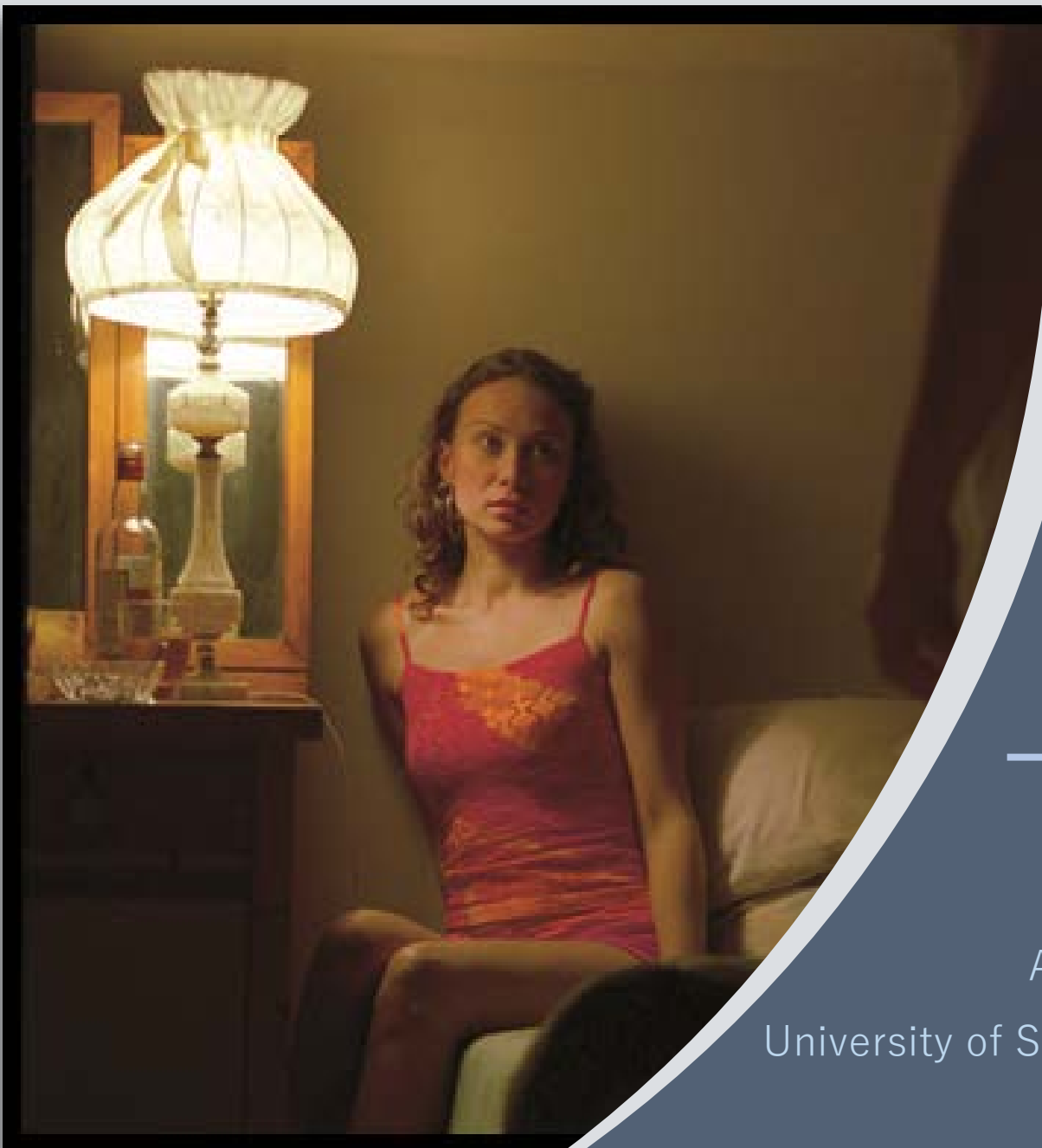


Profiles of Child Sex Traffickers: A Forensic Behavior Analysis



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Child Sex Trafficking: Profiles & Prevention

- Preventing and combating child sex trafficking (CST) are among the most challenging problems currently facing child welfare and law enforcement agencies

(Halter, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2010)

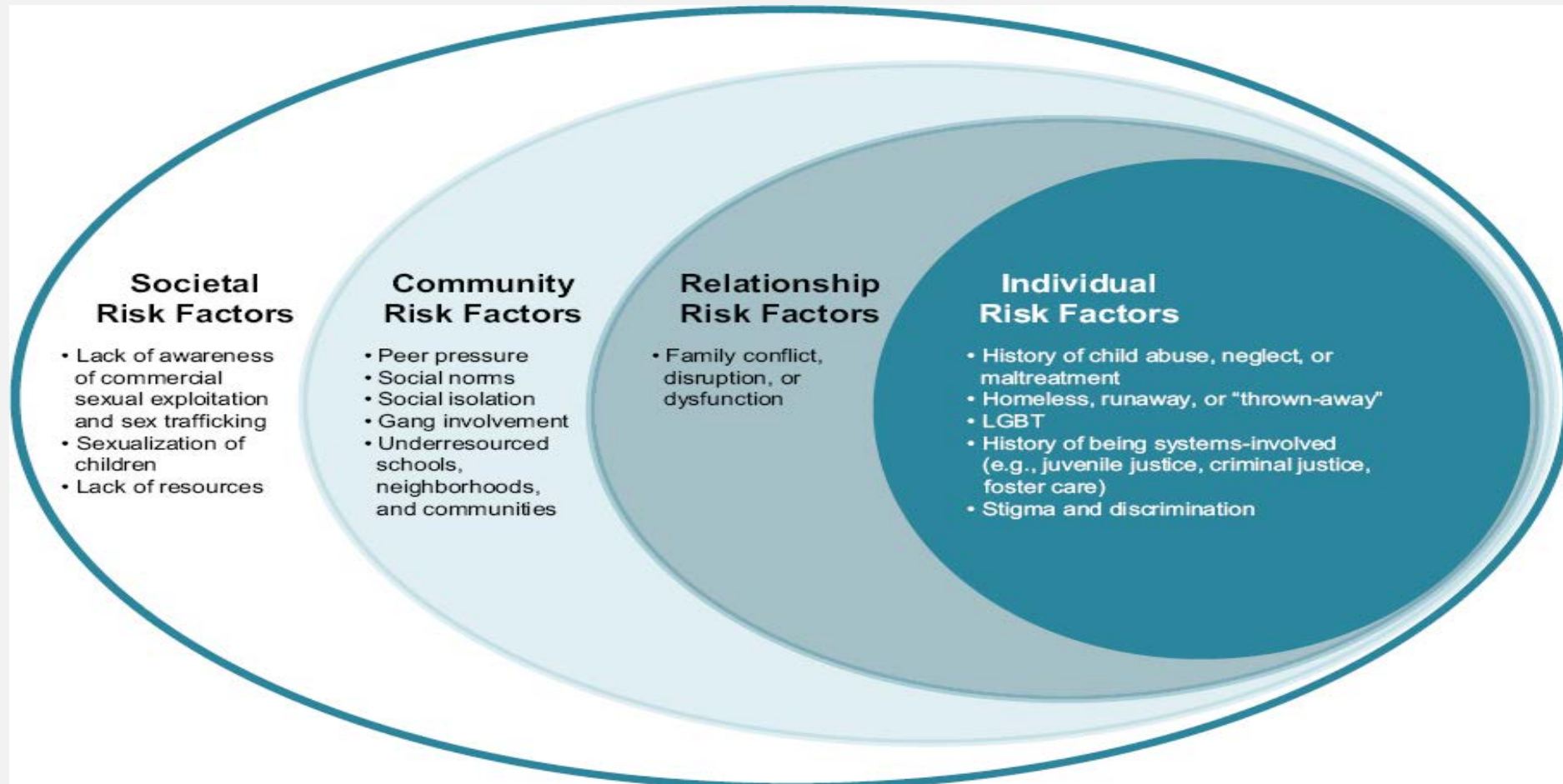
- Despite high level of attention on sex trafficking, little empirical research conducted on types of traffickers and tactics (Finckenauer & Schrock, 2003; Parker & Skrmetti, 2013; Reid, 2010; Saewyc & Edinburgh, 2010)
- This knowledge can inform best practices for law enforcement and service providers on prevention, prosecution, and victim advocacy

Child Sex Trafficking: Profiles & Prevention

- The youthfulness of victims and lack of psychosocial maturity severely diminishes their ability to detect exploitative motives or withstand trafficker manipulation
- The motives and methods used by traffickers differ, leading to different “profiles” of traffickers
- By identifying the distinct sub-types of traffickers, and the motives and methods they use at each stage of the offense, we are better able to intervene and combat child sex trafficking

Victims of Child Sex Trafficking

- Traffickers identify different vulnerabilities to exploit

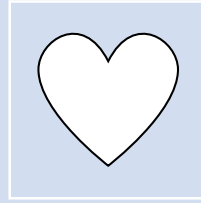


Who Are the Child Sex Traffickers?

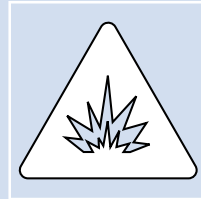
- Family members
- Gangs
- Friends, neighbors, strangers
- Pimps / “Managers”



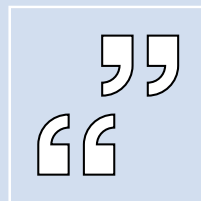
Sex Trafficker Tactics



Studies found girls are entrapped by romantic promises and manipulation of a trafficker/pimp posing as a boyfriend (Brayley et al., 2011; Curtis et al., 2008)



Gang members coined term for the recruitment technique of “love bombing” (Dorias & Corriveau, 2009)



A convicted sex trafficker said: “with young girls, you promise them heaven, and they’ll follow you to hell” (Annitto, 2011, p. 14)

Current Study on Child Sex Traffickers

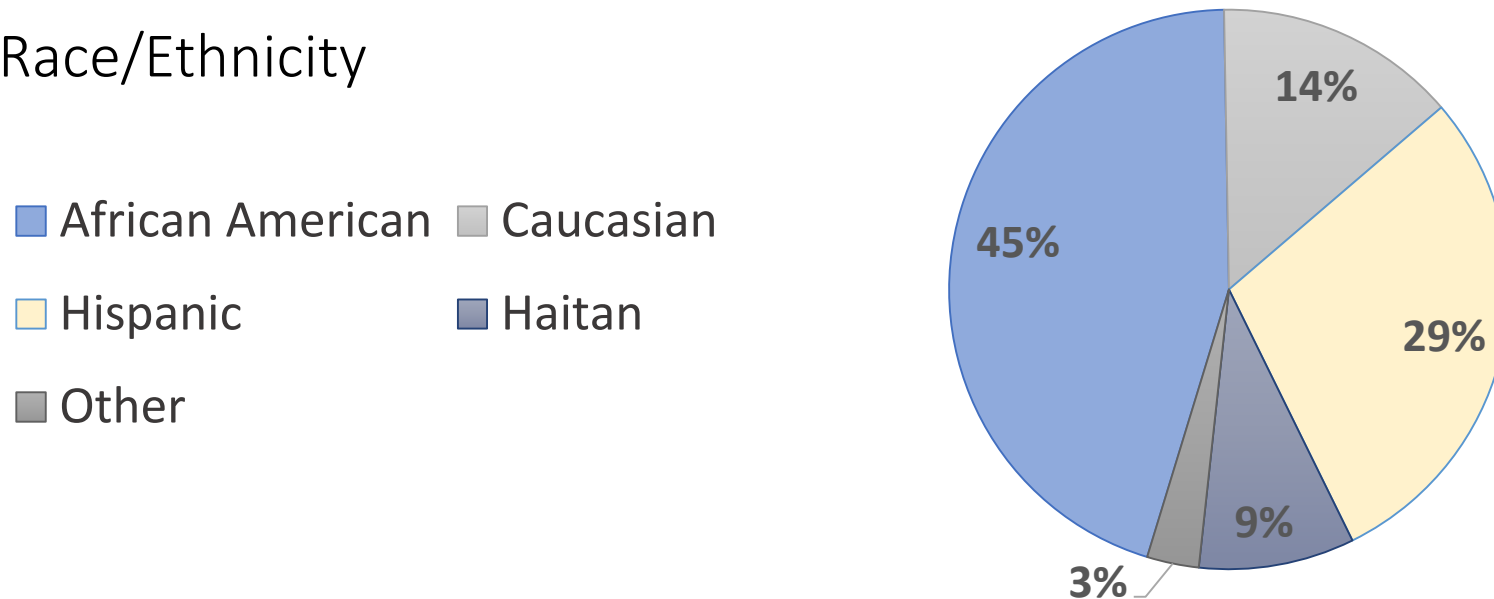
- Our study utilizes forensic behavioral analysis to develop a typology of child sex traffickers based on commonalities and differences in trafficker psychology and behaviors, with implications regarding how to more effectively intervene for each sub-type
- Identify trafficker tactics / crime scripting used to:
 - Find
 - Groom
 - Ensnare
- Do these tactics differ among traffickers, and what unique prevention and intervention strategies can be employed at each phase?

Study Methodology

- Data drawn from 61 case files of trafficked girls located in 2 large metropolitan areas in Florida
 - Interviews with case managers and therapists with in-depth knowledge on the trafficker tactics
- Exploratory multi-case study design and purposive sampling with cross validation
 - Used to reveal core patterns and variation in trafficker tactics (Patton, 2002)
- Data analyzed using template analysis (TA), a systematic method for thematically analyzing qualitative data collected based on the clustering of responses (King, 1998)
 - Frequency analysis conducted on use of tactics by traffickers:
 - Many (10+ reports, 3+ interviews), Some (3-9 reports, 2 interviews), Few (1-2 cases, 1 interview)

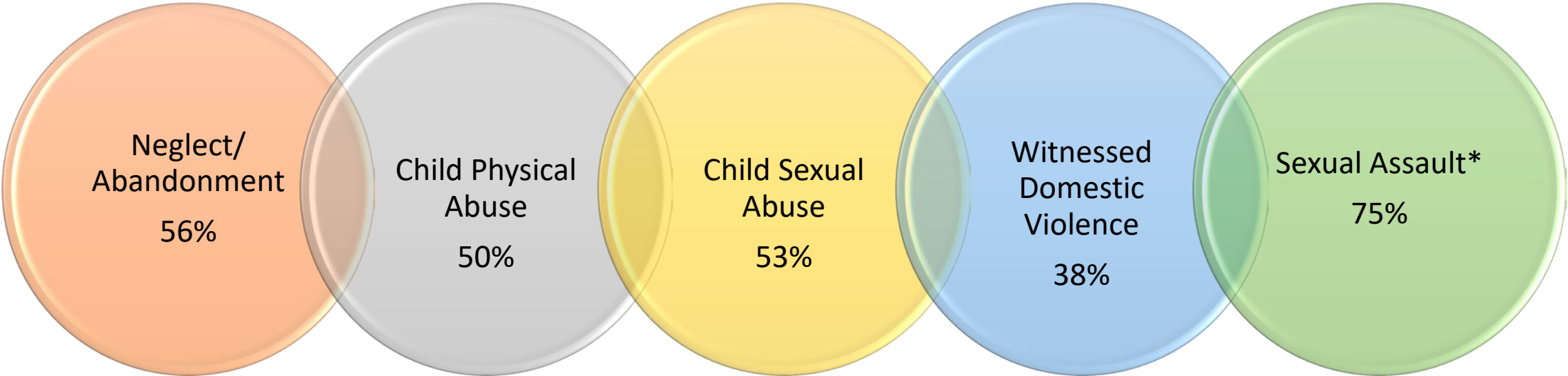
Victims of Child Sex Trafficking (n= 61)

- Victim age range: 4 to 17 years old
- Average age first trafficked – $M= 14.05$ years old
- Victim Race/Ethnicity



- 30% foreign-born (trafficked into US or exploited after arriving in US)

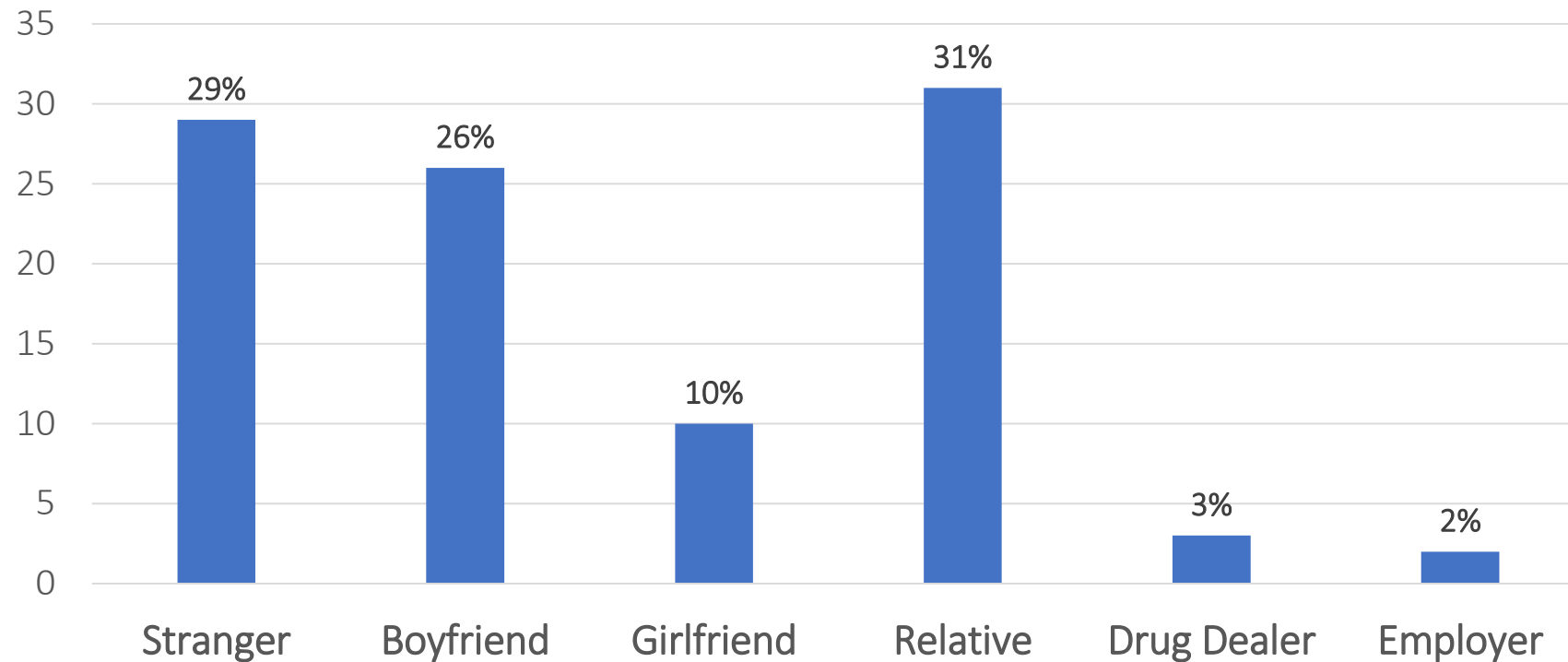
High Rates of Child Abuse and Sexual Assault



*not including child sex trafficking

Child Sex Traffickers

- 74% of traffickers were male, 26% female
- Trafficker-victim relationships:



Results: Trafficker Find Tactics

Pick up at places that youth frequent (MANY)

- Drive around to find youth at bus stop, malls, group homes, etc.

Chat online/Post ad on internet (MANY)

- Search chat rooms for girls, posting on social media sites

Exploited girls buying drugs (FEW)

- Girl who can't pay forced to pay off debt with sex

Recruit using another child or staff in foster care (MANY)

- Using foster girl recruiter in group home to find others
- Staff/foster family recruit girls

Recruit at school (SOME)

- Using peer recruiting in schools

Recruit family (MANY)

- Using mother (in prostitution) to recruit daughter, Family involved in sex ring
- Selling daughters for money or drugs

Results: Trafficker Grooming Tactics

Flatter / Romance (MANY)

- Profess to love her, explicitly treat girl as “grown-up”
- Show off wealth, take to Disney/Busch Gardens, give something never had

Build trust (MANY)

- Offer to help with whatever problem she has (shelter, drugs, protection)

Normalize Sex (MANY)

- Ask girl about sexual experiences/preferences, have sex with her
- Expose to pornographic material

Isolate and Intimidate (MANY)

- Insult and undermine friends, family, other support
- Take girl to unfamiliar places
- Hit, slap, insult, Make threats to hurt girl or her family

Disorient (SOME)

- Give drugs or alcohol
- Switch abruptly between kind and cruel treatment

Family Norms & Abuse (MANY)

- Teach “rules of the game” to children
- Bring men to have sex with children (for money or religious/cultural reasons)

Results: Trafficker Ensnaring Tactics

Shame / Blackmail (MANY)

- Convince that no one else will have her now, can do nothing else, blackmail with photos

Obligation (SOME)

- Convince that he rescued her from worse, Loyalty, “don’t want to be a snitch”

Make Complicit in Crime (MANY)

- Assist in controlling /abusing and recruiting other girls

Pregnancy / Child (SOME)

- With trafficker or john

Isolate (MANY)

- Take away phone, change number, no social media
- Hold against will (in home with cameras/alarms, GPS devices, etc.)

Financial Control (MANY)

- Keep all or almost all of money, control possessions, debt bondage

Intimidate (MANY)

- Routinely beat, injure (tattooed, burned) and rape, Force to watch rape
- Threaten harm, potential arrest, to kick out, to abandon, return to foster care

Create Psychological Bond (MANY)

- No one else can understand you/me/us and what we’ve been through
- Promise to be his best girl again

Sub-Types of Child Sex Traffickers

1) Romantic coercive con(man)

- Present themselves as empathetic and compassionate boyfriends who offer to help minors escape from an abusive home or from harsh living conditions on the streets



2) Family abuser

- Children trafficked by their relatives for profit, or to support a drug habit



3) Gang intimidator

- Pressure to earn money for the gang via prostitution using the reputation of the gang to coerce (Dorias & Corriveau, 2009; Frank & Terwilliger, 2015)



4) Mate crime predator

- 'Befriend' someone in order to abuse or exploit that person, often with intellectual, mental, or physical disability



Romantic Coercive Con(Man) Tactics

- **Find**
 - Chat online, pick up places that youth frequent, peer recruitment
- **Groom**
 - Flatter/romance, provide drugs, normalize sex, isolate
- **Ensnare**
 - Shame/blackmail, obligation, make complicit in crime, pregnancy/child, financial control, create bond/best girl

Family Abuser Tactics

- **Find**
 - Recruit via family
- **Groom**
 - Normalize sex, family norms, highest rates of abuse
- **Ensnare**
 - Bond, obligation, financial control

Gang Intimidator Tactics

- **Find**
 - Drug buyers who can't pay, pick up places that youth frequent
- **Groom**
 - Romance, disorient, isolate, intimidate
- **Ensnare**
 - Intimidate, make complicit in crime, connection, financial control

Mate Crime Predator Tactics

- **Find**
 - Peer recruitment, pick up at places youth frequent
- **Groom**
 - Build trust/take control, disorient, normalize sex
- **Ensnare**
 - Obligation, connection, isolate, intimidate, financial control

Forensic Commonalities Between Sub-Types

- Psychopathic traits
 - Ability to engage in these tactics and behaviors successfully
- Trauma Bonding between offenders and victims
 - Results/psychological aftermath from offenders' behaviors



Sex

Trafficker

Traits

Masters of seduction and exploitation:

Conning, manipulative, able to identify the vulnerabilities of victims and exploit them

Cold/no empathy:

Use physical and psychological abuse to maintain control and obedience

Appear very **charming**, may even convince victims to help recruit future victims

Psychopathy

- “Personality characterized by enduring *anti-social behavior*, diminished capacity for *empathy or remorse*, and poor *behavioral controls*.”

Impulsive,
sensation seekers

Usually male

Aggressive

Manipulative

No remorse



Immoral

Unscrupulous

Feels little or no emotions
(positive and negative)

Low fear and anxiety

Cold

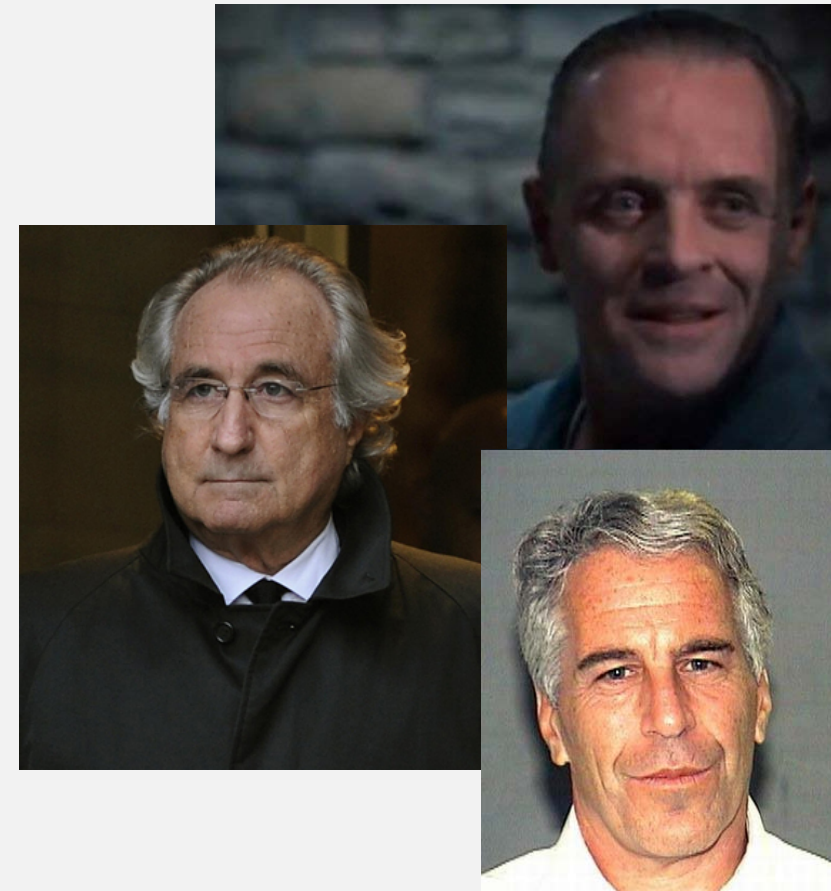
Psychopathy

Not recognized as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association (APA)

- However, about 1% of US population meets criteria
- 15-25% of incarcerated offenders are psychopathic!
- Not all serial killers.... drug dealers, terrorists, con men, and sex traffickers

Psychopathy vs. antisocial personality disorder (APD)

- APD is a recognized personality- not mental- disorder
- “Light” psychopathy
- 4% of Americans meet APD criteria




The Psychopathic Pimp


- 36% of pimps considered psychopathic (30+ on PCL)
- Average pimp score= 27.2 / 40.0
- Average prisoner score= 22.1

PCL Scores	Pimps (N = 22)		Comparison Sample (N = 5,408)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Total	27.23	5.50	22.1	7.9
Factor 1	12.05	1.43	8.5	3.8
Factor 2	11.73	4.19	11.6	4.7
Facet				
Interpersonal	5.91	.75	3.6	2.2
Affective	6.14	.89	4.8	2.1
Lifestyle	5.86	1.83	5.8	2.6
Antisocial	5.86	2.46	5.7	2.8


Facets of Psychopathy

INTERPERSONAL	AFFECTIVE	LIFESTYLE	ANTISOCIAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Superficial charm▪ Grandiose sense of self-worth▪ Pathological lying▪ Conning/Manipulative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lack of remorse▪ Shallow affect▪ Lack of empathy▪ Failure to accept responsibility for actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Need for stimulation▪ Parasitic lifestyle▪ Lack of realistic long-term goals▪ Impulsivity▪ Irresponsibility▪ Many failed relationships▪ Sexual promiscuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Poor behavioral controls▪ Early behavioral problems▪ Juvenile delinquency▪ Parole/probation revoked▪ Criminal versatility


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Psychopathy & Sex Trafficker Types



- **Romantic Coercive Con Men**

- Interpersonal & Affective (superficial charm, pathological lying, manipulative, no empathy)

- **Family Abuser**

- Affective & Lifestyle (lack of remorse, failure to accept responsibility, irresponsible, impulsive, parasitic lifestyle)

- **Gang Intimidator**

- Antisocial, Affective, Interpersonal & Lifestyle (no empathy, manipulative, no remorse, need for stimulation, criminal versatility, poor behavioral controls)

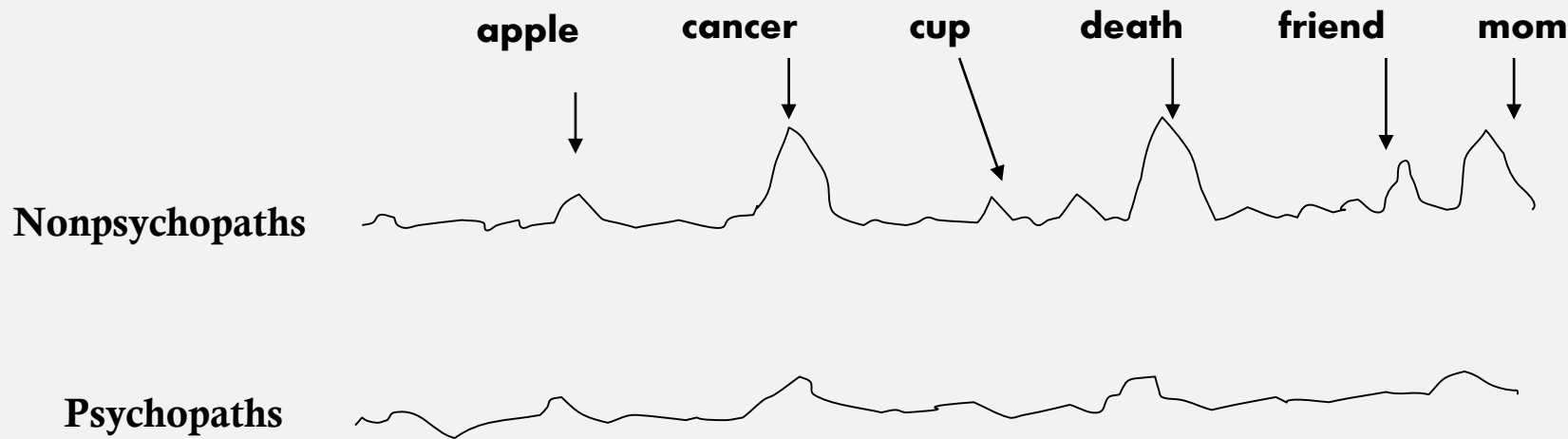
- **Mate Crime Predator**

- Affective, Interpersonal & Lifestyle (lack of remorse, no empathy, pathological lying, manipulative, parasitic lifestyle)

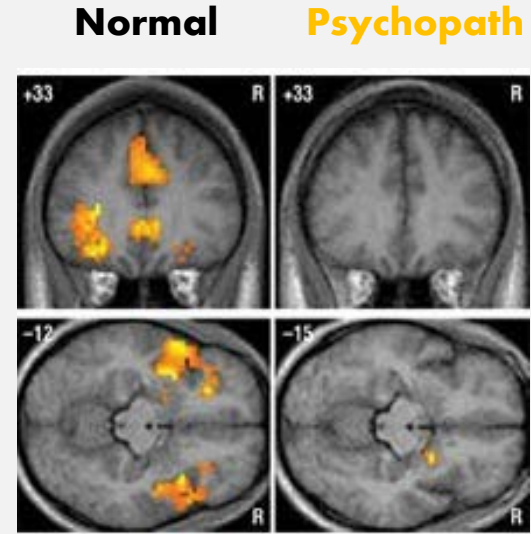
Considerations for Practitioners

Impossible to “cure” a psychopath

- Studies show they experience few emotions, know how to fake it
- No empathy- can't identify with emotional stress of others



Comparison of Electroencephalographs of Psychopaths and Nonpsychopaths on Neutral and Emotionally Laden Words



Considerations for Practitioners

How to best address psychopathic offenders during CST investigations

- Believe their lies- pass polygraphs
- High ego/narcissism, interrogations by “alpha dogs” often unsuccessful
- Victims often are charmed/believe the lies- need hard proof to show otherwise
- Money laundering common- very persuasive and charming, may own “legitimate” businesses as a cover

Trauma Bonding

(Dutton & Painter, 1993)

Two Conditions Required:

1. A marked power imbalance, in which the victim increasingly feels:

POWERLESS

HELPLESS

VULNERABLE

2. Intermittent abuse that alternates with positive or neutral interactions

Trauma Bonding & Child Victims

Youth particularly vulnerable to trauma bonding

- “People in general, and children in particular, seek increased attachment in the face of external danger. Pain, fear, fatigue, and loss of loved ones and protectors all evoke efforts to attract increased care. . . . When there is no access to ordinary sources of comfort, people may turn toward their tormentors.” (van der Kolk, 1989, p. 399)

Considerations for Practitioners

Trauma bonding presents complications for:

- Victim identification
- Separating from the abuser - “no ordinary relationship offers the same degree of intensity as the pathological bond with the abuser” (Herman, 1992, p. 92)
- Safety
- Self-determination – value/effectiveness of client-directed interventions

Barriers to intervention & successful prosecution of traffickers

- *“The repeated experience of terror and reprieve, especially within the isolated context of a love relationship, (or a relationship that is labeled as one), may result in a feeling of intense, almost worshipful dependence on an all-powerful, god-like authority. The victim may live in terror of his wrath, but she may also view him as the source of strength, guidance, and life itself.” (Herman, 1992, p. 92)*

Considerations for Practitioners

Maintain contact without pressure

- Victims likely given a choice – “be loyal to me and no one else OR you are worthless to me and can have nothing to do with me”
- Youth has been told that you (and others like you) are trying to ruin their wonderful, irreplaceable, unique, matchless relationship with their “soul mate”
- Your contact with the youth, no matter how routine and helpful, may be met with anger and resentment. This is because each contact may prompt trafficker/exploiter/abuser to question their loyalty and attack them
- It’s often best to establish predictable, scheduled contacts. Routine contact is less threatening than random contact (may be viewed as “checking up on us”)
- Goal is to maintain contact, remind youth that you’re always there to help, quietly remind the trafficker that someone who cares is nearby and has not disappeared

Considerations for Practitioners

Victim advocacy and caring essential for these victims:

- When relationship is forged by trauma and involves terror: *“an emptiness forms at the core of the person and the self becomes inconsolable. No addiction can fill in. No denial of self will restore it. No single gesture will be believable. Only a profound sense of the human community caring for the self can seal up this hole.”* (Carnes, 1997)

Helpful practices:

- Supportive, Strength-Based Models
- Trauma Treatment
- Address Trauma Bonding – trauma bonding is not based solely on cognitive processes only, cognitive-based therapies alone may not be effective
- Replacement rather than Deprivation “If a dead man can do it, it won’t work”
- Building on Theory of Attachment – importance of stable relationships, expect rejection, testing of boundaries

Considerations for Practitioners

Can't prevent psychopaths- need to reduce opportunities

- Reduce Opportunity for Family Traffickers by:
 - Screening for family-facilitated sex trafficking when assessing youth (e.g. entering group homes, juvenile justice settings, etc.)
 - Putting additional safeguards in place for youth if mother struggling with a drug addiction and/or involved in prostitution
- Reduce Opportunity for other sub-types of traffickers by:
 - Providing runaway safety planning (almost 100% of CST victims increased risk by running away)
 - Training group home staff to call law enforcement immediately if girl is missing (do not wait 24 hours)
 - Providing psychoeducational safety material for at-risk youth in group homes on grooming tactics of traffickers
 - Installing **conspicuous** security cameras at places youth frequent, **outside group homes**, hotel lobbies, hotel parking lots, bus stops, truck stops
 - “Warning” campaigns of harsh penalties for any involvement in CST – from facilitators (hotel managers) to buyers



Legislative Recommendations to Reduce Opportunity

- Discontinue issuing licenses to group homes if in high crime area
- Train all Mandatory Reporters of child abuse on CST as part of state licensing requirement
- Mandate group home staff to call law enforcement immediately if girl is missing
- Enforce Vulnerable Victim Laws – impose harsher sentences for sex traffickers and buyers of sex who prey on those with disability (children and adults)
- Enact “Child Exploitation Protection/No Contact Orders” to stop contact between suspected trafficker/recruiter and potential victim

Concluding Thoughts

Four Types of Child Sex Traffickers Identified:

Romantic Coercive Con (Men), Family Abusers, Gang Intimidators, Mate Crime Predators

Child Sex Traffickers Use Specific Tactics to Find, Groom, and Ensnare Victims:

Identify the type and develop tailored responses

Psychopathy Features Unique to Child Sex Trafficker Types:

Use specific strategies with offenders/victims in investigations

Trauma Bonding Common Among Victims

Be supportive, understanding, respond in non-judgmental way and help to find a way out

Key References

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