

THE EMPIRE OF SUFFERING: TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN THE GLOBAL MILLENNIUM

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Homo homini lupus – Man is a wolf to man.
Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history,
will have the courage to dispute this assertion?
Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920

Tonight an estimated 27 million human beings, but perhaps many more, will go to bed as modern day slaves (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013). Tomorrow, they will wake up as denizens of an empire of suffering where the foundational values, structures, and strictures of civilization are suspended. Human trafficking, an ancient infamy, is now a fully globalized part and parcel of an ever more interconnected, miniaturized, and fragile world. It thrives in the era of advanced technologies, mobile devices, and social media. It is a global empire, generating billions of dollars in profits – over 30 billion dollars representing the third most profitable criminal enterprise after illicit narcotics and armaments (UNODC, 2012).¹ It is an empire bridging failed states with weak or no institutions and rachitic economies to the advanced high-income postindustrial democracies of North America and Europe.

It encompasses all continents and races, the world's religions and languages: "Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims" (UNODC, 2012).² It is a dark empire where the victims and the crimes are once everywhere and nowhere. Like Poe's "Purloined Letter", it is hidden in plain sight.³ "Victims of forced labor have been found in nearly every

¹ "They are powerful, representing entrenched interests and the clout of a global enterprise worth billions of dollars, but they are not invincible" (UNODC, 2004). According to some estimates, modern human trafficking now is the "third most profitable criminal enterprise behind drugs and guns (Bales and Soodalter, 2009: 3; see also Coen, 2011)".

² Trafficking victims originating from 127 countries and have been identified in 137 countries. Trafficking occurs both across borders as well as within a single nation state (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012).

³ Denial of what is in plain sight is a common occurrence, " 'Trafficking doesn't happen here'. Approaching human trafficking as a crime that occurs only in far off places ignores situations of forced labor or sex trafficking that may be happening closer to

job setting or industry imaginable, including private homes, factories, restaurants, elder care and medical facilities, hotels, housekeeping, childrearing, agriculture, construction and landscaping, food processing, meat-packing, and cleaning services” (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013, p. 30).

Pope John Paul II noted, “The alarming increase in the trade in human beings is one of the pressing political, social and economic problems associated with the process of globalization”. Globalization has intensified the trafficking of men, women, and children across well-travelled corridors.⁴ As in all clan-

home. Human trafficking is not a problem that involves only foreigners or migrants, but one faced in nearly every corner of the world involving citizens who may be exploited without ever leaving their hometown” (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013).

⁴ Trafficking corridors, sometimes called trafficking “flows”, are defined as a “link between two countries or two places within the same country (one of origin and one of destination for victims of trafficking in persons), with at least five officially detected victims having been trafficked from the origin to the destination country: there are about 460 such flows across all regions and sub-regions, and involving most countries” (UNODC, 2012, p. 12). Nepal-India is one such well-established trafficking corridor. “Charimaya Tamang, who 19 years ago went out to the fields to cut grass in her village in Nepal. Typically she would have gone with other women from her village, but that day she was alone. A group of men grabbed her from behind, tied her hands and made her swallow ‘a powder’. When she woke up she was in a city in northern India. ‘I had never seen tall buildings before’, she recalled. It was a lot hotter than her village and the men offered her a soda. ‘I didn’t want to drink it but I was so thirsty’, she said. The heat and soda were her last memories before finding herself in a Mumbai brothel under the care of a woman she called ‘Auntie’, where she remained in forced prostitution for 22 months. ‘The sex trafficking starts with the procurers in Nepal, who might be anyone: a stranger with a fake job to offer – or a girl’s own brother-in-law. Then someone else escorts the women across the open border and out of the country. ‘The pimp might take a girl across the border in a cycle-rickshaw and put a tikka dot on her forehead so it looks like she and he are married’, said Pamela Gurung, an activist affiliated with the Nepalese branch of the Catholic nonprofit group Caritas Internationalis, which among other things fights human trafficking throughout Nepal. Anti-trafficking workers have started to train border police officers to be on the lookout for scared-looking women, suspicious couples or men with multiple women. But border police officers are not paid much. Many are bribed as part of the vast criminal network of trafficking between India and Nepal. ‘A brothel pimp or madam pays close to \$2,000 for one trafficked Nepalese girl, according to Rupa Rai, head of Caritas Nepal’s gender department. The girl is then obligated to repay this fee over time. Charimaya Tamang was the first woman in Nepal to file charges against her trafficker and win. The very same men that made her drink that soda were caught and put in jail, she said. ‘Ms. Tamang then began advocating on behalf of other trafficked women. Today she is married with two children and lives in a small room on the third floor of a dilapidated concrete building in Katmandu. On the wall above her bed is a glass display case nearly 12 feet long filled with awards. The sit-

destine systems even the most elemental of data are inadequate and elusive. The most authoritative estimates suggest that women “account for 55–60% of all trafficking victims detected globally; women and girls together account for about 75%” (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2012, p. 19). Even more elusive are the estimates for under-age trafficking which range from 27% of all victims detected globally (UNODC, 2012) to 50% of victims detected in the United States (APA, 2013).

Chapter Aims

In this chapter we present an ecological conceptual framework placing victims at the center but locating human trafficking in the context of globalization. We outline the range of trafficking modalities with a focus on the most vulnerable and weakest victims. We examine the consequences to individuals and bring to the fore the voices of the forgotten victims of the empire of suffering – children and youth.

What Is Trafficking?

Human trafficking is an empire with a hard-to-survey topography. Definite statistics are difficult to establish. The gulf between the estimates of the total trafficked population and identified victims is enormous.⁵ Trafficking resists easy generalizations. Its constituent units are diverse and causally linked to disparate origins. It is composed of dissimilar parts. It contains incommensurable formations in different continents: the enslavement of Thai girls for sexual tourists, the trafficking of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico and Central America for labor exploitation in Southern California, and the of child soldiers in Africa. It also involves cultural practices such as the trafficking of Albinos for body parts in ritual practices in East Africa, the estimated 150,000–500,000 “restavec” children in forced domestic labor in Haiti, (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013, p. 19) and the trafficking of

uation in Nepal is improving in certain ways, thanks to activists like her, international pressure and better coordination with the Indian police. But the problem is daunting, and the number of trafficked women continues to grow” (Orlinsky, 2013).

⁵While the best estimates suggests that 27 million human beings are trafficked today, the US Department of State suggests that only 40,000 victims of trafficking have been identified in the 150 countries who are parties to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish the trafficking in persons – the so-called Palermo Protocol. See, United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2013, p. 7. Washington DC, US Government Printing Office.

brides from North Korea, Vietnam Indonesia to Taiwan, Japan and China.⁶

Becoming instruments of gain, the trafficked endure their horrors in Van Gennep's ever-dangerous zone of "liminality", between and betwixt the rules and rituals constitutive of the social order. As in all liminality there is a "social death" that Patterson places at the center of slavery (Patterson, 1985). It is only recently that the global community has arrived at a broad definition of human trafficking. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, defines trafficking in persons as: "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs" (UNODC, 2013).

A primary feature of human trafficking is that movement is nearly always from low (or lower) income origins to high (or higher) income destinations. Well-travelled corridors include trafficking from Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Thailand to the Gulf Countries, the Caribbean, Mexico, Central and South America to the United States, and from the former Soviet Union to the European Union. A second feature of trafficking, involves the exploitation of the strong over the weak – in the case of children for sex or labor, the exploitation is from older to younger generations. A third feature of trafficking is that always "people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons" in the words of Pope John Paul II (2002).

⁶ "Commodified transnational marriages of young women from Vietnam, Indonesia, North Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Cambodia; the bureau or agent receives payment – reportedly upwards of \$10,000 to \$15,000 – from the prospective groom in richer, more developed countries, including Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, China, and Singapore to make the arrangements". There are an estimated 120,000 Vietnamese foreign brides in Taiwan alone. See Bloom, Jane, *Triple jeopardy: Young, migrant and stateless*. U.S. Liaison Officer International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

While transnational trafficking is a growing concern, “Human trafficking can include but does not require movement. People may be considered trafficking victims regardless of whether they were born into a state of servitude, were transported to the exploitative situation, previously consented to work for a trafficker, or participated in a crime as a direct result of being trafficked. At the heart of this phenomenon is the traffickers’ goal of exploiting and enslaving their victims and the myriad coercive and deceptive practices they use to do so” (United States Department of State, 2013, p. 29).

Human trafficking is often associated and confounded with human smuggling. While there are certain overlaps between human trafficking and human smuggling,⁷ these two formations differ in a variety of ways:

1. **Consent** – “migrant smuggling, while often undertaken in dangerous or degrading conditions, involves consent. Trafficking victims, on the other hand, have either never consented or if they initially consented, that consent has been rendered meaningless by the coercive, deceptive or abusive action of the traffickers” (UNODC, 2013a).
1. **Exploitation** – “migrant smuggling ends with the migrants’ arrival at their destination, whereas trafficking involves the ongoing exploitation of the victim” (UNODC, 2013a).
2. **Transnationality** – “smuggling is always transnational, whereas trafficking may not be. Trafficking can occur regardless of whether victims are taken to another state or moved within a state’s borders” (UNODC, 2013a).
4. **Profits** – “in smuggling cases profits are derived from the transportation of facilitation of the illegal entry or stay of a person into another country, while in trafficking cases profits are derived from exploitation” (UNODC, 2013a).

Three factors are essential in the equation of modern day trafficking: a) vulnerable victims, whose forced labor can be turned into economic value (profit) by b) predatory traffickers and, as important, c) armies of Dante’s “carnal malefactors” ready to consume the fruits of this bitterest of harvests. The weakness of the victims is a *sine qua non* – above all in the case of chil-

⁷ Trafficked persons begin their journey by agreeing to be smuggled into a country, but then later find themselves coerced or forced into a situation that is exploitative. Traffickers use fraud by presenting an “opportunity” that later turns into exploitation of the victim. Criminals use the same “routes and methods” for transporting their victims of smuggling and trafficking (UNODC, 2013a).

dren. Traffickers today “prey on excluded populations – many trafficking victims come from backgrounds that make them reluctant to seek help from authorities” (U.S. Dept. of State 2013, p. 8). Human trafficking turns the world’s most vulnerable populations, undocumented immigrants, racial and caste minorities, peoples of color, indigenous populations, the disabled, the abject, and children into “instruments of gain” (U.S. Dept. of State, 2012, p. 8).

Taking a Contextual Perspective

At the center of the trafficking experience is the individual who has been enslaved. An ecological framework suggests that the human experience is a result of reciprocal interactions between individuals and the various layers of their environments with varying and significant implications for adaptation (Brofenbrenner, 1986). The individual comes in direct contact with a variety of settings and systems referred to by Brofenbrenner as *microsystems*. The *exosystem*, ensconced in the *macrosystem*, is made up of interconnections between settings, institutions, and social structures that have influential but indirect effects on the individual’s experiences and outcomes (APA, 2012). The *macrosystem* is the most distal context – it is the global economic, historical, and cultural contexts setting the stage for human trafficking in the 21st century.⁸

The Macro-System of trafficking is now structured by the global economy, the globalization of inequality, structural adjustment shocks, global pauperism, as well as the historical and cultural contexts given rise to the instrumental exploitation, commodification, and symbolic disparagement of stigmatized populations.⁹ Exo-Systems represent the anemic or complicit

⁸ Brofenbrenner also makes reference to the *chronosystem*, which recognizes development over time as well as the *mesosystem*, which considers the interactions between the individual and various micro-systems in his or her life. In the interest of parsimony, in this chapter and discussion we are concentrating on the most relevant concentric levels of the ecological model as it applies to human trafficking.

⁹ The desperation that comes from global pauperism is a common theme. Here are the voices of two trafficked persons, one from Uganda to Kenya the other from El Salvador to Mexico. “Latulo was desperate to find a job to pay for his university school tuition. While in town one day, Latulo met a man who said he needed people to work for him at a factory in Kenya. Hoping this job would help pay for his tuition, Latulo agreed to accompany the man to Kenya and met with him the very next day to travel. Other men and women also met them to travel to Kenya. Eventually they arrived at their final destination in Kenya at a huge house. The man, who had earlier been kind to

institutional and legal frameworks, the specific niches of trafficking (labor vs. sexual) as well as the networks of relationships and migration corridors established between sending and receiving regions. The Micro-Systems represent the mechanisms of recruitment, abduction, transport, harboring, and the contexts of exploitation – the Devil in the details. At the center is the Individual who in “social death” (Patterson, 1985) is made an “instrument of gain”. At the individual level, experiences will depend on age (child, young adult, adult), gender, race/ethnicity, the extent and nature of trauma – length of enslavement, the nature of the relationships with the traffickers, the exploiters, and the authorities.

Upon rescue, release and re-entry, individual outcomes, will depend on rehabilitation (and in some cases repatriation) programs, individual differences in age, health, socio-emotional and cognitive resources and supports. Educational access, participation in the legitimate labor market, civic engagement, along with the ability to establish basic social trust, intimacy and autonomy would represent significant landmarks on the road out of darkness. Such outcomes represent what we term, “Social Rebirth”.

them all, suddenly became rude and ordered them to give him their identification and phones. They were shown a video of a man who had been suffocated with a bag because he attempted to escape. They were all told that they would not be working at a factory, but rather would be working as sex slaves. Every room had a camera and they were recorded while they were forced to have sex with strangers. After a month and half of captivity, Latulo was allowed to accompany his captors into town. When they stopped to have lunch, he ran away. Law enforcement officials in Kenya opened an investigation and Latulo was able to return to Uganda and received medical attention’. ‘Liliana’ was desperate; she was unemployed and unable to find a job in El Salvador when she decided to leave El Salvador in search of work. ‘A family friend promised to take Liliana to the United States, but instead took her to Mexico. When Liliana discovered that she had been tricked, she ran away and ended up in an area where other migrants like herself waited to go to back to El Salvador. One day a group of men invited her and the others to join their organization, the Zetas, a notorious drug cartel. They said they would give her work and feed her. When she joined them, she was forced into prostitution, tricked for the second time. Liliana was drugged the first day and woke up with a ‘Z’ tattoo, branded for life. She was forced to ingest drugs and was never allowed to travel unaccompanied. After three months, her aunt in El Salvador paid for her freedom and she was freed”. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2013, United States Department of State, pp. 10 and 15. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210737.pdf>

The Empire of Suffering: An Ecological Perspective on Human Trafficking, Suárez-Orozco et al., 2013.

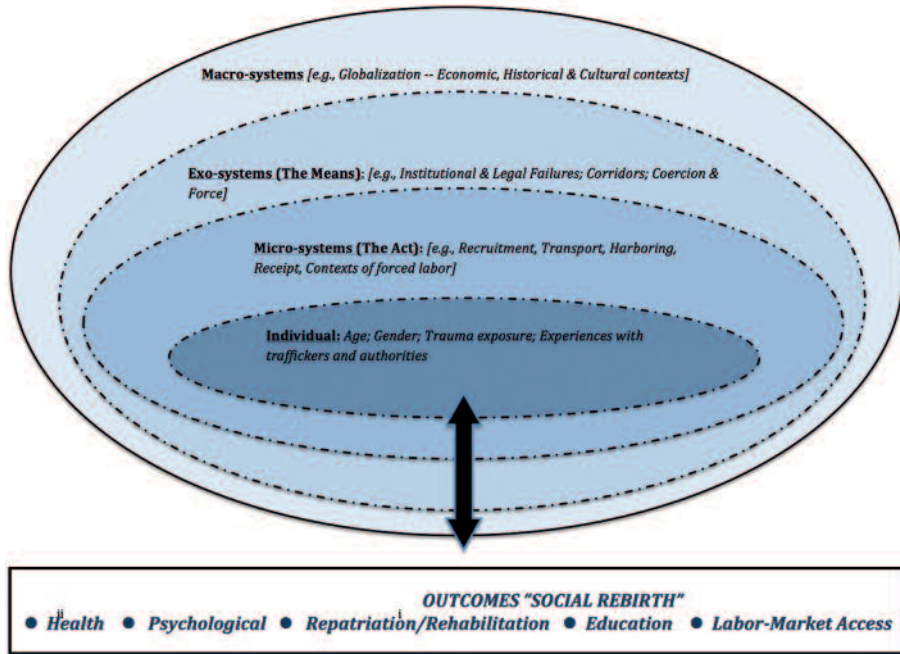


Figure 1. Ecological Model of Human Trafficking.

Globalization’s Dark Side – the Macro-System

Globalization’s three “M’s”, Markets (their integration and disintegration), Media (new information, communication, media technologies, and mobile devices) and mass Migrations are the macro context for human trafficking. The integration and disintegration of markets, new information, communication, and media technologies, the ease and declining costs of mass transportation, the brisk growth of inequality across the world, and new demographic factors are the rocket fuel behind globalization’s new vertigo. In the integrated global economies of the 21st century, economic shocks wreak instant devastation from Wall Street to Main Street, North to South, and West to East. Multiple economic crises over the last decade, *inter alia*, are behind a world “with 1.18 billion people living on \$1.25–2 per day in 2010” (World Bank 2013). The budget-and-debt management structural adjustments regimes imposed on low- and middle-income countries by global lending institutions have decimated wages, health and safety reg-

ulations, and weakened already moribund public social services to the poor in low and middle income countries.

Transnational pauperism, the implosion of the structures that codify familial and social norms, and a new epidemiology of failed states – intensifying in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse and the 2008 economic cataclysm, have given human trafficking its global turn. Furthermore, in the post-modern dystopia, consumption defines self, personhood, and citizenship, making the selling and buying of human life ubiquitous.

More and more studies of children and work mention a sometimes insidious “pull” factor – the desire for material goods and the need for the money with which to buy them: consumerism. This desire functions on two levels, that of the whole family and that of the children themselves. In countries and regions across the world, families want the refrigerators and TVs that make life easier – or at least make their poverty more bearable. Sending children to work is a way to augment family income and make some of these purchases possible (ILO, 2004, p. 91).

Unemployment, underemployment, and wage differentials, when controlled for cost of living differences continue to grow in nearly all South-North corridors. Under these conditions the numbers of vulnerable human beings at risk of trafficking remains staggering.

Second, the global integration and disintegration of markets has produced unprecedented levels of both legal and unauthorized migration worldwide with an estimated one billion human beings as international or internal migrants. The globally integrated economies of the 21st century are structured around a predilection for migrant workers – both in the knowledge-intensive sectors and in the least desirable sectors of the economy generating large numbers of unauthorized immigration the world over – studies suggest that such workers are especially vulnerable to trafficking (Zhang, 2012).

Third, new information, communication, and social media technologies have stimulated new patterns of trafficking, including the prostitution of minors, no longer transacted in dark alleys and seedy brothels but rather in fluid, ubiquitous internet sites and via new mobile devices. Scholarly research in the United States and elsewhere is beginning to outline the uses of digital technologies, mobile devices, tablets, smart phones, and social networking sites for human trafficking. “Increasingly, the business of human trafficking is taking place online and over mobile phones” (Laterno, 2012). Facebook, the world’s most ubiquitous social media site with 1.2 billion users, has become an important conduit to the sexual exploitation of children. By one estimate, “About half of online child sexual exploitation occurs

in on social networks” (Goel, 10, p. A1). Researchers at the Annenberg Research Series on Technology and Human Trafficking offer a succinct summary of the state of knowledge:

(Our) investigation indicates that mobile devices and networks have risen in prominence and are now of central importance to the sex trafficking of minors in the United States. While online platforms such as online classifieds and social networking sites remain a potential venue for exploitation, this research suggests that technology-facilitated trafficking is more diffuse and adaptive than initially thought. ... While the sex trafficking of minors continues to expand across multiple media platforms, our research indicates that the rise of mobile technology may fundamentally transform the trafficking landscape. No other communication technology in history, including the Internet, has been adopted so rapidly around the world. The World Bank estimates that 75% of the global population has access to a mobile phone. Mobile’s ability to facilitate real-time communication and coordination, unbound by physical location, is also being exploited by traffickers to extend the reach of their illicit activities. Traffickers are able to recruit, advertise, organize, and communicate primarily – or even exclusively – via mobile phone, effectively streamlining their activities and expanding their criminal networks. In short, human traffickers and criminal networks are taking advantage of technology to reach larger audiences and to do illicit business more quickly and efficiently across greater distances (Laterno, 2012).

Globalization’s dystopia is the macro-system for human trafficking in the 21st century. In separate statements both the United Nations and the United States Department of State concur that globalization and new technologies are facilitating the business of human trafficking. “As technology and globalization make the world more interconnected, traffickers’ ability to recruit and exploit their victims has also intensified”. (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013, p. 8).¹⁰

The Palermo Protocol and the Micro- and Exo-Systems

Contemporary human trafficking unfolds in a complex ecology with extended social, cultural, economic, technological and transportation net-

¹⁰ “Criminal groups have wasted no time in embracing today’s globalized economy and the sophisticated technology that goes with it”. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto, Kofi Annan, 2004, p. iv, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

works by which people are recruited in their communities of origin and exploited by traffickers using deception and/or coercion to lure and control them. Conceptually, the ecological model of trafficking presented here builds upon the foundations laid by the “Palermo Protocol” which specified three distinct definitional elements: “the act, the means, and the purpose”. The micro-system and exo-system are particularly relevant and align with “the act” and “the means”.¹¹

Broadly speaking, microsystem subsumes “the act” involving the recruitment, transport, harboring or receipt of persons intended for trafficking. In modern human trafficking, the arc of recruitment, transportation, harboring and/or receipt of persons is wide. It involves advanced transnational criminal networks working across continents – relying on sophisticated communications and transportation networks, safe houses, the forging of documents and bribing of authorities, to “mom-and-pop operations”, trafficking a victim to a nearby village, or simply a “boyfriend” or “an auntie” prostituting a minor in a truck stop in a desolated highway.

“The means” – in the ecological model the Exo-Systems – tend to be enabled by broken, anachronistic, corrupt, or otherwise non-existent institutional and legal frameworks. It is the use of force, deception, threats, coercion, abduction, or abuse of power used in luring victims. There is a range in the deployment of force, deception, coercion, and abuse of power: from forced isolation to deprivation of physical movement and chaining, to torture, mutilation and burning, to drugging, psychological manipulation, lying and threatening. These are aimed to render the trafficked individual helpless and unable to act autonomously. “The means” arc back to a premodern domination of the human body. In our model of human trafficking, “the act” and “the means” commence the trafficked person’s “social death” – terminating agency, autonomy, and personhood. (UNODC, 2013b)

Thus, “the act, the means and the purpose” constitute a system organized to maximize the profits extracted from human labor and sexual exploitation. It is predicated on the logic of slavery and the debasement of human life for material gain. In the eternal words of the Second Vatican Council, “slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, and disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons” ... constitute “a supreme dishonour to the Creator” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27).

¹¹ “The purpose” is the form of exploitation to which the traffickers subject their victims, “whether, forced labor, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude or one of a range of other forms such as organ removal” (UNODC, 2013b).

Implications for the Individual

Human trafficking interrupts the essential developmental function allowing for the establishment of basic trust (Erickson, 1950). Whether born into slavery, kidnapped, tricked, or sold, each will have implications for capacities for trust and attachment (APA, 2013). It rips individuals from their family members and community and isolates them in their new settings. Further, physical, sexual, and psychological abuses are intertwined with the trafficking experience.

There are far reaching physical and psychological implications of trafficking to its victims and survivors (APA, 2013, Zimmerman *et al.*, 2011). At the most basic level, victims will suffer from an array of health issues including physical injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (APA, 2013; Rafferty, 2008), malnutrition, as well as an array of other somatic difficulties. Maltreatment from traffickers, employers, and exploiters often result in broken bones and teeth, dislocations and head injuries which can take many years to heal (APA, 2013). Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, as well as complications from Hepatitis B & C, uterine infections, complications in pregnancy and infertility are all secondary to trafficking (APA, 2013; Farley, 2003). Other illnesses that are reported to be high amongst trafficked victims include malaria, asthma and other lung diseases, anemia, gastro-intestinal diseases, among others (APA, 2013; Farley, 2003).

There are myriad psychological consequences to trafficking resulting from the trauma following captivity that include physical and sexual exploitation (APA, 2013; see also Zimmerman *et al.*, 2011). The psychological repercussions suffered by victims of trafficking are reported to be significantly higher for than those of other victims of crimes (APA, 2013; Dovydaitis, 2010). Reported symptoms are consistent with profiles of post-traumatic stress disorder (Rafferty, 2008) including: “depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms, hopelessness, guilt, shame, flashbacks, nightmares, and loss-of self-esteem” (APA, 2013, p. 18). For children in particular who have been isolated, neglected, and abused, anxious, disorganized attachment, social and emotional withdrawal, aggression, and behavioral problems have been noted (APA, 2013; Deb & Mathews, 2011). Disassociation as a short-term coping mechanism to escape the intolerable is common but is linked to long-term difficulties including future victimization (APA, 2013; Herman, 1997). Amnesia, substance abuse, as well as suicide are all also negative individual outcomes of trauma and victimization following trafficking (APA, 2013; Courtois, 2008).

The Youngest Victims Of Trafficking

The scholarly and policy literature on trafficking is rightly focused on interrupting and preventing such infamy. Most of the literature takes either a labor rights or a legal rights framework delving into various instruments available at the national and supra-national level to combat human trafficking (see, *inter alia*, Parreñas, Hwang, & Lee, 2012; Lloyd, 2011; Bales & Soodalter, 2010; Nagle, 2008; Weitzer, 2007; Chuang, 2006; Soderlund, 2005). There has been, too date, much less attention to the plight of minors and youth.

Children: Normative Child Work vs. Child Slavery

Global child labor is often associated with structural conditions of marginality and concentrated disadvantage. These may include deep poverty, stigmatized minority status, race, caste, and gender disparagement, and immigrant status. However, there are features of child work that must be viewed culturally and with an ethnographic lens. The world over we can find practices of legitimate child work that should not be confounded with exploitative, forced child labor.

The household can be defined as a unit of biological reproduction, with constitutive socio-cultural, religious, and ritual functions. It is also a unit of economic production and consumption. Normative household practices where children work, have been found widely throughout the ethnographic record. Children work – now as they did in historic times. According to the International Labor Organization,

The number of children working in the world today is higher than most people think, although it is difficult to obtain anything more than an educated global estimate. This is firstly because many kinds of child labour are underreported, and secondly because many countries have no desire or incentive to publicize how many of their young people work. Nevertheless, statistical techniques allow us to estimate that 211 million children aged 5 to 14 and an additional 141 million children aged 15 to 17 are “economically active”, i.e. are involved in some form of work (ILO, 2004, p. 8).

Some forms of child work are rooted in culturally constituted patterns of human development. We concur with the ILO in highlighting this distinction:

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. Children’s or adolescents’ participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as

being something positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. These kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life (ILO, 2004, p. 8).

Culturally normative forms of child work are not forced, exploitative, coercive, denigrating, or debasing. Furthermore, all societies known through the historic and ethnographic records demarcate a line separating abusive from legitimate practices.

Children in the Empire of Suffering

Child trafficking has been broadly defined as “taking children out of their protective environment and preying on their vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation” (ILO, 2013). Although no precise figures exist, the ILO estimated that “980,000 to 1,225,000 children – both boys and girls – are in a forced labor situation as a result of trafficking” (ILO, 2013).¹² It is associated with feeble institutional controls and weakened or broken labor protections,

The trafficking in children – internally in countries, across national borders and across continents – is closely interlinked with the demand for cheap malleable and docile labour in sectors and among employers where the working conditions and the treatment grossly violates the human rights of the children. These are characterized by environments that are unacceptable (the unconditional worst forms) as well as dangerous to the health and the development of the child (hazardous worst forms). These forms range from bonded labour, camel jockeying, child domestic labour, commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution, drug couriering, and child soldiering to exploitative or slavery-like practices in the informal industrial sector (ILO, 2004, p. 16).

According to the ILO, “The occupations in which most children are working as forced or slave labourers are in agriculture, drug trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and as child soldiers in (paramilitary combat units)” (ILO, 2013). The International Labour Organisation (2004) offers

¹² Notably, this figure albeit from data derived from 2005, is considerably lower than contemporary estimates from UNODC (2013), which estimates that over a quarter of the 27 million estimated trafficked persons are underage.

the following guidelines towards a definition of child labor including its most extremes and harmful forms:

The term “child labour” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

★ is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and

★ interferes with their schooling:

– by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;

– by obliging them to leave school prematurely; or

– by requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities

– often at a very early age (ILO, 2004 p. 16).

The range of economic domains implicated in the exploitation of children is broad and no region of the world seems exempt. “Hazardous work and the unconditional worst forms of child labour occur in every part of the world. Their extent is alarming” (ILO, 2004, p. 63). Agriculture and farming, especially in conditions of concentrated poverty, the rise of third-party labor contracting, and weak institutional controls, are implicated in child labor.¹³ It is often a family affair: “Children are often included as part

¹³ “Large numbers of children around the world work in the farm sector. Farming probably accounts for more hazardous child labour than manufacturing, and tends to have a high accident rate, in the developed as well as the developing world. The risks faced by child agricultural workers in poor, rural communities include exposure to the elements (hot sun, rain) as well as harmful animals and insects; they may be cut by tough stems and the tools they use. Rising early to work in the damp and cold, often barefoot and inadequately dressed, some develop chronic coughs and pneumonia. The hours in the fields are long – eight to ten-hour days are not uncommon. Children working on commercial agricultural plantations are known to pick crops still dripping with pesticides or to spray the chemicals themselves. Skin, eye, respiratory or nervous problems can result from exposure to pesticides. Studies of children harvesting tobacco in Tanzania indicate nausea, vomiting and fainting from nicotine poisoning. Children involved in processing crops such as sisal can suffer respiratory problems due to dust, or wounds from handling the sharp, abrasive leaves. Frequent awkward or heavy lifting and repetitive strains can permanently injure growing spines or limbs, especially if poorly designed equipment is being used. Transport machinery accidents can be common such as being run over by forklift trucks, falling off or under tractors or harvesting machinery (ILO, 2004, pp. 16-17).

of hired family labour for large-scale enterprises producing for export. The use of casual labour by contractors in plantations on a piece-rate or quota system not infrequently involves children as cheap labour, although they are not formally hired and may be engaged in dangerous tasks. Management can plead in such situations that they have no direct responsibility for the health and safety of child workers. With a dramatic rise in the use of contract labour worldwide, the demand for child labour on farms and plantations is likely to remain strong” (ILO, 2004, p. 59).

Debt bondage is especially pernicious in trapping children into forced labor.¹⁴ “Debt bondage to a landlord is a particular kind of forced labour that can entrap children from poor families in agriculture without land or with too little of it to meet their subsistence needs. If the parents become indebted, they may have little choice but to bond their children into agricultural or domestic labour to repay the debt. Debt bondage places children ultimately at the mercy of the landowner (or a contractor or money-lender), where they suffer economic hardship and are deprived of an education. Bonded child labour flourishes in different parts of the globe – not only in South Asia, with which it is most commonly linked, but also in Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia” (ILO, 2004, p. 59).

As this girl explains poignantly:

I am 14 years old. I am an orphan. I have five brothers and two sisters.
I live in the house of my landlord, who owns 22 acres of land. I live

¹⁴ “Domestic labor” – labor hidden behind closed doors, often hides the cruelties of child trafficking. “One may think that domestic work is relatively “safe” compared to other occupations described in this chapter. However, this is not so. Since domestic labour is usually unregulated, this type of work is often hidden from the public eye. Children, particularly girls, are often exposed to cruel treatment, forced to work excessive hours, and prohibited from attending school. Sometimes, they have been trafficked into the situation. Most child domestic workers are girls, although the proportion of girls and boys varies from place to place. Children are constantly on call and deprived of sleep. They may get inadequate food, and may perform hazardous jobs for which they are unprepared. In many cultures, sexual favours are seen as simply part of the job. Girls who drop out of domestic work often run a high risk of ending up in prostitution or other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. Even though Convention No. 182 does not mention domestic work among the worst forms, such slavery-like situations or other worst forms of child labour need to be tackled urgently. On the other hand, domestic employment for children may be permitted within the framework of the minimum age for admission to work under Convention No. 138. This could be done by regulating the conditions, including allowing children to go to school, providing them with a good place to sleep and nourishing meals, some free time to do schoolwork and play with others, the freedom to visit family, and so on (ILO, 2004, p. 60).

in his house 24 hours a day. I work during the day in the fields. I scatter manure in the fields, fetch water from the well, graze cattle, give them fodder, bathe them in the pond, wash utensils, water the garden in the house of my landlord. I don't get paid any wage for this work. Only food. As food I get rice, dal and some times subzi (vegetables). Once a year, I get clothes on festivals. Two lungis (wrap-arounds), and sometimes old rejected clothes from the master's house. I have been working in this landlord's house for the past four years. My family has no land. My master doesn't allow me to leave. I tried last year, but he said no. My master doesn't beat me, but abuses me often. I would like to learn carpentry or tailoring or else I would like to do farming, if the government gave me land (ILO, 2004, 49).

In general the data available, while sub-optimal, allow for certain generalizations. Asia and the Pacific basin have much larger estimated numbers of children at work than the rest of the world combined. In this case of seven-year-old Tola:

... she was lured away from her parents by a couple who owned the field her family worked. While enslaved, she was forced to take care of cats and dogs for the couple's pet grooming shop. For five years, Tola's parents hoped to see her again, never knowing how she disappeared or where she might be. They never imagined that Tola was close, enduring torture and abuse. If Tola did not do her job properly, she was kicked, slapped, and beaten with a broom. Sometimes the couple locked her in a cage and poured boiling hot water over her. On one occasion, the traffickers cut off her ear lobe with a pair of scissors. One day, she climbed a concrete fence of the house while chasing a cat and realized she was free. A neighbor called the police and she was taken to a nearby shelter where her mother identified her. The couple was arrested and charged with various charges, including torture, detaining a person against their will, enslavement, and kidnapping. The couple posted bail and escaped. As for Tola, injuries on her arms affected her muscles; she can no longer move her left arm (US Dept. of State, 2013, p. 20).

While middle- and high-income countries have in general a lower absolute number of children at work, the scourge of abusive child labor is global and the littlest victims tend to come from disparaged communities especially in the mid- and high-income countries:

In Europe, for example, child labourers are likely to be of African or Turkish origin. Among some European minorities, such as the Roma, poverty and lack of education seem to be widespread, which may ex-

plain their more positive attitude toward working children. In Canada, working children tend to be of Asian descent, and in Brazil, they come from indigenous groups. In Southeast Asia and India, they come from the ethnic or tribal minorities living in isolated hill areas, or from ethnically distinct and more impoverished populations living in the rural backwaters of neighbouring countries (ILO, 2004, p. 49).

The Sexual Trafficking of Children

In the Empire of Suffering, special horrors await children whose fragile bodies and minds are shattered in calamitous human debasement and putrid sexual exploitation. Children in conditions of sexual slavery endure a world they are neither physically, maturationally, or psychologically able to cope with. “Sex trafficking has devastating consequences for minors, including long-lasting physical and psychological trauma, disease (including HIV/AIDS), drug addiction, unwanted pregnancy, malnutrition, social ostracism, and even death” (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013, p. 31). The enslavement of children for sexual exploitation, including pornographic performances in the rapidly growing production of online child pornography, shares features with other forms of trafficking but has some unique qualities. In the words of this child:

My name is Gabriela. I am 13 years old. I’ve been on my own for three years now. I used to beg for money, but now I am working. I am a prostitute. I don’t like to say that, because it’s not who I am inside. I dream of my village, and the fresh mountain air there, and the smell of the freshly turned earth. But here in “El Hoyo” it smells like a dirty toilet, and the diesel smoke from the buses turns my stomach. I hate this place. I hate the men who I sleep with. All I can do when they touch me is think of something else – of the walks I used to take through the fields with my sister Juliana on Sunday mornings. I think of the good things I loved at home. It makes it all a little easier (ILO, 2004, p. 53).

The recruitment, harboring, and ongoing exploitation of children is the only major trafficking domain where women play a significant role. Women traffic children across borders, harbor them in clandestine sites, and work as “Madams” socializing children in the child sex industry (UNODC, 2012a). Second, it is a trans-generational form of exploitation involving an older generation and younger generation. Third, the sexual enslavement of children is a double crime of the here-and-now and of the future. It derails children from mastering the developmental tasks (in terms of maturation, cognitive, emotional and moral development) required for the transition to

adulthood. Such derailment may explain why women who were victims of trafficking as children, sometimes graduate to become traffickers – a kind of “life sentence” where manumission or exit from the culture of exploitation is an illusive mirage. Lastly, when girls become pregnant a new generation of babies is born into sexual captivity.

The quotidian conditions of slavery – the physical restrictions, controls, psychological and physical torture, and everyday sadism, the unsanitary conditions, the sheer savagery of the sexual act with children lacking maturational readiness, the medical complications – from tearing and scarring, to stigmatized venereal diseases, HIV-AIDS, hepatitis, and others – make this category of trafficking extraordinarily urgent. Children in conditions of sexual slavery are unable to psychically cope with their situation or make meaning of their conditions. They oscillate, as the words of Gabriela reveal, between a state of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) and a psychic dissociation from the reality of the here-and-now (APA, 2013).

Many children in conditions of structural violence, concentrated poverty, and socioeconomic desperation are forced to enter the commercial sexual exploitation world, via other forms of trafficking. This case exemplifies this pathway into exploitation:

Bina’s father is a sharecropper. Her mother died long ago. She has an elder brother, two elder sisters (both married), a younger sister and a younger brother at school. Bina (then 15 years old) went to Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, with her friends to work in a carpet factory. She stayed with a friend from her village and worked in the factory for two years. The woman owner had promised her a wage of 300 rupees per month (US\$4). She provided her with food and shelter and said that she would give her money when she went home. When Bina wanted to leave, she told her not to go and warned her about the danger of being trafficked to Bombay. Despite the warning, Bina and a friend ran away at night with two Nepalese men and a woman who had promised them a better job. The traffickers took them to an apartment and the next morning, they set out for India. On the way, Bina and her friend were handed over to two Nepalese persons. When the original party disappeared, Bina asked about them but got no answer. On arrival in Bombay, the traffickers put Bina and her friend on different buses. When Bina asked about her friend, she was told that she could meet her later. She was then taken to a brothel owner (a woman) in Bombay and was sold to her. She met 25 to 30 other women in the brothel, mostly Nepalese and some Indians and Bangladeshis, aged 20 to 25. There were five to six girls and women

in a room divided by a curtain. Bina learned later that she had been sold for 50,000 Indian rupees (US\$1,100). After three days she was asked to serve an Indian client. When she tried to resist, she was beaten. Others told her that she would starve to death if she resisted. So she gave in. She served up to six or seven clients a day. She was told that she would receive money when she returned home, but she feared that day would never come.

After a year or so, the brothel was raided by the police, who took her and the other girls into custody. She was brought back to Nepal by an NGO. She feels that she has been very lucky in having been able to return to Nepal. She is undergoing a six-month course in literacy and income-generating activities. She wants to find a job to support herself, and she wants to help other girls who are at risk (ILO, 2004 p. 55).

Data on the commercial sexual exploitation of children reveal a global phenomenon involving high-, middle- and low-income countries. It also suggests that it preys on the weakest and most vulnerable of children and youth. According to the ILO,

[The commercial sexual exploitation] of children takes place in numerous countries. An estimated 1.8 million children worldwide, some of them very young, are used for the gratification of adults' sexual needs. The children are most often young girls, who may have been trafficked by intermediaries and coerced into this activity or who fell into it through peer pressure or certain damaging events that made it difficult for them to live "normal" lives due to trauma or stigma (early rape, for example, that reduced their chances of marriage). The increasingly frequent loss of parents through HIV/AIDS and the need to earn money to support younger siblings or an ill parent, in the absence of any education or skills and in a labour market offering them no other possibilities, also contribute to their entry into sexual exploitation. Sometimes this occupation is practiced in their own villages, sometimes far from home. Some of these girls contract HIV/AIDS while still young teenagers, but they cannot obtain any of the life-extending medicines that are available in the wealthier countries. Many return to live in their home villages, where they are sometimes not well received because of the double stigma of their occupation and illness, or they end up in rehabilitation centres where both the required medicines and counselling are usually in short supply. Other girls become pregnant and bear children at a very young age and have to take care of them while exercising their occupation, an occupation that offers no future prospects. These girls, barely

teenagers, are trapped by circumstances, and it is likely that their daughters raised in this environment will be as well (2004, p. 53).

Precise data on the commercial sexual exploitation of children are wanting. But it is clear that it is widespread in the high- and middle-income countries of the world:

It is impossible to determine the extent of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the developed world. One survey (Kane, 1998) cites reports of more than 400 children in prostitution in Calgary, Canada, and up to 3,000 in Montreal, Canada. Another survey (cited in Cecchetti, 1998) identified nearly 3,000 child prostitutes in Athens, Greece. The US Department of Health and Human Services estimated that there might be as many as 300,000 children in prostitution in the USA as a whole. These children often find their way into prostitution after spending a period of time living on the streets. Many children enter the sex trade by being trafficked from other countries. For example, in the USA, Mexican girls as young as 14 were recruited by offers of domestic employment and then delivered to brothels frequented by migrant workers (Dorman, 2001). In Europe, 500,000 women and young girls are trafficked each year, especially from former Soviet states (ILO, 2004, p. 62)

The globalization of sexual tourism brings “Johns” (or customers) back and forth from well travelled corridors such as Europe to Asia, North America to the Caribbean (UNODC, 2012). Boys and transgendered youth are also victims of trafficking. Structural violence and concentrated poverty, again, are at the forefront, but the pathologies of consumption along with a feverish desire for a Western consumerist “glamorous lifestyle” also play a role:

There is a demand (that may be on the increase) for boys by male tourists from rich countries who come to seek out young boys in certain known tourist areas. Some recent research has demonstrated the growing attraction these contacts offer to the boys, since they are given money, clothing, and perhaps also the (almost inevitably false) hope of a materially richer future that they would have no other means of achieving. A keen desire for the more glamorous lifestyles depicted in western mass media plays a role here, along with the decline in more traditional and less individualistic values, a decline that has been remarked upon by researchers in many countries. In some cases, the same clients return year after year to the same boy. Some boys may be encouraged to enter this occupation on account of peer pressure, but poverty and the need (or desire) for money and, more fundamentally, the lack of alternative prospects in life are the deeper

causes. The families may sometimes approve and turn a blind eye for these reasons. And they may be less approving of patronage of the same children by local clients because there is less to be gained from it (ILO, 2004 p. 56).

In high-income countries, the pathways of children into dark alleys of sexual slavery are littered with broken economies, broken neighborhoods, broken families, broken safety nets. Earlier this year, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation concluded the largest operation of its kind in history, “Operation Cross Country”, liberating 105 sexually exploited children in 76 cities. The FBI arrested in total 150 traffickers and others involved in the exploitation of children.¹⁵ Alex’s path is not uncommon. At age 15, she left a troubled home to stay with a girlfriend and then went to live with an aunt. “When that didn’t work out, she found herself on the street – with an abusive boyfriend who wanted to pimp her out. ‘You learn quickly that the only people who are really willing to feed you, clothe you, and shelter you are your parents’, she said. ‘So I had to figure something out’” (FBI, 2013).

By age 16 Alex was desperate. “Eventually she turned to prostitution and began working for a pimp. ‘At first it was terrifying, and then you just kind of become numb to it’, she said. ‘You put on a whole different attitude – like a different person. It wasn’t me. I know that. Nothing about it was me’” (FBI, 2013). FBI Special Agent Kurt Ormberg, who helped recover Alex and put her pimp behind bars, explained that children who are most susceptible to sexual exploitation have a void in their lives. “‘That void might be related to family, food, or shelter, but it’s a void that needs to be filled, and pimps fill it’. And after they nurture their victims, he said, they sexually exploit them. ‘Too often’, Ormberg added, ‘these young victims don’t think they have anywhere else to turn’” (FBI, 2013).

In the 21st century, pimps or “Aunties” are turning to sophisticated technologies to maximize the profits extracted from slaving a child. Consider the following case reported by the USC’s Annenberg scholars:

On April 11, 2012, 26-year-old Marquist Piere Bradford – dubbed in the news media as the “Twitter Pimp” – was arrested in Springfield, Illinois, for sex trafficking of children. Bradford reportedly used Facebook to communicate with a 15-year-old girl from Fresno, California. According to Bradford’s arrest warrant, the teenage girl had been con-

¹⁵ “Over the last ten years the FBI’s Innocence Lost National Initiative has resulted in the identification and recovery of more than 2,700 children who have been sexually exploited” (FBI, 2013).

sistently running away from an aunt's home in Fresno and engaging in commercial sex involving pimps since she was 14. Another minor, known as Princess, befriended the Fresno girl on Facebook and introduced her to Bradford. After several weeks of messaging via Facebook among the two minors and Bradford, he sent the Fresno girl a bus ticket with instructions to meet him in Sacramento. Upon her arrival, Bradford began advertising her on various escort service websites, namely MyRedBook and VerifiedPlaymates, and trafficked her for two weeks throughout the San Francisco, Sacramento, and San Jose areas. Bradford allegedly confiscated the minor's mobile phone and provided her with a pre-paid mobile phone. Bradford also utilized Facebook for recruitment of and communication with his victims, used pre-paid mobile phones to arrange commercial sex sessions and transactions, posted advertisements on escort websites, and bragged about his exploits on Twitter (Latonero, *et al.*, 2012, p. 8).

Children as Drug Mules

A subcategory of child trafficking is closely linked to another global scourge, the trafficking of narcotics – the world's most profitable criminal enterprise. Children are entrapped early on, and like in the case of sexual slavery, children do not have the cognitive, maturational, and socio-emotional tools to cope with the extreme danger. It is often a “no exit” life-style:

This becomes a way of life for the children who engage in it. It is an activity encouraged and sometimes enforced by adults (perhaps including family members) who are the de facto employers, and the child's involvement tends to be maintained both by the rewards of money, prestige and power, and by friendships with peers who are similarly employed. Drug-related activities can start at a very young age, and the child's personal drug addiction often ensues to set the seal on involvement in the drug world. The external environment also contributes, because the child often comes from a community where dealing in drugs is one of the few employment options available. Adversarial relations with the police and being known by them, as well as by rival groups, makes it difficult for a child to opt out of this occupation once he or she becomes identified with it. The only way to leave is to change locations, and it is indicative that recent research into children involved in drug trafficking in some communities of a large country found that the dream of many of them was to earn enough through their activity to be able to buy a house far away from their community so that they and their families would be exposed to less risk (ILO, p. 56).

In this case, the cultural construction of childhood innocence is turned into an instrument for enormous profit. UNICEF (2003) “reports that in one case, a 13-year-old girl was used to traffic £1 million worth of heroin into Great Britain from Pakistan. The same report points out that trafficking of drugs by drug swallowing, often by teenage girls, has become one of the most common means of smuggling cocaine into Great Britain” (ILO, 2004, pp. 62).

Child Soldiers

A category of child trafficking that is less global and more dependent on local and regional conflicts is the matter of child soldiers. Child trafficking in zones of conflict simultaneously turns children into slaves and into killers. Like in the case of sexual slavery, it is spectacle of the grotesque: children forced to act in ways well behind their maturational, psychological, and socio-emotion readiness. Again, it is a Dantesque inferno with no easy exit.

Children may be kidnapped and forced into combat in rebel military units or government forces; there are even cases where entire classrooms of children have been kidnapped from their rural schools for this purpose. In a few cases the children are persuaded to join military units by their peers or family members who are already involved. In these cases, they may be motivated by religious beliefs, and/or by the hope that their minority ethnic group or impoverished region will one day enjoy political independence and material benefits.

Most often, however, the children have been coerced into what is a form of forced labour. The actual work they do can include wielding sophisticated weaponry at a very young age and with little training. They may be forced to commit acts of extreme savagery, often under the influence of drugs to dull their sensitivity and moral conscience – and under pain of their own death if they refuse to carry out the order. Other assignments, seemingly less horrific but highly dangerous, can include acting as advance lookouts and guards at roadblocks; if there is an enemy ambush they will be the first victims. Girls are used both as cooks and as sexual workers; they live with the units and are often forced to serve the sexual needs of large numbers of male combatants. Some girls are also involved in armed combat. Escape for child combatants is very difficult, and unfortunately rehabilitation even in specialized facilities has proven very problematic. Children who have been traumatized and obliged to commit heinous acts against other human beings or who have been repeatedly raped over long periods may never return to total normalcy (ILO, 2004 p. 51).

A child soldier's shares his story:

"I was on my way to the market when a rebel demanded I come with him. The commander said to move ahead with him. My grandmother argued with him. He shot her twice. I said he should kill me, too. They tied my elbows behind my back. At the base, they locked me in the toilet for two days. When they let me out, they carved the letters RUF across my chest. They tied me so I wouldn't rub it until it was healed. Later, they gave me injections in the legs and cut the back of my head to put in cocaine... It happened any time we were going on the attack – more than 25 times".

As a child soldier, Abbas had to perpetrate many atrocities: "When villagers refused to clear out an area we would strip them naked and burn them to death. Sometimes we used plastic and sometimes a tire. Sometimes they would partially sever a person's neck, then leave him on the road to die slowly". It will take a long time for Abbas to find his way back into a normal life: "Three months ago a friend insulted me, called me a rebel who killed so many people and destroyed the whole world. I said, 'You won't make remarks like that again'. I met a woman slicing potato leaves. I snatched the knife from her and stabbed him. I ripped his skin (*Newsweek*, 13 May 2002).

Concluding Thoughts

Children in the empire of suffering are the victims of two simultaneous crimes: they are robbed of their childhood and they are robbed of their future. Forced child labor involves three criteria. First it turns a child into an "instrument of gain" by extracting profit from her forced labor. Second, it removes her from the proscribed pathways that enable children the world over to reach and master culturally determined developmental milestones – in the biological, emotional, cognitive, moral, and social realms required to successfully make the transition to adulthood. Third, it is life-thwarting, harming of the child's physical, psychological, moral, and social wellbeing placing children contexts that are inherently dangerous and beyond the developmental readiness and maturational capabilities to meet horrendous challenges.

When children the world over are working through the developmental milestones, be they the Piagetian cognitive tasks of achieving "concrete operations", or the Eriksonian developmental task of achieving "industry versus inferiority" or "identity versus role confusion", the littlest denizens in the empire of suffering are removed from the challenges and joys of normative child development, swimming against a powerful undertow ever

threatening to draw them. These most horrendous of crimes must be given absolute priority for eradication.

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