

## **Secrets of the Ports: Human Trafficking in Duluth, Minnesota**

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### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

When one first ventures into the historic city of Duluth, what first comes to mind may be the breathtaking landscape, the crisp winter air or even the beauty which surrounds our great Lake Superior. The last thing anyone would suspect is a city full of dark, hidden secrets; one in which young girls are being forced against their will to work for pimps who will use their bodies for profit. This secret is known as human trafficking. Over the past few months, I have been studying this topic rather closely (specifically that of human sex trafficking) to get a better glimpse of this criminal practice and why it has been under our radar for such a long period of time. After gathering more general information<sup>1</sup> through various articles on the University of Minnesota Duluth's library website, as well as speaking to several professionals who have spent their careers focusing on this matter, I have uncovered many surprises as well as more clarity on this crime and how it may affect a human being.

### **2. Review of Past Literature**

#### *2.1 The Business Itself*

In order to understand the gravity of why traffickers do what they do, it is important to note the success of the business itself. Human trafficking is a highly profitable opportunity for those who are willing to risk possible prison time and other punishable damages. It has been found the revenue accrued can exceed 30 billion dollars each year with the form of sex trafficking being the most common (Akee, pg. 350). With this amount of profit, it is no wonder why so many are willing to be a part of the criminal organization.

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1. The general information to which I am referring to mostly concerns international trafficking.

From an international perspective, the United States is one of the most prominent destination countries. These destination countries are known to be highly developed or financially stable areas of the world. These serve as hot spots for trafficked victims as they are frequently sent here to earn more profit (Hodge 2008, pg. 145). Even though there may be more risk involved when transporting victims to these countries, there are plenty of customers willing to pay. It is said although law enforcement may be stricter on prostitution, it does not discourage the sale of individuals for the purpose of exploitation (Akee, pg, 352). Countries which face several unfortunate circumstances, such as the lack of job and educational opportunities and the difficulty surrounding the obtainment of a visa perpetuate trafficking (Wheaton, Schauer, Galli pg. 121). Under these circumstances victims may be easily tricked or manipulated into the business in order to achieve success.

## *2.2 How Individuals are lured into Trafficking*

One of the biggest questions we may ask ourselves when dealing with the subject of human trafficking is how one becomes a victim. What methods are used to lure innocent individuals to this grim business? Depending on their origin,<sup>2</sup> traffickers will use tactics unique to that individual in order to successfully force them into the trade. However, their personal makeup (which includes their personality and skills/education level) play a part in those whom traffickers prey upon. Victims consist of the most vulnerable members of a society. It isn't uncommon for a victim to be a woman who is struggling financially and/or uneducated (Hodge 2014, pg. 112). They are easier to influence and abuse than those who are not in more compromising situations. Still, depending on where they are from, traffickers have different ways of tempting these soon-to-be victims.

For some born out of the United States, the appeal of living out the American dream is almost blinding. Any offers, such as those for modeling or even potential marriages with American men may entice those who are facing financial difficulties as it would allow them entry into the US or a promising career. After they accept one of these proposals, they are whisked away to a life they had not quite dreamed of. Instead of living a new and happy life outside of their home country, they are forced into the trafficking business where they immediately face difficulties such as the debt they have accrued due to their inability to pay for entry into the destination country. Traffickers almost bet on this; prey on it even. In order to enter the country to begin with, these individuals will accept an offer made by the trafficker who will then agree to help only if the individuals agree to repay the debt they have accumulated (Hodge 2008, pg. 146). It is when they arrive they realize the burden of paying off the debt.

The individuals are immediately forced to give up their passports and travel papers make sure there is no way for them to escape. After traffickers have their victims caught in a corner, they begin to inflict physical abuse upon them. It soon becomes apparent that in order to buy back their freedom victims not only have to pay for their travel expenses, but other fees are tacked on to their total debt. In many situations, in order to hold onto their new victims, traffickers will also charge them for necessities such as housing (Hepburn and Simon, pg. 5). Of course this method is very complicated and requires many resources in order to be successful. There are other methods to lure internationals into the destination countries. One of these methods may include

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2. Their origin meaning they are originate from the United States or from a foreign country.

abduction where women are forced to leave their homelands to work as a sex slave. Traffickers may also attempt to manipulate economically-struggling family members of potential victims by imposing monetary incentives and the promises of a brighter future for their daughter (Hodge 2008, pg. 146). Sometimes the process seems almost too simple. When they have the individual, there is little hope for this better future which was originally proposed.

When it concerns domestic victims of human trafficking, we find this game of luring potential new workers is different than one would use to on international victims. With the power of today's media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter), a trafficker has an advantage when recruiting potential new employees. They use these sites to gain the trust of their would-be victims who will then share details of themselves; completely unaware they are being played by the trafficker. Those who are targeted are, again, the most vulnerable individuals. It is not uncommon for the potential victim to be a young girl who is at-risk and has fled from her parents (Kotrla, pg. 183). After traffickers find their victim, they usually begin a process called grooming in which the victim is spoiled with attention and presents in order to win their trust (Kotrla, pg. 184). At this point, the victim is then manipulated to perform sex acts for the trafficker.

### *2.3 Psychological and Physical Harm Associated with Trafficking*

Those who have become victims of human trafficking have experienced a wide range of both psychological and physical abuses. Years of torture definitely take their toll on these young individuals as they are forced to live a significant portion of their lives in constant fear while being manipulated by those they do not know. These strangers have developed several methods to win the influence of their young victims as they are navigated toward a long and miserable life in the human trafficking realm. In order to have compliant employees, victims are subjected to various physical traumas which include repeated rapes and brutal beatings (Hodge 2014, pg. 113). The injuries that are sustained are rather significant. They usually range from bruises to broken bones and shattered teeth. For professionals, it isn't at all surprising to hear these disturbing injuries as it seems to be quite common in this line of work (Hodge 2008, pg. 147). Many who are new to the business are in a constant fight to keep their sanity. Captors force their victims to take part in illegal activities which could include sex acts or taking drugs in order to deter them from making any quick escapes. It is repeatedly enforced to the victims the possibility of punishment if they were to leave (Hodge 2014, pg. 113). This is all done to force the victim into sex work without refusal. As we delve deeper into their nightmare, we see a dangerous world of nearly impossible attempts to escape.

In order to survive, these trafficked individuals are forced to sell their bodies to several customers to which they are serving hours upon hours each day. Keep in mind, these individuals are forced to work in rather dangerous areas which increases their health risks. Captors could care less about the wellbeing of their workers as long as they are benefiting from it (Hodge 2014, pg. 114). Working in dilapidated conditions with multiple partners for lengthy periods of time can also increase the likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted diseases; especially if a victim is forced to participate in the terrible practice for many years. Studies conducted on trafficked victims in India and Nepal have uncovered relationships between duration of being trafficked compared to those who have been infected with HIV. Both had concluded those who

have been victimized longer were more likely to have HIV (Oram et al. pg. 7).<sup>3</sup> It is quite apparent the chances of a victim coming out of human trafficking unscathed is nearly impossible. This doesn't even account for the psychological repercussions which stem from years of abuse.

Victims who do leave the human trafficking industry, many haven't left unscathed. In addition to the physical damages, their mental health suffers greatly as well. A life within such a hostile and terrifying environment is bound to leave the victim fixated on past experiences. Perhaps one of the most prevalent effects one experiences is posttraumatic stress disorder. In addition to this, victims often suffer from depression and shame ("Sexual Trafficking in the United States," pg. 147). In a way, victims have become shells of what they used to be. They can no longer form bonds of trust with anyone; they find their abilities to socialize diminish; they become lonely. (Hodge 2014, pg. 115). Chances become greater of having psychological damage if they are subjected to various forms of violence and injury during their ordeal (Oram et al. pg. 8). The road to recovery isn't an easy one, which is why there is so much riding on the success of therapists and social workers to rebuild the lives which were taken away the very moment these women were forced into human sex trafficking.

These therapists attempt to use a variety of methods when working with victims of this terrible crime. At times, these professionals are the victims' only hope for recovery. In order to offer proper treatment, it is suggested therapists who have treated victims of sex trafficking in the past are the best option. Methods such as cognitive-behavioral therapy have proven to be especially helpful since they have been successful among those who have had shocking life experiences (Kotrla, pg. 185).<sup>4</sup> However, for social workers to give the best treatment possible, the victim has to be willing to cooperate which is not always the case. Due to various reasons, many may feel hesitant to reveal what had happened to them to anyone out of fear. For instance, the possibility of angry traffickers coming to hurt the victims in some way if they were to utter a single word. It could also stem from their posttraumatic stress or fear authorities involved in the matter simply will not understand the situation (Hepburn and Simon, pg. 19).

In order to heal the victim, therapists must be willing to work in a way which best suits the patient. If the victim prefers to try alternate methods, the therapist must be flexible and must attempt to accommodate to these requests. The therapist himself/herself must give the impression they dedicated to the victim which means they keep promises which are made and they do not pass immediate judgments. The victim will develop a sense of trust which will further encourage them to share as many details of their ordeal as possible (Hodge 2014, pg. 116). Telling their stories may allow them to benefit more from therapeutic techniques if they can assess where to go after surviving a life-changing experience.

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3. In the Nepalese study, those who had been forced into human trafficking at the age of 14 years old or younger had greater chances while those who were 18 years old or older had less of a chance of contracting HIV (Oram et al. pg. 7).

4. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a more active approach between the patient and the therapist. The therapist attempts to find out what the underlying distress their patient suffers by discovering negative behaviors, emotions and thinking within their patient's psyche. After finding the problem areas, the therapist attempts to develop more proactive ways to assess situations and reach goals (Jackson, Nissenson, Cloitre, pg. 243).

### 3. Methodology

Unfortunately, most of the information I had found was more focused on international trafficking. Although I searched and searched, it was becoming apparent there wasn't a lot of research focused on trafficking within the United States which hindered my ability to uncover more information on trafficking in Duluth. I conducted various interviews with experts in law enforcement, trauma intervention and the port in Duluth to gain a better perspective on the city's contribution to the problem that is human trafficking. After hearing their testimonies, I was very surprised to find everything I had originally believed, wasn't entirely correct.

### 4. Interviews

Before conducting my own independent research on the matter with a series of interviews, I was rather uneducated on the subject of human trafficking and how it affects the city of Duluth. Rumors had flourished on the notion the ports had anything and everything to do with the exploitation of young women and girls. However, meeting with several professionals on the matter has allowed me to uncover new information in regards to victims and their captors. Through different perspectives of those who were suspected to be involved as well as those who are involved, more of the story can be told and the public will be able to decipher between rumors and facts. Below, I detail the perspectives of those based on expertise: the point of view from those who work at the ports, those who are involved in law and law enforcement and, finally, those who provide recovery services for the victims. Keep in mind, all of these interviews were both conducted and concerned with Duluth.

#### 4.1 *From the Ports*

One area very significant to the area of human trafficking was the role of the Port Authority in human trafficking. With so many rumors circulating about how involved they are with this terrible crime, it was necessary to meet with those who work directly within this area to understand how much they truly know about the issue and what they are willing to do to change the problem. I had first interviewed the Public Relations Manager with the Port Authority.<sup>5</sup> She offered me incredible insight of what had occurred in the past and what initiatives have been used to stop human trafficking around the ports. Next, I interviewed Maritime Enforcement Specialists who supported the Public Relations Manager in her explanations as well as further inform me of the security initiatives which have been imposed on the ports.

I was first given background knowledge on the matter. It was revealed to me almost immediately the ports, at one point, were a major hub for prostitution. This could have also opened up the door for human trafficking as well because, at this time, the ports were not regulated. Traveling sailors, who spent long length of time at sea, took advantage of the women who approached the boats (A. Yorde, personal communication, November 4, 2014). Ever since the tragedy of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, this hardly seems possible.

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5. Her position was mainly concerned with the communication coming in and out of the Port Authority. She would also be responsible for the marketing of the Port Authority to support economic development which would include publications in magazines and other print sources (Yorde).

It was described to me various security measures put in place since 9/11 to prevent further terrorist attacks on US soil with the passing of the Maritime Transportation and Security Act of 2002. It made it nearly impossible for those who didn't work directly on the boats to gain access. Many more obstacles are in place than there used to be which have also stopped prostitution and human trafficking from occurring. Some of the security measures included possessing a TWIC card,<sup>6</sup> inspections from the coast guard to ensure proper security equipment and credentials and so on (S. McShirley, personal communication, November 21, 2014). When an international ship comes to port, the coast guard will receive word at least 60 hours ahead of time as well as the past five ports the ship had visited. Those on board must provide paperwork and they are checked for outstanding warrants (A. Yorde, personal communication, November 4, 2014). In other words, there are many ways to determine who should be and who should not be on board.

Even though they have stated their case in regards to the high security on the boats, it has not stopped those who work with and on the ports from researching human trafficking. A segment in one of the local newspapers contained scathing comments which criticized the ports for allowing trafficking to flourish had sparked immediate response:

“The Duluth Harbor is notorious among Native people as a site for the trafficking of Native women from northern reservations. In an ongoing project, focused on the trafficking of Native women on ships in Duluth, it was found that the activity includes international transport of Native women and teens, including First Nation women and girls brought down from Thunder Bay, Ontario, to be sold on the ships and in Duluth and Superior (Stark, B2).”

Those I interviewed explained their frustration and confusion with articles such as these which attack the ports for not attempting to correct the problem. It was explained to me in addition to the strong security measures, there are other factors which affect the deterrence of individuals looking to board the ships. First of all, the crew and their ship spend a very short time around the ports. At the most, they are around for 12 hours which hardly allows time for victims to board or the sailors to get off the boat. In terms of the crew's ability to pay, it is claimed they do not acquire the amount of income necessary to purchase a trafficked victim for the evening (S. McShirley, personal communication, November 21, 2014). Next, there are other factors which make it difficult to schedule possible appointments with these organized crime syndicates such as possible weather delays or issues that may come about from processing. There is also almost three months of the year (middle of January to late March) where there is no sailing and no crew on any of the boats docked at the ports (A. Yorde, personal communication, November 4, 2014). The Port Authority also claimed the notion it is a major hub is not as factual as one would assume. They are just not receiving as many foreign vessels as they used to. It has been noted they generally receive a handful of international ships each year, but even so, they aren't traveling great distances with most coming from Canada (S. McShirley, personal communication, November 21, 2014). This rules out the possibility of many international victims traveling in the ships.

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6. Transportation Worker Identification Credential allows for better security and stops those who are not supposed to be on secure vessel areas (“Frequently Asked Questions: Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC”).



Although they believed it was nearly impossible to have victims near the boats, the employees were wondering if this issue was somehow still happening near the ports. They proceeded to educate themselves on the matter through a number of workshops and building relationships with police officers and employees from organizations concerned with victim welfare. The Public Relations Manager I interviewed, for example, immediately started contacting PAVSA and experts in law enforcement focused on human trafficking (A. Yorde, personal communication, November 4, 2014). Members of the coast guard also went to workshops for months to see what it was they were missing in regards to trafficked victims (S. McShirley, personal communication, November 21, 2014). However, their testimonies have disregarded what was written in the newspapers.

#### *4.2 From the Intervention:*

When I first began thinking about this subject, one of the areas which really caught my interest was what happened to the victims once they either escaped the trafficked lifestyle. I decided to meet with employees of PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault)<sup>7</sup> who are experts on this matter and would give me great information in regards to the perspective of victims and support services. I first interviewed the Trafficking Program Regional Coordinator, who gave me information specific to the suspects (who would possibly be capable of trafficking). Next, I interviewed with a therapist who introduced me to various treatment methods she uses in addition to what happens to her patients.

The first inclination many might have regarding the general makeup of victims is they are internationals. Many of the rumors surrounding Duluth are based on the idea victims are forced on the many traveling boats from far away countries. Before meeting with the employees of PAVSA, my beliefs were very similar. However, I was quickly assured this is not quite the case. The common makeup of victims in Duluth are of Native American ethnicity and are usually young women. The average age in which they enter human sex trafficking is about 13 years old. Those who bring/force them into human sex trafficking are often referred to as “pimps.” From what was described to me there are two types: one uses aggressive tactics which is known as the gorilla pimp<sup>8</sup> and the other uses more of what was referred to as the grooming phase which was previously discussed (N. Perrote, personal communication, October 13, 2014).<sup>9</sup>

Is there any way for victims to escape? Yes but it is not as easy as one would think. One of the ways to escape is by outgrowing the business. At a certain point, these victims are no longer valuable to the pimps which gives them a chance to leave. However, they do not immediately run to authorities to report their experiences. If they are over the age of 18 years, they may be seen as a prostitute instead of as a victim (N. Perrote, personal communication, October 13, 2014).

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7. PAVSA is a great resource for those who are victims of sexual assault or exploitation. They offer support groups or therapy programs for victims. They have recognized the problem of human trafficking and have taken initiative to combat the issue which include having various events and educating the public (PAVSA).

8. They take the victim right from the streets and begin beating their new employee to force them to perform what is asked of them (Perrote).

9. They buy the victim gifts or take them out for dinner. In order to build a relationship with their victim so they can eventually be trusted, grooming may take up to six months (Perrote).

If they do leave, they have options to somehow recover from what they have experienced. At PAVSA there are various modes of treatment offered to victims which include individual and group therapy although she had stated she prefers group methods. The group she has been currently working with does not focus on their past experiences but they slowly develop ways to regulate their emotions and cope with what they have suffered. These individuals have been trafficked from anyone such as pimps to their own family members. At a certain point, however, they do share their stories with the group to see how it has impacted their lives and how to move forward (M. Trine, personal communication, November 3, 2014). Another method she has used, and reports great success with is EMDR therapy.<sup>10</sup> Of the 14 victims she has treated who have suffered as a result of human trafficking, she notes this was used with all of them and it greatly aided in their recovery (M. Trine, personal communication, November 3, 2014). It seems PAVSA has had great success with the treatment of human trafficking victims. Still, there are those they have attempted to aid, but have not been successful with.

Although some may have had great progress, others have struggled in order to achieve recovery. It was revealed to me, some of the younger patients were struggling with drug addictions and had been in and out of rehabilitation facilities. Another has found it difficult to seek employment as she had been involved in some legal issues while she was a victim. This is one of the many consequences which are associated with human trafficking as employers are hesitant to hire those who have had problems with the law. Other issues they may face are psychological in nature, turning into posttraumatic stress and disassociation (M. Trine, personal communication, November 3, 2014).

When asked whether or not they believed the ports were involved, both the Trafficking Program Regional Coordinator and the therapist were very quick to discount this rumor. The coordinator mentioned the initiatives which were put in place after 9/11 and stating how it may have been a problem in the past, but it certainly wasn't one now (N. Perrote, personal communication, October 13, 2014). The therapist was similar in her response stating those she had treated made no mention of boats (M. Trine, personal communication, November 3, 2014). This further convinces me the ports have very little to do with this problem our city faces.

#### *4.3 From the Law:*

The last perspective I sought was that of the law. For an issue which seems under-researched and unknown to most of the public, I was curious to see whether the police knew anything about the issue and what they were doing to stop it. Other individuals I interviewed highly recommended I speak with a certain officer who has dedicated her time and resources to saving human trafficking victims.<sup>11</sup> I also interviewed an assistant St. Louis County attorney who has been involved in cases concerning human trafficking.<sup>12</sup>

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10. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing is a method used to cope with trauma by processing the past experience and learning to cope in the present. It doesn't necessarily focus on the actual experience but rather learn to effectively absorb it and learn positive initiatives to help move forward (EMDR International Association, 2014).

11. The investigator's duty was concerned with the thorough investigation of human trafficking and runaways. She has discovered when looking at runaways, the vast majority turn into victims of human trafficking (Wick).



When I first began to question the legal players in human trafficking, I began asking what victims they typically see. So far I knew the majority were Native Americans, but what other individuals were at potential risk of being involved in human trafficking? It was explained to me right away, many victims are teens who run away from home usually around the age of 13 years old. They are some of the most vulnerable members of society who can be easily manipulated by complete strangers.<sup>13</sup> One process frequently used is, once again, grooming. (K. Wick, personal communication, November 5, 2014). Identifying the victims is one thing, discovering how to help and understand the psychological trauma they are experiencing is entirely different.

In addition to posttraumatic stress and disassociation, the investigator informed me the victims may suffer varying degrees of Stockholm syndrome in which they are unwilling to leave or blame their captor. These psychological stressors are extremely difficult to overcome as long periods of manipulation have left their mark. The road to healing may be a long one but the overall goal is to avoid traumatizing the victim once they have escaped their predicament. Experts must allow the victim to heal in their own way using methods the victim approves of (K. Wick, personal communication, November 5, 2014). Even with all this help readily available, many are unable to cope with the trauma they have endured which may lead them astray once again. It is not uncommon to witness victims revert back to a life of drugs and prostitution instead of going back to school or gaining employment. There is an underlying possibility of social stigma or an active criminal record which may hinder them (K. Wick, personal communication, November 5, 2014). Either way, the victim faces a tumultuous road ahead as they attempt to get their life back on track.

What happens to the alleged perpetrators of trafficking? Cases against traffickers are very difficult to build. When they do recover victims, they may be rather hesitant to describe their experiences. Sometimes they stop pursuing the case altogether. However, there have been success stories in which traffickers receive their just desserts. This could be seen in a case which occurred in 2013. Three young girls, who happened to be runaways, were trafficked by Markeace Canty and Tabbatha Olson.<sup>14</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Duluth Police Department caught on quickly to this, however. The captors had used a website known as backpage.com to sell their victims to strangers. Through a series of investigations into various visa gift cards and the traffickers' phone records, authorities were able to prove the exploitation of these underage girls (V. Wanta, personal communication, November 19, 2014).<sup>15</sup> In other words, these traffickers were not able to outsmart the authorities due to extensive advertising and communication networks in order to sell their victims.

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12. The majority of her workload is focused on adult misdemeanors and felonies. Human trafficking was not an area she originally intended to focus on. She was thrust into it a federal case in which she collaborated with the FBI (Wanta).

13. It has also been seen where the pimp is someone the victim's family knows and trusts (Wick).

14. Tabbatha Olson was said to have been with Canty for seven years which has led authorities to suspect she worked as Canty's prostitute and later began helping him exploit the young women involved in the case (Wanta).

15. Nude photographs were also uncovered of two of the victims and they were used for the ads presented on the Backpage website which further contributed to the charges presented to both Canty and Olson (Wanta).

Sentences were imposed upon Canty and Olson. Canty received federal charges of the sex trafficking of a child as well as conspiracy to have a child sex trafficked. Olson, on the other hand, escaped prison time by taking a plea deal and offering more information to authorities on Canty. She was given 10 years of probation in exchange for her good behavior as well as any testimony against her pimp (V. Wanta, personal communication, November 19, 2014). Still, the damage has been done and her young victims are left to cope with the trauma associated with their trafficking experience.

I wish I could say it has been easy for them to move on but sadly this is not the case. Although they had all been sent to separate facilities in order to receive proper care, they have found it quite difficult to move past their terrible ordeal. One has been very open about what she experienced while another is having trouble recuperating and is showing signs of going back to her life in the sex trafficking industry (V. Wanta, personal communication, November 19, 2014). This is very common among victims. After suffering for so long, the years of manipulation have forced them to see the world very differently. It is one very difficult to trust and to navigate, especially after having gained a record (K. Wick, personal communication, November 5, 2014).

After hearing of cases involving trafficked victims, I was interested to hear whether or not these victims may have originated from the ports. The attorney stated they have not had a case since she began working there. It may have been common at one point when there was ignorance and no security measures, but it is not a phenomenon they have seen within the past few years (V. Wanta, personal communication, November 19, 2014). Others like the human trafficking investigator are a little skeptical to say it is something that has completely gone away (K. Wick, personal communication, November 5, 2014). It is uncertain whether or not we can completely eliminate the possibility of the involvement of ports in human trafficking, educating the public on the issue is one of the top priorities among law enforcement. It is a secret we as a community should be aware of (K. Wick, personal communication, November 5, 2014). We should all take the extra initiative to know and understand the issues that continue to affect our great city in order to make a difference in the lives which are at risk.

## **5. Discussion**

After reviewing the evidence presented by the experts I had interviewed, I have come to some resounding conclusions which may shed more light on the issue of human trafficking. Before researching the topic fully, I was like many others who believed the various rumors surrounding the ports. Rumors which flourished on such statements made by various news articles that attempted to describe the ports as the root of the problem in Duluth. Listening to the many testimonies presented, I must admit I find it difficult to place all blame, if any, on the ports. There are so many security measures put in place, it would be almost too much work to even attempt bringing victims on or off the boat without tipping off the many authorities there. Making profits here would have far more risk than reward.

Conducting my own independent research allowed me to visualize and guess who potential victims may be when considering the city of Duluth. Although the stories of internationals having been smuggled appease a curious ear, it is not exactly accurate. When speaking of only

Duluth, the average victim is a runaway with the predominant ethnicity being Native American. In all of my interviews, the thought of those from different nations and countries never reached the topic of conversation. This discovery has only encouraged my research efforts. If I were able to continue, I would focus more on Native Americans to uncover why they are at more risk of becoming victims versus other populations in Duluth.

Psychologically, I was very interested to hear some of the methods discussed as well as some of the other afflictions one might face after experiencing exploitation. Even though the approaches presented have had good results in the past, it is not always successful depending on the current victim in question. Unfortunately some victims do not recover and go back to a life of drugs and prostitution. If less stigma was presented by society, perhaps the young individuals would not be so quick to avoid help when it is given.

Lastly the tactics used to gather potential victims rather surprised me. I did not suspect it to be so simple. I had initially suspected months of careful planning to kidnap or capture individuals for trafficking. Hearing this process of grooming is rather disturbing. Using various methods of trickery and manipulation specifically targeting some of the most vulnerable members of society seems to be more effective as it earns trust and loyalty from victims instead of instilling fear. It is a technique I never would have imagined those involved in human trafficking to use.

Why does it continue? Possibly one of the biggest reasons it is still such an issue in Duluth is most likely due to the lack of education from our community. It has become apparent we are rather ignorant of the support services, perpetrators and victims. It is custom for our community to hear stories of women facing a grim reality of being in the trafficking business but we immediately stop there. We must be more open and willing to hear the truth as well as what we can do in order to put a stop to it in the future.

## **6. Conclusion**

After conducting thorough research on human trafficking, more information has come to light regarding the actual truth and consequences of the practice. Although Duluth is not this epicenter of international exploitation, human trafficking is still a large problem and must be addressed if there is any hope to stop it. Speaking with professionals has opened me up to new knowledge and surprising information I may never have hoped to gain if my curiosity had not gotten the best of me. Hopefully, as support for victims grows and the awareness of the issue strengthens, we become more effective as a community.

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