A Baseline Assessment: Data Collection and Analysis of Women Escort Advertisements Posted on Backpage.com in Madison, WI.

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Molly has practical experience addressing human trafficking, domestically and internationally. In this field, her roles have included trainer, case manager, counselor, policy advocate, and program developer. She received her Master in Social Work (MSW) from the UW-Madison with a focus on human trafficking. Her first year MSW internship was at Project RESPECT in Madison, WI where she counseled, case managed, and facilitated life skills trainings to a diverse population involved in commercial sex work and victims of human trafficking. She also collaborated with staff to plan, organize, and facilitate community events as well as designed and facilitated a client inclusive leadership group. During her second-year internship at Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) in Kampala, Uganda – an anti-human trafficking NGO, she provided technical assistance, created culturally inclusive trainings, and educational workshops for UYDEL Staff and regional NGOs. Molly also researched and developed theoretical frameworks, manuals, and completed a data analysis report – with focus on the current trends for minors who were victims of sex trafficking/labor trafficking/sexually exploited. Molly also developed a multi-media awareness campaign providing factual information that awareness on sex trafficking, and acquired funding by helping to write grants for two innovative programs she helped design.

From August 2014-June 2015 she was Chair of Slave Madison, taking a leadership role in raising awareness, educating and advocating for cooperative community responses to reduce the incidence of human trafficking. She was a member of the APPROACH committee, where she helped create an “End Demand” Wisconsin design. The campaign culminated with the presentation of “End Demand” signs on 50 Madison Metro buses in January of 2015 for human trafficking awareness month. In Madison, WI she has worked as a case manager and program developer at Briarpatch Transitional Living Program for at-risk, homeless, and
trafficked youth. Currently she works at the Salvation Army Dane County as a community
based case manager, educating her clients, Salvation Army, and local agencies on human
trafficking. She continues to attend trainings that address human trafficking. She has served
as a representative for UW STREETS and The Salvation Army at the Wisconsin Anti-Human
Trafficking Task Force and the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to the Commercial
Sexual Exploitation of Children – a subcommittee of the CCR on Sexual Abuse in Dane
County.

Researcher: Madelyne Huibregtse, BS
Throughout her undergraduate studies, Madelyne studied human trafficking at both the
domestic and international levels. At UW-Madison she created a student organization called
the HOPE (Helping Oppressed People Escape) Movement, which raises awareness about
human trafficking. She spent one semester in Denmark, where she explored sex trafficking
patterns and prevalence throughout Europe and Africa. Additionally, she worked with local
professionals to explore the impact of various prostitution laws on sex trafficking. She also
volunteered with HopeNow; a Danish anti-trafficking group advocating for women who
were sex trafficked from Nigeria to Denmark. In this position, she did street outreach,
transcribed interviews, and worked with the women to better understand their individual
needs. Madelyne graduated from UW Madison in December 2016 with a degree in Human
Development and Family Studies with a certificate in Gender and Women’s Studies.
Introduction

Abstract

This study will analyze the relationship between technology and sex trafficking in Madison, Wisconsin. This is a collaborative effort between the community of Madison, Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin STREETS (Social Transformation to End Exploitation and Trafficking of Sex). Aims of this study are to 1) Determine the prevalence of postings of female escorts on backpage.com in Madison, Wisconsin and 2) Whether indicator tools can detect victims of online sex trafficking on postings under female escorts on backpage.com. Data was collected from women who post advertisements from February 1st, 2016 to May 31st, 2016 under the female escort section on backpage.com in Madison, WI. An indicator tool was created from best available evidence and local contextual dynamics highlighted by a detective in Madison, WI that works in the anti-trafficking field. Based on information collected thirteen indicators were tracked on every advertisement, it was proposed documenting yes to indicator(s) observed on an ad increased the potential for the female to be at-risk for online sex trafficking. Based on literature the following six variables were created, tracked, and analyzed: number of indicators observed on an ad, number of days an ad was posted, phone numbers and area codes, and self-identified race/ethnicity and age that were written on ads. The purpose of this study is to understand if there were any causal relationships from the data collected using the indicator tools and detecting victims of online sex trafficking.

Funding

This research is funded by UW STREETS. The vision is to have UW-Madison be a recognized leader, innovator, and contributor to the end of human trafficking. Through education, outreach, and action-oriented research, UW STREETS is grounded in the perspectives and preference of survivors, and through thoughtful bridge-building engagement with policy initiatives. The social transformations effort will have impacts locally and globally, both at the community level and in the legal and policy realm.
Human Trafficking Definitions

United States Human Trafficking Definitions

According to the US Department of State\(^1\) “trafficking in persons” and “human trafficking” are umbrella terms to “to include all of the criminal conduct involved in forced labor and sex trafficking, essentially the conduct involved in reducing or holding someone in compelled service”. Criminal activities that fall under this definition are forced labor and sex trafficking, bonded labor, debt bondage among migrant laborers, involuntary domestic servitude, forced child labor, child soldiers and child sex trafficking. This research will use one of the most frequently used definitions from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000(TVPA) defines Human Trafficking, “severe forms of trafficking” are defined (a) and have the following elements (b):

\(\text{(A) Sex trafficking in which commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or}\)

\(\text{(B) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, people, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.}^2\)

This study targets adult and minor female victims of sex trafficking. Federal and State human trafficking laws state child cannot legally consent to sex. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Domestic Minor Sexual Exploitation (DMST) will be the terms used for minors, who are victims under 18 years old.

Human Trafficking Laws and Statutes

Currently there are no Federal or State of Wisconsin Laws and Statues that specifically target the crime of online sex trafficking. These cases, however, can be prosecuted under the Federal and Wisconsin human trafficking laws and statutes.

Federal Statutes on Sex Trafficking

Sex Trafficking by Force Fraud or Coercion or Sex Trafficking of Children (18 USC Sec 1591)\(^3\)

State of Wisconsin Law and Statutes

In Wisconsin, Human Trafficking can be prosecuted as a state crime. Enacted in 2008, the


Wisconsin law defines two trafficking crimes: Human Trafficking, 940.302 and Trafficking of a child, 948.051. Crime of human trafficking is a class D felony. The penalty is a fine not exceeding $100,000, prison time not exceeding 25 years, or both.4

Wisconsin Statue Definitions

940.302 (1) (b) “debt bondage” means the condition of a debtor arising from the debtor’s pledge of serves as a security for debt if the reasonable value of those services in not applied toward repaying the debt or if the length and nature of the services are not defined.
940.302 (1) (a) “Commercial sex act” means sexual contact for which anything of value is given to, promised, or received, directly or indirectly, by any person.
940.302 (1) (c) “services” means activities performed by one individual at the request, under the supervision, or for the benefit of another person. 5

Human Trafficking Terminology

The underground human trafficking criminal world uses a coded language. To accurately capture sex trafficking in the United States, the following terms were observed and monitored during this study. Definitions of the terms are from The Advocates against Human Rights - that is by perpetrators, victims, johns, bystanders, and United States culture. Understanding the language can help identify and detect crimes of human trafficking.

- **Sex Trafficking Victim**: a person who is under the control of the traffickers and is exploited for the trafficker’s personal gain. 6
- **Prostitute, whore, ho, streetwalker, worker, call girl, escort, dancer, entertainer, and companion**: Terms used to objectify a person who is trafficked.
- **John, buyer, purchaser, client, and patron, Vic**: An individual who buys sex.7
- **Trafficker/Pimp/Perpetrator**: Traffickers are called *pimps* in popular culture and use a variety of means to manipulate, control and sell adults and children for sex.
- **Daddy, boyfriend, husband, and business partner**: Term victims may use to refer to their trafficker. 8

This study adapted similar definitions from the Wisconsin Human Trafficking Protocol and Resource Manual to explain the context in which *at-risk victim, victim,* and *survivor of sex trafficking* is used to describe a person and her/his current situation.

- **At-risk victim** has indicators and vulnerabilities, which increase their risk of trafficking but there is not any legal and self-identifying proof that they are being trafficked.
- **A victim** implies ongoing or hypothetical experiences of trafficking.
- **Survivor** is used if a person self-identifies as a person who has been victimized by

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5 Wisconsin Human Trafficking Committee and Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, 18.
Commercial Sex Worker vs. Sex trafficking Victim

The intention of this study is not to debate on whether commercial sex work should be legalized or the current laws used to prosecute commercial sex workers. The purpose of defining these terms is to understand that by definition a commercial sex worker chooses to exchange in sex work, while a sex trafficking victim is forced by a trafficker. There are some people who identify as commercial sex workers who do not see themselves as victimized in anyway, however an individual who identifies as a commercial sex worker, could also be victimized by sex trafficking. For this study, there was not a method to differentiate between the two terms, and we cannot ascertain whether or not the females view themselves as victimized from backpage.com data. Therefore, it is assumed that the population sampled contains both commercial sex workers and sex trafficking victims.

Literature Review

In the United States, there is a lack of comprehensive tools in data collection, monitoring, and evaluation tools that adequately address human trafficking. Key stakeholders in the anti-trafficking community are creatively using technology as a tool to address the lack of knowledge. This literature review explores the relationship between sex trafficking and technology in the United States – specifically exploring the unique characteristics in Wisconsin where this research collected the data. This review used information obtained through secondary sources that include websites, articles, and academic journals. It focuses on the relationship with technology between victims, traffickers, and johns and how the anti-trafficking community is using technology to creatively problem solve to expand the knowledge base, complexities, and collect comprehensive data that accurately captures the realities of this crime.

Sex Trafficking in the United States

In the United States sex trafficking affects both U.S. and foreign both citizens. This criminal activity and human rights violation exploits victims in both rural and urban areas. The National Human Trafficking Hotline, operated by Polaris, maintains one of the most extensive data sets on human trafficking in the United States. Since 2007 the hotline has received reports of 22,191 sex trafficking cases inside the United States. In 2016, the National Human Trafficking Outline reported 7,572 human trafficking cases.

The nature of human trafficking is similar across the United States; victims often do not self-identify and self-report. This crime can affect people of different genders, gender orientation, race, socio-economic class, and ethnicity. Though LGBTQ+, people of color, and who are low income are overrepresented among female survivors/victims. Elements of sex and labor trafficking and other exploitations often overlap. Polaris states that survivors of

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12 Wisconsin Human Trafficking Committee and Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, May 2012.
trafficking reported hotels and motels being the most common place of exchange.13

Sex trafficking is driven by an economic structure of supply and demand. Traffickers profit from supplying victims to the johns who are purchasing a service from them - sex in exchange for money. According to the International Labor Organization human trafficking has a private economy that generates US$ 150 billion in illegal profits per year. 14 This crime is driven by an underground, calculated criminal enterprise using people for profits. In, 2014, the Urban Institute funded by the National Institute for Justice (NIJ) studied the underground commercial sex venues—massage parlors, brothels, escort services, and street- and internet-based prostitution. Gathering data from eight U.S. cities- Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Kansas City, Miami, Seattle, San Diego, and Washington estimated that this illicit activity generates between $39.9 million and $290 million in revenue. Depending on the city - pimps and traffickers who were interviewed for this study took home between $5,000 and $32,833 a week. 15The traffickers use their victims as a commodity to increase their profit and criminal networks.

Polaris, one of the largest anti-human trafficking organizations in the United States interviewed survivors who accessed their services. Based on the interviews from survivors it was reported environmental factors that include poverty and lack of stable housing and emotional challenges - trauma, needing emotional support, desiring love, having mental health challenges and substance abuse as reasons for being vulnerable to trafficking. For youth, as a result of the lack of stable housing, many saw exchanging sex as their only option and are at an increased risk due to lack of emotional and social support. Polaris states that victims can be lured into trafficking by being manipulated by romantic partners, promises of a false job, and forced to sell sex by parents or other family members. Traffickers take advantage of this vulnerability by making false promises to victims, often times, using money as a motivating factor. The victim becomes a commodity and source of income for traffickers who use calculated methods to control the victims. Survivors stated that traffickers use physical abuse, intimate partner-related threats/intimidation, economic abuse, isolation or confinement, induced substance abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, withholding important objects, and familial-related strategies to trap and manipulate victims. 16

Sex Trafficking in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin human trafficking law and statutes were enacted in 2008, which makes it a relatively new offense. While the passage of the law was a forward action step in addressing human trafficking, currently there is still a lack of understanding, knowledge base, and documentation of human trafficking in this state. To adequately address the lack of documentation, in 2007 the Wisconsin Office of justice published a baseline prevalence study called Hidden in Plain Sight. This was a quantitative study that surveyed 1,300 sexual assault service providers, across different disciplines - who potentially could have encountered commercial sexually exploited children between 2000 and 2007. The


16 Polaris, May 2015.
information gathered showed that in Wisconsin, trafficking occurred in urban and rural areas in more than half of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. Respondents identified more than 200 individuals as potential victims of trafficking, 15% were child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, 85% of victims were adults, 75% were victims of sex related crimes. In 2008, a second study by a researcher at University of Whitewater showed similar results. The information gathered from both surveys showed that the victims came from every part of the globe – around 30% of potential trafficking victims were native-born US citizens, primarily from the Midwest, including Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois.  

Additional reports document the prevalence of potential victims of sex trafficking. In 2016 the National Human Trafficking Hotline, reported 63 calls that were potential human trafficking cases. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistic, between 2007 and 2008 the Milwaukee Task reported 10-19 cases of human trafficking. In 2009, there were more than 2000 potential cases of trafficking, but only two state prosecutions and 4 federal convictions.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, sex trafficking is thriving. Sullivan, a reporter from the Guardian states that for the past four years, the FBI has ranked Milwaukee among the top five cities in the nation for the recovery of trafficked adolescents. The vast majority of documented cases of DMST are African-Americans. Between 2010 and 2012, the Milwaukee Homicide Review Division reported the youngest 77 minors identified in this period were between 15 and 17, the youngest reported was 12 years old. Over the course of 2014, Proactive Outreach for the Health of Sexually Exploited Youth, counted 133 minors who had been trafficked, were suspected of having been trafficked, or exploited over the course of 2014. Dana World-Patterson, chair of the Human Trafficking Task Force of Greater Milwaukee told the Guardian “There’s no way that the numbers are accurate.” Due to the current lack of knowledge and similar accurate data collection tools, it is assumed that Milwaukee’s sex trafficking is higher than what is being reported. This is concerning and demonstrates the need for reliable data to advocate for the need of specialized victim services.

The baseline prevalence study by the Office of Justice, and statistics from different sources demonstrate that human trafficking does exist in Wisconsin and is on the increase. Currently there is still a lack of adequate services for victims and trained professionals in the field. Improvements that are necessary include accurate data collection methods, specialized services for victims, cross-sector collaboration, and victim centered trainings for state and non-state key principle actors that address human trafficking.

**Social Demographics and Determinants of Sex Trafficking**

There is no single profile for a victim of trafficking. However, human trafficking is a discriminatory crime and takes advantage of the most vulnerable populations in the United States. According to Polaris the majority of people who are trafficked come from marginalized and vulnerable groups, including but not limited to undocumented migrants,

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17 Wisconsin Human Trafficking Committee and Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, May 2012, 11.
19 Wisconsin Human Trafficking Committee and Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, May 2012, 11, 12.
runaways, at-risk youth, and economically disadvantaged individuals. Traffickers specifically target the most vulnerable populations because they are easier to recruit, control, and are not protected by law enforcement. 21

In the United States, an overwhelming amount of data states that the majority of victims who are trafficked are both adult and minor females. Across the world, policy, prosecution, and awareness campaigns assume the victim of human trafficking is a female under the age of 18 and a Pimp (Trafficker) as a male; however, boys are also affected and females can also be traffickers. 22 These assumptions are driven by cultural and societal factors that have influenced different facets of sex trafficking - policy, prosecution, awareness campaigns, education, implementation and funding of services for victims that focus on commercial sexual exploitation of children – specifically girls.

In 2000, it was reported that 244,000-293,000 children and youth in the United States were at risk for child sexual exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation. 23 The most commonly reported statistics for the average age of entry is 12-14. Polaris gathered data from 292 survivors who used Polaris BeFree Text Lines and the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) hotline. Out of the 292 survivors, 123 disclosed their age of entry into trafficking, 44% of those survivors estimated they were 17 or younger, and the average age of initial exploitation was 19 years old. Polaris states many studies are skewed because the research was sampled populations from minors. 24 To adequately capture the age of entry, data collection should include a larger study with equal number of adults and minors.

It is a necessary that the anti-human trafficking community understands the relationship between race, poverty, migration, gender, racism, systemic racial discrimination and sex trafficking. Bell states that due to institutional, cultural, and economic systemic barriers, people of color fit this criterion; due to systemic racism, they face increased vulnerabilities and challenges in the United States. According to a Bureau of Justice Statistics report, 77% of human trafficking cases were people who identified as people of color, but 747 out of 1,442 recorded no racial or ethnic origin. In 2013, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families launched a multi-year initiative to explore, measure, and analyze the racial disparities between African-Americans and Whites in Dane County, Wisconsin. Data was collected for 12 months and basic demographics were collected. The report found that in terms of wellbeing, condition, and outcomes, the racial disparities between Blacks and Whites in Dane County is wider than almost any other place in the United States. 25 This study documented the vulnerabilities that African-Americans experience in Madison, WI and the surrounding area. The vulnerabilities and challenges are important to understand and consider when addressing at-risk indicators of sex-trafficking for the African-American community in this area.

In 2015, Wisconsin was reported as having the highest African-American unemployment rate in the nation. Fewer than half of the adult African American men in Milwaukee, a majority black city, are formally employed. With the lack of upward mobility, it is not

21 Ibid.
22 dana boyd, et al., 2011, 2.
23 Wisconsin Human Trafficking Committee and Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance., May 2012, 10
24 Polaris, May 2015.
25 Race to equity: baseline report on the state of racial disparities in Dane County / Race to Equity Project Team; Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 2013.
surprising that in Milwaukee, the majority DMST cases were African-American. The barriers and disparities African-Americans face put them at an increased risk to be recruited and harder to get out of trafficking.  

People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer/questioning, and other sexualities (LGBTQ+) are still a marginalized class in the United States. They face higher rates of discrimination and experience more frequent harassment, family rejection, violence and economic instability. Polaris explains in Sex Trafficking and LGBTQ that discriminatory factors force many LGBTQ+ youth to run away from home to look elsewhere for basic needs. Polaris reports up to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+, in comparison to 7% of the general population and are 4-7x more likely to engage in sex to meet basic needs. 

A 2013 report by Covenant House New York interviewed LGBTQ+ homeless youth, 23% reported exchanging sex for something of value that included a place to sleep, money for food, drugs, clothing, and money to support children or younger siblings. Control from the traffickers, stigma about commercial sex work, and fear based on the victim’s gender identity and sexual orientation can result in the crime not being reported by the victims. The LGBTQ+ population – specifically youth, are over represented in detention for prostitution-related offenses, charges that are often incorrect due to the being a minor and a potential victim of sex trafficking. They are often unaware of services in the area and concerned about providers that are not LGBTQ+ friendly.

The following demographics gender, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic conditions, sexual orientation, mental illness, physically disability, and mental disability are factors that increase vulnerabilities and the risk for sex trafficking. Additional complexities that serve as guiding principles to addressing and responding to victims of trafficking are length of servitude, social determinants, and multilayered scenarios. To accurately address the reality of which groups are at an increased risk for trafficking, data that is collected should have categories specific to tracking and analyzing vulnerabilities; social demographics and determinants.

Challenges in Measuring Domestic Sex Trafficking

In the United States, key stakeholders in the anti-human trafficking community have identified that there is a knowledge gap in reliable data, empirical evidence, and best practices. To understand the full extent of human trafficking it is necessarily to have unbiased and verifiable data that provides statistics on the number of people who are being sex trafficked in the United States. Accessing information from the victim can be difficult, partially due to power and control from the trafficker, distrust of services, and do not self-report or identifying as a victim. Key principle actors working to address sex trafficking still lack knowledge in detecting victims, traffickers, and johns. The anti-human trafficking community have been creatively trying to address this gap by using technology as an asset to collect data, with the objective of creating monitoring and evaluation tools that can

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26 Zoe Sullivan, November 2, 2015.
29 Polaris, May 2016.
30 Wisconsin Human Trafficking Committee and Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, May 2012.
predict sex trafficking. Data extracted is monitored and evaluated differently depending on who is the intended audience, who will benefit from the study, and if the stakeholder implementing the research is for profit or non-profit and if the goal of the study is to benefit the victim.

**Technology-Facilitated Trafficking**

Previously, trafficking and commercial sex work was more visible on the streets; this was the place where the johns knew the exchange took place. According to Latonero and colleagues, the recruitment of victims and exchanging sex for money has shifted to networked technologies including the Internet, mobile phones, and social media where vast amount of people using the Internet in the United States opens a new market where “sex sells.” Latonero and colleagues point out that the advancement and application of networked technologies has changed the way people communicate and how information flows - human trafficking has adapted to this modern cultural shift. 31 The relationship between technology and sex trafficking is interconnected and complex - there continues to be a lack agreement upon best practices and evidence based methodologies. To gain a better understanding of this relationship, boyd32 and colleagues created a framework called Technology Facilitated Trafficking referring to “the social and technical ecosystem wherein individuals use information and communication technologies to engage in human trafficking. Digital and networked technologies impact visibility, coordination, transaction, exchange, and organization.” This framework provides an understanding of how digital technologies impact visibility, coordination, exchange, and organization of human trafficking. This framework focuses on untangling this “ecosystem.” boyd and colleagues explained that focusing on whether technology is good or bad misses the point, because technology in here to stay. 33

Currently there is a focus on using technology applications to leverage human trafficking data. Musto and boyd, state that this focus has created a heightened awareness that has brought new for-profit expertise, third party vendors, and non-traditional actors to the anti-human trafficking movement. They state this awareness is a result of technology being publicly available online, making it more visible and framed as increasing sex trafficking. Sociotechnical innovations have been assumed to be a solution to addressing human trafficking. There is not any reliable data and evidence that proves this relationship exists. These false assumptions have caused complications in a competitive capitalistic economy. “Recent governmental efforts to stimulate private-sector anti-human trafficking initiatives and technological innovations help explain why Google, Microsoft, Palantir, and Yahoo! have all entered the anti-trafficking movement”,34 For-profit companies are using technology applications to create tools and applications to capture the extent of human trafficking that lack experience and accurate knowledge on sex trafficking.

Law enforcement has access to large amounts of data on sex trafficking, but lack of trained

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32 For personal and some political reasons danah michele boyd does not capitalize her name, https://www.danah.org/name.html

33 boyd et al., 2011, 1-3.

professionals in the anti-trafficking field has led some agencies to outsource to technology focused for-profit third-party vendors to create sociotechnical solutions. Musto and boyd list the solutions third party vendors have created: data collection methods called “predictive analytics”, face recognition, data mining, mapping, computational linguistics, and algorithms. Outsourcing data to third party vendors has caused complications. Gallagher, “observes that such an environment can foster innovation and excellence, and it can also lead to duplication of experience and effort, contradictory standards and closed circles of knowledge.” Therefore the objective, sample population targeted, methodologies, and data extracted from technology applications have the potential for a skewed biased agenda that does not adequately address and represent the complex nature of human trafficking.

As Musto and boyd state,

“None of these technologies are equipped to do meaningful interpretation of the data provided. Not only does this underscore why it is important not to fetishize technical solutions or assume they are singularly capable of addressing the program, it further highlights how the introduction of these techniques de facto demands heightened expert intervention and involvement.”

For profit companies are generally driven by monetary gain rather than by the interest of the sex trafficking victim. Musto and boyd explain that outsourced companies who publish their findings from data collection tools while marketing their sociotechnical tools have the potential to influence public perception, funding for services, law enforcement practices, and policy implementation that may cause harm to the victims. To mitigate harm to sex trafficking victims for-profit, non-state, and state partnerships should be formed. If agencies outsource to for-profit companies experienced professionals in the field should track their work to make sure data accurately addresses human trafficking.

**Traffickers and Technology**

Traffickers have access to a bigger population that they can reach at a faster rate using the Internet and a variety of technology assisted tools such as websites, apps, and social media platforms to outreach and recruit potential victims. Polaris interviewed survivors who stated they met their trafficker online on social media and dating websites. Traffickers are using similar tactics to recruit and groom their victim, using technology as an asset. Polaris states “Communication platforms can be used for grooming, coercion, or other forms of deceit e.g. a modeling agency that recruits as a front for a perpetrator. Online content many be used for blackmail. Victims can be threatened with online exposure if they do not comply.”

Traffickers have adapted to the modern shift by using technology platforms and applications to recruit, control, and trap victims into sex trafficking. Pimps advertise and sell their victims on major online services, pimps coordinate the sale of victims, and as a result of being controlled victims also market themselves. These sales are usually coordinated by cellphones. Most of the online advertisements are highly coded, and johns

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38 Polaris, 2015.
can learn about certain code words from online john message boards.\textsuperscript{39}

Traffickers use technology as a tool to communicate to “johns”, victims, and sharing information with other perpetrators. These technologies also leave digital traces; boyd and colleagues describe the activities that make it easier to track trafficker’s behaviors are “credit card transactions, mobile phone calls, GPS patterns, place tickets, apartment rentals.” Traffickers are criminals whose objective is not to get caught, therefore they work hard to cover up their traces and find other ways to adapt to changes in technology. \textsuperscript{40}

**Demand side of Technology Facilitated Trafficking**

In order for sex trafficking to be adequately addressed, it is necessary to understand the demand side of trafficking – the purchasers of sex who similar to traffickers exploit and inflict violent acts towards people in the sex trade, commercial sex workers and victims of trafficking. Technology is a way to advertise victims which “johns” browse to find and purchase victims. Boyd, et al. describes the advantages of technology for johns who “can browse victims online without their victims knowing that they’re being browsed. An advantage to using technology is that johns often remain invisible to law enforcement that has not yet developed sophisticated operations.” \textsuperscript{41} Similar to traffickers, the purchasers of sex - johns, use the Internet to their advantage.

Janson and colleagues published a study that analyzed USA guide – a popular online site that people use to buy sex from who live in Illinois and across the country. The “johns” have a strong community on USA guide’s online forums where they have a platform to communicate and their exploitive behavior is normalized. It also gives them an opportunity to gain knowledge and criticize policies and laws geared towards prosecuting traffickers and johns. To keep anonymity and avoid prosecution the “john board” warns other “johns” about undercover police operations in their area. \textsuperscript{42} This online forum gives them a sense of control for their behaviors that have been documented to sometimes further exploit commercial sex workers and victims of sex trafficking.

In 2008, the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE), End Demand Illinois (EDI), mission is driven by the understanding that without the demand for sex there would not be a need for traffickers to exploit victims. This organization conducted a study of 118 men who purchased sex; johns reported that they would stop purchasing sex if there were consequences for their behavior. EDI also provides tools and resources to law enforcement by focusing on the prosecution of traffickers, pimps, and johns. EDI used Media and online platform sharing applications to launch “the ugly truth campaign” that was disseminated to key stakeholders and online platforms to raise awareness and challenge public attitudes about sexual exploitation, prostitution, and sex trafficking. This campaign is being disseminated across to the country.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} dana boyd et al., 2011, 4, 10.

\textsuperscript{40} dana boyd et al., 2011 6.

\textsuperscript{41} dana boyd et al., 2011 6.

\textsuperscript{42} Lara Janson, Rachel Durchslag, Heather Mann, Rachel Marro, and Allyson Matvey., “Our Great Hobby” An Analysis of Online Networks for Buyers of Sex in Illinois, January 2013.

\textsuperscript{43} Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, End Demand, n.a.
Law Enforcement and Technology Facilitated Trafficking

While technology is being used as an asset for traffickers, it is also used as a powerful tool for law enforcement to investigate, identify, respond to, and prosecute traffickers and “johns.” Researchers Mitchell & boyd disseminated an online survey to law enforcement across the United States to understand the benefits of CSEC and technology. One of the major questions was how do they know when a child is being trafficked online; the common response was that there is not an exact method to detecting CSEC. Law enforcement that had experience addressing sex trafficking tracked known websites used to traffic minors and monitored specific characteristics of posted advertisements. According to law enforcement, the benefits of technology are digital evidence, monitoring capabilities, and opportunity for undercover work. A key challenge is keeping up with the rapidly changing technology that traffickers take advantage of to exploit victims. Another barrier is the shortage of law enforcement personnel and monetary resources to track, monitor, and prosecute the perpetrators. 44

Law enforcement use different surveillance tactics to detect sex trafficking, one method is using publicly sourced online data that leave digital traces to leverage cases of trafficking. Law enforcement have tracked and investigated the photographs on advertisements, specifically targeting photos where the person looked under the age of 18 along with content language that would signify they are underage, example “younger.” This tool to detect trafficking is not without complications. From experience, law enforcement have found that some of the presumed underage photos are not actually the person who is soliciting services.45 Observing and analyzing a photo does not determine if the ad is trafficking of a minor. As technology rapidly changes, new techniques that address this limitation will help adequately predict and detect sex trafficking. Another tactic that has been used is creating a fake account on Facebook, or as one officer interviewed called it an “intelligence gathering devise,” where they became Facebook friends with suspected traffickers and victims, tracking their Facebook accounts for suspicious activity.46 While this tactic is beneficial for law enforcement, there has not been sufficient analysis on it, and it may infringe on a person’s privacy rights.

Law enforcement are first responders to trafficking, and their responsibilities can include to protect victims and to investigate and apprehend traffickers. In order for technology to be beneficial for law enforcement, the departments need more funding. This would allow law enforcement to be properly trained in victim-centered approaches that do not criminalize the exploited victim, but focus on prosecuting the perpetrator while supporting the victim. Additionally, valid and reliable tools and methodologies need to be implemented that can accurately detect, observe, track, and report their data at the state and federal level.

Technologies

Traffickers use multiple social media platforms and websites to exploit their victims. In 2011, the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership and Policy (CCLP) Human

46 Dana boyd and Kimberly J. Mitchell, 11.
Trafficking Incentive released a report examining human trafficking online, particularly sex trafficking of females that use online classified ad sites and social networking sites. On the same vein, Latonero has been studying the relationship between technologies and trafficking with assistance from human experts and specialized computer software that collect, monitor, and analyze data that is publically sourced online. 47

In the United States, multiple agencies and awareness campaigns have focused on the Super Bowl as an event that increases sex trafficking. Due in part to this awareness, a primary focus of the CCLP research was whether the language used on advertisements during the Super Bowl could predict online sex trafficking. They hypothesized that there would be an increase in advertisement and different terminology posted to entice and outreach to johns associated with the Super Bowl. Data was collected from December 27th, 2010 to February 6th, 2011, from the woman escort section on Backpage. An analysis of the data collected saw a 136% increase of posts during the super bowl, a difference in the content language in these specific ads including “different states” and key words such as “visiting.” A slightly older age was also reported during the Super bowl compared to posts collected prior to this event. There were complications in confirming the actual number of posts, “while they were unique posts, it is of note that backpage.com allows ads to be deleted and reposted, which complicates tracking the actual number of new posts.” 48 Researchers concluded that tracking data during this one-time event demonstrated that there was a difference in frequencies of variables, language on the posts, and the average age posted on ads. Latonero, however, points out there was not any method in the study that could prove there was a causal relationship between the Super Bowl and an increase in trafficking. 49

Latonero found that having a human expert manually clicking on each advertisement was time consuming. In order to effectively use time and have the capability to collect and store data from a larger sample population, the same author and his research team developed a computer software to assist human experts in tracking and storing data. For 6 days in April 2011, data was collected from 55,000 posts on the Los Angeles Backpage site. Using prior experience, certain terms frequencies were collected that included possible age indicators such as “girl” (14,749 mentions) and “young” (145) and nationalities; “Latina” (5,931) “European” (176) “Thailand” (29); and transitory indicators such as “visiting” (2,366). 50 Latonero concluded that the time saved by using computer software allows the human expert to focus time on analyzing advertisements that contain at-risk indicators of sex trafficking. A human-computer collaborative approach could help law enforcement and other services in the anti-human trafficking field identify traffickers and victims in a time efficient manner.

Another variable Latonero and colleagues collected and analyzed were phone numbers posted on Backpage.com under the escort section. For different individual ads, they Google searched the phone number and found the same number listed across multiple cities and in different adult sites “including Backpage, EroticMugShots, My Redbook, Local EscortPages, My ProviderGuide, FindHotEscorts, Adult Search, and nsaPals” 51 To validate if having the same number under multiple sites could predict a victim of sex trafficking, phone numbers

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47 Mark Latonero, 2011.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid, 29.
51 Mark Latonero et al., 2012, 23.
on the LA escort section on Backpage were collected from March 1st to May 31st. The phone numbers from 18,429 posts were analyzed, finding the “17 most commonly posted phone number, all of which were assigned to mobile or Internet phone providers that were responsible for 1,863 posts over 3 months.” The most commonly posted phone numbers were seen across different advertisements and had area codes outside of LA and surrounding areas. The researchers hypothesized that having the same phone numbers in multiple ads that were geographically spread out, could indicate a sign of a trafficker moving victims around and/or trafficking more than one victim.

When key stakeholders began exploring and analyzing the relationship of technology and trafficking, the focus was collecting data from the escort section on Craigslist. Polaris states that an FBI investigation of Craigslist in 2008 recorded that there were 2,800 advertisements that were confirmed DMST cases. The numbers could be higher since according to law enforcement, victims are harder to detect because they are made to look as though they are working independently. When Craigslist shut down its adult services section it was seen as a success to the public and advocates, and as an important step in combating this crime.

Law enforcement interviewed by Latonero and colleagues had formed a mutually agreed upon arrangement with Craigslist, which helped law enforcement track and prosecute DMST that were advertised on Craigslist. Benefits to this agreement were that Craigslist quickly responded to subpoenas in a timely manner, as well as the requirement that the company verify their phone number, provide credit card authorization, and pay a fee to post an adult service.” The intention behind shutting down this website was that traffickers would no longer have a platform to sell victims of trafficking. From experience working with online sex trafficking, law enforcement concluded that the traffickers would reorganize and use other social media platforms to sell the victims that are outside the United States jurisdiction. Predictions by law enforcement were confirmed by the findings of Latonero and colleagues study that concluded technology-facilitated trafficking is far more diffuse - spreading across multiple online sites and digital platforms. Traffickers were using different platforms including video game applications and Facebook, a social-network application, to recruit and advertise victims. Evidence gathered for the report demonstrated that a variety of technology applications are being used to facilitate human trafficking, particularly the sex trafficking of minors. The researcher made it clear that evidence gathered was focused on DMST. It is assumed that if a similar study focused on adults and minors, the evidence would show these applications were used to sex traffic all victims, minors and adults.

Backpage was founded in 2004, and is a known site for sex trafficking. In 2017, Backpage shut down its adult ad section. Reporter Hersher quotes Backpage on this decision stating this action is a “direct result of unconstitutional government censorship.” Backpage received pressure to close its escort section after being labeled as the “largest commercial sex services advertisement platform in the United States” in the 2016 Senate Report.

52 Mark Latonero, et al., 2012.
53 Polaris, 2015.
54 Mark Latonero et al., 2012, 23.
55 Ibid, 8.
56 Mark Latonero, 2011.
O'Reilly reports that according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, “73 percent of all child trafficking reports it receives involve Backpage.” Further, citing internal company documents, the Senate report said that Backpage altered ads before publication by deleting words, phrases and images that indicated criminal behavior, including child sex trafficking.”

Criticism against Backpage’s adult ad section stems from the recent attention human trafficking has received publicly, as well as the recent arrests of the CEO of Backpage, who was charged with pimping a minor, pimping, and conspiracy to commit pimping. Backpage officials have also publicly acknowledged that criminals use Backpage for sex trafficking, including for minors.

While the Backpage adult escort section has been forced to shut down, it has not stopped people posting advertisements on Backpage for the same services. Lt. Curtis Williams, part of the DeKalb County Police states, “they have just moved from the adult section on to the dating section, and they’re smart about it. They don’t use explicit terms, but instead say things like ‘looking for companionship’ or ‘looking for a good time.’”

Trafficers are driven by capital gain and will adapt to changing platforms in order to advertise and exploit their victims.

Targeting different social media platforms will not result in a decrease of online sex trafficking; rather pimps and other traffickers will resort to other online platforms to post advertisements. The issue here lies in which sites they use – Backpage.com is a publicly accessible website that is open to all users; it does not require an account. Other sites that traffickers may report to could be potentially harder to access, therefore more difficult for law enforcement to track and provide services to women being sex trafficked on the Internet. While it is positive that advocates in the anti-trafficking community are paying attention to the way that online platforms are being utilized for sex trafficking, it is important to understand and recognize how social media platforms can be used to facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators while helping the victims.

Technology and Victim-Center Approaches

There has been little focus and research on using technology as a tool to outreach to victims of sex trafficking. Researchers in Edmonton, Canada implemented a multi-phase community-university collaboration called Project Backpack. This study used text messaging to initiate outreach support for victims of human trafficking. Text messaging was chosen as a tool to communicate with potential victims over voicemail because of the benefits for both researchers and potential victims. Voicemail has inherent challenges for the service trying to reach the victims, it was more time consuming, there needs to be a person to answer/listen to message, and retain/record info given by potential victims. Based on evidence, the researchers assumed the person is more likely to view info from a text message and can store information - saving it for later just in case perpetrators “pimps” are around. Another advantage is that a text message makes an instantaneous appearance, a person can save it on the phone for future reference, reducing the risk of the trafficker seeing the information sent.


59 Andrew O'Reilly, May 1, 2017.
Software FrontlineSMS v1.6.13 was used to track and store data, creating a text-messaging hub and proved to be a successful tool for this study. For collecting data contextual information, number, and website should be included in the text message that is sent. The data collection software was cost effective and provides a means to communicate to the targeted population. If the research continued GSA Email Spider would be a recommended software to get and store numbers from backpage.com.60.

Best practices from this study demonstrated that a text message does not necessarily need to be sent daily, instead weekly/biweekly is sufficient. There was not a method to differentiate between ads that indicated commercial sex workers and victims of trafficking. As a result, all of the ads sampled were contacted, including commercial sex workers. The findings demonstrated that this outreach method benefits the victim - texting engages the potential victim, who may have distrust or do not have knowledge of services. The initial engagement from text messaging has the potential to create healthy trusting relationship between organization and recipient, which is essential for victims when accessing services.

This study contacted all posts on backpage.com, but did not use a method to analyze ads for having an increased vulnerability to be trafficked. Data collection tools with assistance from human experts and computer software would help differentiate between commercial sex workers and victims of trafficking. Effectively using time and a software system that extracted certain indicators would allow researchers to respond and provide services to victims of trafficking in a timely and effective manner. Healthy trusting relationships were formed from the outreach, to continue these relationships a person who has experience working in the field should be the one responding to the texts. Creating a “do not text” list would respect the wishes of people who do not want to be contacted, but it cannot be assumed the ones who do not wish to be contacted are not victims of trafficking.

**Conclusion**

The literature review provided this study with lessons learned, recommendations and insight on what variables to track, collect, and analyze. That may be able to indicate whether a person posting online is at-risk or a victim of sex trafficking. Additionally, previous research and current trends provided an understanding of the relationships between human trafficking and technology applications - Craigslist, social media applications, mobile phone, and advanced computer software. While the population in Madison is a smaller sample size than other cities that have been studied, similar variables are tracked when observing advertisements in this study that will include age, phones numbers, content terminology, and frequency of ads posted.

Design and Research Methodology

Purpose

Goals:
- Determine the Prevalence of Postings from the Section Female Escorts on Backpage.com.
- Create indicator tools which have the potential to detect victims of online sex trafficking on postings under the female escorts on backpage.com.

This study interviewed a Detective in Madison, WI that specifically works with sex trafficking, including cases that occurred online. The study collected information from the detective on how to code for potential female victims of sex trafficking posting in the escort services section of backpage.com. This is a website that has an online classified advertising site that allows individuals to post ads for a variety of goods, purposes, and services, including available jobs, apartments for rent, and used household goods for sale. Information from the interview provided this study with 13 indicators, and based on literature 6 variables were tracked, extracted and analyzed from the adult services female escort section advertisements posted online on backpage.com. The purpose of the indicator and variables were to track postings that were more “at-risk” for online sex trafficking.

Instruments

The Researcher documented data collected using the computer software program Microsoft Excel. The document stored the advertisements and the indicators present in each of them. A computer tablet was used to take a screenshot of each ad. All ads were securely stored in a flash drive. Documents and data that contained specific information were shared on a secure confidential Google drive with researcher, supervisor, and UW STREETs Program.

Method

Interview and Data Collection

Utilizing an inductive analysis approach and the best available evidence, Detective Nora Prochaska, from the Madison Police Department was interviewed based on her experience working and investigating human trafficking cases in Madison, WI. From her professional experience with different trafficking cases, she provided a specific list that could be indicators of online sex trafficking. Based on the interview thirteen indicators were tracked on every posting. If a posting had a “yes” to an indictor(s) it would be considered more likely to be at-risk for being a victim of online sex trafficking. The following are the thirteen indicators that were tracked on every posting:

1. Is she taking her own photograph?
2. Is she posed in an explicitly sexual manner? (i.e. exposing bare skin on the chest or backside areas, posed in a way that invites sexual interpretation).
3. Is the phone number written in a unique form, meaning not xxx-xxxx or xxx.xxxx?
4. Does the woman in the advertisement look like she does not want to be photographed? Does she look upset or sad, or is she visibly crying?
5. Does the advertisement header or text use words like “new in town”, “fresh”, or
6. Is there more than one woman in the photos/described in the text of the advertisement?
7. Do the pictures posted look like they were taken in a hotel?
8. Is the area code from an area outside of the Madison or Milwaukee area?
9. Is the woman in the advertisement posted frequently, such as every day or more than once a day?
10. Is the face of the woman being advertised covered in the pictures?
11. Does the ad explicitly say no Black/African American solicitors/customers?
12. Does the woman explicitly identify with a certain race or ethnicity?
13. Does the advertisement identify the woman as “exotic”?

During the four-month data collection period the research team problem solved and analyzed data, which created an effective system to code, sort, and analyze the information gathered – adapting and changing indicators in the coding process. Based on literature and knowledge from supervisor who has worked in the anti-human trafficking field in Madison, it was agreed upon to track the following variables: number of indicators observed on an ad, number of days an ad was posted, phone numbers, area codes, self-identified race/ethnicity and age.

Coding Process

The Researcher searched on the Internet under the Madison, WI location on backpage.com, clicking on “escorts” under the adult tab. Researcher was then prompted to the next page, which required the user to click “I agree” to a disclaimer. The disclaimer stated that the person is agreeing that she/he is 18 years of age or older, is not located anywhere that nudity photos are illegal, and that she/he will report any suspected exploitation of minors and/or of human trafficking. It is worth noting that there is no information about how to do so, one must click on “human trafficking”, and then the number The National Human Trafficking Hotline appears 1 (888) 373-7888. Local information is not provided.

From February 1st to May 31st, data was collected from every advertisement posted. Data was collected from the advertisement that was posted earliest in the day. The researcher clicked on each ad, and used the images and text posted to analyze the ad for any indicators that were present. Every indicator and variable observed were documented in the columns of the Google doc excel sheet. Data was collected from the ad using the following categories:

- Name (if applicable) posted for the woman in the ad. If there was no name listed, the title of the advertisement was used. This information was used for organizational purposes and to track the frequency of individual ads.
- The title of the advertisement. This was also used for organizational purposes, as well as analyzed for code words that could indicate the age and description of the individual in the advertisement.
- “Yes” or “No” was marked for each of the ads on whether the women were explicitly sexualized. The researcher used the images and text to analyze if the indicator was present. Refer to Appendix A for the list of indicators, and Appendix B for rationale behind each indicator.
- The age (if listed) of the self-identified female.
- Whether or not the ad contains “review” numbers, from sites such as TEF (The Exotic Review). If there were review numbers, the researcher used the search
engine Google to search the number with TEF, and would identify all of the locations that the woman in the ad has posted an advertisement. This site also showed any reviews that she may have gotten. Another one of the tabs was “locations advertised”. This was discovered in one of two ways. At the bottom of the ads, there was a “location” section that stated where the woman was located or willing to travel to. Also, most numbers – particularly with out-of-area zip codes - could be searched on Google. Often a Google search of the ad that women have been seen in an ad in, as well as the origin of the area code.

- After the review column, the researcher listed the “locations advertised.” At the bottom of the ads, there was a “location” section that states where the woman are located or willing to travel to. Secondly, most numbers – particularly with out-of-area zip codes - could be searched on Google which would often show all of the places that the women have been seen in an ad.

- The race/ethnicity of the woman was recorded in the advertisement, only for ads that clearly stated their self-identified race/ethnicity in the text of the ad. If the advertisement did not state a racial/ethnic identity, this column was left blank in order to avoid making false assumptions based on the photographs in the ad.

- Documenting the number of times an ad was posted. This was used to track ads that were posted multiple times a day, and also to track if the ad was posted at the same time every day.

- Final column of the excel spread sheet is “notes”. This column was used to write other comments that could be important, such as if the woman in the advertisement was present in other ads.

- For novel advertisements, a screenshot of the ad was taken then transferred to a secure and confidential flash drive. Allowing the information to be accessed later if further analysis was needed.
Analysis of Data

Excel documents containing the advertised names, ads marked “Yes” to indicators that were tracked at-risk for sex trafficking, number of indicators observed, number of days an ad was posted, phone numbers, area codes, self-identified race/ethnicity and age were extracted. The indicators and variables were analyzed to understand if there were any causal relationships from the data collected during the time period February 1, 2016 to May 31, 2016. Variables were extracted from the original excel documents and synthesized depending on what relationship we were trying to illustrate using graphs and percentages. To respect confidentiality this study chose not to disclose names and photographs which include cover headings and content from the advertisements.

General Statistics

Data was taken from each month that created totals for the total number of ads, average number of days that an ad was posted and average number of “yes” indicators.

February:
- Total number of ads 213 ads
- Average number of days posted for an ad: 5.19 days
- Average number of indicators per ad: 3.46

March:
- 256 separate ads
- Average number of ads posted daily: 4.12 da
- Average number of indicators per ad: 3.23 indicators

April:
- 294 separate ads
- Average number of days posted: 4.85 days
- Average number of indicators: 3.46

May:
- 331 separate ads
- Average number of days posted: 4.64 days
- Average number of indicators per ad: 2.51 indicators
**Figure 1: Number of Ads per Month**

[Graph showing the number of ads per month from February to May]

*Source: Data collection*

**Figure 2: Statistical averages per month**

[Bar graph showing average number of ads posted daily and average number of indicators per ad for February, March, April, and May]

*Source: Data collection*

**Frequency of Advertisements**

Frequency of advertisements was measured and analyzed to understand if there was a relationship for the increase or decrease of ads on certain days and months. Lines graphs were used to illustrate the frequency of how many ads were posted on each day throughout the four months. The independent variable being the date and dependent variable was how many ads. See Appendix C (Frequency of Advertisements) for data by month.
New advertisements that had never been seen before were posted every day, which were recorded under novel advertisements (See Appendix D). After extracting this variable, it was observed that there was an increase in new advertisements for certain dates. This variable was not extracted until after the research was concluded therefore we were not keeping track of events or certain holidays that could be a potential causal relationship for the increase. New advertisements could demonstrate that the person posted was transitory, and it is known that traffickers will move around victims to decrease the chances of getting caught.

The data analyzed from February to May indicated an increase in the number of ads posted as the weather became warmer. This relationship could be because of the cold and sometimes hazardous winter conditions in Wisconsin making it more difficult for transportation - for johns and for those that posted on ads.

**Advertisements Posted Each Day of the Week**

Advertisements were categorized by the day of the week the posting occurred to determine if there was any relationship between posting frequency and day of the week. Figure 4 tracks the overall average number of advertisements posted on each day of the week. For all four months, the day with the most ads posted was on Friday, with an average of 57 (rounded up from 56.49) ads posted, followed by Saturday with 54 ads, Monday and Wednesday with 53, Tuesday with 51, Thursday with 50, and Sunday with 46.
Figure 4: Prevalence of ads posted for each day of the week

Prevalence of Ads Posted Each Day of the Week

Source: Data Collection

Analyzing the data by month demonstrated a variation on the average day of the week that has the most posts. In February, for example, the order from most ads to least was Wednesday, Tuesday, Friday, Monday, Saturday, Sunday, and Thursday, compared to March’s order of Tuesday, Monday, Thursday, Friday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. April and May were more closely aligned with the overall data, with Friday and Saturday having the highest number of average posts. In April, the order was the same as the overall data: Monday, Wednesday, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. May had more variance, after the weekend had the more postings and it was Wednesday, Thursday, Monday, Tuesday, and Sunday.

Average Number of Ads Poster Per Day of Week:
Monday 53.0875  
Tuesday 51.125  
Wednesday 53  
Thursday 49.5  
Friday 56.4875  
Saturday 54.05  
Sunday 46.175

The importance of extracting and analyzing this variable was that it documents certain days where there is a potential increase or decrease in sex trafficking. This graph demonstrates that all days of the week are relatively similar in the number of ads posted, which means that all days have a risk for trafficking, not just the weekends. Sunday was consistently one of the least common days to post an ad, which could depict a lower demand for purchasing sexual services on that night.
Prevalence of Indicators

All indicators observed on individual advertisements were collected and totaled. The total number of indicators is more than the actual postings; in many advertisements, more than one indicator was observed and recorded. The top three indicators observed for the data collection period was indicator 2: she was posed in an explicitly sexual manner [N=735] 20.65 %, indicator 1: she was not taking her own photograph [N=601] 16.89%, indicator 10: her face is covered [N=536] 15.06% out of 3559 advertisements collected. Refer to Appendix E Prevalence of Indicators for a complete list of data.

After the prevalence of indicators was determined, it became apparent this was not an adequate analysis of the advertisements. For the majority of advertisements, more than one indicator was observed.

The prevalence of each indicator should be looked at in conjunction with how strong of a predictor it is for sex trafficking. Since we studied the advertisements on a female escort page, we predicted that posing in an explicitly sexual manner was less indicative of trafficking due to the fact that women on the site who are not being trafficked may also pose similarly. However, it was more concerning that she was not taking her own photograph, and that many of the women had their faces covered by blurring them out using symbols, or hiding them behind another object. These were the second two most common indicators tracked, therefore it is assumed that these indicators could be a risk factor for sex trafficking. Refer to Appendix B Explanation of Indicators for rationale.

Combination of Indicators

Advertisements were sorted and arranged by the same indicators combination to understand if there were similar combinations that were frequently observed. Combinations of indicators were only recorded on this chart if they were seen in two or more ads and had multiple indicators that were observed. For example, several ads had other combinations of indicators that were only seen in one ad; which would not be recorded on this chart due to their infrequency. Refer to Appendix F for the Combination Indicators Chart.

This chart demonstrates the potential of the relationships between indicators documented on the ads - if one indicator was more commonly present when another is. In this study ads with two yes indicators had the most common combination of 2, 10. Further analysis could determine if there is a connection between the presence of the same combination of indicators observed on multiple advertisements and potential trafficking.

Phone Numbers

For a service being advertised under the adult escort section, the service being sold is the person on the ad and the person purchasing is the john. If the person is being sex trafficked, the perpetrator is controlling the number and the victim is forced to turn a trick to the john. The majority of the advertisements posted phone numbers. We cannot say for certain that the number posted on the website is from the person seen in the ad, or that the person posted in the ad is in control of the phone the number it is connected to. After collecting the
phone data, we observed the same number posted on different advertisements that contained different people in the photo, although the two ads seem to not be connected in any other way.

There were nine separate phone numbers in February associated with multiple advertisements, eighteen in March, twenty-three in April, and twenty-four in May. One phone number was seen in February, March, and April. Two phone numbers were seen in March, April, and May, and 3 were seen duplicated in April and May.

The duplications of numbers could be an indication of a trafficker controlling multiple people that post on the site. It is recommended that phone numbers continue to be collected, tracked and duplicate phone numbers on multiple sites highlighted as a potential at-risk for trafficking.

**Area Codes in Multiple Ads**

Over the course of our study, advertisements with area codes originating from all over the United States were observed - area codes outside of Madison, WI were documented. The location of the ad was mostly used to assure that women were indeed in the Madison area. Many ads also listed Milwaukee as an area the women were willing to travel to. This particular aspect of the data was not further investigated, since most of the ads just posted that the women were available in Dane or Milwaukee County.

The area codes were further analyzed to determine if the women in the ads were from Madison, WI. We found that area codes were from almost every state, and a few from outside of the country.

This graph shows the prevalence of area codes that were seen in more than one ad. There were 240 individual area codes reported from February to March - 98 were seen more than once. Of all the ads posted, only 917 had a phone number associated with it. The most common area codes were 608 for Madison/Dane County (seen in 226 ads), 414 for Milwaukee County (183 ads), and 262 suburbs of Milwaukee (83 ads). The next most common area code is 779, which covers Chicago, 920 (Eastern Wisconsin), 312 (Chicago), and 224 (Northern Chicago). Refer to Appendix G Area Codes of Phone Numbers for the full list of this indicator.

**Figure 5: Area Codes Seen in Multiple Ads**

![Area Codes in Multiple Ads](source: Data Collection)
From the data collected 172 of the area codes were only associated with one advertisement for all four months. The codes come from 37 different states, spanning from the West to East Coast, Southern States to Alaska, Midwest to Central, and Northern States. There are also area codes associated with different countries, including Mexico, Zimbabwe, Belgium, Sweden, and Canada.

Having a phone number listed from out of state could be a potential indicator of trafficking. Women that the trafficker considers a better sell to buyers of sex could be moved from location to location by their controllers to avoid detection and interact with more clients. Alternatively, it is not a foolproof indicator because the women in the ads could have moved from another state to Wisconsin and just not changed their phone number. Therefore, while it is suspicious to have an out-of-state area code, it does not fully indicate that women are unwillingly posting about themselves on Backpage.com.

**Area Code Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of posts with identified area code (percentage based on posts) out of all posts (number):</td>
<td>917 of 1094 (84%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Codes in Dane County: (percentage) out of all posts (number):</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area codes outside of Dane County: (percentage) out of all posts (number):</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area codes from Milwaukee Country Area:</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Codes associated with one post only:</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Codes associated with more than one post:</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unique Phone Numbers Posted**

A unique phone number is any number whose natural form is altered in some way. In some instances, the numbers are written out instead of represented in numerical form (four versus 4). Other times, the numbers are represented by symbols or letters (0 for 0) or the natural order of the numbers (xxx-xxxx) is interrupted by symbols (xxx*xxxx).

**Examples of phone numbers considered “unique”:**

- 608*8FIVE2*10FOUR8
- 608<3 728 <3 8589 (with hearts in between each set of numbers)
- 612! 2204855
- 414*507-9702
- 1*773*209*8620
- 4 1 4 4 0 5 9 7 2 6
- 8ONE3-3four7-8zero5two
- 77nine**2four5#4$even5FIVE

There are 129 unique phone numbers posted over the course of 4 months. The numbers were not repeated for different ads, but the same format was used for different numbers.
For example, multiple ads were posted as xxx’xxxx. The same format for different numbers could be a way of trafficking women by the same organization. Unless computer software was programmed to automatically collect unique numbers, it was beneficial having a researcher manually track those numbers because this potential at-risk variable would have been missed.

**Number of Advertisements with Review Numbers**

Many of the advertisements included comments about how the woman have “reviews”, often including a number that could be used to look them up on other sites, example website The Exotic Review. These sites review both a woman’s body as well as their performances on various sexual acts. They also indicate that a woman has been seen by other individuals before, and rates her performance and appearance. There were 41 ads posted that included a number for such sites. Many of the other ads that said they were “reviewed” but did not include a number, while others had numbers listed for various review websites. In April - 2 of the 6 (33%) ads had review numbers listed, 4 of the 15 ads listed review numbers, and another 3 listed their own personal websites with reviews. In May - 9 of the 20 ads listed review numbers, including one advertisement which listed a review number from 5 different review sites.

Most of the review numbers were for the website The Exotic Review. The majority of the information on this site can only be viewed by “VIP members” – such as the reviews of the services offered. However, the website provides a detailed description of what the woman looks like - including ethnicity, “pussy” (shaved vs. not), description of hair and breasts, build, and age. Several ads listed their numbers from this site with “TER” or “T3R”. Advertisements with review numbers were not listed in detail. Disclosing any information related to a number posted on ads, would be a potential invasion of privacy.

**Age Distribution**

The self-identified ages posted on each site ranged from 18-51. Backpage.com did not allow an ad to be posted if the person was under the age of 18. For each month, the top three ages were shown below. Refer to Appendix H Age for all data.

**Age Distribution Graph**

This graph represents the percentage of ads associated with each reported age for all ads collected from February 1st to May most common ages were 17% age 21, 13% age 22, and 11% age 24. We rationalize that 21 is the most common age because women might still be considered “young”, but old enough to consume alcohol. Additionally, with increased efforts to combat domestic minor sex trafficking, younger women may report or have their age reported by their pimp/trafficker an older age to seem less suspicious. Seeing an ad reported as age 18 can be regarded as more suspicious because the person represented could be a minor. This graph shows the number of ads posted for each age written on the Female Escort page on Backpage.com.
Creating race and ethnicity categories can be restrictive. The Standards for the classification of Federal data of Race and Ethnicity determined by the United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) states five minimum categories for race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. There are two categories for ethnicity: "Hispanic or Latino” and "Not Hispanic or Latino.” Census, surveys, and academic research institutions use OMB standards. During the data collection period, it was observed that the majority of the ads used words that described their outward appearance rather than a specific race and ethnicity. To ensure that this analysis was inclusive of all people who posted, data was extracted only from ads that self-identified race and ethnicity and other defining characteristics that could be considered race and ethnicity. The goal of using this variable was to accurately capture the different race and ethnic characteristics of people who post.

In February - 21 out of 213 (9.86%) of ads self-identified as a race/ethnicity, and the two most prevalent race and ethnicities were White/Caucasian at 4 and Ebony at 4 ads. In March - 31 out of 256 (12.11%) of all ads identified. The most prevalent posts identified as Asian and 4 identified as white. In April - 30 of 294 (10.2%) of ads self-identified: African-American/Black had the most recorded at 3 ads. In May - 40 out of 331 (12.08%) of ads identified as a race/ethnicity. The highest identified were Korean at 3 ads and Asian at 4 ads. In total, 121 out of 1094, (11%) of all ads self-identified as a race/ethnicity.

Refer to Appendix I Race and Ethnicity for full listing found in this study.

Analysis of Headings of Advertisements

This study also analyzed the headers of the advertisements to a limited extent. It was noted that many headers included the words “exotic”, “young”, “tender”, “sweet”, or “new”, which were potential indicators for trafficking. Many of the headings also were directed towards a
certain type of “john” with regards to the usage of language and emojis. Particularly, we noticed that several ads had headers that were more attention-grabbing contained characters and emoji’s along with written texts. Ads containing unique headers generally had more emoji’s and different styled writing in the description portion of the ad.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study extracted and collected data from advertisements posted under the female escort section on Backpage in Madison, WI from February 1st to May 31st, 2016. While the research focused on victims of sex trafficking, there was not a method to differentiate between a commercial sex worker and a sex trafficking victim. Therefore, it was assumed that the sample population is a combination of both populations. The results for this study are only applicable for backpage.com where people have been known to be trafficked, but is not the only site and outlet where people are using classified ads to traffic. This study represents the small sample population posted under the female escort section on Backpage in Madison, WI and cannot be extrapolated to a national figure.

Adjustments for the study took place at supervision meetings that were designed to determine what information would be summarized from the data based on intended casual relationships; extracting and adapting variables when necessary. Collected data was tracked on an excel document and screen shots of the advertisements were stored on the researcher’s computer drive - information was shared through email and Google docs. While the research team adapted to the computer software limitations there is a need for an advance computer software program that assists with securely storing and sharing the confidential data. Due to the complex inhumane nature of sex trafficking, it is recommended to continue the supervision meetings. Communication provided a safe place for emotional support, in hopes of avoiding vicarious trauma for the researcher, while reducing the risk of biases and assumptions that could have potentially skewed the coding process and findings of this study. To effectively document and avoid human errors research should be synthesized on a monthly basis, discussing results in supervision meetings to reflect on the accuracy and success of the research collected for each month.

Several issues affected the reliability of the data collection process, partially due to limited resources and lack of understanding of the scope and time involvement in this study. After the data collection period was completed, extracting potential relevant variables was a tedious process. When observing advertisements, the indicators should have clear guidelines with examples of specific factors that would classify an observation in the ad as a certain indicator. There were outliers in the data collection due to conflicts in the researcher’s schedule. The advertisements were analyzed from the data collected and causal relationships were hypothesized but cannot be confirmed. Also, women who are being represented in these ads were not contacted to confirm if they were victims of sex trafficking, due to safety reasons and ethical practices - to protect both the researchers and the women potentially being sex trafficked. Training another researcher would benefit the time-consuming process of collecting data and create a feasible schedule for the people who are gathering the information.

There were also limitations in documenting the correct number of ads that were posted daily. The Backpage website allows ads to be removed and reposted throughout the course
of one day, from 12 AM to 12 PM. Once a day the researcher collected information from advertisements, the numbers could be incorrect based on the assumption that some ads were being taken down and reposted throughout the course of the day. Additionally, the data was not collected at midnight of each day, which could lead to reports that are lower than the number of ads actually posted on each day.

In regard to data collection, one of the largest difficulties was differentiating between the indicator for whether an ad was a “yes” or “no” for being oversexualized. In the study examples of this indicator were women in ads who had a naked backside or chest, but could also be seen in body language and the pose of the person in the photograph. There was not a clear explanation of what was oversexualized, therefore posting the information would not adequately address this indicator. It is recommended to have clear guidelines of what is considered oversexualized on an ad.

Social demographic variables race, ethnicity, age, and gender were extracted, which research has demonstrated increases the risk of sex trafficking. Content words that could indicate a person was a minor were documented and highlighted in the data collection process, but it cannot be proven that ages or photographs in the ad were minors being sex trafficked. Data was also collected on the few ads under the female escort section who identified as transgender, transgendered woman (MTF), and transsexuals. There was not enough data collected for posts that were transgendered or transsexual that could document at-risk indicators for this population. To understand the extent to which they may have different at-risk indicators than women, it is recommended that transgendered advertisements be tracked and collected under a specific category and compared to the ads posted by women. The categories of race and ethnicity should continue to include self-identified posts that do not fall into the Federal OFM definitions, including descriptions of socio-demographics content that could be an indicator for race/ethnicity. For data collected on socio-demographics, vulnerable and at-risk factors should be tracked with the intent of expanding the documentation to understand if there is a relationship between socio-demographic indicators and being at a higher risk for sex trafficking. Using a victim-centered approach this variable could potentially help to understand what culturally respectful specific services and preventable measures would help individuals who have a greater risk of being sex trafficked.

There were limitations in collecting information from the content of advertisements, which were photographs, language with text and symbols in the ad, and a variety of “names” and language listed as the title of advertisements. This study did not create a specific method to analyze these variables, therefore only generalized observations could be documented. Due to respecting the confidentiality of the person, the names were also not analyzed but focused more on the photographs and how women described themselves. Further research should pay closer attention and document the language used in each advertisement. It is recommended to collaborate with key stakeholders about technology-assisted photo


**Transgender:** A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.”

**Transgender Woman:** A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman (see also “MTF”).

**Transsexual:** An older term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth who seeks to transition from male to female or female to male. Many do not prefer this term because it is thought to sound overly clinical.
recognition software for pictures. For the text and symbols, it would be beneficial to outreach to professionals that have experience understanding the coded symbols and text that traffickers post on ads.

We recommend that future research undergoes a more thorough analysis of the headers for advertisements, particularly those indicative of trafficking. The language and rhetoric could be a potential indicator of sex trafficking. Refer to Appendix J Headers for examples of headers displaying language and emoji usage in this study. We also recommend paying closer attention to body language and if/how women’s face are covered in each photograph. Several of the advertisements posted between February 1st and May 31st obscured the faces in the photographs. Some used symbols such as stars to cover the face, some cropped the face out, and others blurred out the area of the photograph with the face. The headers and how a woman covers her face could help determine if the woman in the advertisement is being trafficked if fully studied and researched.

It is recommended creating a method that would allow the analysis of all indicators observed on an advertisement, with the goal to understand if certain indicator combinations tracked on ads are more likely to predict online sex trafficking. For example, the indicators 1 and 2 were often seen together on multiple advertisements. However, without sophisticated software and input from multiple perspectives in the anti-trafficking community there cannot be a valid relationship between sex trafficking and the combination indicators documented from advertisements.

This study completed the first aim of the study to determine the prevalence of postings under the escort section on backpage.com. After completing the interpretations of the findings, the second aim of the study could not prove whether the indicator tools used to collect data from the postings can detect victims of online sex trafficking. The tool used to collect the data had several limitations that included being able to test the validity of the tools to understand if the causal relationships could be proven. The indicators and variables developed were from the best available evidence, but had limited verification from other professionals in the anti-trafficking field on whether the indicator tools were reliable to predict online sex trafficking.

**Recommendations**

**Method of Research**

Using the limitations and lessons learned from the indicator tools and variables in this study, it would be beneficial to continue data collection from female advertisements in Madison, Wisconsin that are known to be used for online sex trafficking. It is recommended to create a cross-sector and cross-expertise community-based assessment that would provide professional verification of evidence-based reliable methods to collect data from known sex trafficking websites. Moving forward, it is proposed to create a strategic plan and outreach to key principle actors that address human trafficking in Wisconsin; state and non-state agencies, advocacy groups, the community, and people who have been trafficked.

For the community-based assessment it is recommended to outreach to first response agencies that provide services to victims of trafficking and commercial sex workers.
Allocating resources and time to outreach and interview a diverse population of adults and minors who identify as victims and survivors of sex trafficking. The documented knowledge gained by interviews would help create indicators that could potentially differentiate between online advertisements that are victims of trafficking versus ads posted by commercial sex workers. Often, people who have been involved in sex work, whether voluntary or forced, have gaps in working experience, which can serve as a barrier when applying for jobs and a barrier to in leaving their exploiters. Responsibilities from this role would potentially provide skills for upward mobility that can be used in a resume, increasing the chances of job opportunities. An alternative to serving a role in the research is providing an incentive, demonstrating appreciation and respect for their time and experience they provided.

State and non-state key principle actors should also be interviewed based on their experience addressing human trafficking, specifically online sex trafficking. Interviews and surveys should be a tool used to gather information and develop a framework on current technology applications being used by the anti-trafficking field and documented cases of online sex trafficking in Wisconsin.

Based on specific knowledge of online sex trafficking in Wisconsin, targeted key principle actors, including victim/survivors of online sex trafficking would be invited to take part in a research partnership focused on data collection and analysis. To become a partner in this research, a collaborative non-disclosure agreement must be signed that includes confidential information that the partnership shares and limitations to public disclosure. UW STREETS will have the ultimate authority on the content of the agreements to ensure it aligns with the objectives and ethics of the research.

Input from victims, survivors, commercial sex workers, and knowledge from professionals in the field would be documented in a needs assessment - expanding the knowledge base of online sex trafficking in Wisconsin. Knowledge from the partnership and needs assessment would provide direction on how to adapt and change the indicator tools used in this study, with the objective to create valid tools that have the ability to measure and predict online sex trafficking. Collaborative effort and expertise will help refine and create comprehensive indictors, specific variables, and confirmed online platforms that are known to be used by traffickers to exploit victims in Madison, WI. A refined user-centric training procedure manual would be created on how to administer the coding process enabling the ability to train people to use the data analysis.

**Recommendations for Victim Outreach**

It is proposed the final phase of this research use the data collection process as a tool to identify and assist potential victims of online sex trafficking. Implementing a pilot program modeled after best practices from the Project Backpage study in Canada. The goal is to assist in providing outreach support to potential victims in online ads whose indicators are coded at-risk for sex trafficking.

It is recommended to reach out and partner with organizations in Madison, WI that provide direct services to victims and survivors of trafficking. Gaining approval from the agency, the intent is to send mutually agreed upon agency information via text message to potential victims. Based on research trends, the pilot program would use specific computer software
to assist with data collection that can code, “red flag,” ads that meet the criteria for being potentially sex trafficked. People who are trained and have experience working with victims of trafficking would analyze the data collected. Based on data analysis, advertisements that are considered at-risk for online sex trafficking would be contacted via text messaging using a best practice standard protocol that contains the content for available services and to provide immediate support.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

A limitation in this study was being able to internally evaluate the indicators and variables that were observed on the online advertisements. To address this barrier, the online sex trafficking pilot program could test the internal validity of the indicators, coding process, and the victim being exploited. Partnering with Project RESPECT, to collaboratively problem solve on how to document whether a person who has accessed the agency's services was a result of the pilot program and a victim of online sex trafficking. Documentation of their answer would serve as an evaluation tool for the internal validity of the data collection process for at-risk indicators and the pilot program. This assessment could also serve as an additional tool to measure the internal validity from the victim, gathering information on variables that include social demographics, at-risk social determinants, length of servitude, and the complex nature of their exploitation with johns and perpetrators. Based on the data collected from the assessments a best practice victim-centered tool kit could be created, educating the anti-trafficking community about indicators of online sex trafficking.

**Conclusion**

This data collection and findings have been intended to set a baseline for the scope of how many women post advertisements under the female escort section of backpage.com. Raising awareness that publically sourced data from online classified sites and other social media platforms has the possibility to be a potential tool to collect data on sex trafficking. The goal of further research and collaboration from key stakeholders is to produce valid indicators that predict victims of online trafficking.

While this focused on collecting the raw data, publically accessed technology platforms can also be used to outreach to at-risk victims with the intent to provide support and information about services to the potential victims in ads. The beneficiaries of sex trafficking research should be the victims and survivors. Using technology as a complementary victim-centered best practice to identify and assist potential victims of online sex trafficking.

The anti-human trafficking force and key principal actors have made great strides in addressing human trafficking in Wisconsin. There is still a need for accurate data collection tools and methods, funding for services, collaboration between key principle actors, targeted prevention campaigns, and best practices when using technology to benefit victims of trafficking. It is hopeful that this data will be publically shared to code for online trafficking among stakeholders that work indirectly/directory with at-risk/victims of trafficking. Once finalized the evidence based data will be shared through a cooperative community response in the forms of education, awareness, and collaborative partnerships.
References:

(2013). Race to equity: baseline report on the state of racial disparities in Dane County / Race to Equity Project Team; Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. [Madison, WI.]: Wisconsin Council on Children & Families,


Appendix A: Indicators

Indicators were developed from the expertise and observations of a local Madison, WI Detective that has worked on human trafficking cases including those where traffickers forced the victims to post themselves under online classified sites. Each posting was analyzed for each of the following indicators.

Indicators

14. Is she taking her own photograph?
15. Is she posed in an explicitly sexual manner? (i.e. exposing bare skin on the chest or backside areas, posed in a way that invites sexual interpretation).
16. Is the phone number written in a unique form, meaning not xxx-xxxx or xxxxxxxx?
17. Does the woman in the advertisement look like she does not want to be photographed? Does she look upset or sad, or is she visibly crying?
18. Does the advertisement header or text use words like “new in town”, “fresh”, or “young”, even if the ad is not new?
19. Is there more than one woman in the photos/described in the text of the advertisement?
20. Do the pictures posted look like they were taken in a hotel?
21. Is the area code from an area outside of the Madison or Milwaukee area?
22. Is the woman in the advertisement posted frequently, such as every day or more than once a day?
23. Is the face of the woman being advertised covered in the pictures?
24. Does the ad explicitly say no Black/African American solicitors/customers?
25. Does the woman explicitly identify with a certain race or ethnicity?
26. Does the advertisement identify the woman as “exotic”?
Appendix B: Explanation of Indicators

Listed below is the rationale for each indicator, providing insight of why observing one or multiple indicators on a post could be an at-risk sex trafficking factor for the person who is in the advertisement.

1. She is not taking her own photographs.
   **Rationale:** If she is not taking her own photograph, it brings up the question as to who is taking it for her? This is especially important for explicitly sexual photos. In the case of women who may be being trafficked, the answer could be her pimp or another woman being trafficked along with her.

2. She is posed in an explicitly sexual manner.
   **Rationale:** The more sexually the woman is poised, the more appealing she may seem to the Johns looking to purchase her time. This is a trick that the pimps may use to better sell the women they are trafficking.

3. The phone number is written differently, or the natural experience of the phone number is altered.
   **Rationale:** Writing the phone number differently makes it more difficult to track the number and the person connected to the phone number. According to Nora, this could be a sign that the advertiser has been around for a while.

4. She does not look like she wants to be photographed. For example, she is not looking at the camera, she looks upset, or she is crying.
   **Rationale:** This is a clear sign that the woman does not want to have her photograph taken, which could be a sign that she is not in the situation under her free will or consent.

5. The use of phrases like “new in town”, “young” “fresh”, even if she is not new.
   **Rationale:** Using words or phrases such as these are a way to indicate that the woman in the advertisement may be younger than the ad says. This is especially pertinent when the woman looks long and is said to be 18 or 19, since it could be an indicator that she is in fact under the age of 18/a minor.

6. There is more than one girl being advertised.
   **Rationale:** The women could both/all be being controlled under the same pimp/person.

7. The pictures look like they are taken in a hotel. For example, the flooring or bedding looks to be such from a hotel, or there are pictures/mirrors on the walls that are typical of that of hotel decorations.
   **Rationale:** This could be an indicator that the woman is living at a hotel instead of in her home. Women who are being trafficked may live at the hotel or use it as a place to meet the Johns.
8. The area code is not from the Madison or Milwaukee area (608, 262, or 414).  
   **Rationale:** This may be a sign that the woman has been moved around. To  
   supplement this indicator, it is possible to track some of the numbers to see  
   all of the locations where the ad has been posted. Many people who are  
   being trafficked are moved from city to city, often following the path of the  
   interstate highways.

9. They are posting frequently, such as daily or more than once a day.  
   **Rationale:** Women who are posting ads frequently may be doing so in order  
   to reach a specific quota they need to fill by requirement of their pimp.

10. Her face is covered.  
    **Rationale:** The women in the advertisements could have their faces covered  
        in order to hide the fact that they may be looking upset or crying. It could  
        also be a way to further hide their identity, so they are harder to track by  
        law enforcement and other authorities.

11. The ad specifically says no Black/African American men.  
    **Rationale:** According to Nora, is may be a sign that the person posting the ad  
        is experienced. There is a stereotype in the business of human trafficking  
        that African American men are not going to pay, are going to be rough with  
        the woman, or could potentially be another pimp. *

12. Does the advertiser identify as a certain race? If so, what?  
    **Rationale:** This indicator was used solely to study the ethnicity or race of the  
        women who are posting on backpage.com to track any connection between  
        ethnicity and potentially higher risk of trafficking.

13. The woman calls herself “exotic”.  
    **Rationale:** Claiming that they are “exotic” is a way to distinguish themselves  
        from other women posting ads. It may also be a way to appeal to a  
        population of Johns who prefer women who are of a different race than  
        themselves or who are from a different country or “exotic”.

* Footnote: This is a reference to a specific context or additional information that is not detailed in the main text.
Appendix C: Frequency of Ads Posted

Below is the data by the months data was collected. Each month has listed the number of advertisements, along with a line graph depicting the trend of ads posted across the month. Each month also has listed the average number of days posted per ad per month. The number of ads increased every month, but the average number of days each ad was posted for decreased. Finally, each month has listed the average number of indicators per ad, which also generally decreased.

1. **February 2016: Total of 213 separate ads**
   
   Average number of days posted: 5.19 days  
   Average number of indicators per ad: 3.46

   **Figure 7**: Frequency of Ads from February

   ![Figure 7: Frequency of Ads from February](image)

   Source: Data Collection  
   *Outliers include February 4th

2. **March 016: Total of 256 separate ads**

   Average number of days posted: 4.12 days  
   Average number of indicators per ad: 3.23 indicators
Figure 8: Frequency of Ads from March

Source: Data Collection
- Outliers include March 17-19, 21, 24-25

3. April 2016: Total of 294 separate ads

Average number of days posted: 4.85 days
Average number of indicators per ad: 3.46 indicators

Figure 9: Frequency of Ads from April

Source: Data Collection
*Number of ads posted daily for the month of April: Outliers include April 28th

4. May 2016: Total of 331 separate ads

Average number of days posted: 4.64 days
Average number of indicators per ad: 2.51 indicators
5. **Total Frequency: February – May: 1,094 Total Separate Ads**

Average number of days posted: 4.7 days  
Average number of indicators per ad: 3.17 indicators
Appendix D: Novel Ads

Advertisements were checked once a day, below are number of new advertisements that were recorded daily from the data collection period of February 1st to May 31st, 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>February:</th>
<th>March:</th>
<th>April:</th>
<th>May:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>3/1: 7</td>
<td>4/1: 0</td>
<td>5/1: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2: 18</td>
<td>3/2: 7</td>
<td>4/2: 7</td>
<td>5/2: 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3/5: 3</td>
<td>4/5: 6</td>
<td>5/5: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/7: 9</td>
<td>3/7: 8</td>
<td>4/7: 7</td>
<td>5/7: 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12: 5</td>
<td>3/12: 4</td>
<td>4/12: 5</td>
<td>5/12: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14: 6</td>
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<td>3/16: 2</td>
<td>4/16: 8</td>
<td>5/16: 12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3/20: 12</td>
<td>4/17: 3</td>
<td>5/17: 4</td>
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<td>4/26: 8</td>
<td>5/26: 7</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4/30: 13</td>
<td>5/31: 8</td>
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</table>
Appendix E: Prevalence of Indicators

The following information lists the number of indicators observed on advertisements by month. The first column lists the Indicator, the second the number of ads with each indicator, and the final third column the percentage of how many ads had that indicator. The total number of indicators is more than the actual postings because in many advertisements more than one indicator was observed and recorded. For example, in the month of February, Indicator 1 was present in 109 advertisements, comprising approximately 51% of all of the ads for the month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>February: Indicators:</th>
<th>213</th>
<th>March: Indicators:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 109 51.17%</td>
<td>1   137 53.52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 138 64.79%</td>
<td>2   167 78.40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 27 12.68%</td>
<td>3   34 13.28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 2 0.94%</td>
<td>4   5 1.95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 29 13.62%</td>
<td>5   20 7.81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 9 4.23%</td>
<td>6   13 6.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 50 23.47%</td>
<td>7   84 39.44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 79 37.09%</td>
<td>8   95 44.60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 63 29.58%</td>
<td>9   68 25.56%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 111 52.11%</td>
<td>10  124 48.44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 39 18.31%</td>
<td>11  49 23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>E 19 8.92%</td>
<td>E   7 2.73%</td>
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<tr>
<td># 19 8.92%</td>
<td>R   6 2.34%</td>
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<table>
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<th>May: Indicators: 331</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 175 59.52%</td>
<td>1   180 54.38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 211 71.77%</td>
<td>2   219 66.16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 26 8.84%</td>
<td>3   34 10.27%</td>
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<td>4 7 2.38%</td>
<td>4   1 .30%</td>
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<td>5 38 12.93%</td>
<td>5   75 22.66%</td>
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<td>6 21 7.14%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 105 35.71%</td>
<td>7   96 29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 112 38.10%</td>
<td>8   126 38.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 82 27.89%</td>
<td>9   80 24.17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 142 48.30%</td>
<td>10  159 48.04%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 67 22.79%</td>
<td>11  70 21.15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 19 6.46%</td>
<td>E   22 6.65%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R 15 5.10%</td>
<td>R   20 6.04%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 52 15.99%</td>
<td>#   59 17.82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: Combination Indicators

This chart outlines the frequency of combination of indicators across the four months that data was collected. Combinations in bold are ones that are seen in ads each month from February to May 2016.

The first column in the number of indicators that were present (i.e., the first row shows the number of ads that had only one “yes” indicator) in the advertisement. The middle columns (February-May) break down the ads based on the month they were recorded. The final column records the most common combination of indicators (i.e. for all ads that had two yes indicators, the most common combination was 2, 10.)

Combinations of indicators were only recorded on this chart if they were seen in two or more ads. For example, several ads had other combinations of indicators that were only seen in one ad; they would not be recorded on this chart due to the infrequency.

Figure 12: Combination of Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Yes</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Common Combination</th>
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<tr>
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<td>4-1</td>
<td>1-2</td>
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<td>2-6</td>
<td>2-8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8-9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11-2</td>
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<td>1,2-4</td>
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<td>1,10-2</td>
<td>1,10 - 2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2,8-2</td>
<td>2,7 - 2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2,8 - 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8,9-2</td>
<td>2,11 - 3</td>
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<td>1,2,9,10-6</td>
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<td>1,2,9,10-6</td>
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<td>1,2,9,10-6</td>
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<td>1,2,8,10-6</td>
<td>1,2,9,10-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data Collection
Appendix G: Area Codes

There were a total of 104 different area codes listed from around the country and globe. Several of the area codes were seen from multiple ads, while others were just seen in one ad. Both situations demonstrate that it is not only women from Wisconsin or even the Midwest that are posting on Backpage in Dane County, which could be from women being moved around the country by their Traffickers.

Analysis of Area Codes:

150: Sweden
208: Idaho
209: Stockton, CA
210: San Antonio
217: Springfield, IL
224: Northern Chicago Suburbs, IL
229: Albany/SW Georgia
239: SW Florida

263: Zimbabwe
270: Kentucky

303: Denver, Boulder, CO
305: Miami
309: W/Central IL
310: Los Angeles
312: Chicago
313: Detroit
314: St. Louis
315: Syracuse, New York
317: Indianapolis
319: Iowa
320: MN

322: Mexico
323: Los Angeles
324: Belgium
334: Alabama
347: New York City

402: Nebraska
404: Atlanta
415: San Francisco
417: Missouri
419: Toledo, OH
424: CA
443: Baltimore
469: South Dakota
470: Atlanta
480: Phoenix

501: Arkansas
502: Kentucky
504: New Orleans, LA
505: Albuquerque, NM
507: South MN
510: Oakland, CA
512: Austin
515: Des Moines
562: CA
563: Iowa

602: Phoenix
603: New Hampshire
605: South Dakota
612: Minneapolis
614: Columbus, OH
615: Nashville, TN
618: Southern IL
619: San Diego
620: MN
630: DuPage County, IL
646: Manhattan

647: Ontario
651: MN
657: Orange County, CA
661: CA

687: New Caledonia
701: North Dakota
702: Las Vegas
708: Illinois
715: Northern Wisconsin
717: Southern Central PA
719: Colorado Springs
720: Colorado (North/Central)
724: Pittsburg suburbs, Pennsylvania
734: Michigan
740: Ohio

760: San Diego
763: MN
773: Chicago
775: Nevada
786: Miami
779: Outside Chicago
801: Salt Lake City
803: Columbia, SC
805: Santa Barbara, CA
810: Michigan
813: Tampa
815: IL
816: Kansas City
818: LA
832: Houston
847: IL
848: Central Jersey
858: San Diego County
863: Florida
865: Knoxville, TN
904: Jacksonville
906: UP
907: Alaska
915: El Paso, TX
917: NYC
919: Raleigh, NC
929: NYC
937: Dayton, OH
971: Oregon
972: Dallas
973: North New Jersey
978: Massachusetts
**Figure 13: Age Distribution**

This table shows the different ages by month posted on the ads. We cannot say for certain that this is the actual age of the person on the advertisement. NA means that there was no age posted. The column age ratio is the number of ages tracked to the number of posts. Percentages are rounded to the nearest hundredth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Feb. Ratio %</th>
<th>March Ratio %</th>
<th>April Ratio %</th>
<th>May Ratio %</th>
<th>Total Ratio %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>13 6.10%</td>
<td>9 3.33%</td>
<td>12 4.1%</td>
<td>7 2.1%</td>
<td>41 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3 1.41%</td>
<td>8 2.96%</td>
<td>12 4.1%</td>
<td>30 9.1%</td>
<td>53 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>15 7.04%</td>
<td>17 6.30%</td>
<td>20 6.8%</td>
<td>21 6.3%</td>
<td>73 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>17 7.98%</td>
<td>25 9.26%</td>
<td>35 11.9%</td>
<td>28 8.5%</td>
<td>105 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>31 14.55%</td>
<td>47 17.41%</td>
<td>37 12.6%</td>
<td>67 20.2%</td>
<td>182 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>31 14.55%</td>
<td>30 11.11%</td>
<td>37 12.6%</td>
<td>40 12.1%</td>
<td>138 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
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<td>26 9.63%</td>
<td>33 11.3%</td>
<td>26 7.9%</td>
<td>98 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>28 10.37%</td>
<td>25 8.5%</td>
<td>40 12.1%</td>
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<td>9 3.33%</td>
<td>14 4.8%</td>
<td>18 5.4%</td>
<td>49 4%</td>
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<td>4 1.48%</td>
<td>5 1.7%</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>15 1%</td>
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<td>4 1.48%</td>
<td>7 2.4%</td>
<td>2 0.6%</td>
<td>15 1%</td>
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<td>2 0.94%</td>
<td>1 0.37%</td>
<td>5 1.7%</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>9 1%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6 2.82%</td>
<td>8 2.96%</td>
<td>4 1.4%</td>
<td>3 0.9%</td>
<td>21 2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
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<td>3 0.9%</td>
<td>5 0%</td>
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<td>5 1.85%</td>
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<td>4 1.2%</td>
<td>18 2%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>6 1%</td>
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<td>2 0.6%</td>
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<td>1 0.37%</td>
<td>2 0.7%</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>7 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1 0.37%</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>2 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>2 0.94%</td>
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<td>5 1.7%</td>
<td>3 0.9%</td>
<td>13 1%</td>
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<td>1 0.3%</td>
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<td>2 0.7%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
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<td>1 0.37%</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
<td>3 0%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>203 95.31%</td>
<td>267 98.79%</td>
<td>293 100%</td>
<td>329 99.4%</td>
<td>1092 100%</td>
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</table>

Source: Data Collection
Appendix I: Race and Ethnicity

In regard to ethnicity, many of the ads did not self-identify with a particular race or ethnicity. When the ad did self-identify, some were very specific (example: Japanese), while others were more vague (mixed, ebony). *Red indicates that this ad/ethnicity was not seen in previous months.

February: 21 of 213 = 9.86%
- Asian: 2
- White/Caucasian: 4
- Ebony: 5
- Indian/Black Mixed: 1
- Creole: 1
- Asian/Hawaiian: 1
- Somalian: 1
- Mulatto: 1
- Japanese: 1
- Indonesian/Bohemian: 1
- Caribbean: 1
- Cuban/Black: 1
- Ebony BBW: 1

March: 31 of 256 = 12.11% of ads
- Asian: 4
- White: 4
- Ebony: 2
- Italian: 2
- Mulatto: 2
- Cuban/Black: 1
- Indian/Black Mixed: 1
- Indonesian/Bohemian: 1
- Creole: 1
- Dominican/Black: 1
- Caramel Ebony: 1
- Columbian/American: 1
- Dominican: 1
- Native American: 1
- Mixed: 2
- Puerto Rican: 2
- Latina: 1
- “Light skinned”: 1
- Brown Skin: 1
- Japanese: 1
April: 30 of 294 ads = 10.2% of ads
Creole: 1
Japanese: 1
White: 1
Asian: 2
Latina: 1
Mixed: 2
Ebony: 1
Cuban/Black: 1
Dominican/Black: 1
Puerto Rican: 2
Indonesian/Bohemian: 1
Black/Cuban/Indian: 1
African American/Black: 3
Korean/Black: 2
Irish: 1
BBW: 1
Spanish & Dominican: 1 (ad with two girls being advertised)
Cuban Mixed: 1
Ebony/Cuban: 1
Mix Ebony/Indian: 1
Caramel: 1
Cuban/Dominican: 1
Caribbean: 1
Trinidad & Cherokee: 1

May: 40 of 331 = 12.08% of ads
Korean/Black: 2
Caribbean: 2
Korean: 3
Cuban Black: 1
Lebanese/Italian: 2
Asian: 4
Ecuadorian: 1
Mulatto: 1
Latina: 2
Irish: 1
Black/Cuban/Indian: 1
Caramel: 2
Ebony: 2
BBW: 1
Native/Native American: 2
Puerto Rican: 1
White: 2
Columbian: 1
Asian/Black: 1
Brazilian: 1
Mixed Ebony: ½ Cameroonian and ½ Chocolate Ebony: 1
Dominican: 1
Chinese: 1
"Chocolate": 1
Indian: 1
Indonesian/Bohemian: 1
Appendix J: Headers of Advertisements

Below are examples of headers of advertisements posted between February 1st and May 31st. These examples highlight the necessity of further analysis of the text and headers of advertisements, seeing as they are not written in natural form and contain excessive use of emojis or other symbols.

LOOK US Main Attraction[()] EXOTIC
GENTLEMAN’S Choice - - 22

Posted: Sunday, May 1, 2016 1:24 PM

Are you ready for a breathtaking

AVAILABLE Simply Amazing Please γνωρίζετε θέλετε to blow your mind kinky - - 23

AnnMarie - 23

Posted: Monday, March 7, 2016 10:38 PM

Miss krystal kinky hot juicy - 18

Posted: Tuesday, March 3, 2016 3:28 PM

SENSUAL Touches LatiiNas!

！랑！ Romance ! SeNSuAl TouCheS LaTiiNas Do iiT Best ! HOT LOVER - 22

Posted: Wednesday, February 17, 2016 11:19 AM

CLICK ME DADDY ExOTiC Juicy BARBiEDOLL

GUSHY hotIGHLAshley CallNow - 20

Posted: Monday, March 7, 2016 3:36 PM

Addictive Available 973-474-8075 -