

“The Greatest Word in the Bible is Hope:”

Restoring Identity and Reinstating Dignity for Survivors of Human Trafficking

Natalie Larson

North Carolina Wesleyan College

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“Who am I? They often tell me  
I stepped from my cell's confinement  
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,  
Like a Squire from his country house.

Who am I? They often tell me  
I used to speak to my warders  
Freely and friendly and clearly,  
As though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me  
I bore the days of misfortune  
Equably, smilingly, proudly,  
Like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men tell of?  
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?  
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,  
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,  
Yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds,  
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,  
Tossing in expectations of great events,  
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,  
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,  
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.

Who am I? This or the Other?  
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?  
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,  
And before myself a contemptible woebegone weakling?  
Or is something within me still like a beaten army  
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.  
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores how the modern-day slave trade harm's survivors' identity and how the Christian theological tradition provides resources that can restore it. As we dive into the horror of human trafficking, we will see just what it entails. Taking a sociological perspective on identity, we will use that lens to help understand the changes a person goes through when enduring the trauma of trafficking. Christian theology is introduced as a way to help us see identity in a new light and give a solution to the restoration process for survivors. The non-profit JOY International will serve as a case study for a Christian program that applies its faith in the fight against human trafficking. The founder, executive director, and outreach service coordinator are interviewed to shed light on how their faith is incorporated into a non-profit's mission.

**KEY WORDS:** Identity, human trafficking, restoration, JOY International

## THE FOUNDATION

Identity is the core of a person's self-understanding, but the trauma of human trafficking creates a scar on it. Sociology provides us with tools to help understand and explain the changes to a person's self-image. Once those changes are recognized, Christian theology offers a solution to restore a positive identity and reinstate lost dignity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's poem "Who am I?" suggests the theme of the thesis: identity. This can be formed partly through theological beliefs. Bonhoeffer was a German theologian and pastor imprisoned for being a part of a conspirator group, the Abwehr, which was part of the military intelligence that smuggled Jews to Switzerland and had attempted to assassinate Hitler (Plant 2004:32-33). Because of this he was imprisoned for a year and a half by the Nazis before he was hanged (Plant 2004:34). In his time in prison, Bonhoeffer authored books, letters, and poems contemplating his beliefs (Plant 2004:33). From this background and in his context of prison, the poem was birthed.

Throughout this paper, I will discuss the development of identity and how, when going through adversity as Bonhoeffer did, and as victims of human trafficking still do today, one may doubt one's faith and how it might be impacted or even change. One's identity may be forever scarred because of the trauma that is endured, and it may have long lasting effects, such as PTSD and other psychological issues. Although identity is always evolving, trauma, enslavement, and demeaning treatment can impede beneficial development. Therefore, how does one know who they are after surviving enslavement? How does one regain a confidence in knowing themselves? An individual's identity may not ever go back to being as it was, but they can develop and have positive restoration with the proper help psychologically, physically, emotionally, socially, and

spiritually. All of a person's self is connected holistically (Montague 2013:240). Although physical material help is necessary, such as finances, healthcare, mental care, resource counseling, help with job searches, etc., focusing on the spiritual help is also an important part of healing. This spiritual assistance may be based on an actual specific belief system, as we will investigate, or it may entail meditation, grounding to nature (such as running or nature walks), breathing exercises, spiritual therapy, and energy healing.

This paper will demonstrate how Christian theological resources can help victims of human trafficking have that positive restoration. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, it is stated that someone is made into a new creation through Christ (ESV 2011:2230). Some victims of human trafficking want nothing more than to leave their enslavement. Finding a hope through religion is one avenue that can happen by finding a restored identity in Christ. Genesis 1:27 says "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (ESV 2011:51). The very bases of Christianity speak about who God is and secondly, who humans are in regard to God. Through God's own being, He breathed life into people, formed them from His own likeness, and everything He does is to be in right union with them. In this understanding, Christian theology can be a method used to bring about healing for a victim of human trafficking by instilling hope in them. Through Christian organizations, many survivors undergo structured programs that help them develop positive self-images and help reform their identity.

### *Human Trafficking Overview*

Human trafficking is the world's fastest growing crime, second only to drug trafficking when looking at profits (The United States Department of Justice 2016). The former has certain "advantages" over the latter: drugs, once bought, can only be used once. However, with human

trafficking, a single person can be exploited repeatedly. It is the favored business model; it has low risk and high returns (Villa 2019:6). For labor trafficking, traffickers can have “free” help without ever having to lose a dime. Human trafficking is defined by the United Nations as

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means, of threat of use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, or fraud, or deception, of the abuse of power of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving or payments of benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (United Nations 2000a, Article 3, as cited in Zimmerman, 2011:569).

Human trafficking needs to have force, fraud, or coercion to be recognized as such by the United States (Polaris Project 2021). Human trafficking takes place not just in developing countries, but in our back-yards, and no community is immune to it: in the urban inner-cities, in the major cities with intersecting interstates and seaports, and in the small towns of rural America (Polaris Project December 2020). It can happen to anyone. However, those with vulnerabilities, such as financial because they lack money, have a disability, or are part of a socially marginalized group, such as people of color or members of the LGBTQ+ community, are more prone to being trafficked. Human trafficking needs to have an element of action, means, and purpose (Polaris Project 2021). *Action* includes transportation, recruiting, harboring, obtaining, inducing, or providing (Polaris Project 2021). *Means* includes force, fraud, or coercion and *purpose* includes sex or labor trafficking (Polaris Project 2021).

The 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* contains a quote from the then President of the United States, Donald Trump: “Human trafficking erodes personal dignity and destroys the moral fabric of society. It is an affront to humanity that tragically reaches all parts of the world” (2020:3). Not only does it create social upheaval, but human trafficking can sometimes actually support an economy, such as in Amsterdam’s Red

Light District. Regardless of the geographical location, each person affected by it has their dignity stripped away from them. Because the concept of human rights is premised on the notion that every person has an inherent value and dignity, it requires that they be free, which trafficking denies (Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:17).

Both types of human trafficking, sex and labor, create trauma and impact an individual's identity. Sex trafficking strips a person of worth in physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual ways. Labor trafficking degrades a person's dignity, as does the former, but also creates trauma through forcing someone to work without rights and treating them as property.

### *Identity Overview*

The issue of identity is discussed in various academic fields, including in many social sciences such as sociology and psychology (Stryker and Burke 2000:284), and it is also seen in theology. Variations in approaches to the question of identity are considerable. It is seen in theory and in relative uses in classification and in reference to the self. For the purposes of this paper, Christian theological and sociological perspectives are used to define identity from its personal internal perspective to its external interactive perspective, respectively. Identity is someone's inner self, categorized as their eternal soul, mind, body, and heart in Christianity. It is their self-awareness of their motives, thinking, desires, feelings, and character. It is also their external self: their self-image of their appearance and personalities, especially regarding how other's view them through interactions (Cooley 1983, as cited in O'Brien 2011:126). This external self is also seen through concentric circles of self-categorization: sex, gender, race, ethnicity, and social and economic classes. Identity, according to Merriam-Webster dictionary, is "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual" (2020). However, what the dictionary definition lacks is that identity is not just the self-image, self-awareness, or character

of a person. Identity is not just how they present themselves to others, how others perceive them, or their interactions, like how sociology describes it. Identity is the combination of interactions of your external self as well as your internal self, as how Christian theology describes.

Furthermore, identity is a person's inherent worth and value as a human being, regardless of how they see themselves, how others view them, or who other people say they are; it encompasses their dignity (Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:4; St. John Paul II 1995: section 2). The definition says, "the distinguishing character," so what does this character tell us about who we are?

The Christian tradition views this "distinguishing character" as rooted in relationship with God—specifically The first book of the Bible, Genesis 1:26-27, states that

Then God said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, And let them have dominion over the fish of the seas and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (ESV 2011:51).

On this foundational verse stands the entire Biblical theology that states that we, as human beings, have been specifically crafted by God, for God, for the purpose of showing God's love to others, and revealing the identity humans have in Christ. By this thought, the identity we have in Christ, the fact that we are made in His image, provides a guiding notion that we are valuable, have worth, and have rights. This formulation provides a route for people to discover their identity through Christ.

In sociology, identity is viewed through various lenses. Our identity is given to us by our parents: such as our names, views and beliefs, appearance, and self-confidence, such as our assigned sex and race. Yet, our identity exists also in our internal self. As human beings, we have

an inherent right to dignity and other rights that come from being human. Our identity also includes perception, a perception of ourselves through the looking glass of others. Charles Cooley's theory about the looking glass self explains that we imagine how others view us, judge us, and then have an emotional response to us (Cooley 1983, as cited in O'Brien 2011:126). Burke and Stets also explain that our identity is formed when we identify ourselves through the lens of being in the *in* or *out* group, such as belonging to the inner clique or not belonging to a specific group, respectively (2000:226). We need interaction with others to develop our sense of self. Even in psychology, it shows that when we repeat something a neurological pathway can be formed (Bingaman 2013:550). That repeated exposure creates physical routes in the brain that generates engrained thought patterns, leading to an "identity" that could be detrimental if false.

Therefore, when someone's identity, their perception of their self, is damaged from repeated abuse, a neurological pathway is formed. Neuroplasticity is "the ability for the brain to change its structure and functions" by growing "new nerve cells and neural connections" in response to environmental stimuli (Bingaman 2013:550; Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:29). Positive and negative neuroplasticity can occur, causing an increase or decrease, respectively, in neural connections and cognitive functions (Vance, et al. 2010:24). In positive social interactions, positive and healthy neuroplasticity can occur. Neuroplasticity can occur involuntarily or voluntarily through mindful awareness (Bingaman 2013:550). Regarding identity, when one has positive interactions with others and actively understands their character, neural pathways are physically formed. So, when a victim in trafficking has negative interactions that degrade their perception of self and cut off positive influences, negative neuroplasticity occurs, and healthy neural pathways are decaying while negative neural pathways are forming. A restructuring of their brain is occurring on the cellular level.

*Why Human Trafficking? Why Identity?*

Monique Villa explains that “after years of abuse, [survivors of human trafficking] have lost their dignity, their self-respect, and their ability to trust anyone” (2019:3). A victim of trafficking can be any age, race, sex, or nationality. Anyone can experience the force, fraud, and coercion that goes on in trafficking (Polaris Project 2021). Human trafficking victims can be scarred and confused by the lack of care and love psychologically, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually by abuse, taking advantage of them sexually and by their work, and isolating them from family and friends. Victims may be forced to work demeaning jobs, long hours, and can be cut off from any support. The physical and psychological torment victims endure, along with the manipulation and humiliating acts forced upon them, significantly impact trafficked persons’ dignity and self-image as well as their belief in their own value. This can be seen in all types of trafficking, both sex and labor. Victims can lose touch with regards to how to start healing when they are separated from any sort of positive socialization, if they are even in the position to heal.

Identity, at its core, is the fundamental aspect of each person. It is what makes us both similar and unique. It is where people find their worth, their value, and acceptance. It is where they find their awareness of themselves internally and externally; for some that can be in religion, for others, in their jobs, their families, their skills, talents, likes and dislikes. Not only does it encompass who we are on the outside, but it encompasses who we see ourselves to be and what we want to convey to others about our-selves. When we can understand our identity and the dignity we possess, we can then fully understand our individuality and who we are as a collective whole: a valued human being. Therefore, when these inhuman jobs and abuse take place, it not

only tests but even rattles the foundations of a person's self. If a victim is not firmly founded, then the core of that person can break; they lose all hope in life.

Considering all of this, the question is, how does one reconstruct a broken identity? How do we restructure that damaged neurological pathway? How does one restore one's identity to build up a positive self-image and reconstitute one's dignity when so many layers of trauma, psychological abuse, and manipulation and coercion are at play? How can hope be restored? I will be investigating this question by looking into the structure of and motivations for the work of an international non-profit, JOY International. This organization helps provide a way for victims of human trafficking to get the help they need holistically so that they can begin their process of healing and personal growth.

*My personal motivation.*

When I heard Dr. Jeff Brodsky, the founder of JOY International, a non-profit involved with helping children out of sex trafficking, speak at my theatre during freshman year of high school, something changed in me. I always knew I wanted to help people, but until that moment I was headed towards a career in astronomy. However, that day a spark ignited. Dr. Brodsky lives by the words "Awareness without action is apathy" (JOY International n.d.). If one does not do anything with the knowledge they are given, then they might as well forget what they have learned. This conviction has led Dr. Brodsky to start this international organizational to seek out "the least of these:" rescuing children from trafficking, poverty, vulnerable situations, and other

risk factors and restoring them (Matthew 25:40 ESV 2011:1877). He is just one of many Christians who has committed his life to take action against the evils of the world.

This man came into the Venue Theatre barefoot, in the middle of a January snowstorm, expressed his passion for rescuing trafficked and impoverished children and through sharing a few devastating stories, he left with his heart on his sleeve. It was hard hearing what was happening around the world and even in my own state. Dr. Brodsky spoke to a room of high school students and did not hold back the truth; he stood there vulnerable in emotion, but also showing the vulnerability of the children he fights for. He knew this information needed to be said, no matter how hard it was to hear.

I knew I could not just have this information and do nothing about it. I had to do something. With a change in my heart and a new passion to pursue, I started gaining knowledge and experience to work towards helping women and children become restored after being rescued from human trafficking. Since that wintery day in January, my goal has been one thing: to find those hurting from this destructive crime and to help them know their self-worth. Human trafficking is not just damaging to society, but it is specifically damaging to the individual's identity. Their self-worth is diminished, their dignity damaged, and their freedom taken. My driving goal is to see their dignity renewed and help them find confidence in who they are.

## BACKGROUND OF MODERN-DAY SLAVERY

“In this era of mass consumption, slaves are only as good and valuable as their abilities” (Villa 2019:1). Slavery today is not lifelong status cemented in law; one’s status as “slave” is not determined by the amount of time one spends enslaved. Modern-day slavery, the severe exploitation of any person, takes on many forms today: human trafficking, forced labor, debt bondage/bonded labor, descent-based slavery, domestic slavery, slavery of children, and forced and early marriage (Anti-Slavery International 2020 Modern Slavery). Modern slavery, or human trafficking, is the umbrella term for any exploitation of a person, including commercial sexual exploitation, and it is debated if it by some definitions even includes trafficking for organ removal. Human trafficking can include, but is not defined by, the transportation of an individual from one place to another against their will. The definition of Modern-day slavery is ever evolving as more information is discovered about the various types of servitude surface.:

“Human trafficking can also be regarded as forced labour, and so the ILO estimate captures virtually the full spectrum of human trafficking abuses or what some people call ‘modern-day slavery’” (ILO June 2012). As noted, Modern-day slavery includes forced labor and forced marriage. Forced labor includes state-imposed forced labor, forced labor exploitation, and “forced sexual exploitation of adults and commercial sexual exploitation of children” (Alliance 87 Modern Slavery 2017:17). Forced labor is a criminal offense according to the International Labour Organization (ILO June 2012). Modern-day slavery, no matter the form, is determined by force, fraud, or coercion done to an individual. It is not determined by time as in ancient slavery: some victims endure this status it could for just a few months to a few years one endures it (Villa 2019:1). This heinous act of forced servitude, no matter the form, degrades one’s dignity and identity.

*Statistics on Human Trafficking*

Human trafficking consists of two major strands: sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Sex trafficking accounts for roughly 30% of victims, while labor trafficking covers the other 70% of victims (Villa 2019:2). Seventy-one percent of the victims of any type of modern-day slavery are female and 29% are male. In forced labor, the gender ratio is about half and half, whereas for forced sexual exploitation, 99% of the victims are women, and 84% of people who have been forced into marriage are female. Men are mainly in state-imposed labor at 59.4% (Alliance 87 Modern Slavery 2017:23).

According to 2005 International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, globally, there are 9.9 to 14.8 million people who are enslaved at any given time (Zimmerman, 2011:567). In 2019, 40.3 million people were enslaved, although other experts suggest the number could be much higher (Villa 2019:2). These estimates indicate a major increase: from 14.8 million enslaved in 2005 to 40.3 million enslaved in 2019. Of that 40.3 million, 24.9 million are in forced labor and 15.4 million in forced marriages (ILO n.d.). These numbers can include children, but a separate estimate calculates that 152 million children, ages 5-17, are enslaved in child labor around the world (ILO 2017; Alliance 87 Child Labour 2017:5). One out of four victims of modern slavery are children, and there are “5.4 victims of modern slavery for every 1,000 people in the world” (ILO n.d.). Roughly 4.8 million are victims of forced sexual exploitation, vastly girls and women and 21.3% are children (Alliance 87 Modern Slavery 2017:24). As far as state-imposed labor is concerned, 4.1 million people are enslaved at a given time, usually from a few weeks to a few years (Alliance 87 Modern Slavery 2017:40-41). In sum, there are many people who are having their rights violated. If only one person was in modern slavery, it would be one too many.

The ILO also estimates that the profit from forced labor amounts to around \$150 billion dollars, although, again, specialists think that the actual number could be closer to a trillion dollars annually (Villa 2019:5). Two-thirds of \$150 billion, or \$99 billion comes from commercial sexual exploitation, and the other third are illegal profits from forced labor exploitation (ILO 2014). Further, global profits from forced labor by private enterprises reach \$44.3 billion every year, \$31.6 billion of which are from trafficking victims (Belser 2005:iii). Human trafficking thrives on greed.

Many countries are attempting to combat human trafficking, and each country is placed in one of three tiers as defined by the U.S. State Department, depending on the extent of its efforts in combating it (see Appendix B). The U.S. State Department's 2020 Trafficking in Persons report stated that the United States has maintained tier-one status, the top category, as it meets the *minimum* requirements of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:515; Brodsky 2018:164). Tier one countries need to show that are taking responsibility to fight human trafficking and need to show progress of it each year. Other countries that are not meeting the minimum standards are in one of the other Tiers: tier two, tier two watchlist, or tier three. The minimum is not always enough; there are still people who are being trafficked and exploited. In a 2016, as many as 21,000 children with the average age of sixteen were trafficked in the United States alone (Brodsky 2018:176). The United States government started using the "3P" paradigm—prosecuting traffickers, protecting and assisting victims, and preventing trafficking in persons—to assess its efforts (Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:14). Many organizations and NGOs have used the 3Ps in their organizational structure as they fight this crime. Often NGOs will either focus their energy on prosecuting,

protecting, or preventing but usually not all three. If an organization does focus on all three, they often are able to then have a greater reach in helping with the elimination of human trafficking.

### *Identity Crisis*

As noted above, trafficking victims are not treated with the dignity that they possess. It is, instead, taken from them. Their identity is stripped away from them; their names are discarded and they are given a number or label instead. This is a tactic of control of the victim and ownership. This happens mainly in sex trafficking. However, in labor trafficking their identity is stripped in other ways that we will see later.

### *Losing Identity in Sex Trafficking.*

Sex trafficking in the United States is much more common than labor trafficking, although the latter still exists. There were 22,326 total reported cases of both sex and labor trafficking in 2019 in the United States (Polaris Project November 2020). These are just the cases that were reported to Polaris's hotline and likely do not reflect the actual number. Over 15,200 women were reported as having been trafficked in that 2019 report (Polaris Project November 2020). There are many more cases that are undocumented, and in each one, especially with regards to sex trafficking, there is a deep injury of the individual's dignity, identity, and sense of self. The sex trafficking industry in the United States becomes another society with its own language. The following terms used in italics over the next few paragraphs are here to display how the prostitution "world" can harm a woman's self-image and rights as a human being. These terms are commonly used within the sex trafficking commercial industry in the United States, commonly known as prostitution.

When a person is newly involved in prostitution, either by will or by force, it is called *turn out* (see Appendix A). They may not be aware that they are being exploited in sex trafficking. This process involves coercion and manipulation. What is known as *seasoning* takes place where a combination of psychological manipulation with physical threats and violence, such as “intimidation, gang rape, sodomy, beatings, deprivation of food or sleep, isolation from family or friends and other sources of support and threatening or holding hostage of a victim’s children” to tear down “a victim’s resistance and ensure compliance” (see Appendix A). This can be towards the worst side of prostitution and this kind of manipulation and abuse can cause detrimental psychological trauma and physical abuse.

Especially in forced commercial sex trafficking, trafficker will instill into a victim that this is their life, and they cannot escape it. If a person tries to leave, a trafficker will charge them an *exit fee* and make it almost impossible for them to leave. They do this with continual use of threats, violence, and manipulation (see Appendix A). The trafficker engrains in the victim’s minds that they are now property of the pimp or trafficker and often will be fed lies that they owe the trafficker, so they cannot leave without repaying that money back. This leaves individual with a broken will and hope. Often in U.S. sex trafficking, the trafficker or pimp has made the victim addicted to drugs, so they become dependent on future supply of the drug from their trafficker. This ownership that a trafficker will force onto a victim only degrades their identity and dignity further.

Traffickers and pimps see victims as a product, someone to make profit on in their business plan, as referenced to in Villa (2019:6). They give their women *quotas*, saying they cannot come back unless they have made the money required of them (see Appendix A). With pimps that have several women under his employment, he references to them as a *stable* (see

Appendix A). Part of the reason for them using such inhuman language is to instill fear and gain control over these individuals. Because of the manipulation and fear, and possible trauma bond (discussed further down), these women do not leave their situation. If the women have been abused, have gotten older, or the trafficker has come to the point that they have no value in them anymore, the trafficker will sell them to another brothel and just get another, often younger, person. Through these layers—and many more—of manipulation, control, and fear, traffickers degrade these women to the point where they do not see value in themselves and their identity is scarred.

There are a few psychological ways some women have adapted to this lifestyle: trauma bond and dissociation. Many individuals may not even realize that are being sex trafficked, exploited, or are under manipulation. These coping mechanism are possible ways that the brain protects the individual.

A trauma bond, also known as Stockholm syndrome, can be formed by which the victim creates a powerful emotional connection to the trafficker because the trafficker rewards the victim with kindness, causing the victim to feel confused. This uneven display of affection and abuse creates loyalty or love towards their trafficker and can be used as an intentional strategy by abusers (Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:20). This issue has been researched in the United States and seen among women in sex trafficking. It is believed that these are coping mechanisms, but they create additional obstacles to escaping the circumstances of exploitation (Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:21). That is why some trafficking victims, once arrested, choose to return to their abuser instead of seeking outside help. The little research that has been done on trauma bonding suggests that, amid abuse, there is a presence of love in the relationship (Karan and

Hansen 2018). The effects of the trauma are strong enough to the point that they not only connect to their abusers but can even come to love them.

Another form of coping for victims of sex trafficking is through dissociation. This involves the separation of the self from processing ongoing violence. This often occurs in the context of abuse and exploitation as well (dissociation 2020). This is the brain's way of protecting the individual from confusion and deeper psychological harm. This is kind of the opposite of Stockholm Syndrome; instead of a trauma bond being formed, there is a complete detachment from reality.

#### *Losing Identity in Labor Trafficking.*

Labor trafficking, or forced labor, is included in almost all various types of slavery. Forced labor even includes forced sexual services. The definition is “work that is performed involuntarily and under the menace of any penalty” and encompasses

“traditional practices of forced labour, such as vestiges of slavery or slave-like practices, and various forms of debt bondage, as well as new forms of forced labour that have emerged in recent decades, such as human trafficking," also called "modern-slavery" to shed light on working and living conditions contrary to human dignity (ILO 2012).

This type of trafficking is more common, consisting of seventy percent of all trafficking victims. Actually, prior to the 1990s, more non-governmental organizations focused on labor trafficking, but during the Bush administration, human trafficking started to be redefined as that of “a matter of abusive and exploitive sex, and especially of female sexual slavery” (Zimmerman 2011:572). Because of this shift in agenda, human trafficking became misunderstood in that exploitive sex seemed to be the main part of the definition. If that were the case, 70% of people in forced and exploitive situations, such as forced labor or child marriage, would be ignored.

In forced labor conditions, bonded labor is the most widespread globally. Bonded labor involves someone who is working because they owe a debt, but soon loses control of their debt and their employment conditions. Although the most common, forced labor is more discreet than sex trafficking. People are hidden behind closed doors, such as with domestic labor, and no one knows they are there. Yet, in many cases of bonded labor, which make up 50% of forced labor, governments do not understand or do anything about the situations. For example, in India, many families may borrow money to survive, then are stuck working in brick kilns in bonded labor. India's government does not see this as forced labor. When these individuals are not told if they have paid off their debt at the end of the year and there is not good record-keeping of their wages so they are forced to come back year after year, this is forced labor. Women, who make up 40% of the brick kiln work force, and children work and are not paid nor are they considered workers. These workers are constantly denied food and payment, so they must take out more money and then repay it just to survive. Thus, the cycle of debt slavery is never-ending (Anti-Slavery International 2020 Bonded Labor). In the case with bonded labor, victims' identity is tarnished because, instead of working off their debt, they are stuck in a cycle of desperation and hopelessness.

*Who do traffickers prey on?*

“Human trafficking thrives in situation where the rule of law is weak and people lack opportunities. Humanitarian crises and conflicts create an environment in which traffickers easily prey upon the vulnerable,” says Yury Fedotov, the former executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime stated in the 2020 TIP report (page 23).

Is there a specific type of trafficked person? Is there a look or behavior that gives someone away? Who do *traffickers*, *pimps*, and *Johns* prey on (see Appendix A for relevant

terminology)? If an individual is brought into sex trafficking, they may question what it was about them that got them into this position. A person put into forced labor may ask why the government was corrupt and forced them into state-imposed labor. A family did not imagine that they'd be working to pay a debt in the brick kilns their fathers took out.

The answer is that anyone from any background can be trafficked; there is no prejudice in trafficking. Gender, age, or race do not matter much, although ethnic minorities or those who are in impoverished and vulnerable situations are more at risk. Although women and children are often thought of first in trafficking, they make up only about 56% of all enslaved people, as noted above (Zimmerman 2011:568). Moreover, gender is not the greatest predictive factor, vulnerability is (Zimmerman 2011:568). If someone does not have access to the resources they need economically, they are at risk. Even people who are exploited through forced pregnancies and adoptions are trafficked (Zimmerman 2011:568). The fact is, there is not one answer to whom traffickers prey on. Although there are many stories about how poverty pushed people into selling themselves, such as in prostitution, many of them would not have chosen that life. The bondage that comes out of that is not their fault either. The majority of trafficking victims are exploited because desperation or poverty put them in a vulnerable position. If they are more vulnerable due to economic precarity or if they do not have access to political power, then they are more likely to be trafficked (Zimmerman 2011:568). Traffickers, in essence, prey on the vulnerable in society.

Human trafficking can take place among a wide variety of forced labor situations: working-class sectors like sweatshops, agriculture, manufacturing, and construction, and in service industries like domestic services, restaurants, entertainment, and sexual services. In the U.S. forced labor mainly includes agriculture and domestic services. There are many *facilitators*

in both types of trafficking (see Appendix A). What happens when someone is taken for granted or is rejected in society? They are taken advantage of. Even governments do it, as seen with state-imposed labor (Alliance 87 Modern Slavery 2017:40). Therefore, the blame is never on the victim because they do not have access to the resources that can help them.

Minorities and immigrants are often trafficked due to the lack of economic resources. There are many instances where immigrants come into the United States to work, only to have their papers taken away, putting them at the mercy of their employer. Those who lack education and for whom English may not be their first language are more vulnerable as well. Those who do not have a strong support system, such as a stable family, are also vulnerable. Runaways and homeless teens and young adults are especially at risk in the United States.

*How to identify a victim of human trafficking.*

If people are aware of the signs of trafficking, then possibly they can make a difference in someone's life. People are trafficked in our backyards; there is a high chance you have actually met someone who has been involved in trafficking. You just need to be aware of the signs. Especially if law enforcement used trauma-informed policing practices, were aware of the signs, and knew what questions to ask, it could stop the cycle of slavery (Stelter (2014) 2020). Without that knowledge, many victims end up being incarcerated themselves.

John Meekins, a former corrections officer in a women's prison, has done research into sex trafficking by interviewing the formerly trafficked women, traffickers, investigators, experts, and academics (Stelter (2014) 2020). He discovered that many cases go unnoticed by the justice system, but also that many trafficking victims are currently in prisons. The first thing to understand if someone is a victim of trafficking or if they are freely engaging in the sex trade is that a survivor will not tell you that they have been abused because of the manipulations and

threats from their procurer (Stelter (2014) 2020). Meekins further explains that victims believe their procurers are all powerful. When someone is arrested, there are some signs for law enforcement that provide insight if that person is a victim of trafficking or not:

1. She does not have an ID on her at the time of arrest.
2. She chooses to use an alias or go by "Jane Doe."
3. She has signs of physical abuse. These wounds are not usually visible on her face, but rather will be around her hairline or on her torso. A pimp will avoid damaging the face of women he controls because a beat up prostitute costs him money.
4. She does not appear to be worried about being arrested. This is an indication that she has a pimp who will immediately pay her bond.
5. Being arrested more than once in a 48-hour period. This signifies that someone is making her get back to 'work' immediately.
6. She appears to have no one to call, yet is bonded out quickly.
7. Two or more girls are bonded out by the same person.
8. Women has noticeable tattoos (AKA brands) with a person's name. These tattoos tend to be large and elaborate and often include '\$' symbols or reference to 'pimps.' If these tattoos are present, police should document for future identification on other women.
9. She uses a paid lawyer instead of a public defender
10. When arrested, she actively seeks out other girls who do not have anyone to pay their bond. This indicates she is 'recruiting' for her pimp. (Stelter (2014) 2020).

Meekins also suggests some questions to ask potential victims. One such question is: "how do you perceive yourself and what led you to this belief?" (Stelter (2014) 2020). Because of the manipulation, brainwashing, and dehumanization that occurs to have a victim surrender to the trafficker, she will not feel worthy (Stelter (2014) 2020). Many times, women have tried to seek help before only to be punished, so this could be their only opportunity to get out. Meekins further explains that asking questions about her family relations, her job, charges, etc., will give

an indicator of her situation and could save her life. Many non-profits are working to further educate law enforcement on- trauma informed protocols so they do not retraumatize a victim in their quest to search for answers.

There are also practical signs for the community to watch out for, especially at big events, event centers, hotels, and shopping malls. There is a national human trafficking hotline called Polaris that anyone can call if they suspect someone is being trafficked [+1(888)373-7888]. Polaris then contacts law enforcement to investigate based on the information given, so their reach could be limited. Here are some signs and questions of which to be aware, as provided by the Homeland Security's awareness campaign, the Blue Campaign, to recognize human trafficking:

- Does the person appear disconnected from family, friends, community organizations, or houses of worship?
- Has a child stopped attending school?
- Has the person had a sudden or dramatic change in behavior?
- Is a juvenile engaged in commercial sex acts?
- Is the person disoriented or confused, or showing signs of mental or physical abuse?
- Does the person have bruises in various stages of healing?
- Is the person fearful, timid, or submissive?
- Does the person show signs of having been denied food, water, sleep, or medical care?
- Is the person often in the company of someone to whom he or she defers? Or someone who seems to be in control of the situation, e.g., where they go or who they talk to?
- Does the person appear to be coached on what to say?
- Is the person living in unsuitable conditions?
- Does the person lack personal possessions and appear not to have a stable living situation?
- Does the person have freedom of movement? Can the person freely leave where they live? Are there unreasonable security measures? (Blue Campaign 2020).

Red flags should also be raised if there are inconsistencies in such questions raised above in the report of any party. Further, if a person is avoiding eye contact, is inappropriately dressed, may be under the influence of controlled substances, does not have any possessions or personal documents on them, and if are in the presence of a controlling adult they could have been trafficked. If someone is showing any of these signs, it is necessary to contact law enforcement and/or Polaris.

*Who/What is at fault for Human Trafficking?*

Yvonne Zimmerman, a dean of Christian Ethics at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, writes that slavery is no longer about the duration of time one is enslaved—as was historically the case with lifelong African American slavery in the United States of America—but rather that the key is “the enactment of violent control of one person by another” (2011:567). It is more about the process of how a person is enslaved, such as one who undergoes force, fraud, or coercion, over the permanent state of an individual, that of being lifelong enslavement. Zimmerman states in her article that Kevin Bale, a trafficking expert, explains that the reasons for the resurgence of slavery since 1945 are threefold: “the increase in world population,” “the social and economic changes” that create huge disparities and lead many into poverty, and corruption, where “citizens are vulnerable to becoming enslaved when governments fail to protect their citizens and maintain the rule of the law” (2011:568). These three factors have created vulnerable situations for many. Slavery has evolved--before it was protected by the law in the U.S., but now it has to hide from the law because “the key to keep someone in bondage is to detain them in a situation where the law cannot protect them” (Zimmerman 2011:568). But as Bale writes, even within the law and government, there is often corruption, creating conditions for slavery to flourish. In many ways, modern societies have cultivated an environment for underground businesses to make a profit on the exploitation of people.

The blame is also on the economic, political, and social institutions themselves. In these social institutions, patriarchal hegemony, sexism, and misogyny have parts to play in human trafficking. Hegemony refers to the “collective consent to inequality secured by the idea that it’s inevitable, natural, or desirable” (Wade and Ferree 137-138). This concept helps us understand social inequality which we can then apply to human trafficking. In a world that idealizes those

who can perform like a “man,” men are rewarded for affirming the stereotype of hegemonic masculine traits which continue to devalue and discriminate against women. When we idealize hegemonic masculinity, we then rationalize the gender inequality and disadvantages of women and some men (Wade and Ferree: 138). This hegemony is thus “widespread consent to relations of systematic social disadvantage” (Wade and Ferree: 138).

Sexism is “the belief that one sex, usually male, is superior to the other” (Ferris and Stein 2020:249). This is a result of historical privileges, opportunities, and resources that were distributed based on category membership in an unequal society, which results in patriarchy (Ferris and Stein 2020:249). Some cultures, currently and in the past, has been marked by gender inequality. Now, sexism is a result of that in contemporary societies (Ferris and Stein 2020:249). Misogyny also is a result. It is “an ingrained prejudice against women; dislike, contempt, or hatred of women” (Ferris and Stein 2020:249). These prejudices contribute to human trafficking, especially for women who travel for work. It is seen most easily with sex trafficking as well, as 99% of them are women, and often they are abused and degraded.

These three social constructs relate to sex trafficking because people believe and act on the stereotypes that go along with them. The idealization and rationalization on these bases of discrimination can lead to unjust acts against women, such as forced sexual exploitation, of whose victims are 99% female (Alliance 87 Modern Slavery 2017:23). Many procurers assert their dominance over women because of power; it is not always about the sexual acts themselves but the control over the individual.

Blame should go to the perpetrators and exploiters who use institutions of hegemony, misogyny, and sexism as a support system. The same is true for the Johns who buy sex and those who watch pornography. Monique Villa stated in her book, *Slaves Among Us*, that traffickers

objectify and dehumanize the person they torture and abuse. In this way, they will not have remorse (2019:xvi). This mindset may help distance themselves from the act. A trafficker or pimp, even a John, can continue living out their fantasies, gratify their sexual desires, and exploit and abuse a person without feeling guilt. Those who watch pornography also play a part, because it is a fuel for trafficking. Many of those on pornographic websites have been trafficked or exploited without ever leaving their homes. This is because many of those on pornographic websites are under 18, have been forced into it, or have had some sort of fraud or coercion. Hence, everyone who acts on a desire or thinks in this way contributes to this complex intertwined network of atrocity.

In labor trafficking, the underlining structure is mainly seen in economic differences, intersected by class, gender, and race. Human trafficking as a whole is a “logical and even predictable outgrowth of globalization and of gendered labor and migration (Zimmerman 2011:575). Often seen in America are immigrants who come to the U.S. for domestic or agriculture work because of global economic and ecological changes as well as their own countries’ poverty, and end up being exploited, trafficked, and abused (Zarembka 2002:144). World leaders seeking capitalistic opportunities are often to blame, as they set the standards for loans with the International Monetary Fund for other countries, and those countries’ currency value plummets, leading workers to seek work in the global north (Zarembka 2002:144).

In theological terms, it is the evil within people that cause this horrendous crime to develop: their sinful nature. There are plenty of scripture references that speak on the sinful nature of man. One such is Jeremiah 17:9 which states that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (ESV 2011:1405). Sin was originally brought into the world through Adam and Eve, biblically the first man and woman on Earth,

who, through eating the forbidden fruit, disobeyed God and were condemned to die (see Genesis 3). From their original sin, all humans have it in their nature to sin, as expressed in Romans 5:12: “therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (ESV 2011:2166). Through sin, our natural "fleshly" desires are wicked (Romans 7:18 ESV 2011:2169; Ephesians 2:3 ESV 2011:2264). Thus, everyone who acts on their fleshly sinful nature sins, which everyone does in some shape or form. It is those who do not try to prevent heinous acts and willingly act on that sinful flesh who are to blame. Galatians 5:19-21 discloses that some of the human desires that are sinful: such as sexual immorality, orgies, and sensuality. Galatians 5:17 further shares that “the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit,” or God. The only way to not act on it is to live in the Spirit by letting Christ transform your heart through salvation and the works of the Spirit, which can be seen through the “fruit of the Spirit” which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, (and) self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23 ESV 2011:2254-2255).

## IDENTITY

Identity is something we all strive for. We long to be known, understood, and accepted. We want to be accepted in the crowd, while still standing out and maintaining our individuality. Even in cultures that are more family-oriented than individualistic, people still want to be understood for themselves. We want to know ourselves; who are we? Why did we act like that? What is our purpose? Some people are working to be more self-aware; they may ask “what are my feelings, dreams, and desires? Can I have a certain characteristic? What are my strengths and weaknesses?” Getting to know oneself is a continuous process throughout life. As new situations and circumstances occur in life, we adjust, form, and shape ourselves.

*What is the framework for identity?*

Identity is a person’s whole self, not just externally but also internally. It is the mind; our inward being or self. It is the body; our physical being. It is the heart; our emotional being. It is the soul; our spiritual being.

In society, we are told a story of what is accepted. Many adolescents adjust themselves to either fit inside that mold or not to. Their self-image is influenced by society’s peer pressure of what is “in,” what others think of them and outwardly vocalize, and how they are raised (Cooley 1983, as cited in O’Brien 2011:126). Each person may perceive an individual differently based on how they present themselves to that person and in a given situation. As we develop, our brains (the physical matter) matures while our mind (the abstract where our thoughts are) mentally matures; we figure out our emotions. All of that is in constant reciprocal relationship with our experiences (Bingaman 2013:550; Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:29).

We become wiser through knowledge and those experiences. However, sometimes our experiences can hold us back, cripple us, and harm our development. As we experience life, we must sift through what we will value, what criticism we will learn from, and what we will put aside.

### *Sociological perspectives on identity*

We want to create our own identity; we want it to be our own. Our identity is not just defined by our interaction with others. Our external experiences create our self-image, those ideas we hold about our abilities, appearances, and personality (Stets and Burke 2000:226). Yet, our identity is not just defined by who we see ourselves to be. Our internal experiences create our self-awareness, the conscious knowledge of our own character, feelings, motives, and desires (Adams and Marshall 1996:430). Identity is a combination of both our internal identities and our outward experiences. Again, our personal identity (psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical) cannot be formed without outside interaction (our experiences and others perception of us). As such, “Identities are definitional categories we use to specify, both to ourselves and to others, who we are. They are our social locations that determine our position in the world relative to other people” (Newman 2012:35). This can explain identity in a sociological context. Constructionism argues what we “know to be real and essential is always a product of the culture and historic period in which we live” (Newman 2012:39).

One way to also view our external identity is through the "concentric circles" model: how others see us is where we are placed, whether that be based on sex, gender, race, social or economic class, or education level (Newman 2012:29). Here, the concentric circles are a visual aid to categorize our identities. This definition shows that each of those things in our concentric circles are our external *identities*. Identifiers and identity are different. There are four functions

of identifiers: 1) they depend on the context (e.g. race, sex, etc. in social meaning); 2) they make us think in terms of opposites (e.g. either/or, man or woman, etc.); 3) they reflect social ranking and power relations (e.g. class as a system of dominance); and 4) they have both psychological and structural meanings (Newman 2012:39-40). Our perspectives on our identity are based on these four identifiers which, under constructionism, are otherwise known as the social construct of reality (Newman 2012:39). So, we all possess multiple identities, based on identifiers (still external), in the time period and the various cultures we live in. Yet, one must keep in mind that this still only views the external identity and that we still have the internal one. Together, they make up one whole self, a whole identity.

*Why is this important?*

Identity is not just a psychological phenomenon. It is also who we are as a result of our interaction with others, our experiences, and our sense of inherent self-worth. The former United States Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo, stated in the *2020 Trafficking in Person's Report* that

Every person, everywhere, is inherently vested with profound, inherent, equal dignity. America was founded on a promise to defend those rights—including life, liberty, and the pursuit of justice. But too often we've fallen short, and we cannot fall short on this challenge (2020:4).

As human beings, we have an inherent, inalienable right to be treated ethically and morally. The United Nations created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 which outlined those rights we possess as humans. Article 1 states that “we are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” In Article 3, we have the right to life, liberty, and security of person. Article 4 makes clear that slavery is wrong (United Nations Declaration of Human Rights n.d.). The list

goes on. It is our basic right that others recognize our dignity. Sociology helps us understand the interactions of people in groups, and specifically we see the interaction between those who are in power and those who are forced to be in subordination in “permanent inequality” (Rothenburg 1995:57-64). Inequality goes against the basic right of humanity as prescribed by the UN.

Human trafficking is a direct violation of human rights, according to domestic and international law. When the physical integrity of any person is violated, the dignity of that person is violated as well. That alters our interaction with society, so ultimately it alters our self-image and whole self. It is the moral and just thing to do to help correct the wrong done to a person.

*Framework to create identity: Sociological theories*

*Looking-glass self.*

Charles Horton Cooley developed a theory called the looking-glass self which describes how a person perceives who they are by how others view them. A famous concept attached to this is there is no *I* without the *you* (Cooley 1983, as cited in O’Brien 2011:126). What this suggests is that we perceive what others think of us and that molds the identity we create for ourselves. A forerunner of this is Mead’s social psychology of the *Self, the I, and the Me*, where the “I” is the response of the individual to the community, where the “me” is the reflective self, it maintains itself in the community (Mead 1934:125, as cited in O’Brien 2011). Later Cooley adapted Mead’s “me” into his looking-glass self theory. There are three elements to this theory: 1) “The imagination of our appearance to other persons”; 2) “The imagination of (the) judgement of that appearance”; and 3) “a self-feeling,” such as pride or mortification (Cooley 1983, as cited in O’Brien 2011:126). Cooley suggests the imagined appearance, the perception of other’s judgement of it, and the emotional response to it shapes the internal self of an individual.

We share in this imagined judgement others may have of our appearance by placing it upon ourselves (Cooley 1983, as cited in O'Brien 2011:126). We can see a perfect example of this with my niece. She is three years old and has a wonderfully sassy personality. However, she is also very polite, especially when wanting something. Young minds can be easily formed and manipulated; everything is impressed within their minds and that is why it is so important to protect them. Cooley would describe my niece's personality as a reflection from what she knows we want to see. Children need affection, and any response they can manage, good or bad, enables them to control the situation in a way; they are preoccupied with what others think and grasp at holding that attention and affection (Cooley 1983, as cited in O'Brien 2011:126). They will appropriate a visible action of a parent, which they know they can have some sort of control (Cooley 1983, as cited in O'Brien 2011:126). They are always doing whatever others want them to do or what can elicit a response: "Affection, at any age, exists when the passion to influence others seems to overbalance the established character and give it an obvious twist or pose" (Cooley 1983, as cited in O'Brien 2011:127). My niece may want to play with me and, since throwing tantrums does not get her desired effect, she knows that if she asks nicely, I am less likely to turn that request down. In appropriation, she creates an action to get my attention, and so according to Cooley, she "works" me (Cooley 1983, as cited in O'Brien 2011:127). Children observe and respond by looking for and acting on that attention.

The looking-glass self, although a perceived self-image from another's, I argue, is not actually an individual's identity. It is the image that you place on yourself, from what others think. The imagination that creates your self-feelings only creates your social *I*. Cooley's theory can help explain how the identity of a victim of human trafficking can be distorted through the lens of their trafficker. For example, when a procurer refers to his *stable*, he is belittling

everyone's identities to just money-making pieces of property (see Appendix A). This interaction does impact victims' self-image. If women are only seen as property and treated inhumanly, what are they going to think of themselves? If they are consistently being told that they are lesser than they are, the image that they are going to internalize will be a reflection of that. However, what they see in the mirror is a reflection not of their true value, but rather it is only a reflection from what years of slavery have told them they are.

*Social psychology: Social identity theory*

Social psychology studies “how situations influence us, with special attention to how people view and affect one another” (Myers and Twenge 2019:2). When we constantly go through the same physical pattern or are exposed to the same group and social settings, that repetition influences us. It influences not only our brain chemistry, but also how we see ourselves because our identity is partly tied to our interactions.

Jan Stets and Peter Burke explain social identity theory as a person creating a self-concept by belonging to a group. The formation of identity is when the self names or categorizes itself in certain ways relative to other social categories, such as race or class (Stets and Burke 2000: 224). The outward self is shaped by the naming of the self and being involved in or not involved in different groups. In identity theory, the categorization is called identification, whereas in social identity theory it is called self-categorization (Stets and Burke 2000: 224). Stets and Burke state that “identities are composed of the self-views that emerge from the reflexive activity” of identification of membership in a group (Stets and Burke 2000: 225-226). In social identity theory, a person know they belong to a group or social category, which is a group of people who are in the same social category (Stets and Burke 2000:225). So, if someone

is similar to their self and categorized as such, they are part of the “in” group, as opposed to those who differ from the self and who are therefore part of the “out” group (Stets and Burke 2000:225).

Stets and Burke explain further that the foundation of identity is established through interaction within these groups. People view themselves within a group, in comparison to a group, and their role within that group (Stets and Burke 2000: 226). This can be examined with Cooley’s looking-glass self in how people see themselves by how others view them, in the “in” group or the “out” group. This can include any social category such as class, race or ethnic group, or sex. However, when identifying oneself based on categorizing the self within a group, one may take on the stereotypes of a group. With the example of the trafficker’s *stable*, an individual may take on the characteristics of that group as their new identity.

Through social comparison, a person sees similarities with their self and the in-group and accentuates differences with their self and the out group (Stets and Burke 2000:225). This could happen in trafficking, such as when a victim may see themselves apart from a group, within one, or take on a role within the group, assimilating into that culture. Part of self-categorization means a person begins performing the role, with its expectations and meanings (Stets and Burke 2000:225). An individual composes an identity based on categorizing themselves within the group by performing the role of that group, such as in prostitution (Stets and Burke 2000:225-226). In this “role identity,” people take on self-meaning to accompany it (Stets and Burke 2000:226). This is seen in labor trafficking, where domestic workers take on the role, adopt self-meanings to the role, and assimilate it. This takes the dignity and the truth of their identity away? from them, even to the point where some people may not even realize they are being trafficked.

A person may have a distinguishing characteristic that relates to a group, so that it becomes a part of their social identity. However, their intrinsic fundamental identity, that of their self, may not be shaped by the social identity. Their personality may be molded by social factors, but people are also born with traits that make them unique. This is part of the self, or personal identity, is the lowest level of self-categorization and categorizes the self as a “unique entity, distinct from other individuals” (Stets and Burke 2000:228). The *self*, a noun, is defined as “the union of elements (such as body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations) that constitute the individuality and identity of a person; the entire person of an individual” (Merriam-Webster 2020). This is a great definition to explain a person’s inward being, without which one’s full identity is lacking.

When an individual acts out, they do so with their own desires and goals (Stets and Burke 2000:228), and we see this when a victim tries to escape their situation and they know they are in trouble. They act outside of the collective group. Depending on the factors in the situation, the level of identity that is activated will operate and may override the personal identity (Stets and Burke 2000:228). If they know they need to cooperate to stay alive, such as in bonded labor, the situation may call for them to “fit in” as the group identity of laborers may triumph. This is called *salience* when a person activates an identity in a situation to increase influence (Stets and Burke 2000:229). This can be seen in sexual exploitation when a sex worker activates their identity of being one to gain a little influence with the procurer or client so they will not be beaten. We need both the interaction with others and with the self to understand the whole identity of a person.

When a person embodies an “in” group, it is called depersonalization (Stets and Burke 2000:231). They are associating themselves in that social category of the group, such as sex

worker or bonded laborer, instead of as an individual (Stets and Burke 2000:231). The activation of any social identity can result in depersonalization or self-verification, which could then result in collective action, cooperation, altruism, and emotional contagion (Stets and Burke 2000:232). There are two aspects to depersonalization: “one’s identification with a category ... and the behaviors that we associate with the category” (Stets and Burke 2000:232). One needs to both identify and act on those behaviors. When one is accepted into the group, that also plays apart in their identification process and their self-esteem. A victim of trafficking, after months or even years of trafficking, may embody the “in” group identity and show signs of depersonalization. This could result in confusion with the reality of their situation and bring about trauma bonding.

#### *Psychology: Neuroplasticity*

A traumatic event, especially recurring, can change the neurons in the brain and change the way someone thinks and perceives the world around them. Our mind creates neural pathways, a psychical route, when we go through repeated exposure and when we create habits or thought patterns (Bingaman 2013:550). There is a physical change in our minds when something becomes "engrained" in it.

Neuroplasticity is the brain’s ability to physically change its structure by creating new neural pathways (Bingaman 2013:550). These changes are due to environmental stimuli and can be positive or negative (Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:24). Even from childhood, our brains rapid-fire neurons and neural pathways are formed in a continual process. Positive neuroplasticity refers to the situation in which someone goes through challenging environmental stimuli which promote cognitive functioning through neurons becoming stronger (Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:24). Negative neuroplasticity refers to the brain

experiencing weak environmental stimuli, resulting in decreased cognitive functions by weaker connections between neurons (Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:24). Positive neuroplasticity is not always *positive*. Someone can have positive neuroplasticity when there is a challenging stimulus in a healthy environment, and this can be reciprocated in a bad unhealthy environment. “Cognitive reserve” refers to the “structural changes that support and improve cognitive functioning” (Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:24). In an unhealthy environment, naturally, a person may experience less sleep, poor nutrition, poor health, substance abuse, and depression, all of which link to less cognitive reserve. On the other hand, a healthy diet, physical activity, education, social interactions, intellectual pursuits, and cognitive remediation can result in more cognitive reserve, thus resulting in positive neuroplasticity (Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:25).

Victims of human trafficking often are in environments characterized by high physical activity, but poor diet, increased stress, alcohol and substance abuse (especially with sex trafficking), and lack of education opportunities. This can result in lower cognitive reserve, which can result in negative neuroplasticity and deteriorating neural pathways (Vance, Roberson, McGuinness, and Fazeli 2010:24-25). Often, survivors disassociate during trauma which can result in their brain switching into a protective mode. Along with this, sex trafficking victims can be stuck in a fight or flight mode, a survival mode. There can be an increase in anxiety and depression, which results in a need for more mindfulness (Bingaman 2013:550-551). This anxious awareness is the result of the amygdala, or “stress center,” being on overdrive and producing too much fear and anxiety (Bingaman 2013:551). Although a little fear or anxiety is necessary, too much is physically and psychologically dangerous.

The brain is a hyper aware “anticipation machine” that encodes automatic responses based on past experiences (Bingaman 2013:551). These neural pathways can cause increased stress even when small things are introduced. Survivors can learn to change these pathways and learn to reconstruct these mental bridges by having mindful practices such as meditation, which has been shown to be helpful through examining religious practitioners (Bingaman 2013:551-2, 555).

*How their identity is shaped by human trafficking*

Identity is scarred by the trauma of human trafficking. The essence of the victims’ being, the inherent value and worth, is still the same. However, the experience of being degraded and exploited makes such an impact that they feel worthless and broken. The influence of the environment and *the Life*, the harm that is done to them from being in sex trafficking or labor trafficking, takes its toll (see Appendix A). This is because who we associate with is who we will start to reflect and become.

Aside from the fact that victims have had endured physical harm, the emotional and spiritual isolation and psychological harm have also scarred their selves. A part of their identity, the self, has now been changed because their body has gone through torture, their emotions are shattered, and their mind has now created physical neural pathways that shape their thinking (Bingaman 2013:550). Where our mind goes, there we go also. Our thoughts shape our actions.

It is important to remember that not all sex workers are trafficked or enslaved. Anne McClintock argues that “depicting all sex workers as slaves only travesties the myriad, different experiences of sex workers around the world. At the same time, it theoretically confuses social agency and identity with social *construct*” (Brennan 2002:155). Lumping them all together can

confuse governments and non-profits working to help individuals in these situations. McClintock explains that not every sex worker is a slave, so representing each as such confuses the understanding of sex trafficking with sex workers and with slavery. We have to understand each as distinct in order to understand how to go about helping them. We have to also understand the unique workings of their identity. When they are all portrayed as the same thing, sex workers or slaves, then the reality of each is assumed under the umbrella of human trafficking and it is not distinct. It is important to understand that not all sex workers are slaves and need to be rescued. In Nevada, it is legal to be a sex worker, or prostitute. That is why in each situation it is important to understand the differences.

In the Dominican Republic, there are women who are exploited both voluntarily and involuntarily. Stuck in a cycle of poverty and desperation, women work in the sex industry in an attempt to capitalize on the tourist market. Some work for themselves and maintain control of their work environment; there are no pimps or traffickers that coerce them (Brennan 2002:155). As poverty in the Dominican Republic is widespread, the women often sell their bodies in the hopes of attracting wealthy tourists, as they see them as “walking visas,” so they can be secure economically (Brennan 2002:156). There have been a few success stories in which women obtain visas and seek more advantageous lives outside the country. This keeps the market open and encourages more women to follow the same path. Some women are voluntary in this job market; however, not all are lucky to be self-employed and decide when they want to stop working in the industry. But for those who work voluntarily, in the attempt to survive and advance, these women are capitalizing on the same thing that exploits them (Brennan 2002:155). They strive to have a better life by using capitalism’s logic, yet that is what has brought them into this situation in the first place. They are exploited because they have to use their body as a

means to an end instead of being able to obtain basic needs and rights without having to use sex to have those needs met. This should never have to be the case. Many times, they believe that they can only gain a better life through their bodies, and since they see that it can be advantageous for a few, they go into that line of work (if they had the choice initially).

Yet, there are many who are in *labor* trafficking with no way out. They are treated like the outcasts in society. However, some corporations are built by those who have been trafficked. Many of the rich in society have maids or nannies, which possibly could be in domestic forced labor. In *Global Women*, one essay talks about how domestic workers who travel to the United States seeking work end up having their contract ignored and work longer, harder hours on 50 cents an hour, or nothing, as opposed to the people they work for may be making \$120,000 tax free incomes (Zarembka 2002:146). They are not treated as humans with the equal rights, but instead are given as gifts from one rich upper class to rich members of society, and many are further exploited (Zarembka 2002:147). Many of these domestic workers cannot seek help as their papers have been taken from them and if they go to the police, they risk being deported (Zarembka 2002:145,148).

In these cases of domestic forced labor, these labor workers are stripped of their identity, their role, their dignity. There is one example of a domestic worker who wasn't allowed to bathe inside, or where one was forced to wear a dog collar and sleep outside with the dog (Zarembka 2002:147). Like in sex trafficking, many people dream of a better life, a ticket to a better land (Brennan 2002:159). However, they do not always get the chance. There is a major gap that is not being reached. People are losing against the direction of powerful and wealthier countries and economic changes, resulting in their situation to become that much more dire. Because of

poverty or other major or minor social influences, people are put into situations that only cause harm to them holistically.

### *The link between religion and sociology*

The perspective on religion differs vastly among sociologists. One father of sociology, Emile Durkheim, helps us understand religion's function in society. Sociology studies interaction, and religion is one community where people interact and form strong bonds, as examined in Durkheim's collective effervescence. His work in the sociology of religion is in the macro lens and does not look at the micro lens of religion and sociology with identity. Emile Durkheim's work centers around understanding how individuals are shaped by social facts (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:97). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* helps us understand how human consciousness and social facts are linked by separating the sacred from the profane (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:97). The sacred is created through rituals where individuals transform moral power into religious symbols, grouping people together (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:97). Through *The Elementary Forms*, Durkheim gives rise to the notion of "collective effervescence" and through that we can further understand "in" group bonding that Stets and Burke reference for identity (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:99). Durkheim further argues that the moral bond becomes a cognitive bond that lays the backdrop of religion (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:97). Religion is just an explanation of collective ideas for Durkheim.

Durkheim argues that society created religion by dividing the world into sacred and profane objects. The profane included commonplace items, whereas the sacred caused reverence, awe, and obligation. Durkheim does not understand the source of the sacred (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:97). While he believes that there is a truth behind religion, a superior moral power, it is based in society, not in God for him (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:98). For Durkheim,

religion embodies society, and in its primitive form it has an “intellectual and moral conformity” that can relate beliefs to social structures (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:98-99). In religion, people come together for ceremonies and, he argues. The intensified interactions serve as a stimulant to generate *collective effervescence*, during which participants believe to be overtaken by something outside themselves (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:99). This becomes religion. For Durkheim, religion consists of rituals, and it plays an important role in bringing people together in harmony.

Collective effervescence is formed by groups coming together in religious celebration and harmony in like-mindedness, creating an energy and enthusiasm that is due to the intense interactions of many people (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:99). Through this, we can see how when people form an “in” group, there can be a collective effervescence formed where that concentration of people can create an intense interaction, energy and enthusiasm (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:99). In human trafficking, many times people are isolated, they become part of the “out” group. Even with sex workers, they have their own “in” group by the connection of their experiences. However, what they lack is that collective effervescence. There is no positive “enthusiasm” in trafficking. What Durkheim explains in the *Elementary Forms*, is that in the sacred, there are “rituals that transform the moral power of society into religious symbols that bind individuals to the group” (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018:97). Religion binds individuals together and offers a support group. However, trafficking, on a micro lens, tears them apart and separates groups of people. In human trafficking there is that element of isolation and possibly feeling cast of society, feeling like the “out” group, not being involved with reality of life, and separated from any support groups. That is why it is so important in the recovery process of victims to create a support group, and even ties to a religious group if wanted. Durkheim would

probably explain it as a need to create a collective effervescence, creating a group for shared collective ideas.

### *Theological perspective on identity*

#### *Why is this important?*

Whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society... Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator. (Pope Paul VI 1965: 27).

This quote, from Pope Paul VI in 1965, speaks volumes about the violence that is done to a person regarding their dignity and integrity. This corruption poisons human society: if human society is poisoned, then personal interactions become toxic. It seems to be an endless cycle that one cannot escape. In this pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world, or *Gaudium et Spes*, Paul VI argues that these infamies are not only violations against persons, but a dishonor against the creator (Pope Paul VI 1965: 27). Many well-known Christian figures, such as Pope Paul VI, have been able to shed light and add moral clarity to social issues.

The Christian theological perspective can help people restore their self-image and reinstate lost dignity. We live in a very broken and corrupt world. Every source of hope that can encourage others' souls is important. As stated in the U.N.'s Declaration of Human Rights, people are inherently equal because we all have an intrinsic value and worth. Christian theology speaks to that right repeatedly through scripture, the Holy Bible. The conviction that "all persons are important--because they are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ and not because they have merited significance" (UMC Book of Discipline 2016:83)

permeates Christian theology. Furthermore, the Christian tradition considers humans' identity as beloved children of God to be so fundamental that neither the lack of merit, nor any sort of suffering, nor even the ubiquity of sin can revoke it. The apostle Paul wrote in the New Testament:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-38 ESV 2011:2172).

This verse specifically speaks of the love that is given to us and that nothing, not even the most grievous sufferings, can take it away. Even as trafficking victims endure their perils, Christianity teaches that there is someone who loves them, and because of that love they can conquer their fear and torments through Christ. Those who the world discards, God still loves.

Christian theology helps promote a restorative message and hope to those who are harmed. For example, the verse from the prophet Jeremiah "before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" shows that God knew each person before they were born (Jeremiah 1:5a ESV 2011:1369). The apostle Paul states in Hebrews 1:3 that humans are the exact representation of God's being (ESV 2011:2361). Furthermore, in Romans 8:21, Jesus came to show that he is for us, not against us (ESV 2011:2171). Each of these Christian truths help found the basis of identity for believers and many use it to understand who they are and who we are meant to be.

Because we are human beings, we have value, inherent in Christ and rightly given to us by God. It is stated in Genesis 2:7 that God made man from His very breath, and from this life-giving breath, we share in God's eternal life (ESV 2011:53).

Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase (St. John Paul II 1995:section 2).

Even with the fall of man through sin and the restoration of that shared life with God through Christ, as humans, our life should be full, exceeding our life on earth. From this spiritual status, there is a value on every life, Christian or otherwise. 1 Peter 2:9 states that we are a "royal priesthood" for those who are in Christ (ESV 2011:2408). From a theological stance, our value is inherent because we are made in the image of God, are loved and worthy, and we are to share in His life by living fully in His existence.

The result of those who do not live with God is sin against His people. Since God is love, those who do not have God do not understand or live in His unconditional love. The results from that separation from His love leaves us to our sinful nature, which was laid out in the beginning of Adam and Eves fall when their initial sin separated them from God. We cannot have the Kingdom of God without His love, as noted, "if the kingdom of God is the true human society, it is a fellowship of justice, equality, and love. But it is hard to get riches with justice, to keep them with equality, and to spend them with love" (Rauschenbusch 1991:77). Left to our own devices, separate from the gift of God's moral clarity, values such as justice, equality, and love are squandered and twisted. Yet, these values are distorted by everyone—including those who live in the Kingdom because if we are on this Earth, then we still sin and are being sanctified. Theology explains human beings only redemption is Jesus Christ. Those who live in the Kingdom are just aware of God's unconditional love and moral clarity, but, it is up to them to live it out. Those

who do not may still live by those values or morality, justice, equality, and love, but not under Christ.

Anyone can become greedy for wealth, and in the process can treat others unjustly, as the quote states. Sometimes this squandered justice, equality, and love becomes so immoral that labor or sex trafficking can occur. Hording and accumulating wealth and power can result in the sacrifice of others, such as how America is built on the backs of African slaves. Spending the wealth can become a self-centered interest and can be done without love. What Christian theology shows is that, in living in the kingdom of God, living justice, equal, and loving lives can be done without the bad side-effects because they are done in God's unconditional love with the fruits of His Spirit.

Christian theology offers practical solutions to combat this social problem. The 2020 *Trafficking in Persons Report* by the U.S. government notes that "faith-based organizations are able to provide victim assistance due to their extensive community networks and reach across national and international borders" which grants them flexibility that governments do not have (24). It also notes that eleven religious leaders from the world's major religions united in stating that their religious texts condemn human trafficking (*Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:24*). This is just a small example of the resources that religious organizations bring to the fight against human trafficking.

Slavery fundamentally views people as a *means* rather than an *end*. The basis of humanity is that people have worth and rights that may not be taken into consideration in trafficking. The goal should be to protect people and their rights. Instead, some people's self-centered ends are founded in greed, and they treat others as a instrument? to obtain to their goal. There is a "sanctity of life" that needs to be taken into consideration (Gushee 2006). Each person

has a fundamental right to life and freedom, yet, in history, that has not always been acknowledged. People have inherent dignity, “the state or quality of being worthy of honor and respect” (Merriam-Webster 2021). Yet, through labor practices and the sex industry, principally in slavery, this has been violated. Nations have enslaved other nations for thousands of years. Slavery has existed in many shapes and forms. Regardless, religious faith has always held a moral high ground on the sanctity of human life. Although at times Christian theologians have made argument to justify slavery, Christianity also provided the core ideas for abolition and continues not only to condemn slavery, but also to help survivors of slavery heal.

If this sanctity of life is maintained, a “moral conviction” develops (Gushee 2006). When one honors life and the inherent value of humans, ethical considerations are brought to light through a right as opposed to the wrong moral code. Especially in Christianity, this is clearly developed. During the passage of the federal anti-trafficking legislation, this conviction is shown by the evangelical Christians who were valuable partners in its passage because they brought “moral clarity” to the argument (Zimmerman 2011:573). This clarity, this moral conscious that runs through the veins of religion, has given insight into how to help victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Pope Leo XIII, when speaking about the excesses of capitalism and labor in *Rerum Novarum*, offered a forceful condemnation of the denial of private property that initiated a tradition of Catholic thinking about some social and economic issues (1891: section 20). The church’s moral clarity gave insight to the wrongs in wealth and poverty. The Pope states that “working for gain is credible, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood” according to Christian philosophy (1891: section 20). However, Pope Leo XIII also states:

but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers—that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind. Hence, the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex and age (1891: section 20).

The misuse of workers are seen today. Although the Pope just briefly touched on it, we see that even in 1891 there was an ethical condemnation of improperly holding working people. We know that in that time children were allowed to work in factories, and yet, even today, children are working in factories in other countries, and are working in agriculture in America that is “unsuited to their ... age” and is “beyond their strength” (1891: section 20).

During the 1960s, after the Second Vatican Council, liberation theology emerged as a praxis with the motto “preferential option for the poor,” which means to take care of the well-being of the poor in society. In Gustavo Gutiérrez articulated this theology in *A Theology of Liberation* (1973). Liberation theology has been controversial. It draws on Marxism in its critique of economic systems and at times espouses violence in bringing about social change. However, this “option for the poor” has deep roots in scripture and Christian tradition. Many passages in the Bible speak of showing mercy and helping the poor and vulnerable. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus states “truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” This passage encourages that if anyone shows kindness, or on the contrary evil, to another, it is like showing that action to God.

*Offers solutions*

From Christianity's origins, it addresses the plight of the oppressed and marginalized, particularly women and children. In the Christian subculture of the Greco-Roman world, women were able to enjoy higher social status than other pagan women, which initially drew more women to Christianity than men (Stark 1997:95). This was the cause of Christian doctrines that did not condone abortion and infanticide (Stark 1997:104). Women also achieved marital security, as they could marry later and have a choice in who they married, rather than marry prepubescent or at 12 or 13 years of age like pagan women, did which was a health risk for girls that young (Stark 1997:105). In having marriage status, they were not forced into child marriages. They often married pagan men since there were not that many Christian men, this resulted in many secondary conversions (Stark 1997:95). Because of Christianity catering to the oppressed early on, it has always offered the solution of justice and equality between the sexes.

The Social Gospel Movement was a movement that applied Christian ethics to various social problems. Walter Rauschenbusch, who wrote about the Social Gospel Movement, states:

“All human goodness must be social goodness. Man is fundamentally gregarious and his morality consists in being a good member of his community. A man is moral when he is social; he is immoral when he is anti-social. The highest type of goodness is that which puts freely at the service of the community all that a man is and can. The highest type of badness is that which uses up the wealth and happiness and virtue of the community to please self” (Rauschenbusch 1991:77).

His statement clearly defines where morality stands regarding social problems: in the actions and interactions of people. When applied to human trafficking, corrupt people have exploited society for their own wealth and temporary happiness and have stolen others' virtue. They are on the brink of society, isolated, having fallen so far down the moral ladder that they seek gratification

through exploitation. Bad socialization, isolation, or not giving back to the community only results in harm. Bad socialization would be where someone would not learn how to properly socialize within their society, which is also true for antisocial or isolated individuals. Aligning this with Christian principles, all sins can be forgiven, regardless, because nothing can separate a person from God's love. On the other hand, Rauschenbusch writes the moral also show it by their actions. They are the ones who help and uplift each other in their community. Much like what the church is supposed to do as the body of Christ. Those who suffer as a result of the immoral, although enduring the worst pain, have the support of the community, unlike those who inflict the pain. God states in Deuteronomy 10:18-19 that "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt" (NIV). So as the body of Christ, people are to help others, which falls in line with that moral clarity and conviction.

*To restore positive self-image*

When supporting those who have gone through the trauma of trafficking, it is imperative that the process brings healing for a restored identity. This is not just healing physically which can include reintegration back into society with vocational training and continued education . Healing also occurs on the mental, emotional, and spiritual planes and involves a healing of survivors' perception of their self-image, a restoring of their understanding of their worth and value, and a reinstatement of their whole self. This is identity restoration.

In order to do this, there needs to be a renewing of their mind, a change in the social influences, and a consistent support in the process. Identity restoration can occur through Christian theology, and not just for the spiritual side, but directly affects the mental and

emotional sides. When consistently supported, a survivor will begin to heal on these fronts when there is an environment that cultivates love and strengthens their self-image. When this is continuously done in a healthy atmosphere of helping them realize or remember their self-worth and value, healing begins.

*To reinstate dignity*

“The fact that each and every human being bears the image of God, *imago Dei*, means that each and every human being has equal, inestimable, and irreducible dignity” (CBHD 2006). Each person, regardless of their actions, has the quality of being worthy of respect. Just as we have seen through in the UN Declaration of Rights, each person has a fundamental, inherent worth, value, and dignity. This perspective supports identity restoration. While in the process of healing holistically, the survivor ... showing that respect and equality to a person goes a long way. When survivors can once again knowingly wear dignity as their clothing, the healing process in identity has begun (Proverbs 31:25 ESV 2011:1191). Galatians 3:28 states that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (ESV 2011:2251). Regardless of race or ethnicity, sex or gender, or if someone has been affected by modern slavery or not, this is a perfect reminder to honor all people, as we are all equal. On societies standards, there may not be equality, but in God’s standards, he sees each person the same, through Christ. Their past, if they were the perpetrators or the victims, does not define who they are. Although acknowledged, in Christ, they are set free.

*Framework to create identity-theological theories*

The Christian understanding of identity is that we have been made in the image of God, as stated in Genesis 1:27 (ESV 2011:51). God states countless times that He loves us, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14 ESV 2011:1116-1117), and that He bought us

with the life of his perfect Son. With this foundation, we can fill in the framework of how Christian theology creates identity and shapes it.

*Theological level of identity*

Several key biblical verses establish the theological foundation of identity. Each speak to the identity that we have in Christ:

- 1 John 3:1-3 “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (ESV 2011:2433).
- 2 Corinthean 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV 2011:2230).
- Colossians 3:3 “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (ESV 2011:2298).
- 1 Corinthians 13:11-12 “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” (NIV).
- Psalms 139:13-16 “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden

from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” (ESV 2011:1116-1117).

We are children of God, pure in Christ, a new creation, hidden with Christ, fully known, and fearfully and wonderfully made. 1 John explains that when a person hopes in Christ they become like Christ: a pure, refined, child of God. Fully known to God, and like Christ in a beautiful relationship of Him knowing us and us knowing Him. 2 Corinthians explains this further as someone is in Christ, they are a new creation and their old self is gone; anything they were is gone and only who they are in Christ, who is perfect and holy, is known. Colossians describes this old self leaving as *dying* (metaphorically) and this new creation in 2 Corinthians as a new self, a new life being seen through Christ’s perfect self. Later in the chapter, Colossians 3:10, furthers this notion that being a new creation takes work, a renewal of the mind, by stating “and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” (ESV 2011:2298). 1 Corinthians explains how as we have physically grown, we change, that is also true for when we grow spiritually, instead of just partially knowing our identity, we will fully know our identity as God fully knows our identity. Psalm has a great depiction of how we are fearfully and wonderfully made in any stage in in womb (“unformed substance”). God perfectly designed each person, and our souls know God’s works are intricate and wonderful. It further states that He wrote and knew each in his book of life their days, before a day was formed--before conception.

We have been created in the image of God, and because of that, St. Pope John XXIII states in *Mater et Magistra*, “This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings

are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings” (John XXIII 1961:219). Consequently, humans share in the glory of God and in Christ’s inheritance (2 Thessalonians 2:14 ESV 2011:2318; Colossians 1:12 ESV 2011:2294). Because human beings are the foundation, dignity is a fundamental right is each person get to share in that right, no matter the differences between them.

In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus narrates a parable about a good Samaritan who recognized dignity in another’s life (ESV 2011:1976-1977). This Samaritan, a half Jew and half Gentile, helped a man who was beaten and left for dead when no one else would. Although the Samaritan and the injured person’s identity are devalued in thier society, Jesus relating to marginalized people and thus shows that their intrinsic value shall not be forgotten. This is as true today as it was 2000 years ago, and the church recognizes this.

Even in the catholic church it procliams “that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society” (USCCB n.d.). The Methodist church has similarly published its stance on the immorality of human trafficking and implored others to help its legislative efforts against slavery and for anti-trafficking efforts (UMC n.d.). The church recognizes as a whole that dignity is inherent and needs to be honored.

#### *How human trafficking manipulates identity*

Human trafficking has serious impacts on a person’s identity. The injury that it creates will always be there. But there is a healing process so that the wound does not hurt as it used to. Before we get to that though, we have to see how trafficking impact's identity on a spiritual level.

The degradation that is imposed on victims of trafficking is surreal. Often people believe it only happens in other countries; however, it is everywhere. In each communal network, there

are *facilitators* who support human trafficking (see Appendix A). There are companies that help transport people for work, but these people then have their visas taken away and are trapped in their work for fear of being thrown in jail or deported. In labor and sex trafficking, there is enough force, fraud, and coercion to destroy hope and create submission through fear (see Appendix A). Through each, the victim's dignity is being infringed upon and their identity is traumatized.

Force and coercion can result in major physical harm, along with mental manipulation. Fraud includes this manipulation through lying and false promises. When someone trusts another with their livelihood, such if they believe someone will get them a green card, documents, or a job, they are putting their hope in someone else because they were in a vulnerable situation and were asking for help or offered help. They are taken advantage of. In the case with sex trafficking and forced prostitution, they could even be manipulated to believe that their pimp loves them, so they place trust in that person only to have it ripped away. In this same example, victims who are traded up or down will feel they are just merchandise and they do not feel value or dignity in that respect (see Appendix A). With repeated abuse, not just physically but mentally, emotionally, and socially, there will be a deterioration of their self-image. When a person is removed from a positive socialized environment, feeling lost and isolated and building mental and emotional walls is inevitable.

One example of a victim of human sex trafficking is Amy Wilburt. She was prostituted and exploited in Las Vegas, Nevada. She became numb and broken, not wanting to live. It took her a hospital visit, caused by the abuse of her pimp, that made her open her eyes and search for a way out (Lobert 2019). She found Jesus, and her life was turned around and her identity was restored. Lobert started her non-profit "Hookers for Jesus" to "offer transitional support to at-risk

women who want to escape the commercial sex industry. This includes providing spiritual, emotional and physical support and healing” (Hookers for Jesus n.d.).

Getting victims out of the exploitative environment and in a new supportive social setting is vital. With anyone coming out of trauma, counseling is a must, and getting them the right resources. From there, identity reformation can start. Having consistency in support and a consistency in encouraging them and renewing their minds, is a must.

The Bible states that if one is transformed by the renewing of one’s mind and through testing one may discern God’s perfect, good, and acceptable will (Romans 12:2 ESV 2011:2178). When a survivor is being told over and over again that they are loved, worthy, accepted, etc., and they accept that, there will be a renewal of their mind. This is an actual physical changing of the neurons in the brain. In neuroplasticity, the neuron pathways that structured their thinking while they were in trafficking, when they were being told and treated like they were worthless, will start to deteriorate. However, it will be a slow hard journey and many times there will be relapse or falling back into old patterns. Philippians 4:8 helps with this by encouraging them that “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy” fix your mind on those things (NIV).

Ephesians 4:22-24 states perfectly what is needed as survivors are healing: “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (ESV 2011:2269). This verse speaks directly about a person’s sins; however it is still relevant that the “former manner of life” can be done away with and a new self can be put on through renewing one’s mind (Colossians 3:10

ESV 2011:2298). This is also relevant when to put off your old self (body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations) is to get rid of your old ways of thinking and the patterns of emotions that caused harm and put on a new restored self--one that completes your identity. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says this “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (ESV 2011:2229).

### *Summarize identity*

Identity includes a person’s holistic self, the union of their body, emotions, spirit, and mind, and their intrinsic worth and value as a human being, made in the image of God. A person has their intrinsic value and right of dignity because a loving God creates them wonderfully and perfectly. Additionally, a person learns their social identity through interactions from others, which can include seeing themselves through the imagined judgement of others, or even through social psychology’s way of categorizing oneself in groups. In all, each person may learn to understand themselves differently, but each person has a fundamental value and right to of dignity; that is their identity.

## RECOVERY

Human trafficking breaks down the person's self, dignity, identity and hope in the future. The restoration process is a life-long process, but one needs to heal so that they can develop past their pain. As stated in the theological section, restoration and healing comes from a structured support system and a renewal of the mind. It takes time, but consistency in counseling and loving survivors through their pain helps. When a person realizes who they are, and what their purpose is, hope is no more a constant endeavor, but an achieved victory. Each person may find their identity and worth in other things, but when it can be tied not to jobs, people (who can fail them), or materialistic things, but to an unchanging but loving God who knows them, hope is more than just a word or a striving endeavor. Hope becomes their "why" to live; because they found hope, they found love and life through healing.

Proverbs 31:25 states this "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come" (ESV 2011:1191). When a victim can walk in confidence of who they are, in the strength of their identity and their given intrinsic dignity, worry is no longer a burden. Trauma, anxiety, depression, and pain seems not as heavy a load. Reshaping their self-worth, self-image, and thought processes helps them see who they are. Seeing who they are gives hope, saves lives, and changes the future; helping them realize their potential, passions, and purpose. It is a joyous day when a victim turns into a survivor. Although that journey or restoration has just begun, when they can begin to look forward and not live in their past pain, they start to identify not with the word *victim*, but with *survivor*.

*What's the solution?*

Christian theology and practices have made a significant impact in the fight against trafficking and in the journey of restoration. The solution is to restore survivors' hope in themselves and in their future. You start by having a consistent support system. That consistency is key. When they are ready, they will begin the journey through the tough terrain of restoration. The practice of renewing their minds will be an endless cycle of pouring that encouragement and hope into them.

*How do you reconstruct identities and reinstate dignity?*

I use restore here because many human trafficking related non-profits and organizations refer to the three "R's": rescue, restore, and reintegrate. In essence, they are working to advocate for a victim's psychological, physical, emotional, social, spiritual, educational, and vocational well-being for healing (Brodsky-least of these 2018:177). Many organizations work on prevention, but very few actually work on the complete process from rescue to a healing functioning human being.

Regarding victims, Cornelius Katona, a psychiatrist at the Helen Bamber Foundation in London, stated that "they feel that what has happened is what they deserved or is inevitable. So they lose their self-esteem, their self-worth; they lose the ability to forgive themselves, to feel compassionate about themselves" (Villa 2019:4). Interaction with other survivors helps each one as that group therapy is psychologically comforting. There is that common *bond* that cannot be broken, regardless of if trafficked victims have been under the same pimp or in a completely different country. Therefore, reinstating that ability to forgive, that ability to love themselves, and that ability to heal, is not only part of the process, it is the process.

## METHODS

In the development of this argument and research, interviews were conducted with a non-profit in hopes of gaining real world application of how identity is reformed through Christian theology. Interview guides were written (see Appendix C) for the Executive Director and the Founder of JOY International, the non-profit chosen for the study. In the initial interview with Gina Moran, the Executive Director, much information was given, including a follow-up interview with Alyssa McKinley, the Outreach Service Coordinator, to understand their partnerships with other safe houses and the work they do with survivors. Once he returned from his sabbatical, the founder, Dr. Jeff Brodsky, was interviewed to get a better understanding of how JOY was founded. The interviews ranged for a couple hours over a one-month period that adjusted to each person's schedules. They were recorded over a video call on Zoom in the Spring semester of 2021. The Interview guide had an initial fifteen base questions and discussion points that were then expanded upon and tailored to each interviewee. Not including sub-questions, thirteen questions were asked of Gina Moran, Eleven of Alyssa McKinley, and roughly ten of Dr. Jeff Brodsky. The questions expanded upon the mission, history, and work of the nonprofit, identity, and the theological stances each participant and the organization takes on the subject.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE STUDY: JOY INTERNATIONAL

*Joy International – history, mission, work*

JOY International is a non-profit based out of Conifer, Colorado, that aims to make aware, rescue, restore, prevent, and reintegrate women and children from sex trafficking. Their mission “is dedicated to the rescue, restoration, and reintegration of children, teens and young women affected by trafficking and the prevention of child trafficking worldwide” (Joy International Home n.d.). JOY was started forty years ago by a very empathetic and passionate man, Dr. Jeff Brodsky. It did not begin by working with rescuing children out of trafficking, it began with a clown.

Snuggles the Love Clown was someone whom many people loved. He had wonderful energy to make people laugh, smile, and feel loved with only his wordless gestures and tricks. That was Dr. Brodsky. That was his mission: spread love, joy and the gospel of Christ through being a clown. During a mission trip in Kalighat, India in 1979, Mr. Snuggles was invited by Mother Teresa to her Home of the Destitute and Dying. The invitation read as follows: “Even those who are starving to death deserve the dignity of laughter –Mother Teresa” (Dr. Brodsky, *personal communication*, unpublished data, 2021). Dr. Brodsky went as Mr. Snuggles that day and read the sign that stated “when we handle the sick and needy, think we are touching the body of Christ, how our hands must be to touch the body of Christ” (*pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Mother Teresa believed that as she lifted up people, it was as if she was lifting up Christ. Her whole heart was to give the dying dignity before death, even if that was just to give them soup or try to nurse them to health.

Today, Dr. Brodsky looks back and applies Mother Teresa’s mission not only to those dying physically, but to those who are ravaged and dying emotionally. His calling is that of a

five-fold evangelist--no one will go into a brothel to tell these women and children about Christ, so he does. That is what drives him each day to do the work that he does: “There by the grace of God, go I” quoted Dr. Brodsky as we talked over Zoom (1 Corinthians 15:8-10 ESV 2011:2214). That child in trafficking could be his granddaughter, but just because it is not his child does not be it is not God’s child. His view is that God created me just as much as he created every one of them (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

Originally, JOY was founded on John 15:11 which states “I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete” (CSB). Dr. Brodsky thought “that is what I do as a clown--bring joy into people’s lives, but it is temporary. Everything is temporary as it is only while you do it: holding hands with your loved one, laughing at a joke. Then it is only a memory” (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). However, the joy of Jesus is forever: Jesus, Others, and Yourself. At that moment JOY was founded in September of 1981, now 40 years ago this year. In 2005, there was an exposé on Dateline by Chris Henson that went underground into Cambodia’s brothels. Watching this, Dr. Brodsky found out about trafficking and researched everything he could on the subject: “How could this be happening, and we not know about it?” (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). From here, he transitioned JOY and made the decision to rescue people physically and spiritually from trafficking. Dr. Brodsky’s life mantra is “Awareness without action is apathy,” and his main function is to make people aware (*pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). He stated in the interview, and I have read countless times, that if he could motivate just one person to action, then it is all worth it, otherwise he has wasted their time if they do not do anything.

Upon asking Dr. Brodsky why he argued that “This is without question THE most evil, heinous crime ever perpetrated against a child since the dawn of creation” (Joy International Our

Story n.d.), his response was riveting: “Tell me something that is worse than having to ‘service’ 5-20 men a day, maybe more. Being raped once influences a life, imagine that 20 times a day from despicable heartless vile people on earth. You can’t see anything worse” (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). In our following conversation, he mentioned watching a film by college students from the University of Florida called the *Fields of Mudan* (FSU Film 2016). He said watching this was his motivation for “acting” crazy in role play on rescues in brothels. Upon watching the film, I cried a solid couple minutes and have had it on my mind since. No wonder he said Mudan speaks volumes and caused him to go further into this line of work (*pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Mudan is a little girl, probably about six or seven, who had been trafficked and sold to a brothel where men come daily to be serviced by young girls. She meets an unlikely friend, a fellow trafficked girl Faye. Through this film, they accurately show what happens to these girls, the loss of their identity and hope, and the trauma they endure through it all.

JOY International’s mission, values, and vision are based around loving those rescued from trafficking and seeing them through their healing process. Their vision “is to see each captive set free from a life of slavery to experience the true joy of reaching their greatest potential in every area of life” (Joy International Mission, Vision, Values n.d.). JOY values seeking justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly in everything they do (Joy International Mission, Vision, Values n.d.). When asked where they draw these priorities from, Dr. Brodsky said they want to minister to the person holistically in restoration which covers six major areas for them: physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, educationally, and vocationally (*pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Their Outreach Service Coordinator, Alyssa McKinley, has been connecting JOY with safe houses already in place, such as Agape international

Missions and Compassion to Act among others, that need to have these six dimensions. Rescuing a woman or child physically is one thing, but the restoration process is another –that is where the aftercare comes in, there “cannot be a reintegration without restoration” (*pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

This past year the world has endured a pandemic which caused lots of issues, but also created opportunities for non-profits. This led to McKinley supporting ongoing restoration efforts domestically and making more connections with safe houses to assist them. One thing she does is support staff and service providers with teachings on identity and making sure they are healthy to then minister to others. One thing she has also started is an advocacy team program where volunteers can go into partnered safe houses to share resources, support the staff and clients by giving assistance in prayer, food, cards, and celebrating with them (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

Alyssa McKinley is one of the closest on the team to see the restoration process take place through her unique role in setting up and maintaining partnerships. Through their partnerships she got to have a unique perspective, unlike the other two interviewees, that provided insight into some of the key questions asked about the restoration process with survivors of human trafficking. Each home and organization, many of which are Christian-based although others are not, do not discriminate in who they help. The staff cannot force biblical viewpoints, but they value showing that love from their beliefs to the survivors. There is not a specific healing process or stages of healing; it is different for each person, but it is a continuous process that takes time and ongoing counseling. One of the biggest things McKinley pointed out is that in the United States, JOY works with more women rather than children and when working with adults there needs to be some sort of "ask" from them, and that is where the advocacy

program with mentorship will be very impactful (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

In Zimmerman's text about *Christianity and Human Trafficking*, she states that "nothing harms human dignity more profoundly than sex that takes place in the wrong relational context" (2011:575). After quoting this, McKinley responded to the question of how "they reclaim dignity through the healing process," and she noted that between therapy, coaching, and the consistency of someone speaking and fighting for them and not giving up on them, that "showing them who they are is how you treat them, valuing them and valuing their story ... showing them the grace that they are worth it is showing them Jesus and showing them that Jesus forgives" (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Simply showing them dignity, amidst their trauma, abuse, and their issues is vital, but there is not one easy answer to reclaim that self-worth or self-dignity.

In each of their partner programs, even if they are religiously based, they do not force religion on those they serve since religious freedom is important and they do not want to retraumatize them by not giving them a choice (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Being sensitive to personal spiritual beliefs is vital. So, what many do is show them God's love and that they are loved through their own testimonies, through showing them persistent constant love and support.

There is not just one way to measure if a survivor is to a point in their recovery where they will not be trafficked again or a way to evaluate if someone has complete healing. McKinley pointed out that mentorship and just sitting and talking with them is huge to gauge healing for reintegration, and each person comes to their healing differently. Being able to do basic functions, depending on their age, such as job application, holding a job, or paying their bills on their own is one indicator that they are out of that survival, fight or flight mode. A big

question to ask is, “can they dream about and vocalize their plans for the future? Or are they still stuck in survivor mode?” (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

In practical terms, in everything JOY does, even with its partnerships, there is a holistic approach in healing; from providing funding and equipment, to rescues and restoration. Internationally there are many rescues and training the police. Domestically, JOY walks alongside the police. In Gina Moran’s interview, she vocalized how the worldwide COVID pandemic prevented them from traveling, so they expanded domestically: McKinley with outreach and the Director of Tactile Operations expanded their interdisciplinary rapid response team. From this pandemic, they have been able to help from afar, such as with providing funding for education for at-risk girls in Uganda so they did not have to be child brides. Morron further explained and provided insight in how JOY is not a one-man-show anymore; it can function as a team even without Dr. Brodsky, which was proven this spring while he went on sabbatical for the first time in over 30 years. Through building a legacy and strengthening relationships domestically and abroad, JOY will continue to strike major blows against the sex trafficking industry (Moran, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

### *Joy’s understanding of identity*

Identity, that concept that can wreak havoc if it goes unknown can wreak havoc. When asked how she defines it, Alyssa McKinley stated “having a correct view of who you are and who you are made to be. It is not just who you are today, but who you are called to be in the future” (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Identity, a constant as we have the inherent value and dignity, is also a variable, as we are always growing into who we are and who we are called to be. McKinley, possibly unconsciously, paraphrased Jeremiah 29:11 which says

“for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (NIV). She stated that even for non-believers, knowing “that you have a future and there is a hope” is a comfort to keep moving forward in developing one’s knowledge of themselves (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

Dr. Brodsky, not knowing what McKinley told me, expanded on this same concept of identity that she gave. He said that there are two main things that is vital to understand for someone discovering who they are: 1) their identity and 2) their destiny. Both in Christ, one will show you who you are in Him, the other where they are going with him (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). The biggest questions adolescents, and honestly even adults, ask is “who am I?” and “where am I going?” (Brodsky 1997:70). That is one of the best gifts a pastor, or a parent, can teach is to help someone find their identity, their gift, and their purpose. In this first book, *Stepping into Adulthood*, Dr. Brodsky expands on what area identity needs to be clear: As a member of God’s family, as a member of their earthly family, and as a member of society (1997:71). To find their destiny, there are three questions that can be asked: 1) Why am I here?, 2) Where am I going?, and 3) What is my purpose? (1997:72). Dr. Brodsky argued a correlation to suicide and when these questions cannot be answered for identity and destiny (1997:73). As we talked in the interview, he stated that the “greatest word in the Bible is hope. When you lose hope, you lose everything and you are willing to lose your life. You go into survival mode and take your life” (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). He quoted Hosea 4:6 “For lack of knowledge my people perish,” when talking about youth needing to know their purpose and direction, and the importance of the parent's role in helping the child understand their identity (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). The greatest

understanding for anyone is when they know who they are as a child of God and the purpose behind Him giving them life (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

McKinley talked at length about how organizations need to have trauma-informed care because of the psychological effects on the survivor and the techniques needed in the restorative process with identity. When trauma happens, it creates literal neurological blocks in the brain that has the individual disassociate from what is happening, it is the brains way of protecting itself (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). This is a form of escape in any season or situation that is uncomfortable. They can get stuck in survival mode that causes them to not make rational decisions, as they are only making decisions that are best for the here and now, not the future or to take care of themselves. McKinley explained that a baby can focus on growing in social, emotional and cognitive abilities because someone is taking care of it, however if trauma happens a young victim gets stuck at the lower levels of survival mode. When disassociation occurs, breathing techniques are found to be helpful, along with self-holding (such as a self-hug) and repeating phrases like “I am safe, I am loved” (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Inside a faith-based organization they may use scripture, prayer, or point them back towards Christ, but in any organization ongoing therapy and physical and mental support are needed. Survivors need it reiterated that someone will not leave them and that they are safe. There is no one answer to help someone out of a survival stage, it just goes along with renewing the mind. In children, they are still developing so stopping those neurological grooves from developing so deep is still possible, but for adults it takes more time and a level of ask on their part. Although physically safe, there needs to be mental and emotional “I can breathe” moments (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Consistency by service providers and in reiterating their safety and who they are is key in the restoration process of identity. When they

can start dreaming for themselves, they have moved past that survival mode, so they are not just surviving but dreaming. Identity is central to the restoration process. So, when a service provider is able to give them the knowledge that they are valued and loved, that they were made for more and have unique gifts that the world wants and needs, they will then have a purpose outside of providing service in the form of slavery. “Love and identity is the most complete picture of that” (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

Moran furthered this notion that to help keep a survivor out of trafficking, they have to find and pursue dreams. They can do this by tapping into what God has called them to do which helps heal and create a strong foundation for human dignity for them (Moran, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Tapping into *who* God says they are, that is vital as well. Generally, every woman needs to hear repeatedly that they are more than only trafficking survivors. When working with safe houses, it is important to be trauma informed and understand there are layers or trauma to process through with each individual. It is an important message that the women know they do not have to hustle and gain their worth, but psychological trauma can inhibit them from hearing it especially as trafficking only enforces it: they are only as valuable as what their bodies can offer. It is an ongoing process. Moran further explained that although they walk alongside survivors in love, they cannot save them. Each safe house does a good job at walking alongside them in love and acceptance, reinforcing core truths, but it is ultimately up to the individual if they accept healing (Moran, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021)

### *Theological foundations of Joy's work*

Matthew 25:24-10 is the foundational verses for JOY International. Jesus states in Verse 40 that whoever does anything to the “least of these,” does it to him (ESV). For Dr. Brodsky, this

became the foundational verse when he set out on his journey from Mother Teresa to find the least of these. He takes on the theology that Jesus came to set the captives free, and so Jesus has called him to do the same, in a quite literal sense of the phrase (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Dr. Brodsky did an in-depth study to find out where Jesus was quoted saying these words. He was sitting in what could be known in biblical times as a red-light district, a morally corrupt place full of prostitution and exploitation, in the northeast region of Israel. This is powerful because he took his disciples to a place that had the worst people, the worst crime and corruption, where people were not treated with dignity, and said that “truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Dr. Brodsky, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021; Matthew 25:40 ESV 2011).

McKinley stated that her driving life verse goes back to the Old Testament in Micah 6 verse 8 that calls for people to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. This is the same verse the organization has its values based around. For McKinley, seeking justice is a given for the oppressed, loving mercy is loving those as they are in the process of renewal and extending grace in the process, and walking humbly is recognizing who you are and who you are not (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Each person is made in the image of God which McKinley adds has a unique value and mark of the Lord on that person. She stated, “when you generalize you get in trouble, but when you look at an individual and see a child of God and you value them... that goes a long way” (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). They have an individualistic “thumbprint of God” on their identity and their calling (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021). Through this lens, she sees they are fully loved, they are worth justice, worth Jesus dying for them, and their intrinsic value is worth so much in God’s image “Love is a central point in this. If love is missing from justice, it can cause harm” which reflects

Rauschenbusch's quote (1991:77). In ending our interview, McKinley explains that survivors finding hope in religion, a level of purpose, and move towards restoration is a big part of healing (McKinley, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

Moran explains it is plain for her, God called her to love without judgment, referring to Galatians 5:6). She understands the value of Matthew 25:40 and Micah 6:8 that the missions are based on. For her, she knows we are called to love people and point them to Christ, but we cannot save them in the spiritual sense. She just wants to see them live out the life God has for them, free from the chains of slavery and bondage physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. (Moran, *pers. comm.*, unpublished data, 2021).

*How do you reconstruct broken identities?*

JOY International works to help rescue and restore women and children out of human sex trafficking. Through their strategic partnerships with established safehouses, they can further their impact of helping survivors heal from the traumas and realize who they are and what they are meant to do. They work directly with the rescue operations, and indirectly (?) with the victims. They have six criteria they look for in safe houses with whom they partner and who give aftercare and help restore and reintegrate survivors: physically, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, educationally, and vocationally. They gave valuable insight into how these safe houses help heal individuals on the psychological, emotional, and spiritual plane.

## CONCLUSION

### *Human trafficking's effects on identity*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer went through many hard times in his day, living through two world wars and eventually being hanged. Even as a theologian, he questioned who he was. But at the end of that poem he wrote in prison, it states “Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine. Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!” (Bonhoeffer n.d.). Through the trails of life, we may often lose our way. However, just as Bonhoeffer, we can rest secure knowing *whose* we are.

Survivors of the various forms of human trafficking go through more than we can imagine. Their dignity is stripped as they are not treated with the inherent value that all humans have. From labor trafficking and bonded labor to sexual exploitation and child marriage, individuals are having their rights taken away. With survivors of sex trafficking, there are often deeper mental adversity and trauma from abuse going on, resulting in someone who is scarred. With labor trafficking, they are being prohibited to live life and can often be forced and abused in these situations, resulting in someone who is scarred. In any adversity in life, it leaves an impression on our identity. Every interaction has meaning, from being accepted in the “in group” to be rejected from it. Our intrinsic value never changes, but the external identity and internal self-image, and believe of self-worth, can.

### *Restoration*

Christian theology offers a solution in the restoration process. This is through knowing the foundation that every human being is made in the image of God. Many Christian organizations offer a restorative journey through transitional homes and safe houses and many address holistic healing for individuals. JOY International is one Christian non-profit that focuses on rescuing women and children and putting them in partnered safe houses that focus on six areas of healing: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, educational, and vocational. Through their approach of renewing the mind through counseling and walking life with these women, many women and children have come out of trafficking with a restored hope, a renewed identity and dignity, and a dream.

A sound identity does not only apply to human trafficking survivors, but to all people. Knowing who you are and what you are meant to do in life answers many of those questions. Christianity has not only offered a restorative approach to identity but has given hope to survivors of exploitation. This same approach can refine and transform anyone's identity.

#### *Limitations and suggestions for research*

One major limitation is that there is not a scientific way of measuring restored identity. Each person has a different pace to this lifelong process of development as different challenges arise in life. So, to say someone has been healed holistically is quite hard to measure. However, in Christian theology there is complete healing when the individual surrenders their control over their pain where Christ comes to heal, restore, and make new. There is not a way for measuring, however, talking with the survivor, seeing how they can handle different everyday tasks is one way to see their progress when coming out of trauma.

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**Appendix A. Glossary of sex trafficking terms and slang phrases commonly used by traffickers. Taken from Leischen Stelter.**

**Automatic:** A term denoting the victim's "automatic" routine when her pimp is out of town, in jail, or otherwise not in direct contact with those he is prostituting. Victims are expected to comply with the rules and often do so out of fear of punishment or because they have been psychologically manipulated into a sense of loyalty or love. All money generated on "automatic" is turned over to the pimp. This money may be used to support his concession/phone account or to pay his bond if he's in jail.

**Bottom** or "**Bottom Bitch**": A female appointed by the trafficker/pimp to supervise the others and report rule violations. Operating as his "right hand," the Bottom may help instruct victims, collect money, book hotel rooms, post ads, or inflict punishment on other girls.

**Branding:** A tattoo or carving on a victim that indicates ownership by a trafficker/pimp/gang.

**Caught a Case:** A term that refers to when a pimp or victim has been arrested and charged with a crime.

**Choosing Up:** The process by which a different pimp takes "ownership" of a victim. Victims are to keep their eyes on the ground at all times. According to traditional pimping rules, when a victim makes eye contact with another pimp (accidentally or on purpose), she is choosing him to be her pimp. If the original pimp wants the victim back, he has to pay a fee to the new pimp. When this occurs, he will force the victim to work harder to replace the money lost in the transaction. (See *Reckless Eyeballing*).

**Circuit:** A series of cities among which prostituted people are moved. One example would be the West Coast circuit of San Diego, Las Vegas, Portland, and the cities in between. The term can also refer to a chain of states such as the "Minnesota pipeline" by which victims are moved through a series of locations from Minnesota to markets in New York.

**Coercion:** Threats or perceived threats of serious harm to or physical constraints against any person; a scheme intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform will result in serious harm to or physical restraints against any person.

**Commercial Sex Act:** Any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

**Cousin-in-Laws:** Victims or pimp partners who work together.

**Daddy:** The term a pimp will often require his victims to call him.

**Date:** The exchange when prostitution takes place, or the activity of prostitution. A victim is said to be “with a date” or “dating.”

**Exit Fee:** The money a pimp will demand from a victim who is thinking about trying to leave. It will be an exorbitant sum, to discourage her from leaving. Most pimps never let their victims leave freely.

**Facilitators:** It is important to realize that human trafficking operations often intersect or exist alongside legitimate businesses. As a result, certain industries may help to enable, support, or facilitate human trafficking. This “support structure” may include a wide range of individuals, organizations, businesses and corporations, and Internet sites and practices. Common facilitators on which traffickers frequently rely include:

- Hotels and Motels
- Landlords
- Labor brokers
- Taxi and other driving services
- Airlines, bus, and rail companies
- Advertisers (Websites like Craigslist.com and Backpage.com; Phone books: Alternative newspapers)
- Banks and other financial services companies
- Inmate pen-pal services

**Family/Folks:** The term used to describe the other individuals under the control of the same pimp. He plays the role of father (or “Daddy”) while the group fulfills the need for the “family.”

**Finesse Pimp/Romeo Pimp:** One who prides himself on controlling others primarily through psychological manipulation. Although he may shower his victims with affection and gifts (especially during the recruitment phase), the threat of violence is always present.

**Force (Federal TVPA Definition):** Physical restraint or causing serious harm. Examples of force include kidnapping, battering, kicking, pushing, denial of food or water, denial of medical care, forced use of drugs or denial of drugs once a victim is addicted, forced to lie to friends and family about their whereabouts, being held in locked rooms or bound.

**Fraud:** Knowingly misrepresenting the truth or concealing an actual fact for the purpose of inducing another person to act to her/his detriment. Examples of fraud include false promises for specific employment, being promised a certain amount of money that is never paid, working conditions are not as promised, being told she or he would receive legitimate immigration papers or a green card to work but the documents are not obtained.

**Gorilla (or Guerilla) Pimp:** A pimp who controls his victims almost entirely through physical violence and force.

**Head Cut:** A victim getting beaten down by their pimp.

**Human Smuggling:** The facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation, or illegal entry of a person or persons across an international border, in violation of one of more countries' laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents.

**In-Pocket:** Not paying any other pimp than the one controlled by the victim. Not speaking to any other pimp.

**“John” (a.k.a Buyer or “Trick”):** An individual who pays for or trades something of value for sexual acts.

**Kiddie Stroll:** An area known for prostitution that features younger victims.

**Loose Bitch:** Pimps call a loose bitch a victim who keeps choosing different pimps.

**Lot Lizard:** Derogatory term for a person who is being prostituted at truck stops.

**Madam:** An older woman who manages a brothel, escort service or other prostitution establishment. She may work alone or in collaboration with other traffickers.

**Out of Pocket:** The phrase describing when a victim is not under control of a pimp but working on a pimp-controlled track, leaving her vulnerable to threats, harassment, and violence

in order to make her “choose” a pimp. This may also refer to a victim who is disobeying the pimp’s rules.

**Pimp:** A person who controls and financially benefits from the commercial sexual exploitation of another person. The relationship can be abusive and possessive, with the pimp using techniques such as psychological intimidation, manipulation, starvation, rape and /or gang rape, and the shame from these acts to keep the sexually exploited person under control.

**Pimp Circle:** When several pimps encircle a victim to intimidate through verbal and physical threats in order to discipline the victim or force her to choose up.

**Pimp Partner:** Two pimps who are friends and allow their victims to work together.

**Quota:** A set amount of money that a trafficking victim must make each night before she can come “home.” Quotas are often set between \$300 and \$2000. If the victim returns without meeting the quota, she is typically beaten and sent back out on the street to earn the rest. Quotas vary according to geographic region, local events, etc.

**Reckless Eyeballing:** A term which refers to the act of looking around instead of keeping your eyes on the ground. Eyeballing is against the rules and could lead an untrained victim to “choose up” by mistake.

**Renegade:** A person involved in prostitution without a pimp.

**Seasoning:** A combination of psychological manipulation, intimidation, gang rape, sodomy, beatings, deprivation of food or sleep, isolation from friends or family and other sources of support, and threatening or holding hostage of a victim’s children. Seasoning is designed to break down a victim’s resistance and ensure compliance.

**Serving a Pimp:** The actual phone call one pimp makes to another after “taking” his victim.

**Squaring Up:** Attempting to escape or exit prostitution.

**Stable:** A group of victims who are under the control of a single pimp.

**The Game/The Life:** The subculture of prostitution, complete with rules, a hierarchy of authority, and language. Referring to the act of pimping as ‘the game’ gives the illusion that it

can be a fun and easy way to make money, when the reality is much harsher. Women and girls will say they've been "in the life" if they've been involved in prostitution for a while.

**Track (a/k/a Stroll or Blade):** An area of town known for prostitution activity. This can be the area around a group of strip clubs and pornography stores, or a particular stretch of street.

**Trade Up/Trade Down:** To move a victim like merchandise between pimps. A pimp may trade one girl for another or trade with some exchange of money.

**Traffickers:** Traffickers are people who exploit others for profit. They can be any demographic, individuals and groups, street gangs and organized crime, businesses or contractors.

**Trick:** Committing an act of prostitution (verb), or the person buying it (noun). A victim is said to be "turning a trick" or "with a trick."

**Turn Out:** To be forced into prostitution (verb) or a person newly involved in prostitution (noun).

**The Wire:** (1) A pimp hotline, like a phone tree pimps use to get the word around, to find out which city is on/off. (2) Wiring money from victim to pimp in different cities/states ("put it on the wire").

**Wifeys/Wife-in-Law/Sister Wife:** What women and girls under the control of the same pimp call each other.

(Stelter (2014) 2020)

Stelter (Kranick), L. (July 3, 2014) August 24, 2020. "Know the Language of Human Trafficking: A Glossary of Sex Trafficking Terms." <https://amuedge.com/know-the-language-of-human-trafficking-a-glossary-of-sex-trafficking-terms/>

## **Appendix B. 2020 TIP Report Guide to the Tiers.**

### *Tier 1*

Countries whose governments fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

### *Tier 2*

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

### *Tier 2 Watch List*

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and for which:

- the estimated number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing and the country is not taking proportional concrete actions;
- there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecution, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials.

### *Tier 3*

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. The TVPA, as amended, lists additional factors to determine whether a country should be on Tier 2 (or Tier 2 Watch List) versus Tier 3:

- the extent to which the country is a country of origin, transit, or destination for severe forms of trafficking;
- the extent to which the country's government does not meet the TVPA's minimum standards and, in particular, the extent to which officials or government employees have been complicit in severe forms of trafficking;
- reasonable measures that the government would need to undertake to be in compliance with the minimum standards in light of the government's resources and capabilities to address and eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons;
- the extent to which the government is devoting sufficient budgetary resources to investigate and prosecute human trafficking, convict and sentence traffickers; and obtain restitution for victims of human trafficking; and

- the extent to which the government is devoting sufficient budgetary resources to protect victims and prevent the crime from occurring.

(Trafficking in Persons Report 2020:40-41)

Trafficking in Persons Report. 2020. *United States Department of State*.

20<sup>th</sup> ed. [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

**Appendix C. Interview Guide for JOY International.**

Natalie Larson

HON 402 (01)

Dr. Andrew Stern

Spring 2021

*Interview guide for JOY International*

This interview for JOY International is for my honors thesis about how human trafficking effects a person's identity.

I will be analyzing it from a sociological lens, but I'm showing how theology can offer a solution to heal their self-image, identity and broken dignity. I am using JOY as a case analysis to look into how Christian organizations can have a positive and even improved way of restoring victim's identities.

The interview will take place over Zoom on --- 2021 with the 'Executive Director', 'Outreach service Coordinator', or 'Founder' of JOY International. This interview guide [subject to change depending on the interviewee], the thesis statement, and the outline of the thesis has been emailed in advance. The participant should know that this interview will be recorded.

**[Insert Participant's Information]:**

1. How long have you been working with *JOY International*?
2. What does your role involve?
3. When did JOY get involved with human trafficking?
4. According to the website, your mission, values, and vision is based around loving those rescued from trafficking and seeing them through their healing process (<https://www.joy.org/mission-vision-values>). From where do you base these priorities?
5. According to research done by Yvonne Zimmerman on Christianity and Human trafficking, the *International Religious Freedom Act* (IRFA) passed in 1998 would not

have been around were not it not for the Christian activists. Additionally, many Christians view religious persecution and human trafficking as parallel issues (page 572).

- a. What are *JOY's* views on religious persecution and human trafficking being parallel issues?
6. How would you define 'identity'?
  7. Prior to 1990 it was secular NGO's that mostly focused on labor trafficking. We know that sex trafficking only consists of roughly 10% of all trafficking, the majority being labor. Zimmerman states "during the years of the Bush administration (2001-2009), for example, it was the U.S.'s official position that human trafficking consisted primarily in the forced prostitution and sexual enslavement of women and children" (2011:572).
    - a. Did this influence *JOY's* direction and mission?
    - b. What were all the factors that influenced your change of direction in the organization from helping impoverished children to specifically helping those from sex trafficking?
  8. Part of Zimmerman's research was looking at the intention behind the work of faith-based programs. "Reminiscent of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century social purity movement, much conservative Christian anti- trafficking activism and advocacy is animated by the larger goals of reinstating 'traditional' gender roles and the centrality of monogamous marriage with the U.S.-American culture and extending these arrangements throughout the world (2011:573). The traditional gender role and marriage ideals are "reformulated as crucial bulwarks against abuse, exploitation, and violation of human dignity within trafficking" (2011:573).
    - a. What is your response to this?

- b. If you agree with ‘traditional gender roles’, can you elaborate on what your bases is for your beliefs?
    - i. Is it possibly backed by Genesis 1:27?
  - c. As I understand it, marriage is to be the reflection of Christ and the church. Would you agree that it is crucial for protection against “exploitation... and violation of human dignity”?
9. What is the theological model that *JOY* has behind the organization's values and mission?
10. “Human dignity and sexual integrity are often linked in Christian theology” (Zimmerman 2011:574). I know Dr. Brodsky found ‘the least of these’ in children that are sex trafficked and that theological stance (of Matthew 25:40) and Christian value became the backbone and the heartbeat of the organization. Each person has dignity and integrity in their physical bodies, that when compromised, not just their bodies are hurt, but their soul, mind, heart, and spirit.
- a. Do these things of human dignity and integrity hold true for *JOY*?
  - b. Further said on page 575, “nothing harms human dignity more profoundly than sex that takes place in the wrong relational context”
    - i. What are your thoughts on this?
    - ii. Is this thought about dignity and sexual integrity, (the fact that human dignity is harmed through breaking that sexual integrity in the wrong context), just a motivation for your organization? Or is this identity in sexual integrity the driving force in restoration as well?
    - iii. What are the theological beliefs and actions taken to restore a survivors identity?

- iv. How does this translate to a very secular world? In other words, how do you put this belief and notion across without pushing religion onto others?  
(With a survivor- how do they put them through recovery if they reject Christ? --this point is also further explained and questioned below).

11. In Dr. Brodsky's book *The Least of These*, he mentions what you do: rescue, the restoration, reintegration, and then prevention. Your restoration step includes physical, emotional, psychological, educational, spiritual, and vocational. How is this done?

12. If you work directly with the survivors, how Does *JOY*, specifically, help a child or woman that they rescue reinstate dignity and restore their identity?

- a. What are the different healing stages?
- b. Can you speak for the safe houses on their restoration and healing process in regards to identity?
- c. Which specific theological resources does *JOY*, or some of these organizations, draw on in doing this work? What is the fundamental understanding of Identity that is inspiring this?
- d. I know traffickers' prey on the vulnerable... so with someone already broken and hurt, and then going through this, how does the organizations *JOY* partners with keep them from being trafficked again?
- e. What do you measure it by?
- f. How do you evaluate someone's complete healing?
- g. What is *JOY's* recovery rate for the survivors not just physically, but holistically? And specifically, what is their recovery rate in their self-perception, self-image

and self-worth at their core; their identity and healing the confidence in who they are?

13. Can you give us an example of someone who has gone through the program and has come out with a stronger identity?
14. What can you speak on in regards to religion offering a solution in the healing process of a survivors identity?
15. Is there anything you would like to add to examine the restoration and healing process of survivors in their identity?

Founder, Dr. Jeff Brodsky: [Based on the initial interview with JOY International's Executive Director, the questions for the founder are subject to change.]

1. How did your experience with Mother Tereasa influence your attitude towards 'the least of these'?
2. What was your vision when starting *JOY International*?
3. How would you define a person's "identity"?
4. According to the website, your mission, values, and vision is based around loving those rescued from trafficking and seeing them through their healing process (<https://www.joy.org/mission-vision-values>).
  - a. From where do you base these priorities?
5. When did JOY get involved with human trafficking?

- a. What made you make this shift toward trafficking? I know on the website under “Our Story” you mention **“This is without question THE most evil, heinous crime ever perpetrated against a child since the dawn of creation.”**
  - b. Why do you argue this crime is the vilest since dawn of creation?
6. What theology did you draw on in developing this organization and designing its mission (besides Matthew 25:34-40)?
  7. In your own words, have you seen children and women become healed and restored in their identity through *JOY International*?
  8. Are there any questions from the initial interview that you would like to comment on or expound upon?