American Indian/Alaska Native women & girls:

ACEs, Trauma, & Vulnerability to Sex Traffickers

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Prepared by

Othayonih Research

Alexandra (Sandi) Pierce, PhD
spierce651@comcast.net
(651) 247-9581

Contents

Figures

Background

There is a growing body of evidence that American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls are significantly over-represented as sex trafficking victims, and that traffickers deliberately target them for victimization. In 2006, research in Minnesota identified American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls as frequent sex trafficking victims. A statewide survey with 14 Minnesota human services providers, nurses, and law enforcement personnel reported working with a total of 345 Native victims of sex trafficking over the previous three years.[1] An analysis of 2007 prostitution arrest data in Hennepin County, where Minneapolis is located, found 24% of arrests to be of Native women, more than twelve times their representation in the county's population.[2] A 2011 study involved interviews with 105 adult American Indian/Alaska Native women who were currently in, or who had previously been, in prostitution. In describing their entry into the sex trade, almost half (45%) referred to third-party control or pimp-controlled prostitution, which meets the legal definition of a trafficking victim.[3]

Other regions of the country also began calling attention to the problem. In 2010, the FBI and the Anchorage Police Department began warning Alaska Native villages that sex traffickers were targeting Native minor girls visiting Anchorage for youth conferences, as well as luring them to Anchorage for purposes of prostitution.[4, 5, 6] Since that time, a rapidly rising number of domestically trafficked AI/AN girls have been reported in the larger cities of Alaska, South Dakota, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington, and in North Dakota "fracking" mining and oil fields.[7, 8, 9] More recently, the Seattle Indian Center reported the International Rescue Committee's recent research finding that American Indian/Alaska Native victims represented nearly 25% of all domestic trafficking victims in the region.[10] In South Dakota, the U.S. Attorney's Office reported that 40% of reported sex trafficking cases involved American Indian/Alaska Native women or girls, though they represented only 8% of the population.[11]

Native women and girls are being trafficked on reservations as well as in larger cities. In a national survey conducted by the General Accounting Office, 27 of the 132 responding tribal law enforcement agencies (LEAs) reported initiating investigations involving human trafficking from 2014 to 2016. Across the 61 major city law enforcement agencies that responded to the survey, 6 reported initiating human trafficking investigations that involved at least one Native American victim during the same period. The GAO indicated that these data most likely represent an undercount.[12]

In data collected at intake for drop-in social services at an urban Indian nonprofit in Minneapolis, more than one-third (34%) of Native girls and young women ages 12-21 had already been sold for sex; (42%) of these had initially been coerced or forced into prostitution at age 15 or younger, and 20% of whom had first been prostituted when they were age 12 or younger. These girls were also exposed to the sex trade on a regular basis within their neighborhoods and social circles: 41% had one or more friends in prostitution, 45% had regular contact with gang members, and 31% currently knew a pimp.[13, 14]

All of these studies are very limited in scope, and not generalizable to the larger American Indian/Alaska Native population. Much is that is due to the difficulty of conducting research on any kind of sensitive subject in Indian Country.

Absence of research on Indian Country

Several factors are at play in the lack of large-scale research on the sex trafficking of American Indian/Alaska Native women and youth. A major factor is tribal communities' historical distrust of researchers and other persons attempting to collect personal information from and about Native people. The distrust is justifiable, as the data collected have often been used to further the careers of the researchers, without regard to the usefulness of the information to the people being studied, or the role it may play in reinforcing negative stereotypes about Native persons without attending to the underlying context or causes.

A second factor is that American Indians and Alaska Natives are a demographically small population across the U.S. which confounds efforts to develop a sample that is large enough and representative enough to draw conclusions that can be generalized to the larger Native population.

If the research design involves working on reservations, federal recognition of tribal sovereignty dictates that permission must be gained from the council or other governmental body that legally represents the tribe/community as a whole. That process can take a significant amount of time, and community members typically expect to participate fully in the decisions and the economic resources allocated to the project. Though university-affiliated researchers often claim use of community-based participatory research methods, large and/or complex studies are most often funded by government agencies.

Unless the researcher has a pre-existing relationship with the communities included in the research design, and there is agreement on the project and allocation of funds prior to submission of the proposal, communities are most often presented with a plan in which they had no roles. Furthermore, university research budgets are usually based on utilizing the labor of university-employed students and other university personnel. Community leaders and members view their members' exclusion from the financial benefits as further exploitation.

Given the challenges in gaining tribal/Alaska Native community approval, and the fact that the federal government recognizes more than 350 historically, socioeconomically, and culturally diverse American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and communities, many academic researchers determine that the research is too difficult, too time-consuming, and too expensive, with too little payoff in career advancement.

The role of trauma

Despite the relative absence of research on American Indian/Alaska Native sex trafficking victims, trauma has been identified as a core factor in women's and children's vulnerability to traffickers. There is strong agreement among American Indian/Alaska Native psychologists and sociologists that generations of Native people have experienced severe trauma from adverse

childhood experiences since the colonial era, and that generational transmission of unresolved trauma has a powerful effect on families' and communities' functioning.[15, 16, 17]

The forced removal of children from their family homes to separate them from the "negative influences" of tribal culture, and their placement on boarding schools and foster or adoptive homes to assimilate them into White society, has been identified as the primary factor contributing to the over-representation of American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls in trafficking cases.

The problem was compounded, first by the Indian Adoption Project, in which 16 western states removed 395 Native children from their families for adoption by White families in Illinois, Indiana, New York, Massachusetts, Missouri, and other states in the East and Midwest. The practice was continued by the Adoption Resource Exchange of North America, which continued placing Native children in White homes into the early 1970s. [18] A 1969 study by the Association on American Indian Affairs found that roughly 25-35% of Native children had been separated by their families; more recently, the First Nations Orphan Association estimated that between 1941 and 1978, 68% of all American Indian/Alaska Native children had been removed from their homes and placed in orphanages or foster homes, or adopted into White families.[19] When the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted in 1978, 25-35% of all Indian children had been removed from their tribes and families and placed in adoptive homes; about 90% of those adoptions were into non-Indian homes.[20, 21]

Across generations, American Indians/Alaska Natives have experienced multiple traumatic childhood events stemming from these and other governmental interventions. Unresolved trauma has been passed on to each generation's children, which added to ongoing exposure to traumatic events in their own lifetimes, has created an accumulation of trauma that grows with each generation. This has led to development of maladaptive behavioral coping strategies to avoid the pain of unresolved trauma, which have also been passed on, with an exponential impact on each subsequent generation of children.[22, 23, 24] The difficulties confronting Native families and communities create exactly the types of vulnerabilities that traffickers look for in their potential victims.[25]

In their research on perpetrators, Miethe and Meier (1994) described two important factors that play a major role in victim selection. The first is target attractiveness, which means that persons are singled out because they have particular value in the eyes of the perpetrator.[26] Sex buyers' interest in "exotic" American Indian women and girls is a key reason that traffickers seek them out.[27, 28] The second factor in perpetrators' victim selection is capable guardianship, which means that victimization is prevented by increasing the costs to the potential perpetrator. Even if a target is very attractive, if she/he also has people watching out for him/her to the degree that the perpetrator would suffer consequences for harming them, the perpetrator is likely to move on to another victim who lacks that protection.[29]

While many tribal communities are working to address generational trauma and the vulnerability of Native women and youth, the necessary healing is very difficult ongoing individual-level traumas continue creating additional layers. This severely damages community

functions like social networks and trust, the ability to take collective action, and effective "capable guardianship" of women and girls.[30]

The following sections describe American Indian/Alaska Native representation in individual-level exposure to traumatic life experiences.

Individual-level trauma

Research has found trauma to be prevalent among American Indian youth in particular:

- AI/AN youth experience trauma at a rate 2.5 times that of their non-Native peers.[31]
- 22% of AI/AN juveniles experience posttraumatic stress disorder, the same rate as that of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, and triple the rate of the U.S. General Population.[32, 33]
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for American Indian adolescents and young adults ages 10-34.[34]

Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Research has found stressful or traumatic events in childhood (Adverse Childhood Experiences/ACEs) to be strongly associated with the development and prevalence of a wide range of medical, social, and behavioral health problems throughout a person's lifespan.[35] As a group, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth are disproportionately affected by ACEs (see Figure 1).

1. Reported ACEs, AI/AN vs. White youth (National Survey of Children's Health)[36]

ACE Category	AI/AN youth	White, Non-Hisp youth
Family has difficulty getting by on the family's income, hard to cover basic needs like food or housing	35.7%	22.8%
Parents separated or divorced after child was born	33.0%	21.4
Person/people in home had substance abuse problem	23.6%	11.6
Child lived with parent who served time in jail after he/she was born	18.0%	6.0%
Victim of violence or witnessed violence in his/her neighborhood	15.9%	6.7%
Child saw parents hit, kick, slap, punch, or beat each other up	15.5%	6.3%
Child lived with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal or severely depressed for more than a couple weeks	13.2%	9.7%
Child lived with a parent who died	4.2%	2.5%

The Minnesota Student survey is a statewide survey administered to students at school every two years. The 2016 survey included questions about safety, support, and exposure to abuse and/or violence. Most of the rates for trauma-related items among American Indian/Alaska Native girls were significantly higher than those for White non-Hispanic girls (see Figure 2).

2. 2016 Minnesota Student Survey findings: Trauma exposure[37]

	8th grade girls		11th grade girls	
At school and at home	**AmInd (n=1544)**	**White (n=15,802)**	**AmInd (n=786)**	**White (n=13,747)**
Past 30 days was bullied or harassed at school because of my race, ethnicity, or national origin	21%	6%	17%	3%
Past 30 days was bullied or harassed at school because of my size or weight	35%	24%	28%	7%
Past 30 days was bullied or harassed at school because of my physical appearance	45%	33%	31%	22%
Past 30 days was pushed, shoved, slapped, hit or kicked by another student at school	21%	11%	9%	4%
Past 30 days another student threatened violence	20%	10%	11%	4%
Past 30 days another student made sexual jokes, comments, or gestures toward me	38%	24%	31%	23%
Past 30 days was bullied through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting	30%	22%	20%	14%
Homeless in past 12 months, with family member(s)	10%	4%	6%	2%
Homeless in past 12 months, without family member(s)	13%	5%	8%	2%
Have had a parent or guardian in jail or prison	45%	14%	38%	14%
Someone in my home drinks too much alcohol	16%	9%	18%	12%
I live with someone who uses illegal drugs or abuses prescription drugs	11%	4%	13%	5%
Parent or other adult in my home regularly swears at me, insults me, or puts me down	27%	15%	25%	14%
Parents or other adults in my home have slapped, hit, kicked, punched, or beat each other up	16%	6%	14%	6%
Parent or other adult in my home has hit, kicked, beat, or physically hurt me	20%	10%	19%	10%
Non-family adult or other person has touched me sexually or made me touch them	11%	4%	13%	6%
Older/stronger person in my family has touched me sexually or made me touch them	7%	2%	9%	3%
Boy/girlfriend/dating partner in serious relationship has called me names or put me down verbally	13%	6%	24%	17%
Boy/girlfriend/dating partner in serious relationship has hit, slapped, or physically hurt me on purpose	5%	2%	14%	6%
Boy/girlfriend/dating partner in serious relationship has pressured me into sex when I did not want to	Question not asked		21%	14%

Responses to the 2016 Minnesota Student Survey also show American Indian/Alaska Native girls to be over-represented in Minnesota girls reporting mental health, emotional, and behavioral health problems (see Figure 4).

3. 2016 Minnesota Student Survey findings: Trauma effects[38]

	8th grade girls		11th grade girls	
	AmInd (n=1544)	White (n=15,802)	AmInd (n=786)	White (n=13,747)
Have had a long-term mental health, emotional, or behavioral problem (more than 6 months)	36%	19%	43%	28%
In past 12 months, did something to purposely hurt or injure myself without wanting to die, such as cutting, burning, or bruising myself	39%	20%	33%	20%
In past 12 months, seriously considered suicide	30%	14%	28%	15%
In past 12 months, attempted suicide	14%	4%	8%	4%
In past 2 weeks, was bothered more than half of the days or nearly every day by little interest or pleasure in doing things	27%	17%	33%	22%
In past 2 weeks, was bothered more than half of the days or nearly every day by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	36%	21%	35%	21%

Poverty

Living in poverty causes housing instability and food insecurity, both of which are adverse childhood experiences. More than in four (26.2%) persons identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native only (single-race) had incomes below the poverty level, the highest rate of any racial group in the nation. The poverty rate for all persons in the nation was only 14%.[39] Some studies have noted that neglect is the most common type of maltreatment reported in child welfare investigations involving American Indian/Alaska Native children, and neglect determinations are often associated with family poverty.[40, 41]

Out-of-home placement

There is evidence of a strong relationship between foster care placement and vulnerability to sex traffickers. In FBI raids during 2015, 60% of minor sex trafficking victims had been in foster care prior to the trafficking incident.[42] Research has found that abuse in the home and foster care placement were both key background factors in American Indian/Alaska Native girls being trafficked into prostitution, often after running away.[43] Findings from the 2016 Minnesota Student Survey showed percentages of 8th and 11th grade Native girls reporting they had run away from home at least once in the previous 12 months were more than double those of White girls in the same grades. Rates of sexual abuse by a family member reported by American Indian/Alaska Native girls, while low, were triple those of White girls, and Native girls' rates of

sexual abuse by a non-family adult or other person were more than double those of White girls of the same age (see Figure 4)

4. 2016 Minnesota Student Survey findings: Abuse and running away[44]

	8th grade girls		11th grade girls	
	AmInd (n=1544)	White (n=15,802)	AmInd (n=786)	White (n=13,747)
In past 12 months, ran away from home one or more times	15%	6%	12%	5%
Non-family adult or other person has touched me sexually or made me touch them	11%	4%	13%	6%
Older/stronger person in my family has touched me sexually or made me touch them	7%	2%	9%	3%

Recent research studies and state data show that Native children continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system nationwide, especially in foster care placement.[45] Nationwide, though they represent only 0.9% of all children in the U.S., they represent 2.1% of all children in foster placement, a rate 2.7 times that of all children in the U.S.[46]

Figure 5 shows the states with the highest rates of disproportionality in out-of-home placement, when comparing non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska children to White non-Hispanic children.

5. American Indian/Alaska Native children: Disproportionality in poverty and foster care placement [47, 48]

State	% of children in population who are AI/AN[49]	% of children in poverty who are AI/AN[50]	% of children in foster care who are AI/AN[51]	Disproportionality: AI/AN rate compared to rate of White children[52]
Minnesota	1.4%	34%	18.8%	13.9
Nebraska	1.1%	44%	8.7%	7.7
Iowa	0.3%	2%	6.6%	4.5
Washington	1.5%	28%	6.6%	4.3
Wisconsin	1.1%	30%	4.3%	4.1
South Dakota	13.5%	56%	50.8%	3.8
Montana	25%	44%	35.1%	3.7
Idaho	1.2%	22%	34.3%	3.7
Oregon	1.3%	31%	4.4%	3.5
North Dakota	8.5%	45%	28.4%	3.3
Utah	1.0%	40%	3.1%	3.2
Alaska	17.7%	30%	51.0%	2.9

As of 2014, Minnesota had the highest rate of Native children placed in foster care in the nation, a rate actually higher than it had been in 1978 when ICWA was enacted.[53, 54, 55] American Indian/Alaska Native children were five times more likely to be reported as victims of abuse than white children, and 10 times more likely to end up in foster care. [56]

Some have argued that systematic bias is a core underlying factor in the disproportional representation of Native children removed from their families by Child Welfare authorities. Nationally, where abuse has been reported, AI/AN children are twice as likely as White children to be have their families investigated, twice as likely to have allegations of abuse substantiated, and 4 times more likely to be placed in foster care.[57] Though initial reports of abuse and neglect are at rates proportionate to AI/AN representation in the child population, bias creeps in as the rate of representation increases at each major decision point from investigation to out-of-home placement, culminating in this overrepresentation of AI/AN in placements outside their family homes.[58]

Juvenile justice involvement

There is also a strong relationship between placement in foster care, sexual abuse, and involvement with the juvenile justice system.[59, 60] American Indian/Alaska Native girls represent 1 percent of the general youth population but constitute 3.5 percent of girls detained and committed to juvenile justice residential placement facilities. Their placement rate is 179 per 100,000, while African-American girls' rate is 123 per 100,000 and Latinas' rate is 47 per 100,000. By comparison, 37 per 100,000 of non-Hispanic white girls are confined.[61]

A 2006 study of girls in Oregon's juvenile justice system found that 93 percent had experienced sexual or physical abuse; of these, 76% experienced at least one sexual abuse incident by the age of 13, averaging just under seven and a half of age. The girls in the Oregon study reported an average of four forms of severe sexual abuse before the age of 12.[62] Similarly, a 2009 study of delinquent girls in South Carolina found that 81% reported a history of sexual violence, and 64% had experienced both physical and sexual abuse.[63]

As noted earlier, American Indian girls are twice as likely as White girls to report having run away from home in the past year, and having experienced sexual abuse by family members and/or by non-family members.[64] According to a 2015 report issued jointly by the Human Rights Project for Girls and the Center on Poverty and Inequality, girls account for 40% of juvenile justice cases involving status offenses that result in residential placement. Status offenses include running away from home, truancy, and curfew violations, which are also indicators of abuse. The result, the authors say, is a harmful cycle: girls with a history of sexual abuse run away, which makes them more likely to be sexually exploited or engage in activity that increases their risk of juvenile justice involvement. When a girl returns home after release, if the justice system has failed to address the reasons that she ran away in the first place, she is at higher risk of additional sexual victimization throughout her life.[65]

Other studies indicate that if this sort of trauma is not resolved, victims may begin or escalate drug and alcohol use, become involved in violent activity, and/or develop mental health problems. These trauma-related responses then lead to additional arrest and punishment, thus escalating her involvement in the justice system.[66, 67]

Incarceration of a parent or caregiver

An incarcerated parent is another significant adverse childhood experience that is common in American Indian/Alaska Native communities, affecting the well-being of children in those communities. As noted earlier, 45% of the 8th grade American Indian/Alaska Native girls completing the Minnesota Student survey reported they had experienced a parent or guardian in jail or prison; 38% of 11th American Indian/Alaska Native girls reported this experience, compared to only 14% of White girls in both 8th and 11th grades.[68]

The U.S. Department of Justice reported that the number of American Indians and Alaska Natives held in local jails has nearly doubled from 1999 to 2014. The increase in the number of incarcerated American Indians/Alaska Natives averaged 4.3% each year, compared to a 1.4% increase for all other races combined.[69]

While the national incarceration rate decreased from 2005 to 2013, the proportion of AI/AN inmates increased by 10.8%. An estimated 17% of adult AI/AN inmates were age 39 or younger.[70] While American Indian/Alaska Native women made up only 1.6% of the U.S. adult female population, they represented almost 16% of all female jail inmates in 2013. In 2011, the proportion of Native female jail inmates had been lower (14.6%), and had increased by 1.4% in two years.[71]

At Shakopee Women's Prison in Minnesota, Native American women comprised 21% of the 2017 inmate population, while they represented only about 1% of the state's population.[72]

Intersecting vulnerabilities

In a Minneapolis-based study of domestic minor sex trafficking operations, researchers examining police and court records found that victims were predominantly girls of color living in poverty, and many were runaways and/or precariously housed or homeless. The study also conducted interviews with professionals working with victims, who also noted that the most common vulnerabilities were unsupportive home relationships, impaired mental and physical health, and precarious housing or homelessness.[73] Importantly, the Minneapolis study found that in their efforts to improve their living situations, girls cycled in and out of traffickers' control while experiencing homelessness, foster care, treatment facilities, stays in the homes of their families of origin and friends, and police custody.[74]

In June 2014, FBI agents and police officers participated in a weeklong national effort to find and rescue minor sex trafficking victims in hotel rooms, truck stops and homes. Many of the rescued children had not been reported as missing, despite being under the supervision of state child welfare systems.

Human Rights for Girls reported findings from multiple studies linking girls' experiences in child welfare systems and their victimization by sex traffickers.[75] The findings included:

- 60% of the child sex trafficking victims recovered as part of a FBI nationwide raid from over 70 cities were children from foster care or group homes (2013).
- Connecticut reported 88 child victims of sex trafficking. Eighty-six were child welfare involved, and most reported abuse while in foster care or residential placement (2012).
- Los Angeles County, California reported that of the 72 commercially sexually exploited girls in their Succeed Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court Program, 56 were child-welfare involved (2012).

The Children's Bureau's 2017 Bulletin for Professionals noted that the National Human Trafficking Hotline received reports for 5,544 potential cases of human trafficking in 2015, with 1,621 of those cases describing minors. Furthermore, one in six of the more than 18,500 children reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in 2017 as missing were victims of child sex trafficking.

Violence against female friends and relatives

Violence against one's mother is described as a critically important adverse childhood experience, but culturally, aunts and cousins also play important "mothering" roles in Native families and households. Multiple studies over the past 20 years have confirmed that American Indian/Alaska Native women experience the highest levels of violence in the U.S. They are significantly more likely to experience lifetime sexual violence (1.7 times the rate of non-Hispanic White women), intimate partner physical violence (1.6 times), intimate partner psychological aggression (1.3), and intimate partner stalking (1.8) times (see Figure 6).[76]

6. Lifetime sexual violence, women ages 18+, weighted estimates (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010)[77]*

NS = not statistically significant	AI/AN	NHW	Relative risk
Sexual violence with penetration	**35.0%**	**20.1%**	**1.7**
Completed forced penetration	29.5%	13.6%	2.2
Completed alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration	16.7%	9.0%	NS
Attempted forced penetration	12.2%	5.3%	2.3
Other sexual violence	**52.1%**	**46.8%**	**NS**
Sexual coercion	24.5%	13.7%	1.8
Unwanted sexual contact	42.5%	30.5%	1.4
Non-contact unwanted sexual experiences	38.4%	31.0%	NS
Any sexual violence	**56.1%**	**49.7%**	**NS**

Adolescents often witness physical violence against their mothers and other female relatives and friends in their homes. As noted earlier, 16% of 8th grade Native girls and 14% of 11th Native grade girls completing the school-based 2016 Minnesota Student Survey reported that their parents or other adults in their homes had slapped, hit, kicked, punched, or beat each other up.[78]

Though children are less likely to witness sexual violence than physical violence against mothers and other female relatives in the home, the effect of these crimes on the victims may impact the children indirectly. As Figure 6 (above) indicates, the rate of completed rapes (completed forced penetration) among American Indian/Alaska Native women is more than twice that of non-Hispanic White women.

Native women survey respondents described the perpetrators of intimate partner physical violence, stalking, and psychological aggression as persons of another race at a much higher rate than non-Hispanic White women (see Figure 7). Some have argued that the data may be skewed by Native women's reluctance to report a Native perpetrator due to the interrelatedness of families on reservations, but if this is the case, the actual rate is even higher.

7. Perpetrator race by type of victimization, AI/AN vs. non-Hispanic White (NHW) women victims (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010)[79]

	Sexual violence		Physical violence		Stalking		Psychological aggression	
Perpetrator	AI/AN	NHW	AI/AN	NHW	AI/AN	NHW	AI/AN	NHW
Other-race	96%	32%	90%	18%	89%	26%	91%	22%
Same-race	21%	91%	18%	89%	30%	87%	25%	93%

Prevalence of early deaths

Not only the absence of a parent, but also the frequency of early deaths in American Indian/Alaska Native communities has a traumatic impact on the communities' children. In particular, Native communities have extremely high rates of premature death in young adults, who if not parents, are often friends or relatives. Deaths from drug overdoses have increased dramatically since 2001, but overdose death rates for American Indians/Alaska Natives have risen to an alarming level.

In 2016, while Minnesota's overall mortality rates from drug overdoses were some of the lowest in the nation (12.5 per 100,000 in the population), the mortality rate for American Indians/Alaska Natives ages was 64.6 per 100,000 in the population—an increase over the 2015 rate of 47.3. Native persons had become six times more likely to die of a drug overdose than White Minnesotans. This was the largest race disparity in the entire country. Most of the deaths were in persons of parenting age, ages 25-34.[80]

A second study, comparing American Indian/Alaska Native overdose rates to those of non-Hispanic Whites in Washington State, found Native rates of overdose deaths to be more 2.7 times those of White non-Hispanics (see Figure 8). The project found not only tremendous

disproportionality in opioid-related drug overdoses, but also that due to racial misclassification, the CDC data underestimated American Indian/Alaska Native overdose mortality counts and rates in Washington State by 40%. To arrive at the more accurate estimate, the research team compared Washington State death certificates to information in the Northwest Tribal Registry to correct racial misidentification Washington State death records. [81]

8. Disproportionality in drug overdose rates per 100,000 population, AI/AN versus Whites by type of drug overdose, 2013-2015 [82]

Race	Population	Total drug	Opioid-involved	Heroin-involved
American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN)	WA State (corrected)	40.9	27.5	16.7
	WA State (uncorrected)	28.7	19.6	11.9
	U.S. CDC (uncorrected)	13.2	7.6	2.4
Non-Hispanic White (NHW)	WA State (corrected)	15.1	10.2	4.1
	WA State (uncorrected)	15.7	10.6	4.3
	U.S. CDC (uncorrected)	19.2	12.1	4.4
Washington AI/AN versus NHW rate ratios				
Washington AI/AN versus NHW (corrected)		2.7	2.7	4.1
Washington AI/AN versus NHW (uncorrected)		1.8	1.8	2.8
U.S. AI/AN versus NHW (uncorrected)		0.69	0.63	0.55
Washington AI/AN (corrected versus uncorrected)		1.4	1.4	1.4

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of unintentional injury death for American Indians/Alaska Natives. Adult (aged ≥20 years) motor vehicle-related death rates for AI/AN are more than twice that of non-Hispanic whites or blacks.[83] In a study of motor vehicle and traffic accident deaths from 2005, 2009, researchers found that the highest death rates were for young adults between the ages of 25 and 34. The Native men's rate in this age group was 2.47 times that of White men, and the Native women's rate was 2.31 times that of White females.[84] American Indians and Alaska Natives also had the highest percentage of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed during that period, compared to all other racial and ethnic groups.[85]

Another striking disparity in mortality rates is that related to death by homicide. American Indian/Alaska Native men have the highest homicide rates and disproportionality in the U.S.; the disproportionality in homicide-related deaths of Native women is also striking (see Figure 9). In the Indian Health Services Northern Plains Contract Health Service Delivery (CHSD) area, Native men were 9.8 times more likely than White men to be homicide victims, and Native women were 4.6 times more likely to be victims of homicide. The disparity was even greater when comparing data from U.S. county areas in the region: Native men were 15.8 times more likely than White men to be homicide victims, while Native women were 5.3 times more likely.[86] Data from the Alaska Indian Health Services region indicated that both Native men and Native

women experienced homicide deaths at 3 times the rates as White men and women in the region, regardless of whether they lived in a U.S. County or on tribal or trust lands.

9. Disproportionality in homicide rates per 100,000 population, AI/AN versus Whites by sex[87]

IHS Region	Sex	CHSD* AI/AN rate	CHSD* White rate	Rate ratio	Counties* AI/AN rate	Counties* White rate	Rate ratio
Total	Male	18.5	3.8	4.9	15.0	3.8	3.9
	Female	6.0	1.9	3.2	5.0	1.9	2.6
Northern Plains	Male	20.0	2.0	9.8	15.8	2.5	6.2
	Female	6.6	1.4	4.6	5.3	1.5	3.5
Southwest	Male	25.6	5.7	4.5	24.1	4.5	5.4
	Female	6.9	2.4	2.8	6.8	2.2	3.2
Alaska	Male	17.7	5.2	3.4	17.7	5.2	3.4
	Female	10.3	2.4	4.3	10.3	2.4	4.3
Southern Plains	Male	14.2	5.6	2.5	11.5	5.2	2.2
	Female	4.8	2.7	1.7	4.2	2.5	1.7
Pacific Coast	Male	13.5	3.6	3.7	12.0	3.7	3.2
	Female	5.2	1.7	3.1	4.9	1.6	3.0
East	Male	10.5	3.7	2.8	10.4	4.1	2.6
	Female	3.0	1.8	1.7	2.9	2.0	1.5

**IHS Region refers to Indian Health Service regions designate by the federal government. Contract Health Service Delivery areas refer to tribal, Indian trust lands, and areas adjacent to them, where health care is delivered by IHS contractors. These correspond to specific IHS Regions. U.S. Counties refers to U.S. Counties in the region that are not served by Indian Health Service or its Contract Health Service Delivery contractors. Rate ratios are the AI/AN rate in proportion to the White rate.*

Summary for testimony

Traffickers' operational strategies

- Traffickers view themselves as leaders of business operations, as such, they employ a standardized set of operational strategies to maximize their profits.
- They identify and target the "right" kind of victim, based on target attractiveness and level of capable guardianship.
    1. AI/AN girls viewed by sex buyers as "exotic," traffickers view them as "versatile," can market them as Asian, Hawaiian, American Indian, and/or Latina.
    2. AI/AN girls represented in ACEs at rates double to triple those of White girls: Poverty, child abuse/neglect, foster care/juvenile justice placement, parent incarceration, exposure to family violence, premature deaths in families/friends, exposure to bullying and abuse in schools and neighborhoods.
- Once a potential victim has been identified, they employee specific strategies to bring her under their control.
- The most common approach used w American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls is "lover-boy pimping," or intimate partner pimping.
- To initially attract the girl's attention/interest, traffickers often offer/supply drugs or alcohol and/or invite the girl to "come party," usually after being introduced by someone in her social circle.

Though they do not always occur in the same order, there are four stages involved in lover-boy pimping:

- Attracting/luring (psychological). Painting the picture of a glamorous/exciting lifestyle, plenty of money to spend, freedom from family members who want to control her, the happiness that could be hers as his "boo." Taking her out to eat, offering gifts, clothing/shoes she had never been able to afford, getting her nails done/paying for a makeover, road trips, staying in hotels.
- Binding/dependency (psychological). Playing on her unhappiness/dissatisfaction with her current situation and her insecurities, emphasizing her "specialness," offering a fabulous life with someone who idolizes her. Moving her into his home/apartment, paying all of her expenses, emphasizing that they are destined to be together, that she is everything he ever wanted in a woman. Separating her from friends and family.
- Breaking/trauma bond (physical/psychological). Deliberately creating psychological distress by fostering uncertainty/insecurity/fear of loss. Accusations that she does not really love him/care about him, that she is using him, as justification for physical and sexual violence. Demanding that she pull her weight, bring in money to support them as a couple, forcing her to have sex with his friends/pimp network. Instill shame and fear through humiliation, forcing her to engage in degrading sex acts.
- Controlling/preventing escape (physical/psychological). Convincing the victim that he will find her no matter where she goes and/or that if she tells anyone, SHE is the one who will go to jail. Requiring immediate response to calls/texts, stalking her then suddenly

appearing when she does not expect it or using "watchers." Playing girls other under his control against the victim, threats to harm the victim or people she loves, using children as hostages. Alternating cruelty with kindness and special treatment, convincing the victim that her own actions are what cause his behavior, keeping her off balance so she no longer believes her own perception of the situation.

How trauma bonds work

- When victims are subjected to unpredictable, tense, and abusive tactics, they can experience an interconnected variety of changes in their character and their behaviors.[88]
- These changes are part of complex trauma: a shift in the victim's internal reality and a change in their thinking patterns because the abuser's persistent and invasive tactics have successfully broken down the victim's sense of self.[89]
- As a result, the victim is forced to adopt a new worldview based entirely on the abuser's perspective. She then takes on the blame and responsibility for the abuse, and idealizes her abuser and tries to please him. [90, 91, 92, 93]
- The trafficker exploits the power imbalances he has put in place. By constantly reinforcing her subordinate status while continuing to abuse her, he makes himself the most powerful person in her life both physically and emotionally.[94]
- Over time, the victim internalizes this power differential, which keeps her uncertain, lost, fearful, and entrapped. This is especially true when the victim developed prior trauma-related attachments to caregivers as a child through child abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment, and the trafficker arbitrarily re-triggers that trauma.[95]
- The victim no longer has the wherewithal to try to escape. Traffickers call this "going on automatic," meaning they no longer have to exercise control over the victim—she controls herself.

Other barriers to leaving

- Even if the victim is somehow able to consider trying to escape, she has typically not completed high school and has no work experience, no work history, and no references.
- Because the trafficker isolated her, she has no one to go to for help and no other source of financial support.
- In addition to being psychologically incapacitated by trauma, she may also feel undeserving of help (moral injury), self-blame, devastating shame.

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