customers of commercial sex increased by 18.3%. Today, the government can prove an act of illicit commercial sexual activity occurred through proof that “a defendant: 1) engaged in one of 10 prohibited trafficking activities; or 2) benefitted from participating in a sex trafficking venture.”⁶¹ In 2017 the federal court convicted 98.2% of the defendants of child sex trafficking cases. This marks a remarkable improvement from the past as the criminals have shifted from the victims to the traffickers. Prior to changes in the TVPA (Trafficking in Victims Protection Act) law, victims of child trafficking often found themselves in jail and treated as criminals while their traffickers ran free. Today, the report by the Human Trafficking Institute indicates that finally the federal government views the children as victims and the traffickers as criminals. On average those convicted in child sex trafficking cases received 138 months of imprisonment, equaling close to eleven and a half years of time in prison. Six of the seven life sentences distributed in 2017 involved only child victims.

Amendments to the 2015 TVPA act now require those convicted of child sexual exploitation or sexual abuse much pay a \$5000 fee to a “Domestic Trafficking Victim’s Fund.” Although the court only required 25 of those convicted to pay the fund, this number increased

⁶¹ “The Human Trafficking Institute: 2017 Annual Report.”

27% since 2016. Oftentimes, in these child trafficking cases, the court now forces the convicted defendant to pay restitution to their victims.⁶²

According to the report, the federal justice system has significantly increased punishments to offenders in child sex trafficking cases, and as indicated by studies by the Human Trafficking Institute, a positive increase in retribution by the law demotivates traffickers.

⁶² “Federal Human Trafficking Report” (The Human Trafficking Institute, 2017), 2017-Federal-Human-Trafficking-Report-WEB-Low-Res.pdf.

CHAPTER V: CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN VENEZUELA

“First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out –

Because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out -

Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out –

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me –

And there was no one left to speak for me.”

- Martin Niehmoller (1892-1984)

Economic State of Venezuela

At one point in history, the world praised Venezuela for its economic success and democratic government. Its unparalleled oil reserves made it the richest country in Latin America. However, in 2004 with the surge of oil prices, the president at the time, Hugo Chávez massively increased his spending on social welfare programs. These programs allowed him to maintain his popularity although he dramatically overspent. While he significantly decreased poverty rates, these programs' reliance on oil prices would soon prove to be the start of the ruin of Venezuela's economy. In order to maintain his power and popularity among the people, Chávez drastically spent beyond his budget and adjusted the economy to continue funding these programs, while simultaneously consolidating his power. At the time that Chávez died and his hand-picked successor, Nicolás Maduro took control, oil prices dropped. In 2014, Venezuela's economy began its sharp decline and Maduro failed to correct it. Currently, the country suffers

from the highest inflation rate in the world, while Maduro continues to rig the economy, only to the further detriment of the poor. The collapse of Venezuela's economy has led to skyrocketing poverty rates in conjunction with constant protests and murder rates at unprecedented levels. It's GDP in the last four years has dropped 35%, a sharper drop than the United States experienced in the Great Depression. In December 2018, Venezuela's inflation rate was reported to be 1,698,488 percent.⁶³

Access to Technology

Paul Salvodelli founded InterCable, the first company to establish high speed internet and broadband access in several countries, one of those being Venezuela. He spoke to the level of infiltration of technology, the internet, in the population of Venezuela. According to him, in emerging markets, such as that of Venezuela, most internet connections occur by cellular phone. These provide the dominant form of contact for people in the developing world. While Venezuela maintains very high broadband penetration, the connection is mostly cellular. About 60 percent of Venezuelans have a cell phone that connects to the internet with access to various levels of data and almost 100 percent of the population carries a cell phone. Thus, about 60 percent of the population accesses the internet from their cellular phone, while another 40 percent access through a home-based broadband connection. Typically, the 60 percent who access the internet from a cellular phone own a smart phone. Interestingly, the internet now exists as a worldwide phenomenon. It no longer resides only in the developed world. However, in criminal activity, the internet in the developed world does not seem to play such a significant

⁶³ "Venezuela Inflation Rate | 2019 | Data | Chart | Calendar | Forecast | News," accessed February 7, 2019, <https://tradingeconomics.com/venezuela/inflation-cpi>.

role. When law enforcement and corruption allow crimes like sex trafficking to occur, there no longer exists a need for encrypted markets, cryptocurrencies, and hidden networks. Instead, the trafficking occurs much more blatantly.⁶⁴

Prevalence of Child Sex Trafficking

While culturally, Latin American countries maintain strong family ties and value the unit of family, a breakdown in economic circumstances, lack of food, medicine and other basic necessities to care for oneself can cause a deterioration of even the strongest of bonds. Among the numerous repercussions of the deterioration of Venezuela's economy is the increase in human trafficking. While most data remain speculative, foreign governments report high increases in the presence of Venezuelans in forced prostitution. For example, the Spanish Interior Ministry "...reported a 1200% increase of in victims of forced sexual abuse from Venezuela... between 2014 and 2017."⁶⁵ Furthermore, when the criminals are the government, the law fails from the top down. In Venezuela, the primary abusers of the country's assets are those that hold the most power – the government itself and the military – and these hold significant power to curb the epidemic of child sex trafficking.⁶⁶

As very little data exists to quantify the number of child sex trafficking victims within Venezuela, this chapter, for the purpose of the paper's argument, will convey information surrounding sex trafficking within Venezuela as a whole with the understanding that an unknown number of these victims are children. Generally, these women and children in Venezuela enter

⁶⁴ Paul Salvodelli, December 2018.

⁶⁵ Joe Wallen, "How Venezuela's Crisis Is Fuelling Prostitution and Sex Trafficking on Spain's Costa Del Sol," *The Telegraph*, February 1, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/02/01/venezuelas-crisis-fuelling-prostitution-sex-trafficking-costa/>.

⁶⁶ Salvodelli, interview.

the industry through equivalent means. It is widely known that increased poverty increases desperation, a desperation to grasp at any means of survival. However, in a country where over 90 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, desperation hardly satisfies to explain the state at which the majority of Venezuela lives daily. As President Maduro continues in his efforts to consolidate and preserve his power, he further presses his country into the depths of poverty. This paper seeks to identify and describe one among many consequences of the ruin of Venezuela.

Without basic means of survival, women and children in Venezuela often turn to prostitution as their only remaining option. Lucía Palacios, a native of Venezuela, destined for one of the country's top medical schools provides a harrowing example of effects of poverty for the Venezuelan people. While her grades would have sent her down a career path of success as a medical professional, unfortunately, the economic status of the country prevented her from doing so. She represents one of the many young girls forced to flee Venezuela, and now, she lives in Spain's Costa del Sol where she works as a prostitute, under the guise of "Ms. Palacios." According to an article written about her, "She is one of 208,333 Venezuelans that the Spanish authorities [have recorded since early 2019] as having fled the failed central American state for Spain over the last few years... the true figure is thought to be much higher... many educated women, like Ms Palacios, have been forced into prostitution to make ends meet."⁶⁷ Human traffickers offer to purchase plane tickets and fund emigration from Venezuela. When the migrant arrives to the foreign country, the traffickers turn around and sell them as payment for their debts.

⁶⁷ Wallen, "How Venezuela's Crisis Is Fueling Prostitution and Sex Trafficking on Spain's Costa Del Sol."

According to interviews from *Telemundo51*, many Venezuelans have turned to the internet to sell their bodies. The money made from their self-made pornography and prostitution advertisements often allows them to buy the most basic necessities.⁶⁸

A news release recently highlighted the dilemma faced by parents as they themselves struggle to survive and support their families. Unable to afford to care for their children, many parents have resorted to forcing their children to survive on their own. The police in Venezuela often beat the children as they beg on the streets, attempting to find food and shelter. The story follows a woman named Maria, who is six months pregnant with five other children. Maria already plans on giving up her child for adoption and has already given up three of her other children. Like many other mothers in Venezuela, Maria cannot afford contraceptives nor food to support the children she already has. Thus, she is left without options and in order to live, she must give up her children.⁶⁹ This is the fate of many of the children of Venezuela as the number of children in the streets, fighting for life, only continues to rise. One can only begin to imagine the desperation that would cause these children to seek out any and all help, leaving them vulnerable to those that seek to exploit them.

Furthermore, other children enter into the industry as they fall victim to Colombian gangs and foreign sex trafficking rings once they cross out of Venezuela into other countries. These gangs offer these vulnerable children free transportation, food, shelter to force them into debt to the gangs. Thus, with no money of their own and no way to escape, these children, even once across the border and out of Venezuela, now fall prey to the hands of crime rings who will

⁶⁸ Por TELEMUNDO 51, "Auge de tráfico sexual en frontera Venezuela-Colombia - Telemundo 51," accessed April 8, 2019, <https://www.telemundo51.com/noticias/destacados/Auge-de-prostitucion-en-frontera-entre-Venezuela-y-Colombia-481638421.html>.

⁶⁹ "Mothers Giving Away Babies in Venezuela," BBC News, accessed February 9, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-latin-america-45879534/venezuela-crisis-mothers-giving-away-babies-children-living-on-streets>.

continue to exploit them throughout Latin America and even into Europe. These gangs force their victims to Colombia's international airport where they will serve as sex slaves for various Latin American countries.⁷⁰ For example, on July 23, 2018, members of the Venezuelan police discovered and arrested a Colombia-based sex trafficking. It had forced young girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen into prostitution, lured by the hope of work in Venezuela's neighboring country. The investigation began with mothers reporting their missing daughters, some of whom had been transported across the border to Colombia. Furthermore, police reported that some corrupt police officers and school officials had played a role in facilitating the trafficking of the girls.⁷¹ This story represents epidemic of corruption inherent within widespread poverty. In Mexico City, the gangs often bribe the police force to allow them to smuggle victims through the airport. A study by two Venezuelan attorneys, Beatriz Borge and Lilian Aya, indicates the increased levels of trafficking, while these numbers do not point specifically to child sex trafficking, they do provide some insight into rate of growth of the industry. Their study showed that "...in the past two years, the number of trafficked women has skyrocketed, from just over 60,000 in 2016 to almost 200,000 this year. They fear the number could rise to 600,000 by 2020, representing nearly 2% of Venezuela's population."⁷² Thus, human trafficking's exponential rise in Venezuela indicates a likely simultaneous rise in child sex trafficking as studies indicate that most sex trafficking victims from Venezuela are children – the most vulnerable of a population.

⁷⁰ Giacomo, "Another Consequence Of Venezuela Crisis: A Sex Trafficking Boom," accessed February 7, 2019, <https://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/another-consequence-of-venezuela-crisis-a-sex-trafficking-boom>.

⁷¹ Angelika Albaladejo, "Transnational Sex Trafficking Rings Cash In on Venezuela Crisis," *InSight Crime* (blog), June 28, 2018, <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/transnational-sex-trafficking-rings-cash-venezuela-crisis/>.

⁷² Giacomo, "Another Consequence Of Venezuela Crisis."

These gangs may not need to employ the use of technology or internet devices to initially lure their victims into sex trafficking. The victims' poverty and vulnerability accomplish that task for them. However, once the traffickers secure their hold on the victim, they often use internet platforms to sell the child. Sources indicate that traffickers often sell the youngest children from more anonymous locations such as rural towns with little presence from the national police or from internet cafes that make anonymity possible. According to an article interviewing an undercover agent from a US-based non-profit, Latin America has become a "hub for online child porn."⁷³ He says in an interview describing the fate of some of these children in specifically the realm of online trafficking as porn and states "And then there's just the pornography side, the live streaming of child rape and so you can have tens of thousands of men logging in and watching these things take place."⁷⁴ He continues to emphasize the young age at which this takes place for children from Latin American, where the produced pornography is then distributed through internet-based technologies. According to him, "traffickers are increasingly distributing child pornography and selling children via instant encrypted messaging services like WhatsApp, social networks such as Facebook, and sites on the dark web that can allow users to remain anonymous."⁷⁵

Current Anti-Trafficking Methodology in Venezuela

Because poverty and sex trafficking in Venezuela only continue to rise, law enforcement measures cannot possibly combat child sex trafficking to the degree necessary. Furthermore, like many other countries around the globe, the Venezuelan police force due to the poverty of the

⁷³ Thomson Reuters Foundation, "INTERVIEW-Child Sex Traffickers Turn to Rural Areas, Internet for Business," news.trust.org, accessed February 9, 2019, <http://news.trust.org/item/20170919155442-ja2a3/>.

⁷⁴ Foundation.

⁷⁵ Foundation.

nation as a whole, often accepts bribes and other forms of manipulation for their own survival. Poverty and violence coexist and hand in hand they force one another into a deeper more permanent state.

The United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report* of 2018 rated Venezuela as a tier three nation, meaning “The Government of Venezuela does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so...”⁷⁶ It seems that little to no efforts by the Venezuelan government exist to prevent the trafficking of its children. The state of the country at large prevents its law enforcement from efficiently combating such a fast-growing crime. Additionally, much of the trafficking of Venezuela’s children occurs outside of Venezuela itself. Traffickers force children under their control to work in neighboring countries or places like Europe. Recently, Spanish authorities detained a sex trafficking ring who profited by luring young girls from Venezuela through promises of safety and transportation. Once the immigrants arrived to Barcelona, the traffickers began to sell them for sex around the city.⁷⁷ Eventually, the Spanish police caught the traffickers and confiscated sufficient information to rescue the victims through the internet and cell phones. However, many more Venezuelans continue to arrive in Spain, caught up in the sex trade. In this case, Spanish authorities played a role in their rescue, however, most children from Venezuela never receive help from their own local authorities or the host country in which they arrive as they already remain under the control of a trafficker.

⁷⁶ “Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, accessed February 9, 2019, <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282779.htm>.

⁷⁷ “Ocho Detenidos Por Explotación Sexual de Mujeres Venezolanas En España,” accessed November 26, 2018, http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/europa/ocho-detenidos-por-explotacion-sexual-mujeres-venezolanas-espana_224559.

Mostly, non-profits around the globe work to fight sex trafficking in places like Venezuela. These non-profits, such as Exodus Road, work to save children from falling prey to criminal sex trafficking rings. This nonprofit gathers information and behavioral patterns of traffickers through the internet to build cases for law enforcement. Exodus Road specifically employs technologies that “...decode encrypted files and data [scrape]” to find otherwise inaccessible information. Its software accesses specific contact information of traffickers such as “...location, phone, email, and other personal information associated with online sex ads.”⁷⁸ Thus, their software data system will continually build cases against traffickers and various crime rings, mapping data and piecing together information in a unique way. They use facial recognition technologies along with data extraction software that can extract information from the personal computers and tablets of traffickers to collect vital evidence for police forces that may not possess these technological capabilities. Technologies such as these have the potential to reduce child sex trafficking in an industry that slowly shifts towards more internet-based models.

While Exodus Road’s cyber technologies provide promising remedies to trafficking in Venezuela, ultimately, an end to trafficking in the country requires an end to corruption and government resources to prosecute traffickers. Venezuela’s trafficking typically begins at the border between Venezuela and Colombia or it lures women and girls out of the country to work in places that often lead to trafficking. The internet’s major role in this is that it allows traffickers to place artificial job advertisements online, communicate with women and girls, and arrange for their emigration from Venezuela. However, unfortunately, because Venezuela’s trafficking does not currently rely on the internet to the extent that the United States and the Philippines do, few places for interdiction by technology exist. Although, if traffickers in Venezuela and its

⁷⁸ Foundation, “INTERVIEW-Child Sex Traffickers Turn to Rural Areas, Internet for Business.”

neighboring countries eventually increase their use of the internet, the places for interdiction with technology-based anti-trafficking methods will increase.

CHAPTER VI: CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN THE PHILIPPINES

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

We are caught in an escapable network of mutuality,
tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly,
affects all indirectly.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*

Background

The clustered group of islands in Southeast Asia represents the second most populated country in all of Asia, home to over 100 million people.⁷⁹ Most of its populations speaks English, the official language of the country, and with its rich resources, the Philippines contains an enormous amount of wealth. However, it also contains an immense gap between the rich and the poor. Although it could exist as a largely industrial society, most of the Philippines remains agricultural. Furthermore, the country’s education system has ensured that it has the highest literacy rates in all of Asia. In 1986 a movement by the “people power” removed the president at the time, Ferdinand Marcos, in order to end the authoritarian rule of 21 years and establish a democracy. A subsequent series of coups and political turmoil led to an economic decline in the country. Eventually, in 1992, the new president made significant strides in order to regain economic and political stability. Although the country suffered under the political upheavals at

⁷⁹ “Philippines Population (2019) - Worldometers,” accessed April 5, 2019, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/philippines-population/>.

the end of the 20th century. Today, the Central Intelligence Agency notes that the economy within the country remains stable and reliable.⁸⁰

Filipino Access to Technology

In the Philippines, a July 2016 study estimated that about 55.5% of the population had internet access. Presumably, this number has even increased since. In a comparison chart indicating the number of internet users among countries, the Philippines ranked number twelve, and it ranked number thirty-five in the world in a chart comparing countries and the number of users with broadband internet subscriptions. These indicate a relatively high level of internet access among the entire country. It contains similarly high levels of access to mobile phones with cell phone coverage country-wide.⁸¹ Because of this, the sale of a child through the internet becomes easier as a vast majority of the population can access both a webcam and a computer.

Last January, the Philippine government in partnership with Facebook launched a campaign to bring high speed broadband internet access to the entire country. While the country contains a large number of internet users, its internet remains some of world's slowest and most expensive. Thus, "the project will build an ultra high-speed information highway that will greatly improve the speed, affordability and accessibility of broadband Internet throughout the country" by 2019.⁸² It remains to be seen how these changes will influence the cybersex trafficking industry.

⁸⁰ "East Asia/Southeast Asia :: Philippines — The World Factbook - Central Intelligence Agency," accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html>.

⁸¹ "East Asia/Southeast Asia :: Philippines — The World Factbook - Central Intelligence Agency."

⁸² "Philippine Government Teams Up with Facebook for High Speed Broadband Infrastructure | Bases Conversion and Development Authority," accessed April 5, 2019, <https://bcda.gov.ph/philippine-government-teams-facebook-high-speed-broadband-infrastructure>.

Child Sex Trafficking in the Philippines

“I really miss my mother and my family...I feel angry and want to forget it.” At merely eight years old, this little girl’s neighbor forced her three times a day to perform sexual acts in front of a webcam. Her profits allowed her neighbor to buy food with the equivalent of six US dollars.⁸³

In 2015, International Justice Mission, an international non-profit organization, along with the Philippine government rescued six children, mostly under the age of seven years old, after discovering over 4,000 images of child pornography on the computer of a British national. Images indicated the abuse of a ten-year-old girl as well, presumably the sibling of one of the younger children. She was never found.⁸⁴

While traditional trafficking indicates the illegal trade of humans, today’s era ushers in a new kind of trafficking: cybersex trafficking. Trafficking, “according to the UN Trafficking Protocol” can “refer to the transmission of images and videos to another country.”⁸⁵ Increasingly, the use of the internet provides a platform for sexual acts via a webcam, altering much of the traditional trafficking industry. In the Philippines, this type of trafficking, cybersex trafficking of children, has thrived. Through the internet, traffickers not only access a wide variety of customers, all while keeping both the customer and trafficker anonymous, the traffickers also influence the perception of violent abuse of children online. It becomes commonplace. Furthermore, because the customer dictates the abuse, it becomes increasingly

⁸³ “The State of the World’s Children: Children in a Digital World” (UNICEF, 2017), https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2017_ENG_WEB.pdf.

⁸⁴ International Justice Mission, “Children as Young as 2 Rescued from Cybersex Trafficking in Philippines,” accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/children-as-young-as-2-rescued-from-cybersex-trafficking-in-philippines-300131598.html>.

⁸⁵ Thula Koops, Arne Dekker, and Peer Briken, “Online Sexual Activity Involving Webcams—An Overview of Existing Literature and Implications for Sexual Boundary Violations of Children and Adolescents,” *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 36, no. 2 (2018): 182–97, <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2333>.

violent. In a 2017 article in the *International Journal of Cyber Criminology* Kemal Veli wrote “...the sessions of [Webcam Child Prostitution] are shaped with the sexual requests of the consumer. And thus, intensity and price of the sexual abuse might increase throughout the session.”⁸⁶ Although the customer does not physically interact with the child, the internet allows him or her to facilitate abuse from thousands of miles away. It also reduces the power of the law as it involves multiple law enforcement agencies cross nationally. A literature review of child sex abuse via a webcam addresses the legal loopholes that advantage the traffickers. Unlike physical trafficking of children, online trafficking occurs in multiple countries simultaneously, creating new difficulties for law enforcement.⁸⁷

After a major economic decline in the 1970s, the Philippines reached further into poverty. Ultimately, this poverty simultaneously with an increased access to internet would contribute to the child cyber-sex trafficking industry. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), “...the country [is] the number one global source of child pornography and a hub for live-stream sexual abuse trade. Around eight out of every ten Filipino children are at risk of online sexual abuse or bullying.”⁸⁸ These children have become commodities for an international and billion-dollar industry. Although cybersex trafficking represents the majority of child sex trafficking cases in the Philippines, UNICEF estimates that between 60,000 and 100,000 children in the Philippines fall victim to child sex trafficking rings annually.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Kemal Veli, “Webcam Child Prostitution: An Exploration of Current and Futuristic Methods of Detection,” *Turkish National Police, Turkey* 11, no. 1 (2017), <https://www.cybercrimejournal.com/Kemalvol11issue1IJCC2017.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Koops, Dekker, and Briken, “Online Sexual Activity Involving Webcams—An Overview of Existing Literature and Implications for Sexual Boundary Violations of Children and Adolescents.”

⁸⁸ “UNICEF: Make the Digital World Safer for Children – While Increasing Online Access to Benefit the Most Disadvantaged,” accessed April 3, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/unicef-make-digital-world-safer-children-while-increasing-online-access-benefit-most>.

⁸⁹ “Factsheet: Child Trafficking in the Philippines” (UNICEF, n.d.), <https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/ipulocaltrafficking.pdf>.

According to International Justice Mission, “cybersex trafficking is the live-streaming sexual exploitation of children viewed over the internet.” Here, criminals enjoy wide profit margins and people from around the world wire in a payment to watch while “boys and girls – some under 2 years old – are abused or forced to perform sex acts in front of a webcam. The more abusive the show, the more the customer pays.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, IJM reports that of all of their cases in the Philippines, 54 percent of the victims of child sex trafficking are between one and twelve years old. Because price increases as the abuse increases, traffickers extract major profits from their business. Compared with the trade of still child abuse images, the live streaming of child sexual abuse generates far greater profits.⁹¹

Rescue operations offer some insight into the scale of the issue. However, they do not provide a full picture. To further understand the scope of the global crime, a Netherlands-based organization, Terre de Hommes (TdH) created a 3D image of a ten-year-old Filipino girl, whom they named “Sweetie.” They hoped that by pretending to sell this fabricated child, they could better determine the number of child predators on the internet, fueling the industry. The report detailed that “1000 potential abusers from 71 different countries offered Sweetie money for sexual acts over 10 weeks.” The sting operation expanded to 2000 different child abusers who “sought to get into contact with Sweetie during the course of the experiment.” The vast number of individuals seeking her sexual acts overwhelmed the entire operation, pointing to the massive market for online child sex abuse.⁹²

⁹⁰ “IJM Casework Series: Cybersex Trafficking,” Factsheet (International Justice Mission, n.d.), https://www.ijm.org/sites/default/files/IJM_2016_Casework_FactSheets_CybersexTrafficking.pdf.

⁹¹ Kemal Veli AÇAR, “Webcam Child Prostitution: An Exploration Of Current And Futuristic Methods Of Detection,” *Zenodo*, April 9, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.495775>.

⁹² Veli, “Webcam Child Prostitution: An Exploration of Current and Futuristic Methods of Detection.”

The cybersex trafficking industry in the Philippines has existed for years. However, the trend shows a decrease in age of the victims as its audience increasingly seeks out young children. In 2016, the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group discovered 136 different cases of child cybersex trafficking. At the time, this number significantly surpassed previous data. Today, the numbers only continue to rise. Now, specifically in the Philippines, the purchase of sex does not need to occur in a brothel. Traffickers sell the victims to customers around the globe behind walls and hidden from authorities, teaching and forcing the children to act as if they choose to perform these sexual acts.⁹³

Oftentimes, the parents and relatives of these children enable the illicit activity and pocket the profits of their abuse, typically making between \$20 to \$150 for an online child sex show. According to a social worker interviewed by CNN, "...parents who submit their children to cyber-sex – especially the ones from rural areas -- think this is something that won't violate their children in the way that traditional sex crimes do because it is just a camera and just the body being shown, and there is no touching with anyone else."⁹⁴ These family members maintain an advantage as they abuse their children at a shockingly young age because a child usually trusts their parent or believes they have no escape. While family members often abuse the children for profit, many children fall into the traps of older adults, promising a better life somewhere far from their home.

For Andrea, a fourteen-year-old Filipino girl from a small mountain village in the rural Philippines, her life changed for the worst when her cousin lured her away from her home to the

⁹³ Erin Hale, "Philippine Cybersex 'Dens' Are Making It Too Easy To Exploit Children," *Forbes*, accessed April 3, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/erinhale/2016/09/22/how-the-internet-helps-and-hides-underage-exploitation-in-the-philippines/>.

⁹⁴ "Cyber-Sex Trafficking: A 21st Century Scourge - CNN," accessed November 19, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/07/17/world/asia/philippines-cybersex-trafficking/index.html>.

province of Negros Oriental in hopes of work and an easier life. Instead, she found herself in a dark room shut out from the world with only a camera connected to a computer. Along with many other children in the establishment, her trafficker forced her to perform sexual acts to those watching on the other side of the world. According to Andrea, "...customers would ask the girls to perform sexually with each other." Watching the men on the screen, Andrea and the other girls between the ages of thirteen and eighteen were forced to comply with the demands typed out by their customers.

Unfortunately, Andrea's story is not unique. Widespread poverty, internet access and the use of English language in the Philippines contribute to the success of cyber-sex trafficking. A criminal, exploiting a child, does not need to risk their own prosecution by selling a child on the streets anymore. Instead, now anyone can manipulate a child and sell them behind a computer screen to more customers than ever before. On the other side of the world, the customer can remain hidden, never revealing their own identity and access the innocence of a child from the privacy of their own home. The nature of the crime makes it such that no data exists to determine the numbers of victims of the crime. However, police and other experts understand that cyber-sex trafficking has infiltrated the lives of tens of thousands of victims.⁹⁵

The average age of entry for children in cyber-sex trafficking continues to decrease according to sources as more and more families seek child abuse as an exit to poverty. Furthermore, the Filipino culture of silence makes it such that often this abuse remains undiscovered.

⁹⁵ "Cyber-Sex Trafficking: A 21st Century Scourge - CNN."

Current Anti-Trafficking Methodology in the Philippines

Filipino Sex Law

According to Filipino law, sex work in private, brothels, and soliciting of sexual acts currently remain illegal. However, the scope of the crime extends beyond the capabilities of its law enforcement. The United Nations Department of the Pacific reported the specific laws and their implications in a 2012 document. It refers to the *Revised Penal Code* where “sex work and profiting from sex work are illegal.” However, its definition for trafficking remains extremely vague. Massage parlors are required to follow sanitation codes according to local institutions, and the law requires “HIV education, condom availability and STI testing and treatment of sex workers operating in licensed entertainment establishments.” It seems that the majority of the laws surround the containment and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. However, the law’s broad definition of trafficking does not directly address cybersex trafficking. While some police raids of cybersex dens have provided disincentives for traffickers, the report addresses major concerns of corruption within the police system. These sometimes occurred in form of abuse by the police themselves.

Anti-Trafficking Efforts

Although law enforcement attempts to end the perpetual cycle of online sexual abuse in the Philippines, the rampant crime and the perfect conditions to allow the abuse to continue often make it extremely difficult for law enforcement. The internet allows both trafficker and customer to remain anonymous and execute their trade from practically any location. Cryptocurrencies and various encrypted live streams further exacerbate the difficulties faced by those trying to combat the crime and while a demand for the abuse exists, traffickers will supply. This global trend,

while flourishing in the Philippines, continues to be fueled by increased access to internet, poverty and the standard English language. As each increase at varying levels, cyber-sex trafficking rates simultaneously increase.

In the Philippines, the age of consent remains at twelve years old. Because of the age of consent along with the widespread belief that sexual acts with the consent of the family in front of a camera do not violate the child, law enforcement and NGOs face an uphill battle in fighting this particularly rampant cyber crime. Although, unlike Venezuela, the Filipino government, according to the United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report*, “The Government of the Philippines fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period...”⁹⁶ It is considered a Tier 1 country by the US Department of State in its anti-trafficking efforts. The nature of the crime presents a complex issue as it exists across borders, internationally. A buyer in one country, a seller in another.

However, IJM reports major improvements in the prevention of child cybersex trafficking in the cities where it has partnered with local law enforcement. According to the nonprofit, “Studies have shown the number of minors available for purchase on the streets and in bars once notorious for sex trafficking has plummeted between 75% and 86% in the cities where IJM has worked.”⁹⁷ They have aided the rescue of over 1200 women and children from sex trafficking and seen between a 75-86% decrease in the availability of children for cybersex trafficking within four years of working in various cities in the Philippines. IJM seeks to rescue victims, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors and strengthen justice systems. The combination of

⁹⁶ “Philippines,” U.S. Department of State, accessed February 9, 2019, <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282731.htm>.

⁹⁷ “Philippines | International Justice Mission,” Philippines | International Justice Mission, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.ijm.org/partner-offices/philippines>.

these efforts has contributed significantly to the major decreases in trafficking in the Philippines. There remains much room for improvement as the demand for child sexual abuse unfortunately only continues to increase, major improvements in law enforcement provide hope for the future of the Philippines and the potential to end the cybersex trafficking of children.

Furthermore, as the thesis described, one organization, Terre des Hommes Netherlands produced an artificial model of a 3D child, whom they referred to as “Sweetie.” They sought to estimate the number of child predators on the internet and identify those. The sheer number of responses by child predators seeking to contact “Sweetie” overwhelmed the officials working on the case, as they attempted to identify the customers. The article referring to “Sweetie” identifies fully automated chatbots and artificial intelligences as promising methods of interdiction for webcam child prostitution. A bot like “Sweetie” could potentially possess advanced artificial intelligence capabilities that would help law enforcement identify the prosecutor, providing a far more efficient means of detecting and identifying customers of online live child abuse.

According to the article, “[the] cognitively distorted and sexually aroused situation of potential offenders makes them more vulnerable to be deceived. This was the main reason why the majority of the offenders almost instantly gave personally identifiable information about themselves during the Sweetie operation.”⁹⁸ With automated the chat system through artificial intelligence, bots could gather information about a much larger group of offenders. In summary, the bot would communicate with the offender, even creating an audio reply to the customer’s requests. Some of the chatbots would be programmed to make grammatical errors, imitating the speech patterns of a child using English as their second language. The proposed chatbot,

⁹⁸ AÇAR, “Webcam Child Prostitution.”

although complicated to produce successfully, could significantly increase the rate and efficiency of offender identification in child cybersex trafficking.

Analysis of metadata also may serve as a pathway to detection of online child predators and customers of live child sex abuse. While data analysis of content may compromise privacy laws, metadata analysis “only shows some attributes of communications such as date, creator and IP addresses...”⁹⁹ This preserves the privacy of users while also enabling the detection of a potential child abuse buyer. If, for example, a Filipino user who does not use a concealing software, such as Tor, “from the Cebu district contacts three offenders from three different countries in a week,” the data analysis could flag the irregular communication pattern.¹⁰⁰ This irregular communication could then be further analyzed by law enforcement. In this way, analysis of metadata may facilitate more efficient detection of online child prostitution.

Anti-trafficking efforts in child cybersex trafficking rarely involve technological solutions. Much of the work done to reduce trafficking in areas such as the Philippines has been done by organizations like IJM. However, viable solutions such as advanced chat bots, artificial intelligence and metadata analysis may serve to improve the efficiency of detection of child cyber sex trafficking once the technology has been further developed.

⁹⁹ AÇAR.

¹⁰⁰ AÇAR.

CHAPTER VII: DEVELOPMENTS IN ANTI-TRAFFICKING

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference...

Indifference to me is the epitome of evil.”

- Elie Wiesel

Background

Child sex trafficking exists at a staggering and global level. The phenomenon in various forms affects every portion of the world. No place is left unaffected. Thus, the end of sex trafficking seems idealistic at best. However, in their book *Half the Sky*, Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn annotate the importance of fighting it through this brief parable:

A man goes out on the beach and see that it is covered with starfish that have washed up in the tide. A little boy is walking along, picking them up and throwing them back into the water. “What are you doing son?” the man asks. ‘You see how many starfish there are? You’ll never make a difference.’ The boy paused thoughtfully, and picked up another starfish and threw it into the ocean. ‘It sure made a difference to that one,’ he said.¹⁰¹

As evidenced throughout this work, technology, specifically the internet, plays a vital and dual role in child sex trafficking globally. Now, trafficking appears differently than it has in the past, even though it has always existed. Prior to the invention of the internet, a trafficker recruited his or her victim face-to-face and the rest of the victim’s experience in the life occurred through brothels, word of mouth or some other face to face interaction. These relatively simple

¹⁰¹ Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (Vintage Books, 2010).

means of trafficking meant that law enforcement or others faced higher odds in identifying victims. These victims and traffickers had to enter the public eye in some form – just like any other business.

However, the age of the internet has created a screen behind which both the trafficker and the customer can hide. No longer does a customer need to exit his home to purchase the innocence of a child. A trafficker, furthermore, possesses the capabilities to manipulate a child while remaining hidden. Online chat rooms, social media, and other webpages allow a trafficker to pose as anyone, contact a child, and arrange a meeting. Once he or she has gained control over the child, he again does little more than place an advertisement online to sell his victim. This is why the sex trafficking industry reaches profits of \$150 billion worldwide,¹⁰² a growing crime that is predicted to surpass the drug trade.¹⁰³ Through the internet, a trafficker can recruit, harbor, threaten and sell a child while running only the slightest of risks of prosecution. The trafficker then communicates via the internet with the customer and arranges the time and place of purchase. This will happen over and over again behind the screen of the internet and each of these present points for intervention.

When law enforcement and other anti-trafficking agencies seek to find the criminals and end the trade, those in the developed world face an intricate and complicated series of encrypted websites and dark web pages, purposely formed such that the user remains anonymous. However, while these webpages present intricate challenges for those combating trafficking, they also provide windows into safety for children. Technological advancements currently developing seek to address these challenges and identify perpetrators through internet patterns.

¹⁰² Renata A. Konrad, “Designing Awareness Campaigns to Counter Human Trafficking: An Analytic Approach,” *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, October 25, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2018.10.005>.

¹⁰³ DiRienzo, “Compliance with Anti-Human Trafficking Policies.”

Unfortunately, human trafficking combative efforts were lacking until recent years. The lack of empirical evidence and statistics for the widespread epidemic of human trafficking made anti-trafficking efforts difficult. However, as the knowledge gap narrows, the possibility of effectively fighting trafficking becomes a reality. Human trafficking broadly encompasses various forms of trafficking, including child sex trafficking. Thus, anti-trafficking efforts apply to the more specific realm of child sex trafficking.¹⁰⁴ An internationally recognized and adopted paradigm specifies what has become known as the “3Ps” of fighting trafficking, referring prevention, protection, and prosecution. Experts consider this three-pronged method to cover the most foundational approach to anti-trafficking. In 2009, Hilary Clinton added a fourth “P” in the United States – partnership. This included the partnership of the government and other agencies (i.e. NGOs) to work cohesively to improve their anti-trafficking methodologies.¹⁰⁵ The United States and other countries have made vast strides in establishing and improving anti-human trafficking efforts. However, the crime according to the United Nations “...is among the fast growing types of criminal activity”, and as a result, significant efforts must be made to unceasingly work to fight against it.¹⁰⁶

Because anti-trafficking requires the involvement of multiple NGOs and government organizations, methods and perspectives often vary. Generally, these maintain similar goals yet various approaches as to the most efficient method of address the crime. The conjunction of numerous organizations allows for each to specify in areas of anti-trafficking and very precisely pinpoint needs that they can fulfill. Most play an important and necessary role, but issues arise

¹⁰⁴ Natalia Szablewska and Krzysztof Kubacki, “Anti-Human Trafficking Campaigns: A Systematic Literature Review,” *Social Marketing Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (June 1, 2018): 104–22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524500418771611>.

¹⁰⁵ Deanna Davy, “Anti-Human Trafficking Interventions: How Do We Know If They Are Working?,” *American Journal of Evaluation* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 2016): 486–504, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214016630615>.

¹⁰⁶ DiRienzo, “Compliance with Anti-Human Trafficking Policies.”

when the challenges shift from organization to organization. While anti-trafficking spans a wide variety of approaches, for the sake of the thesis, this chapter focuses on those anti-trafficking methodologies that involve technology, most often that being the internet.

Prevention

Prevention of human trafficking encompasses a dynamic array of strategies, many of which involve raising awareness. Only recently has information about human trafficking become widespread, and much of this is due to the work of organizations working relentlessly to disseminate awareness of human trafficking as a method of prevention. Raising awareness in theory seeks to address to key audiences: those at risk for falling into sex trafficking, those who may seek to purchase commercial sex and those who could identify victims and take action. By informing at risk children of the signs of a trafficker, experts attempt to disrupt the pattern of victimization and alleviate some children from entering into the life. Information about trafficking for the general public could potentially increase the number of identified victims. However, evaluative measures for these specific campaigns are generally lacking. Often, according to a literature review of anti-human trafficking campaigns, retrospective evaluations of prevention and awareness campaigns cannot reach a significant level of credibility. Most evaluations of these campaigns are retrospective if they are evaluated at all. According to the review, “Of the limited number of programs that have been evaluated, many outcomes have gone unreported or the methodology is too inadequate to draw any definitive conclusions on the effectiveness of the programs.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, it remains difficult to estimate the impact of awareness campaigns. However, undeniably, they play an important role in gathering support for the fight

¹⁰⁷ Davy, “Anti-Human Trafficking Interventions.”

against trafficking, and the internet allows campaigns to spread their information to a wide network of individuals. Regardless of the evaluative measures available for these campaigns, they play a vital role in victim identification. The United States Department of State argues that “human trafficking is often described as a crime that is ‘hidden in plain sight’ because victims may interact with others in the community but are unlikely to self-identify for many reasons, including fear of harm to themselves or their family members.”¹⁰⁸ It continues to report that studies indicate an increase in victim identification when a community and its institutions possess the capabilities to identify children in trafficking. Thus, any member of the public, whether a school official, healthcare worker, or others, must understand the most basic signs of trafficking. These campaigns employ the internet to disseminate information about trafficking to the general public.

Protection and Prosecution

The Human Trafficking Institute in its 2018 report reported that in 87.7% of cases, traffickers used the internet as a platform for sale. This represented a 1.3% increase in internet-based trafficking from 2017. Even with the shutdown of Backpage.com in April 2018, online trafficking continues to thrive and overtake traditional use of the track as a platform for sale.¹⁰⁹ As a result, this presents a unique opportunity for the continuous development of technologies to identify victims and build cases for law enforcement. Thorn, a California-based non-profit works to develop technologies that specifically address these needs.¹¹⁰ Their technologies utilize data

¹⁰⁸ “Trafficking in Persons Report” (Department of State, June 2018), <https://www.traffickingmatters.com/wp-content/uploads/legal-resources/tip-reports/TIP-Report-2018.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ Currier et al., “Federal Human Trafficking Report.”

¹¹⁰ “Spotlight: Human Trafficking Intelligence and Leads,” *Thorn* (blog), accessed February 9, 2019, <https://www.thorn.org/spotlight/>.

analytics to find victims online. Technologies like these allow organizations like the Human Trafficking Institute to build a case for a child through their “victim-centered approach.” They believe that trafficking begins with the trafficker and the law must suffice in order to demotivate the traffickers. Thus, the Institute works to disincentivize traffickers through efficient and effective case buildings such that they receive justice to the full extent of the law while decriminalizing the victims themselves. By training law enforcement and other government officials, the organization seeks to increase the number of court cases against traffickers. According to their report, “In 2018, there were 771 total active human trafficking cases in federal courts.”¹¹¹ The report further indicates the use of over 70 different webpages named in these criminal cases. Thus, the protection of victims and prosecution of criminals must involve the employment of some form of internet-based technologies.

Latest Technologies to Fight Trafficking

Within the United States, non-profits such as Thorn, Exodus Road, and Allies Against Slavery continue to refine and develop technologies specifically to fight child sex trafficking. Allies Against Slavery, an Austin, Texas based non-profit, works with government officials to identify signs of trafficking through its platform Lighthouse. This technology uses complex data-driven analytics to screen for victims. Based on their research, 88 percent of victims at one point interact with an individual with potential to help them, and of the 88 percent, only 2 percent are labeled as victims. The tool aids social workers, medical professionals, school officials and others who would likely come in contact with a victim to identify the signs of trafficking. Users

¹¹¹ Currier et al., “Federal Human Trafficking Report.”

of the database input characteristics of potential victims into the cloud, while the database runs the characteristic through an algorithm to determine the likelihood of the child having been trafficking. It then presents the user with a list of potential victims and identified victims, confirming or denying suspicions of trafficking.¹¹²

In 2016, Thorn developed its first prototype of its technology, Spotlight. After conducting its “Survivor Insights” survey to determine the true role of technology in a victim’s recruitment, sale, exploitation, and rescue, the organization sought to fulfill a need for internet-based victim identification. Its unique technology searches the internet for trends that would indicate an advertisement created by a child. According to Thorn, Spotlight identifies eight children per day on average with a total of 9,320 children identified in child sexual exploitation. Furthermore, their technologies drastically reduce search time for law enforcement by about 63 percent. Their research reveals that most traffickers force children to create their own ads. Thus, this technology can identify the writing of a child, leading to the rescue of a victim.¹¹³

Thorn also created another product designed for companies “that speeds up the identification and removal of child abuse content...[and] helps companies share best practices to keep their platforms safe...”¹¹⁴ Because of the prolific amount of child sexual abuse available on the internet, Thorn’s product will attempt to remove it for companies. This step plays a crucial role in preventing companies from breaking the law as well as reducing the demand for child sexual abuse images, videos and other illegal content.

Like Lighthouse, other organizations utilize victim-identification technologies in the form of an app to make reporting trafficking easier for the average person. For example, Truckers

¹¹² DiRienzo, “Compliance with Anti-Human Trafficking Policies.”

¹¹³ “Spotlight.”

¹¹⁴ “Our Work to Defend Children From Sexual Abuse,” *Thorn* (blog), accessed April 14, 2019, <https://www.thorn.org/our-work-to-stop-child-sexual-exploitation/>.

Against Trafficking has developed a smart phone app that allows truckers to quickly determine whether or not trafficking has taken place and report it on the app. The application streamlines the process for a trucker to efficiently help a victim. As a result, Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) has identified over 612 human trafficking cases and a total of 1,133 trafficking victims. Truckers have made over 2,250 calls to the National Human Trafficking hotline because of this application and over 700,000 truckers have received training through the application in victim identification.

In 2015, The Exchange Initiative with scientists at Washington University in St. Louis created an app called TraffickCam. These scientists specialized in computer vision, a technology in their laboratory that allows them to determine the location of photographs. Understanding the potential of computer vision, they sought to leverage its capabilities in order to determine the location of online photographs taken by victims of sex trafficking. Thus, they created TraffickCam, which asks travelers to photograph their hotel rooms and upload the photographs to the app. It then creates a database of hotel room images to hopefully identify the location of victims as they pose for photographs online, which typically take place in hotel rooms. Thus, with computer vision and machine learning, the developers match online photographs with those in their database to pinpoint an exact location.¹¹⁵

Along with these, Exodus Road in Colorado also employs technology to disrupt human trafficking. They see the role that technology plays throughout child sex trafficking and aim to fight trafficking with technology. As briefly explained earlier, at its data center, Exodus Road gathers cyber information on traffickers in order to piece together information about them and their operations. Through a variety of extraction tools and facial recognition technology through

¹¹⁵ “TraffickCam | About,” accessed April 14, 2019, <https://traffickcam.com/about>.

a partnership with another company called Cellebrite, this non-profit works with law enforcement in various developing countries to arrest traffickers. On its website, Exodus Road describes itself in saying “Although the inner workings of [our] systems are complicated, all of our cyber operations boil down to one simply purpose: quickly and efficiently uncovering human trafficking so we can stop it.”¹¹⁶ Exodus Road highlights the hidden nature of trafficking; its remote and clandestine operations keep it out of the public eye. However, the organization uses its cyber operations to detect trafficking on the internet. As of 2019, Exodus Road has rescued 1104 victims of trafficking and arrested 521 offenders. As trafficking shifts towards almost completely internet-based models, it becomes possible to detect the crime through advanced technology.

Lessons Learned from the United States

As online trafficking becomes the primary platform for the sexual and commercial exploitation of America’s children, anti-trafficking measures must advance to the level of the technology used by the traffickers. Anti-trafficking tools need to infiltrate the dark webs to identify victims and prosecute traffickers. Furthermore, the complexity increases as the internet allows images and explicit content of children to travel across international borders, intertwining multiple law enforcement agencies. As business models globally turn towards online platforms sale practices, crime networks will follow a similar pattern. Research already indicates the increasing trend of child trafficking online. In the developed world, traffickers seem to use the internet to a much greater extend than in the developing world, where the internet does not play

¹¹⁶ Kelly Allen, “How We Use Cyber Investigations to Fight Human Trafficking,” accessed February 9, 2019, <https://blog.theexodusroad.com/cyber-investigations>.

such a prominent role in everyday life. Clearly, the Philippines already experiences an infiltration of the internet in its child trafficking market. Venezuela has yet to utilize the internet to the degree of the United States, even the Philippines. Although, even there, where basic necessities are lacking, women and children continue to fall into the hands of traffickers with online advertisements for job opportunities outside of the impoverished country.

The United States has by no means perfectly executed its anti-trafficking measures. However, the technologies developed in the United States today could expand internationally. Furthermore, the lessons learned by law enforcement in the United States transfer to other countries.

First and foremost, the United States has seen clear success in victim identification. With every NGO or government strategy comes explicit directives and measures to increase the identification of children in trafficking. Until recently, the United States government most often treated the victims as the criminals while the traffickers received no retribution. Today, as anti-sex trafficking approaches become more victim-centered and law enforcement more widely understands the issue, courts increasingly treat the traffickers as the criminals and children as victims. Research indicates that children in trafficking rarely self-identify as victims. Thus, trafficking requires the training of those who would likely come into contact with them. It requires the public to understand the basics of the issues such that anyone who comes in contact with a child in trafficking could take action. It means that NGOs and government agencies must work continuously to undo the stereotypes of trafficking produced by the media and reeducate the public to spot the signs. In 2017, a flight attendant identified a trafficked child on a plane as she made her rounds through the cabin, resulting in the rescue of the child. Her one example

serves to relay the viability in training the public to spot signs of trafficking.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, medical professionals and school officials must understand the signs of trafficking as research indicates that these consistently interact with victims of trafficking. According to researchers at the University of Texas at Austin in a survey study of victims of trafficking, “Slightly over half of the participants who sought help from law enforcement were not identified or asked if they had been trafficked. The findings [were] the same with regard to healthcare providers.”¹¹⁸ This recent study indicates the value in improving victim identification efficiency with healthcare and school officials and law enforcement. Thus, technologies developed in the United States to streamline victim identification and rapidly increase the speed of it have proven highly successful in rescuing children from trafficking. This thesis highlights the importance of victim identification in anti-trafficking measures in any country because the end to trafficking starts with rescuing the children.

Secondly, law enforcement must receive adequate training in anti-trafficking measures including victim identification. The Human Trafficking Institute stresses this approach in its various reports, indicating the value in disincentivizing traffickers. It writes that because traffickers, motivated by financial gain, operate similarly to a commercial business, the prospect of retribution by the law often forces them to terminate their business. The institute has witnessed high levels of success in law enforcement training in the United States, Uganda and Belize.¹¹⁹ Thus, the law enforcement plays a vital role in the abolition of trafficking.

Unfortunately, many law enforcement agencies in impoverished countries remain corrupt and

¹¹⁷ “Flight Attendants Train to Spot Human Trafficking Ahead of Super Bowl,” NBC News, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/airplane-mode/flight-attendants-train-spot-human-trafficking-n716181>.

¹¹⁸ Kellison et al., ““To the Public, Nothing Was Wrong with Me’ Life Experiences of Minors and Youth in Texas At Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.”

¹¹⁹ Currier et al., “Federal Human Trafficking Report.”

untrustworthy. This makes reliance on law enforcement difficult in many places, especially in places like Venezuela where the governmental corruption is rampant. However, it remains clear that training does effectively reduce trafficking.

Next Steps

The United States

While significant progress has been made within the United States to fight sex trafficking, anti-trafficking efforts must linearly increase with the crime. Even now, as efforts continue to improve, there remains substantial room for technology in conjunction with NGOs and the United States government to fill voids in anti-trafficking methodologies. The work seems endless, but the rewards and the potential for anti-trafficking technologies prove invaluable. Even in the sparse number of technologies available today for anti-trafficking efforts, studies indicate vast levels of improvement in victim identification, law enforcement involvement and criminal prosecution.

It seems that anti-trafficking technologies often focus on victim identification and therefore victim rescue. These areas, which are detailed earlier, have shown tremendous success. However, the technologies available thus far do very little in terms of leveraging the internet to increase awareness, virtual law enforcement trainings, perpetrator identification, and decoding of cryptocurrencies at exit points. The internet provides exponential potential as a platform for raising awareness for child sex trafficking within schools, healthcare institutions and other places in which the public may interact with a victim. In utilizing the internet as a tool for information dissemination, organizations could reach a far greater audience and impact a larger percentage of the population. Additionally, in today's era, education often takes place virtually. Law

enforcement training could be standardized and distributed to law enforcement agencies in every part of the United States such that each receives efficient and effective information to fight trafficking. Lastly, while victim identification remains a priority in anti-trafficking efforts, prosecution of the customers themselves lacks sufficient backing. Little technology exists to prosecute and criminalize buyers of commercial sex of children and child pornography, and while cryptocurrencies complicate these identification efforts and aide in maintaining the anonymity of the buyers, there is potential for identification in their exit points, where the customer will exchange the cryptocurrency back into dollars. These four areas represent points at which technology may serve to further anti-trafficking efforts.

Venezuela

Venezuela and other developing countries face the greatest battle in fighting trafficking. When corruption dominates the law enforcement agenda and the government lacks or fails to provide substantial resources to fight trafficking, NGOs and non-profit organizations often fill the void. In Venezuela, Exodus Road and others provide much of the only aid to trafficking victims, and unfortunately, these victims face decreasing odds of rescue as the turmoil in the country only increases. However, when their trafficking occurs abroad in places like Spain, there exists a greater potential for rescue as those governments with greater resources work to end trafficking.

As the world of child commercial exploitation merges in international online markets, law enforcement agencies of foreign governments must work across borders to prosecute criminals and rescue victims. Thus, law enforcement training proves invaluable. As mentioned earlier, the internet provides a pathway to standardization of this training. It provides a method of

informing and educating law enforcements internationally to come to similar levels of understanding of trafficking, increasing their ability to identify victims and prosecute buyers as they cross international borders.

The Philippines

Unlike Venezuela, the Philippines' cyber child sex trafficking industry relies heavily on the internet and other technologies to function. The relatively high rate of internet access in the country and widespread use of the English language allows the industry to flourish. Customers in the West can dictate the sexual acts they want to view, while the trafficker in the Philippines forces the child to perform the act in a live-streamed show. This requires advanced technologies for both the live-streamed show, the chatting capabilities and the monetary exchange through the internet. While this entangles various law enforcement agencies, it does provide the potential for both rescue of the victim and prosecution of the customer.

Because the exchange of these live streamed shows must involve the internet, an advanced technology system such as that of Exodus Road could potentially track trafficking activity. Bots such as the few that have been tested could attract and identify customers in an attempt to reduce the demand of the industry. Bots, if advanced to a certain level, could improve child cybersex trafficking detection levels. With artificial intelligence, the bots could communicate with potential customers of online live child abuse and extract information about the customers. These bots must be developed and advanced in order to fully aid law enforcement in identification of online child predators. Additionally, analysis of metadata by companies such as Skype, which may unknowingly facilitate communication between victims and customers, could perform metadata analysis to detect live-streamed child abuse. Lastly, western countries

could require customers to exchange cryptocurrencies at ATMs in an effort to prosecute buyers of commercial sexual exploitation and prevent complete anonymity. These various points for intervention by advance technological solutions may provide the tools necessary for international law enforcement agencies to attack online child abuse because while the internet often enables cyber child sex trafficking, it also provides opportunities for its inhibition.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSIONS

“Freedom is never more than
one generation away from extinction.

We didn’t pass it to our children
in the bloodstream.

It must be fought for, protected
and handed to them to do the same.”

- Ronald Reagan

As technology progresses and businesses evolve toward online-platforms, the child sex trafficking industry follows in a similar vein. Furthermore, the narrative of sex trafficking indicates that unless the entire world joins in an effort to fight trafficking, it will only increase. The financial motivation for traffickers often outweighs the efforts of governments to suppress trafficking. Thus, governments, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies around the globe must work cohesively and effectively to end trafficking. While technology provides unprecedented anonymity for traffickers and customers alike, it also presents new opportunities for anti-trafficking efforts. Many of the efforts described in this thesis leverage the internet and more advanced technologies to piece together information about traffickers, customers and their victims. The growing trend towards use of technology in trafficking allows for organizations like Exodus Road and Thorn with particular technology solutions to combat pernicious activity on the Dark Web. While Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies hide online financial transactions, agencies find sophisticated detection methods to track transactions at exit points. Organizations such as Exodus Road, Thorn, and Allies Against Slavery utilize complicated algorithms and cyber operations to detect trafficking online. While a trafficker can try to remain hidden from law

enforcement, an anti-trafficking organization also can piece together the trafficker's activity through online clues. The role of technology in child sex trafficking remains intricate and complex. However, technology provides new opportunities for anti-trafficking measures and new abilities to rescue children worldwide.

In stemming trafficking of Venezuelans, international law enforcement training in anti-trafficking measures serves as a potential opportunity to rescue victims trafficked out of Venezuela. However, until the Venezuelan economy resurfaces, and poverty decreases, Venezuela faces few opportunities for trafficking prevention.

On the other hand, technology to combat Filipino cyber-sex trafficking may prove an efficient strategy in abolishing the industry. Technologies developed in the United States and other countries which leverage the internet to target online-based traffickers reveal a propensity for similarly fighting cyber-sex trafficking in the Philippines.

The thesis aimed to extend promising technology-based anti-trafficking solutions constructed within the United States to both Venezuela and the Philippines. The ideation was born out of an interest in technology's both positive and negative impact on the world stage. If criminals successfully traffick America's children despite state-of-the-art intelligence agencies and progressive law enforcement, they must employ highly developed and refined methods of doing so, involving software specifically formulated to hide and protect. Even then, traffickers often openly promote commercial sex with children throughout the internet, based on a recognition that their probable profits eclipse the threat of incarceration. A literature review revealed expansive efforts by United States NGOs, non-profits and government agencies to leverage technology in anti-trafficking efforts. The thesis adheres to the theory that these

technologies, if applied in international contexts, contain the potential to successfully aid in the termination of child sex trafficking.

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BIOGRAPHY

Catherine Murray was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico on July 28th, 1995. She spent the majority of her life in Fort Worth, Texas and went to Fort Worth Country Day for high school. In the fall of 2014, she came to the University of Texas at Austin, where she majored in biochemistry, Spanish, and Plan II Honors. Throughout her time at UT, she launched the University of Texas branch of the 10 Days Campaign to fundraise for clean water wells in Rwanda and served various roles in her sorority, Kappa Alpha Theta. During two of her summers, she interned for biotechnology companies and hopes to work in the industry post the coming year. She plans to move to Guatemala City in September 2019 to work for International Justice Mission for one year, fighting child sexual assault. At the same time, she plans to receive her Master's in Biotechnology from John Hopkins University online in order to eventually pursue a career in biotechnology.