

Research Proposal

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research proposal is to highlight the injustices of deceptive methods used by human traffickers to seduce, oppress, and obtain control over their victims. This research proposal intends to illustrate the importance of further research in order to expose traffickers methods of power and put an end to violence against women in this manner. This proposal will first introduce the topic of human trafficking and state its need for further reearch. The proposal will then support the topic by providing information of research that have been previously studied. Following this literature review, a methodology section will be provided that includes how the research will be sampled and how the data obtained will be measured and collected. Finally, readers will review how the data will be analyzed and will conclude with a short overview of all of the information provided.

### Introduction

\_\_\_\_\_The violence and mental abuse of human sex trafficking is a major problem facing women in the United States today. So much so, that many equate the topic to slavery and it has coined itself the term, “modern day slavery” by many researchers. Through my own research, I can conclude that human trafficking is an invisible problem. This is because a large number of traffickers are going unpunished for the evil they conduct. Victims are invisible because policy in place ignores the mental trauma they endure. There is not enough emphasis on the mental health of victims in recovery and there are little preventative efforts in place for potential prey to be protected from the cycle of trafficking. Through vigorous review of studies related to human trafficking methods and its effect on women, research has guided me to focus on the methods used by traffickers that ultimately breaks a woman’s spirit. A woman’s spirit is the essence in maintaining a sense of self and having the ability to make free choices. This is further highlighted in the literature review that follows but requires extensive future research in order to gain a sense of understanding for victims and provide them with the best possible support so that they are no longer invisible. Studies previously conducted by researchers pave a way for victims to receive the justice and care that they are owed, but it is imperative for further research to be done in order to do so.

### Literature Review

Human Sex Trafficking is a devastating, yet common occurrence in the United States today and many scholars refer to it as modern day slavery of women. Victims are often exposed to many psychological and physical traumas that affect their way of living if they survive the

vicious cycle of being trafficked. Women between the ages of 18 and 25 often become victims of the trafficking ring due to fraudulent methods used by their predators. Women become completely submissive to their traffickers through the loss of their spirit. The human spirit is hard to operationalize and the public has a difficult time defining the term. As stated in an article published in the Organization Development Journal, the American Heritage Society defines one's spirit as "the vital principle, the animating force traditionally believed to be within and the essential nature of every human being" (White, 2001, p. 48). The human spirit affects an individual's ego and sense of self. It is important for women to have a well-developed ego because without it, she has no sense of self-reliance and it impacts her ability to think on her own and make individualized choices. Traffickers seek to break a woman's spirit because that allows them to have complete dominance of their "product" and the ability to use their victim in any way they please. The fraudulent methods of human trafficking horrifyingly results in violence on the spirit and the overall mental instability of low-income, young adult women in the United States.

Carol Adams' model of violence may be applied to explain the effects of human trafficking on a woman and her spirit. Carol Adams' model analyzes the cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and finally consumption in order to express the violence and oppression of both women and animals (Herrington, McEachern, 2018). This model can specifically connect to human sex trafficking because victims are often so abused, they are treated like animals instead of humans. This model is effective in the explanation of the process in which traffickers gain complete control over their victims through the destruction of one's human spirit.

In order for a woman to be completely consumed by the commercialization of human trafficking, she is first subject to objectification. The objectification process consists of being viewed and treated as an object until they eventually view themselves as one; a mere possession to that of their trafficker. This is done so by the predator creating and maintaining a sense of dominance and control over their victim. A study done on a group of women who have experienced being trafficked expressed their need to feel loved contributed to their status in commercial sex trafficking (Perkins, Ruiz, 2016, p. 177). This driving need many victims feel makes them more vulnerable and susceptible to becoming objectified. Traffickers then abuse this vulnerability and utilize fraudulent and coercive methods of seduction in order to obtain control over their victim. This study supports the concept of objectification leading towards the instability of victims and destruction of the human spirit. This is because the simple necessity of emotional human connection becomes the vulnerability that predators feed on to objectify their “prey” and begin the process of obtaining complete dominance.

The next stage in Carol Adams’ model is fragmentation. Through the objectification process a woman is fragmented into mere body parts that can be used. Fragmentation is the concept of decreasing one’s self-value so dramatically that she becomes a product that can be used and sold. At this point, a woman is so psychologically abused that she is restricted from maintaining her own self dependency and self-worth. One author expresses the imperativeness for a viable human spirit to be present in an organizational environment because it eliminates the fear of employees and therefore, they will succeed in their jobs so long as they are confident in their workplace (White, 2001, p. 48). This knowledge may be applied to the methods used during the human trafficking because it illustrates the very opposite environment that trafficked victims

are exposed to. During the process of objectification and fragmentation, predators use fraudulent and coercive behaviors to instill fear into women. This fear then interprets to the loss of those women's spirits and the incapability of making decisions for themselves, they are now dependent on their traffickers. The discussion of fear leads to the misconception of choice in commercial sex trafficking. Prostitution and the realities of human sex trafficking are often confused in legal implications and deals with a woman's choice in participation. In human sex trafficking, after the psychological trauma of being objectified and fragmented a woman loses her ability to make her own decisions and therefore has no choice in the actions she performs. In a briefing handbook titled, "The Links Between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking," the authors express that "the critical question is the context in which choice is being exercised and what alternatives, if any, exist" (O'Connor, Healy, 2006). This illusion of choice in this kind of environment must be properly analyzed when assessing sexually trafficked victims. A woman without a high spirit is incapable of making her own choices and therefore should be protected instead of punished when dealing with prostitution accusations. The fragmentation process causes a psychological instability and a loss of a sense of self. This results in a woman's spirit breaking and an inability to make her own choices.

Objectification and fragmentation leads to the final stage and ultimate goal of the trafficker in the Carol Adams' model, consumption. Consumption of a trafficked woman means that their spirit has been completely broken by their trafficker. She is labeled a price, has no sense of self-sustainability, and has become the property of someone else. Many survivors of rape and trauma describe their experience as feeling "like a piece of meat" (Herrington, McEachern, 2018). This could also apply to sex trafficking survivors as they have been objected,

fragmented into pieces, and finally consumed, or sold into the industry. The woman's broken spirit is the causing factor for her submission to her trafficker and inability to escape their control. There are resources in place for women who have survived sexual trafficking that provide housing services, medical services, and services related to their reintegration into society. However, there is a lack of services that focus on the spiritual being that must be rebuilt in the woman. One scholar writes about the importance of spiritual care, writing "the challenge goes out to also sensitively and ethically address the spiritual needs of the clients" (Baker, Grover, 2013). While there are ethical dilemmas with remaining religiously sensitive to the clients, a victim's spiritual health should be held to equal importance as other healthcare needs, whether those services incorporate religion or not. The final consumption stage of destroying a woman's spirit in order to gain complete control contributes to the unlikelihood of reintegration into society. Due to the vulnerability of many victims, coercive and fraudulent methods used by traffickers are too often successful. This proves that there is a lack of protective resources for vulnerable and low-income women.

This illustration of human trafficking through the Carol Adams' model offers an informative outlook on the destruction of a woman's spirit and overall identity. Misconceptions of a woman's right to choice and free will are important to disprove in order to create better policies and protective factors for those who are vulnerable to fraudulent and coercive methods of trafficking. The victimization of women who have been preyed upon through this inhumane treatment happens far too often. Policy makers and social workers must study and expose human trafficking methodologies in order to rewrite the outcomes for woman susceptible to this type of treatment and bring justice to survivors.

### Research Question

\_\_\_\_\_ There are many methods used by traffickers in order to gain control of their victim and essentially use them as their product to be used and sold. The method of force is the traditional and most well-known tactic used by traffickers to attack their victims. However, for purposes of this study, research will be focused on how the fraudulent and coercive methods are utilized in order to gain control over women that fall victim to the cycle of sex trafficking. Through the use of fraudulent and coercive methods, traffickers gain a sense of control over women that ultimately lead to their instability and overall loss of their spirit. Based on this study, the term “spirit” may be operationally defined as “the vital principle, the animating force traditionally believed to be within and the essential nature of every human being” (White, 2001, p. 48). The loss of a woman’s spirit is the final and most important element of an individual is stolen by traffickers. This research intends to analyze how traffickers obtain a woman’s spirit and the effect it has on their sense of self in order to implement proper protective factors for this population and provide them with necessary treatment.

### Methodology

#### Sampling

\_\_\_\_\_ In order to obtain participants for this study, the sampling procedure will be conducted to obtain 100 women from across the United States. This will be done in order to recognize how the diversity of environments and backgrounds of women tend to result in similar effects on their mental well-being and need for proper care. Participants in this study will be on a voluntarily based scale so that women who are not mentally stable enough in their recovery process to discuss their experience do not feel obliged to participate. Clinicians who counsel and work with

survivors of sex trafficking will be informed of the study and asked to inform their clients of the study to see if they are willing to be included in the study. Participants in the study must be women above the age of 18 who were trafficked through a fraudulent or coercive manner. There will be an emphasis on gathering the 100 participants from a range of racial and socio-economic backgrounds. This is because the purpose of this research is to show that no matter the woman, her spirit can still be broken by traffickers.

#### *Measurement & Data Collection Methods*

\_\_\_\_\_The independent variable in this study is the fraudulent or coercive methods used by traffickers, as all of the women who participate in the study are victims to either of these methods. The dependent variables in this study are the overall instability of victims, the lack of protection measure for victims, and the overall loss of spirit experienced by women who have been trafficked. The overall instability of victims refers to the bio, psycho, social, and spiritual (BPSS) framework in obtaining information pertaining to every aspect of the individual's life and how it was affected by the specific manners in which they were trafficked. The lack of protection measures of victims particularly pertains to the ability for victims to access resources that may have changed the outcome of their experiences. Finally, the loss of spirit for victims will be measured operationally in terms of victims' sense of self-sufficiency and self-worth. The definition of one's spirit has been defined previously but due to the significance of the term for this study the definition is as follows: a woman's spirit is "the vital principle, the animating force traditionally believed to be within and the essential nature of every human being" (White, 2001, p. 48). A woman's spirit in this context cannot properly be physically measured. However, the data collected pertaining to a victim's spirit will be collected based on the Carol Adams' model

pertaining to violence that consists of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption in order to determine how and to what extent a woman's spirit has been broken.

In order to obtain data for this study, women will be given a survey with questions related to the independent variables stated previously, with emphasis on questions relating to their experiences of being objectified, fragmented, and consumed by their trafficker. These questions will specifically address the methods used by their traffickers, the manner in which these methods were carried out, the feelings of the victim in response to their trafficker, and the victims overall sense of self in response to each of these levels as stated in the Carol Adams model. These questions will be phrased in a way that participants can distinguish if a certain act was present and the extent to which their sense of self was disturbed in the process. The BPSS framework will be utilized to fashion questions in order to obtain qualitative data for the study, as each woman's experience is personal and different. The Carol Adams' model is already a verifiable model used in many research methods, therefore a questionnaire based upon the model will be influential in the process of data analysis.

The questionnaire will be given to participants via on paper or electronically in order to effectively gather information to analyze. Further, qualitative questions related to the woman's BPSS framework will be conducted by a licensed clinical psychologist and analyzed anonymously to protect the identities of participants. Further, participants will be given the opportunity to discuss their emotions with a clinician at any time during the collection of information as the sensitive material may cause traumatic memories. Participants may also terminate their participation in the study if at any time they no longer feel comfortable or it becomes too traumatic for them.

### Data Analysis

\_\_\_\_\_The data collected will be analyzed using a multinomial logistic regression which is a test that will explain the relationship between the methods used by traffickers and its overall effectiveness in breaking a woman's spirit. The data will also have to be further analyzed by licensed clinical professionals in order to adhere to the sensitivity of the different responses and experiences of women who mentally experience similar issues in different ways. Also, since the definition of one's spirit is used operationally, the data must be manually analyzed by clinicians in order to gain a better understanding of the results and find patterns within the study.

### Conclusion

\_\_\_\_\_Through research on this topic, there are already patterns shown related to this study by what is known about human sex trafficking. This study intends to expose traffickers' methods of abuse and show the immense effect they have on their victims lives. This study also intends to shed importance on not only physical signs of abuse, but the mental abuse that a woman suffers from having her spirit broken. The findings from this study will offer a new insight on human sex trafficking and support further research on the best treatment modalities for victims who have had their spirit broken.

## References

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