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# Prevalence of Human Trafficking and Resources to Alleviate its Effects in Tennessee

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Prevalence of Human Trafficking and Resources to Alleviate its Effects in Tennessee

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The University of Tennessee

Chancellor's Honors Thesis

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# CHAPTER 1

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Modern-day slavery, also known as human trafficking, has been noted by President Obama to be one of the primary injustices facing contemporary society and is estimated by the International Labour Organization to illegally generate \$150 billion per year through the exploitation of 21 million people internationally (Obama, 2012; International Labour Organization, 2014). Human trafficking is defined by the United Nations as

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations, 2000).

While it is commonly considered to be constrained to distant undeveloped areas, such as Thailand or ex-Soviet nations human trafficking occurs within the United States as well (Tennessee Bar Journal, 2013). As indicated in the above definition, human trafficking may be separated into 3 major categories: sex, labor, and organ trafficking. All of these types occur within the United States, but only sex and labor trafficking are recognized by United States law, which defines “severe forms of trafficking in persons” as:

- (a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person is induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or,
- (b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose

of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery (United States, 2000).

Although, many do not acknowledge its existence, a sordid underworld of modern day slavery is thriving in the United States. A problem that upon first glance takes place only in foreign brothels and fields occurs in American backyards as well. American citizens too are at risk for human trafficking. In fact, the Department of Justice estimates that 83 percent of sex trafficking victims in the United States are American citizens (2010). Greater attention is warranted within the United States to protect citizens and migrants alike against the growing risk of exploitation through human trafficking.

This paper goes on to address the challenges presented by human trafficking as well as coping methods and treatment pathways for victims. More specifically, it addresses the issue of human trafficking within the state of Tennessee through qualitative interviews with employees of nonprofit organizations that work to combat human trafficking and to offer resources for victims. These interviews give insight into the true extent of trafficking in Tennessee and reveal common themes of experience for those who work first hand with trafficking victims.

## **PREVALENCE OF TRAFFICKING**

Due to the hidden nature of the human trafficking, it is difficult to obtain concrete data pertaining to its prevalence within the United States (Panigabutra-Roberts, 2012). Obtaining accurate data is further complicated as many human trafficking victims are afraid to come forward. Their fear often stems from being forced to commit criminal acts like prostitution, being involved in illegal activities such as drug use or the use of false documents, or being undocumented and afraid of deportation from the United States (Logan, Walker, & Hunt, 2009). Another problem regarding identification of victims occurs when law enforcement personnel are

unable to look past illegal activity like prostitution and incorrectly label victims only as criminals (Logan, et al., 2009).

Despite difficulty in obtaining statistics about the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States, some limited estimates regarding the number and demographics of victims are available. While the Polaris Project, a leading organization amidst the fight to internationally eradicate human trafficking, does not offer an official estimate of the number of trafficking victims in the United States, it suggests that victims may measure in the hundreds of thousands nationally (The facts, 2016). The government provides some information regarding the demographics of trafficking victims in the United States. According to the Attorney General, among human trafficking victims identified by law enforcement within the nation in 2011, 55 percent were male, while all victims of sex trafficking were female. Further, 59 percent of child victims were female (U.S. Attorney General, 2011).

Some information regarding the different sectors of trafficking that exist within the United States is also available. Research suggests that the major types of trafficking sectors in the United States include the following: sex work (prostitution, commercial sex), other sex work–related activities (exotic dancing, pornography, entertainment), domestic labor, personal service (domestic or sexual servitude, servile marriage), factory labor/sweatshop, restaurant labor, and agricultural or other labor (general, construction, coal mining) (Logan, et al., 2009). Sex work and domestic labor are believed to be the most prevalent in the United States (Logan, et al., 2009). Victims involved in sex work are usually female and are often underage, while victims involved in labor trafficking are typically male and are between 18 and 24 years old (Institute on Race and Justice at Northeastern University, 2008).

## **VULNERABILITY TO TRAFFICKING**

Extreme poverty appears to be the factor that most increases a person's vulnerability to trafficking (Logan, et al., 2009). Those who are living in extreme poverty are easily lured by a chance of a better quality of life (Vollman, 2007). Victims often believe that they are taking legitimate jobs as waitresses, landscapers, childcare providers, or domestic workers but arrive to find out that they have been deceived into a life of modern day slavery (Logan, et al., 2009). Lack of education and lack of knowledge about legal rights also contribute to vulnerability to trafficking (Logan, et al., 2009). There are also demographic risk factors for trafficking. For example, females are more likely to be trafficked than males (Logan, et al., 2009).

Once involved in trafficking, several factors are involved in keeping victims entrapped. Among the most common reasons that people struggle to escape trafficking are: fear, lack of knowledge about alternatives, and isolation (Logan, et al., 2009). Fear is the most commonly stated reason among victims concerning their lack of ability to escape (Logan, et al., 2009). This fear may be induced by physical and sexual violence, threats to family members, threats of deportation, and the possibility of losing their children (Logan, et al., 2009). Many victims are also unaware of the resources available to assist them. Some may not even know their rights or that what is happening to them is a crime (Logan, et al., 2009). Isolation, too, plays a large role in keeping trafficking victims ensnared. Traffickers use isolation as a tactic to ensure the further entrapment of victims, limiting their contact with the outside world and especially with family members and other members of their ethnic and religious communities (Logan, et al., 2009). Along with the tactic of isolation, traffickers may obtain control of victims' money, passports, visas, and other identifying objects (Logan, et al., 2009). Traffickers may employ debt bondage in which they employ bogus contracts or charge undue debts that are almost impossible to pay

off (Logan, et al, 2009). Due to all of these reasons, it is difficult for victims to escape trafficking and rejoin society.

## **EFFECTS OF TRAFFICKING**

Trafficking takes a heavy toll on victims both physically and mentally, producing complex needs. Due to chronic exposure to traumatic events, trafficking victims typically undergo great psychological harm (Zimmerman, Hossain, & Watts, 2011). Victims often suffer great maltreatment at the hands of traffickers, including intimidation, blackmail, threats against loved ones, physical attacks, deprivation of necessities like sleep and food, sexual abuse, and forced or coerced substance use (Zimmerman et al., 2011). The mental health consequences of these types of maltreatment may include: post-trauma symptoms and syndromes, insomnia, depression, dissociation and cognitive problems, drug or alcohol addiction, overdose, self-harm, and feelings such as shame and guilt, loss of self-esteem, suicidal ideations, etc. (Zimmerman et al., 2011). Victims have reported feeling mental defeat, which may be described as “the perceived loss of all autonomy, a state of giving up in one’s mind all efforts to retain one’s identity as a human being with a will of one’s own,” as a result of trafficking (Ehlers, Maercker, & Boos, 2000). Victims’ feelings of mental defeat are associated with total subordination, including loss of self-identity, and not caring if one lives or dies (Logan, et al., 2009).

Victims typically have pressing physical needs as well given that traffickers often treat victims abusively and have a tendency to neglect routine medical care in order to obtain the maximum amount of profit and avoid detection (Hodge, 2014). Physical consequences of trafficking may include: immune suppression, malnutrition, sexually transmitted infections

including HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, brain or liver damage, etc. (Zimmerman et al., 2011).

## **RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS**

Once trafficking victims are identified, their mental and physical needs demand pressing attention. Coalitions including local governments, civic groups, community health providers, faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and social service organizations unite across the United States to provide services to human trafficking victims (Panigabutra-Roberts, 2012). Needs of victims may be grouped into 3 categories, including immediate, ongoing, and long-term needs. Immediate needs include such services as crisis safety and shelter services, basic supplies, language services, and emergency medical care (Macy & Johns, 2011). Ongoing needs include physical and mental healthcare, substance abuse services, safety services, transitional housing, and legal and immigration advocacy (Macy & Johns, 2011). Long-term needs include life skills and job training, language skills, and long-term housing (Macy & Johns, 2011).

During the first stages of the recovery process, the victims' needs for healthcare and for safety for their family members are usually prioritized (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Heffron, 2011). Victims also are in need of material assistance, which is most often provided by local nonprofit organizations. These nonprofit organizations ensure that victims will have food, shelter, and clothing (Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Food may be supplied through food pantries and soup kitchens and shelter through domestic violence/women's shelters, runaway and homeless youth shelters, and transitional housing programs (Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Job training, education services, transportation, and other types of assistance are also available for many victims through local nonprofit organizations (Department

of Health and Human Services, 2012). Medical services may be provided through community health centers, homeless clinics, free clinics, and substance abuse services (Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Research suggests that rehabilitative success is greatest when one case manager coordinates all of the above services for a victim (Macy & Johns, 2011). Case managers can offer both emotional support to victims during a lengthy recovery and assist with connecting victims to other service providers (Macy & Johns, 2011).

To provide the best mental health care for trafficking victims, great care must be taken. Providing trauma-informed care is recommended. Providers who employ trauma-informed care should: give priority to the victims' safety, use an empowerment philosophy, maximize victims' choice and control of services, emphasize victims' resilience, and minimize the potential to experience additional trauma (Macy & Johns, 2011). Because victims have experienced a complete violation of trust during trafficking, mental health providers should constantly work to build trust and rapport (Aron, Zweig, & Newmark, 2006). Further, research suggests that providers should offer cognitive-behavioral therapy to alleviate both depression and post-trauma syndromes (Macy & Johns, 2011).

## **LOCAL PREVALENCE**

The most complete published information regarding human trafficking in Tennessee comes from the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. However, the information relies solely upon reports supplied by Tennessee law enforcement officials, which may be considered to be incomplete as human trafficking victims are often hesitant to approach these officials. The TBI's information also reports only on sex trafficking without any information regarding other potential sectors of trafficking within the state.

In 2013 the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation noted that 76 of Tennessee's 95 counties reported cases of human trafficking. Coffee, Davidson, Knox, and Shelby county officials reported more than 100 cases of minor sex trafficking annually, while Franklin, Rutherford, Warren, Carter, Hamilton, Lawrence, Madison, Roane, and Washington reported at least 25 cases (Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 2013). The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's reports also indicate that human trafficking is not constrained only to urban areas but takes place in rural communities as well. Among rural law enforcement respondents to surveys of human trafficking, 42 percent reported knowing of cases of sex trafficking in their jurisdiction (Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 2013). Based upon this data, it is clear that human trafficking is a state-wide issue that affects many types of communities from rural towns to large cities.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's reports also include qualitative responses made by law enforcement officials regarding the nature of trafficking in their jurisdictions. A Coffee County respondent described his experience with human trafficking as "a father who was abusing his daughters and then letting his friends participate for a fee" (Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 2013). A Bradley County respondent noted that "too often non-offending parents stay with the abuser due to a lack of resources" (Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 2013).

Forty-nine percent of law enforcement survey respondents indicated that they had referred human trafficking victims to services including counseling treatment and housing and healthcare services. Unfortunately, 30 percent of respondents indicated that they had no knowledge of such services in their geographical area (Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 2011).

I now relate the methods for the paper. The following chapter defines the research

process that I used to explore the prevalence of human trafficking and the resources to alleviate its effects in Tennessee

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **SAMPLE**

I conducted interviews with employees of 3 nonprofit organizations that work to combat human trafficking and to offer resources to victims in the state of Tennessee. These organizations included Second Life of Chattanooga, the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking, and End Slavery Tennessee. The organizations are located in Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Nashville respectively. I generated this sample using convenience sampling, which accesses research participants based upon their availability. Convenience sampling was used due to the rarity of the research population.

I contacted employees of the nonprofit organizations using emails listed on their websites. Through these email correspondences, interviews were set up with one employee at each of the 3 organizations.

#### **INTERVIEWS**

My exploratory investigation regarded primarily the prevalence and demographics of human trafficking in Tennessee as well as the needs of victims and the resources available to rehabilitate them within the state. Before beginning the interviews, I submitted a request for and received permission to receive human subjects with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Tennessee. The IRB requires participants to sign an informed consent form before participating in research. My informed consent form is included as Appendix A.

I conducted 1 interview with each individual. Each interview lasted between one (1) and two (2) hours. Each participant consented to allow audio recording of his or her interview, which I later transcribed. I also took handwritten notes during each interview.

Each interview took place in the private office of the employee at the nonprofit organization’s headquarters or via telephone depending upon the geographic location of the nonprofit organization in relation to my location in Knoxville, Tennessee.

I initiated each interview with a greeting followed by a review of the objectives of my study—to determine the prevalence and demographics of human trafficking in Tennessee as well as the needs of victims and the resources available to rehabilitate them within the state. I next reviewed the informed consent form with the participant. If the interview was completed in person, the participant then signed the consent form in my presence. If the interview was completed via phone, I emailed the consent form to the organization prior to the interview, and the participant scanned a signed version and returned it to me via email.

The qualitative interviews that I conducted were similar to conversations. I used several prompts and questions to generate dialogue with each participant. These are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/PROMPTS

How many human trafficking victims do you provide services to each month?
What percentage of your victims are males and what percentage are females?
What is the age range of your clients?
What races and nationalities do your clients represent?
What are the most common sectors of trafficking that your clients have experienced (labor, sex, organ, etc.)?

How do your clients typically find themselves to be involved in human trafficking?
How long are your clients usually involved in trafficking before they seek help?
What are the barriers that trafficking victims experience in seeking help (fear of legal repercussions, language barriers, etc.)?
Without discussing specific individual details of clients, describe the psychological needs of someone who has been a victim of human trafficking.
What are some of the other issues, such as drugs, homelessness, hunger, or lack of skills, that your clients typically face?
What services do you provide to rehabilitate victims?
How long do you typically provide services to clients?
What are indicators of successful treatment?
How often do you achieve success in treating a client?
Do you work in collaboration with the government or other nonprofits to treat victims?
Without discussing specific, individual details, what experiences have your clients had with government officials and law enforcement in regards to trafficking?
In what ways can human trafficking be better prevented in Tennessee?
In what ways can treatment and rehabilitation of victims be improved in Tennessee?

I did, however, allow participants to talk freely, offering prompts only when appropriate.

Participants discussed broad aspects of their work at the nonprofit organizations, detailing their daily duties and experiences in interacting with law enforcement, other nonprofit organizations, and human trafficking victims.

## **METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

After compiling my notes and the transcript from each interview, I familiarized myself with them through numerous readings and comparison. I then identified commonalities and themes that ran throughout the interviews.

I began by studying the number and demographics of trafficking victims assisted by the nonprofit organizations in Tennessee. I next studied participants' descriptions of the experiences of trafficking victims before, during, and after experiencing trafficking and the needs presented at each stage. Finally, I studied the services provided by the nonprofit organizations to victims and the ways in which these services may be improved.

I now relate these research findings. In the following 2 chapters, I report on the realities of human trafficking within the state of Tennessee.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **PREVALENCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Employees of Second Life of Chattanooga and the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking in East Tennessee and of End Slavery Tennessee in Middle Tennessee all reported growth in the number of victims they have served from year to year and even from month to month in Tennessee. Since their advent, these nonprofit organizations have continuously increased the number of clients who receive assistance. They have also worked to educate primary responders, such as law enforcement personnel, truck stop and hotel managers, and cable television installers or others who work in private homes, in victim identification. With an increase in educated primary responders, nonprofit organizations expect growth to continue in the future. Second Life of Chattanooga served 50 victims in 2015, and the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking served 21. These East Tennessee organizations had already served 16 and 15 victims in the spring of 2016 respectively. End Slavery Tennessee provided services to more than 80 victims and their families during 2015 and expect to double that number in 2016. End Slavery Tennessee had served more than 40 victims already in March of 2016.

All three of the nonprofit organizations whose employees were interviewed serve primarily female victims. The Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking has to date only served female victims. Second Life of Chattanooga has served 3 male victims since its advent in 2008, and End Slavery Tennessee reported that 99 percent of the victims that they have served have been female. These organizations, of course, are willing to serve male victims when the

need arises. However, one interviewee suggested that typically men who are trafficking victims are undocumented immigrants experiencing labor trafficking. Due to fear of legal repercussions such as deportation or jailing, these men are less likely than women experiencing sex trafficking to be discovered or to seek assistance.

A wide range of trafficking victims have been identified and assisted in Tennessee. The interviewed organizations reported serving victims as young as 14 but as old as 53. The majority of assisted victims in the state have been young adults above the age of 18.

Victims of human trafficking in Tennessee represent multiple races. In East Tennessee the community Coalition Against Human Trafficking has served primarily victims from the Southeast United States. Only one of the victims they have served was not a United States citizen. Seventy-five percent of the victims served in East Tennessee have been Caucasian, and 20 percent have been African Americans. The remaining 5 percent have been Asian and Latino. One interviewee, though, reported that the Sheriff's office conducts stings in the area at massage parlors and spas where international women, mostly from countries such as China and Vietnam, are trafficked. Because the interviewed nonprofits have very little interaction with these women, they are not included in the statistics above. In Middle Tennessee End Slavery Tennessee has served Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian victims.

All of the victims who have received services from the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking, Second Life of Chattanooga, and End Slavery Tennessee have been sex trafficking victims. Some of the victims they have served, however, have experienced dual victimization during which they experience sex and labor trafficking simultaneously. These women have been forced to work long hours for no pay but also were forced to perform sexual acts in a commercial exchange. One interviewee was unsurprised that all of the victims whom

the organizations have served have been sex trafficking victims and reported that it accounts for about 80 percent of trafficking within the United States. However, this interviewee described labor trafficking with which the interviewed nonprofit organizations have not worked with directly that occurs in tourist areas like Sevierville. In this labor trafficking, international victims have their passports and visas confiscated and are charged exuberant travel and housing fees by traffickers, leaving victims with no money or means of escape at the end of the day.

## **TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCES**

Although there are a variety of ways to become ensnared in trafficking, victims often have common vulnerabilities and experiences. One interviewee related that more than 50 percent of sex trafficking victims in the United States have been through the foster care system and more than 90 percent have a history of sexual abuse. These women's history of trauma and limited access to resources often increases their desire to feel loved and accepted and consequently makes them vulnerable to a trafficking technique known as "boyfriending". In boyfriending a trafficker poses as a boyfriend or father figure and convinces an unsuspecting woman that he loves her. Once the woman is convinced of this false love, the trafficker begins to exploit her. Runaway youth are especially vulnerable to the boyfriending technique, especially because there are currently no runaway youth shelters in some parts of Tennessee. Some victims are introduced to trafficking through their family members as well. The interviewed nonprofits have assisted victims who were forced into trafficking by a parent or a spouse. Other victims become ensnared in trafficking to fuel drug addictions. Even more commonly victims begin to use drugs as a coping mechanism during trafficking or are forced by traffickers to use drugs to produce forced compliance and develop an addiction. Still others are naïve and unsuspectingly begin

relationships with traffickers online. As these relationships progress, the victims are manipulated into sending traffickers sexual material electronically. Due to emotional abuse and threats these victims are forced to continue to provide sexual materials to traffickers for extended periods of time.

The victims assisted by the interviewed nonprofits do not usually seek help for themselves. Instead victims are identified by others who seek help for them. Often those who identify and initially assist victims are law enforcement personnel, medical personnel at emergency rooms and pregnancy clinics, or employees at sexual assault centers. Victims are hesitant to seek help for themselves for a variety of reasons. Foremost among these reasons is a reluctance to approach law enforcement or to face legal repercussions. One interviewee pointed out that the United States legal system is not skewed to help trafficking victims. Instead it typically labels victims simply as criminals, piling on drug and prostitution charges. For this reason, victims experience reasonable fear in approaching law enforcement personnel for assistance. Further, victims are typically too afraid of their traffickers due to psychological and emotional abuse experienced at their hands to reach out for help. Traffickers brainwash victims into believing that they are worthless and only good for sexual exploitation. Perhaps victims are even led to believe that they are at fault for the trauma they are experiencing. Traffickers also physically beat victims and assure them that if they attempt to leave or escape, they or their families will be killed. Still other victims are utterly convinced through the boyfriendting technique that their trafficker truly loves them and therefore do not understand that they are being trafficked.

## **NEEDS OF VICTIMS**

Victims of human trafficking develop a plethora of psychological and emotional disturbances and needs due to the trauma that they have experienced. Victims are subject to domestic, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse as they are trafficked. Often they disassociate as a coping mechanism against these traumas. One interviewee suggested that the level of posttraumatic stress experienced by trafficking victims is rivaled only by returning war veterans. Moreover, victims often struggle additionally with addiction, depression, anxiety, self-harm, eating disorders, and other psychological disorders. At the core of these issues is often an ingrained sense of worthlessness and hopelessness that must be overcome.

Physical needs exhibited by trafficking victims may include chronic pain, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, chronic dental issues, untreated broken bones, malnourishment, hair loss, and more.

Many trafficking victims also lack education and skills. Victims most often enter trafficking during their early teenage years. Consequently, they often do not complete their education and earn a high school diploma or a GED. Perhaps too they have never had a job and, therefore, have not developed any skills. Victims often also have petty criminal records with charges such as drug possession and theft. They almost always have a list of solicitation charges, which ensures that they are listed as sexual offenders within Tennessee, as well. Due to these issues, it is almost impossible for victims to get a job after they have been trafficked. Moreover, even if victims do manage to secure a job, it is unlikely that they have the social skills needed to succeed due to their history of abuse and trauma. For example, they likely do not possess the necessary social skills to interact with customers as a cashier and do not have the experience to understand the proper relationship between a boss and an employee.

## **SERVICES FOR VICTIMS**

The Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking, Second Life of Chattanooga, and End Slavery Tennessee all offer extensive services to rehabilitate human trafficking victims in conjunction with other governmental and nonprofit organizations. In East Tennessee, the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking offers not only training and education to the community about human trafficking but also provides referral services to the victims with whom they work to residential facilities, which are often in Nashville or Atlanta. These referrals are necessary because there is not yet a residential facility for human trafficking victims in East Tennessee. Fortunately, a residential facility is scheduled to open in Chattanooga in 2017 under Second Life of Chattanooga. In the meantime, the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking forms relationships with victims and provides bus or plane tickets to residential facilities as well as needed materials like clothing and food. The staff at the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking focuses heavily upon empowerment and upon developing open, long-term relationships through follow-ups with victims. At the center of the organization's philosophy is the idea that victims' humanity is just as important as others'. This philosophy means that the staff at the Community Against Human Trafficking encourages victims to make their own choices and allows victims to define their own individual parameters for successful treatment.

At the center of the services provided by Second Life of Chattanooga is trauma-informed mental healthcare. Trauma-informed mental healthcare involves a variety of different counseling methods conducted by specially-trained therapists that all focus upon alleviating the repeated trauma experienced by trafficking victims. The counselors at Second Life of Chattanooga are contracted from other providers in the area currently; however, Second Life of Chattanooga is

now working to open 2 homes that will house victims during recovery, one offering short-term stays of up to 30 days and another offering long-term stays of up to a year. Within these homes, staff will provide oversight and administer care and programming 24 hours a day. The programming will provide trauma-informed mental healthcare and substance abuse recovery. It will also include job training, teaching everything from interview skills to how to develop a resume, as well as support for victims to advance their education during recovery. Second Life of Chattanooga ascribes to the belief that recovering from trafficking is a lifelong process and strives to maintain relationships with those whom they have served, continuously encouraging them to improve.

In Middle Tennessee, End Slavery Tennessee too works to build lifelong relationships and to provide holistic services to restore trafficking victims. They provide for immediate needs, offering clothing, food, medicine, and housing. They also assist victims as they finish school, look for jobs, and attempt to get custody of their children back. End Slavery Tennessee meets the psychological needs of the victims whom they service as well, offering therapy, counseling, and drug treatment in conjunction with other local organizations. Each victim with whom End Slavery Tennessee works develops short- and long-term goals with a care coordinator on staff and is encouraged to keep in long-term contact with the organization, checking in even when independent to celebrate milestones on the road to recovery.

## **PREVENTION AND IMPROVEMENT**

Interviewees pointed to education as the key to prevent human trafficking in Tennessee. One interviewee poignantly stated that “no community can respond to a crime it does not know how to recognize.” Youth need to be educated so that they are not susceptible. Parents, teachers,

and mentors need to be educated to identify the early signs of potential trafficking. The community as a whole needs to be educated to recognize the actual prevalence and significance of trafficking within the state.

The interviewees consider sex trafficking to be a demand-driven issue and were adamant that it is impossible to end it in the United States without curbing the demand for pornography and commercial sex. One interviewee blatantly related increased access to pornography to an increase in sex trafficking. Pornography breeds desires that may manifest themselves in illicit manners, driving some to purchase sex. Further, when one views pornography, he or she has no guarantee that those involved in its creation were willing participants or that they were of age. The pornography itself may have been created through sex trafficking. An interviewee stated that the refusal of some faith communities, especially in East Tennessee, to acknowledge the issue of pornography and to educate members about its dangers are allowing illicit activity that in turn leads to sex trafficking. Another interviewee pointed to the sexualization of women in general society as a culprit in increasing sex trafficking. The interview also highlighted the role of traditional gender stereotypes that indicate that women are sexual objects and that the measure of a man is his dominance in encouraging the trafficking of women, especially in the South. To combat these stereotypes, the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking is developing a preventative curriculum for teenage boys to educate them about gender identity and about how to identify as a man with oppressing women.

Interviewees also spoke about the incredibly high tendency for prostitution-related criminal charges to be addressed to prostitutes rather than to traffickers or to “Johns” who purchase sex. Because there have been little repercussions for men who purchase sex, many men may believe that it is within their rights to do so. These men need to be educated about

trafficking and informed that simply because a woman is available for sex if paid for, she may not truly be a willing party. Although interviewees indicated that improvement has been made in educating law enforcement personnel about trafficking, further education about the difference between the criminal activity of prostitution and the victimization of trafficking is needed. Far too often the legal system is not skewed in favor of victims.

Education is once again imperative in order to improve services for human trafficking victims in Tennessee. Those who work at treatment and rehabilitation facilities need to be educated about the incredible trauma brought on by human trafficking and about the complexity of treating victims. Once education is sufficient, a specialized treatment plan can be created to cater specifically to the needs of individual trafficking victims. Further, continued collaboration among nonprofit organizations, law enforcement personnel, and those involved in treatment is necessary.

I now relate my conclusions. The following chapter includes an overview of human trafficking and provides suggestions about decreasing its existence in Tennessee.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the prevalence of human trafficking and the resources available to alleviate its effects in Tennessee. I conducted qualitative interviews with the employees of nonprofits in Tennessee that work to combat human trafficking and to rehabilitate human trafficking victims. The interviews were intended to provide accurate information about the state of human trafficking in Tennessee. Because the interviewed nonprofit employees work with human trafficking victims on a daily basis, their insight is perhaps more valuable than the insight of law enforcement personnel, whom trafficking victims are often hesitant to address.

The interviews revealed that human trafficking, although overlooked by many, is a prevalent issue in Tennessee. Women in the state are being sexually exploited for commercial gain by traffickers. These women are most often American citizens who are led to believe that they are entering romantic relationships with traffickers but are then exploited. Nonprofits in Tennessee provide tangible materials and offer services, such as trauma-informed mental healthcare, drug addiction rehabilitation, and job training, to assist victims in recovery. Victims, however, rarely seek assistance themselves. Instead, they are typically identified by law enforcement and medical personnel. Once identified, recovery is a life-long process for human trafficking victims. Because victims have experienced repeated traumas, they develop complex emotional and psychological issues, including but not limited to post traumatic stress,

depression, anxiety, and addiction. Victims also suffer physical repercussions and develop issues such as sexually transmitted infections and diseases, chronic pain, and malnourishment.

The rise in the commercial sex industry is at the root of human trafficking in Tennessee. Increases in pornographic activity encourage growth of the sex trafficking industry. Pornography elicits desires that are fulfilled by trafficking activity and perpetuates the idea that women are sexual objects that may be dominated and purchased by men. Until pornographic use is addressed by communities and reduced, it will continue to incite the exploitation of women through sex trafficking in Tennessee.

An increase in awareness and education about the existence and reality of human trafficking in Tennessee is also needed to decrease the exploitation of women. Many are not aware of or do not acknowledge the existence of human trafficking in Tennessee. A rise in community awareness and action has the potential to drastically reduce sex trafficking and the devastation it wreaks in women's lives in Tennessee.

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## **Appendix A: Informed Consent Form**

### **Informed Consent Statement**

#### **Prevalence of Human Trafficking and Resources to Alleviate its Effects in Tennessee**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to participate in a research study, the purpose of which is to better understand the prevalence and effects of human trafficking in Tennessee. Questions will be asked about your insights concerning the nature of trafficking within Tennessee.

##### **INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY**

The study involves an interview that may take between two (2) and three (3) hours. You will be asked to participate in one interview. The interview may be tape-recorded if you consent to tape-recording. The interview will take place in a room at the headquarters of the nonprofit for which you are employed or via video chat, using Skype or Zoom.

##### **RISKS**

There are no other foreseeable risks or discomforts other than those encountered in everyday life involved in participation in this study.

##### **BENEFITS**

Potential benefits of the study include greater understanding of the prevalence and types of trafficking in Tennessee and of the resources available to aid victims in recovery.

##### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information from the tape-recorded interview may be used to support study findings, but no names will be used to report these findings. Records will be preserved with a made-up name substituted for your real name, and tape-recorded interviews will be destroyed. No information other than this consent statement kept on record will identify you as an informant. This record of your real name will be kept in a locked box. Only the researcher and her advisor will have access to this box.

##### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Brooke Morton, at [cmorton3@vols.utk.edu](mailto:cmorton3@vols.utk.edu) or (931)205-3573 or her advisor, Dr. Regina Benedict, at [rbenedic@vols.utk.edu](mailto:rbenedic@vols.utk.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at [utkirb@utk.edu](mailto:utkirb@utk.edu) or (865) 974-7697.

##### **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will not be included in the results of the study.

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**CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_