

Modern Day Slavery: The Exploitation and Prostitution of Juveniles in the United States

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“The more often a person is exposed to potentially harmful materials, the more normal it seems and the more desensitized the person becomes”- Dr. Sharon Cooper, MD, FAAP, CEO of Developmental and Forensic Pediatrics.

ABSTRACT

Every year, thousands of innocent children are exploited and manipulated into the complex system of prostitution in the United States. The country’s youth are falling into a deceptive trap set by sexual predators, or pimps, where they are sexually victimized and held in a virtual bondage against their will. Pimps utilize coercive techniques and brutal physical force to lure, capture and exploit juveniles for their economic benefit. Countless myths and stereotypes regarding juvenile prostitution must be eliminated to clear the pathway toward resolution. This study is not the result of scientific research but purely an examination of the issue in an attempt to raise awareness. The information contained in this research is not intended for generalizations as the dynamics of juvenile prostitution differ throughout the country. It is more important than ever to understand the challenges law enforcement authorities face and the unwarranted pain each child is forced to endure.

HANNAH

Hannah was only 13 years old when she met Mike. It was a Friday afternoon and she and two other friends, Sarah and Ashley, ditched school that day. Hannah normally doesn't do this but figured, 'why not,' she hasn't been getting along with her step-dad and had a huge fight the night before. Hannah and her friends were just window-shopping when Mike approached them. He appeared to be about 20 years old and Hannah immediately noticed his great smile. He was tall, good looking and dressed from head to toe in designer clothing. Hannah was slightly caught off guard when he directed his attention to her but she was intrigued. It was nothing new for her friend Sarah to be approached by men, but for Hannah she wasn't really used to being noticed. Mike introduced himself and started to walk with the girls through the mall. Completely uninterested, Sarah and Ashley broke away to go meet up with some classmates that just got out of school. Hannah decided to stay with Mike. He began to ask her questions about her life like what it was like at home and if she got along with her parents. She explained that her parents recently divorced, her father wasn't really around anymore and she was having a difficult time getting along with her step-dad, but despite all of that, she had a baby brother she cared for very much. Mike said he understood and knew how she felt because he once was in a similar situation with his family.

After about an hour of walking and talking, Mike was flirting and showering Hannah in compliments, telling her how beautiful and attractive he thought she was. He started bringing Hannah into stores, asking her which things she liked and told her he would buy her anything she wanted. At the register, Hannah was a little stunned to see Mike pull out a wallet full of cash to buy Hannah two pair of new jeans and a stack of t-shirts. When he noticed Hannah looking at it,

he told her that he was a recording artist that just caught a break and signed a deal. He told her that this was just the beginning and he was on his way to making it to the top in the industry. Mike promised if she stayed with him he would treat her like a princess and she could have anything she wanted. As they left the last store, Mike told Hannah he had to meet up with his brother and wanted to know if she would come along. Unaware of where Sarah and Ashley were, she agreed to go with him.

They got into his car and drove about 30 minutes to a neighborhood downtown she didn't recognize. They entered an apartment complex and went up into a room where three African American men and one girl were smoking marijuana in the living room. Immediately, Hannah noticed a handgun in the waistband of one of the men's pants. Mike left her in the living room while he went into a back bedroom. Her stomach dropped, she didn't know what to do. About five minutes later Mike came out of the room and left the apartment without saying a word. Hannah was left alone with these strangers and before she knew it the "grooming" process began. The men took away all of her belongings and forced her to smoke marijuana. Not knowing what to do and fearing any consequences if she disobeyed, she did what they said.

Mike eventually returned to the apartment and handed Hannah a new set of clothes. She was too afraid to refuse so she put on the black mini skirt and yellow midriff top and Mike began to take pictures. Then he brought her into the bathroom and forced her to take off the clothing and proceeded to take nude photos of her. Hannah begged to be let go but Mike chuckled a little and threatened that he knew where she lived and he would kill her mom, dad and little brother if she tried to leave. She believed every word he said and the nightmare continued. One by one, the men took turns violently raping Hannah, leaving her completely helpless and destroyed. She pleaded over and over again to be let go, but this time Mike threatened to post the nude pictures

on the Internet and show her parents what she did. Hannah thought to herself, she smoked marijuana, was photographed nude and was gang raped by each man in the apartment. What would her parents think of her? She had crossed the line. At this point Hannah was ashamed and thought that after everything she did her parents would never accept her back home.

Hungry, tired and completely disoriented, Hannah was forced back into the provocative clothing and shoved into the car with Mike and the others from the apartment. It was pitch dark outside and Hannah was feeling nauseous and still had no idea where she was. In the car, the female started talking to Hannah. She told her that she needed to understand they're a family now and she had to listen carefully to the rules. She would be taken care of but she had to do her part for the family. All of the sudden the car stopped. The female and Hannah got out on the corner and the car sped away. Hannah turned her first trick that night. She quickly went from an innocent 13-year-old to a sexually exploited slave in her own country. This is modern day slavery.

INTRODUCTION

The word "slavery" evokes a number of feelings and reactions. The average person may recall stories and images from textbooks of shackled African Americans held against their will and forced to work arduous hours in the fields and subjected to violent and abusive treatment. Although slavery is formally outlawed in the United States and around the world, several varying forms of enslavement still exist today and unbeknownst to most, operate in the average neighborhood. Most people believe slavery is a thing of the past, but at this moment hundreds of thousands of children in the United States are being sexually exploited and domestically

trafficked across the country for profit. These youth are manipulated, coerced and violated on a daily basis and held against their will by chains of fear. Their innocence and youth are savagely stolen from them while they are transformed into a helpless commodity.

The sexual exploitation of children can appear in many forms such as pornography and sex tourism but arguably the most overlooked form is the prostitution of children. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children generally defines prostitution as “performing, offering, or agreeing to perform a sexual act for any money, property, token, object, article, or anything of value.” On the other hand, the prostitution of children “is defined as the sexual exploitation of a child for remuneration in cash or in-kind, usually but not always organized by an intermediary such as a procurer, family member, pimp, or madame.” Children forced into this lifestyle are robbed of their development, their rights to an education, to health, and to grow up in a protected and safe environment. This study should eliminate the myth that prostitution is a victimless crime and that a choice is always involved. The rights of these children, to a normal and healthy childhood, are crushed against their will.

This examination is not going to focus on the headline stories. It is not about the young Vietnamese girls trafficked into the United States, it is about the 13-year-old runaway from down the street or the girl that attends the middle school just around the corner. One outreach group, The Polaris Project, explains that much like the majority of other countries affected by human trafficking, the United States has a large internal or “domestic” component of human trafficking for the purposes of both sexual and labor exploitation. The domestic trafficking of children moves them from state to state or from city to city for exploitative purposes, forcing them to break human connections and live in isolation. Through their highly intelligent coercive methods, domestic sex traffickers commonly referred to as pimps, lure children into the

commercial sex industry and down a path of destruction. What this study ultimately aims to do is shed light on the shadow that has been cast over this startling reality.

BACKGROUND

Economic globalization, industrialization and free trade are phenomenon praised for creating new world markets and widening opportunities for broader success. Despite their benefits, several unanticipated social problems have resulted from these changes. One new market, once considered marginal, has opened up and begun to flourish over the past thirty years. This market is the sex industry and its goods are human beings. According to Poulin (2004), the sex industry has come to occupy a strategic and central position in the development of international capitalism, emerging as a mainstream sector of the economy. Unfortunately, deeply entangled in the increasing modernization of the sex trade are young children. Juveniles are transformed into products sold within a massive and highly organized billion-dollar industry.

It was not until the late 20th century that the distorted viewpoint in the United States regarding sexually victimized children finally started to shift. Brown (2008) explains that juveniles that were sexually abused and exploited were narrowly portrayed as immoral girls inviting and seducing older men. Not realizing that these children are far from being delinquents, but in fact helpless victims, society frowned upon them for being independent, dirty and sexually experienced. Negative connotations such as these led to false assumptions regarding juvenile prostitution and society began to view these children as tainted and blameworthy for their actions. The voices of children caught in the commercialized sex industry are rarely heard, but

thanks in large part to the efforts of charitable organizations and child welfare groups, most of society has now come to realize it is pure abuse.

The Children of the Night organization distinguishes a particular point in time they believe child prostitution became a very real and undeniable problem. The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act was passed by Congress in 1974 and prohibited the secure detention of runaway children. Children were left on the streets to fend for themselves because this act prevented police from arresting children for running away from home. Without any support and desperate for food and shelter, children become extremely vulnerable and can easily fall into the wrong hands. Prostitution is an age-old problem but little is known about the recent explosion of child trafficking and exploitation. It is extremely common for society to turn a blind eye to social evils that are difficult to deal with, especially moral issues involving children. By refusing to recognize the dark underside to society, children will continue to fall vulnerable to the trap society has unknowingly set. UNICEF estimates that a million new juveniles are coerced or forced into sex slavery each year. This is a fact society can not afford to turn its back on.

P.I.M.P. = "Power In Manipulating People"

As this paper has only begun to indicate, it takes a certain type of person to involve themselves with the intentional harm of children. Actually, it essentially takes an incredibly charming, charismatic and engaging person. Someone who appears to lead a very promising and successful life. Someone hiding behind a deceitful mask. By definition, a pimp finds and manages clients by engaging them in acts of prostitution in order to profit from their earnings. Over the years, the word pimp has come to imply different meanings; to an older generation, a

despicable and detestable person, and to a younger generation, a well dressed, good-looking ladies man. But above all, the word chiefly denotes male dominance. Some women operate in a similar capacity as a pimp but are referred to as madams. Because this is not as prevalent, this study will concentrate on the male pimp as the more common “business owner.”

Unlike the children involved, the pimps are not victims in this equation. Often times, they begin as gang members or drug dealers before deciding to enter into “the game,” the term used for the underground sector of the economy revolving around prostitution activities.

Unfortunately, many drug dealers realize one bag of marijuana or crack cocaine can only be sold once, but one child can be sold over and over again in just one day. A child has the potential to be a reusable resource. To be a highly successful pimp it is ideal to have a “stable” of girls under direct control. Typically, a pimp will begin his business with his own girlfriend. He persuades her to prove her devotion by turning “tricks,” which is the act of selling ones sexual services for profit. An average street level pimp will manage one to three girls at any given time; any more than that is rare and highly lucrative. One bag of drugs, no matter how large, can only yield a one-time profit while one or two children is an investment capable of continuously bringing in tax-free cash, night after night, day after day. Pimps see more benefit to prostituting women than drug dealing because in comparison the risk of being caught is minimal. Drug dealers are forced into face-to-face interaction while pimps hide in safety as the women and children make deals, perform the services and receive payment. The United States Department of Justice estimates that during one year, the prostituted sexual services of one child are sold to between 100 and 1500 clients (Nair, 2007).

As one former pimp explains, pimps are born not made, but it usually begins when someone from the neighborhood, a family member or a neighbor, exposes a young male to this

lifestyle. For example, this person has suddenly begun wearing high-quality clothing, driving flashy cars and basically living a more superior lifestyle than anyone else in the neighborhood. Their involvement sparks the interest in other men to find the means to live a similar lifestyle. When they hear about what they do, these potential pimps think they have the skills to do it too, maybe even better. Pimps are educated in the inner city and schooled on the pimping business by a mentor or series of mentors (Slim, 2004). They work on developing their “game” and fine tuning their skills so they can learn to invest and market their product to yield the maximum profit.

Pimps are not carbon copies of each other but share similar traits. As a basis, pimps must possess the ability to manipulate, deceive and cheat people for their benefit. Every pimp takes pride in their superior skills of hustling and smooth talking their victims. They are cunning and devious members of society with little to no remorse for their actions. As masters of psychological persuasion, pimps live, work and breathe for “the game” every single day. They have devoted their lives to learning and perfecting it. Two famous and successful pimps, Iceberg Slim and Ice Tea were said to be so cold-blooded they called themselves "Ice" to let everyone know their capacity for heartlessness.

THE TARGET

In Phoenix, Arizona, the average age a child falls victim to the exploitation of prostitution is 13 years old. Many are only 11 or 12 years old but every so often law enforcement encounter children as young as 9 years old. Juveniles are a pimp’s prized possession. They are targeted because customers, or “johns,” believe they have less of a chance of contracting a disease from a

child. Customers also view juveniles as healthier and more attractive than older prostitutes, somewhat of a novelty, and are willing to pay a higher price. In consequence, prostitutes continue to get younger because that particular age group can generate more money. This intensifies the challenge for law enforcement because the rule is, the younger the girl, the more protected she is by her pimp (Dunlap, 2008).

There is no precise way of knowing which children will or will not be recruited for prostitution. Although the popular belief may be that children of a certain social class or family type are more prone to being recruited, it is not always children from poverty stricken neighborhoods and it is not always children from broken homes that end up as prostitutes. Recent research trends show that there are several characteristics common among children recruited into the game, that there are certain traits among young girls that pimps focus on and try to exploit. General psychological and emotional problems, housing instability, homelessness, substance abuse, educational and vocational failure, and other serious issues such as assault at home have all been cited as common precipitating factors in the lives of prostituted children. Farley (2004) found that in general, entry into prostitution is preceded by prolonged and repeated childhood trauma.

Emotionally unstable or economically disadvantaged backgrounds are two key circumstances that can transform children into easy targets. For example, runaways, society's invisible children, are immediately top targets for pimps because in most cases the child is unhappy at home, feeling desperate and abandoned. This type of vulnerability is a major red flag that any pimp can sense. Runaways have no way to meet their basic need for food and shelter and lack any human connections. They're throwaways and viewed as trouble making deviants in the eyes of society. In a 2008 interview with *The Washington Post* in New York City, a young

16-year-old girl recalled running away from her sexually abusive home when she was only 14 years old. She ran into a young man who she thought wanted to be her boyfriend, but she soon found out he had other intentions. This young girl was shocked but so desperate, a situation many girls on the street find themselves in. She remembers, "At the time I needed a place to sleep, so I was like, 'Fine, I'll go along with it'". To emphasize the susceptibility and weakness, according to the National Runaway Switchboard, one out of every three teens on the street will be lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.

A pimp wants to fill any empty space in a child's life by appealing to what the child needs or desires. A pimp has a special ability, a 6th sense so to speak, for detecting the signs that indicate a child is unhappy. A common scenario typically involves a child from a dysfunctional home who has experienced trauma due to physical, verbal, sexual and/or emotional abuse. The child has usually been abused or neglected by a trusted adult in their life and because of their limited knowledge they are lead to believe the only way to escape the violence is to run away from home. They choose to take to the streets to escape and deal with their pain but little do they know they have put themselves in an even more hazardous position. Robert "Moosey" Jones, an individual highly involved in a child prostitution and trafficking ring in Eastern Iowa, said, "pimps look for girls who are 'gullible, vulnerable, misguided, who have low self-esteem', 'they're more easy to mislead'" (Hemmingsen, 2008).

Lack of a parental figure or alcoholic or drug-addicted parents are also factors driving children to seek something or someone else to fill the void in their lives. When children are craving attention, affection and love they are especially vulnerable to the crafty tricks of a pimp. Pimps make promises to desperate children not only to disappoint them in the end, but make their lives exponentially worse.

The prostitution of juveniles does not discriminate between socioeconomic groups. Although common denominators exist, every end of the spectrum is represented in this epidemic. Young girls from educated, middle to upper-class families may run away out of pure rebellion, only planning to stay away from home for a day or so, but are immediately targeted as potential victims. There is a misconception that children are immune to this type of danger when they come from stable families but it is extremely risky to buy into this notion. In the 2002 report, "Female Juvenile Prostitution: Problem and Response," published by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, several case histories and personal testimonies reveal how former juvenile prostitutes were lured in. Karen, for example, describes how she grew up in an upper-middle class family in the suburbs of a moderate sized Mid-western city. She never experienced or witnessed any physical or sexual abuse in her home and there wasn't a history of alcoholism or drug abuse in the family. Although there was a lack of common precipitating factors in Karen's situation, this case confirms that a wide range of girls are in danger. Karen, 13 years old at the time, explained that there were other factors in her life that rendered her vulnerable to Mike's charm, the 18 year-old pimp that procured her into prostitution. She recalled never experiencing any love or physically demonstrated affection within her family. She never felt she was good enough for her parents and was unfavorably compared to her siblings who had multiple talents. She also added that she was unpopular among her peers and attributed this to her deep feelings of unattractiveness. Karen remembered how she felt about herself when she was attending school, "I was the tallest girl in the school and my class, so I mean all the boys were shorter than me, and I had big ears, and I had red hair, and I had freckles, and I wasn't one of the perfect people. You know, I just never believed I would ever get anybody".

As opposed to runaways, children from more secure home situations such as Karen's may be less likely to fall victim to prostitution, but all children in general lack the capability to make informed and intelligent decisions at such a young age. Without the protection and guidance of a trusted adult, their lack of formal education and street sense puts them in a compromising position. Melissa Farley, a research psychologist who has studied prostitution for over a decade, explained thirteen-year-olds think they know a lot about the world, but they don't, they're young and inexperienced.

Another scenario involves juveniles who feel as if their life provides no other options. For example, in some cases they were born into a life on the street where their mothers, sisters or other family members were selling their bodies for cash (Yohemas-Hayes, 2009). Juveniles born into circumstances like these are almost immediately disconnected from mainstream institutions and locked out of conventional employment opportunities. Children of prostitutes often see this avenue as the only viable option and are already accustomed to the lifestyle their family members lead. It is an unfortunate generational cycle juveniles are born into and often can not find their way out of.

RECRUITMENT

Similar to a legitimate day job, pimps will devote a full time effort every single day to recruiting juveniles into prostitution. Certain high-risk areas, like bus and truck stops, are common places for children to be approached by pimps. Children are typically hanging around these places without supervision because they have run away from home and have nowhere else to go. Other common areas where children tend to congregate with their friends, like fast-food

establishments, under 18 non-alcoholic clubs or video game arcades, are all areas highly frequented by pimps. In recent years, there has been an increase in the recruitment of middle-class youth from schools and shopping malls in suburban areas. Places like these put juveniles at risk because many parents treat the mall like a babysitter and leave their children unattended for hours at a time. This allows for plenty of opportunity for pimps to approach and possibly recruit juveniles.

The increase of technological advancements has ushered in new avenues for crime to flourish, often eliminating the constant risk of law enforcement patrol on the street. The privacy factor of the Internet allows crime such as child prostitution to persist by easily evading law enforcement. Pimps can discreetly contact young girls over the Internet through social networking websites like MySpace and Facebook, eventually luring them out of the safety of their own home. Websites such as these allow pimps to converse with young girls and engage in the courtship process over the Internet. The sophistication of the Internet has not only allowed pimps to expand their reach when recruiting juveniles, but it also enables them to contact juveniles from a broader spectrum of society.

In addition to making initial contact with juveniles over the Internet, pimps also have the ability to use the Internet to broker their juvenile victims by posting listings on national websites like Craigslist, Backpage and Eros, which all feature free classified advertisements. On Craigslist, for example, anyone can create or respond to millions of postings, ranging from home appliances to undercover juvenile prostitution. It only takes a cell phone camera and an ad on Craigslist to instantly begin exploiting and prostituting a young child. These advertisements do not explicitly market prostitution but make it abundantly clear what types of services are offered. Cook County, Illinois Sheriff Tom Dart asserted, “Craigslist is the single largest source of

prostitution in the nation,' he said. 'Missing children, runaways, abused women and women trafficked in from foreign countries are routinely forced to have sex with strangers because they're being pimped on Craigslist'".

In 2007, a 19-year-old Minneapolis woman, Justine Alex Reisdorf, was arrested for recruiting minors into a prostitution ring and advertising them in the "erotic services" section of the online bulletin Craigslist. Reisdorf was recruiting high school girls to work for her as prostitutes at a townhouse she rented in Burnsville. She was actively soliciting clients for a sex ring she operated out of a Burnsville condominium and hotel where she worked. Investigators found advertisements on Craigslist that read: "Hi Fellas. it's the party girls ... 200 roses for 2 hours for one of us ... 375 roses for 2 hours for 3 of us ... Kandy, Deja and Carmen." Police discovered "Deja" was used as Reisdorf's alias and "roses" was code for dollars. Often times, advertisements will use code words like "roses" and "hugs" to imply the dollar amounts.

To explore this Internet phenomenon myself, I browsed the Craigslist website under the "erotic services" section. It was only after searching a few postings on the first page that I immediately noticed one advertisement in particular that stood out as a possible juvenile. Aside from the female's body appearing underdeveloped, other indicators suggested the photo may be hiding juvenile prostitution. First, the face is purposely cut out the photo because it could easily reveal that the female may be under-age. The female also appears to be standing in a shower and a small mini refrigerator is located in the background of the photo. This gives the impression the photo was taken in a motel or hotel room, most likely against the female's will. There are also tattoos on the her body, her thigh in particular, which is a common place for pimps to brand their prostitutes. Overall, I only needed to search the site for a few minutes to learn how overtly displayed these ads are.

In the battle against juvenile prostitution, law enforcement personnel constantly browse Internet ads searching for signs like these and other clues on possible cases. Phoenix Police Vice Lieutenant William Schemers explains that due to the explosion of “indoor prostitution” over the Internet and the new challenges it brings, browsing sites like Craigslist has been incorporated into their daily routine. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has found approximately over 2,800 juvenile prostitution ads posted on Craigslist, but the battle over the existence of the “erotic services” section continues. As of recent, Craigslist has made changes to their site by increasing the monitoring of explicit material due in large part to illegal and controversial cases involving the website. In late 2008, Craigslist announced they would crack down on prostitution ads by requiring people who post “erotic services” ads to provide a working phone number and pay a fee with a valid credit card. Craigslist users can also help police the site by flagging ads they believe may be illegal or inappropriate. In March 2005, Craigslist averaged 25,000 new ads every ten days under the “erotic services” section (Farley, 2007). In other words, statistics like these show that law enforcement can not enter this battle alone.

THE BUSINESS MODEL OF PIMPING

From beginning to end, the business model of pimping operates in a similar fashion throughout the country. Like Hannah experienced in the introductory story, the primary method for procuring juveniles into prostitution is through a deceptive and manipulative form of courtship. A combination of feigned friendship or love and the identification and fulfillment of an unmet need in the targeted youth is the most effective and common approach to recruitment. The duration of the courtship process, or “honeymoon” period, can last as little as a few hours or

as long as several months. In Hannah's case, it only took one trip to the mall for Mike's flirtatious charm and feigned interest to drag Hannah into his dirty lies. In some cases, when a pimp makes initial contact with a juvenile, he may break down the courtship process into a few steps.

First of all, when a pimp approaches a young girl, if she does not immediately turn and run away, then he knows there may be potential in the situation. Pimps are careful about who they choose to approach. Phoenix Police Vice Sergeant Clay Sutherlin explains that many pimps use "the rule of three," especially in places like shopping malls. In a group of three girls for instance, the pimp will judge who is the most attractive, who is average in appearance and who is the least attractive. At this point, the pimp will target the most average looking girl from the group. The logic behind this method is that the most attractive girl expects the attention from men and will most likely brush it off. The least attractive girl is automatically on guard and suspicious when men approach her instead of her more attractive friends. Therefore, when a pimp approaches the average looking girl it raises fewer red flags. In most cases she welcomes the attention and is flattered he chose to talk to her over her more attractive friend. Once initial contact is made and the juvenile appears engaged, the courtship process ensues. At first, the development of a relationship may progress gradually with only a brief conversation and possibly obtaining the targeted juvenile's phone number or email address. This will initiate an information-gathering phase by allowing for regular communication through various means such as the telephone, text messaging or emailing. Normally, just like a legitimate relationship, pimps seduce girls by setting up dinner dates or taking her out, showing her a good time and buying her gifts. All the while he is encouraging conversation about what it is she feels she is missing in her life, whether it is how miserable her home life is or how awful she thinks her parents are, he will

focus on the soft spots to manipulate to his advantage. Why don't you get along with your family? Are you sick of your strict parents and their rules? Can you not afford the things you want? These are potential questions a pimp may ask in order to devise a unique strategy to meet her particular needs. If she is a runaway, or accustomed to a life of poverty, he may offer food and shelter. If she's yearning for attention and companionship he may promise money and romance. When the juvenile opens up and describes her situation, the pimp will counter it by showing how exciting, glamorous and care free his life is. He typically will hide behind a façade of an amazing career and an abundance of wealth, just like Mike, the up and coming recording artist from the introductory story. Although not every situation and not every pimp is identical, most resort to similar methods and techniques because they have proven to yield the most promising results.

At this point, the juvenile is truly convinced she has met someone interested and concerned with her life, someone she can trust and rely on above anyone else. In some cases the juvenile feels she has found a friend, but often times it is not uncommon for the young girl to feel like she has fallen in love. This situation occurs quite frequently and is a major factor in keeping her involved for years. Pimps entice juveniles with false promises of romance, glamour and wealth that they fall so deeply in love they can't see through the lies. Pimps heavily rely on the emotional bond they have created with a young girl and use this as well as other deceptive mental, physical and emotional techniques to keep her tangled in his web of lies.

THE INVISIBLE CHAINS

A person does not need to be chained down to be a slave. Juveniles involved in prostitution are exploited against their will. They are not free to go whenever they please. They are stripped of their right to say yes or no. They work unimaginable hours on the streets, without food or sleep, selling their bodies to countless strangers for money they will never see. The myth must be broken that it's not a choice, it's a trick. Peggy Bilsten, former Phoenix City Council Representative and Former Phoenix Vice Mayor, emphasizes, "There is not a single child who went out and said, 'oh ya know what, tonight I want to be gang raped, I want to have foreign objects inserted into me, I want to be held in a dog crate, I want to be branded, not tattooed, branded'". When confronted with such a controversial issue, many people tend to wonder, "why don't they just run away," or "why don't they call for help?" The most common misconception is the idea that they must want to do this if they aren't running away.

Force, fraud and coercion are three key mechanisms used to keep juveniles involved in prostitution rings after the initial contact and courtship process. The minimization and denial of physical violence, as well as economic exploitation, social isolation, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, sexual assault, and captivity are a few among many methods of coercion and control used by pimps (Farley, 2004). It is through the use of these techniques, not chains or ropes, that juveniles are prevented from running away or seeking help. By utilizing a combination of violence and affection, degradation and gifts, pimps are able to control juveniles and force them to perform sexual services against their will. These are highly intelligent systematic methods used to eliminate the child's sense of identity and autonomy. The pimp emphasizes powerlessness, worthlessness and invisibility to convince the victim that her only

role in life is that of a prostitute (Farley, 1994). In her book, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute*, Shannon Bell cites Evelina Giobbe, Executive Director of The Commercial Sexual Exploitation Resource Institute, who wrote:

“The process of ‘becoming’ a prostitute entails the systematic destruction of an individual woman’s beliefs, feelings, desires and values . . . Thus the word ‘prostitute’ does not imply a ‘deeper identity;’ it is the absence of an identity: the theft and subsequent abandonment of self. What remains is essential to the ‘job’: the mouth, the genitals, anus, breasts . . . and the label”.

In addition to physical force and severe brutality, pimps use deceitful mind games to manipulate and brainwash their victims so they quickly lose their common sense between right and wrong and the ability to logically rationalize the situation. It is only after a short period of time that the victim is unable to think clearly or act sensibly. These are only children to begin with so their judgment and reasoning skills have yet to fully develop. In an interview with *The Washington Post*, one former child prostitute recalled being immediately put back to work after the numerous beatings and gang rapes. “I felt at that point that my soul was dying. You're just going through something that's so unimaginable you just can't even think, you just can't even feel". These children are deeply physically and psychologically damaged, confused and battered. Referring back to the myth that prostitution is always a choice, one should consider this: when someone holds a gun to your head and threatens to kill you and your loved ones if you try to run, would you take that chance and run away?

As the aforementioned sections explain, pimps initially attract their victims with an enticing and charismatic attitude. What these victims do not immediately know is that this façade only lasts for a very short period of time before it transforms into a brutality situation. The use of physical abuse is an integral part of exploiting and prostituting children. Juvenile prostitutes contacted through outreach programs usually showed signs of assault including bruises, cuts,

whip marks, and black eyes. A pimp will constantly “discipline” his girls through intimidation and threats against their life in order to keep them in line and keep them doing anything he wishes.

When a pimp wields such an intense amount of control over his juvenile victims, the child no longer belongs to their mother or their father. They become property of a pimp. To establish ownership, pimps will brand their girls with a symbol or words, such as “daddy’s girl,” to signify control by the pimp and obedience by the youth. This is not a pretty tattoo; these are brandings, sometimes made by using a crude scalding iron, similar to the type cattle receive from their owner. A branding may be located anywhere on the girl’s body, on her wrist, back of her neck or the front of her thigh. The branding is also a symbol used to show other pimps that the juvenile is already property of another pimp. Above all, for the girl, brandings serve as the invisible shackles around her ankles. It is a permanent reminder of her subordinate status and the hell she lives in while serving her pimp.

Once the honeymoon period ends and the pimp begins to engage in violence to maintain control, he is referred to as a “guerilla pimp”. A guerilla pimp uses constant physical force by beating and raping his girls to keep them in line. They are cold-blooded, heartless and possess the ability to snap at any moment, turning off any warm feelings and loving affection in exchange for emotional and physical cruelty. In a 2008 interview with *The Washington Post*, a former child prostitute recalls living under the control of a guerilla pimp. She divulged in the interview that one of his tactics was to hold a hot iron so close to her arm that she could feel the steam melt her skin. All pimps utilize violence to a varying degree, but guerilla pimps take it to a level beyond comprehension.

A pimp operates his business with an internal structure centered on violence and built for

dealing with girls who break the rules. The use of torture is a means to ensure that his victims will comply with any demands that he or the customers may have (Farley, 2004). For instance, for a pimp to show his commanding power, he will strategically beat and punish one of his girls in front of the others to remind them of his dominance and to show them first hand what could happen if they step out of line. This tactic instills fear and demonstrates to his victims what he is capable of doing. If they don't do what he says, he will beat them. If he has some time on his hands and just feels like it, he will beat them. He does it because he can. In his autobiography, Iceberg Slim recalls one of the many instances he used physical force on a girl: "I reached down and slapped her hard against the side of her face. It sounded like a pistol shot. On impact a thrill shot through me. I should have slugged her with a baseball bat." In addition to their own physical strength, pimps will also use a "pimp stick," which is a homemade whip made by straightening coat hangers and intertwining them together. This is a common tool pimps use to punish their girls. The creatively disturbing punishments are endless: locking girls in the trunk of a car, raping them for not bringing in an assigned quota or beating them for looking another pimp in the eye. The terror does not stop until the girl finds a way to escape.

Unfortunately, violence is only one aspect of the pimping game. As masterminds of their business, pimps subject their sexual slaves to a combination of brainwashing and psychological torture, beginning immediately during the courtship and grooming stages. Pimps are so skilled at what they do that they utilize military warfare tactics to break down their juvenile victims and hold them hostage in their own mental cage. The U.S. military uses psychological methods, such as sensory deprivation, for interrogation purposes. Sensory deprivation is a form of torture and mind control which pimps, just like military officials, use as a weapon for destruction. By using sensory deprivation, prostitutes are subjected to sleep and food deprivation while being forced to

work shifts of approximately eight to twelve hours every night on the street. Juveniles must complete the most dehumanizing tasks before they are allowed to sleep again. This cycle can continue for months, forcing juveniles to work day after day without proper sustenance and wearing them down to the point that they are unable to think or act logically. Children involved in the pimping game have had their mind, body and soul savagely stolen.

The difference between torture against criminals and against prostitutes can be noted in society's stance towards this type of treatment. Critics constantly condemned the Bush Administration for its tolerant attitude toward torture during the war on terror. Social critics and analysts, political groups, journalists and scholars have each expressed their profound disgust with the torturous acts perpetrated by the United States, but have held their silence on the identical treatment prostitutes receive from pimps. Many individuals view the torture of prisoners with shock and horror, yet at the same time consider similar acts perpetrated and photographed against prostituted women and children to be sexual entertainment. Torture by pimps and johns is acceptable and extremely common. Acts may include, but are not limited to, being bound and gagged, tied with ropes or chains, burned with cigarettes, penetrated vaginally, orally and anally with foreign objects such as bottles, guns or animals and the list goes on (Farley, 2006). In 2004, military historian Joanna Bourke reflected on the obscene photographs of American soldiers humiliating and dehumanizing Iraqi detainees. Bourke characterizes these photos as reminiscent of sadomasochistic pornography. The photographs reveal uniformed soldiers stripping and sexually degrading captives for entertainment. They created a violent spectacle, posing in front of their victims as if they were trophies, clearly proud of what they had done. Bourke wrote:

“Torture is an embodied violation of another individual. The sexual nature of these acts shows that the torturers realise the centrality of sexuality for their victims' identity. The perpetrators in these

photographs aim to destroy their victim's sense of self by inflicting and recording extreme sexual humiliation.”

Bourke’s analysis and insightful description of sexual torture can be equally applied to the degradation and humiliation inflicted upon juvenile prostitutes. There is no other word besides torture to explain what these children are forced to endure. What else could intense pain, endless shame and unwarranted violence on a daily basis be considered?

IN THE MIND OF THE CHILD

“A pimp is happy when his whores giggle. He knows they are still asleep”- Iceberg Slim, 2004

Due to such extreme circumstances, studies have been conducted to analyze how individuals are able to cope under these conditions. Adult and juvenile prostitutes employ psychological and emotional strategies in order to endure each day. Without these tactics, many prostitutes have admitted the pain and shame would be too overwhelming to survive (Farley, 2004). For juveniles in particular, the guilt of their actions is so strong they function under the belief that they are responsible for the consequences of their involvement in prostitution. They feel like they have gone too far, they’ve crossed the line and there is no turning back. Phoenix Police Vice Sergeant Clay Sutherlin explains that their shame is so deep they are convinced their parents will never accept them back. This type of attitude leads adults and juveniles to search for survival tactics as opposed to escape plans.

Studies have reported a range of coping mechanisms used to survive the rape, battering and psychological torture involved in prostitution. Melissa Farley, clinical psychologist, researcher and feminist anti-pornography and anti-prostitution activist, has conducted numerous research

projects on the effects of prostitution, trafficking and sexual abuse. Her research has shown that as a response to the trauma of prostitution, women use dissociation as a common psychological defense for their actions. Dissociation is a mental process that causes a lack of connection in an individual's thoughts, memory and sense of identity. For juveniles, according to the trauma model of dissociation, pathological dissociation is a core element in the response to chronic and severe childhood trauma that typically includes physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse.

Through dissociation, victims of prostitution are allowed to remove themselves psychologically from their bodies during sexual acts. After analyzing four studies of dissociation among women in prostitution, Farley (2004) found that most women admit they can not function unless they dissociate. Disassociation allows juveniles and women to emotionally and psychologically survive the touching and penetration. It is a necessary method used to fight away the overwhelming feelings of exploitation and can be a strategy to justify, minimize and create illusions of control, choice and purpose. The dissociative state juveniles experience during the act of prostitution is the same type of dissociation that rape victims employ to shield themselves psychologically from the sexual trauma. The difference is that rape victims typically experience only a single assault, while prostituted women and children endure a prolonged, numbing series of violations day after day.

Although it is favorably used as a defense mechanism, research has found that in general, pathological dissociation has a tremendous impact on the cognition, memory and behavior of a developing child. In his book addressing dissociation in children and adolescents, Frank W. Putnam cites a range of troubling symptoms after examining 64 children diagnosed with dissociative disorder. Putnam (1997) observed that affective and anxiety symptoms were prominent, including depression, affective lability, withdrawal/hopelessness, self-blame, and low

self-esteem. In addition, conduct issues were noted in almost two thirds of the cases and serious suicidal ideation was found in over half of the children. Because of the lifestyle juvenile prostitutes are forced to live, they are placed at an increased risk of suffering from any combination of these symptoms.

Stockholm Syndrome, another defense mechanism noted in juveniles engaged in prostitution, as well as in individuals in various types of hostage, prisoner or abusive situations, is a psychological response employed for survival in captivity (Carver, 2009). In 1973, when the term was coined following a hostage incident, the four captives exhibited shocking reactions after their rescue. Although the four individuals were threatened, abused and feared losing their lives, their attitudes following their rescue showed hesitancy towards law enforcement and firm support for their captors. These individuals emotionally bonded with their captors for survival purposes and eventually began to feel as if the captors were protecting them from the police.

Although it is not present in every abusive situation, Stockholm Syndrome generally appears when an abuser is in a position of authority or control and the victim perceives a threat to her life. Initially, victims identify with their captors for purely defensive purposes, but as time passes victims become sympathetic and loyal to their captors while simultaneously developing distrust for law enforcement.

There are generally four precursors that are almost always present for the development of Stockholm Syndrome:

- Perceived threat to survival and the belief that one's captor is willing to act on that threat.
- The captive's perception of small kindnesses from the captor within a context of terror.
- Isolation from perspectives other than those of the captor.
- Perceived inability to escape.

These four foundations highly correlate with the juvenile and pimp relationship. In fact,

Farley (2006) found that the traumatic bonds established between females in prostitution and their pimp are identical to those between battered women and their batterers. For example, when the pimp designates one of his girls as his “bottom,” or his number one girl, she has been given responsibility, trust and more freedom than the other girls. This act of “small kindness” leads the “bottom” to feel elevated in importance, as if her presence serves a purpose. As an advocate for the anti-trafficking organization “Polaris Project,” Bradley Myles explains in an interview with *The New York Times* that what keeps a victim involved is extremely complicated because it is far more than just fear. The emotional connection is often so strong that “when somebody wields power over you to kill you and doesn’t, you feel this bizarre thankfulness,” Mr. Myles stated. He terms this situation “trauma bonding.”

When juveniles experience Stockholm Syndrome, law enforcement efforts are consequently faced with immense challenges in finding ways to convince the juvenile to cooperate and exit the situation. Criminal prosecution becomes an even more difficult process when the juvenile protects the pimp and refuses to press charges. Unfortunately, after experiencing Stockholm Syndrome or dissociation for an extended period of time, women and children involved in prostitution begin to internalize the commoditization and objectification. Due to the profound disconnectedness, the victim eventually views her body as a commodity as well. The bottom line is despite any defense mechanism used, the more involved the victim becomes, the more complicated it is to leave.

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW FAMILY

A pimp relies on a tight knit “family” in order to operate his business efficiently. Each

victim has been deceptively fooled into working under the mindset that what they are doing is for the betterment of the family. They have been conned into believing that this type of work will lead them to a better life as long as they keep working hard. They think that if they continue turning tricks and don't step out of line, the money will enable them to buy a dream home, secure financial stability and lead them out of prostitution. In reality, most prostitutes never see a dime and this lifestyle is only leading them into a deeper downward spiral.

“Daddy” is a commonly used street term for girls to call their pimps. Often times, pimps will not allow their girls to call them by any other name. He is her new father, mother, sister, brother and best friend. He is her everything, she just needs to trust him and she will be rewarded. When a pimp builds his “family,” a hierarchical system of submission is built within it. As expected, the pimp is the head of the family, the entrepreneurial business owner receiving and benefiting from all profits earned by his slaves. Directly below the pimp is the “bottom bitch,” or just “bottom.” She is the pimps most trusted prostitute and is normally not a juvenile. The bottom has more authority and more privileges than any of the other girls. For example, she may be able to go out on the “track” on her own and act as a superior to the other girls. The bottom is charged with keeping an eye on what the other girls do and ensures that they answer to the pimp's demands. In an interview with *Inside Bay Area*, Jim Saleda, an officer with the Oakland Police Child Exploitation Unit, explains that the bottom is typically a senior girl tasked with disciplining, training and collecting money from the other girls. When a new girl is brought into the stable, the bottom is required to teach her the rules of the game by “grooming” her. Referring back to the introductory scenario, often times the grooming process appears very similar to what occurred when Hannah, the juvenile victim, was forced to use illegal substances and was gang raped by multiple strangers. Victims like Hannah are subsequently left with the

bottom girl who informs her that she's working for the family now and must adhere to the rules. The rules can range from remembering to always get the cash to never looking at another pimp. But the number one rule: never give up your pimp.

There is also a very intelligent and strategic aspect to the involvement of a bottom girl. Pimps use their bottom to act as a buffer between the himself and his other girls. The bottom girl is especially crucial when juveniles are involved because she can pay special attention to the child while allowing the pimp to stay out of sight. When his girls are out on the street, pimps trust their bottom to make deals and collect money while he stakes out and watches at a nearby location. When the bottom acts as the intermediary, it makes it exponentially more difficult for law enforcement to connect the pimp to the juvenile and prosecute a case.

A NEVER ENDING EPIDEMIC?

As society continues to modernize, technological advances sweep in a new era of possibilities and sophistication. Without doubt, progress toward the betterment of society has been made because of these changes, but not without negative side effects. Unfortunately, Internet development promotes prostitution and allows it to thrive in a private environment. While law enforcement used to only patrol the streets, they recently have been forced to begin patrolling the Internet for juvenile prostitution. Websites created for social networking and advertising, like MySpace and Craigslist, are now being used to conduct prostitution rings. Almost every step, from initiating contact with juveniles to posting advertisements for child prostitution, can occur discreetly over the Internet. This development poses new challenges for law enforcement in eradicating juvenile prostitution.

The commercialization of the sex industry plays a major factor in the perpetuation of juvenile prostitution and highly contributes to the arising challenges in combating the issue. In today's society, there is a greater interest in illicit sex than ever before. Commercialization increases interest because the lifestyle of a pimp is being glorified when society should be condemning it. The mainstreaming of being "a pimp" gives the word an entirely new and above all positive meaning. Not long ago, the word pimp was associated with filth and evil. Today, calling a man a pimp is received as a compliment. The music and television industries use the term as a marketing tool and have been hugely successful. Rap songs, music videos on MTV and television shows like "Pimp My Ride" have all started to glamorize the lifestyle to an expanding and vulnerable audience. In 2005, the song "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp" performed by the hip-hop group "Three 6 Mafia" won Best Original Song at the 78th Annual Academy Awards (Cochrane, 2006).

Furthermore, the mainstreaming of the word pimp shows complete disregard toward women and degrades legitimate male and female relationships. The new attitude concerning the word reflects the fact that society is viewing the widespread exploitation and prostitution of women and children as not only acceptable, but admirable. The sex culture that has evolved in conjunction with the mainstreaming and commercialization of the word pimp drives juvenile prostitution in cities across the United States. Juvenile prostitutes are constantly raped and robbed and society glamorizes it in pop culture.

THE EFFECTS

The long and short-term effects children suffer are extensive, ranging from violence during the act to death. The risks juvenile prostitutes are forced to take everyday constantly jeopardize their well-being and safety. At times they're not sure if they are going to live until the next day and often times they're not sure if they want to. Each time a juvenile performs a service, she is put at risk for contracting a number of sexually transmitted diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis-B, gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Venereal diseases run rampant among juveniles and are rarely ever treated by medical professionals. They are often malnourished and practice poor hygiene, rendering their immune systems weak and vulnerable to infectious disease. In fact, this is so common that only 15% of the prostitutes in the United States have never contracted a venereal disease (Poulin, 2004). Given the frequency of sexual intercourse, unwanted pregnancy and abortions are also common for juveniles during their time as a prostitute.

Juveniles often experience cognitive symptoms resulting from violence-related brain injury, for example, and from extended time spent as a prostitute. The despair and depression juveniles experience can persist for years after the prostitution ends. Although they have escaped prostitution, they have not escaped the consequences. In many instances, substance abuse becomes integrated into the lifestyle. Many pimps force juveniles to smoke marijuana or use other illicit substances to disorient their mind and subsequently addict these children to drugs.

Studies have shown that the incidence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is high in juvenile prostitutes. This can develop when juveniles have experienced extreme traumatic stressors involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death

or serious injury; or other threat to one's personal integrity (Farley, 1998). Symptoms of PTSD may be extremely severe and long lasting, ranging from re-living the trauma to a general numbing of responsiveness (Farley, 1998). Posttraumatic stress and depressive conditions commonly occur in conjunction with dissociative symptoms like Stockholm Syndrome.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimate that at least two thirds of juvenile prostitutes are victimized by both their customers and their pimps. Although pimps offer promises of protection and love, in actuality, they do not offer any safety from customer violence as it could jeopardize their monetary income. Customers are free to touch, pull, grab and hit whatever they want, even against the female's expressed wishes. Juveniles are subject to repeated raping and suffer constant injury including, but not limited to, "cuts, bruises, lacerations, internal hemorrhaging, broken bones, suffocation, mutilation, disfigurement and dismemberment" (Farley, 2006). One former prostitute, Karen, defined rape as a situation where the customer had intercourse with her but refused to pay or took back the money after the act was completed. Karen estimated she had been raped by customers on approximately 15 to 20 occasions and was beaten up, usually in the context of robbery or sexual assaulted, on approximately 30 separate occasions.

Given the extent of violence in their lives, juveniles find it difficult to ever fully recover and settle into a normal relationship. Unfortunately, many juveniles encounter failure in future relationships due to a lack of trust, especially with males. Juveniles also meet challenges trying to reconnect with institutions such as the educational system. If juveniles are even given the chance at an education, their lack of motivation or support leads to truancy and low graduation rates. This only adds to their struggle through life as they fall into a cycle marked by a lack of opportunities, career options and overall failure.

CONCLUSION

Juvenile prostitution exists and is kept alive today because society allows it to persist. By ignoring the most desperate children in society, they have become invisible and any kind of help is out of their reach. Many people have difficulty acknowledging and talking about the scope and characteristics of the problem. ECPAT is a network of organizations and individuals working together throughout the world to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children. ECPAT believes that if society wants to end the injustice toward children then the first step is to bring attention to it and talk about it. They suggest beginning by telling one person what you know about child prostitution and how it profoundly impacts their lives. This single action can be the beginning of an immense change. At last, this social epidemic is finally receiving greater attention from authorities and non-profit groups who are tirelessly fighting to spread awareness and break the myth that this could happen anywhere in the world except in the United States.

Reflecting on the complexity of the issue, I found that one major challenge I encountered was deciding where to draw the line. With such an intense issue, I found myself wanting to dig deeper into other areas such as investigating the vantage point of the johns or researching the countless outreach groups operating in Arizona. Most importantly, I believe more emphasis needs to be placed on the problem law enforcement is currently struggling with which is where to place the juveniles once they are rescued. The lack of shelters and programs puts law enforcement at odds when trying to combat the problem. I hope that this study may contribute a small piece toward eradicating the exploitation and prostitution of juveniles.