The Placeness of Sex Trafficking—Instilling Consciousness Through Minnesota's Experience

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ABSTRACT

Collaboration has long been lauded as an effective means of bringing about change. In the case of sex trafficking, one of the greatest social ills of our time, collaborations with designers can shed light on the ways that sex trafficking remains hidden from public consciousness thereby allowing it to proliferate. By joining forces with others working to end trafficking in Minnesota, we explore the types of places implicated in sex trafficking and the potential role of design solutions, adding new dimensions to dialogues that call for an end to modern-is a call to action. In these efforts, we immerse interior design scholarship, pedagogies, and practice in the placeness of trafficking. "Placeness" connotes the state of being tied to a place, a physical space with material and social/behavioral qualities. We use a Multi-Disciplinary, Multi-Sectoral, Collaborative Engagement approach to unravel the mysteries surrounding the placeness of sex trafficking. This required a synthesis of interdisciplinary knowledge and collaboration with other university units, as well as close work with local institutions, organizations, and community members. Our team visited places identified by our collaborators that allowed us to experience them firsthand and begin to narrow down the design parameters that might make these specific spaces amenable to trafficking. Findings point to sex trafficking of women and girls in Minnesota happening everywhere around us: from cyberspace to hotel rooms and bathrooms in transit spaces, from public to private places, from the obvious to the unexpected. Design parameters we identified as conducive to trafficking or not, include space planning, color choices, and code regulations. Attention to design opportunities that emerge through collaborative energies can build consciousness and position design as a medium for social justice.

Introduction

Sex is what occupies John's[1] mind. In the comfort of his home, this middle-aged man is surfing the Internet, hoping for an exhilarating sexual encounter. Across town, Nadita, an immigrant girl goes to sleep in the exit staircase of the apartment complex in which she lives. A fight with her mother left her homeless that night. Asad finds her there and promises that if she goes with him, she will have a bright future with lots of money. In the meantime, John clicks the return button and secures his transaction. Then, he drives to a suburban chain hotel, where Nadita is waiting. Missing from this story is the fact that Nadita is only 12 years old and is a victim of sex trafficking. Hidden from public consciousness, dozens of similar transactions take place each night in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, and interior environments are implicated in every step of the process.

"The city," Lefebvre (1996) noted in his seminal work *Right to the City*, "can be read because it writes, because it was writing." He goes on to elaborate on the importance of understanding the context when writing about cities:

> '*The context, what is* below *the text to decipher (daily life, immediate relations, the* unconscious *of the urban, what is little said and of which even less is written), hides itself in the inhabited spaces—sexual and family life—and rarely confronts itself, and*

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what is above *this urban text (institutions, ideologies), cannot be neglected in the deciphering'* (p. 108).

Little could Lefebvre know, that in the 21st century, American cities would be among the settings where thousands of women and girls as young as 12–14 would be sold from such hidden, inhabited spaces every night for sexual favors. Sex and violence are sources of media sensation. But, when coupled together in sex trafficking, the real experiences of these heinous crimes remain hidden. According to Lefebvre, unraveling the hidden nature of sexual life is partly dependent on our ability to decipher *how* this hiding is constructed. As scholars of interior design, our primary interest in this study is the role of the interior environment in its occupants' health and safety as well as potential roles in prevention of harm.

This paper has a dual purpose. First, it aims to deconstruct the hidden nature of sex trafficking by exploring answers to two questions: what types of places are involved in sex trafficking? And, is design implicated in that process? The narrative gives a voice to the places where sex trafficking occurs and allows design parameters to surface. Our objective is to spearhead a movement among designers that will inform national and international efforts to combat trafficking, helping to save lives. In these efforts, we employ the term "placeness." The suffix "–ness" refers to a state or a condition (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/-ness) and as such, it allows us to present another lens through which to see familiar places. For the purposes of this paper, *placeness* is defined as the state of being tied to a place with material and social/behavioral qualities.[2]

Another important goal of this paper is to serve as a call to arms. We hope to entice interior designers to join collaborative efforts that take a stand to end what President Obama called at his 2012 Clinton Global Initiative presentation "modern slavery." As a field that was instrumental in mobilizing the fight against the HIV/AIDs epidemic through organizations such as DIFFA (Design Industries Foundation Fighting Aids), interior design can once

Figure 1. The placeness of sex trafficking—A collaborative endeavor.
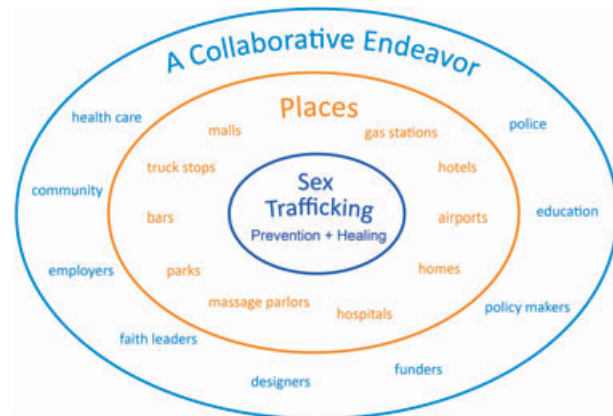
again be a leader in making the world a better place for everyone. Figure 1 summarizes the model we are proposing: working collaboratively with the police force, medical personnel, educators, policy makers, funders, employers, and the general public, interior designers can use design as a medium for social justice—for prevention and healing. Prevention, through the design of buildings that range from malls to gas stations is the focus of this paper.

The vocabulary of sex trafficking is partly to blame for its lack of visibility. North American society is often uncomfortable with the word *sex* (Havard, 2008). *Human trafficking* is a blanket term that lumps together all forms of the trade in humans, including labor and sex trafficking, which are often intertwined and happen simultaneously, making them hard to separate.[3] Calling sex trafficking *human trafficking*, poses the risk that its severity and devastating impact are overlooked. The word *human* camouflages the harshness of victims' physical and mental experiences (Hodge, 2008; Logan, Walker, & Hunt, 2009). This study focuses specifically on sex trafficking: "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which

It is estimated that 27 million people, mostly girls and young women, are trafficked each year in what is a $32 billion dollars a year global industry.

the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age" (Van Hollen, 2012, p. 5).[4]

The numbers are shocking—it is estimated that 27 million people, mostly girls and young women, are trafficked each year in what is a $32 billion dollars a year global industry (Polaris Project, 2010). Approximately 100,000 children are from the United States (Hodge, 2008; Farrell, McDevitt, & Fahy, 2010; U.S. Department of State, 2012). In Minnesota alone, anywhere from 8,000 to 12,000 victims are involved in sex trafficking and prostitution every day. This led to the Minneapolis division being identified as one of 13 American cities with a large concentration of child prostitution enterprises by the 2003 Department of Justice's Innocence Lost National Initiative (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). At least 213 girls are sold for sex an average of five times per day and the average age of victims is 13 (Women's Foundation of Minnesota, 2012). Minnesota has revamped efforts to address the issue of sex trafficking and collaborations are being formed among many different organizations and institutions, including the University of Minnesota. Using the Minnesota experience as a case study, we explore answers to our questions and create the fertile ground on which designers' imagination for how to design buildings that are not conducive to trafficking can flourish.

Methodological Approach

Current research on sex trafficking in the United States has primarily focused on the victims: the women and girls, boys and men, who have been sexually exploited or forced into prostitution (Musto, 2009). Although these studies increase our understanding of how trafficking occurs, their narrow focus fails to offer a broad-enough perspective of the issue. The emphasis on such a singular perspective has caused repetitiveness in the types of questions asked, thus inhibiting growth in the field's base of knowledge (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010). Answering the call for "more innovative studies and new methodologies that move beyond the victim narrative and produce

conclusions that can be applied beyond each specific sample" (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010, p. 2), this study puts new questions on the table, ones with potential to form innovative solutions within design.

Jean Lave's book *Cognition in Practice* (1988) provided a trajectory for how to instill consciousness around the placeness of sex trafficking. Cognition and consciousness intertwine as cognition is defined as "a conscious intellectual act," one that results from activities such as thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering (www.m-w.com). As cited by Ingold (2000), Lave presents cognition as:

> '*a process wherein both persons, as knowledgeable social agents, and the settings in which they act, continually come into being, each in relation to the other...if knowledge is shared it is because people work together, through their joint immersion in the settings of activity, in the process of its formation*' (pp. 162–163).

Connecting people to people and people places can help us find answers to our questions and allow the settings where sex trafficking occurs to tell their story.

Although sex trafficking is a global concern, efforts to combat it must bridge the local and the global. There are particular intricacies tied to each locality and if these are not understood, it is difficult to identify ways by which design can help prevent specific settings from turning into sex trafficking venues. Places, including interiors, are locally-bound, dictated by factors such as codes and regulations, cultural and social needs, environmental prescriptions, and access to technological advances as well as materials. Understanding how places relate at the local level, however, can provide answers that inform larger efforts to combat sex trafficking nationally and internationally.

The approach we used to identify the places associated with sex trafficking and potential design implications involved a combination of: (a) literature review of academic and lay sources; (b) interviews of local people immersed in efforts to stop trafficking in Minnesota, as well as, (c) observations, including visits to

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actual places identified through our collaborators and media sources. We call the complex collaborative approach we had to devise: Multi-Disciplinary, Multi-Sectoral, Collaborative Engagement.[5] Below, we elaborate on the three facets of this approach and how they are tied to collaboration.

Literature Review

A review of written material searching for places associated with trafficking included literature in the academic journals of fields ranging across multiple disciplines from sociology to criminal justice; online sources such as CNN's Freedom Project and local news reports. Web sites devoted to exposing trafficking, such as the Polaris Project were also found and reviewed. Reports and training materials, including the ones by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center for hotels and airlines and the Minnesota Women's Foundation's pioneering report "*MN girls are not for sale*" were scanned.

This material gave us a thorough basis for understanding how trafficking occurs, why it is noted as a great social ill, as well as where it happens. The literature review yielded very little information on the role of design in sex trafficking and provided an incentive to use the Minnesota experience as a case study that sheds light on the question of how design is implicated in that process. Our familiarity with this literature prepared us for the interviews we conducted with local people. It made us more sophisticated in the questions we were asking and how we approached the problem of forming the collaborations needed to identify local places and their design characteristics.

Interviews of Local People

Part of the challenge in using the Minnesota experience as a case study was identifying who could share with us intimate information that would direct us in our quest for answers. We overcame that hurdle through Multi-Sectoral Collaboration and Community Engagement, which means collaborating across sectors, organizations, and institutions within our university and the broader community. Multi-sectoral collaboration has been noted to strengthen "a community's capacity to address important issues by weaving together the skills, resources, networks and knowledge of the government, business, voluntary sectors and low-income leaders" (Tamarack: An Institute for Community Engagement, 2012). We therefore, sought others working on the same topic. First, we joined forces with other University of Minnesota units working on sex trafficking: the Center for Integrative Leadership (CIL) and the Urban Research and Outreach Center (UROC). CIL and UROC shared sources and contacts with us. They also invited us to community gatherings that they organized, where we met many people eager to collaborate. These included police officers working to end trafficking: one staff member from a Juvenile Detention Center; one law enforcement official from the Metro Transit Police, and four officers from the Police Department Criminal Investigation Division. Along with the police officers, we met staff of a non-profit organization that aims to provide supportive housing for Somali youth. One-on-one informal interviews with these collaborators added depth to our knowledge about the local intricacies of sex trafficking—how it occurs and where.[6] These insiders provided us with a list of local places that we could investigate, information that would have been impossible to get otherwise.

Observations

The last step involved visiting actual places known to be associated with sex trafficking and analyzing them in terms of how their design could have made them conducive to the practices of this crime. Parameters explored included accessibility, space planning, surveillance, and privacy. Having photographs of these actual places enabled us to share what we learned in a way that is easier for designers and others to relate to than words, such as how space plans can block visual monitoring and how the location of exterior windows can determine who can access a room. As tools that can educate designers about the urgency of the issue as well as potential interventions, the visuals become a medium

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through which the places where trafficking occurs can more succinctly tell their story. Photographs can be turned into evidence of the relationships and meanings that these places hold for some members of our communities.

The Placeness of Sex Trafficking

The term prostitution often evokes the visual image of a woman dressed in skimpy clothing on a street corner. The challenge to those working to end sex trafficking is that many of the acts associated with it are no longer visible—instead, as Michelle Guelbart from ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) explained: "in the past 20 years, the action has mostly moved off the street" (as cited in Smith, 2011, p. 7). Interior environments are now implicated in sex trafficking on scales that range from the public to the private and at all four phases of the process: from recruiting victims, to closing a deal, executing the act, and providing healing environments for victims who hope to break free.[7]

Complicating efforts to curtail sex trafficking is *movement*, the fact that sex trafficking entrenches itself in the American landscape by disassociating itself from space and place. Traffickers thrive by keeping their victims constantly on the move and rarely in one place for long. Victims are frequently transported from city to city and across state borders so that they remain in a mentally disoriented state. Less able to defend themselves, victims become dependent on their traffickers for guidance, food, and shelter (Logan, 2007). To sufficiently understand the placeness of sex trafficking then, we have to deconstruct it, examining the places in which we live our daily lives through a new lens. Through this lens, we see both cyberspace and physical space and how they are often linked as they support this heinous crime.

Cyberspace

Increasingly, sex trafficking starts with someone placing an ad and someone else viewing that ad and securing a transaction for sex—via phone, computer, or mobile device. Internet access is ubiquitous today and therefore, every place can connect with cyberspace—from urban streets to homes, coffee shops, and workplaces. The availability of the Internet has certainly expanded the sex trafficking industry, enabling advertising, sales, and arrangements to be conducted virtually. Ironically, through the online world, "the sex industry is able to adapt from its more stereotypical, seedy, back streets image into a modern, diversified enterprise" (Raymond, Hughes, & Gomez, 2001, p. 19). Web sites, such as www.backpage.com, provide opportunities for traffickers to exploit women, with fees that range from as little as a $1 a week to more than $14.

Brian Weaver,[8] a Senior Asset Protection Specialist with the Metro Transit Police Department of the Twin Cities, works with technology and surveillance across the Metro Transit system. He spoke to us about the covert nature of sex trafficking, where initial online communication is used to agree upon a destination for the commercial sex act to take place. Instead of patrolling downtown streets and neighborhoods, some law enforcement personnel are now patrolling sites like Facebook and Twitter to detect the codes that traffickers are using to arrange these meetings. The hope is that if they crack the codes, they will have an easier time catching the act. Their challenge is having the manpower to secure both the streets and places we inhabit as well as patrol cyberspace.

Detective Design

Fascinating for researchers and practitioners of interior design is an effort to use characteristics of hotel interiors to identify specific locations advertised on popular Web sites (Hetter, 2012). Hoteliers monitor trafficking situations by "[using] the Internet to investigate suspicious guests" (Smith, 2011, p. 8). Hoteliers can view photos in advertisements on popular commercial sex Web sites, such as www.backpage.com, and "often recognize their own guestrooms by the furnishing and decorations" (Smith, 2011, p. 8). Once they identify their rooms, hotel staff can further investigate the trafficking

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situation, detecting supplementary evidence, and cuing in law enforcement. Interior design can thereby attain a new subspecialty, that of "detective design"; that is, designs that can be identifiable through particular signs.[9] Accentuating design differences in everything from wallpapers to door handles, furniture selections, and color/accessory choices and providing distinct visual features for hotel rooms may allow hotel staff and police officers to identify individual rooms more easily and pinpoint the crime.

Surveillance—Virtual and Physical

The Internet has also impacted the temporal dimensions of sex trafficking. Weaver commented further that because of the virtual arrangement, the trafficking process is more spontaneous and requires using similarly flexible modes of technology to track it down. With less time between the act of securing the transaction for sex and the actual transaction, additional means of technological intelligence can be employed. Sergeant Snyder and Sergeant Bartholomew from the Minneapolis Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division relayed to us the three-call method by which traffickers and purchasers attempt to throw off law enforcement:

- The first call advises the purchaser to meet at a given area somewhere in town and directs him to call when he gets to the location.
- The second call will lead the purchaser to the hotel and direct him to call when he gets there.
- The third and final call will direct the purchaser to the room where the girl will be waiting.

Identifying ways to intercept this process at any stage could help put an end to trafficking.

According to all of the officers we worked with, surveillance systems can also be used to identify hot spots for prostitution. Weaver suggested using analytic surveillance systems that can assist the police force by identifying, for example, loitering behaviors. As Snyder and Bartholomew explained, with an insufficient number of employees to monitor and detect potential hot spots and track those over multiple days, months, or even years, such a system would give law enforcement the ability to prioritize their efforts to specific locations at specific times.

Because surveillance is widely used in interiors, interior designers can be part of conversations that help reimagine how surveillance can become the "eyes and voice" of a building. Surveillance has been conceived as connecting mechanism that connects people-to-people as well as people the environment (Hadjiyanni & Kwon, 2009). Designers can then be advocates for developing surveillance systems that address what researchers have called the security paradox: "...when security systems assert themselves most forcefully fear, discomfort, and even danger often flourish; conversely, the absence of visible protection can promote the feeling of well-being" (Ivy, 2002, p. 15). People can feel uncomfortable, controlled, and almost like being in a prison in the presence of surveillance (Groombridge, 2002; Helten & Fischer, 2004; Shiffer, 2001). Additional factors to consider include privacy concerns (Gray, 2003) and the discriminatory practices that have been noted among operators toward minority groups and women. Women have also been found to be reporting more anxiety and to feel more negative about surveillance than men (Fyfe & Bannister, 1996; Koskela, 2002; Lyon, 2001).

The use of surveillance systems for monitoring trafficking raises additional concerns. Questions abound: Who will have access to the surveillance information? How will it be used? And in what ways will the victims be protected? Ensuring, for example, that victims are not further victimized by the surveillance systems should be an important consideration in their development. A surveillance system could be used to identify and arrest victims, those who are forced to trade sex. Advocates for victims' rights may not be supportive of the idea of surveillance as a tool against trafficking for fear that it will be used to identify, stigmatize, and/or arrest juveniles. Thus, stakeholder engagement is a critical component of a successful implementation of surveillance systems in cases of trafficking (Martin, 2013). Interior designers can serve as catalysts in the

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development of surveillance systems that are sensitive to human needs.

Brothels, Strip Clubs, and Massage Parlors

The obvious expectations of places associated with the sale of sex include brothels and strip clubs. Although brothels are places where some women work in the sex trade by choice, they are also common sites where sex trafficking occurs (Bales & Lize, 2005). A trafficking study showed that 40% of women in the United States were recruited by "organized businesses and crime networks, such as escort services, bars, brothels, clubs, 'biker gangs' and the mafia" (Raymond et al., 2001, p. 9). Officer Heather Weyker confirmed that this was also the case in Minnesota.

Massage parlors, which often serve as a cover-up for sex trafficking, present a particular challenge to law enforcement. Many are not legitimate massage parlors, but use the "massage parlor" title as a cover (Kotrla, 2010). Officer Benjamin Henrich, also from the Minneapolis Police Department, spoke of the limited resources available to tackle massage parlors—even when they manage to take one down others proliferate. Part of the challenge is the transient state of these facilities, as massage parlors are a place where traffickers and their victims may remain for a time and then move to another destination: "The trafficking networks and sex trade are very mobile, not only in moving women from place to place, but in setting up clubs, massage parlors, escort services and brothels in out-of-the-way and out-of-the-ordinary locations, e.g., in rural trailers" (Raymond et al., 2001, p. 23).

Complicating matters is the fact that the race and ethnicity of victims in massage parlors has been found to be primarily Asian (Newton, Mulcahy, & Martin, 2008). Presented as nail technicians and massage providers, it is difficult according to Henrich to figure out if these sex workers are voluntary or forced. The elusiveness of the ways by which the design of these interiors can curtail trafficking should not stop us

from exploring how to protect those who end up there unwillingly. User knowledge can be integrated into design projects as both a constraint and an inspiration (Oygur & McCoy, 2011). Intimate knowledge of the victims' experience can foster the creativity needed to develop designs that make a difference.

Transit Spaces

As movement can be an inherent characteristic of the sex trafficking trade, transit spaces become media for the transfer of victims. Airports for example, have been noted for providing a "natural way for human traffickers to move people around" (Murtagh, 2012). Recognizing the role of the airline industry in enabling trafficking, Airline Ambassadors, an organization run entirely by flight attendants, works to prevent it. As part of their awareness program, they provide education on how to detect and respond to the signs of a trafficking situation while aboard the aircraft (Airline Ambassadors International, 2012). Some red flags include individuals who appear malnourished or distressed, fail to provide correct documentation, are afraid of people in uniforms, or are not free to use the bathroom alone or talk for themselves. Another suspicious sign would be a person with a baby who does not carry a diaper bag or know the name or age of the child (Murtagh, 2012). Surveillance systems that can detect such behaviors while also being sensitive to the concerns raised earlier can be employed in the fight against sex trafficking in airports.

Sergeants Snyder and Bartholomew noted inner-city bus stops as popular target areas for the sex trading industry at the street level. According to a U.S. Department of Justice report, traffickers and pimps target children and youths at "bus stations . . . focusing on girls who appear to be runaways or without money or job skills" (Reid, 2010, p. 149). Simultaneously, truck stops along major highways are implicated in trafficking and truckers are also banding together to get training and recognize the tell-tale signs (http://truckersagainsttrafficking.org/).

Lastly, bathrooms in gas stations, such as the one featured in Figure 2, can also be used by sex traffickers

Figure 2. **The cashier does not have direct view of bathroom area for monitoring.**

Figure 3. **The bathroom is a room of its own, making it easier for traffickers to use.**

Figure 4. **The openness of this gas station allows for supervision.**

Figure 5. **Multiple stalls in the bathroom reduce potential of illegal activity.**

according to the officers we interviewed. The space plan does not allow a direct view from the cashier to the bathroom area, limiting the possibility of staff monitoring bathroom usage. Furthermore, the bathroom is a single room, enabling users to isolate themselves with little worry of being seen or heard (Figure 3).

In contrast, the openness of the gas station featured in Figure 4 is not conducive to sex trafficking uses. The direct view of the cashier into the bathroom area, the large window that exposes that area to passersby, and the multiple stalls in the bathroom (Figure 5)

are design parameters that can help prevent illegal activity. One can only wonder what other opportunities would arise if interior designers, architects, and planners followed the models adopted by Airline Ambassadors and Truckers Against Trafficking. Design Against Trafficking can be the next DIFFA.

Restaurants and Bars

Restaurants and bars are often locations where sex trafficking is literally "hidden in plain sight." Perhaps this is because the sampling method in most research studies "misses people who have not been arrested

or those who work less frequently or in off-street venues such as online services, crack houses, or bars" (Martin, 2010, p. 14). Victims of both labor and sex trafficking may get lost in the busyness and normality of the restaurant scene. However, there are ways to detect sex trafficking in these types of public venues. Some of the signs include a "patron entertaining a minor at the bar or restaurant that he did not come with originally," or "individuals waiting at a table or bar and being picked up by a male (trafficker or customer)" (Polaris Project, 2012, p. 4). Other suspicious behaviors include those who loiter outside the establishment to solicit male customers, or individuals who pick up cash that is left on tables (Polaris Project, 2012). Similar to the gas station example, designs that allow for better visual monitoring of private spaces in public venues by staff can limit illegal acts from being undertaken.

Hotels and Motels

A paper published in *Hospitality Magazine* warns lodging staff that sex trafficking is increasing in the hotel-based industry (Smith, 2011). Similarly, according to the officers we interviewed, in Minnesota, suburban chain hotels as well as hotels in small towns and rural areas are becoming a mainstay destination for both traffickers and customers. Their explanation is that "hotels and motels are often the unfortunate and yet logical replacement location, with their ever-changing parade of guests and . . . let's face it . . . all the right furnishings come as standard equipment" (Smith, 2011, p. 7). The privacy and

anonymity offered by hotels and motels are added benefits to traffickers (Polaris Project, 2012).

For many of the victims, the stay is quick and spontaneous. Victims "may be forced to stay at a hotel or motel where customers come to them (in-call), or they are required to go to rooms rented out by the customers (out-call)" (Polaris Project, 2012, p. 1). As a result, responsible business practices have been established at many major hotel chains to address this concern and raise awareness among staff regarding the signs associated with sex trafficking. Brenda Schultz, from Responsible Business America, helped develop the training materials for the Carlson Company, owner of the Radisson hotel chain among 1,300 other hotels across the globe. Carlson, a Minnesota-owned and -based company, has emerged as a leader in the hospitality and traveling industry in establishing trafficking awareness programs. Schultz explained that their mandatory sessions train all employees to detect and respond to signs of sex trafficking, which range from check-ins with little or no luggage to situations where the "Do Not Disturb" sign is used constantly.

Our interviewees noted that design characteristics of hotels and motels make some preferable to traffickers over others. Figure 6[10] illustrates a motel located at the intersection of two major highways, one that can be easily found. Furthermore, two separate parking lots allow purchasers, traffickers, and victims to use the building without going through the front desk and lobby area, where they risk being identified by

Figure 6. **Two separate parking lots enable easy access.**

The least expected places for sex trafficking may be private residences, which are implicated in sex trafficking in multiple ways and at all stages of the process.

Figure 7. Back door allows for entering the facility without going through the front lobby.

hotel personnel. Easy access to rooms through the back door (Figure 7) ensures anonymity as well as speeds up the transaction. Lastly, the multiple rooms with ground access allow traffickers to take out the window screens so purchasers can directly enter the room, avoiding the motel's public areas altogether (Figure 8).

Private Residences

The least expected places for sex trafficking may be private residences, which are implicated in sex trafficking in multiple ways and at all stages of the process. As noted earlier, any purchaser can secure his transaction from the privacy of his home. Blending in the surroundings can be a safe way to hide—for both purchasers and traffickers. Typical urban and suburban neighborhoods can be harbors for sex traffickers, who in order to avoid detection, "deliberately seek out obscure venues" (Hodge, 2008, p. 148), ones that can easily be "camouflaged by their normal, middle-class surroundings" (Landesman, 2004, np). Homes and apartments are the second most frequently reported venue for sex trafficking (after brothels) (Newton et al., 2008). Plus, traffickers and victims also need places in which to live.

Figure 8. Ground floor rooms and windows are conducive to direct room access.

The discreet, little house illustrated in Figure 9 is located in a tranquil South Minneapolis neighborhood and was the setting for a sex trafficking ring that was busted. A couple with their infant was strolling the street the day we visited while a neighbor, who was out gardening, related to us that she lived there for 36 years and did not know anything about sex trafficking on her block. Defining design characteristics that make a house or a neighborhood conducive to sex trafficking may be difficult but not impossible. In his landmark study on *Defensible Space*, Oscar Newman (1972) advocated for strategically blending the social and physical dimensions to achieve security

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Sex trafficking of women and girls is happening everywhere around us.

Figure 9. The single-family house in the middle blends with its surroundings.

through surveillance. Windows that allow neighbors to monitor the streets as well as allow views into houses are some of the ways by which principles embedded in *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (CPTED) could help increase supervision and foster needed connections (Crowe, 1991). Although this house has multiple windows on the front, it has fewer on the sides, limiting the ability of next-door neighbors to get a feeling of what activities might be occurring inside. Signs, such as blinds being constantly down, can be missed as neighbors focus on "minding their own business." The back alley is also difficult to monitor as a high fence, a garage, and greenery prevents views into the home's back yard.

Strong community connections are inextricably linked to neighbors' willingness to monitor activity on their blocks. Additional design considerations for how to help build strong community connections came from a community gathering, titled "The Impact of Sex Trafficking and Prostitution on Community Health." Reverend Alika Galloway of Minneapolis' Kwanzaa Community Church spoke of how she started to notice young women going up and down the street in the early morning hours. She was sitting on the stairs of Kwanzaa Community Church, which now houses the Northside Women's Space, a safe place where women and girls who are victims of the commercial sex trade can find services and support. The concrete stairs serve as a symbol of her act of reaching out to make a difference; a bridge between life in darkness and slavery and a life of freedom. Creating spaces where residents can spend time outdoors, from simple front steps to porches, provides opportunities for engagement with neighbors and passersby. Informal conversations and observations can help foster connections among people that can in turn, help prevent or stop sex trafficking processes.

Large apartment complexes can also be recruiting spaces. Founders of *The Khadra Project* shared with us the pain experienced by the Somali community in Minnesota. One of the region's largest new immigrant groups, Somalis found some of their youth enmeshed in sex trafficking. News reports point to the immense Cedar Riverside Plaza building (Figure 10) as a setting where traffickers recruit young women into the sex trade (Eckholm, 2010; Shah, 2012).
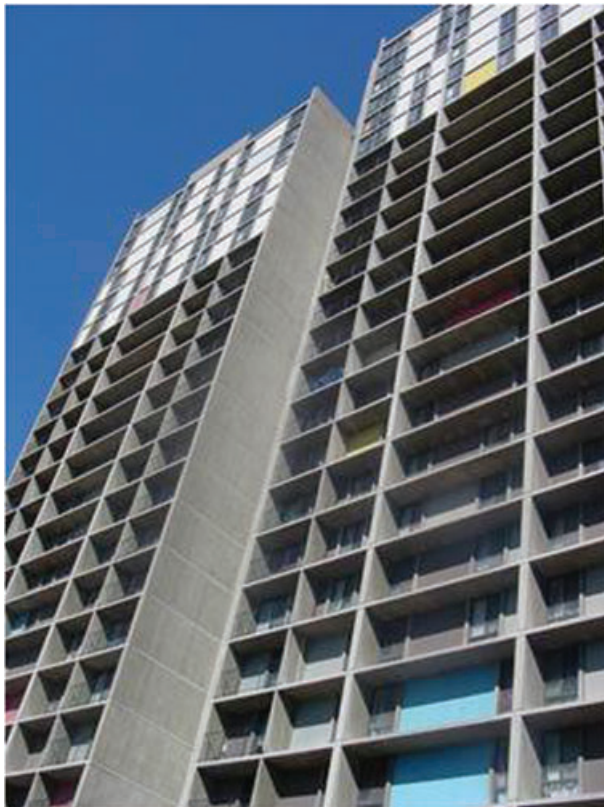
Close to 6,000 Somalis live here but there are times when young girls could end up spending the night in the exit staircases of this housing complex, particularly when a fight with their mothers or caretakers leaves them homeless for the night, exposing them to the dangers of the sex trafficking trade.[11] Designed to be traversed only in cases of a fire, exit stairways are cold and isolated spaces that are not typically used by residents, turning instead into places of harassment and intimidation. Rethinking how code regulations can be met while at the same time ensuring that exit stairways follow principles of the CPTED model could protect vulnerable girls who live in multifamily housing.

Conclusions and Implications

From cyberspace to hotel rooms, from public to private spaces, from the obvious to the unexpected, sex trafficking of women and girls is happening everywhere around us. The hidden nature of sex trafficking is partly linked to its happening in interior environments, which are by their very nature, hidden

Designers can help save lives by being cognizant of the role that design characteristics can play in curtailing one of the most heinous crimes of our times.

Figure 10. Cedar Riverside housing complex.

levels of privacy, surveillance (both physical and technological), code regulations, window size, and placement, as well as furniture, color, and accessory selection are enmeshed in sex trafficking. Designers can help save lives by being cognizant of the role that design characteristics can play in curtailing one of the most heinous crimes of our times.

Many questions remain. Future research can delve deeper into the placeness of sex trafficking: What does the placeness of sex trafficking mean in terms of our understanding of different environments? How can designers learn more about the particular ways by which each of these places is implicated in sex trafficking? Which theories can aid in our quest for understanding while being applicable to interior design (Clemons & Eckman, 2011; Pable, 2007)? What are the physical and cultural differences within and across communities, nations, and the world at large? And, what kind of design solutions can be implemented for prevention and healing? Undertaking such research studies requires figuring out ways by which conversations on placeness can address global issues and responsibilities. Cyberspace can be a tool that fights sex trafficking as well as enabling it. Following a model adopted by anthropologists (Brennan, 2005), interior design researchers can form collaborations across the United States and the world, yielding research on a wide range of places and the behaviors they influence.

spaces, not easily accessible or visible from the outside. Using a collaborative approach, this paper channels conversations toward the places where sex trafficking occurs and thrives, shedding light on the role that designers can play in efforts to combat trafficking. This is not to say that focusing on places or rethinking the design of places will be the panacea solution to the problem of trafficking.

Instead, we see this work as a call to arms. We are calling on educators, researchers, students, and professionals to imagine how spaces are used and misused. We are also calling all readers to be active and conscientious community members, ones who are willing to join what promises to be a long and arduous journey. According to our research, we learned that design factors such as space planning, accessibility,

Collaborations across diverse disciplines are needed to effect change. Forming relationships with other university units, community institutions, the police force, medical personnel, educators, policy makers, funders, employers, and members of the general public will not come without challenges. Because the information we wanted to gather was sensitive, we had to gain the trust of those with whom we were to collaborate. It takes time to build collaborative relationships and show commitment. The Multi-Disciplinary, Multi-Sectoral, Collaborative Engagement approach is enriching and transformative but it can also be frustrating to those in need of fast turnarounds for research projects.

Imagine a world in which all *interiors support the health and well-being of* everyone.

The questions are equally poignant in terms of education: What are the ways by which educators could sensitize the next generation of interior designers to tackle problems that are socially relevant? How can they do that while being sensitive to students' needs at a time when one in five college women could have been a victim of sexual violence in college (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000)? And, where and when can educators have the discussion that students can change the world and make it a better place for everyone?

Connecting with their community and turning studio projects into forms of community engagement are ways by which faculty can model for students how the connections needed to bring about change are formed and sustained (Zollinger, Guerin, Hadjiyanni, & Martin, 2009). Examples from our experience include our collaborations with the Khadra Project morphing into a junior-level interior design studio for supportive homes for Somali youth. In parallel, we introduced the question of trafficking to an earlier collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Department of Computer Science and Engineering and the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department (ECE). As part of their Senior Design Project, four ECE seniors began developing surveillance systems that can detect behaviors associated with trafficking while balancing out ethical and privacy considerations.

Design practitioners can also be involved in channeling collaborative energies. Given that aspects of sex trafficking could be happening anywhere, the questions multiply: How would this knowledge change the programming phase for projects? What kind of precedents can be used to inform the work of practitioners who wish to ensure that no such acts are happening in their buildings? What would a training manual for interior designers look like? Who else needs to be on the decision-making table to prevent sex trafficking in the hotels, airports, homes, and neighborhoods we design?

In closing, we recognize that sex trafficking cannot be tackled in the singular, by any one agency or one solution alone; it must be approached in the plural. For us, one lesson is certain: that the power of collaboration comes from the many new and exciting opportunities it provides, the multiple connections it forms that would not have been possible otherwise. We do not know where this journey will lead us but we do know that being part of these efforts allows us to imagine a world in which *all* interiors support the health and well-being of *everyone*.

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Notes

[1] Names used in this scenario are not real. "John" is a typical reference to purchasers of prostitution, those who pay for sex. City Council Member Elizabeth Glidden spoke about the need to change the language we use when referring to trafficking of children. In a *Southwest Journal* article, she states: "Why are we being so soft on someone who's a predator with children? Why do they get the term John?" (McKenzie, 2012, p. A14). In this paper, we use the term *purchasers* to refer to those who pay for sex with victims.

[2] Other scholars who used the term "placeness" to emphasize the qualities of a place include Daniel López and Sánchez-Criado (2009). In their investigations of the home as a place of care, they argue that it is often seen as being fragmented and blurred. They also question whether the placeness of the home is only located in human activity and whether it is the result only of practical and social meaningful appropriation. By using the term placeness, they can move beyond the focus on the materiality of place and instead think of home in a broader sense.

[3] Although a study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice made distinctions between sex trafficking and non-sex trafficking cases (Bales & Lize, 2005), those distinctions were not helpful in portraying the "full reality of human trafficking in the United States" (Bales & Lize, 2005, p. 41). Women who were trafficked for labor rather than the purpose of prostitution were still sexually exploited by their traffickers. Similarly, "women trapped in forced agricultural labor reported either witnessing or being the victims of sexual assault" (Bales & Lize, 2005, p. 41). The most prominent culprit industries include domestic service, agriculture, entertainment, factory work, restaurant service, and street peddling (Logan et al., 2009). Complicating matters are the subdefinitions that fall within sex trafficking, as the disjointed terminology and varying definitions can result in a failure to identify victims. For commercial sexual exploitation occurring within the borders with U.S. citizens or permanent resident children the term domestic minor sex trafficking is used (Reid, 2010). Furthermore, different professional populations that come into contact with domestic minor sex trafficking victims, all have varying labels for "a child exploited through prostitution, pornography, and/or stripping" (Reid, 2010, p. 155).

[4] It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on the differences between voluntary prostitution and sex trafficking. However, we provide a brief summary below to enable the reader to understand how one can become a victim of sex trafficking. Victims come from all socio-economic strata, ages, races, ethnicities, geographic locations, and backgrounds (Bales & Lize, 2005; Rand, 2010). Some are coerced into the trade by the trafficker who promises them a better life. A girl for example, may think of her trafficker as her boyfriend and may be convinced that her lifestyle of prostitution is going to provide for their future life together. Typically, victims do not actually receive any of the money from their sexual acts—they are completely controlled by the trafficker. This notion of control is partly what ties trafficking to slavery. The elimination of economic benefits from commercial sex transactions reverses the perspective of the girl, boy, or young woman or man from being viewed as a criminal to a victim. Because of this, police departments across the country are transforming the way these crimes are penalized, approaching these people as victims in need of treatment and support rather than perpetrators deserving punishment. The commonality among trafficked victims is not necessarily poverty, but rather a void in their life that they are seeking to fill. A girl may have a poor relationship with her father, and be seeking love and attention from an older man. She may struggle socially or come from a dysfunctional home. A victim may not only take form as the girl on the street corner at night, but also as a classmate, colleague, or neighbor (Tresniowski, 2006).

[5]Parallel terms include Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) which implies community and university collaboration (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Participatory Action Research (PAR) is more about members of the community becoming active agents in research on their own issues (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007).

[6]Some of these interviews were conducted by ECE students in the Senior Design Class (see Conclusions and Implications).

[7]Healing environments for victims of sex trafficking are limited. In the Twin Cities, these include Breaking Free, the Kwanzaa's Northside Women's Space, and Source Annex Transitional Home.

[8]All names of interviewees are used with permission.

[9]Credit for coining this term goes to Deidre Webster.

[10]Figure 6 has been cropped to prevent identification of the building.

[11]Intergenerational conflict, due to differing assimilation levels, is often behind the break-up of Somali families—the youth are eager to adopt the American way of life whereas their parents try to keep them focused on their religion and traditions (Amin & Ahmed, 2011). In the case of youth who emigrated into the United States with extended family members instead of their own parents, the effects of this conflict can be more severe.

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