Breaking the Bond: Trauma Bonds and the Intersection of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Trafficking

May 2, 2018

Laramie Gorbett
Human Trafficking Specialist
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault
lgorbett@taasa.org

Linda Anderson
Social Services Coordinator
Travis County Adult Probation, SMART Program
Linda.Anderson@traviscountytx.gov
About TAASA

TAASA is a statewide advocacy organization that works to address and eliminate sexual violence through public policy, training, prevention work, and support to programs that serve survivors of sexual violence.

Training Team

TAASA is the unifying voice to eliminate sexual violence in Texas. As the statewide coalition of rape crisis centers, advocates, and survivors, we are committed to fostering a culture that respects the fundamental rights and dignity of all Texans.
SMART Substance Abuse Program

SMART is a 116-bed substance abuse treatment program that provides residential treatment and continuing care services to offenders with substance abuse offenses or a history of chemical dependency. The program includes the SMART Re-Entry Court, a problem-solving court that supports the Continuing Care treatment.

In addition to substance abuse treatment and the SMART Re-Entry Court, SMART includes 3 essential components that research has shown to be essential to success:

- continuing care,
- intensive attention to anti-social thinking for high risk/case-control and limit setting offenders, and
- a family program that is designed to assist family members.
Objectives

- Explore the intersection domestic/sexual violence and human trafficking
- Examine power and control dynamics in trafficking
- Define trauma and trauma bonds
- Integrate knowledge of trauma into investigations and services
### Trafficking

**Actions:** Recruitment, harboring, provision, receipt, transportation and/or obtaining of individuals

**Means:** Using force or threats, coercion, abduction, fraud and/or systems of indebtedness or debt bondage

** Purposes can include:**
- Fraudulent adoption
- Forced labor as domestic, industrial, agricultural workers
- Prostitution, pornography, and sex tourism
- Organ removal/harvesting
- Involuntary servitude, including servile marriages
- Serving as drug mules
Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)

• **Definition:**
  • Commercial sexual abuse and exploitation of minors through buying, trading or selling their sexual services

* A commercial sex act refers to anything of value: money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, higher status in a gang, that is exchanged for sex.

• **Purposes** include:
  • Prostitution: street prostitution, escort services, internet-aided prostitution, strip clubs, massage parlors, peep shows
  • Pornography where minor is sold/rented/provided something of value to perform sex acts on camera.
# Tactics of Trafficking

## Force
Power, violence, compulsion, or constraint exerted upon or against a person.

- Beating
- Burning
- Branding or Tattooing
- Torture
- Drug Addiction
- Confinement
- “Seasoning”
- Sexual Assault

## Fraud
Intentional misrepresentation of material existing fact made by one person to another with knowledge of its falsity and for the purpose of inducing the other person to act, and upon which the other person relies.

- False promises, marriages, employment
- Deceitful enticing and affectionate behavior, “the boyfriend/girlfriend”
- Withholding wages
- Misrepresenting working conditions
- Misrepresenting the promise of a “better life”

## Coercion
The intimidation of a victim to compel the individual to do some act against his or her will by the use of psychological pressure, physical force, or threats.

- Threats Of Serious Harm Or Restraint
- Intimidation/Humiliation
- Emotional Abuse
- Control Of Daily Lives & Brainwashing
- Threats To Family Members
- Deportation Threats
- Confiscation Of Documents
Statistics of Domestic Trafficking

National

- 1 in 3 runaway children are lured into “prostitution” within 48 hours
- The average age of entry into “prostitution” is 12-14
- In America, victims of pimp-controlled sex trafficking are commonly forced to meet quotas of $500 to $1,000 a night
- 70% of victims have experienced physical or sexual abuse in their homes.
- Over 1.68 million American children run away each year.

Texas

- National human trafficking hotlines receive more calls from Texas than any other state in the US other than California.
- 15% of those calls are from the Dallas-Fort Worth area *Polaris Project
- 20% of all human trafficking in the US comes through Texas at some point.
Trafficking in Texas

Approximately 79,000 minors and youth are victims of sex trafficking in Texas.

Approximately 234,000 workers are victims of labor trafficking.

There are currently an estimated 313,000 victims of human trafficking in Texas.

Traffickers exploit approximately $600 million from victims of labor trafficking in Texas.

Minor and youth sex trafficking costs the state of Texas approximately $6.6 billion.
Survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence usually do not self-identify as victims and are frequently unaware of their legal protections.

Categorizing individuals as either being a survivor of human trafficking or a survivor of domestic violence may limit a survivor’s options for social services and legal remedies.

Immigrant survivors face additional barriers to leaving:

- fear of law enforcement
- lack of awareness of rights and laws
- lack of awareness of available services
- fear of deportation, & specific cultural considerations
Dynamics of Human Trafficking & Domestic Violence

- Survivors who have experienced violence and discrimination in their home countries because of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, are more vulnerable to human trafficking.

- Traffickers also exploit the effects of trauma that survivors/victims have experienced in their homes, and in previous abusive relationships.
Dynamics of Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking

• Traffickers use sexual violence as a tool.

• Traffickers and perpetrators of sexual assault frequently prey upon marginalized populations; including:
  • Immigrants,
  • Ethnic & Racial Minorities,
  • Economically disadvantaged persons/homeless
  • LGBTQ+ individuals,
  • Persons with disabilities.
Dynamics of Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking

Is victim identification difficult?

Are there social and cultural stigmas attached to trafficking and sexual assault?

Are sexual assault victims held to different standards than perpetrators?

What does a victim-centered approach look like?
What is Rape Culture?

**Rape Culture** is a setting in which *rape* is pervasive and *normalized* due to societal attitudes about *gender* and *sexuality*.

Behaviors commonly associated with rape culture include *victim blaming*, *sexual objectification*, trivializing rape, *denial* of widespread rape, and refusing to acknowledge the harm caused by some forms of sexual violence.
Vulnerabilities to Trafficking

- Unstable home life
- Previous sexual abuse
- Desperately seeking love or acceptance
- Overly shares personal information on social media
- Glamorizes stars who glorify “the life”
Vulnerabilities to Trafficking

LGBTQIA

- 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQIA
- 46% ran away because of family rejection
- 7.4x more likely to experience acts of sexual violence than their heterosexual peers
- 3-7x more likely to engage in survival sex to meet basic needs, including:
  - shelter, food, drugs, & toiletries.
Victim Indicators

- Injuries from beatings or weapons
- Signs of torture (cigarette burns)
- Brands or scarring indicating ownership
- Signs of malnourishment
Victim Indicators continued

- Gifts, especially cell phones
- Sudden changes in sexuality, dress/attitude toward sex outside of normal development
- Demeanor and secrecy when a certain person calls
- Heavily influenced by new friend/girl/boyfriend
- Doesn’t want anyone to meet her/his girl/boyfriend
- Missing work / truancy from school
Red Flags

Is under the age of 18 and engaged in commercial sex, regardless of force, fraud, or coercion

- Feels they must provide commercial sex in exchange for food, housing, hormones, or other necessities
- Photos of the youth have been placed online for advertising purposes
- Movement or communications are monitored
- Is hesitant to answer questions; scripted responses
- Has been threatened with harm to self or loved ones, arrest, or deportation
Red Flags continued

- Demonstrates mental health concerns like PTSD, anxiety, self-destructive behavior, or depression
- Suffers from untreated medical concerns, especially sexual or reproductive health
- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, malnourishment, or poor hygiene
- Has a debt they cannot pay off
- Earnings are confiscated or held by others
- Frequently moves or travels to new cities with new acquaintances
Sex Trafficking

**Coercion and Threats**
- Threatens to do physical harm
- Threatens to harm family
- Threatens to shame victim to community
- Threatens to report to police/immigration

**Economic Abuse**
- Creates debt bondage that can never be repaid
- Takes some or all money earned
- Forbids victim to have access to their finances or bank account
- Forbids victim to go to school

**Using Privilege**
- Treats victim like a servant
- Defines gender roles to make subservient
- Uses nationality to suggest superiority
- Uses certain victims to control other victims
- Hides or destroys important papers

**Sexual Abuse**
- Forces victim to have sex with multiple people in a day
- Uses rape as a weapon and means of control
- Treats victim as an object used for monetary gain
- Normalizes sexual violence and selling sex

**Intimidation**
- Harms or kills others to show force
- Displays or uses weapons
- Destroys property
- Harms children
- Lies about police involvement in the trafficking situation

**Emotional Abuse**
- Humiliates in front of others
- Calls names
- Plays mind games
- Makes victim feel guilt, blame for the situation
- Creates dependence by convincing victim they're the only one that cares about them

**Isolation**
- Keeps confined
- Accompanies to public places
- Creates distrust of police/others
- Moves victims to multiple locations
- Rotates victims
- Doesn't allow victim to learn English
- Denies access to children, family and friends

**Minimizing, Denying & Blaming**
- Makes light of abuse or situation
- Denies that anything illegal is occurring
- Places blame on victim for the trafficking situation

Labor Trafficking

Domestic servants, farm workers, food service

Prostitution, brothels, massage parlors
Traffickers

Traffickers are masters of the art of seduction; they are able to identify the vulnerabilities of a specific victim and exploit them.

Once seduced, traffickers use torture tactics to control their victims. Such tactics consistently lead to complete obedience and a breakdown of personal agency and autonomy.

These behaviors include both physical and psychological torture. Traffickers use the increased glamorization of pimp cultural and demand for child victims to help maintain control of the child.
What kinds of traffickers are there?

- CEO Pimp - $Money
- Romeo Pimp - Love
- Guerilla Pimp - Violence
- Familial Trafficker - Parents/grandparents/ extended family
Familial Trafficking

- Culture of violence, hopelessness, and chronic trauma
- The familial trafficker will be well-known in the community and obsessed with power
- Familial trafficker will lead a double life and have connections to criminal networks
- All forms of violence are used to control trafficking victim
- Sexual and physical abuse start at birth
- Rape is normalized
- Family will attempt to look normal from the outside
- Family members will ALWAYS accompany child to all medical/social service visits
What is Trauma?

A threat to a person’s physical and/or emotional wellbeing.

An overwhelming experience that is difficult to manage emotionally.

Distressing to individuals, and may affect whole families and communities across generations.
Trauma

- **Individual trauma**: Trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring condition, in which: the individual is exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual (and/or psychological) violation by directly experiencing, witnessing or learning about a traumatic event.

- **Multi-abuse trauma**: Survivors of child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of gender based violence. It refers to the multiple layers of trauma and oppression that may be experienced when an individual is impacted by multiple co-occurring issues that negatively affect safety, health, or well-being.

- **Collective Trauma**: Cultural, historical, insidious and political/economic trauma that impacts individuals and communities across generations

- **Interpersonal Trauma**: Intimate and social betrayal; cumulative burden; ongoing risk

- **Societal abuse**: a form of active abuse that refers to the disadvantages an individual or group experiences as a result of unjust social structures (Benbow, 2009).
Complex Trauma

- *Complex trauma* is a term used by some mental health professionals to refer to a condition that can result from prolonged and repeated abuse, especially if the abuse beginning early childhood or came from multiple sources.

- *Complex trauma* involves traumatic stressors that are repetitive or prolonged; involve direct harm and/or neglect and abandonment by caregivers or ostensibly responsible adults; occur at developmentally vulnerable times in the victim’s life, such as early childhood; and have great potential to severely compromise a child’s development.
Physiology and Trauma

- How is the brain and body affected?
Human Nervous System

Figure 2.5
Myers, Exploring Psychology, 10e, © 2016 Worth Publishers
The Amazing Brain
The Amazing Brain

Figure 2.15
Myers, Exploring Psychology, 10e, © 2016 Worth Publishers

Figure 2.17
Myers, Exploring Psychology, 10e, © 2016 Worth Publishers
Human Stress Response - HPA

- Amygdala Detects Threat
- Activates Hypothalamus
- Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal Axis Activates
HPA Axis

Image taken from Integrative Therapeutics
Human Stress Response

**Sympathetic Nervous System**
- Eyes: Pupils dilate
- Mouth: Inhibits salivation
- Lungs: Bronchi dilate; rapid, shallow breathing
- Heart: Increases heartbeat
- Palms: Stimulates sweat glands
- Stomach and intestine: Inhibits digestion

**Parasympathetic Nervous System**
- Eyes: Pupils contract
- Mouth: Stimulates salivation
- Lungs: Bronchi constrict; slower, deeper breathing
- Heart: Slows heartbeat
- Palms: Sweat diminishes
- Stomach and intestine: Stimulates digestion

Effects of Trauma

Different responses to “normal” interactions

- Anxiety
- Avoid certain activities
- Stress levels differ
- Health issues
- Feel out of control

(Used with permission from Trauma Resource Model www.traumaresourceinstitute.com)
Adverse experiences in childhood (trauma) affect the health and behavior of adults through two primary mechanisms.

1. Increased conventional risk factors such as smoking, excessive drinking, overeating, self-injury, and engaging in risky sex—behaviors that often are used to cope with the pain of the trauma.

2. Biomedical research shows that childhood trauma affects the developing brain and body, causing deregulation of the stress response.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and wellbeing

- Abuse
  - Emotional abuse
  - Physical abuse
  - Sexual abuse

- Neglect
  - Emotional neglect
  - Physical neglect

Household Challenges
- Domestic violence
- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Parental separation/divorce
- Incarcerated parent

People with 6+ ACEs can die 20 yrs earlier than those who have none

1/8 of the population have more than 4 ACEs

4 or more ACEs

- 3x the levels of lung disease and adult smoking
- 14x the number of suicide attempts
- 4.5x more likely to develop depression
- 11x the level of intravenous drug abuse
- 4x as likely to have begun intercourse by age 15
- 2x the level of liver disease

67% of the population have at least 1 ACE

Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today

Dr. Robert Block, the former President of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Image taken from https://twitter.com/7030Campaign
Re-traumatization refers to the psychological and physiological experience of being “triggered,” perhaps by a smell, a sound, or a sensation, that recreates or recalls the original abuse.

Triggers for re-traumatization may include: strip searches, room searches that involve inspecting personal items, cuffs or restraints, isolation, sudden room changes, yelling, and insults.

- Exposure to acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and personal loss such as the death of a family member also may trigger re-traumatization.
- Illicit Self Protection: including violent outbursts and withdrawal from treatment.
Trauma can shatter an individual’s sense of safety and trust.

This may lead to general fearfulness and isolation that makes connecting to family, friends, and treatment professionals difficult.

Many people who have experienced trauma feel a sense of powerlessness or helplessness over their own lives, which may make it difficult to engage in treatment programs and in judicial proceedings.

Examples from your work...
Trauma Bonds

• **Definition:** Dysfunctional attachments that occur in the presence of danger, shame or exploitation.

• **Clinical Patterns:** Abusive/conflictual ties like abuse cycles such as those found in domestic violence; misplaced loyalty as in cults, incest, or hostage situations; depression; rage or debilitation resentment; co-dependency.

SAMHSA’s National Center on Trauma-Informed Care and SAMHSA’s National GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice: Essential Components of Trauma-Informed Judicial Practice. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2013.
They all involve exploitation of trust or power or both. They all can result in a bond with a person who is dangerous and exploitive.

Signs of betrayal bonding include: misplaced loyalty, inability to detach, and self-destructive denial.

"Logic would say that using fear and threat is not a good way to gain cooperation and loyalty. The irony is that in a perverse way it is. Fear immobilizes and deepens attachment." (Carnes, 1997).
Symptoms of Trauma Bonds

• When you obsess about people who have hurt you and they are long gone
• When you continue to seek contact with people whom you know will cause you further pain
• When you go “overboard” to help people who have been destructive to you
• When you continue being a “team” member when obviously things are becoming destructive
• When you continue attempts to get people to like you who are clearly using you
Symptoms of Trauma Bonds continued

- When you trust people again and again who are proven to be unreliable
- When you are unable to retreat from unhealthy relationships
- When you want to be understood by those who clearly do not care
- When you choose to stay in conflict with others when it would cost you nothing to walk away
- When you are loyal to people who have betrayed you
- When you are attracted to untrustworthy people
- When you keep damaging secrets about exploitation or abuse

Trauma Bonds by Patrick J. Carnes, Ph.D., CAS
How do you break a trauma bond?

- Time & Stability
- Services are trauma informed and responsive, and include trust based relationships.
- Care Coordination Teams coordinate recovery by law enforcement and delivery of services to victims and improve collaboration among stakeholders.
- Long-term individualized services, including planning for and reengaging with youth after relapse.
What Coping Looks Like

- Many survivors have engaged in behavior that others might consider self-destructive, such as IV drug use, other substance abuse, survival sex, and self-injury.

- Being trauma informed is to understand these behaviors not as character flaws or symptoms of mental illness, but as strategies or behavioral adaptations developed to cope with the physical and emotional impact of past trauma.
According to SAMHSA’s concept of a trauma-informed approach, “A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

• **Realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;

• **Recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;

• **Responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices;

• **Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.”**
Knowing symptoms of PTSD can help us normalize their experiences

Common Symptoms:
• Nightmares
• Lack of sleep or excessive sleep
• Flashbacks
• Loss of trust
• Impacts ability to form relationships

The body reacts as if it were reliving the traumatic experience, so grounding to the present is important.

Emphasizing the “here and now” can be helpful; but consider that the “here and now” of detention centers is also stressful.
Resiliency & Protective Factors

- **Resilience**: Capacity for successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances
- **Protective factors**: Promote resilience in those at risk. Response of caregivers and other caring adults

- Secure attachment can be most important source of resilience & ability to manage stress.
- Social support, social fabric, community, spirituality
- Individual factors such as capacities and talents, ability to positively engage others
- Access to social and economic resources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT SURVIVORS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. CHALLENGE ATTITUDES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge attitudes that blame victims, such as &quot;she was asking for it,&quot; &quot;she was stupid,&quot; &quot;what was she thinking,&quot; or &quot;she deserved what she got&quot;. Rapists are the reason rape happens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. SHOW SUPPORT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show support by expressing your gratitude for survivors coming forward and to law enforcement for promptly arresting perpetrators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. BELIEVE SURVIVORS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe survivors when they come forward and don’t question or judge their actions, behaviors, dress, or decision to delay or defer reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. HOLD OFFENDERS ACCOUNTABLE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold offenders accountable by highlighting their predatory behavior and utter disregard for sexual boundaries, human dignity and an individual’s basic human right to decide with whom, when, where, and how they want to engage in sexual activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[www.brstar.org](http://www.brstar.org)
Hotlines

**Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force:**

1-888-428-7581

This telephone line is operated by the United States Department of Justice. Operators have access to interpreters and can talk with callers in their own language. The service is offered on weekdays from 9 AM to 5 PM EST. After these hours, information is available on tape in English, Spanish, Russian, and Mandarin.

**United States Department of Health and Human Services—Rescue and Restore Campaign Information and Referral Hotline:**

1-888-373-7888

Connects victims of trafficking to non-government organizations (NGOs) who can help victims in their local area.
Resources

Gordon, N. 2011 Effective Interviewing and Interrogation Techniques, Elsevier Ltd. London

Hadnagy, C. 2011 The Art of Human Hacking, Wiley Publishing, Indianapolis


Lisak, D. 2002. The Neurobiology of Trauma (unpublished article), University of Massachusetts — Boston.


Zulawski, D. Practical Interviewing and Interrogation. CRC Press, Boca Raton


https://twitter.com/7030Campaign

www.nsvrc.org , College Sexual Assault , National Sexual Violence Resource Center

www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rsavcaf , Bureau of Justice , Campus Sexual Assault Survey, Nation Institute for Sexual Assault Violence Survey

www.ncjrs.gov/publications/248443 , National Criminal Justice Reference Service
Thank you!

Laramie Gorbett, M.A.
Human Trafficking Specialist
lgorbett@taasa.org
512.474.7190 ext.27

Linda Anderson
Social Services Coordinator
Travis County Adult Probation, SMART Program
Linda.Anderson@traviscountytx.gov