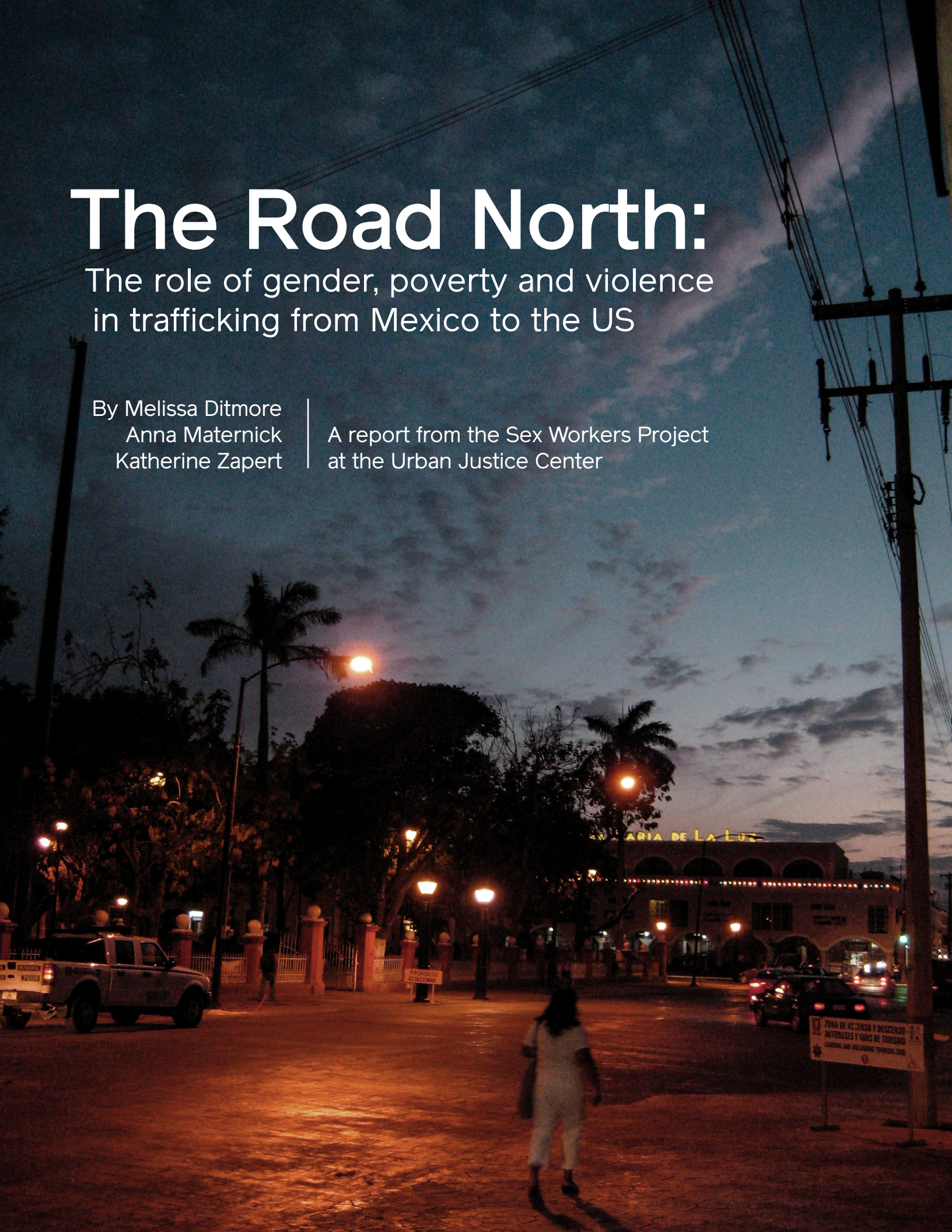


The Road North:

The role of gender, poverty and violence
in trafficking from Mexico to the US

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A report from the Sex Workers Project
at the Urban Justice Center



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This report is dedicated to the memory of Michael Carden, who was supportive of SWP from the very beginning and instrumental in previous reports.

About the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center

The Sex Workers Project provides client-centered legal and social services to individuals who engage in sex work, regardless of whether they do so by choice, circumstance, or coercion. One of the first programs in the nation to assist survivors of human trafficking, the Sex Workers Project has pioneered an approach to service grounded in human rights, harm reduction and in the real life experiences of our clients. Our professional service providers are multi-lingual, non-judgmental and bring more than ten years of experience.

As the only US organization meeting the needs of both sex workers and trafficking victims, the Sex Workers Project serves a marginalized community that few others reach. We engage in policy and media advocacy, community education and human rights documentation, working to create a world that is safe for sex workers and where human trafficking does not exist.

The Sex Workers Project is a project at the Urban Justice Center. The Urban Justice Center serves low-income and marginalized New Yorkers through a unique combination of direct legal services, systemic advocacy, community education, and organizing. For information about the Sex Workers Project, please visit www.sexworkersproject.org. For more information about the Urban Justice Center, please visit www.urbanjustice.org.

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List of Acronyms

CAM	Centro de Estudios Sociales y Culturales Antonio de Montesinos
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FY	Fiscal Year
HSTC	Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center
ICE	US Immigration Customs and Enforcement
IMUMI	Instituto para las Mujeres en la Migracion
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
SWP	Sex Workers Project
TRAC	Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act
VAWA	Violence Against Women Act

The Road North: The role of gender, poverty and violence in trafficking from Mexico to the United States

Executive Summary

The Road North was undertaken when service providers in Mexico sought information about people trafficked to the United States via Mexico in order to inform their practice, and support their work to prevent human trafficking.

Trafficking in persons refers to the compulsion of an individual into any form of labor through use of force, fraud or coercion, or debt bondage. This report uses the legal definition from the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act, as the individuals included sought services and legal status under these terms. Individuals are trafficked into a variety of industries: domestic servitude, agricultural or construction labor, and service industries such as hotels, restaurants and commercial sex, to name a few.

The context of migration between the US and Mexico is influenced by economic disparities, economic and migration policies, labor opportunities and gender roles in both countries. Human trafficking also occurs within Mexico. The US response to human trafficking, which emphasizes law enforcement, is described, alongside the challenges presented. These topics are discussed throughout the full report to promote greater understanding of the data and its interpretation.

The Road North highlights the experiences of 37 individuals who were trafficked from Mexico to the United States, eventually arriving in the New York City area. Of the 36 women, including 2 transgender women, and 1 man in this report, all but one had experienced some form of sexual harassment or were trafficked into the sex industry. Many were also forced or coerced into other labor or economic activities, including theft. Data was collected from 37 signed affidavits and 6 interviews. The affidavits were written between 2005 and 2011. Interviews were conducted in January and February 2012. 25 affidavits were collected from the Sex Workers Project (SWP) at the Urban Justice Center and 12 were collected from the Anti-Trafficking Program at Safe Horizon, both based in New York City. The interviews were conducted with clients and former clients of SWP whose affidavits were also being used for this report.

Poverty is likely to contribute to trafficking vulnerability

My family was very poor, even compared to other families in the village. My parents worked as farmers on other people's lands. They traveled to other states to find work, and they took us with them.

I worked alongside my parents starting when I was eight years old. I tried to also go to school, but had to stop after 6th grade because I missed so much school in order to work. The work I generally did was harvesting vegetables.

— Camilla¹

- 75 percent of affiants describe fiscal hardship during their childhood in their affidavits.
- 27 affiants, out of the 33 affiants whose affidavits included information about educational attainment prior to trafficking, did not attend school past the 10th grade, within that group 12 affiants attended school until the 6th through 8th grade, and 6 attended for 1 year or less. The majority of affiants cited financial reasons for leaving school prior to graduation or not being able to attend at all.
- 7 affiants migrated at an early age, as young as 9 years old, in order to find work and send money back to their families. They often migrated alone.
- 11 affiants mention experiencing food insecurity during their childhood or later as working single mothers prior to trafficking.
- 35 percent of affiants in the sample mention that their parents separated, which appeared to put a strain on the affiants' families financial situations.

¹ Please note all names have been changed to protect affiants' identities. For more information please see the Methodology section of the full report.

Experiences of violence prior to trafficking may also increase vulnerability to trafficking

- 54 percent of affiants described a violent experience prior to trafficking.
- These violent experiences were often extreme and included: witnessing domestic violence, being a victim of physical or sexual abuse, being a victim of intimate partner violence, witnessing a murder, and being harassed and beaten in school.
- The two transgender women in the sample described the highest levels of violence in the sample, often facing harassment and violence from their family as well as their communities.
- For many affiants, violence in their homes influenced their desire to leave and go with the trafficker. During an interview with Meena, she revealed that she decided to go with the man who trafficked her because she believed he could help her escape from the sexual abuse she was facing at home.

I was 16 to 18 and I needed to leave there because I was suffering a lot of trauma based on the way they were treating me [...] I didn't feel well there, I didn't feel calm, my uncle kept bothering me and I couldn't say anything cause I was afraid [...]

And [then] this man appeared, an acquaintance of my aunt, I went out with him and left the house with him. He said I'm going to take you to my aunt's and she can give you a job and you can live there. I thought that was a really good idea, but it wasn't like that.

— Meena

² This section will outline various cultural factors that affect and can promote human trafficking in Mexico.

Affiants often had a personal connection to the trafficker Prior to trafficking situation

- 69 percent of affiants in the sample met the person who trafficked them through a family member, friend or neighbor; contributing to their initial trust of the trafficker.
- 4 affiants (8 percent) were trafficked by someone who was a family member of the affiant prior to trafficking.
- 38 percent of affiants did not have any connection to the trafficker before they met. In these cases, affiants were often living apart from family and the traffickers were strangers who built trust through friendship and seduction.

I met [trafficker] [in year] when he was 17 years old and I was 14 years old. There was a carnival in my hometown of [town] and my friend, who is [trafficker's] aunt, introduced us there. [Trafficker's] aunt lived nearby in [town] and I was familiar with her because she was a friend of my mother's. [Trafficker] and I did not talk to each other the first time we met but we did on the second day of the carnival.

— Inez

Respondents recommend open communication with family members in order to help prevent trafficking

My parents didn't talk with us about those things, about drugs, about sex, about any of those things. I think that it is very important to speak with [children] about everything, to let them know there are bad people outside, to give them signs to let them learn how to recognize behaviors about somebody that is approaching you with some other intentions.

— Helena

- 4 out of 6 affiants who were interviewed recommend open communication within families about romantic relationships, marriage, sex, and drugs, as essential to prevention of trafficking.

Recommendations

During interviews conducted for this study we asked interviewees to tell us what advice they believe might help others avoid the situation that they found themselves in. 4 out of 6 respondents mentioned the importance of open communication with parents and access to information about the world. The advice Helena gave during an interview mirrors that of other affiants.

I really think that the best thing is to communicate, the parents they have to talk with their kids, even when they are 10, 11, 15 they have to tell them what is the situation at home, what they are going through, that they need to let the children know or the teenagers know what is happening at home, to talk with them.

Also to talk with them about like drugs, sex, all that stuff. My parents didn't talk with us about those things, about drugs, about sex, about any of those things. I think that it is very important to speak with them about everything, to let them know there are bad people outside, to give them signs to let them learn how to recognize behaviors about somebody that is approaching you with some other intentions.

— Helena

Helena and other interviewees expressed that they could have been better equipped to avoid or get out of the trafficking situation if they would have had more open communication with their families and more knowledge about the world. It is evident that campaigns to raise awareness about family violence and human trafficking are vital in fighting trafficking in communities like the one where Helena is from.

Recommendations for the Mexican Government

- Take action to address violence, including violence against women, and to investigate human trafficking. Few prosecutions have been undertaken against traffickers in Mexico using pre-existing statutes or the new anti-trafficking law.
- Support organizations to provide services for trafficked persons in Mexico, including migrants and women and children who are alienated from their marital families and families of origin.
- Support organizations to provide services to transgender and gay people, especially youth.
- Support organizations to develop campaigns for awareness and communication within families about trafficking and domestic violence, including child abuse and child sexual abuse, particularly in impoverished and isolated communities.
- Adopt economic policies that address poverty in Mexico, particularly of women and single parent households.

Recommendations for the US Government

- More resources and solutions are needed to reunify foreign-born victims of trafficking with their children, particularly when children of the trafficking victim are in the custody of the trafficking family. These children may be at risk of being incorporated into the trafficking cycle, and may be used to manipulate their trafficked parents, who cannot simultaneously maintain contact with their children and ensure cooperation with prosecution efforts; therefore the prioritization of family reunification is recommended on humanitarian and criminal justice grounds.
- Support organizations to provide services for victims of human trafficking. Recovery of victims is essential to preventing future criminal acts against them.
- The requirement of cooperation with law enforcement in order to lawfully remain in the United States should be discontinued. Victims of trafficking face ongoing danger from traffickers if they cooperate with law enforcement, because of common familial relationships with traffickers and manipulation of children by traffickers. Furthermore, in some cases, victims are pressured to cooperate or testify before they are recovered enough to do so without incurring further traumatization. Such people may not be effective victim-witnesses, thereby jeopardizing successful prosecutions.
- Repeal or amend S-Comm and 287(g), which are likely to result in deportation of many victims of trafficking to their home countries where they will be likely to continue to be trafficked and abused.
- Support economic policies that decrease inequity and poverty in Mexico, especially among women and single-parent households.
- Offer accessible routes to immigration status for survivors of human trafficking. The majority of victims of trafficking cannot return to their country of origin because they have no supportive family or community to return to, and because of real danger of re-trafficking, violence, or persecution.

Recommendations for Organizations in Mexico

- Provide counseling and safety services for people who have suffered violence, including violence in childhood, in marriage, at work, and in trafficking situations, which may help individuals recover from trauma, and become more resistant to future trafficking situations.
- Initiate campaigns promoting awareness and communication within families about sexuality, gender roles, trafficking and family violence, particularly in impoverished and isolated communities. One goal of awareness campaigns should be to promote discussion within families, as recommended by survivors of trafficking as one thing that could have helped them avoid being trafficked.
- Initiate campaigns to promote awareness and acceptance of people who do not conform to gender norms, including transgender and gay people as well as women who do not conform to gender ideals.
- Provide services for trafficked persons of all genders
- Provide legal and social services, in partnership with US service organizations, to reunite survivors of trafficking with their children who are in perilous situations.

Recommendations for Organizations in the United States

- Develop cultural competency with regards to the gender norms and ideals your clients may have internalized. Cultural competency will help you understand the situations your clients face, the decisions they have made, and their reactions to the options you can present.
- Be aware of the possibility of domestic and family violence in the lives of people who have survived trafficking situations.

The Road North: The role of gender, poverty and violence in trafficking from Mexico to the United States

Introduction

The Road North was undertaken when service providers in Mexico sought information about people trafficked to the United States via Mexico in order to enable more effective prevention of human trafficking. These organizations already partner closely with the Sex Workers Project on human trafficking cases, providing assistance on family reunification and other cross-border issues.

Trafficking in persons refers to the compulsion of an individual into any form of labor through use of force, fraud or coercion, or debt bondage. This report uses the legal definition from the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act, as the individuals included sought services and legal status under these terms. Individuals are trafficked into a variety of industries: domestic servitude, agricultural or construction labor, and service industries such as hotels, restaurants and commercial sex, to name a few. This report highlights the experiences of 37 individuals whom were trafficked from Mexico to the United States, eventually arriving in the New York City area. Of the 36 women, including 2 transgender women, and 1 man, all but one woman had experienced some form of sexual harassment or were trafficked into the sex industry. Many also experienced other forced labor or coerced economic activities, including theft. The context of migration between the US and Mexico is influenced by economic disparities, economic and migration policies, labor opportunities and gender roles in both countries. Human trafficking also occurs within Mexico. The US response to human trafficking, which emphasizes law enforcement, is described, alongside the challenges presented. These topics are discussed below to offer background information to promote greater understanding of the data and its interpretation.

The Mexican economy and migration

In the broadest terms, neoliberal economic policies and cultural practices often create a milieu in Mexico where one conceives migration for work as the best option for survival. The unfortunate result is a climate where the trafficking in persons becomes a lucrative business, because victims trying to find work find illicit migration a necessity due to strict immigration policy.

The global financial crises that have engulfed economies worldwide over the past twenty years have created a climate in which labor migration is commonplace and often essential. Free market forces, effects of globalization, and economic policies pushed down through international institutions promoting these concepts, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, are chiefly responsible (Augustín 2007; Kara 2008; Newdick 2005; Pollock & Lin Aung 2010). For instance, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) removed most trade barriers between Canada, Mexico and the US in 1994 and has allowed agricultural goods to be tax-free. The result in Mexico was an agricultural market flooded with cheap US produce. This led to the systematic eradication of farming as a source of economic livelihood in rural Mexican indigenous communities and is cited as a major cause of abject poverty (Newdick 2005). The US understanding of economic strategy, and the presupposition that the United States is inherently superior to Mexico, overwhelmingly influenced the hegemonic policies promoted through NAFTA (Skonieczny 2001). Thus, the resulting policies do not take into account Mexico's poorest and most underserved populations, including indigenous people, and affect them disproportionately (Newdick 2005). The results of these neoliberal politics is a situation where little economic opportunity exists in isolated areas of Mexico and therefore many choose—sometimes reluctantly—to migrate for work in urban areas. Although Mexico is the focus for this report, it is not alone in this paradigm. Similar patterns of migration as necessary to secure work have been documented in South Asia and the former Soviet Republics. Both regions experienced political pressures similar to Mexico from international economic institutions (Kara 2008).

It has been widely documented that women and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by economic globalization (Augustín 2007; Kara 2008; Pollock & Lin Aung 2010). Suggestions claim that 70 percent of those living in extreme poverty in underdeveloped

countries are women (Kara 2008). The lack of economic opportunities pull many people towards migrating for work in search of economic stability for themselves, and often their families. Today, women are estimated to make up more than half of the world's migrants (Augustín 2007; Kara 2008). However, the industries in which migrants often find themselves employed are informal. These include agricultural work, sweatshops, and factories that lack significant labor protections for employees, as well as other sectors that are not protected by any labor laws, such as domestic labor and babysitting. Furthermore, these economic sectors imitate exploitation of existing societal gender disparities. Commonly, migrant women find themselves engaged in what is historically considered "women's work"—childcare, domestic service, and sex work (Pollock & Lin Aung 2010). For example, there is considerable evidence that many Mexican women migrate from southern and rural areas of Mexico—most commonly, the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tlaxcala and Veracruz—to seek work in urban areas and outside Mexico out of financial necessity (Acharya 2010; Bucardo, Semple, Fraga-Vallejo, Davila, & Patterson 2004; Torres 2009; Castro Soto et al. 2004). The lack of economic options for Mexico's young women often creates conditions where sex work is one of few viable options (Acharya 2010; Bucardo et al. 2004; Castro Soto et al. 2004; Villareal 2007). There is evidence of situations where sex work is voluntary in this population, and situations where it is forced or coerced.

These industries are often informal ones where poor working conditions, low wages, and few legal securities are the norm. Men who migrate are commonly feminized and seen as vulnerable when they find themselves in the same or similar service industries that are considered "women's work" (Augustín 2007). Thus, gender tends to act as a fundamental standard that arranges informal labor markets, therefore, "reinforcing pre-existing gender patterns that oppress women" (Kara 2008 p. 215).

Cultures in which violence against women is pervasive, and racism against minorities is routine, propagate acceptance or at least the expectation of oppression by those who migrate for work. In situations where institutional discrimination against women and ethnic minorities is culturally normative, discriminatory practices become obscured and difficult to question. Additionally, migrants—both documented and undocumented—have historically been viewed as deviant. Thus, discriminatory attitudes towards migrants continue to influence the design of immigration and labor policies today (Augustín 2007).

Cultural dynamics in Mexico²

Violence against women and cultural beliefs and state systems that support it exist in greater or lesser degree all over the world. In Mexico, patriarchal cultural values take the form of *machismo*, which values strong and dominant men, and justifies identifying women as property and violence against women in various forms (Bucardo 2004; Newdick 2005; Peek-Asa, Garcia, McArthur & Castro 2002). Evidence displays various cultural ideals that support *machismo*'s influence on Mexican society. For example, young women are often mandated to work by their families or must get permission, and intimate partner violence is not given serious consideration as a public health issue (Peek-Asa, Garcia, McArthur & Castro 2002; Villareal 2007).

Machismo also manifests in pervasive discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Mexico. Some organizations estimate that there are as many as 1,000 murders of gays, lesbians, transgender or transsexual individuals occurring every year (Norandi 2007), or up to 15 homophobic or transphobic murders each month, according to The Citizens Commission Against Homophobic Hate Crimes (Fortino Torrentero 2009). Murders, assaults and other violent crimes against LGBT persons are hugely under reported due to a general distrust of law enforcement based on the violence, exploitation and indifference exhibited by law enforcement toward LGBT persons (Villamil 2010).

The presence of *machismo* in Mexican society creates a culture that tolerates the existence of an involuntary sexual labor force.

Latino culture has many concepts that define beliefs about gender and family in addition to *machismo*, which are present in Mexico (Bucardo 2004; Newdick 2005; Peek-Asa, Garcia, McArthur & Castro 2002). *Familismo* calls upon a strong obligation to one's family. In the traditional gender roles in Latino culture, *marianismo*, creates the expectation that women present as wholesome and must comply with the needs of their family, particularly the male members (Bucardo 2004; Newdick 2005; Peek-Asa, Garcia, McArthur & Castro 2002).

² This section will outline various cultural factors that affect and can promote human trafficking in Mexico. The oppression of women and people who violate gender norms occurs all over the world, not just in Mexico. We are grateful to the staff of the Instituto para las Mujeres en la Migracion and to the work of Oscar Montiel Torres for introducing us to the specific ways these issues manifest in Mexico.

Simpatia emphasizes non-confrontational relationships. These social and cultural beliefs not only create an atmosphere tolerant of abuse, but also one where acknowledgement of abuse is unlikely (Bucardo 2004; Peek-Asa, Garcia, McArthur & Castro 2002).

These cultural values can also act as deterrents to speaking out negatively against family, friends, elders, and particularly males. In addition, *respeto*—a fundamental value concerning respect—further complicates abuse because a woman would likely fear the consequences of speaking out against an elder, relative, or man because it could be deemed disrespectful due to *respeto* (Bucardo 2004; Newdick 2005; Peek-Asa, Garcia, McArthur & Castro 2002). Physical and social retribution may be the consequences of violating *respeto*. Re-victimization is a stark reality because Latino culture dictates that when an unmarried woman is no longer a virgin, she is automatically considered promiscuous and/or a fair target of sexual aggression by male family and non-family members (Comas-Diaz 1995). Although these cultural understandings are from a study of Puerto Rican family dynamics, these characteristics are prevalent in Mexico. The specific cultural examples in the next section clearly display this.

These deeply instilled cultural beliefs further perpetuate a culture where women are often silent sufferers of violence. State actions in Mexico perpetuate structural violence against women through policies that are socially constraining, such as lack of access to abortion and reproductive health rights, the ability to marry as young as 14 with parental consent, and lack of prosecutions against those who abuse or murder women (Hague Domestic Violence Project 2012; United Nations Population Fund 2009). Lack of attention to violence against women may be an unintended consequence of the state's focus on tackling drug-related violence through a military response to the cartel-led drug trafficking industry (Martinez 2012). However, violence against women in Central America is not isolated to Mexico. The Guatemalan government recently launched a “femicide” unit to address the unprecedented levels of violence against women, particularly indigenous women, and the rising murder rate (Bevan 2012).

Trafficking into commercial sex in Mexico

Due to these cultural, societal and economic conditions, the trafficking of persons into commercial sex has become a lucrative business in some southern Mexican states. Not only are young women seeking alternative employment opportunities, but many in these regions have been left economically vulnerable due to the forces of globalization, and most notably the North American Free Trade Agreement's (NAFTA) impact on certain socio-economic sectors in these states (Newdick 2005). Human trafficking within and originating in Mexico is a diverse and widespread phenomena, affecting many kinds of labor and industry. However, in regards to trafficking into commercial sex in Mexico, historical and cultural factors have led the city of Tenancingo in the state of Tlaxcala to be a geographic nucleus (Torres 2009; Brumback & Stevenson 2010; HSTC Bulletins #9, #11 2011). Here, adult men, often with the support of their multi-generational families, have come to distort customary marriage traditions of local indigenous populations in order to deceptively coerce young women into prostitution (HSTC Bulletin #9 2011; Torres 2009; Castro Soto et al. 2004).

The lack of economic opportunities for men in Tlaxcala and the surrounding regions is one important factor contributing to the rise of trafficking. Anthropologist Oscar Montiel Torres carefully tracks how changes in the economy in Tlaxcala left few employment options for men of the region (Torres 2009). Torres cites the industrialization process, cycles of factory booms and busts in the early and late 20th century, corresponding political changes, and labor policy as the reasons why so many men in and around Tenancingo, once dependent on factory work, now turn to trafficking (Torres 2009: Ch. 3).

Two of the most common recruitment methods used by traffickers in Tlaxcala, Mexico are the “asking of the hand” and the “theft of the bride.” Long-standing cultural practices are the basis for both methods, which are still commonplace when seeking a wife (HSTC Bulletin #9 2011; Castro Soto et al. 2004). The “asking of the hand” method entails adult men—the traffickers, or as they are known locally, *padrotes*—wooing and courting adolescent women for a culturally acceptable amount of time before asking permission of the bride’s family for her hand in marriage. The trafficker appears to follow the traditional procedures. However, the trafficker subverts the traditional practice after living together as a married couple, and eventually coerces his young bride into prostitution under the guise of their mutual financial interest (HSTC Bulletin #9 2011; Castro Soto et al. 2004).

The “theft of the bride” method is more complex. Kidnapping the bride and rendering her “unreturnable” either through rape or consensual sex are the key components to this practice (Montes and Iñiguez 2010; Kaltman et al. 2011; D’Aubeterre 2003). Then the prospective groom and bride, together with the groom’s family, go to the bride’s family to ask forgiveness for the kidnapping and to get their blessing for marriage. Sometimes the kidnapping is a ruse used by a consenting couple to get married, and sometimes the kidnapping is more sinister where a man would forcibly kidnap and often rape a woman who did not want to become his bride. In these regions of Mexico the practice is often perceived as akin to elopement as opposed to taking young women against their will (D’Aubeterre 2003; Kaltman et al. 2011; Montes and Iñiguez 2010; Castro Soto et al. 2004). Traffickers manipulate this ritual by initially appearing to follow traditional cultural procedures, and then using them as a way to trap women into a marriage or a relationship in order to later force her into prostitution. This method is far more stigmatizing for both gender roles: young women are victimized multiple times, while young men have several opportunities to display superiority through force and physical violence (HSTC Bulletin #9 2011; Kaltman et al. 2011; Castro Soto et al. 2004).

Generally, the “asking of the hand” method is more culturally acceptable than the “theft of the bride” method, yet both traditions make it difficult for the young women involved to find a socially respectable way out of the relationship, even after they realize that they are in danger (HSTC Bulletin #9 2011; Torres 2009). Many young women in Mexican society are subject to chastisement if they leave a relationship or have sex with a man without getting married. These women often do not feel that they can return home out of fear that they will bring shame and dishonor to their families. These cultural pressures sometimes result in women agreeing to a marriage or staying in a relationship in order to appeal to social expectations (Kaltman et al. 2011; Castro Soto et al. 2004). Because these techniques do not always lead to legal marriage, the trafficker can use them over and over, securing multiple women. The trafficking situation exacerbates these cultural vulnerabilities because traffickers often utilize physical violence and psychological manipulation in order to maintain a hold over the victim (Castro Soto et al. 2004).

The United States and anti-trafficking policy

The United States has an undisputed past associated with slavery and the trafficking in persons, in the forms of chattel slavery and indentured servitude (Ditmore 2011). Even after the end of chattel slavery, forms of forced labor continued. In the latter half of the 19th century, efforts to curb the sale and movement of women for forms of forced labor arose alongside the development of social service as profession (Augustín 2007; Ditmore 2009). At this time well-to-do white Christian women, took a particular interest in the crusade to save women of lesser economic stature, who may or may not have been working in prostitution under force. Thus, “the inception of social services can be viewed as a white middle class feminist project” (Ditmore 2009: 18). Historically and presently, US feminist and religious social service agencies that focus on prostitution do so from the perspective of saving women and girls because they are victims of exploitative men, of the economy or society. “The idea of saving this victim is ‘uncontroversial,’ and in many ways accords with Judeo-Christian ideologies as well as feminist views on power and control” (Uy 2011: 218).

However, often efforts to rescue women of lesser social status do not take into account the real-life, multifaceted challenges these particular women face. A rescue approach also attempts to moralize women engaged in prostitution in order to “save” them from religious condemnation. Discourse around prostitution and trafficking has consistently left out concepts of agency and personal choice (Uy 2011). Further, by framing the conversation around the need to save this “uncontroversial” victim from a human rights perspective, it effectively navigates the discussion away from the interrelated political and structural issues of labor, migration, and sexual freedom that often perpetuate actual human trafficking (Bernstein 2010). The belief that women are either forced into prostitution, or are promiscuous and deviant, continues to be reflected in current US policy and law enforcement efforts to address human trafficking and prostitution. For example, under the Trafficking Victims Protect Act (TVPA), service providers can only receive federal funding to serve victims of human trafficking if they pledge to “oppose the legalization or practice of prostitution.” Under the Bush administration, trafficking of persons, most notably sex trafficking, became a major focus of US institutional efforts.

The passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 during the Clinton administration and its subsequent renewals under the Bush administration display the United States’ commitment to abolishing trafficking. This legislation recognizes “severe forms of trafficking” as “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person

for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion” in all forms of labor, bringing domestic US legislation in line with international standards governing trafficking in persons (Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000; United Nations Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children 2000). The passage of the TVPA created a legal framework for the prosecution of the crime of “trafficking in persons,” and provided assistance to trafficked persons identified or “certified” as such by law enforcement or another government agency.

Although it is widely acknowledged that there are no concrete figures on the number of individuals trafficked, and additional evidence suggests that most trafficking victims are not forced to work in the sex industry, the US efforts are mostly focused on sex trafficking (Koken 2010; Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2007). This is partially attributed to ideological perspectives on sex and prostitution held historically in the United States and furthered by the religious associations of the Bush administration (Ditmore 2010; Weitzer 2010; Zimmerman 2010). At the same time, the focus on sex trafficking prevents focus on other abuses of labor that meet the definition of trafficking (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2007).

Anti-prostitution feminist organizations found an unlikely ally in the Bush administration (Koken 2010; Uy 2011; Weitzer 2010). These feminist groups that oppose prostitution—known as “prohibitionists” due to their belief in abolishing all forms of sex work—inherently identify all sex work as oppressive (Weitzer 2010). Utilizing the Bush administration’s interest in anti-trafficking efforts they capitalized on an opportunity to align their anti-prostitution stance with the administration’s anti-trafficking efforts (Weitzer 2010; Zimmerman 2010). Their influence on trafficking related policy is easily identified in the legislative language that largely conflates prostitution and trafficking.

Much of the federal funding earmarked for anti-trafficking efforts went to the aforementioned feminist groups, and to religious organizations that have little to no understanding of the trafficking industry, its perpetuating factors, and the complex issues posed by trafficked individuals (Zimmerman 2010). The efforts of the Bush administration, however noble in the attempts to understand and eradicate human trafficking and assist victims, has created an environment that is not conducive to identifying trafficked individuals, providing much needed long term social services, or re-assimilation efforts (Weitzer 2010; Zimmerman 2010). Further, assuming all trafficked persons are trafficked into commercial sex, focuses law enforcement efforts on the sex industry and lessens possibility for identifying individuals trafficked into alternate industries, or taking those cases seriously

(Ditmore 2009). Conflating prostitution and trafficking can also result in interrogation and law enforcement tactics that further shame trafficked persons, many of whom are migrants, a status that carries its own stigma in the United States. New York City has been the site of some high-profile trafficking cases involving victims and perpetrators from Mexico, including the first major trafficking case to break, that involved a group of deaf Mexican people forced to sell trinkets in the New York City subway (Peterson 1997). Since then, high-profile cases in New York City have included commercial sex (US Attorneys Office Eastern District of New York 2007) while cases from other parts of the US involving Mexican people have included a wider variety of types of work, such as agricultural labor and restaurant work (Ditmore 2009).

Law enforcement and challenges

In spite of the near-exclusive focus of the US government on sex trafficking (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2007), the experiences of those trafficked into commercial sex and the services and remedies they need are still not widely understood. For example, US federal and local anti-trafficking policies are largely dependent on law enforcement raids, with an overwhelming focus on sex work. This strategy has proven ineffective in the effort to identify trafficking victims, and to lead to human rights violations of sex workers and survivors of trafficking (Ditmore 2009; Brennan 2010). Anti-trafficking task forces are federally funded and often consist of both local and federal law enforcement personnel, with a focus on raids. The results of the raids reflect a focus on sex trafficking: Between 2008 and 2010, these task forces opened 2,515 suspected incidents of human trafficking for investigation. Of the 2,515 cases, 82 percent were classified as sex trafficking, and 92 percent of the sex trafficking cases identify state, local or territorial level government as the lead agency (Banks & Kyckelhahn 2011). One reason for this may be that many of the federally funded task forces locate anti-trafficking units within vice enforcement, instead of starting operations designed to find human trafficking in all labor sectors (Farrell, McDevitt & Fahy 2008: 35, 90-91, 98-100, 117; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2007).

One remedy available to individuals trafficked to the United States is a T-visa, a specific visa approved through the TVPA. The T-visa is a nonimmigrant status that allows foreign trafficking survivors to stay in the United States for up to four years, to work legally in the United States, and to apply for permanent residence (Administration for Children & Families

2011). In order to receive the benefits of the T-visa, a trafficking victim must cooperate with the prosecution of his or her trafficker. Legislation states 5,000 T-visas can be issued annually. In cases that had been confirmed as human trafficking and open for at least a year with a federally funded human trafficking task force between 2008–2010, only a quarter, 21 of 90 cases, of those eligible for a T-visa as “undocumented or qualified aliens” received them (Banks & Kyckelhahn 2011). Law enforcement’s exclusive focus on trafficking into commercial sex, along with the burdensome requirement of a trafficking victim to cooperate with law enforcement, may explain the issuance of so few T-visas, under 2000 in a decade (Brennan 2010).

Meanwhile, the Obama administration has continued to raid, arrest and deport undocumented migrant workers, many of whom may be trafficking victims. The administration has funneled large sums of money into these efforts. The US Immigration Customs & Enforcement Agency (ICE) reports deporting an unprecedented amount of individuals in fiscal year 2011, although evidence to the contrary has surfaced. According to records obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, Syracuse University’s Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) reports that far less “individuals were apprehended, deported or detained than ICE claims in its official statements” (2012). In fact, ICE accounts claim almost five times more seizures of individuals, “24 times more individuals deported and 34 times more detentions” (TRAC 2012) than revealed in the incomplete data ICE provided to TRAC³.

Regardless of the discrepancies revealed through TRAC’s research, the Obama administration has maintained federal efforts to identify undocumented migrant workers. There has, however, been a paradigm shift from the high-profile raids of the Bush administration’s efforts to more hidden, and possibly more insidious forms of enforcement that operate through local police and jails and smaller scale ICE enforcement actions (Applied Research Center 2011; United States Council of Catholic Bishops 2011). This alteration in law enforcement strategy is a result of two programs focused on increasing cooperation between federal and local immigration efforts, 287(g) and Secure Communities (Applied Research Center 2011; ICE 2011). These programs claim to target immigrants for deportation who come into contact with the criminal justice system through serious legal offenses, which ICE claims is its main objective. However, evidence of their efforts has displayed the contrary. According to ICE’s own data, nearly sixty percent of those deported were “non-criminal immigration violators” (ICE 2011).

³ TRAC’s initial FOIA request in May 2010, requests specific information about “all individuals who had been arrested, detained, charged, returned or removed from the country for the period beginning October 1, 2004 to date” (TRAC 2012). In ICE’s initial and incomplete response, only data through FY 2005 was delivered.

Congress enacted 287(g) in 1996 and requires written Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with local law enforcement agencies, the first of which was signed in 2002. Early on in its tenure, the Obama administration revised the program, to focus on identifying and removing potentially dangerous undocumented immigrants. ICE currently has 69 MOAs signed in 24 states. ICE (2011) credits 287(g) with the identification of more than 217,300 potentially removable undocumented immigrants.

The Department of Homeland Security created Secure Communities in 2008 as an information-sharing program, which allows ICE access to fingerprint databases from local and state jurisdictions, as well as the FBI, increasing unilateral law enforcement and justice efforts. ICE insists that Secure Communities does not authorize local law enforcement to enforce immigration laws, as 287(g) does this (Migration and Refugee Services, Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs & United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2011). Nonetheless policies and practices surrounding the enforcement of Secure Communities remain unclear. The program only requires the state body responsible for criminal information systems sharing to approve the program, this then grants ICE access to all law enforcement agency databases within the state. Although some states and districts — California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Washington DC—have tried to opt out of the program (Preston 2011), ICE has provided contradictory and confusing statements regarding states' ability to do so (Immigration Policy Center 2011). Secure Communities is currently operational in New York City (Iverac 2012).

In addition to infringing upon civil liberties and human rights, critics of 287(g) and Secure Communities find issue with identifying undocumented immigrants through focusing on non-threatening legal offenses, such as minor traffic violations, and more disturbingly through tracking undocumented immigrants who are victims of crimes (Migration and Refugee Services, Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs & United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2011). Furthermore, although the programs' intent is to enhance community safety and security, they have actually had the opposite effect, creating mistrust in the relationship between local law enforcement agencies and immigrant communities. For example, in communities where 287(g) is active there has been an uptick in racial profiling and illegal search and seizures. In addition, many of those identified, detained and eventually deported are far from dangerous or severe criminal offenders (ICE 2011; Migration and Refugee Services, Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs & United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2011).

Recent research found that roughly one in nine deportation cases were identified through charges or investigations stemming from domestic violence (Applied Research Center

2011). This is in direct conflict with legislation approved through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), originally passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2005. VAWA includes provisions for immigrant women victimized by domestic violence to stay in the United States through the U-visa Program (National Network to End Domestic Violence 2008). Additionally, the current system unjustly deports trafficked individuals entitled to T-visas. These immigration programs also separate children from their deported parents, a practice that child welfare legislation seeks to avoid at all costs and one that is easily avoided with T- and U-visas (Applied Research Center 2011).

Service provider experiences and recommendations

Between January 2008 and June 2009 (at time of writing, the most recent data available), providers offering services to trafficking survivors through the Office for Victims of Crime reported servicing more labor trafficking victims than any other TVPA-defined form of trafficking: 64 percent. This is compared to 22 percent that were trafficked into the sex industry and 10 percent that were a combination of sex trafficking and labor trafficking (Banks & Kyckelhahn 2011). However, law enforcement and many service providers tend to focus their efforts on commercial sex trafficking of women and girls, seeking the “perfect victim” (Uy 2011). Only concentrating on commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls produces difficulties and real challenges when dealing with trafficking victims who do not fall into this limited scope (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2011; Uy 2011). Thus, to reflect the actual needs of trafficking survivors, moving away from discourses focused solely on the sex industry is an imperative step to make comprehensive victim-centered care available.

Regardless of each individual’s experience, which will vary widely, trauma responses and trauma-related disorders, experiencing personal shame and lack of trust in others are universal experiences after being trafficked (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2011). Culturally competent and trauma-sensitive care is integral to identification of trafficked individuals and supporting survivors in the healing process. There are currently gaps in services for victims of commercial and domestic labor trafficking and for men, that take into account different characteristics such as the drive to return to work, as well as gendered assumptions regarding men’s lower likelihood of acknowledging trafficking as a traumatic experience (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2011; Uy 2011).

There is also a lack of housing and shelter options for survivors of trafficking. Training healthcare professionals who may encounter trafficking victims in medical settings is important. Often times, trafficking victims are brought in for medical attention as a last resort and therefore these sites can act as ideal places for identification. However, there are many dynamics that prevent victims from disclosing their trafficked status, including language barriers, social and cultural isolation, accompaniment by the trafficker, pervasive fear and shame, to name a few (Baldwin, Eisenman, Sayles, Ryan & Chuang 2011). Current federal funding for services for survivors of trafficking only funds very short service periods, while trafficking survivors may require years of counseling to recover from trauma (Herman 1992, Stern 2010). Finally, untrained law enforcement can disrupt or reverse the healing process when encountering survivors, and interactions with law enforcement can be retraumatizing or more traumatizing than the trafficking experience itself (Ditmore 2009). Therefore, training for law enforcement and service providers that reflects the needs of all trafficked individuals and focuses on long-term care is crucial (Baldwin et al 2011, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform 2011, US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2011, Uy 2011)

A victim-centered approach educates survivors and ensures that they know of all the available service options, in order to make well-informed decisions about their own after-care. Current policies, especially concerning reproductive rights, tend to limit the choices of trafficking survivors. Thus, the literature recognizes that victim-centered care is a crucial step to restoring autonomy and empowered decision-making for the survivor, something the trafficking experience robbed from them. It is integral that after-care does not replicate the trafficking experience by limiting the choices of survivors (House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform 2011; Uy 2011).

Methodology

Data for this project was collected from 37 signed affidavits and 6 interviews. The affidavits were written between 2005 and 2011. Interviews were conducted in January and February 2012. 25 affidavits were collected from the Sex Workers Project (SWP) at the Urban Justice Center and 12 were collected from the Anti-Trafficking Program at Safe Horizon.

The interviews were conducted with clients and former clients of SWP whose affidavits were also being used for the study. This project was reviewed and approved by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board.

Affidavits

An affidavit is a written account about an event or experience that is sworn to be true under oath. The affidavits used for this report describe trafficking experiences and events surrounding those experiences. These affidavits were written by clients of SWP and Safe Horizon, in collaboration with their attorneys, to fulfill part of the T-nonimmigrant status (T-visa) application requirements. The T-visa allows trafficked persons to legally remain in the United States. The goal of writing these affidavits was to show that the clients met the standard of eligibility for the T-visa, thus, the affidavits include facts that prove the client was a victim of a severe form of human trafficking, complied with requests for assistance from law enforcement, and would suffer extreme hardship if returned to their home country. Some affidavits offer additional information about the pre-trafficking life of the client, some focus solely on the trafficking experience.

The safety and confidentiality of the affiant—the person who writes and swears to an affidavit—was a paramount concern for the research team. Therefore, all of the affidavits were redacted by the organization that represented the client before coding to maintain anonymity and protect client confidentiality. This means that any identifying information such as residential addresses and names were removed before coding. In some cases demographic information, such as birthplace and birthdates were also removed. No information that could be used to identify the affiant was printed in this report.

Interviews

The data from the affidavits was supplemented by interviews. Interview participation was limited to SWP clients whose affidavit was already included in the study. SWP's human rights and harm reduction model contributed to the relationships with victims of crime that lead to their participating in this project. In order to recruit interviewees, SWP service providers (i.e. client's lawyers and social workers) were asked to use their professional judgment and to approach people who were least likely to feel distress during the interview. These individuals were asked whether they would be interested in participating in this study by being interviewed about their experiences. Out of 25 potential interviewees, 6 were interviewed. 4 clients were excluded due to concerns for their psychological well-being, 1 client had passed away before the time of the study, and 1 client was incarcerated at the time of the study. 6 clients declined to participate and 3 were unreachable due to lack of current contact information. 10 clients were eligible and agreed to give an interview however, 1 cancelled for a medical reason and 3 were not able to schedule the interview.

Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. Participants were interviewed at SWP by the lead researcher. Since most of the respondents were more comfortable speaking in Spanish rather than in English, a translator interpreted for the client and the researcher in most cases. All interviews were recorded and English transcriptions were created from these recordings. Before beginning an interview, each respondent went through an informed consent process. The respondents were given a copy of the informed consent form and discussed each section with the lead researcher and translator. The consent form was provided in English and Spanish to ensure that each respondent fully understood the form. In addition, respondents were reminded throughout the interview of their right to rescind consent or to refrain from answering any questions. At the end of an interview, each respondent was offered \$50.00 in compensation for their time and transportation costs. One respondent declined the money, insisting that the money be used to support SWP's anti-trafficking efforts. Two respondents who were unemployed told researchers that they accepted the money because they needed it, but wished that they could donate it to SWP instead.

The interview questions were centered on three main subject areas: the client's childhood, the trafficking situation, and recommendations for service providers, policy makers, and

community members. The interviews were conducted using a specific interview protocol as a guide. A copy of the protocol can be found in the appendix of this report. Generally, respondents were asked questions about violence in their childhood home, their families' financial situation, what their life was like with the trafficker, and what advice they would give a young girl in Mexico today that may help them avoid this type of situation.

Coding and analysis

Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software package, was used to code the affidavits. The codes were structured into 5 main temporal categories representing the phases of trafficking including: Client Background, Meet Trafficker, During Relationship with Trafficker, Escape from Trafficker, Post Trafficking. In addition, 3 descriptive categories were included: geography, demographics, and timeline. Each category was then broken up into different codes reflecting the clients' experiences. For example the temporal categories included codes such as: incidents of violence, examples of the trafficker controlling the communication of the client, and examples of the client feeling unable to turn to their family for help. The descriptive categories included codes such as: geographic route to the United States, client's birthplace, trafficker's birthplace and year that the client entered the United States. This coding structure was necessary for the researchers to be able to understand the process of trafficking as it changes during different phases and to identify distinct patterns that appear for each phase.

Two researchers were involved in developing and implementing the coding scheme described above. A codebook was created to ensure accurate coding. In addition, inter-coder reliability was assessed by comparing a sample of each researcher's coded affidavits and checking for consistency. This process was repeated multiple times until a high level of consistency was achieved.

Since the interviews were designed to supplement and deepen information gathered from the affidavits, the interview transcripts were significantly shorter and more specific than the affidavits.

The interviews were coded using the same coding scheme as the affidavits, however, due to the difference in scope emphasis during coding was placed on three temporal categories: client background, meet trafficker, and during relationship with trafficker.

This study is also limited by a high incidence of trafficking into commercial sex, which is not reflective of all forms of human trafficking from Mexico. This emphasis is due to a number of factors, and does not necessarily reflect the scope of any form of trafficking over other forms in Mexico or from Mexico to the United States. One factor is that the Sex Workers Project focuses on sex work and people trafficked into commercial sex. Another is a documented pattern of commercial sex trafficking from Mexico to the New York metropolitan area. Another factor is the emphasis of law enforcement on finding victims of trafficking into commercial sex, to the exclusion of other kinds of victims, which led some of these affiants to seek the services of a service provider. Comparative research is needed in other cities and states, and in partnership with organizations that focus on labor trafficking, to reveal the true scope and nature of human trafficking from Mexico to the United States.

Limitations

The affidavits present limitations because while they are autobiographical, they lack a full account of each subject's experiences before, during and after trafficking. In addition, the redactions caused some demographic information to be removed. Due to this, some information about the client's experiences before trafficking and after trafficking is missing. As mentioned previously, some of this information was recovered through the interviews; however, since we were not able to interview all of the subjects this still presented a limitation during the study. If this information were available, we would expect that some findings would increase, such as frequency of domestic violence incidents before and after trafficking.

The sample size of 37 affiants limits generalizability. However, the affidavits presented similar themes and patterns, which were reinforced by data from the interviews. In addition, the affidavits and the interviews provided deeply descriptive information about the experiences of trafficking. This level of detail would be difficult to replicate using a more quantitative approach. The confirmation that our findings were familiar to organizations working with migrants and trafficked women in Mexico suggests that the findings are generalizable despite the small number of interviewees.

This study is also limited by a high incidence of trafficking into commercial sex, which is not reflective of all forms of human trafficking from Mexico. This emphasis is due to a number of factors, and does not necessarily reflect the scope of any form of trafficking over other forms in Mexico or from Mexico to the United States. One factor is that the Sex Workers Project focuses on sex work and people trafficked into commercial sex. Another is a documented pattern of commercial sex trafficking from Mexico to the New York metropolitan area. Another factor is the emphasis of law enforcement on finding victims of trafficking into commercial sex, to the exclusion of other kinds of victims, which led some of these affiants to seek the services of a service provider. Comparative research is needed in other cities and states, and in partnership with organizations that focus on labor trafficking, to reveal the true scope and nature of human trafficking from Mexico to the United States.

Findings

There were three key findings that deepen our understanding of how people become trafficked in Mexico. The first was that poverty and violence experienced before trafficking appears to have contributed to affiants' vulnerability to trafficking. Secondly the majority, 69 percent, of affiants met the traffickers through a family member, friend or neighbor. Thirdly, traffickers often exploited cultural norms and expectations about gender roles to manipulate affiants into the trafficking situation.

Poverty appears to be a contributing factor to affiants' vulnerability to trafficking. Poverty is assessed in this study by educational attainment and examples of fiscal hardship. 75 percent of affiants describe fiscal hardship during their childhood in their affidavits. It is likely that the actual number of affiants who experienced poverty during childhood is larger; however, not all affiants discussed their childhood in their affidavit. Within the group who did mention examples of poverty, they generally describe extreme poverty situations. Often traffickers would manipulate affiants by convincing them that they could have a better life if affiants went with them. The traffickers would tell the affiants they would be taken care of and be able to take care of their own families. Many affiants believed that they had finally found a way out of poverty and that going with the trafficker to the US or marrying the trafficker would help them fulfill their dreams.

In addition to poverty, affiants' vulnerability to trafficking appears to be compounded by experiences of violence prior to being trafficked, including experiencing direct physical and sexual violence as well as witnessing violence or otherwise being affected by violence. 20 affiants, 54 percent of the sample, mention a violent experience prior to trafficking in their affidavit. Within that group, 12 affiants also mentioned fiscal hardship during childhood. The violent experiences included: witnessing domestic violence, being a victim of physical or sexual abuse, being a victim of intimate partner violence, witnessing a murder, and being harassed and beaten in school. For many affiants, the experience of violence caused them to leave home at an early age or divorce their spouse. Additionally, many affiants experienced multiple forms of violence, often severe and traumatic. Importantly, the highest levels of violence were perpetrated against the two transgender women in this sample. In addition to facing violence from their families they also faced violence and discrimination from their community, which appears to have directly contributed to their vulnerability to trafficking.

The second key finding was that the majority of the affiants met the trafficker through a family member, friend or neighbor. This is important because it could help explain why some affiants initially trusted the trafficker. The trafficker was not necessarily a stranger to them, but someone who had been introduced by a trusted person. There are also cases in which the trafficker was a family member of the affiant. For example, Tatiana, who agreed to travel to the US with her cousin, “[...] trusted him because he was family, and seemed to have my best interests in mind.” Unfortunately, Tatiana, like other affiants, soon discovered that her cousin was exploiting their familial relationship for his own gain.

Another key finding was that traffickers often exploited cultural norms in order to manipulate the affiants. This was especially true in situations where traffickers feigned or began romantic relationships with affiants while appearing to follow traditional courting customs. Traffickers consistently distorted traditional marriage rituals, such as *robo de la novia* (“theft of the bride”), and exploited gendered cultural expectations. The pressure to conform to gender norms and cultural expectations often led affiants to enter into a relationship with the trafficker, and kept them from being able to turn to their families for help after they realized the danger of their situation.

One third of affiants did not have any connection to their trafficker prior to trafficking. This person was essentially a stranger. In these cases women were often seduced by traffickers who would pretend to be romantically interested in them. The traffickers would compliment the affiants, often give them gifts or buy them dinner, listen to affiants talk about problems that they were having and tell them that they loved them. Generally these affiants were made to believe that the trafficker genuinely cared for them. Similarly to women who were trafficked by someone they knew, for women who were trafficked by someone unknown to them and their contacts, cultural norms were manipulated to promote their dependence upon the trafficker. Additionally, the same aspirations for a better life and desire to have a family were exploited. These are normal desires and women are especially expected to pursue these aims via romantic relationships. Unlike affiants trafficked by someone they knew, most of the affiants trafficked by a stranger were isolated from their families before they met the trafficker because they were working as domestics in a city and living apart from their families and villages. This isolation combined with seduction by a trafficker skilled at manipulating cultural norms appears to have increased the affiant’s vulnerability to being trafficked.

Place of Origin

Out of 37 analyzed affidavits, we found that 34 affiants were from Mexico and 3 were from countries south of Mexico. One non-native Mexican affiant migrated to Chiapas, Mexico as a child to find work. A second non-native Mexican affiant migrated to Oaxaca, Mexico as a child after her parents separated. The third non-native Mexican affiant never lived in Mexico, but was trafficked directly through Mexico to the United States.

All of the affiants who were born in Mexico were from Southern Mexico. The majority, 14, were from the State of Puebla, 5 were from the State of Mexico, 6 were from the State of Tlaxcala, 4 were from the State of Veracruz, 2 were from the State of Guerrero, and 1 was from each of the states of Oaxaca, Jalisco, and Tabasco.

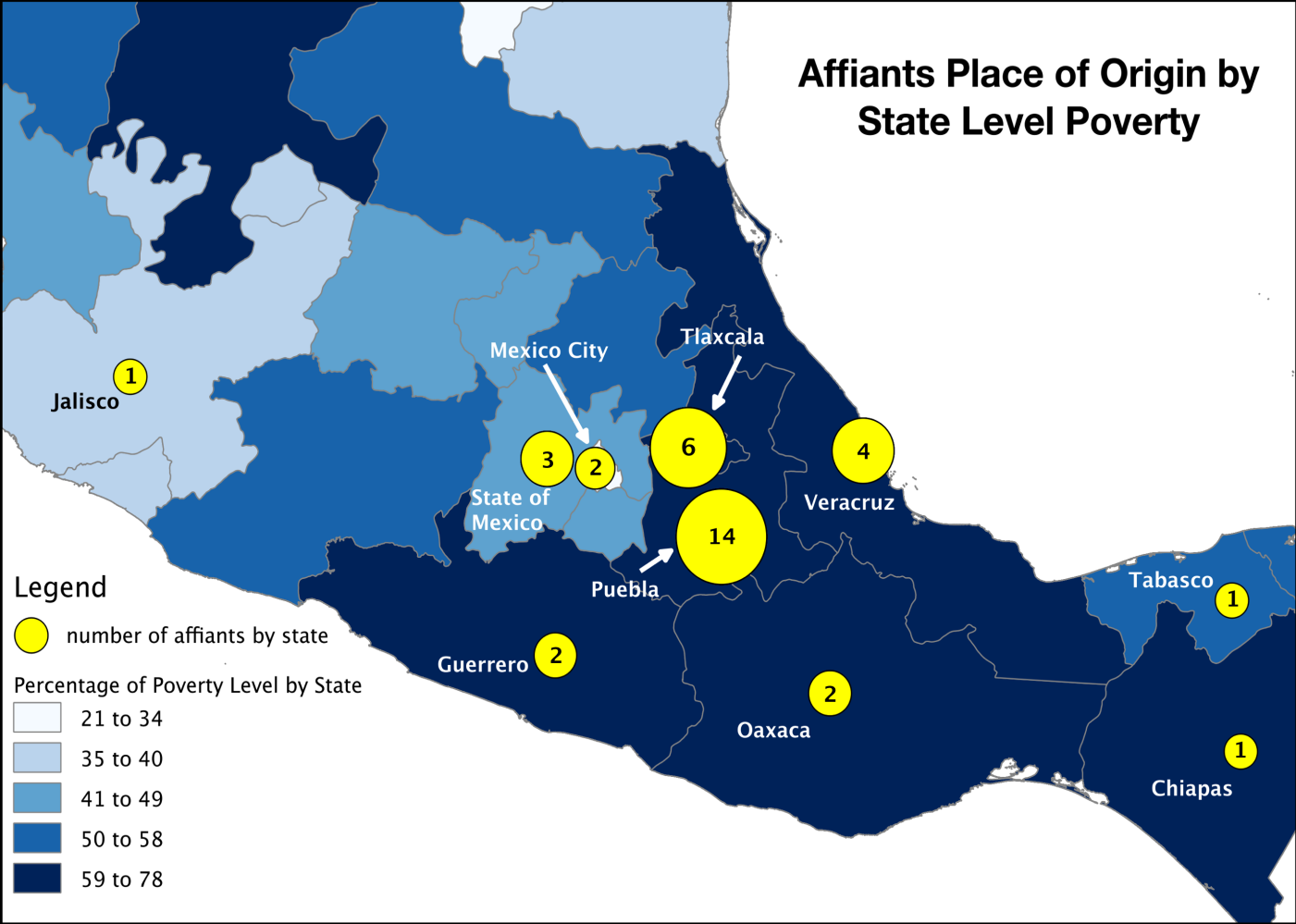
This geographical data reflects the fact that the town of Tenancingo in the state of Tlaxcala has been a hub of human trafficking into the sex industry for at least three generations (Torres 2009). This has led to a few particularly high-profile cases in the United States such as those involving the Carreto family (US Attorneys Office Eastern District of New York 2007) and the Granados family (Pearson 2012) with victim-witnesses describing trafficking by multiple generations in numerous US locations. Young men from Tenancingo travel to other places to woo young women whom they later force into prostitution (Torres 2009). This is reflected in our data.

Please note that race/ethnic demographic information was not available for this study. However, many of the very poor in Mexico are of indigenous background (Newdick 2005), and the links to rural and poor areas indicate that some affiants may also be of indigenous descent.

Gender

36 affiants were female, including 2 transgender women, and one affiant was male. This reflects the migration and trafficking patterns between Mexico and the New York metropolitan area, in part due to links to a part of Mexico associated with trafficking into commercial sex.

Figure 1



Map created using QGIS software. Data sources:
1. Anexo estadístico de la Medición Municipal 2010: Indicadores de pobreza por entidad federativa [computer file]. 2010. Mexico City, MX: El Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL). Available online: http://www.coneval.gob.mx/cmsconeval/rw/pages/medicion/multidimensional/anexo_estadistico_municipal_2010.es.do
2. Global Administrative Areas (December 2011). University of California, Berkeley. Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. [digital geospatial data]. Available online: <http://www.gadm.org> [04/27/2012].

Age trafficked to the United States

Affiants were first trafficked to the United States between the ages of 13 and 34. The mean age was 19 years old. A large majority of affiants were trafficked during their teens and early 20s. Please note that some affiants were trafficked to the United States and within Mexico multiple times, however, figure 2 only reflects the affiants' ages when they were first trafficked to the United States.

Figure 2. Ages at time of entry to United States

Age	Under 15	15-18	19-22	23-26	27+	Total
# of Affiants	1	15	12	6	2	36*

** age data was not available for one case, due to redaction.*

Forced work during trafficking

Forced labor and forced prostitution were common. In some cases, forced labor and forced prostitution were involved in the same case. In some cases, sexual assault and violence but not prostitution were involved in labor cases. One case involved forced theft.

The mean age affiants were forced to work in prostitution or forced to perform other work was 18 years old. Notice that the frequency of 15-18 year olds in figure 3 is higher than the frequency of 15-18 year olds in figure 2. This reflects that many affiants were trafficked and forced to work within Mexico, before being trafficked to the United States. Specifically, 16 affiants, or 43 percent of the sample, were trafficked for commercial sex within Mexico prior to being trafficked into the United States. 16 affiants, or 43 percent of the sample, were trafficked for commercial sex within Mexico prior to being trafficked into the United States.

Figure 3. Ages at time of forced work

Age	Under 15	15-18	19-22	23-26	27+	Total
# of Affiants	1	21	7	6	1	36*

** age data was not available for one case, due to redaction.*

Experiences of Poverty and Violence before Trafficking

A large majority of the sample experienced extreme poverty or fiscal hardship during childhood. In addition many affiants survived violent experiences including: childhood abuse, extreme bullying, and intimate partner violence.

Poverty

Poverty was assessed by tracking educational attainment and examples of fiscal hardship. The majority of affiants in the sample describe an impoverished situation during childhood. Often, affiants described extreme poverty situations. For example, Camilla, quoted below, describes how her family's situation compared with other families in her town.

My family was very poor, even compared to other families in the village. My parents worked as farmers on other people's lands. They traveled to other states to find work, and they took us with them. I worked alongside my parents starting when I was 8 years old. I tried to also go to school, but had to stop after 6th grade because I missed so much school in order to work. The work I generally did was harvesting vegetables.

— Camilla⁴

The states from which the affiants came are among the poorest in Mexico, with few job opportunities. Figure 1 shows the poverty levels in the states of Mexico and the numbers of affiants from each state. All but three came from states with more than 40 percent of the population living in poverty, and 27 of 37 affiants came from states where between 58 and 78 percent of the population live in poverty. Many migrants within and from Mexico hail from these impoverished areas and leave to seek work elsewhere. In this way, the affiants are typical migrants.

⁴ Any potentially identifying information was removed to protect affiant identities, including place names and the names of traffickers and other people involved. See the Methodology section of this report for more information.

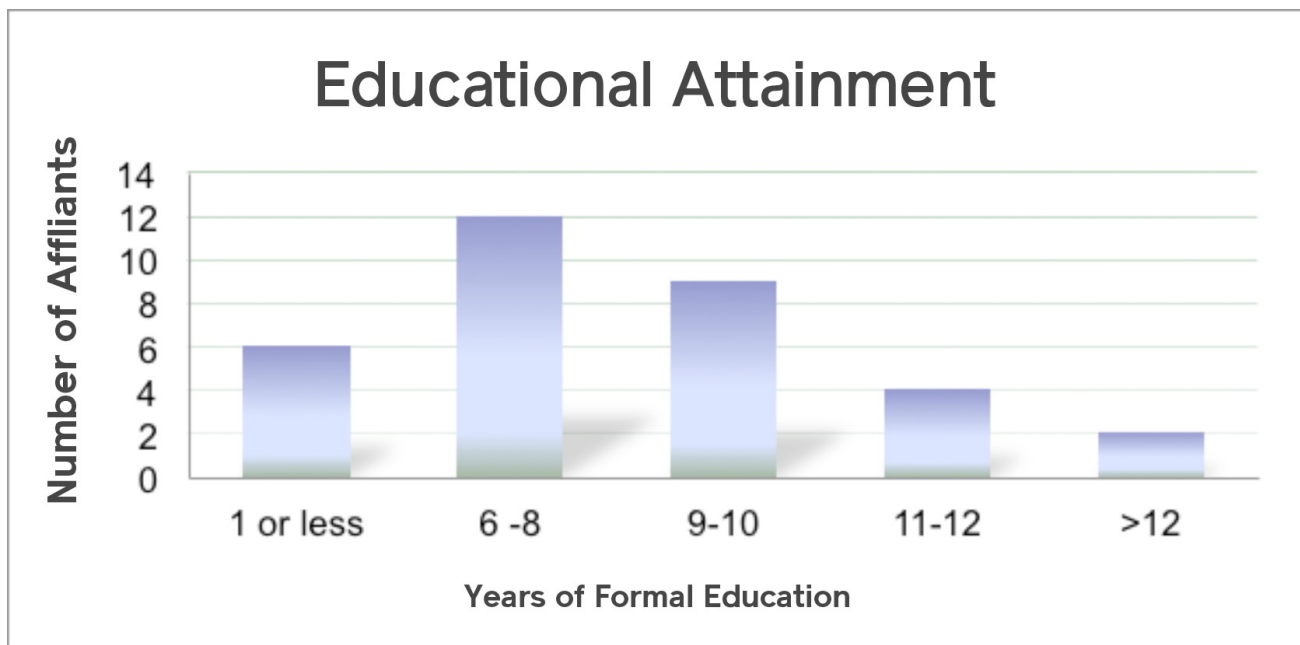
Educational Attainment

Like Camilla, many other affiants were forced to leave school in order to work. Often families did not have enough money to send the affiants to school, and the affiants' wages were necessary support for their families. In the quote below, Veronica tells a similar story.

I went to school until the 1st grade and then I began helping my parents work in the fields. My older brothers went to school up to 4th grade. My younger siblings went to school until 1st grade. School was expensive and very far away. It was a two-hour walk from where we lived so our parents stopped sending us.

— Veronica

The chart below illustrates the years of formal education attained by affiants prior to trafficking. This chart includes data for 33 affiants; data for the 4 remaining affiants was not available in their affidavits. The chart indicates that the majority of the affiants had some years of formal education but only a few graduated from high school and attended college or technical school.



There are multiple reasons that the affiants were not able to attend school or had to stop attending school before their high school graduation. Camilla, Veronica and 18 additional affiants stopped going to school before the 12th grade or did not attend school at all due to financial reasons. 6 affiants stopped attending school after they eloped with or were kidnapped by the trafficker. 3 affiants left school at an early age due to sexual assault or harassment. 2 affiants were trafficked when they were 11 and 13 years old respectively. Prior to that, both of these affiants did not attend school due to abuse, neglect and fiscal hardship.

The desire to help their families during a tough financial situation, sometimes caused by a non-supportive parent, also caused some affiants to leave school for work. In the quote below from an interview with Juliana, she describes why she felt the need to start working and stop attending school at the age of 12.

My father let's say was machista, he drank a lot. He didn't like to work. At that time, my mother, it wasn't her thought or life dream... to spend all the time working, but that was her only option was to work a lot. She did not think we as young children should be working but it was our decision. On that occasion we didn't really listen to her because we wanted to help her.

— Juliana

Other affiants described their desire to attend school, even though they were not able. Meena was 12 years old when she stopped attending school to work. During an interview, Meena described how upset she was about her situation. In addition to the financial hardship, which made it difficult for Meena to attend school, she also faced resistance from her aunt and uncles. They were fearful of Meena forming relationships with boys at school, which would bring shame upon her family.

I wanted to study. I would cry. I was crying a lot because I wanted to go to school but they didn't want to go anymore cause I had to help them. And my father returned at one time and he said he could take me to school but it wasn't possible. My aunt and uncles got angry. They said no. There are a lot of girls that get married very young or they go to school and have boyfriends and they get pregnant and then... They thought that would happen to me like that so they didn't want me going to school. They didn't let me go to school.

— Meena

The desire to attend school was mentioned by other affiants as well. Two affiants who were not able to attend school as children, Luke and Kiara, mentioned taking adult education classes as teenagers. In order to do this, they saved money from their wages and attended classes on the weekends. In the quote below, Luke, who had previously been trafficked in Mexico, describes how he was able to attend classes as a teenager.

When I was around 15 years old, I found a job as a waiter in a night bar in [town]. I was able to provide for my siblings so they could go to school. I also completed my primary and secondary education in an open school for adult education.

— Luke

Migration for Work

7 affiants migrated at an early age from a small town to a big city, like Mexico City, in order to find work. Often affiants migrated alone and would send money back to their families. Adela describes her experience in the quote below.

At 9 years old, I left [country] by myself and travelled by bus for [a number of] hours north into Mexico. I travelled to [city], Chiapas, Mexico to look for a job to help my family. An aunt that lived in [city] gave me a job as a babysitter and domestic worker. During this time, I sent most of my money home to [country].

— Adela

Food insecurity

In addition to educational attainment, another marker of poverty is food insecurity. 7 affiants in the sample mention experiencing food insecurity during childhood. It is likely that more affiants experienced food insecurity than is shown in the data. In the quote below, Kiara, who migrated to Mexico City at the age of 15 for work, mentions her experience of food insecurity.

Life was difficult for my family. My mother stayed at home and my father worked in construction, but there was often not enough money. There were times when we did not have enough to eat.

— Kiara

4 affiants had children before the trafficking situation and experienced food insecurity as young single mothers. Mariana, quoted below, tells how food insecurity affected her life and the lives of her children.

He [Mariana's ex-husband] was not working so I had to support the family myself by selling candy in the street. However, the money I made from selling candy was not enough to provide for my family and we often did not have money for food. ... I hated being so poor that I could not buy food for my children and I did not want them to continue living like that.

— Mariana

Parental separation

Parental separation either by death, divorce or abandonment was a common experience among affiants and appears to exacerbate fiscal hardship for the affiants' families. 35 percent of affiants in the sample mention that their parents were separated. Often a parent leaving, usually the father, had an immediate felt financial effect on the family. Carmen's experience mirrors that of other affiants.

When my father left, my mother was very worried about money because my father had been the main one to work. So after my parents separated, I quit attending school and began working as a seamstress to help with the expenses of the family.

— Carmen

Like Carmen, Belina's childhood was directly affected by her parent's separation. In the quote below, Belina describes the extreme poverty she experienced which was exacerbated by her father abandoning her family.

My father did not live with us. For about a year after he left our family, he provided money to my mother. Then, he quit his job and we never heard from him again. My mother cleaned houses in Mexico City to help support the entire family on her own. We did not have a lot of money and did not have a lot to eat. My mother, my siblings and I all lived in a one-room house. The house used to flood whenever it rained, and we had to remove the water.

— Belina

Diana's parents were not separated, however, Diana's father was extremely violent, perpetually absent and an alcoholic. This meant that Diana's mother was often the sole care-taker for Diana and her 3 siblings.

My father could not keep jobs for very long because he was and is a drunk. I hardly ever saw him earn any money or provide for us at all. Most of the time, we would not hear from him for 6 to 7 months at a time. I did not see him at all [for several years]. He claimed he traveled for work but we never received any money. Therefore, my mother had the entire responsibility to raise all 4 children alone.

— Diana

Violence

As mentioned previously, many affiants vulnerability to trafficking may have been increased due to experiences of violence in childhood and intimate partner violence situations. 54 percent of affiant's mention a violent experience prior to trafficking. These experiences were often extreme and were likely to have been traumatic.

Physical violence

Luke was driven to leave his family home at a very young age because of neglect and violence at the hands of his uncle.

Growing up I did not feel safe or loved at home by any adults. I felt nobody loved me or wanted to take care of me. An uncle that would live with us for periods of time used to hit me constantly. My grandmother would get upset and tell him to stop but she was not able to actually stop him. The first time I left my house I was 11 years old. I felt I would have to know other places, work and become independent in order to survive.

— Luke

Like Luke, Diana also had a violent childhood. Diana's story is an example of the extreme violence that many affiants experienced before trafficking.

I grew up with both [of] my parents in a very abusive household. I kept telling my mother to leave my father because he continuously abused her. Once he pulled out a gun, shot it and then fired the gun at me. Then my father hit my mother on head with the gun, creating wounds on her head and making her bleed. This type of thing happened a lot growing up and thus I did not like growing up in that violent atmosphere.

— Diana

Like Luke and Diana, Tatiana also had a violent childhood. Tatiana's story is representative of other affiants' violent childhoods.

My father drank a lot, and when he drank he was violent. He did not believe that I was his child, and he would beat me and my mother until we bled. I have two brothers and two sisters, but my father did not abuse them, only me and my mother. My first memories are of being beaten.

— Tatiana

Before being trafficked, Tatiana got married and was excited to start a new life, free from violence. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The man she married became abusive to her soon after the wedding. Tatiana divorced her abusive husband and became a single working mother at 24 years old. Soon after this divorce Tatiana was trafficked to the United States. For many affiants, like Tatiana, violence in childhood appears to be linked to re-victimization in adulthood.

Mariana does not mention experiencing childhood violence in her affidavit, however, like Tatiana, she was a victim of intimate partner violence before she was trafficked.

My ex-husband was abusive and used to beat me. He also drank a lot. While I was pregnant with my daughter, he hit me so hard that she came out premature and almost died. I eventually separated from him because of his abuse.

— Mariana

It is likely that more affiants experienced violence during childhood than what is reported in the affidavits. During an interview, Lelia disclosed that she grew up in a violent household. This information was not included in her affidavit.

My brother tells me now, my mother was beaten a lot by my father. I don't really remember. I just know that one time he was drinking. I had to stay at my grandparents' house because he hit me with a chair and I started bleeding from my nose.

— Lelia

Camilla and Tabitha, both transgender women, were continually harassed due to prejudice about their gender identity. In addition to verbal harassment, they both faced violence from their own families and the surrounding community. In the quote below, Camilla describes her father's violent reaction to her gender identity.

My mother and siblings did not treat me badly but my father sometimes screamed at me and called me derogatory names about my being gay. This started when I was 7 years old. I actually did not know if I was gay as a young child, but knew I was treated as if I was. My father saw me as very feminine because I didn't want to do what my brothers did. I didn't like to leave the house. He used to hit me and beat me. This also started when I was 7 because I was too feminine. He never hit my other siblings, just me. He was ashamed of me because it was a small town. All the men are machos (real men). He would say, 'My son is going to be a real man.' This made me feel bad because he was my father and I didn't know what to do.

— Camilla

Sexual violence

In addition to physical violence and emotional abuse, 4 affiants also experienced sexual assault or abuse at the hands of a teacher, family member or intimate partner before being trafficked. Meena was sexually abused by her uncle as a child, she was silenced by fear for her younger siblings. In an interview, Meena talked about why she wanted to leave her grandmother's house and why she left with the man who trafficked her when she was around 17.

I was 16 to 18 and I needed to leave there because I was suffering a lot of trauma based on the way they were treating me [...] I didn't feel well there, I didn't feel calm, my uncle kept bothering me and I couldn't say anything cause I was afraid, and from the beginning I was afraid then later on I thought I'm gonna tell somebody, maybe one of my aunts. But I was afraid for my younger siblings, this is like when I was 12.

I felt very badly, [and thought] 'I'm going to say something', and then I was older and I thought, well, 'if they throw us out of here, you know...' And [then] this man appeared, an acquaintance of my aunt, I went out with him and left the house with him. He said I'm going to take you to my aunt's and she can give you a job and you can live there. I thought that was a really good idea, but it wasn't like that.

— Meena

The man, mentioned in the last paragraph above, whom Meena believed would help her escape the abusive situation, turned out to be the man who trafficked her. Meena met this man, who was 30 years old at the time, through her aunt and therefore had reason to believe that he would help her.

Meeting the Trafficker

Meeting the trafficker through a family member, friend, or neighbor

Similarly to Meena, who was introduced to the man who trafficked her by her aunt, 24 additional affiants in this sample (69 percent) met the trafficker through a family member, friend or neighbor. In 4 cases, the trafficker was a family member of the affiant prior to trafficking. In addition, some affiants appear to have been directly set up for trafficking by their family members. In one particularly devastating case, Sofia, was forced by her family members to marry a man who trafficked her into domestic labor when she was very young.

I came back home [after working for 2 years in another town] when I was 10 or 11 years old to find that my father had sold me into marriage. My sister pushed me to get married because she thought that we would get money. She threatened to kill me if I didn't marry [trafficker 1]. When that didn't work, she said that if I don't marry [trafficker 1], our parents would be killed. [trafficker 1] and I were married shortly after in a civil ceremony.

— Sofia

This was the first time Sofia was trafficked into domestic labor. During this marriage, she was continually abused, assaulted and forced to do all of the domestic work for the trafficker and his family. Sofia eventually escaped from this trafficker, however she was not able to escape the violence, when she was 15 years old she met the second man who trafficked her.

Veronica was not overtly forced, like Sofia was, to leave her home with the trafficker but she was introduced to the trafficker through a family member and then manipulated into agreeing to go with the trafficker. Veronica did not have a desire to go to the United States and wanted to raise her little girl (who was 3 years old at the time) near her family in Mexico. In the quote below, Veronica talks about the pressure she felt to go to Mexico City and how her brother gained from manipulating her into being trafficked.

I later learned that [trafficker] had made a deal with [my brother] that said if [my brother] could convince me to go to the US, then he would also take [my brother] over the border. That is why [my brother] tried to convince me to come to America-he would also benefit from it. [My brother] kept insisting that I should travel because there are many opportunities to work in the US. He said if I went to the US I could provide for myself, my daughter and the whole family.

It was too much pressure. I started to feel as though my own family was angry at me because I refused to go to the US. I felt a duty, as though I owed it to them to go to the US and work hard to support them.

[...] I found out after I came to US that my brother had used me to live out his dream.

— Veronica

When Veronica first met the trafficker, her brother and the trafficker's sister were dating and living with Veronica's parents. They later married. Veronica was betrayed by her brother yet again when during the trafficking situation in the US, Veronica asked her brother and his wife for help, but they refused.

Inez's story is representative of many other affiants in the sample. Inez was introduced to the man who trafficked her by a friend of her family.

I met [trafficker] in [year] when he was 17 years old and I was 14 years old. There was a carnival in my hometown of [town] and my friend, who is [trafficker's] aunt, introduced us there. [Trafficker's] aunt lived nearby in [town] and I was familiar with her because she was a friend of my mother's. [Trafficker] and I did not talk to each other the first time we met but we did on the second day of the carnival.

— Inez

Inez soon learned that many of the trafficker's family members, including the aunt who introduced her to him, were involved in trafficking for commercial sex in the United States. The trafficker was able to use his aunt's connection with Inez to manipulate her into leaving with him.

Like Inez, Lelia also met the man who trafficked her through a friend. During an interview, Lelia was asked why she initially trusted the man who trafficked her. In response she talked about how she met the man who trafficked her through a friend. She stayed with the traffickers initially because they offered to help her with medical problems that she was having at the time.

I met him [the trafficker] through a friend I had [...] She invited me to her house once, she introduced me to her husband, she was like the boss. So she would be the one to introduce you to the husband and he would introduce you to [trafficker] so when she invited me to her house he was the one who took me there. They said we're

gonna take care of you here, you're gonna stay here, were going to give you treatments and massages for your [hip]

[...] And then I met his brother, which is like her brother-in-law and he was talking to me, like "what's my name". I told him, we got to know each other, so we got together and we were together intimately, but he had his plans already. He already knew what was gonna happen later.

— Lelia

It appears that Lelia walked into a trap. The friend who Lelia refers to as “the boss” was the trafficker’s sister-in-law. One month after this meeting Lelia would be forced into prostitution in Mexico for the first time.

Belina’s experience was different from other affiants. Belina met the woman who trafficked her through the trafficker’s son. The trafficker’s son dated Belina’s sister for a little while. After Belina’s sister stopped dating the trafficker’s son, the trafficker turned her attention to Belina. In the quote below, Belina mentions how the trafficker manipulated her and illustrates how the connection she had to the trafficker, through her sister, was one of the main reasons she initially trusted the trafficker.

I did not think it was strange that [trafficker] wanted me to come to the US with her. I had wanted to come to the US for so long that I did not think too much of her interest in me. I was very happy and excited to be coming to the US as I thought I could improve my family's financial situation.

I also trusted [trafficker], because my sister had dated her son, and so by association, I trusted [trafficker].

— Belina

Meeting the trafficker who was a stranger

38 percent of affiants did not have any connection to the trafficker before they met. The traffickers were strangers, who often approached and seduced the affiants in a public place, such as a park. Martina’s experience is representative of other affiants whose traffickers were complete strangers.

I met [trafficker], the man who trafficked me, in Mexico City where I was working in a house as a domestic worker. When I first met [trafficker] he was 25 years old and I was 16 years old. At the time I worked cleaning one house. I lived in this house six days a week and Sunday was my personal day.

One Sunday in October of [year], as I walked through a nearby park a stranger began following me saying he was going to accompany me. I told him I did not want company, and I lied to him, saying that I had a boyfriend who was waiting for me on an upcoming corner. He persisted and as I kept walking this fictional boyfriend never appeared so he knew I was lying.

As he kept following me and kept saying nice things to me, I became less hesitant and was flattered by his attention. He introduced himself as [trafficker], asked me for my work number and I gave it to him.

— Martina

Emiliana offered another example. Like Martina, she was living in Mexico City having moved there from her small town in order to work. In the quote below, Emiliana describes the night she met the man who trafficked her for the first time.

I went to a dancehall and met [trafficker]. The town held these dances every Sunday. I was 19 years old at the time and he introduced himself as “[fake name]” to me. I remember thinking how sweet and nice he was.

— Emiliana

One month later, Emiliana found herself trapped in his house hours away from Mexico City and from her home town.

Mariana met the man who trafficked her while she was selling candy on the street, struggling to provide for her children. Mariana had recently separated from her abusive husband who was still harassing her at the time. Both of these factors could have contributed to Mariana’s manipulation by the trafficker.

I met [trafficker], the man who trafficked me, in [year] when I was 25 years old. I was living in [town], Mexico with my mother and my two children and was still selling candy to make money. [Trafficker] used to come around in his car and buy candy from me. He was from [town], Mexico.

—Mariana

The trafficker appeared to offer Mariana support and comfort her during a very difficult time. After Mariana had divorced her husband she began dating the trafficker. While dating, the trafficker convinced her that going to the United States would be the best way to provide for herself and her children.

Exploitation of Cultural Norms

Exploitation of cultural norms by trafficker to manipulate and control affiants

Traffickers often manipulated cultural norms, especially regarding gender roles, in order to trap affiants into a relationship or maintain control over the affiants. In the quote below, Inez describes what was going through her mind when she was first trapped by the trafficker.

I wanted to go back home after talking to my mom but I felt that our community back home would look down on me and my family if they knew I had sex with [trafficker]. Even though I first had sex with [trafficker] on the second day after I spoke with my mother, my whole community would assume that I already had sex with [trafficker] and would look down upon me. In Mexican culture, a young woman cannot have sex with a boy and then come home to her parent's house without being married. Even though my mother repeated that I must come home I felt scared and trapped. On one hand I knew I would bring dishonor to my family through my actions and on the other I knew [trafficker's] family would not let me go. I did not want to hurt my family and bring more pain to them.

— Inez

Inez believed that the trafficker's family would take care of her and that the trafficker was in love with her. Like Inez, Michaela was also fearful of her family's reaction and her reputation after she was raped by the man who trafficked her.

For the next 2 weeks, I had a very strong feeling that I was pregnant because I was throwing up a lot. I did not want my mom to know that I was raped. For that reason, I decided to protect my parents and pretend like I was in a relationship with [trafficker].

[...] I agreed to get married because I wanted to protect my parents. I accepted the blame for what [trafficker] had done to me; I felt that it was my fault. I also wanted to calm my parents down and make them think that everything was fine. I mainly thought of my parents.

— Michaela

The situation that Michaela describes closely resembles the *robo de la novia* tradition. The trafficker raped Michaela and then asked permission for them to marry. Her mother was not supportive of the marriage, but Michaela choose to marry because she wanted to “protect” her parents. She did not want them to suffer and she felt the responsibility for being raped.

A very similar situation happened to Cecilia. She met the man who trafficked her through her cousin who was dating the trafficker’s brother. Cecilia, who was 18 at the time, agreed to go to a movie with the trafficker, but instead of taking her to the movies, he drove her a few hours away to his family home. They spent the night together. In the quote below, Cecilia describes what happened the next morning.

[Trafficker] woke up around 7AM and went out without saying anything to me. He came back ten minutes later to the room where I was with his mother. Both [trafficker] and his mother told me to stay and his mother told me that [trafficker] didn’t have a woman. At that moment, a man whom [trafficker] introduced as his dad came into the room. He said his name was [trafficker’s father]. He asked me to stay with his son. He told me to think about what my family would think since I had already spent the night with [trafficker]. I told him no, but at that moment, my cousin came into the room. At that time, she was already living with [trafficker’s brother 1]. She told me to stay and that we would be together.

—Cecilia

In Cecilia’s case, the trafficker, his family and her cousin were all involved in manipulating her to stay with the trafficker.

Kiara met the man who trafficked her at a park on her day off. A week later she met up with him again in the park he told her he liked her and asked her if she wanted to meet his

family. She agreed. He drove her a few hours away to his family's home and then left her in his house. He later came back and told her he loved her and he wanted her to be his wife. In the quote below, Kiara discusses why she decided to stay with him.

After one week of living with him, I realized he never planned to take me home. I told him I felt bad about stopping work because I wanted to take care of my family, and my father was sick and needed the money. He said that since we were living as a couple now, he was like the husband and I had to do as he said. He said that often when people marry they can no longer help their parents in the same way. I thought about all the young women in my town who also get married. I decided that it was my turn to go through this rite of passage. I was excited to be married and start this new life.

—Kiara

The man who trafficked Kiara manipulated her ideas about marriage and traditional roles for men and women. She did not question his controlling behavior and in fact looked forward to married life with him. Lelia wanted to leave the man who trafficked her but was unable because she was frightened of his family and also because she felt she could not return to her family after living with the trafficker. In the quote below, Lelia talked about the importance of maintaining her reputation.

[...] I had already lived with [trafficker] so I could not return to my family's house due to Mexican culture. I was afraid of what my parents would say about my situation—about living with a boy without being married. It was shaming and my family would have been dishonored if I returned to them as a single woman. I had to make my relationship with [trafficker] work no matter what because I had nowhere to go. I believed and loved him and truly believed we would get married when I finally slept with him. I trusted him to take care of me—I was naïve and could not believe he would do anything to harm me. Thus, I was trapped when he eventually became mean and vicious.

— Lelia

Manipulation using children and threats to family members

29 of 37 affiants were manipulated by traffickers using threats to their families during their trafficking and 12 of 37 affiants described threats to their families after they left trafficking situations.

Manipulation using children

Traffickers often used affiants' children to manipulate the affiants, forcing them to stay in a relationship and continue working for the trafficker. 15 affiants, or 40 percent of the sample, had children with the men who trafficked them. The trafficker would often place the child with one of his family members and take the affiant to the United States under the guise of making a better life for their child. This technique was used as well on single working mothers, like Mariana, who were manipulated into thinking that if they went with the trafficker they would be able to better financially support their children.

[Trafficker] told me I should marry him and go with him to work in the United States. He said we could work together in the US and then return to Mexico with enough money to complete the construction of his house in [town], where we would live together with my children. He told me his sister was in charge of a restaurant.

in the US and I could work there. I thought that we would be working together in his sister's restaurant. I really liked [trafficker] and wanted to be with him. I also wanted to earn some money for my children because I was not making enough to provide for my family. Therefore, I agreed to go to the US with [trafficker].
—Mariana

During the relationship, the trafficker would often use the children to keep the affiants working and force them to stay with the trafficker. They would ask for money to support the children and threaten to stop the affiants from seeing their children. For example, in the quote below, Carmen described how the man who trafficked her used their children to force her into commercial sex work in the United States.

About a month after I moved to the United States, he told me that he thought that I would be able to make some money by being a prostitute. I was very surprised to hear him say that, and I didn't think he could be serious. When I told him that I could never do

that, he said that I had to do it for our children, and he threatened that they would be harmed if I didn't work. I was scared to hear him say that, and I felt like I had no choice but to try to do it in order to protect my kids.

— Carmen

Eva also faced threats from the man who trafficked her. Eva eventually had two children with the man who trafficked her. He used their children to manipulate Eva into staying with him and working for him.

He threatened me every day that if I ever left, I would never see my son again. I was so scared, and even though I wanted to leave so he would stop hurting me, I did not dare try to escape because I was afraid of what he would do to my child.

— Eva

Michaela was able to save money and escape the trafficker, but she also wanted to get her daughter back from the trafficker. She went back to Mexico to meet with him in the hopes of helping her daughter. The quote below describes what happened when Michaela went back.

I agreed to meet him in Mexico City because I believed that it was the only way to get my daughter back—after all, [my daughter] lived with his family. In December [year], I went to Mexico City and told him that I wanted my daughter. He was driving me to [town], where his mother and [my daughter] were, and he told me that I could take [my daughter] and go. But when we arrived at his house, [trafficker] took me to a bedroom, where he beat me and told me that I had behaved badly. [...] This was one of the worst beatings he ever gave me.

[Trafficker] told me that if I wanted to see my daughter, I would have to behave. He said that what I did by leaving was wrong, and that now I had to stay with his operation in New York and I would not be able to see my daughter.

— Michaela

7 affiants were in the same situation and many of them are still trying to regain custody of their children. In order to maintain contact with her son, Lelia has to maintain contact with the trafficker's family. In an interview, Lelia described the fear that she has for her son who is still living with the trafficker's family in Mexico.

I am afraid my son might take on this same path [trafficking].

Yesterday, I spoke to him, [and it was] very ugly. I talk to him and he's not very interested in talking to me. He's very quick on the phone, 'I have to go do something' [he says]. He's not very interested in talking to me [...]

I'm very afraid for him. [...] He is nine and I don't know what to do. In May he'll be 10, so 9 years I haven't seen him. [I] Only [talk to him] by phone and only sometimes. It's a lot of pain for me. [...] They also put a lot of ideas in his mind that I'm still prostituting myself working for other people, that I'm... so he thinks these other things about me.

—Lelia

Manipulation using threats to family members

Children were not the only family members used to manipulate trafficked persons.

[Trafficker] threatened our families back in Mexico

— Faith

[Trafficker] threatened me and told me if I did not do what they said, they knew where my mother lived, and would go after my mother.

— Belina

Trauma and violence after the trafficking situation

An unexpected finding was that women in particular found themselves in violent romantic relationships after leaving trafficking situations. People interviewed demonstrated their resilience; however, it turns out that in the literature, trauma is linked to hypo- and hyper-vigilance, alongside difficulty recognizing potentially dangerous situations (Norris et al. 1999; Witte and Kendra 2010). These are not the only symptoms of trauma, but it appears that the experiences of trauma and violence in childhood may culminate in repeating patterns of violence in romantic and family relationships (Desai et al. 2002; Widom 2008; Klest 2011).

A recommendation from interviewees

Interviews with 6 affiants included questions about what they would recommend. During interviews that we conducted with women that had experienced forced prostitution in marriage and “theft of the bride” situations they repeatedly recommended that parents speak with their children about sexual and romantic matters and about marriage and their futures. They frequently reported not being able to speak with their families about these issues, which have great bearing on female roles and traditional identities.

Discussion

Most of the trafficked persons had some relationship with their trafficker, either as a relative or a family friend or a friend of a friend, contributing to their initial trust of the trafficker. Physical violence, emotional manipulation and manipulation of cultural norms were all used to force victims to do what traffickers wanted them to do.

Manipulation of gender roles

Gender norms and ideals were prominent in trafficking situations for both men and women, and contributed to their vulnerability in similar ways. In situations involving transgender people and gay men, both of whom transgress ideals of masculinity and are highly marginalized in Mexico, personal connections were used to gain trust similarly to how they were used with women. However, transgender and male victims were never in recognized relationships with their traffickers—traffickers did not use marital cultural traditions to strengthen control over these victims. Instead, for men and transgender women who transgress gender norms, this marginalization may lead them to have fewer community resources and to be unable to rely on their families for help. They may be alienated from their families, as was seen in the cases we analyzed. In these cases, people were trafficked into situations involving forced labor and sexual abuse, including forced prostitution. Their situations involved frequent serious physical violence in addition to sexual violence.

In many cases, forcing women into sex work or prostitution was combined with manipulation of gender norms in order to discredit the victim, and also to gain her compliance. For example, young women and adolescent girls described being invited to parties or other events by men who took them away from their home villages or workplaces so that they would have to spend the night. In some cases, they described being prevented from taking a bus or other public transit to their home communities. This is a form of manipulation of gender norms because women and girls who are presumed to have had sex with a man either must marry to preserve their own and their families' reputations, or can expect to be rejected by their families and communities. This was used to force women into romantic relationships that in some cases they did not want initially, and in other cases in which they did not want the relationship once it was revealed that they were deceived and manipulated. These are examples of the "theft of the bride." Such "seductions" have been a form of elopement, but in most of these cases, they were accompanied by violence, sometimes rape, and forced prostitution. These victims' compliance with gender expectations of being sexually virtuous resulted in relationships in which they were forced into prostitution.

Gender roles and ideals such as *marianismo* and respect for elders leave little room for girls and young women from traditional families to speak and ask questions about sex, marriage and their futures with their parents or other family members. This is reflected in our interview data, in which women who had experienced forced prostitution in marriage and “theft of the bride” situations repeatedly described not being able to discuss or even raise issues because raising these issues, which directly relate to their lives, would contradict traditional female roles and identities. Therefore, they recommended that parents speak with their children about sexual and romantic matters and about marriage and their futures. This was similar for the transgender people and men who transgress gender norms in our sample, as they also deviate from cultural standards and could not or felt that they could not return to their families of origin. However, only the non-transgender women described their families as particularly traditional, and identified this trait as contributing to their ignorance about the world because they had been sheltered and were not able to exercise autonomy within the home. In this way, a traditional background in which female autonomy is squelched contributed to these young women’s vulnerability: they sought situations in which they would have more autonomy. Desires to escape poverty and violence and typical adolescent desires for greater autonomy combined with traditional values of women’s submission appeared to culminate in situations in which the women saw marriage or romance as a socially acceptable way to escape the confines of their families’ homes.

Another factor complicating traditional compliance with gender roles is the realities of affiants’ families of origin. Over one-third of the affiants came from families in which parents were separated by death, divorce or abandonment. Family separation is also counter to the cultural norm of marriage. Additionally, family separation was often accompanied by economic deprivation. In such families, frequently the mother was the sole provider until her children could contribute economically. This may have influenced the perceptions of women among both female and male affiants. They may have expected women to contribute economically and so be pressured into economic activities counter to cultural ideals, including migrating away from their families in the cases of the one-third of affiants who did not have any family or other connection to their traffickers, or working in economic sectors counter to cultural ideals, such as sex work.

Affiants’ impoverished and violent backgrounds combined with the manipulation of gender ideals to prevent their being able to return to their families, in some cases for fear of bringing shame on their families and in other cases due to expectations of outright rejection by their families. Cecilia, who had initially returned to her family, was seduced back into the trafficking situation. Soon after she went back to the trafficker she realized that she had been trapped again in a dangerous situation. Feeling that she could not return and ask for

her family's help for a second time she stayed with the trafficker and endured another 4 years of a violent relationship. For women like Cecilia, returning home is often not an option as poor families may not have the resources to assist or take them back in, while violent families may offer little or no relief. The strong association with poverty implies that improved economic opportunities for young women, which correlate with higher levels of education in development literature (Mammen and Paxon, 2000; Hadden and London 1996), could offer alternative paths to self-sufficiency. International experiences demonstrate that economic autonomy for women has been linked to lower levels of violence and abuse (Vyas and Watts, 2009).

These cultural roles can only be manipulated by people who understand them; therefore, the traffickers who use such tactics are not examples of cultural outsiders. Unfortunately, many of these people have gained wealth through human trafficking and thereby they have gained influence—they are in positions of power within their communities (Torres 2009). This may contribute to a lack of political will in their local governments to assist with prosecutions and family reunification. It is highly likely that cultural authority bestowed upon males also figures in this situation.

Being unable to return to their families of origin has long-term ramifications for trafficked persons. The affiants describe being refused help by family members, being trafficked by family members, and of small communities where traffickers are neighbors, not strangers. Return to these communities—to their families of origin—is not an option for most survivors because they do not have a safe family or community to which they can return. In fact, members of their families and home communities may have trafficked them.

Poverty

The fact that three quarters of affiants described being from deeply impoverished backgrounds featuring food insecurity and/or limited education because of the need to generate income suggests that economic opportunities and empowerment for women, men and transgender people could ameliorate the economic situations that contribute to individual vulnerability to trafficking. Single-parent households and a lack of economic support from an absent or neglectful parent were associated with poverty; this implies that economic strategies leading to living wages by which one person could support a family would be particularly helpful in ameliorating the poverty among female-headed, single-parent households.

Many of the affiants had left their home communities in order to seek work or, in the case of affiants who are transgender or male, to move to large cities that may be more hospitable to people who transgress norms of masculinity as well as to seek work and support themselves apart from their families. These people who were already separated from their families described trafficking situations that capitalized upon their separation from their families. Returning to their home communities was not an option for many affiants, therefore exploiting cultural norms to further cement this separation was a common tactic in gaining control over the abused.

The US Department of State's Trafficking In Persons office is exclusively focused on promoting the passage of harsh laws against human trafficking in source countries. The deterrence of having the rule of law in source countries where governments are corrupt and traffickers are not prosecuted is probably important, but our evidence suggests that economic factors are equally or more important and present an opportunity to address a root cause of migration and the exploitation of migrants.

Use of children to manipulate women

Some of the women have had children with the men who trafficked them. In some cases these children are then used to manipulate them, for example, through demands to continue sending money to the trafficker's family in order to support this child. Interviewees and affiants expressed concern that their daughters would be forced into prostitution, and that their sons may become traffickers themselves. These fears are supported by recent studies of trafficking in the Tenancingo region—which demonstrate that entire families can be incorporated into the trafficking scheme (Torres 2009). Without being able to cut these ties to the trafficking family, cooperation with law enforcement is jeopardized, and the cycle of trafficking continues. Family reunification may be important in some cases for both humanitarian and criminal justice reasons.

Links to trauma

Trauma and violence in childhood

Many of the affiants described violence in their childhood homes and communities. This primarily referred to family violence, between their parents and also violence in

childhood from parents and in some cases from others. Such abuse may have contributed to desires to leave their family homes and their communities. However, even as the affiants may have been leaving an abusive situation, one of the effects of suffering violence is to normalize violence: family violence was accepted by many, with partner violence particularly accepted by their families and communities. The experience of family violence disrupts norms and expectations associated with love.

Childhood experiences are important to take into account because experiences of trauma and violence in childhood may be linked to future experiences of violence and trauma (Desai et al. 2002; Widom 2008; Klest 2011). Research demonstrates that childhood experiences of trauma and violence may culminate in repeating patterns of violence in romantic and family relationships (Desai et al. 2002; Widom 2008; Klest 2011) and this is borne out by our finding that many women referred to subsequent abusive relationships after leaving trafficking situations. Disruptions of the norms and expectations of familial and romantic love may be one factor in the repeating patterns of violence found by researchers in some, but not all, people who have experienced trauma and violence. Furthermore, the possibility of repeating patterns of violence has strong implications for human trafficking and other abuses: People who experience violence are more likely to perceive violence as normal, and more likely to leave home, to become isolated, and to endure deep poverty. An additional effect of violence is traumatization, which has been linked with the inability to recognize dangerous situations (Norris et al. 1999; Witte and Kendra 2010). In some cases, family separation, common among affiants, may have itself been a traumatic experience, as in the case of the woman whose brother was murdered. This could have been a contributing factor to vulnerability to trafficking for those affiants who had experienced trauma in childhood.

Trauma and recovery

It is common for people who have suffered trauma to have difficulty recognizing possibly dangerous situations, but there are many other symptoms that can prevent people from behaving in ways that we may see as “normal” or self-protective. For example, people who are in the “survival” mode focus only on their immediate safety, rather than their work, appropriate social behavior, and getting to appointments promptly. Recovery to normal social functioning and developing the ability to recognize what is happening and then address the symptoms of panic can even take years. Multiple traumas make recovery more difficult, as each subsequent trauma compounds the survival response. Each time, it is necessary to recover from a deeper, more ingrained and reinforced response (Herman 1992; Stern 2010).

Recommendations

During interviews conducted for this study we asked interviewees to tell us what advice they believe might help others avoid the situation that they found themselves in. 4 out of 6 respondents mentioned the importance of open communication with parents and access to information about the world. The advice Helena gave during an interview mirrors that of other affiants.

I really think that the best thing is to communicate, the parents they have to talk with their kids, even when they are 10, 11, 15 they have to tell them what is the situation at home, what they are going through, that they need to let the children know or the teenagers know what is happening at home, to talk with them.

Also to talk with them about like drugs, sex, all that stuff. My parents didn't talk with us about those things, about drugs, about sex, about any of those things. I think that it is very important to speak with them about everything, to let them know there are bad people outside, to give them signs to let them learn how to recognize behaviors about somebody that is approaching you with some other intentions.

— Helena

Helena and other interviewees expressed that they could have been better equipped to avoid or get out of the trafficking situation if they would have had more open communication with their families and more knowledge about the world. It is evident that campaigns to raise awareness about family violence and human trafficking are vital in fighting trafficking in communities like the one where Helena is from.

Recommendations for the Mexican Government

- Take action to address violence, including violence against women, and to investigate human trafficking. Few prosecutions have been undertaken against traffickers in Mexico using pre-existing statutes or the new anti-trafficking law.

- Support organizations to provide services for trafficked persons in Mexico, including migrants and women and children who are alienated from their marital families and families of origin.
- Support organizations to provide services to transgender and gay people, especially youth.
- Support organizations to develop campaigns for awareness and communication within families about trafficking and domestic violence, including child abuse and child sexual abuse, particularly in impoverished and isolated communities.
- Adopt economic policies that address poverty in Mexico, particularly of women and single parent households.

Recommendations for the US Government

- More resources and solutions are needed to reunite foreign-born victims of trafficking with their children, particularly when children of the trafficking victim are in the custody of the trafficking family. These children may be at risk of being incorporated into the trafficking cycle, and may be used to manipulate their trafficked parents, who cannot simultaneously maintain contact with their children and ensure cooperation with prosecution efforts; therefore the prioritization of family reunification is recommended on humanitarian and criminal justice grounds.
- Support organizations to provide services for victims of human trafficking. Recovery of victims is essential to preventing future criminal acts against them.
- The requirement of cooperation with law enforcement in order to lawfully remain in the United States should be discontinued. Victims of trafficking face ongoing danger from traffickers if they cooperate with law enforcement, because of common familial relationships with traffickers and manipulation of children and high levels of danger to their families in their home countries and in the US from traffickers. Furthermore, in some cases, victims are pressured to cooperate or testify before they are recovered enough to do so without incurring further traumatization. Such people may not be effective victim-witnesses, thereby jeopardizing successful prosecutions.

- Repeal or amend S-Comm and 287(g), which are likely to result in deportation of many victims of trafficking into commercial sex to their home countries where they will be likely to continue to be trafficked and abused.
- Support economic policies that decrease inequity and poverty in Mexico, especially among women and single-parent households.
- Offer accessible routes to immigration status for survivors of human trafficking. The majority of victims of trafficking cannot return to their country of origin because they have no supportive family or community to return to, and because of real danger of re-trafficking, violence, or persecution.

Recommendations for Organizations in Mexico

- Provide counseling and safety services for people who have suffered violence, including violence in childhood, in marriage, at work, and in trafficking situations, which may help individuals recover from trauma, and become more resistant to future trafficking situations.
- Initiate campaigns promoting awareness and communication within families about sexuality, gender roles, trafficking and family violence, particularly in impoverished and isolated communities. One goal of awareness campaigns should be to promote discussion within families, as recommended by survivors of trafficking as one thing that could have helped them avoid being trafficked.
- Initiate campaigns to promote awareness and acceptance of people who do not conform to gender norms, including transgender and gay people as well as women who do not conform to gender ideals.
- Provide services for trafficked persons of all genders.
- Provide legal and social services, in partnership with US service organizations, to reunite survivors of trafficking with their children who are in perilous situations.

Recommendations for Organizations in the United States

- Develop cultural competency with regards to the gender norms and ideals your clients may have internalized. Cultural competency will help you understand the situations your clients face, the decisions they have made, and their reactions to the options you can present.
- Be aware of the possibility of domestic and family violence in the lives of people who have survived trafficking situations.

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Appendix A.

Interview Protocol for Trafficked Persons

[The informed consent process must be completed before beginning the interview.]

1. Childhood

Where did you live when you were a child? [town, state or province, and country]

Who did you live with when you were a child? How did they get along with each other?

How old were you when you left school? Why did you stop going to school?

Tell me about your childhood. Were your parents working?

Were you economically secure?

Did your parents borrow or owe money to someone?

Were you ever hungry?

Was there enough food for everybody in the family?

Did people in your home ever fight about money?

Were there other kinds of fighting? Why?

Were people ever violent in your home?

When you were young, did you want to get married? [getting at gender norms with this and work questions]

What do you expect women and men to be like or to do?

When you were a child, what did you think you would do for work when you became an adult?

2. Work

Now I would like to ask you about working.

How were jobs in your home divided? Who did what?

What did your mother do for a living? And your grandmother?

Did they work outside the home? Inside? If they worked, what happened to the money they earned? [If the participant did not live with mother and grandmother, also ask about the women in their home.]

What was the first kind of work you did? Did you do this while you lived with your family?

Whose idea was it for you to go to work?

How did you get that job?

Why did you take this job?

Did you know anyone who did work like this before you started?

What did you do with the money you earned at this job?

[prompts include give to parents, keep, spend on what, put in bank]

How did people in your family feel about women who worked in general?

Did this relate to the kind of work?

What was the first kind of work you did when you left home?

When you worked, what did you do with the money you earned now that you were away from your family?

Did you ever send money home?

Did you put money in the bank?

Did the work you got into have any effects on you?

Did it change the way people thought of you? [PROMPTS ABOUT LATE NIGHTS, getting at gender norms again]

3. Migration

I would like to ask you about leaving home. How and why did you leave your hometown there?

How old were you when you left your family's home? Where was that home?

Whose idea was it for you to leave?

Were your family supportive of your leaving? Why or why not? [prompts include monetary incentives like gifts from someone outside the family, and dowry, all of which contribute to commitment to a relationship, not only romantic relationships but familial associations]

Did you meet anyone who encouraged you to leave? If yes, who? Where was this person from? What was your relationship to this person? What did this person tell you? Why did you trust this person?

Did you get to know his or her family? Were they involved in your travel and your situation? If yes, how?

Was this person involved since you left there?

Where did you go first?

Why there?

How did you go there? [prompts: walking, riding (horse, bicycle), car, truck, bus]

Did you travel with anyone? Did you know anyone in this new place? If yes, who?

Did you have any friends in this new place? [These last few questions are intended to offer information about the participant's life but also to get at familial trafficking networks because there have been families involved in human trafficking networks including men and women working with their parents, grandparents, siblings and children

Please tell me in as much detail as you can what happened while you were there.

What did you do there? How long were you there? What was your life like there?

Did you meet anyone who encouraged you to leave? Who? Was this person involved since you left there?

THESE NEXT QUESTIONS ARE TO BE REPEATED FOR EACH PLACE UP TO TRAVEL TO THE US [US TRAVEL IS DETAILED IN AFFIDAVITS IN APPLICATIONS FOR STATUS AS TRAFFICKED PERSONS]

Where did you go next?

Why there?

How did you go there? [prompts: walking, riding (horse, bicycle), car, truck, bus]

Did you travel with anyone? Why did you travel with this person?

What was your relationship to this person? What did this person tell you? Why did you trust this person? Did you get to know his or her family? Were they involved in your travel and your situation? If yes, how?

Did you know anyone in this new place? If yes, who?

Did you have any friends in this new place? [These last few questions are intended to offer information about the participant's life but also to get at familial trafficking networks because there have been families involved in human trafficking networks including men and women working with their parents, grandparents, siblings and children.]

Were you offered a job?

Was this person you traveled with involved since you left there?

Were you paid for your work? Was the money you earned given to you? Was the money you earned given to someone else?

Did you hold on to your money?

Did you give your money to someone else to hold? Who? Why did you trust this person to hold your money? Did you have a choice?

Please tell me in as much detail as you can what happened while you were there.

What did you do there? How long were you there? How old were you then? [Age is easier than duration for many people.] What was your life like there?

Who did you meet there? [getting at traffickers' families]

How often did you call home or otherwise communicate or have contact with your family while you were there?

How did you communicate with them? [mobile phone, whose? Land line? Whose? Email? Social networking?]

What did it cost you to communicate with your family?

Could you ask them for help?

Did you meet anyone who encouraged you to leave? Who?

Did you travel with anyone? Why did you travel with this person?

Were you in love?

Were you offered a job?

Was this person involved since you left there?

How many places did you go before you went to the US? I especially want to know if you stayed anywhere for long enough to work or to look for work there.

4. In the United States

Once you arrived in the US,

What kind of work did you expect to do?

What kinds of work did you do on the way to the US? Any?

What did you think things would be like for you in the US?

What kind of work did you do when you arrived in the US?

When did you find out how different it would be from your expectations?

Were you paid for your work? Was the money you earned given to you? Was the money you earned given to someone else?

Did you hold on to your money?

Did you give your money to someone else to hold? Who? Why did you trust this person to hold your money? Did you have a choice?

What kind of information might have helped you to avoid this bad situation? IS there anything, any information or services, that could have helped you avoid the difficult situation that you have overcome? Is there anyone whose advice you would have taken? Why or why not?

Is there anything that you would tell someone in your situation then? Someone in a small town or city, with few opportunities? What advice would you offer? What information would you give them, based on your experience?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me or think that it would be good or important for me to know?

5. Demographic info

Age:

Sex: M/F/T (MTF OR FTM?)

Highest level of education completed:

6. Wrap up

Thank you for all your help! May I contact you for clarification if I have questions later? I would contact you through [name of service provider from name of service organization.] Would you like me to send a copy of our report to [SERVICE ORGANIZATION CONTACT] to give to you?