DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Avoiding Shock and Awe:
Best Practices in Building Reality-Based Awareness
About Human Trafficking in Your Community

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Objectives

o Describe how representation of human trafficking can be harmful to survivors and the anti-trafficking movement

o Apply positive representation of human trafficking in ways that are helpful to survivors and the anti-trafficking movement

o Reflect survivor-centered, trauma-informed representation in community response work

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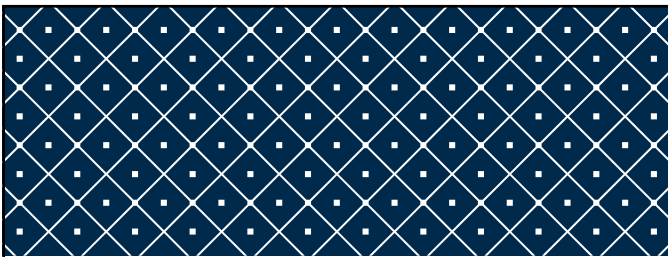
Rethinking Representation: Framing Human Trafficking for Anti-trafficking professionals

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What is Representation?

rep·re·sen·ta·tion
/ˌreprəˌzenˈtāSH(ə)n/ ◄)

noun

1. the action of speaking or acting on behalf of someone or the state of being so represented.
   "asylum-seekers should be guaranteed good legal advice and representation"

2. the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature.
   "the representation of women in newspapers"
   synonyms: portrayal, depiction, delineation, presentation, rendition
   "Rossetti's representation of women"

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Representation is a Double-Edged Sword

BENEFITS TO THE MOVEMENT

- Increases awareness and focus on the issue
- Improved policy and procedures
- Increased funding
- More victims identified, survivors served

DRAWBACKS TO THE MOVEMENT

- Can hurt survivors
- Can lead to fewer victims recognized
- Can hurt movement:
  - Incorrect facts lead to misinformed public
  - Misallocation of resources & effort

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Storytelling

- Humanizes the experience
- Gives folks who haven't experienced the crime insight into the experience
- Focuses the issue in the public eye and with legislators

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Storytelling: Common THEMES

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- **"Ideal victim"**
- **US citizens** (often white females) being trafficked by foreign nationals
- There is a **Savior**
- Females **desperate to escape**
- **Rescuing victims is the end of the process** for "saving" someone
- **Emphasis on law enforcement** approach
- Victims know they are victims
- Perpetrators are men (black men)
- Victims are always **kidnapped** and physically restrained
- Only **women and girls** are trafficked
- Human trafficking is just **sex trafficking**
- Conflation of sex work and sex trafficking
- **Transportation/smuggling** of victims across borders

THE ETHICS OF NONPROFIT STORYTELLING: SURVIVOR PORN AND PARADING TRAUMA

Podcast by Amy Costello interviewing Sophie Otiende

Survivor Porn: When Survivors are asked by non-profits to provide the emotional hook for their cause, and without understanding the unexpected personal and emotional challenges for survivors in the aftermath.

"Think about the power that an organization holds over this victim, and then think about consent. Think about whether that survivor would actually be able to give proper consent about telling their story." Otiende 2019

HTTPS://NONPROFITQUARTERLY.ORG/2019/04/05/THE-ETHICS-OF-NONPROFIT-STORYTELLING-SURVIVOR-PORN-AND-PARADING-TRAUMA/

Common Missteps

- Lack of diversity of experiences and identities
- Playing off of misconceptions or stereotypes
- Depiction of violence or severe trauma - "trauma porn"
- Shocking stories or language at the expense of accuracy, in order to provoke public interest or excitement
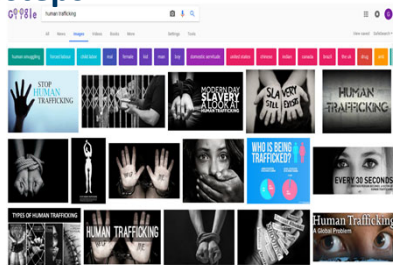
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Common missteps: survivor stories

"What we don't need any more of is good intentions that aren't backed up by thoughtfulness, integrity, common sense values and an educated, informed approach. Survivors aren't actually asking for special treatment, we're simply asking to be treated as people, as colleagues, as leaders in this work who bring far more to the table than the ability to make people cry. **We're asking simply that in your fight to help victims of trafficking, that you don't harm survivors in the process.**"

-Rachel Lloyd
"At What Cost: The Road To Anti-trafficking Is Paved With Good Intentions"[3]

- Treat survivors differently than other professionals
- Forcing and controlling survivors
- Not allowing survivors to tell their story how, when or where they want
- Lack of compensation

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Commonly Shared Faulty Statistics

Average trafficking age of entry into sex trade is 12-14 years old [12]

80% of all trafficking victims are children [15]

Runaways will be trafficked within 72 hours of running [16]

There are 100,000-300,000 child prostitutes/ sex trafficked youth in the US [17]

Super Bowl is the biggest trafficking event in the world [13, 14]

(insert city/county/state name) is one of the top places for trafficking in the US [19]

There are 2 children sold every minute in the US/ every 26 seconds a child's sold into slavery [15]

Trafficking is $9.8 billion industry in the United States [18]

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Common missteps:
Misunderstanding Methodology

- **Sample size**
  - The "n" or number of data points measured in a study
- **Sample variety**
  - Who participated? How were participants chosen?
    - Age, location, nationality, gender
- **Bias:**
  - What is the point of view of the people conducting the study?
  - EXAMPLE: TIP Report holds countries to the US definitions of trafficking, rather than the global definitions, and rankings can be influenced by relationships with the US
- **Age of study**
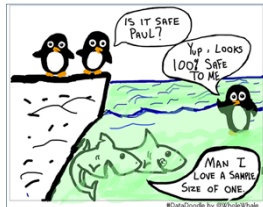
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Common missteps: professional opinions

Presenting professional estimates, opinions, and/or guesswork as hard facts

- HT researchers often don't use the same rigorous data standards as researchers from other human rights fields
- Professionals may try to fill information void with their opinions

"Well, apparently you haven't heard... personal opinions ARE the new facts!"

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Why does this matter?

- Framing the issue for community and systems to understand the crime
- Influences policies, funding, and response protocols
- Determines "who is trafficked" and "what trafficking looks like"
- CONSIDER: Who's missing from the dominant narrative? How does this affect their experiences as victims?

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Juli Fast – Youth Program Manager

Southwest Crisis Center

Reality Based Awareness
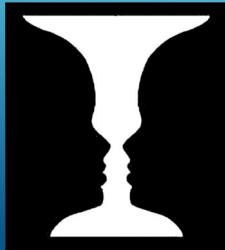
Survivors: Misrepresentation and Reality
Redirecting Representation

Stereotype Representation

Reality Based Representation

Survivors: Misrepresentation and Reality
Redirecting Representation

Infantilizing Representation

Reality Based Representation

Survivors: Misrepresentation and Reality
Redirecting Representation

Oppression Representation

Reality Based Representation

Slide 1

Sexual Exploitation and sex Trafficking in Southwest MN

The following first person accounts of exploitation/trafficking are from youth in southwest Minnesota who have given their full consent and signed authorization to share their stories so that we might learn more fully to recognize exploitation/trafficking. All names have been changed to preserve their anonymity. Everything else is authentic.

Slide 2

Sexual Exploitation and sex Trafficking in Southwest MN

Slide 3

DOES EXPLOITATION/TRAFFICKING HAPPEN IN RURAL COMMUNITIES?

Safe Harbor Statewide Services

County	# of Cases
Cottonwood	8
Jackson	9
Nobles	25
Pipestone	6
Rock	3
Other	14

Above is 2017-2019 exploitation and trafficking cases where supportive services were provided. Right is consults logged in Apricot for SW MN Regional Navigator.

County	Population	Youth Cases
Lincoln	5,709	2
Murray	8,344	2
Pipestone	9,127	5
Rock	9,491	4
Jackson	9,951	3
Watonwan	10,839	4
Cottonwood	11,320	3
Faribault	13,671	3
Sibley	14,869	3
Redwood	15,278	6
Martin	19,865	5
Nobles	21,963	6
Brown	25,245	5
Lyon	25,823	6
Le Sueur	27,881	4
Nicollet	33,892	6
Blue Earth	67,220	8
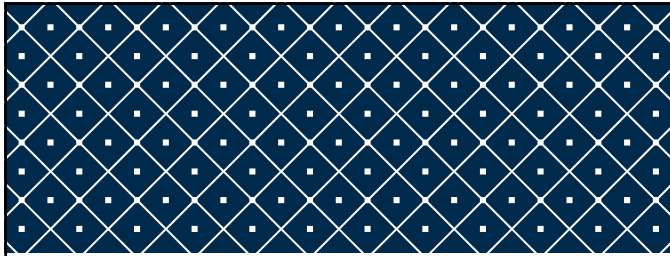
APPLYING POSITIVE REPRESENTATION PRACTICES | WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?

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Redirecting Representation Approaches

COMMON REPRESENTATION ELEMENTS	Redirect to…	POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES
Sexualizing, infantilizing, and dehumanizing elements, making subjects seem helpless or desperate for rescue/saving	→	**Trauma- informed and empowering,** leading, thriving and surviving, building community elements, showing autonomy/strength, emancipation
Stereotyping of individuals, IE: women of color prostituting on the street, young white girls held in chains, Hispanic men in forced agricultural labor	→	**Diverse representation** of individual identities in photos that indicate the variety of people susceptible to the crime
Symbols of oppression, IE: chains, locks, traps, guns, clenched fist, ropes, physical harm, artifacts from exploitation experience	→	**Symbols of liberation**, IE: keys, doves/birds flying, olive branch, holding hands, extended helping hand, empowered survivors
Exploiting survivor story, "savior complex" or stories without consent of survivor, seeing a survivor for their trauma instead of expertise	→	**Survivor-centered:** Getting full permission from survivors willing to share, ensuring their story is represented accurately in their own words
Sensationalism: Shock and awe tactics to create fear, including elements of 'trauma porn', or statistics without solid basis	→	**Authenticity**: Omitting unnecessarily shock/awe/grotesque aspects and recognizing all forms of exploitation are bad, using verified data

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Best Practices: Storytelling

Focus on authenticity and honesty
- Avoid inaccurate themes and sensationalism
- Recognize the variety of experiences of trafficking victims/survivors
- Emphasize need-to know info like vulnerabilities, themes, common components of control

Lift up and amplify survivors
- Consult survivors and survivor-leaders
- Do not exploit survivors for increased viewership
- Create a safe space through policies to ensure that survivor experiences are respected

Be intentional
- Think carefully about the words you use
- Consult trafficking experts and/or survivors prior to publishing or creating content
- Consider your motivation for sharing the information, recognizing your biases and your agenda

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Best Practices: Survivor Testimonial

Utilize trauma-informed, survivor-centered practices
- Avoid soliciting stories from survivors who aren't ready to share
- Consider providing a counselor or an advocate for the process
- Be flexible - encourage survivors to tell their stories, when, where and how they want to

Utilize a participant informed consent form
- Inform they may choose not to participate, can stop at any time
- Discuss the potential dangers and benefits of telling their story
- Ensure the consent form is written down and signed like a contract

For persons under 18, avoid identifiable information
- **If children can't consent to other potentially harmful decisions, consider whether they can consent to sharing their story publicly**

Respect and honor the survivor's expertise
- Give the survivor power in the process of telling their story
- Treat the survivor like you'd treat other professionals
- Get consent every time you use the story
- **Compensate the survivor for their expertise***

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Best Practices: visual media

BOTTOM LINE: *Regardless of how commonly an image is shared, choose not to use something if it employs negative characteristics.*

Avoid "trauma porn"
- Avoid the "-isms" and "-zations" identified as common missteps
- Acknowledge that survivors are more than their trauma experience
- Depicting aspects of victimization should focus on vulnerabilities, signs, or symptoms

Emphasize diversity of experiences
- Ensure survivor experiences of all kinds (from trafficking type to ethnicity of survivors represented) are present

Employ trauma-informed practices
- Remember that all audiences likely include survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking
- Engage survivor leaders about acceptable content and preferences about what's shared

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Examples of positive images & symbols

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Best Practices Checklist for Statistics/Data

Where did these data come from?
- Who conducted the study originally? Is the source trustworthy?
- Where did I find the statistic? Is the location trusted?
- What is their bias or point of view? What's the creator's agenda?

What is the methodology? How was this information gathered?
- Is there guesswork involved in the numbers/outcomes? Is this a professional opinion/estimate?
- What are the sources the authors use to come to their conclusions? Are those sources biased and/or data-driven?
- What is the sample size? Who is the sample population (IE age range, location of study, etc.)?
- Was this peer reviewed or verified by a trusted source?

What is the benefit of sharing these data?
- **Are you pushing an agenda rather than providing good data?**

BOTTOM LINE:
If you can't determine the *original* source and/or you can't find the methodology: use a different source, or <u>explicitly</u> mention the information's limitations.

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Strong Leadership in Trafficking Representation

- HEAL Trafficking: https://healtrafficking.org/media-and-community-awareness-guidelines/
- Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST): http://www.castla.org/home
- Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT): http://combathumantrafficking.org/
- Polaris (formerly Polaris Project): https://polarisproject.org/
- GEMS: http://www.gems-girls.org/survivor-leadership/resources/more-than-a-survivor-campaign
- Irina Project: http://www.theirinaproject.org/

> Human trafficking awareness campaigns often perpetuate the common narrative of an "ideal" victim and a singular perpetrator, which can result in the reluctance of survivors to self-identify or the denial of services to those who do not fit this dominant narrative.
>
> **KARA NAPOLITANO**

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Committing to ethical representation

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What can we do with this information?

Use it in your teams and day-to-day life
- Apply this framework to content you share
- Choose to avoid common missteps, regardless of whether other organizations use them
- Implement tools or framework to guide future content
- Ask for a second opinion
- Include survivor-leaders in process of editing and publishing content
- Focus on medical aspects or public health aspects of victimization
- **Create a representation protocol**

Spread the word to other anti-trafficking community members
- If you see something, respectfully say something
- **Kindly and respectfully** use teachable moments if colleagues use questionable content
- Share this information with other practitioners in the movement
- Publicly post your commitment to ethical representation

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Questions?

Thank you!