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Advertising in a World Full of Human Trafficking: How Advertising and Human Trafficking Coincide

April Cherry

Mentor, Glenn Jackson

As a young woman, I have been groomed to worry about the consequences of what I wear, what I say, and how I interact with men. My grandma is constantly sending me emails with new information on sexual assault or kidnapping cases around the area in which I live. I see articles about human trafficking schemes on my news feed almost weekly. As a young woman, I am conditioned to be on guard at all times because the dangers of being abducted or attacked, specifically trafficked, are portrayed as more likely than they truly are. Why is this? Why are young women, and some young men, so scared of something happening to them? Is it because of the crimes we see in the world on the news throughout the day? Is it because women are afraid they cannot gain justice if they are attacked? Is it because of the manipulative false advertising of human traffickers? So many of these factors contribute to the unforgiving fear many women hold onto for most of their lives. This fear of inferiority has been with women for decades, but recent social and political events around the world, especially in the United States, have been highlighted in the media more and more in the past few years. From the 2017 Women's March in Washington D.C. the day after Donald Trump's inauguration to the recent Brett Kavanaugh versus Christine Blasey Ford scandal in September of this past year, women's rights and issues have become more relevant to the average American's everyday life. Many modern women have expressed a subconscious fear of walking to their cars when its dark outside or answering their front doors late at night. This heightened fear in women is correlated with the increase in

publicity tragic events such as rapes and attacks have been achieving in the last few years. Whether it is a rise in crime or a rise in the publicity of the crime is debatable, but nonetheless, the rise has women everywhere acutely conscious of the movements that men make around them.

Rose Hackman comments on this fear in “The Emotional Burden of Living in Fear: A Call for Women’s Stories,” saying that being simply female is enough reason to live in fear. Women are expected to live and function normally in a society while the same society enables assault and harassment to happen to women on a daily basis. Actions or contact made by men that make women feel uncomfortable are often seen as just a brush on the arm or a touch to the back by many of the men making this contact. Not only do women have to feel fearful for their physical selves, but for their emotional selves as well. It is an emotional labor to keep one’s guard up at all times while in public and sometimes even private space. Women are often viewed as prey. Many situations have arisen in which a woman is seen as a target or a prize to a man, even if at something as innocent as a high school prom. Although I have not experienced trafficking, I have been able to experience this kind of so called acceptable contact men have with women. In elementary school, boys think it’s okay to tug on a girl’s braid or to tickle their sides. In high school, boys thought it was okay to grab cellphones out of girls back pockets and throw paper wads down their shirts. In college, boys think it’s okay to put their hands on the smalls of women’s backs at a party and grab a woman’s leg as a joke. I have been able to experience all of these inappropriate actions boys have made, whether the action was done to myself or another woman I was with. The idea that men can touch women without their consent, even if the touch seems innocent, and perhaps it sometimes is, has been instilled in both boys and girls from a young age. Because of this, men are left thinking there is nothing wrong with

touching a woman on the arm or back and women are left having to stay calm and be cool when a man is touching them without consent. Women do not only have to deal with the actual physical aggression, but they have to deal with the memory of them. They have to live with the fear and awareness that these aggressions could happen again at any point in time, whether that be in the office, at the store, on the street, or in someone's home. Women must keep their brains constantly running to ascertain the level of safety at all times.

My father taught me at a young age to be very aware of my surroundings at all times. When I started driving, he told me to never pick up someone on the street, to never stop when someone has their car flashers on, and to always park under a street lamp and lock the doors as soon as I got in the car. Before I moved into college, he encouraged me to take a self-defense class in case I ever needed to use it. Even my father knows how fearful I am when just living my day to day life. He also knows how real the threat is. It is a constant effort and women simply cannot afford to turn their brains off for one minute. Even when sitting at home alone, once a knock on the door is heard, her heart skips a beat and wonders who could be there and if she should even open it. Women must downplay incidents that make them uncomfortable because society hardly ever takes their side. When sexist incidents happen, many women have to ignore the almost full-blown assault and participate in a process of self-de-escalation in order to not make a man feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. Women are awaiting which uncomfortable situation will happen each day. What if my boss calls me sweetheart again? What if my coworker looks down my shirt again? What if a guy on the subway touches my leg or back again? What if a man on the streets cat-calls me again? Each of these "what ifs" hold a strong significance for many women in our country. Women are constantly surrounded by situations that could become concerning or uncomfortable in a split second. Many women have even

become desensitized to some of these situations because they are so common. Unfortunately, the manipulative advertising of the sex trafficking industry is a situation that is a dangerous one for women. Often times, women find it difficult to notice the manipulative advertising traffickers display because it is typically not a method that makes women feel uncomfortable. This factor may be the one that makes these advertisements so dangerous.

Before diving into the research gathered on advertising and human trafficking, it is useful to know the basic definitions of terms used throughout this research. Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery—a multi-billion dollar criminal industry that denies freedom to 24.9 million people around the world. No matter where you live, chances are it's happening nearby. From the girl forced into prostitution at a truck stop, to the man discovered in a restaurant kitchen, stripped of his passport and held against his will. All trafficking victims share one essential experience: the loss of freedom (Polaris Project). Sex trafficking is a subcategory of human trafficking. Sex traffickers use threats, manipulation, lies, debt bondage, and other forms of coercion to compel adults and children to engage in commercial sex acts against their will. Under U.S. law, any minor under the age of 18 years induced into commercial sex is a victim of sex trafficking — regardless of whether or not the trafficker used force, fraud, or coercion (Polaris Project).

Another concept that is referenced often in this research is advertising, and more specifically, false advertising. False advertising is the crime or tort of publishing, broadcasting, or otherwise publicly distributing an advertisement that contains an untrue, misleading, or deceptive representation or statement which was made knowingly or recklessly and with the intent to promote the sale of property, goods, or services to the public (Merriam Webster Legal). These definitions and statistics will help the reader better understand to what my research is referring.

In order to fully understand how heavily women are targeted when it comes to sex trafficking, consumers must take a step back and look at advertising as a whole, not just advertising for trafficking. The average television, magazine, and social media advertisement is created for women using advertising methods that appeal to the insecurities and desires women have. As of 2015, sixty percent of women and thirty-three percent of men nationwide identified themselves as feminists (*Moss*). Over half of the population advocates for women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality with men. The empowerment of women across the globe has become a hot topic of conversation, political debates, and even marketing methods. Femvertising, a new strategy of advertising that strives to empower women, has become a go-to marketing strategy for multiple companies over the last few years. Because sixty percent of women consider themselves to be feminists and the majority of consumers in America are women, advertisers have a focused target audience to market towards. Bridget Brennan writes in *Forbes Magazine* that "women are the world's most powerful consumers" (*Brennan*). Femvertising often takes place in cosmetic company ads. For example, makeup commercials typically consist of a celebrity or very beautiful woman parading around looking extremely happy. Rarely, if ever, do advertisements show an realistic scenario of a tired college girl putting on makeup before her 8:00 AM English class on a Wednesday morning. Ads never show a woman with greasy or frizzy hair, eye boogers, and unbrushed teeth getting out of bed and getting ready for the day. Ads never show women suffering from the effects of depression or anxiety. Ads never show women in old t-shirts and shorts rather than elegant silk pajamas. Women are often insecure in their appearances and are therefore susceptible to feel obligated to put on the makeup they saw advertised as making a woman in a commercial happy with how she looks.

The popular cosmetic and nail care brand name Sally Hansen released a campaign in October of 2017 entitled “Shetopia.” The advertising campaign was received very positively by women and used all of the best Femvertising techniques of the time. The ad showcased nine “self-made” women who ranged from mothers to politicians to business owners to athletes. The unique women in this ad were non famous women of different races and sizes and were able to showcase their real life accomplishments at the end of the commercial. As previously mentioned, women reacted positively to this campaign and Sally Hansen’s sales actually slightly increased after the advertisement was released. Female consumers liked that Sally Hansen was empowering them and the skills they possess; however, consumers who did no research into the company and solely appreciated the advertisement, which would be most, would be shocked at the inner workings of the company that created this powerful campaign. COTY is a company that owns 77 brands across beauty including Sally Hansen and many other well-known brands. One would think that a company that promotes powerful, accomplished women in its advertisements would value female leadership within its own board of directors. Unfortunately, this is not the case at all. COTY’s Board of Directors is comprised of nine leaders, eight of whom are middle-aged white men. There is only one woman on COTY’s Board of Directors. This form of false advertising is often unseen by the average female consumer. Many companies, especially companies whose main targets are women, have an all-male or majority male executive board. The majority of women are aware of this issue, and if not, they should be. It is a well-known fact that many of the people in big business are men. Many of the executives or corporate business owners throughout America’s history and in America today were and are men. This is a man’s world we live in, whether the men who are advertising to women want us to think that or not. Many of the male executives are good at appealing to women, which is one of

the reasons why they have received the positions they have in big business; however, how much more effective would businesses be at appealing to women if a woman were making the decisions? Would a female executive be able to appeal to the main target audience of almost every product-selling company that creates advertisements? The thought is interesting at the least.

Most women do not have the time to do research on every company they plan to purchase products from, but rather they have to trust the advertiser. This lack of research and overly trustworthy attitude is a major issue in the advertising industry. Consumers are typically busy people. In order to purchase goods or products, a consumer must work to earn money, which takes up the majority of the average adult's time. College students are constantly studying, reading, and writing for sometimes up to six or seven classes. The typical consumer simply does not have time or energy to look up how products are made, the board of directors for a certain company, or who is responsible for testing the products. Taking the time and energy to know the moral and ethical dilemmas surrounding each company a consumer purchases products from is simply unrealistic. In this case, Sally Hansen claimed it valued strong independent females, but hardly incorporates this belief into its own company. So then, is this truly an honest belief or simply a scam that was created to appeal well to women? Unfortunately, the latter is much more believable based on the demographics of the company. Brennan also asserts that "women are females first and consumers second" (Brennan), meaning that women take pride in being women. Choosing what products to be consumers of comes second to being the best woman, mother, wife, and daughter they can be. This is key to the femvertising technique advertisers are flocking towards. Marketers are aware that women take pride in being women, especially in this time and culture in America, and they cater to that characteristic through advertising. Even a

commercial as harmless as a Huggies ad showing a mother embracing her infant can make a woman feel like an incompetent mother if she doesn't buy the Huggies name-brand diapers. A mother who sees Huggies commercials often, cannot afford to buy them, and has to buy generic brand diapers, may subconsciously feel like a worse mother because she can't afford the name brand. In reality, she is still adequately providing for her child. What is typically accepted as harmless advertising is actually directly targeting women in a way that appeals to them in a certain way, often negatively.

Because women are typically the target audience of advertisements, it is not necessarily a surprise when an advertisement doesn't necessarily bring a positive response to a woman. Not every advertising company can get it right. Bianco, a Danish footwear company, released their #womenneedmore campaign a few years back and it received incredible backlash when people called the campaign "capitalism disguised as feminism." The advertisement features business women who are angry at their bosses because their bosses do not pay them enough as their male coworkers even though the female lifestyle is typically more expensive than males. The commercial begins with a woman telling other women that there is equal pay nowhere in the world and that they should be angrier about it than they are. One of the women in the advertisement bursts into her boss's office, stands on his desk, and kicks his mug of coffee in his face while wearing her expensive Bianco shoes. Another woman shattered a glass office window by throwing her shoe through it while the third was jumping on the hood of her boss's car, ruining it, in her Bianco high heels. The narrator then goes on to say that equal pay is no longer enough, but that women need more money than men because their haircuts, underwear, clothes, and accessories cost more than men's haircuts, underwear, clothes, or accessories. Many feminists took poorly to the campaign because, although they agreed they were angry about the

pay gap, they did not want equal pay so that they could buy new, expensive shoes. In August of 2017, Boohoo, a clothing brand, launched their #allgirls campaign and people definitely noticed that the girls in their ad were all white size 2s from America. One woman responded to their campaign on Twitter saying, “Where are the plus size girls? The disabled girls? The headscarf wearing girls? The black girls? The trans girls? The girls I haven’t listed? You’re not #allgirls.” This concerned consumer obviously had a point when calling out the clothing brand.

Advertisements that intend to empower women but falsely advertise to them reveal the selfishness of the brand itself to simply want consumers. Advertisements pertaining to female exploitation, like Hardy’s or PETA, are also common. PETA, or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, is an organization that has used controversial advertisements over the years, but the ad they created using Pamela Anderson was extraordinarily disturbing. The ad is pictured below:



This ad was created with the intention of showing meat eaters that animals and humans have the same parts by marking up Pamela Anderson like she is a calf about to be slaughtered. It is evident to anyone who looks at the ad, but this PETA ad completely objectifies women. If the picture on the advertisement was not enough to prove PETA is exploiting women in this ad, perhaps the article typed along with the ad on the official PETA website will. The article about the ad states:

Voluptuous vegan Pamela Anderson is proving that all animals have the same parts and encouraging people to ditch meat. In this sexy ad for PETA, the blonde bombshell shows some serious skin and looks as if she's been tagged by a butcher (PETA).

As right or wrong as it is, women have become used to seeing other women sexualized on screen. These sexualized women, however, receive attention that is portrayed as positive. The average American woman does not receive this sexualized positive attention because she is not seen to be as beautiful or as sexy as the models in those commercials. So what happens when a vulnerable woman, typically a young woman, is surrounded by these false ideals that in order to be desirable she must exploit herself, comes across an online ad that reads, "Young girls wanted! Modeling opportunities available!" she just may respond to it. In Illinois in 2010, a 19 year old female responded to an internet ad promoting modeling opportunities. When she responded, she was not offered a modeling job, but was enticed into waiting in a hotel room where she was expected to have sex with an unknown person (Americanbar 2013). Likewise, in Denmark, law enforcement agencies noticed suspicious ads for nannies, waitresses, and dancers on websites in multiple European countries. From this incident, an anti-trafficking group in Poland was able to

report that 30 percent of its clients (trafficked women) were recruited through the internet. Recently in Humble, Texas a girl received a phone call from a business saying they needed girls to be receptionists and starting pay was fifteen dollars an hour. Thankfully, rather than going in for the interview, she called the sheriff's office and reported the number. It was later found that this "business" was a human trafficking scheme where they would take girls in for an interview, give them a drugged water bottle, and then the girls would wake up in a strange place far from their home. Online advertisements like these play a major role in the enticement and abduction of women into the sex industry. Even advertisements that are printed out and hung on community boards or mailed to women can sometimes be false ads to gain human trafficking victims. In April of 2017, the West Central MN Human Trafficking Task Force in Florida identified an example of a sex trafficking scam for young teens. The flyer read, "Wanted: Teens for After School Job! Earn \$60, \$80, \$100 per week!!! Work evenings and Saturdays, free trips and activities, transportation provided, 14 years and older. Bonuses! Bring your friends!" (Fact Check). Sex traffickers have even mailed fake letters to young women's personal addresses in hopes someone would respond. A Facebook post drawing attention to this scam read, "Urgent: A few days ago I reblogged a warning about a letter being sent to young girls urging them to apply for a vague job. This group (Vector) has been drugging girls that show up and then kidnapping them to be used in sex trafficking, The post I saw was based in California, but today I received the same letter (in Utah)" (Fact Check). It is typical for us all to receive junk mail from random companies in our mail boxes, but a letter from a sex trafficker offering an interview to a young girl goes far past an invasion of privacy and turns into a threat on her safety. A drastic difference exists between annoying advertisements for J.C. Penny's or Kroger showing up in your mailbox and letters or flyers offering interviews for high paying jobs for your high school daughter

appearing alongside your bills. One of these can offer you “huge savings” while the other could actually change your life or the life of someone you love forever.

I have never had a personal experience with human trafficking nor have I known anyone who has, so I wanted to try and gain a more personal understanding for my thesis. The letter that Vector sent to the young girl, whom I wrote about earlier, had a website address on the top of it. I decided to see if that web address was still in use, and if it was, to respond to their interview posting. Sure enough, their website was up and running and consisted of a very short application that consisted of the question, “I am: at least 18 years old, 17 and graduating high school in 2018, under 18 and still in high school” with the option to choose one of the three. The application then goes on to ask for a first and last name, email, and phone number of the applicant. I made a new email account and a Google voice randomized phone number, all under the fake name, Pam Lacey, and submitted an application. Alongside filling in my fake name and contact information, I filled in the short demographic section of the application. I checked the box claiming that I was 17 years old and about to graduate high school and I also submitted that I lived in Richmond, KY. I provided these two bits of information to show that the company responded to me even though I was underage and to ensure I found results close and relevant to the Richmond area. Only ten minutes after I submitted an application, I received two text messages from a number with no avatar attached. The conversation I had over text with this number is written below:

Kayla: Hi Pam, my name is Kayla and I am following up on your request for an interview. We are looking for immediate help and my manager would like to meet you. We offer an excellent starting pay with opportunities for advancement and the schedules

are flexible. Our office is 5 minutes from the UK campus (although you may be able to work remotely if accepted). It's a little long to explain over text but basically you'd be talking with customers, answering questions, and helping place orders. No prior experience is necessary because we have a full training program. What I'd like to do is get you set up for an interview to discuss all the details and see if it's the right fit. How soon are you available to come in for an interview?

Me: That sounds great, Kayla! Will I need to bring in a resume? Also, I do not have a car so would it be okay if a friend drove me and interviewed too? We're both looking for jobs so we can have some extra money for college soon.

Kayla: They would need to apply. They can request an interview at [www.earnparttime.com](http://www.earnparttime.com). The application requests job history, school, and character references. You can bring a resume, pen, and paper. Turns out I can get you in either... Friday, Nov 2nd at 9:45 am or Monday, Nov 5th at 12:20 pm. Which do you want to do?

Me: Okay! Thank you. I will tell her to apply. Just to be clear, what exactly is the position again?

Kayla: It's with Vector, and we were recently named DECA's National Advisory Board Partner of the Year. It's basic customer work like explaining products, answering questions, and helping to place orders. We work through appointments: face to face or online. No cold calling or door to door. Which time works better?

Me: I think the 5th would work better!

Kayla: Ok great. Pam, I have you confirmed for Monday, Nov 5th at 12:20 pm. It might take you a little while to get to our office, but that's just where you'll interview. If accepted, you'd have an option to work closer to home (so you won't have to make the trip every day). You'll get an email in just a moment. Here are some simple directions to get to our office...The office address is 365 Waller Ave Ste 230 Lexington, KY 40504. Look for a 2 story brown brick building with white railings. Our address 365 is in black letters on the 2nd story railing. Go ahead and park in front, take the outside stairs to the 2nd floor, suite 230. Dress business casual and arrive 10 minutes early to fill out an application. Good luck in your interview, and enjoy your day.

Pictured below is a screenshot of the office building to which Kayla gave me directions.



Due to safety reasons, I did not actually attend this interview just in case this company truly is a human trafficking scam, although I wish I could so I could give a more in-depth experience. Although I am not physically going to the address they sent me, I did look it up on Google maps while using the street view feature. The office they sent an address for looked like it was in an old apartment or office building with a couple of unmarked vans and a truck outside. Again, I do not want to speculate that the vague text messages, open interview, and disreputable office space automatically conclude that this company posing as Vector is a human trafficking agency, but there is something off about the company regardless. Personally, I felt unsafe and on edge when I was texting with Kayla. I would have never contacted the company under my own name, email, and phone number, whereas I have contacted many other companies for jobs using my personal information because I had detailed information about the job, the location, the staff, and the expectations. In this scenario, I was given a very unclear job description and no preliminary application process. In addition to this, I have never applied or interviewed for a job where the recruiter texted my personal phone, they have always emailed or called me as to appear more professional. To clarify, Vector Marketing is a real company that sells Cutco Cutlery and partners with DECA to train high school graduates in sales and marketing. I am not asserting that this company is a scam, but I am asserting that a trafficking agency has used Vector's name and credibility to appeal to young people. I am under this impression because when I visited the Vector webpage from the accused human trafficking letter, I was directed to a site that looked different than the actual Vector homepage that popped up after searching Vector on the internet. This possible trafficking agency has also strategically chosen to pose as Vector because the real Vector Marketing company does send out letter to high schoolers involved with DECA. Typically, high schoolers trust and respond to these letters as well because they have

been told Vector is a reputable place to work through their DECA careers. I also want to clarify that I am not asserting this company drugs and kidnaps the people who come in for an interview, but I am asserting that the company claiming to be Vector is illegitimate and potentially unsafe.

To further my experiment, I decided to message Kayla back after the date of my missed interview. As I mentioned previously, I did not attend the interview I had scheduled for 12:20 November 5, but I decided to message her back and ask for a different interview date. The conversation went as follows:

Me: Hey, Kayla! I'm so sorry about missing the interview yesterday. I accidentally overslept and couldn't make it. Is there any way we could reschedule?

Kayla: Yes, I have here...Wednesday, Nov 7th at 11:15 am or Wednesday, Nov 7th at 1:05 pm. Which time do you want?

Me: I actually have a party with some friends tonight and will be out late, so I don't think I can do that either. Do you have anything later in the week?

Again, much of this experiment relies on a gut instinct and evaluation of the conversation, but I would like to point out that no professional business would offer a makeup interview to a person because he or she simply overslept. There are certain situations in which rescheduling an interview would be acceptable, such as car trouble or an accident, a family emergency, or something of that sort, but simply oversleeping shows irresponsibility. Oversleeping is not a legitimate excuse on its own, but my interview was scheduled for 12:20 pm

which makes my oversleeping excuse much harder to believe. It is very curious to me that a well-known, accredited company such as Vector, who likely has plenty of opportunities to work with high school graduates because of their involvement with DECA would be so willing to give another chance to a high-schooler who overslept for a job interview. If I were an interviewer or recruiter for a company, I would not want a person who missed her interview because she forgot to set her alarm working for me. That shows that she would likely be late, or not even show up, to work if she were hired. The fact that I was even offered a second interview is strange enough as it is, but what is even stranger is that I messaged Kayla to ask for a second interview at 10:40 pm and received a reply with interview times available for the next day by 10:43 pm. This is also peculiar because, even though we are messaging over text, I expected to not get a text back until tomorrow morning which is when I assumed office hours would begin again. I just found it interesting that I received a text back in under three minutes with two possible interview times for tomorrow. When I sent the message about having a party tonight, I was being a little more risky in my messaging. I was testing to see how morally upstanding this company was by wondering if they would work with my social schedule. I waited for a response and did not receive one for the rest of the evening, so I figured whoever was messaging with me likely did not want to hire a 17 year old who partied on Tuesday nights. However, my hope was quickly deflated when I checked my messages the next morning and found these three messages from Kayla waiting for me:

8:19 AM- So sorry for the late response. How about...Wednesday, Nov 14 at 3:15 pm or

Thursday, Nov 15 at 12:05 pm. Which do you want to do?

9:04 AM- Does either time work?

9:14 AM- Still there?

Again, I do not want to make false accusation of the company that was contacting me, but these three messages truly made me skeptical of the entire organization. I want us to look at the conversation I had with Kayla as if it was a conversation with the real, accredited Vector Marketing Company. First of all, I think it is highly inappropriate for a nationwide company to give multiple chances to someone whom they have never met who overslept for her first interview and couldn't make it to the interview that was offered next because she was going to a party with her friends on a Tuesday, likely drinking, while being underage. All of that just rings a very loud bell to me. Secondly, the rhetoric that Kayla uses is very informal for an employee of a professional company. Amidst all the awkward spacing and structure of every message she sent me, the last message that read "Still there?" appeared too informal for even a small business to use when hiring, so for a corporate business to use an incomplete sentence to ask a potential future employee if he or she is still interested in an interview is quite peculiar.

By interacting back and forth with this person, I was able to get a feel for the methods employers, potentially traffickers, from "Vector" use to gain control over young girls. The questions I asked over the course of our conversation were strategically used to determine how trustworthy the company I messaged really was. As previously mentioned, I checked the box on my application that stated I was under the legal age, I proved irresponsible twice when I claimed to miss an interview because I overslept and made the excuse I would be out late at a party to not go to the next interview offered. I have not figured out a safe way to continue my research with

this organization, so until I am given the opportunity to safely visit the Vector building, I must rely on second-hand information others have made public about their Vector experience. During my research, I found a great number of videos on YouTube, articles, and social media posts about the unreliable Vector Marketing company. The vast majority of the posts and articles I found explained a very negative experience with Vector Marketing. Although the experiences that people shared did not lead me to believe Vector Marketing was explicitly trafficking people, the company seems to be completely unreliable and malicious to young people. The company seems to be searching for gullible young people, eager to earn quick money, who are easily persuaded to do whatever the company wants of them. The spam, such as the letter I referenced earlier that was sent to the young girl in Utah, that Vector Marketing sends to students became so excessive that a group of college students across the nation joined forces forming a group called “Students Against Vector Exploitation” or SAVE in 2003 (MLM). The group was hoping to expose the companies unethical business practices. It is not surprising that this many college students felt this strongly about the company. Many of the testimonies I read claimed the experience working for Vector Marketing was similar to working like a slave-labor salesforce, being treated either well or poorly based on professional performance. This type of treatment sounds a lot like the types of forced labor that happen within human trafficking. Often forced labor happens because a person is desperate for money and is willing to be treated unfairly in order to earn it. The fact that Vector Marketing appeals to young adults, either in high school or college, and promises them higher wages if they sell a higher number of products could lead one to believe Vector is coercing students who are in desperate need of money to work in unfair conditions to make their desired salary.

The conversation I was able to have with the representative from Vector leads me into another aspect of human trafficking. It is a common belief that traffickers often jump out of windowless white vans to kidnap high school girls who are walking to their cars in a dark Walmart parking lot. Much of this misconception comes from the false images the media provides as well. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, leaders and the general public began to become increasingly aware of and concerned about the risks of exploitation caused by human trafficking. In 2000, the United States government passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, which defined human trafficking a new crime and instructed law enforcement agencies to begin identifying and responding to this form of victimization. Because this law was passed, the U.S. media's interest and coverage of the topic steadily increased. Since then, the description of the problem and its causes and solutions have changed over the years. In 2005, media coverage of human trafficking cases spiked and has risen steadily since then. At this time, human trafficking had become a popular topic in investigative journalism as well as in television shows and films. However, these television shows and movies often misrepresented the issue of human trafficking, focusing solely on one aspect of the problem. Rachel Austin and Amy Farrell write in the Oxford research Encyclopedia Criminology and Criminal Justice section that human trafficking is often pictured in in the media as an innocent white female victim needing to be rescued from nefarious traffickers. Many television shows, movies, and even documentaries on human trafficking have followed the rescue narrative in which innocent victims are saved from vicious traffickers. Alongside this typically false ideal, traffickers are also often shown as being a part of a larger organized crime ring; however, there is strong empirical evidence that displays the exact opposite impression. Because of this incorrect portrayal of

human trafficking in popular media, policy makers, law enforcement agencies, and legislators may be tempted to adopt less helpful anti-trafficking responses.

Although it is not unheard of for young women to be taken from their homes, cars, or workplaces by a creepy man in a ski mask, this is not the most common form of human trafficking. Females are often under the impression that this misconception is true because crime T.V. shows and news stories portray human trafficking in this way. In the U.S., the media began covering human trafficking following the congressional hearings that led to the passing of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act in 2000. The coverage of human trafficking has only increased since then within the media and in popular culture. For example, in the movie *Taken* Liam Neeson played a father who single handedly took on an international organized crime network to rescue his daughter from sex traffickers. This movie was not the first and will not be the last to portray human trafficking as an outwardly violent and recognizable trade. On many popular crime shows such as *Criminal Minds* or *Law and Order*, human and sex traffickers are often depicted as men waiting outside a woman's car to place a chloroform rag over her mouth and nose; however, research shows that this form of capturing women is not as common as the media portrays it to be.

According to the official definition of human trafficking, traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to subject victims to engage in commercial sex acts or forced labor (Fact Sheet). Force includes physical restraint or harm, sexual assault, and beatings. Often times, monitoring and confinement is used to gain control over victims. This idea of force is what the general public believes about sex trafficking. Fraud includes the false promises regarding employment, wages, working conditions, love, marriage, or a better life. Over the course of time there may be unexpected changes in work conditions, compensation, or the nature of relationships. Lastly,

coercion typically includes threats or serious harm or physical restraint against any person, psychological manipulations, document confiscation, and shame and fear-inducing threats to share information or pictures with others of the authorities (Fact Sheet). Fraud and coercion are two means of action to lure victims into trafficking that are much harder to identify than force.

Human trafficking is often redefined as modern day slavery; however, this form of slavery is often quite different than the enslavement of African Americans in early American history. Modern day slavery is much more discrete, hidden, and underground. I am not one to attempt to judge if one form of slavery were worse or better and that is not the point of this research. The point is to show how psychologically involved human traffickers are in mentally tormenting their victims. An anonymous interview was conducted with a convicted human trafficker in which he revealed his tactic for psychological coercion when seeking out girls to traffic. The trafficker would walk around shopping malls looking for young girls who were shopping by themselves. Once he found a target, he would approach her, tell her that she had pretty eyes, then judge her response. If the girl looked him in the eye and said thank you, he would walk away and be done with her, but if the girl looked down and said, "No, I don't," he would continue complimenting her and making her feel valued. Traffickers often prey on young girls who have low self-confidence, a poor home-life, and addictions, such as an addiction to narcotics, that need to be fed. Many human traffickers are called "pimps" or "daddy" because of their ability to make young girls feel as if they are cared for by them. A lot of pimps take the time to get to know their victims before coercing them into completing commercial sexual acts or labor acts. A victim may be introduced to the sex trafficking world by first being asked to watch porn, then being asked to accompany another victim to a hotel room to watch her peer have sex with a man, then eventually this leads to the victim having personal sexual relations

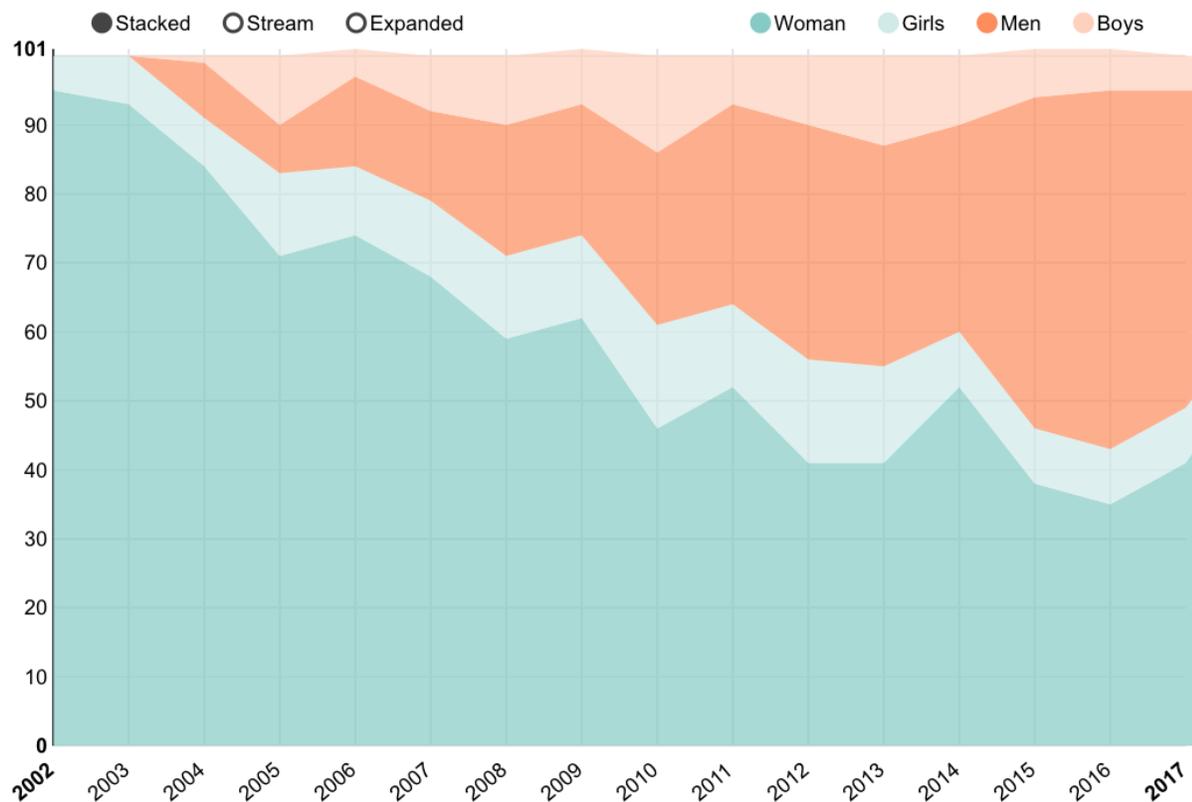
with someone in a hotel room. If force is not used, the process of trafficking relies on psychological warfare. Marc Chadderdon, a criminal investigator, describes this psychological method as follows,

More often than not, you have an at-risk youth who is a runaway, maybe truant, and they maybe get arrested for small things - shoplifting, survival-type things. And then someone's nice to them. It isn't "The Abduction." It's not like the movie "Taken." It's that somebody's nice to them, meets them at the mall or a public place, maybe takes them and buys them a few trivial things or gets their hair done and spends a little money on them. And these victims view this person as a boyfriend. That's somebody who's been nice to them. And then after a period of time, they switch to, you know, Baby, I've spent all my money on you. You need to do something for me. And that's where they may take them to a truck stop and say, start knocking on doors and don't come back till you make \$500. But they are still protective of that person. And that's the difficulty with law enforcement, as they've probably come from a background where they have negative experiences with social services and law enforcement, and they're protective of their trafficker (NPR).

If Vector is truly a human trafficking ploy, I suspect they would use the psychological approach rather than the forced approach. It would be unlikely for me to attend the interview Vector offered me and then never return home because I was kidnapped, but it would be likely that I would get hired, answer a lot of questions about my family and home life, then feel indebted to my boss because of the threats he could use against my friends, my family, and myself. It is important to bring light to the issue of psychological manipulation within human

trafficking in order for women everywhere to be more aware of who is trustworthy and who is not.

The victimization of women by traffickers has been the primary focus of research thus far; however, men are subject to be lured into this horrific world of human trafficking as well. It is historically and societally believed that women are the primary target of human traffickers; however, although women do comprise the majority of trafficking victims, there is a notable percentage of men who are victims of human trafficking as well. The Counter-Trafficking Data Collective reports that while 71% of trafficking victims are female, 28% of victims are men and 1% of victims are labeled as other. Females are focused on as primary victims of trafficking, but it is important to not forget about the other 29% of men and others who suffer from trafficking every single day. In fact, identified victims over time have drastically shifted from almost completely female to almost equal percentages of identified male and female victims. According to Counter-Trafficking Data Collective, the ratio of male to female human trafficking victims was nine to ninety-one in 2004. The same survey reported a ratio of forty to sixty male to female victims only ten years later in 2014 (CTDC). The chart below illustrates the increase in male human trafficking victims:



The Counter-Trafficking Data Collective comments that a large proportion of human trafficking victims who are identified are expected to be women. Over time, however, a higher percentage of human trafficking victims have been identified as men. It is curious to wonder if more men are coming forward now because more men are becoming victims or if more men are coming forward now because they feel more comfortable to do so now because of America's more inclusive society. In the late 1990s or early 2000s, it is likely there were men who were victims of trafficking and who never told anyone because it was seen as a crime that affects women. A man admitting to being trafficked, raped, or beaten may have been seen as being "weak" or "feminine" so some based on the toxic masculinity expected of many men at the time. In today's time, society is more accepting of men who choose to rebel from the stereotypical male lifestyle

and live in the way they choose to. Because of this cultural shift, men may be more comfortable coming forward to say they have been a victim of human trafficking. Although improvements have been made in this area, it is important that progress is still worked towards.

The research the Counter-Trafficking Data Collective displayed shows how prevalent human trafficking is in the United States of America. Millions of people, whether they are men or women, are affected in some way by human trafficking every single day. The issue is even more severe than the average American is expected to conceive. Human trafficking can and does affect everyone, without regard for age and gender. It is also important to consider the opposing side of the human trafficking trade. Although it is a more controversial argument, the manipulation of the men who indulge in human trafficking is also prevalent in the industry. These men who purchase women or children who are being sold are called Johns. The term Johns is used to represent the average man who participates in the human trafficking industry. These men can be husbands, fathers, business-men, employers, or truly any kind of man in any stage of life, which is why the vague name John is used to identify the men who buy trafficking victims. Although Johns buy women or children for sex, which is clearly morally wrong, they can often be taken advantage of by human traffickers as well. For example, it is not uncommon for men to respond to an ad on Craigslist or Backdoor.com (a website similar to Craigslist) that reads something like,

Two of the best in Atlanta from Panama City, FL. We're here just looking for safe, clean , discreet fun...preferably with older men, but all are welcome. Please be serious because we are. Be generous, and mobile, sure to have 100% satisfaction. So come on. You know you want to. XXX-XXX-XXXX.

The morality of the man responding to this ad is not the point intended for debate in my research, but the aftermath of the ad response is what I am concerned with. The majority of the time, men respond to a personal advertisement on Craigslist or a similar website, meet in the designated meeting place, do whatever they agreed they would do, pay for the act, then leave; however, it is not unheard of for men, often inexperienced sex buyers, to respond to an advertisement on Craigslist to buy sex from a woman, show up to the designated meeting place with however much money was agreed on, and instead of finding a woman to have sex with, they find a man waiting to rob and beat them and leave them with no one to find them.

Not only can human trafficking affect people of all ages and genders, but it affects the citizens of America, and even the citizens of our own state. One of the largest human trafficking events that happens annually in America is the Super Bowl. To many Americans, the Super Bowl is a relaxing, fun-filled day that constitutes watching parties and painted t-shirts; however, for many trafficked women in the United States, the day brings terror. According to Forbes, 10,000 prostitutes were brought to Miami for the 2010 Super Bowl while 133 underage arrests were made for prostitution in Dallas during the 2011 Super Bowl (Forbes). Keep in mind the prostitution of minors is considered trafficking under federal law in the United States. The Super Bowl is not an event women should fear attending because it is not an event where females are kidnapped from the game. Rather, the Super Bowl is an event that trafficked women are taken to by their traffickers and are expected to make a certain amount of money during that day. Greenlee, a former sex trafficking victim, reports to the Huffington Post,

If you don't make that number of sex customers, you're going to dearly, dearly, severely pay for it. I mean with beatings, I mean with over and over again rapings. With just straight torture. The worst torture they put on you is when they make you watch the other girl get tortured because of your mistake (Goldberg).

Not only is this statement from a former victim terrible, it reveals how truly horrific the human trafficking industry is. Women are made to be objects of possession sold for money and bought just like a piece of meat in the supermarket. Men buy birthday presents for themselves or buy a celebration woman when their team wins the victory at the Super Bowl. The unimaginable horrors the victims of human trafficking must endure are horrendous and completely unsuitable for any person to have to live through. Not all trafficked prostitutes are treated in this extreme way if they do not reach a certain quota by the time the Super Bowl game is over, but there would be consequences of some sort for any trafficking victim who did not meet their traffickers expectations. The increase of fans at the Super Bowl, the majority of them men, fosters the ultimate breeding ground for pimps looking to boost their profits for the week. Experts have reported that the larger than expected number of men looking to pay for sex substantially increases the demand of women while the massive crowds allow for pimps and victims to go almost completely unnoticed (Goldberg). Acting with a similar structure as the Super Bowl, the Kentucky Derby is another one of the nation's largest human trafficking events. A WDRB news report from May 6, 2018 stated that nine people were charged in a human trafficking sting on Kentucky Derby weekend. Local officers placed fake advertisements for sex with minors on sites such as Craigslist.com and Backdoor.com and the response they received shows how truly terrifying the world of human trafficking is. The officers only posted two ads, but they received

three-hundred-ninety emails, texts, or phone calls from the ads. They were able to have communication with 265 of those individuals. The men who were interested in meeting up were told to meet at a hotel near Hurstbourne Parkway and Bluegrass Parkway to engage in sexual acts on the Friday, Saturday, or Sunday of Derby weekend. Reporter Valerie Chinn of WDRB reports that,

Police arrested 26-year-old Nicholas Hilerio-Alfaro, 22-year-old Robin Perdomo-Reyes, 34-year-old Dr. Thomas Falls, 38-year-old Rodney Ellithorpe, 42-year-old Garrett Stanbery, 19-year-old Singh Bir Tamang and 39-year-old Jason Stinson. Additionally, police say 19-year-old Aita Tamang and 32-year-old Alhagi Boye were cited. Police say Falls, who works with KentuckyOne Health, agreed to pay \$200 for sex with a 17-year-old girl (Chinn).

It is worth noting how the ages of the men arrested range from high school graduates still living with their parents to middle-aged married fathers. The diverse range of men who these women have to meet up with and sell their bodies to is incredibly disgusting. The men who were charged for human trafficking in this case were not the only people charged with human trafficking over the course of last year's Kentucky Derby weekend. The Human Trafficking Task Force, a collaborative effort by government agencies and service providers, reported 107 potential victims of trafficking at the Kentucky Derby in 2017 (Austin). The horse races of Keeneland are also a popular time for human trafficking to spike. Similarly to the Kentucky Derby, women are advertised and sold for sex to the individuals who attend the events of the weekend. It is important to understand that there is no face to human trafficking, which is why large events like

the Super Bowl or the Kentucky Derby cause spikes in trafficking. The large crowds of people in one area make trafficking a much more discrete act. Traffickers, trafficking victims, and Johns are all less likely to be discovered when integrated into a large crowd, especially a rowdy crowd like the average Super Bowl crowd.

Although human trafficking is a very real-world issue that affects real people, much of the control traffickers are able to have is a result of modern technology. It seems to become more heard of each year for a young person to struggle with anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts because of online bullying through social media. The fact that people can say whatever hurtful things they want to, likely facing no repercussions or consequences, is appealing to some people who want to hurt others either emotionally or physically. Many online bullies call innocent people names or say hurtful things to them because they know that person cannot directly reach them or see them on the internet. It is very common for online bullies to create an anonymous account in order to say these harmful things to others. The tactics human traffickers use to lure victims in online are not much different. As discussed earlier, the online advertisements traffickers post are available to practically every young person with access to the internet. Children are receiving phones, tablets, and laptops at younger and younger ages every year now, giving them access to social media sites at a younger age. Unfortunately, many parents and guardians do not teach their children the rights and wrongs of using the internet and do not supervise their children when they are using their devices. This increase in the number of children and teenagers who have technology and the decrease in the age of people of who own technology is a great advancement for traffickers. More and more younger middle school and oftentimes even elementary aged kids are posting pictures and statuses on the internet available

for anyone to see, including human traffickers. I was always taught to never write a post letting followers know I was home alone or that our house was empty because predators could see that information and take advantage of the situation. Unfortunately, many young people who are affected by trafficking come from poor home lives and therefore likely do not have parents or guardians who think to advise their children with tips like these.

Social media sites and internet chat rooms were created so people would have the opportunity to connect with people who are not able to be in each other's everyday life. Although this was the original intention, technology has now become an escape for when people want to block out responsibilities of the real world. In fact, the excessive use of technology often times means isolation. Young people very often find themselves alone with only their phones or laptops to keep them company, which leaves anyone trying to contact them on these devices alone with them as well. Victims are not the only ones using technology to isolate themselves, either. Siddharth Kara, author of "Technology and Human Trafficking: Friend and Foe" from Columbia University Press writes,

Perhaps the most important insight that has emerged from my research is that technology is used by both traffickers and anti-traffickers to manipulate one of the most important features relating to slavery - isolation. (Kara 148)

Kara's statement is powerful because it shows how truly instrumental technology is in the world of human trafficking. Human trafficking is a very underground industry that is difficult to pinpoint. A vital instrument in the severity of the trafficking industry is the isolation that is forced upon the victims. The main tactic used to ensure victims will not run away or tell

someone about their situation is because traffickers often make victims feel as though they have no one to run to and no one to tell.

It is evident that human trafficking is a problem in our society that is much too complex to find an immediate solution to; however, steps can always be made to help improve the problem. Perhaps the most influential step would be to try and eliminate the want for trafficked victims. The desire people have for prostitutes or cheap labor are what create a demand for these so called services. If we as a country are able to eliminate, or at least decrease, a desire, the demand will decrease, leading to less victims. "Human trafficking is a supply and demand business," says University of Louisville professor Theresa Hayden, who teaches a course on the subject and is the board chair for People Against Trafficking Humans Coalition of Kentucky (PATH). "As long as people are demanding human beings, there's always going to be someone out there supplying." This statement holds truth about every industry that requires consumers and products, so why have we as a country been focusing on eliminating the traffickers or the trafficked victims? Although each arrest of a trafficker and each rescue of a victim is a victory, the problem will not disappear until the demand is reduced.

Human trafficking is just one of the many issues the world we live in has. The underground nature of the industry leaves its victims feeling hopeless and its traffickers feeling bold. Many factors contribute to the widespread nature of the industry, perhaps the most influential of these being the manipulative advertisements traffickers release to young women around the world, especially in our own country. Young women are targeted by ads claiming to pay unusually well for job positions such as receptionists, models, and sales people. Having

knowledge of what these false advertisements from human traffickers look like is an effective step to understanding the world of trafficking a bit better.

Another step is to stop normalizing the uncomfortable situations men put women in on a daily basis. When men touch women without their permission, it is seen as okay as long as the touch was not in an explicitly inappropriate spot like below the waist or the breast; however, normalizing this touching makes this issue even worse. When normal men touch women like this, it becomes less concerning when men with intention to harm a woman touch her like this. It is difficult to differentiate between the two sometimes. Being unable to differentiate leaves women with a stronger likelihood of mistrusting someone who they ought to not trust, this person being a possible trafficker. If men without intention to harm would stop touching women without their consent, then it would become more noticeable to women when men do touch them. Then, they could therefore be more cautious with who they trust and who they ignore for the rest of the day or night.

Much work is left to be done in the world of human trafficking, but the first step is awareness. Having awareness of the number of people affected, the severity of the conditions victims must endure, the ways in which victims are advertised towards by traffickers, and the methods traffickers use to control victims is influential in creating a change in the trafficking industry over the years to come. Because human trafficking does exist using underground methods, it is important to be on the lookout for signs of traffickers and trafficking victims. There have been many activists movements created to help raise awareness for human trafficking in recent years. The United States Department of State is only one of the resource guides that offers a list of ways to raise awareness for and get involved in the fight against human trafficking. Many organizations around the country are also available to help fight trafficking in

your area. The National Human Trafficking Hotline is also available to anyone who feels as if they or someone they know is being affected by human trafficking.

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