UNDERSTANDING VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

SHANNON WOLF, PHD, LPC-S
SWOLF@BHCARROLL.EDU
NOVEMBER 14, 2019
2 OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will gain a detained understanding of the risk factors that could lead to trafficking.

2. Participants will explain how development plays a key role in trafficking victimization.

3. Participants will analyze the role trauma bond play in keeping victims from seeking help.

4. Participants will describe how healthcare workers can assist victims in the recovery process.
UNDERSTANDING THE VICTIM
ADOLESCENTS

- Impulsive
- Don’t always make good decisions
- Want to belong
- Developing Identity
- Developing Worldview
BIOLOGICAL/SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Inability to read situations
- Inability to think ahead
- Pushing away from family
- Becoming an individual
- Further developing assumptions about the world
- Worldview assumptions become crystalized
ERIKSON’S PSYCHOSOCIAL STAGE

• Adolescent: Identity vs Identity Confusion
  • Normal developmental stage used for ill purposes
  • Bombardment of messages
  • Females seek to be similar to strengthen relationships

• Young Adult: Intimacy vs Isolation
  • Ways of establishing intimacy have been developed
DEVELOPMENT OF WORLDVIEW

• Foundational assumptions that provide a conceptual framework for understanding, organizing, and explaining the world around us.

• Since it helps us make sense out of the world, it influences how we interpret the world. (It serves as an interpretive schema.)

• Worldview influences how we act in the world. (It guides our actions.)
RISK FACTORS

• *Primary risk factor is non-protective family*
• Lack of secure bond between parents and child
• Run-aways
• Emotional and physical abuse/abandonment
• Childhood sexual assault

• Foster Care
• Self-denigration
• Mental Disabilities
• Substance Abuse
OTHER RISK FACTORS
MORE RISK FACTORS: CURRENT APPS TRAFFICKERS USE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meet Me</th>
<th>Grinder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skout</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>Badoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumble</td>
<td>Snapchat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kik</td>
<td>Live.me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holla</td>
<td>Whisper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask.fm</td>
<td>Hot or Not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATTACHMENT CONSIDERATIONS

• Development of identity as a family member
• Starving for belonging and love
• Oxytocin
• Sex as a method of developing quasi-bonds
DOMESTIC MINOR
SEX TRAFFICKING

• Anyone under the age of 18

• FBI statistics - 51% of all trafficked persons in USA (Actual number is impossible to establish)
  • Victims can be misidentified
  • Victims may not perceive themselves as being trafficked

• Traffickers tend to look for younger victims
  • Perceived as “Clean”
  • Can charge more
SPIRITUAL/MORAL DEVELOPMENT

- Looking for a place to belong
  - “Trouble maker”
- Experience rejection from “good people”
  - Becomes part of worldview
- Trafficker may use God as a weapon to control victim
- Traffickers or johns may be people of faith or in positions of power
DESCRIBING THE TRAFFICKER
DESCRIBING THE TRAFFICKER

- Exploits another human being for personal gain
- May play a single role or multiple roles
- May be well-known in the community or a stranger
- May be a person of authority or not involved in society
- May be involved in other crimes or only ST
- Finesse Pimp or Guerrilla Pimp (taken from guerrilla warfare)
- Male or Female
CONTROLLING THE VICTIM

• Coercion and Manipulation
  • Isolation
  • Controlling bodily needs/functions
  • Relationships
• Physical Violence
• Frequent Relocation
• Drugs and Alcohol
THE IMPACT OF TRAFFICKING ON THE VICTIM
TRAUMA BONDS

• Powerful emotional attachments of a victim to the perpetrator that are mitigated by numerous traumatic events.

• The bonds can be with the trafficker and/or the “family”

• Bonds are adaptive responses to extreme trauma

• These bonds are very difficult to break
CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAUMA -BONDS

- Victims feel emotional ties to the perpetrator and to other girls involved.
- These bonds can be very strong.
- The victim may not take opportunities to escape a captor.
- Trauma bonding appears to be an adaptive response to an excessively abusive repeatedly traumatic environment.
ASSOCIATED PROCESSES

• Attachment Processes
• Learned Helplessness
• Complex PTSD
  • Type 1 vs. Type 2
• Sympathetic Nervous System Stress Response (fight, flight, freeze, submit)
• Development of Worldview
At its core, trauma-bonds can be understood as an attachment issue wrapped with worldview and identity confusion, and topped off with a trauma, loss, and grief.
The trafficker then is the one who causes emotional pain but is the only one who can relieve that pain.
COMMON EXPERIENCES

- Type 2 Trauma
- Repeated Sexual Assault
- Attachment Disorder
- Coping skills/Self-soothing
- Abortion (Forced abortion)
- Drugs and Alcohol Addiction
- Sexual Addiction
- Physical Abuse/Torture
- Witnessing Traumatic Acts/Forced to perform acts of violence
PTSD

- Exposure and response to trauma
- Intrusion symptoms
- Avoidance symptoms
- Negative alterations in cognitions and mood
COMPLEX PTSD AND THE BRAIN

• More than PTSD symptoms with depression and anxiety
  • Not all will have a PTSD diagnosis
  • They will have serious effects from the trauma of trafficking
• Severe trauma can lead to changes in brain functioning.
  • Trauma may cause a fight, flight, freeze, submit response
  • Main areas impacted are:
    • amygdala, hippocampus, & prefrontal cortex.
IMPLICATIONS

• Trafficking is much more complex than sexual assault thus symptoms are more complex
• Difficulties with relationships
• Mental Disorders
• Education and life skill deficits
• Does not tolerate stress well
• Healing is a slow process
HOW TO HELP
VICTIMS YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

• Victims may be in a Peri-trauma state
• Lying
• Manipulation
• Discerning what you want to hear
• May appear that they are resisting help
INTERACTING WITH VICTIMS

• Be a safe person for them
• Unconditional Acceptance
• Have realistic expectations for them
• The victim may expect to be exploited. Allow her to trust slowly.
• This will most likely be a marathon.
• Own your frustration – Don’t blame the victim!
• Time away from the trafficker is one of the best predictors of a good outcome.
QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?