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## Online sex slaves: The internet's powerful role in sex trafficking

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### Abstract

Sex trafficking, often referred, as "modern day slavery" is one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises on the Internet. Sex trafficking occurs when a victim, typically a female, is traded for the purpose of commercial sex. Fueled by global economic conditions and increased international mobility, the trading of human beings is expanding rapidly. Classified advertisements on the Internet and social media websites have help aid in the advancement of the industry because traffickers are hidden behind the shield of anonymity and protection known as the web. Victims are sold numerous times to multiple buyers on a daily basis. Sex trafficking is a complex criminal activity involving many specialized roles such as a recruiter, victim, trafficker and buyer. This paper will examine the role Internet plays in this degrading sex-slave trade industry and what can be done to identify and help those being traded.

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ONLINE SEX SLAVES: THE INTERNET'S POWERFUL ROLE IN SEX  
TRAFFICKING

By

Daizchane Baker

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### Abstract

Sex trafficking, often referred, as “modern day slavery” is one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises on the Internet. Sex trafficking occurs when a victim, typically a female, is traded for the purpose of commercial sex. Fueled by global economic conditions and increased international mobility, the trading of human beings is expanding rapidly. Classified advertisements on the Internet and social media websites have help aid in the advancement of the industry because traffickers are hidden behind the shield of anonymity and protection known as the web. Victims are sold numerous times to multiple buyers on a daily basis. Sex trafficking is a complex criminal activity involving many specialized roles such as a recruiter, victim, trafficker and buyer. This paper will examine the role Internet plays in this degrading sex-slave trade industry and what can be done to identify and help those being traded.

*Keywords: Sex trafficking, prostitution, Backpage, Craigslist, Escort ads*

### Introduction

Sex trafficking is a branch of human trafficking, which is the fastest growing criminal act (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). The formal definition of sex trafficking is “using force, fraud, or coercion to cause a person to engage in a commercial sexual act” (Peter, 2012, 826). Sex trafficking is a global criminal industry spreading throughout society like a cancer. Contrary to information circulating on the Internet, a victim does not have to be transported or trafficked across state or country lines to be considered a victim of sex trafficking.

Sex trafficking is a hidden crime. It is thought of as something that does not happen in United States or that United States citizens are not victims. This is simply not true. Sex trafficking can happen to anyone and occur everywhere. Globally, sex trafficking has moved from dark hidden corners of the underbelly of society to the public purview through the Internet. The Internet has become a powerful ally for traffickers and buyers. The anonymity afforded by the Internet allows traffickers and buyers to mask their identities while committing their criminal acts. However, the victim’s identity is not always afforded the same protection. Quite often the faces of these young women can be clearly seen in photographs in the ads. Even more disturbing is that the sex traffickers use actual social media profiles of the women to sell them.

Traffickers are recruiting victims on social media sites and selling them on Backpage. Sex trafficking can no longer be an over looked crime. Unfortunately, it seems, that sex trafficking is an industry that shows no plans of slowing down. It’s a billion dollar industry. Of the \$32 billion that the human trafficking industry makes annually, \$27.8 billion comes from sex trafficking (Makatche, 2013).

The lucrativeness of the sex trafficking industry attracts many new traffickers to the industry daily. Victims can be bought and sold numerous times unlike drugs (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). The high demand for the limited supply of victims keeps traffickers in business. Every sixty seconds a woman or a child is being sexually trafficked (Kara, 2009). According to Rachel Lloyd, founder of Girls Educational and Mentoring Services, “for every twenty kids out there every night, there are maybe thousands of johns” (2009).

The appeal for traffickers lies in the risk/rewards afforded to these criminals. With a low legal risk and a high financial reward getting into this industry is very lucrative. . The low risk, high reward system has attracted established criminal organizations to expand into the industry and have also motivated new criminal organizations to establish with the purpose of specializing in sex trafficking. Some organizations “have evolved into complex organized networks of recruiters, transporters and pimps”, while some organizations specialize in one of the acts (Hodge & Lietz, 2007, p.166). As said by a United Kingdom police officer, “the fact that they can put these human beings out for viewing not only shows how they regard the women, but also underlines how strong the market is” (Farley, Franzblau & Kennedy, 2013, p.1041).

#### Location

Sex trafficking is seen in “Africa, Asia, the Common Wealth of Independent States, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the industrialized nations, such as the United States (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). Trafficking victims in the United States consist of United States born citizens and victims from East Asia, Europe and Mexico. Victims from foreign countries often arrive legally with valid passports and visas, however their

documents are confiscated upon arrival. Mexican victims are typically smuggled across the United States-Mexico border as a point of entry by traffickers or smugglers. Victims brought in from foreign countries to another country are charged a high travel fee that becomes a debt. The victim is told that they must now work off their debt to gain their freedom back (Kara, 2009).

Sex trafficking victims can be found in very public places. Common places are brothels, strip clubs, motels or hotels, at truck stops and rest areas along with working on the streets ("Sex trafficking"). Victims also can be found in pornographic films, live web cam shows, or in spas or massage parlors. Sex trafficking victims meet a special demand for sex tourism and military prostitution (Farley et. al., 2013, p.1042).

#### Victims

Females between the ages of 13 to 17 are the main targets of traffickers (Miller, 2014). Approximately, "244,000 to 300,000 American children are prostituted each year" (Makatche, 2013, p.243). Twenty-five percent of child victims are trafficked by a relative (Parker & Skrmetti, 2013). According to a Department of Justice 2008 report, it was estimated that 14,500 to 17,500 individuals are being trafficked into the United States annually (Swartz, 2010). From 2008 to 2010, 83 percent of sex trafficking victims in the United States were United States citizens (Kunze, 2010).

Victims have no control over the clients they serve or the services they provide. Victims also have no power to set their own hours or daily limits of the number of clients served. It's not uncommon for the victims to serve up to fifty clients on an 18-hour day. The women will receive very little to none of the profits they make. Interpol estimated

that a sex trafficking victim makes around \$124,000 yearly for their traffickers (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). Victims have no employee rights or benefits.

Traffickers use a variety of tactics to maintain control over the victims. Violence is one of the most frequent tactic (Kara, 2009), which can result in the victim having concussions or broken ribs (Bales & Soodalter, 2009). The women in some instances can be urinated or defecated on by the traffickers or the buyers. In extreme violent situations a trafficker may chain a victim to a bed and whipped them until they bleed (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). Isolation, drugs, and alcohol are other tactics commonly used (Kara, 2009). Finally, emotional control is used to maintain submission of the victim (Miller, 2014). Victims have many health issues such as sexually transmitted infections, miscarriages and fertility problems, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and substance and alcohol addiction (Bales & Soodalter, 2009). Help is never offered, which results in further physical and mental degradation.

Traffickers who transport women use debt-bondage to maintain “ownership.” It can take thousands of sexual acts for the women to clear their debt (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). Charges are constantly added to the debt along with high interest rates to make it impossible for the victim to pay off (Kara, 2009). Some women may lack basic counting skills that prevent them keeping track of their debt; this prevents them from knowing when they have paid off their debt. For those who can count will be sent to another location to add more travel fees to ensure their debt will never be paid (Hodge & Lietz, 2007).

Irina Veselykh was promised a waitress job in Germany, but when arrived she was forced into prostitution and now in debt to her traffickers for her travel costs.

Veselykh (2006) testified, "I complained that I could not pay my debts. So they sent me to a different club where I could service more clients and pay lower rent. I was taken to a club called "Diplomat", which is in the Netherlands border with Germany. But I saw right away no matter how many there were, I could never repay the debts," ("Victim testimony").

There are signs that can help detect if someone is being trafficked. The number one sign of a trafficked victim is they are not free to come and go as they please. Other signs include avoiding eye contact, unusual fearful or anxious behavior, receiving very little to no pay from their source of "employment". A trafficked victim will also have no access to their identification documents, no financial control of their finances and very few personal possessions. Trafficked victims also may not be aware of their current location or the current time. Physical signs will include visible marks and bruises on their bodies along with sexual abuse signs. Victims typically don't receive proper health care and nutrition ("Recognizing").

#### Prostitution vs. Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is often linked and compared to prostitution. While both industries involve the selling of sex, there are some differences between the two. However in both cases, the woman could be performing the sexual acts against her will. Prostitution is known as the "oldest profession in the world" (Peter, 2012, p.826). In some cases the woman or the prostitute can receive a portion of the profits. But when she does not receive any of the profits it can be similar to what occurs in a sex trafficking situation. Law enforcement and nonprofit workers have noted that in some situations it can be difficult to distinguish a prostitution situation from a trafficking situation (Farley et. al.,

2013). Since there is no data being collected on whether a prostitute is being held captive, it makes difficult to see how many individuals could possibly be in a sex trafficking situation (Swartz, 2010). Sometimes when a sex trafficking victim comes in contact with the law they are arrested on prostitution charges, despite the fact that they are being forced to commit illegal acts. Both prostitutes and traffickers utilize classified ad sites to advertise sexual services (Peter, 2012). The line between sex trafficking and prostitution is thin and blurry.

### The Grooming and Recruitment Process

Sex trafficking victims go through a similar grooming process as prostitutes. Traffickers will pre-judge victims before attempting to groom them. This allows them to stay clear of those who will leave during the grooming process or will be searched for by loved ones. Traffickers prefer victims with little to no self-esteem. A trafficked reported that he would approach potential victims by complimenting their eyes by calling them pretty. If a girl replied confidently with a thank you, she would be left alone and he would move along. But if she replied with a response that showed she had low-esteem, she would become a potential target (Parker & Skrmetti, 2013).

Traffickers use expressions of love, the opportunity to travel to new destinations and/or claims of turning the female into a famous model as tactics to deceive potential victims (Dixon, 2013). Traffickers will offer poor families, usually from underdeveloped or poorer countries, a lucrative job offer for their child in a western country with a high salary. The high salary promised is something that the family cannot refuse, which gives them enough of a reason to allow their child to go (Kara, 2009), with a stranger to a foreign country. These families are unaware of what is going to take place next.

Traffickers also recruit women who are already working in the sex industry. Traffickers promise higher salaries, which get the women to agree to work for them. Once the woman agrees, the traffickers will relocate them to a new location to isolate them from familiar surroundings and force them into sexual slavery (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). A less frequent way of recruiting is kidnapping (Kara, 2009).

#### Recruitment and Grooming via Social Media

As the sex trafficking industry has grown, traffickers became savvy and started to use social media to recruit victims at growing speeds (Miller, 2014). Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter are the most commonly social media websites used (Farley et. al., 2013). Research indicates that recruitment through social media is the equivalence of the grooming process that prostitutes must endure. From 2000 to 2006, the number of traffickers using the Internet to recruit and groom victims tripled. Traffickers are able to gain access to the lives of the victims because of the increase use of the Internet and social media sites (Miller, 2014).

Social media websites have their advantages such as; victims are not able to visually see the traffickers to pick up on any cues or body language of deception. However, on the Internet traffickers are more truthful about their desire to engage in sexual activities with the victims. The relationship starts by communicating online and advance to in-person meetings. Traffickers will pretend to have the same interests, care about the victim's personal conflicts and over all well being. Eventually an exclusive romantic relationship will form and traffickers use the relationship to isolate the victim from their family (Miller, 2014).

Victims will voluntarily agree to have an in-person meeting after months of online communication. Despite being uncomfortable during the in-person meetings, victims are afraid to voice their concerns because of their fear of how the traffickers may react. At some point, the in-person meetings could lead to an introduction into the sex trafficking ring (Miller, 2014).

### The Role of the Internet

The Internet has been an effective and efficient tool for traffickers to recruit and sell victims (Miller, 2014). There has been an increase in sex trafficking in the past decade because of the Internet is an easy place to connect traffickers with buyers (Peter, 2012). Sex traffickers use social media, online chat rooms and classified ad sites to promote the victims to buyers. Buyers and traffickers are able to facilitate sales without leaving their residences (Peter, 2012). Advances in technology allow traffickers to promote their victims to buyers almost anonymously with only the identity of the victim being public through the online classified ads (Musto & Boyd, 2014). Brothels, strip clubs and escort agencies utilize the Internet to advertise illegal sexual services of the women being trafficked (Farley et al., 2013). Traffickers rely on the anonymous identity that the Internet to avoid legal cases (Miller, 2014).

### Chat Rooms

A chat room is an online tool that sex traffickers and buyers use to negotiate sales and communicate with each other. Specific online sex buying message boards exist for the purpose of exchanging information on how to buy sex and where women for sex can be purchased. Participants in the message boards will also alert each other when there is an undercover officer participating in the chat rooms.

Theeroticreview (TER) is a site where victims and traffickers are rated based on services provided. TER was founded in 1999 by Dave Elms and sold to Treehouse Park in 2004. The site helps men who buy sex by teaching these men how to negotiate prices and locate women for sex. The message board on the site caters to those who buy sex on the Internet (Farley et al., 2013).

An online predator preyed on 13-year-old Alicia Kozakiewicz. On January 1, 2002 a man she met in a chat room kidnapped her. He took her across state lines to his home where he abused and raped her. He also posted pornographic pictures of her online. FBI agents later rescued her and her abuser was sentenced to twenty years. "That child was stolen from me. Make no mistake – that child was murdered," spoken by Kozakiewicz regarding her ordeal.

#### Classified Ad Sites

Classified ad sites with an adult or escort services section are popular online tools that traffickers use to promote their victims and attract buyers (Dalton, 2013). Classified ad sites are known as the "virtual red-light district of the internet" (Peter, 2012, p. 823). These sites provide traffickers with the platform needed to advance their criminal acts (Musto & Boyd, 2014). Prostitution and sex trafficking has become a primary online advertised business (Farley et al., 2013).

Backpage and Craigslist have been noted by the public as being major facilitators in the sex trafficking industry. Those sites provide the benefit of "the anonymity afforded by the internet" (Musto & Boyd, 2014, p.466). Craigslist and Backpage are continuously criticized by anti-trafficking organizations for profiting off of the illegal sale of victims for sex (Thakor & Boyd, 2013) through advertisements and ad posting fees. Other

classified sites include eros.com, adultsearch.com, localescortpages.com, eroticmugshots.com, webcamso.com, cityvive.com and myredbook.com.

Classified ad sites take in millions of dollars in profit annually, making sex trafficking a profitable business for traffickers and classified ad websites. Profits from the sex sales go into expanding and funding organized crime efforts across the globe. In 2013 it was estimated that \$45 million in revenue is generated annually from prostitution ads. Village Media, owner of Backpage estimated revenue was \$17.5 million (Farley et al., 2013).

Code words are used in attempt to throw police off of criminal activity. Roses or hugs are the code word for dollars. An ad may say a massage for fifty roses meaning fifty dollars. "Here for a short stay" usually means that the victim in the ad is from out of town (Farley & Kennedy, 2013, p. 1078). "Looking for an inexperienced girl" is code for that the girl in the images is underage (Farley et al., 2013).

"Craigslist is the Wal-Mart of online sex trafficking," Andrea Powell of Fair Girls said summing up the role of Craigslist in the sex trafficking industry. Craigslist is a source for pimps and traffickers to advertise the forced sexual services of victims (Dixon, 2013). Craigslist is the "training wheels for selling sex" (Farley et al., 2013, p.1041).

In 2009, Thomas Dart, sheriff of Cook County, Illinois filed a lawsuit against Craigslist. Cook County has used Craigslist's ads as a part of their sting operations. Over 200 individuals were arrested because of Craigslist ads related to prostitution in Cook County, Illinois. The lawsuit claimed that Craigslist allegedly had a role in prostitution by helping to facilitate the act by allowing online ads to advertise the services (Campbell & Snyders, 2009). The lawsuit claimed that women and children were being prostituted by

traffickers and pimps through the erotic services section of the website (Dixon, 2013). The case was dismissed, as Craigslist is not responsible for third party postings. Dart stated, "Craigslist is the single largest source of prostitution in the nation... [Victims] are routinely forced to have sex with strangers because they are being pimped on Craigslist."

On September 4, 2010, Craigslist changed the adult services section to censored before removing the section permanently. This was done voluntarily, but after receiving years of pressure from law makers and activists (Peter, 2012). Although, Craigslist no longer offered an adult or erotic services section this was a minor victory in the fight as there are many more classified sites for traffickers to use. After Craigslist shut down their adult services section, traffickers migrated to other sites.

Backpage became the leading classified ad site used to facilitate sex trafficking (Makatche, 2013). Backpage ads primarily advertise massages or escort services rather than sexual services. Sexual services are implied through the wording included in the ad. Backpage also places trafficking hotline numbers as an attempt to take a stance and show their support in the anti-trafficking movement (Dalton, 2013).

#### The Parts of a classified Ad

"Fifty years ago pimps coerced women to solicit in the street where they were advertised to the relatively limited marketplace of sex buyers," but today the women are advertised to the world. "The truth is that a lot of deep marketing-thought goes into the sex industry (Farley ET. Al., 2013, p.1040). Sex traffickers are marketing professionals. They are able to effectively and successfully market their victims to potential buyers using the Internet tools that are available to them.

Each classified ad is unique to the victim but all ads contain the same basic elements. It's important to mention that not every woman in an ad is a victim of sex trafficking or under the control of a pimp but could be acting on her own free will. Sex trafficking victims' Backpage ads are designed to look like a woman is placing her own ad. The Backpage ad is essential to the buying and selling process. It is seen as more popular to say you found a woman through Backpage or a classified ad sites rather than on a corner or street. Prostitution has moved to the Internet as an attempt to be more discreet and evade law enforcement.

Titles become the prevailing calling card for sex traffickers. Once you go to your local cities' escort category on Backpage, a list of titles comes up. Titles are written using adjectives that describe the woman in the ad as attractive, fun, experience, young and eager to please. In cases where the woman has multiple ads placed on the site, the titles may differ but the description and photos are usually the same. The title of the ad is the first thing that a buyer will see.

The description is the selling piece of the ad along with the images included (see figure 1). Description will not specifically state that sexual services will be provided due to laws making prostitution illegal. The ads may advertise massages or companion services. Some ads go as far as saying that they do not provide sexual services, however the description will allude to the fact that sexual services will be provided. The description typically includes prices per half hour and hour. The name of the woman is included in the ad, however this name is typically not their legal name.

**SAVANNAH \* \*A True SOUTHERN BELL\*\* Available NOW\*\* 810-771-3277 - 33**

Posted: Sunday, August 2, 2015 2:19 PM

I enjoy my JOB, I promise this experience will EXPLODE your MIND!!!!!! \*\*e\* SEXY,SWEET,SATISFYING,SUUCTIVE,SOUTHERN BELL\*\*\*\* ARE YOU TIRED OF MEETING NEW PEOPLE AT NEW LOCATIONS THIS WILL BE YOUR LAST CALL ON ANY SITE\*\* Relax gentleman...I promise this is not your typical ad encounter Comfort for both of us is important. I promise I will raise your standard and EXCEED YOUR EXPECTATIONS. Just read my reviews. Visitor SATISFACTION IS my #1 priority. Donations and tips are greatly appreciated

Poster's age: 33

- Location: Flint, Near Mott Campus downtown

- PostID: 18461567 Flint

[email to friend](#)



Enlarge Picture

Figure 1: Savannah's Backpage Ad. This is an example of a description.

There is always at least one phone number in the ad. Sometimes the ad will specify whether to call or text only. The description will have whether outcalls or in calls are available. "Outcalls" mean that the woman is available to come to buyer's location and "in call" means the buyer will have to come their location, commonly a hotel or motel room. Typically, these exchanges occur in hotels and motels in order to keep details such as home addresses private.

In some ads there is a no law enforcement statement (see figure 2). This means that law enforcement should not call the owner of the ad or the owner of the ad is not affiliated with law enforcement agencies. However this does not prevent law enforcement from contacting the ad or law enforcement from being the owner of the ad. The ad may also have their lists of rules that they expect their clients to follow if they are to meet.

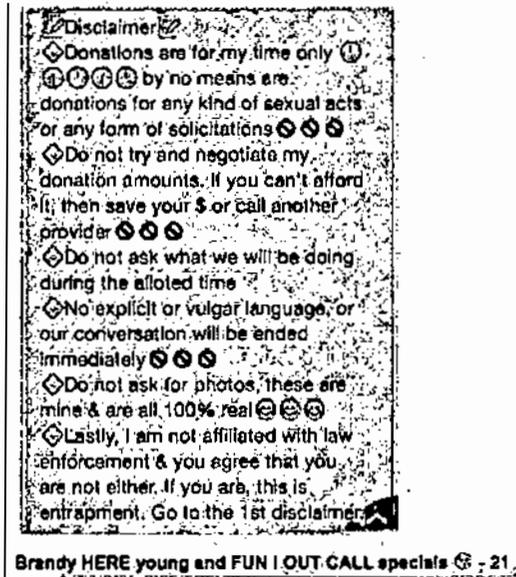


Figure 2: Backpage Ad. This is an example of a list of rules and expectations that can be found on Backpage ads.

Below the description are additional details (see figure 3), such as the location and a city and state, usually near or where the woman is currently located. The age of the female is also featured. Ages are commonly lowered to reflect a younger age while underage victims' ages are increased to reflect a legal age. If there are other ads by the same person, those ad titles will be shown as well for buyers to view.

plea\$ure princess 🍷🍷🍷new pics 🍷❤always on my naugh

Posted: Wednesday, August 5, 2015 2:41 PM

Hi Im Dimples 🍷🍷🍷 I am a very discreet and InDePeNdAnT individual, "meaning NO PIMP". I love what I do, I love older upscale respectable gentleman with clasS. Come see me for a spectacular session of pure sensual companionship! 🍷🍷🍷 ...[LOVEwhat I Do!!!! CALL ME ! 🍷🍷🍷I'm simply amazing ... Call me asap e definitofollow up ept. Will be needed ... Im DIMPLeS 289 312 5264

Poster's age: 25

- Location: Kalamazoo
- Post ID: 15168962 kalamazoo

• Other ads by this user:

🍷🍷🍷ReAl pics 🍷🍷🍷 CoMe get LuCKY WITH a TeStie of Ms. DIMPLeS 🍷🍷🍷 WILL HeVe YoUrMiNd BlOwN 🍷 - 25 (Kalamazoo, battle creek) adult entertainment: escorts

🍷🍷🍷DoMiNiCaN BoMbShHeLL 🍷🍷🍷 NicHoLe 🍷🍷🍷 80\$ hnspecials 🍷 - 25 (Kalamazoo) adult entertainment: escorts



Figure 3: Backpage Ad. This is an example of what additional details can be found on the bottom of a Backpage ad.

Images are one of the most important elements in the ads (see figure 4). Images often feature women in suggestive clothing along in evocative poses. The description usually advertises massage services, not sexually explicit services. Multiple images from different angles give the prospective buyer a good look at his "purchase." The face of the woman is sometimes blurred or cropped out of the picture. This is the victim's only protection. Some ads will feature professionally shot photographs will others will have cell phone camera photographs.

\*:♥GOOD♥♥♥🍷🍷🍷GIRL🍷\*:♥♥♥TURNED♥♥♥🍷🍷🍷BAD♥♥♥SPECIALS♥🍷🍷 - 25

Posted: Wednesday, August 5, 2015 11:32 AM



🍷🍷🍷 Hello gents Patience here & I can be highly addicting I'm the perfect compa nion. Sweet, sexy & most importantly discreet! I can b ur best kept secret, that u'll Bsuro 2 keep! 🍷🍷. Don't take a chance at disappointment! Come 2 me in private. Pics R 100% real & I have an amazing personality 2 match my sexy ill frame. Call me 2 experience the thrill of a lifetime I'm waiting for 🍷🍷 at a side location. Willing 2 travel depending on distance 2 all who tried 2 call me sorry had wrong #listed 517-802-1726

Poster's age: 25

- Location: Lansing, Jackson, Easton Rapids, BC Couraunzing.
- Post ID: 16772448 lansing



Figure 4: Patience's Backpage Ad. This is an example of a Backpage ad featuring seductive images.

Law Enforcement Ads

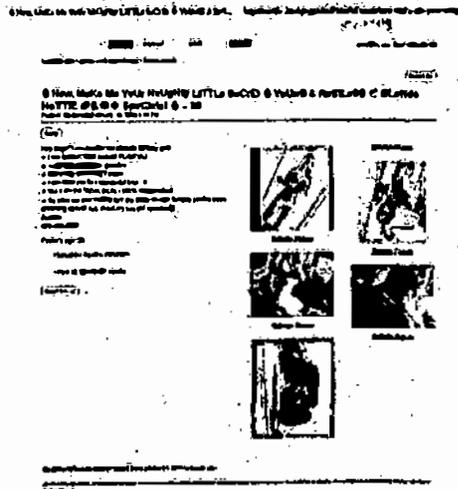


Figure 5: Law Enforcement Ad. This is an example of a law enforcement created Backpage ad.

Law enforcement Backpage ads do not look any different from the ads created by traffickers. This ad in figure 5 looks very similar to the ads shown above in figures 1 to 4. Buyers are not always able to spot a law enforcement ad when searching through Backpage looking for a “date”. This is how law enforcement agencies are able to attract buyers to their ads. Law enforcement agents follow the same process and use the same elements as traffickers when crafting their ads to prevent them from looking suspicious.

Attractive law enforcement agents will pose for suggestive photographs to use in the ads. This law enforcement agent could possibly be the one who will be in the hotel or motel room as a part of the sting operation. Law enforcement agencies have begun to create their own Backpage ads as a part of their anti-trafficking efforts and for use in sting operations.

Websites that allow classified ads of trafficking victims are immune to prosecution and free of legal responsibility because of certain laws. Because of this victims have unsuccessfully tried to sue the websites where their ads were hosted. Victims who were underage and communicated with predators unsuccessfully tried to sue MySpace, where the communication occurred. The case was dismissed on the grounds of the Communications Decency Act that prevents Internet servicers like MySpace from being held liable for third party actions (Farley et al., 2013). The law allows the websites remain free from responsibility in their roles in helping to facilitate sex trafficking. The Communications Decency Act of 1996 provides websites with the immunity from any civil and criminal liability and responsibility for any illegal material posted by a site user (Peter, 2012). The act states “online service providers are not to be held as publishers of content posted to their sites by third parties” (Makatche, 2013, p.237). Online websites owners are also protected by the first amendment of the United States Constitution that protects anonymous free speech (Peter, 2012).

During 2008, law officials started to realize that sex trafficking was occurring online (Dalton, 2013). While the Internet allows for anonymity, traffickers still leave behind a digital footprint. Law agencies use the digital footprint to gather evidence through data from cell phones, GPS, online payment transactions and other sources (Musto & Boyd, 2014). Law agencies use online technology to discover the identity of the trafficker through sale transaction data from the purchase of the classified ad (Thakor & Boyd, 2013). This evidence than can be used to prove a relationship between the trafficker and victim (Musto & Boyd, 2014).

Advocates and law agencies use the same classified ad websites to gather data and set up sting and rescue operations (Musto & Boyd, 2014). Law enforcement officers will create their own ads on Backpage and previously Craigslist as a way to catch the buyers and traffickers. Nonprofit organizations will conduct their own investigations using the ads and pass along the information to local law enforcement agencies. Law agencies also create fake social media accounts to form relationships and locate any suspected trafficking victims and link them to their suspected traffickers. Law agencies will use any information gathered during stings to set up new ones. Another tactic used by law enforcement is to conduct in-person surveillance at known "strolls" or areas where prostitution has been known to occur (Musto & Boyd, 2014).

A 19-year-old Illinois female replied to an ad that advertised modeling opportunities. Instead of embarking on a modeling career, the trafficker who posted the ad informed the girl that she would be having sex with men. The female was then left in a hotel room where she was expected to have sex with me. Luckily her first client was an undercover police officer working on a sting operation and rescued her (Dixon, 2013).

MSNBC "Sex Slaves" documentary series follows law enforcement as they set up sting operations to rescue women and apprehend buyers and traffickers. MSNBC have featured destinations such as San Francisco, Chicago, Florida, Las Vegas and Detroit in various episodes. Each episode features law enforcement in their local area and follows them as they tackle sex crimes. The documentary series have shown law enforcement going undercover by responding to Backpage ads, creating their own Backpage ads or working the "stroll". Law enforcement has also been shown issuing citations to massage parlors and businesses that are suspected of engaging in sex crimes a violation of local

business ordinances.

Buyers, traffickers, pimps, and women have been arrested during the episodes. Some women on the show are doing this on their own free will while others have been shown to be under the control of someone else. Some episodes focus on the effects of sex trafficking and prostitution such as drug addiction. Former prostitutes and trafficked victims have appeared to share their story and help the women who are leave the industry.

Anti-trafficking legislation on both state and federal levels began in 2001, which led to an increase in anti-trafficking efforts (Musto & Boyd, 2014). A majority of the states have passed anti-trafficking laws making sex trafficking illegal. Anti-trafficking laws are aimed to criminalize the act and help victims reintegrate into society. In locations where prostitution is legal, it hinders law enforcement abilities to criminally charge traffickers (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 was passed to prosecute traffickers and protect victims (Makatche, 2013). The Victims Protection Act sentencing guidelines is fifteen years to life with no parole for a convicted trafficker, if there is a victim under fourteen years old who was trafficked with the use of force. For victims fourteen to eighteen years old without the use of force, the sentencing guidelines are ten years to life for convicted traffickers (Parker & Skrmetti, 2013). Typical charges includes kidnapping, racketeering, extortion, wire fraud, murder, sex trafficking, transporting an individual or minor across state borders for the purpose of prostitution, solicitation and prostitution charges (Farley & Kennedy, 2013).

The Legal Side: Victim's Point of View

Victims tend to reject help and seek help from law enforcement because of the fear of being sent to jail or being harmed by their traffickers. In places where prostitution is illegal, law enforcement focuses more on the women being trafficked than the people who are trafficking them (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). Common charges against trafficked women are "prostitution, document fraud or immigration and labor violations" (Brock, 2010). Victims are charged with crimes that they are forced to commit, which creates a divide between victims and law enforcement. During one sting operation, a 17-year-old Pennsylvania sex trafficking victim was charged with prostitution and sent to a juvenile prison (Weiss, 2013). A Bosnian woman was charged with a use of false documents because of her testimony against her trafficker. Despite the fact that she was a sex trafficking victim and her trafficker purchased the fake documents (Brock, 2010).

In some cases prosecutors will find an applicable charge for the victim for the purpose of keeping them off the streets and an opportunity to get them out of a trafficking situation (Tarr, 2013). For victims in foreign countries they are sometimes able to get temporary visas in exchange for their testimony against their trafficker. The Trafficking Victim's Protection Act has a clause that provides temporary visas to trafficking victims. A temporary visa can turn into a permanent visa. Only 5,000 visas can be granted per year. Victims do not have to testify to get the visa, but it is stated that it increases their chances of being approved and works in their favor (Brock, 2010).

New laws are being introduced to help victims. A uniform law regarding sex trafficking has been proposed for every state to adopt that would protect victims from being criminally charged with prostitution. This law would also help adult victims to use a trafficking victim defense when charged with prostitution (Weiss, 2013).

Some victims will not want help or are too ashamed to ask. Common services for sex trafficking victims include psychological help, help with finding employment, legal services, housing and providing protection during criminal trials against their traffickers (Brock, 2010). Victims can seek help by contacting the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline at (888) 373-7880 or by texting help to Be Free (23 3733). There is a lack of specific sex trafficking victims housing and support services, which creates barriers when trying to find resources and help for the victims (Weiss, 2013). Victims are often left to their own devices to figure out how to reintegrate into society.

The location where Masha Gerzedilova was being trafficked was raided and upon her release she was she was left in a foreign country to figure out how to survive without money or identification. Gerzedilova (2006) testified, "She [a Russian lawyer] pitied us and we were released into the streets. We did not have anywhere to go. No one told us about shelters or services. We were lost and afraid in a strange country. We didn't know the language and had no money, so we went back to the bar."

#### Call to Action

Sex trafficking is modern-day slavery. Sex trafficking victims need help and support from the community to get their lives back from the traffickers who exploited them. There are many ways that individuals can make a difference in the fight to end sex trafficking. The four main ways to help is by raising awareness, financial support, community vigilance, and writing letters to political figures (Kara, 2009).

Individuals can raise awareness by sharing news articles regarding sex trafficking with their social media community. Individuals can also raise awareness by distributing educational and informative handouts to the public and hosting events. Doing anything

that will help educate the public about sex trafficking and bring attention to the cause will help bring awareness to the issue and gain more supporters.

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Donating to anti-trafficking and sex trafficking victim support organizations helps a lot. Financially supporting the organizations provides them with the necessary funds to continue their work and prevent them from closing due to of lack funds. Be sure to research the organization before donating to confirm that it is legit.

Be a community vigilante. Educate yourself on sex trafficking and the different signs of trafficking victim and situation. Constantly try to keep your eyes and ears open to activity occurring in your community and report suspicious behavior. Sex trafficking is not always hidden and can occur anywhere. Some communities are creating local task forces to combat sex trafficking in their area.

Write letters to your local and state elected lawmakers. In your letters, ask what they are doing to help in the fight against trafficking. See what laws they are working on that will put traffickers behind bars and protect victims from prosecution. Educate them through the letters on sex trafficking. Be sure to leave contact information in order for the lawmaker to contact you with a response if needed. It's important to get laws passed that deals with sex trafficking.

#### Further Research

To expand on the current research, I would take a look at how sex trafficking victims reintegrate into society. Victims can go through tremendous psychological, physical, and sexual trauma. It would be interesting to see how my move forward to have

productive lives and help other victims or do they fall into a cycle of drug abuse and prostitution. While a victim may need extensive therapy and a ton of support, it is possible for them to move forward with their lives. Another way to expand the current research is to take a look at traffickers. The research would focus on what leads a trafficker into sex trafficking. Is it a family profession or is it solely the money that is a motivating factor. Also explore the trafficker's personal life; are they going home to a family or a single man? It would also be worth looking at what happens if they are charged and found guilty and if they are able to become productive members of society or continue their criminal acts.

#### Summary

Sex trafficking is a global crime affecting thousands of women annually. Selling a human has become a lucrative business. These women, and sometimes children, can be sold repeatedly. We live in time when humans have been given price tags. And while slavery may have been declared illegal over a century ago, it has not ended. Sexual slavery is a very real crime. The Internet is a powerful tool that helps traffickers recruit and sell victims to buyers every second of the day. Law enforcement has taken notice and uses those same tools to help rescue victims and prosecute traffickers. Nonprofits and citizens have also joined to help with anti-trafficking efforts. Knowing the signs of a trafficking victim and being aware of your surroundings can not only save your life but also help someone else. Sex trafficking victims needs more support from the public and law enforcement to successfully reintegrate into society.



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