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Carving a New Notch in the Bible Belt: Rescuing the Women of Kentucky

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CARVING A NEW NOTCH IN THE BIBLE BELT: RESCUING THE FALLEN
WOMEN OF KENTUCKY

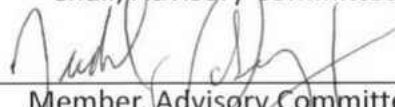
By

Molly Dunn

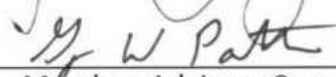
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Carving a New Notch in the Bible Belt: Rescuing the Fallen Women of Kentucky

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Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation has become a major focus on the local, national, and global level. This is despite research, which has identified labor trafficking to be a significantly larger issue across the globe. The purpose of this research is to identify how human trafficking has come to be defined in Kentucky by examining how prominent local actors guide the state's anti-trafficking movement. Through interactions with non-profit organizations, law enforcement, and concerned citizens, factors and forces that may shape the public's conception of human trafficking were examined. While the stated goal of most anti-trafficking advocates is to prosecute traffickers and rescue victims, the dominant understanding of human trafficking in Kentucky has shaped the anti-trafficking response in a way that does not necessarily focus on the needs of the victim in intervention efforts. This may create a narrow construction of the phenomenon that ignores larger structural issues such as gender and economic inequality, migrant patterns, and patriarchy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This past October, 22-year-old Justin Ritter, became the first person in the state of Kentucky to be convicted of human trafficking. Ritter pled guilty to dosing a 17-year-old girl with heroin and exploiting her for sexual services out of the back of his van. He was caught when he attempted to sell the minor to an undercover Louisville police officer, leading to his arrest. Ritter has been sentenced to prison for the next ten years (Smith, 2014a). During his trial he received a stern lecture from Circuit Judge McKay Chauvin. “If you anticipate getting out anytime in the relatively near future, or just not getting maxed out, you’re going to have to do better than that. Because they will not let you go until they’re confident that you can live amongst us without being dangerous” (Smith, 2014a). The gravity of the Judge’s statement is reflective of broader national efforts to increase punitive action against perpetrators of human trafficking, but also to recognize the significance and serious nature of this crime (Bales, 2005).

Dating back to the second Bush administration, law enforcement, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have joined forces to combat one of the most critical issues of our time; human trafficking. The nation has attacked what has been coined “modern-day slavery” (Bales, 2005) from a legal, feminist, conservative, and religious approach. Although there has been research on the enactment and enforcement of international policies, such as the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Potts, 2003; Fry, 2009; Doherty & Harris, 2015; Ollus, 2015), and federal and state legislation (Desyllas, 2007; Crile,

2012; Soifer, 2012; Weitzer, 2012), relatively little is known about the interventions and treatments provided by NGOs, specifically as it relates to policy, training and practice, and the ideologies that undergird such assistance programs.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Kentucky's collaborative approach along with the underlying ideologies that inform how human trafficking is combatted in the state. In order to do this, I examine local responses to human trafficking victims in Kentucky. Many of the agencies involved in combating human trafficking in Kentucky report success (Thomas, 2014; Refuge for Women, 2015b.), however, these reports are often part of larger efforts to acquire funding and gain recognition in outreach campaigns (Gray, 2014; Participant Observation, 2015h; Thomas, 2014). To rely on these reports alone in order to determine how human trafficking policy occurs in practice in Kentucky, may not yield an objective understanding of the issue. While the goal as articulated by the NGOs and state organizational groups involved, is often to rescue and provide services to victims of trafficking, the procedures they have implemented may simultaneously contribute to the re-victimization of survivors.

Drawing on literature from feminist criminology, sociology, and public policy this thesis examines interventions provided by nine non-profit organizations in the state of Kentucky. Utilizing data gleaned from extensive observation in trainings, intervention practices, and events conducted by these groups, I argue that the most prominent anti-trafficking NGOs in Kentucky openly and surreptitiously instill ideological values that lead to the spread of dangerous myths about the phenomenon of human trafficking. The partnering of anti-trafficking advocacy work and religious underpinnings has further

promoted the inequality, subordination, and cyclical nature of violence against women, under the guise of humanitarian efforts.

In the following chapter, I begin with defining human trafficking before proceeding with a review of the human trafficking literature at both the national and local levels. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical/conceptual framework for this study. Chapter 4 continues with a discussion of the methodology used. I then present my findings in Chapter 6 before discussing the broader meaning of the findings and offering some concluding thoughts in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has long been recognized that trafficking in human beings is a complex phenomenon occurring at the local, global, and transnational level (Saunders, 2005; Weitzer, 2007; Desyllas, 2007; Musto, 2009; Musto, 2010; Denton, 2010; Chuang, 2010) providing a significant threat to human rights since it encompasses a spectrum of abuses of fundamental liberties (Donovan, 2008). The international political community defines human trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, 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 labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (Article 3 (2) paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons 2000) (United Nations, 2002a).

Trafficking of human beings therefore, covers different behaviors that more generally have been divided into three categories in the literature; sex trafficking (Bernstein, 2007; Musto, 2013; Saunders, 2007), forced labor (International Labor Office, 2014; International Organization for Migration, 2005; Ruggerio, 1997), and organ trafficking (Jalalzai, 2005; Kelly, 2013; Makei, 2015; Meyer, 2006; Potts, 2003). All three types of trafficking have been broadly understood as the forced movement of individuals or individual organs for the purposes of labor, sexual, or bodily exploitation and profit (Musto, 2010; Potts, 2003).

Although each of the aforementioned trafficking subjects has garnered attention, there is general agreement that of the three forms of trafficking, organ trafficking is least common (Geis & Brown, 2008). Conversely, sex trafficking has received considerable attention from media, polity and scholars alike (Brennan, 2002; CNN, 2011; General Accountability Office, 2006; Kavner, 2011; Steele & Shores, 2014). As noted by feminist scholars, this has led to human trafficking becoming increasingly linked to, and in some instances, made synonymous with sex work (Jacobsen & Skilbrei, 2010; Seagrave et al, 2009; Weitzer 2007). This contradicts other research that calls attention to the prevalence of labor trafficking (Bauer, 2013; Bauer & Ramirez, 2010; Urban Institute, 2014). For example, Feingold (2005) dispels the myth that sex trafficking is more prevalent than labor trafficking simply due to the high demand for low-wage workers worldwide. In turn, and due to rampant media attention to the sexual nature of trafficking, labor trafficking has received less attention and therefore much of the general public does not recognize that labor trafficking is as problematic as sex trafficking (Denton, 2010), if not more so (Block, 2004; Feingold, 2005; Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005; Warren, 2012). This disproportionate attention to the sexual side of trafficking has been largely attributed to issues of morality that have shaped how human trafficking is understood (Desyllas, 2007; Weitzer, 2012).

Moral Issues in Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has become a moral platform for different positions on commercial sex work including prostitution (Weitzer, 2012). By meshing together “sex slavery” and “prostitution”, the anti-trafficking work of NGOs, legal workers, and law

enforcement project the idea that women cannot conceivably consent to sex work. The morality issue is further compounded by confusing human trafficking with immigration trends and patterns such as smuggling (Aronowitz, 2009; Batsyukova, 2012; Chuang, 2010; Desyllas, 2007). Despite the existence of a concrete definition of the phenomenon, the term “trafficking” has been conflated due to media, governmental, and non-governmental entities’ ample use of ambiguous and interchangeable language. Due to the exploitative and harsh conditions in which trafficked persons are often found, Musto (2009) notes that there is a propensity for scholarly commentary, United States policy leaders, and the media to equate human trafficking to “modern day slavery” or “sexual slavery.” The focus on the ‘end’ point of trafficking tends to draw attention away from the factors that contribute to the initial exploitation. This is problematic for several reasons.

First, referring to *all* trafficking victims as “modern day slaves” neglects the recurrent and blurred nature between trafficking and smuggling. One of the most prominent issues in anti-trafficking policy is an ability to understand the distinction between trafficking and smuggling, especially as it relates to illegal immigration and classifying people as victims versus criminals. Unfortunately, due to the complicated nature of trafficking, what begins as smuggling may often turn into a case of trafficking, unbeknownst to the victim.

Additionally, individuals at the mercy of policymakers and law enforcement agents in the United States are often regarded as criminals until they can prove themselves innocent. This is an extremely complicated process. In order for undocumented immigrants to become identified as trafficked victims, they must be able

to convince federal prosecutors and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents that they have not participated in any willing activities (such as sex work) or voluntarily complied in crossing the border in any way (Musto, 2009). Unfortunately, the ability to discern between the two actions can prove to be quite difficult.

Second, many scholars have likened the comparison of human trafficking and modern day slavery to antebellum slavery in the United States and the white slavery hysteria of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and have found flaws in the logic (Bernstein, 2007; Chateauvert, 2014; Chuang, 2011; Saunders, 2005; Weitzer, 2007). White slavery refers to the Progressive Era's fear of Caucasian women and girls being kidnapped for the purposes of prostitution. The White Slave Traffic Act of 1910 (also known as the Mann Act) made it a felony to engage in interstate or foreign commerce transport of women or girls for the purposes of prostitution. However, Melinda Chateauvert, author of *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* protests, "You cannot analogize the two at all. There's not an entire government and citizenship that is bound and determined to enforce sex work. So, to analogize that is a very racialized understanding and cynical use of what the word slavery really means" (Hall, 2015, pp. 2-3). Moral panics surrounding white slavery invoked a sexualized racism against immigrants from Eastern Europe and Asia migrating to a developed nation for work. The hysteria surrounding this migration rested on the assumption that these new foreigners were the culprits responsible for kidnapping white women and exploiting them for sexual services (Grittner, 1990). This historical trafficking narrative evokes the current fabrication of how the media portrays the stereotypical "deviant" trafficker (i.e. a non-Caucasian). Doezema (2010) reasons that the moral panics surrounding white

slavery were fundamental in linking the word ‘trafficking’ to sex and gender, as we see it today.

Those who have gained even more attention than women being trafficked for sex are, specifically, minors trafficked for sexual purposes. The focus on children has been prominent in local anti-trafficking legislative and advocacy work. This past year, Kentucky introduced the Safe Harbor Provision, stating that any individual under the age of eighteen who is picked up for selling sexual services will be treated as a victim, rather than a criminal. Human trafficking commissioner Theresa James describes the passing of this law as a “win for Kentucky’s children” (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2014b). Musto (2013), however, argues that the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)’s attention to minors implicitly suggests that sex trafficking of individuals under the age of 18 is of greater importance than forced labor cases. Additionally, she concludes that the focus on underage victims is “strategic in that it sidesteps debates about the voluntary nature of prostitution” (p. 263). The political, ideological, media, and scholarly bias of focusing on sex trafficking, holds considerable power in influencing preferred responses to human trafficking.

The Multi-Professional Response to Trafficking

Beyond legal controls that predominantly focus on criminal ramifications for perpetrators of trafficking (Schaffner, 2014), there also exist interventionist programs and practices that impact victims. Victim centered programs take on different approaches informed by varying ideologies. As noted in the criminological literature, services provided to victims of trafficking focus on the issue of law enforcement intervention

(Brennan, 2008; Musto, 2013; Musto & Boyd, 2014; Vandenberg, 2007), barriers to justice (Andrevski, Larson & Lyneham, 2013; Bernstein, 2010; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008), and rehabilitation (Bernstein, 2007; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008; Logan, Walker & Hunt, 2009). For example, in examining programs that focus on victim services that encourage cooperation with law enforcement, Musto (2010) suggests that scholars question whether protective services are actually helping trafficked persons when the focus appears to be on cooperation with law enforcement, leading to the prosecution of their traffickers.

According to state and federal legislation, if a victim is not willing to work with law enforcement to help identify their trafficker they are in violation of federal law (Williams, 2009). This is particularly problematic for foreign-national victims who may need to apply for a temporary visa in order to remain in the United States (Smith, 2013). Though there are rare cases in which minors can be exempt from this rule, most victims of trafficking must adhere to this law (Crary, 2005). The consequences for non-compliance are arrest or deportation (Roby, Turley, & Cloward, 2008). Frequently, these victims are at risk for being re-subjected to trafficking if they are sent to the country where their initial exploitation occurred (Karvelis, 2013).

Another approach to victim services that has gained considerable traction across the globe is the abolitionist approach (Chuang, 2010; Weitzer, 2012). Both feminist and conservative abolitionists maintain that prostitution is a violation of human rights, analogous to (sexual) slavery, and an extreme expression of sexual violence (Desyllas, 2007). Weitzer (2012) refers to this abolitionist conceptualization of trafficking as part of an oppression paradigm. In this paradigm, all forms of sexual commerce serve to

subordinate women, regardless of the conditions under which they occur. The central principle of this paradigm claims sexual commerce rests on structural inequalities between men and women, and that male domination is intrinsic to sexual commerce. Oppression writers have paved the way for feminist and conservative abolitionists to align forces and pursue a cause that has rebranded trafficking in a way that implicates all sex work.

Several scholars (Bernstein, 2007, 2010; Chuang, 2013; Musto, 2007; Weitzer, 2007) have protested against the partnering of conservative and feminist abolitionists in efforts to eradicate human trafficking. On the other side of the debate, Dempsey (2009) argues that this accusation is uncalled for. She claims,

The key distinction is simply the respective understanding of why sex trafficking and prostitution should be abolished: feminists support abolition as a means to challenge and ultimately dismantle patriarchal structural inequality, while conservatives and reactionaries support abolitionism as a means to maintain or reestablish patriarchal structural inequality (Dempsey, 2009, p. 1744).

Dempsey's argument begs for a more intensive review of the literature. Human trafficking has been at the forefront of social justice for well over a decade, yet there has still been an overall lack of research dedicated to the long-term effects of faith-based rescue and rehabilitative efforts. Therefore, it is difficult to positively conclude whether or not the partnering of conservative and feminist abolitionist efforts is effective.

The faith-based response to trafficking has been marginally examined by scholars, law enforcement, and the United States government. Due to this religious movement, the second Bush administration adopted anti-trafficking as a key humanitarian initiative (Chuang, 2010). However, contrary to United States and international definitions of trafficking, this faith-based movement has potentially provided the general population

with a particular understanding of the nature of human trafficking in our world today. Through television, film, and daily conversation, the construction of the human trafficking narrative is built on moral and social problems, characterized by patriarchy, evil, and deviancy (Dominik & Doyle, 2005; The Defenders, 2015; Wolf, 2010). Due to the success of this narrative, it is critical that scholars examine their platform more closely.

Presently, feminist and conservative abolitionists continue to purport a vision of human trafficking that is not consistent with the literature. Developing on existing feminist theory, Zimmerman (2013) calls for a more thorough inquiry of the role that Christian culture has played in influencing this country's anti-trafficking laws and overall agenda. A wider base of research must be dedicated to understanding and acknowledging how Christianity has influenced the areas of law, education, and the social world as they relate to, construct and codify the problem of human trafficking.

This study addresses this void in the literature. Drawing on data from local human trafficking service providers in the state of Kentucky, paying particular attention to the influence of faith-based responses, I explore the ideological agendas that shape the services provided to victims. My inquiry includes the manner in which services are provided, how service-recipients respond and interpret the approach, and what the outcomes look like for victims, as well as future policy implementation. The following chapter provides an overview of the integrated theory and concepts that I use as a lens to approach my research.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory integration is the process of gathering complementary theoretical conceptions from various intellectual fields, and creating an interdisciplinary framework of knowledge. Barak (2002) notes the appeal of theory integration is that “the diversification of models is liberating to the extent that they allow for a creative plurality of knowledge” (p.1). Theory integration is particularly appropriate to this research considering the multi-professional response to human trafficking on the national, state, and local levels, which requires examining different levels of analysis (i.e. state, organizational and interactional). To develop a thorough understanding of how Kentucky has conceptualized the phenomenon, I will integrate a number of concepts from different theories and perspectives to help explain localized responses to human trafficking in Kentucky; labeling theory (Becker 1963), Bernstein’s (2007) concepts of carceral feminism and the establishment of a neoliberal sexual agenda, Zimmerman’s (2013) perspective on the influence of religious ideologies on responses to human trafficking, as well as arguments from Bumiller’s (2008) book *In An Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement against Sexual Violence*. Becker’s (1963) labeling theory, as well as each of these concepts will be discussed in turn, before they are integrated as a framework that is applied to the data to provide an analysis of its meaning.

Becker’s (1963) labeling theory describes how particular labels such as “deviant” are applied selectively and vary according to the culture in charge of defining the label. This theory emerged as a way of challenging the status quo that believed crime was a

deviant behavior that violated law. Becker opposed this assumption by concluding that society is not fixed but rather, constantly changing, adapting, and embracing new interpretations of ideas, social meanings, and perceptions of deviance. He concluded that the stagnant interpretation of deviant behavior as rule breaking was too simplistic. Becker (1973) asserted, “The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label” (p. 9).

Extending from Becker’s original assertion, labeling theorists have argued for three key concepts that guide what we will define as criminal or deviant: “(1) The social meaning of deviance, (2) societal reaction, and (3) stigma” (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2011, pp.150-156). First, the social meaning of deviance maintains that due to the fluid and ever-changing opinions of human beings, it is impossible to identify a concrete definition of deviance because perceptions of behavior vary according to historical, political, and social influences. The labeling perspective questions the ability for people to ever be truly objective and value-free. However, it is important to recognize who is granted the power to label specific behaviors within a given time. Becker (1972) refers to the ‘hierarchy of credibility’ as the prospect that individuals with high status and/or economic prestige will have their opinions on controversial matters disseminated into public knowledge as fact. The relationship between knowledge and power is key to understanding the processes that allow specific people or entities to present information as fact.

Second, a society’s reaction to behavior heavily shapes cultural understandings of what behavior appears in deviant form, and what behavior is seemingly “normal.” For example, prior to Kentucky’s passage of the Human Trafficking Victims Rights Act in

March of 2013 (Frazier, Hunt, & Thomas, 2014), children under the age of 18 who were caught soliciting sex were considered prostitutes according to state law and would be jailed for such behavior. Presently, the Safe Harbor statute mandates that no person under the age of eighteen can be charged with prostitution. Now, the same behavior is labeled as ‘trafficking’ and the child prostitute is labeled ‘victim.’ Finally, stigma, or negative labeling represents a social marker to the rest of society. Stigma designates those as unfit or undeserving of belonging to the rest of civilization. Labeling theorists have reasoned that people from the lower echelons of society are likely to experience the most stigmatization, as they are relatively powerless to separate themselves from their stigmatization (Becker, 1970). It is those in power that have the most control over what and who is deemed deviant, as well as what behaviors then become subject to law, something that relates to the broader law and order agenda addressed by Bernstein (2007).

Bernstein’s (2007) concept of ‘carceral feminism’ describes “the commitment of abolitionist feminist activists to a law and order agenda and...a drift from the welfare state to the carceral state as the enforcement apparatus for feminist goals” (p. 143). Stated more simply, feminist advocates have promoted state-sponsored punitive measures as a solution to violence against women. This is problematic for several reasons. The carceral response signifies a movement away from state supported social advocacy and responsibility for women, as well as a shift towards the private sector for solutions to address violence against women.

Further, Bernstein examines the development of an alliance between anti-prostitution feminists and the Religious Right. In *The Sexual Politics of the “New*

Abolitionism” (2007), Bernstein considers how and why the most powerful activist work against sexual slavery in the United States has been generated by a predominantly white, evangelical, middle and upper class population. She situates the manifestation of state, feminist, and conservative alliances in accordance with a neoliberal sexual agenda that:

(1) identifies the trafficking phenomenon as a problem of individual deviant actions rather than a problem of structural institutions of economics, gender, and race (2) pursues solutions through private organizations and criminal justice interventions instead of the welfare state and, (3) seeks out the privileged to provide charitable solutions rather than aiding victims through alternatives means that would help them become empowered (p. 137).

Through her ethnographic work, Bernstein has discovered that much of the social justice activism surrounding the anti-human trafficking movement has omitted broad structural problems of globalization, gendered labor, and migration, and instead pushed for trafficking cures through capitalism. As the alliance of these three groups coalesces their goal is to move migrants or trafficking ‘victims’ towards legitimate forms of commodified labor (Bernstein, 2007, 2010). Zimmerman (2013) has echoed similar concerns as it relates to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), national legislation passed to address trafficking in the United States.

Zimmerman (2013) reflects upon how the partnership between the Christian Right and anti-prostitution feminist groups has influenced trafficking legislation in the United States. She argues that the language within the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) has situated trafficking at the forefront of today’s social justice issues due to the immoral, rather than the unjust nature of the problem (Zimmerman, 2005). The TVPA was created to address the existence of forced labor trafficking and sexual exploitation. However, trafficking in relation to women has been exclusively tied to

conceptions of forced sexuality (Zimmerman, 2005) and the condemnation of all sex work-whether forced or not. Therefore, the TVPA along with other contemporary discourses on trafficking aid in reinforcing stereotypes of the passive female and have performed, as Doezema (2005) describes it, “a macabre zombie magic, rousing the corpses of the Victorian imagination from their well-deserved rest” (p. 67).

Furthermore, Zimmerman (2005) addresses the use of *consent* as a defining factor in United States legislation, arguing that it is used to rationalize whether or not an individual was indeed trafficked and forcibly exploited for sex. Zimmerman asserts that consent is generally regarded as a recognition of private choice. Thus consent is tantamount to choice. Framing a woman’s decision to migrate as an individual and private decision, removes the influence and power exerted by larger structural, political, and socioeconomic forces that may drive her into the realm of trafficking. The theme of individual choice translates over to Bumiller’s (2008) work in addressing feminist and state response to trafficking victims.

From Bumiller’s perspective, the feminist campaign to end sexual violence has moved into a problematic alliance with the state over the past forty years. What began as a 1970’s feminist demand for the state to publicly and financially resolve the problem of domestic violence against women, has resulted in a contemporary shift in government measures to combat violence against women in the context of human trafficking as a “war on gender” (p. 18) and violation of human rights.

The declaration of trafficking, as a violation of human rights is a redefinition of the problem by feminists, religious organizations, and other humanitarian groups, committed to ending this sexual crisis on local and international levels. Bumiller (2008)

discusses how feminist thought surrounding sexual violence against women has transformed from grave concerns about violence against women in the private sphere, to outright cultural panics over ‘stranger danger’, racialized trafficking perpetrators, and fear for women in public spaces.

Bumiller’s (2008) work is particularly relevant to understanding the role of professionals and state actors in responding to victims of human trafficking. She asserts that two representational frames have emerged from this response to the gender war: (1) The iconographic portrayal of victims, and (2) The trauma model-a psychological framework that defines how women and children experience violence. The portrayal of victims is relevant to Zimmerman’s (2005) description of choice as it is the defining distinction that separates the victims from the criminals. Through the dangerous idea of ‘choice’ the state is able to coerce a victim of trafficking into an idealized mold of sexual exploitation, psychological damage, and completely lacking agency. Through the iconographic portrayal of victims, the state and anti-trafficking advocates concoct the perfect ideal of a ‘good victim’. The good victim is passive, innocent, traumatized, and completely cooperative with the state in constructing a trafficking narrative.

While on the one hand, the iconographic portrayal of the victim is one that attributes her trafficking to poor, individualistic choices, the trauma model is key in essentializing the experiences of trafficked women. Bumiller (2008) describes how the expanding forms of expertise about violence against women have the capability of constructing sexual violence as a treatable social problem as well as helping women become “successful survivors” (p. 64). This is done through therapeutic programs that train their clients/victims to make better choices by pointing to the personal psychological

flaws that may have led to their victimization in the first place. Through emphasizing the professional's focus on rehabilitating women back into mainstream society by securing legitimate means of work and making better choices, the state reinforces the individualistic, rather than structural factors that often lead women into trafficking.

According to the integrated frame described above, the hierarchies of power who have the privilege of labeling the phenomenon (i.e. politicians), also frame the processes used to create policies and shape public opinion (Becker's labeling theory (1963). Through the use of media and political discourse it was expected that the dominant institutions in the state of Kentucky would continue to push for harsher punitive actions against traffickers (Bernstein, 2007). Additionally, it was expected that they would also further the agendas of private conservative and faith-based organizations as they become the ideal model for victim rehabilitation where the institution of marriage and/or capital labor are viewed as *the* solution to each trafficked woman's private problem (Bumiller, 2008; Zimmerman, 2005). The state and conservative groups were predicted to have adopted a traditionalist and micro-level agenda under the umbrella of women's rights and ability to choose freedom (Zimmerman, 2005), with the blessing and partnership of liberal feminist organizations (Bumiller, 2008).

In this study, alliances between feminist groups, faith-based organizations, and the state were examined in relation to interventions used to address human trafficking. The next section offers a discussion of methods used to analyze the data related to this partnership.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

As noted in the literature review, due to the complex nature of trafficking, it is framed, shaped, and disseminated in a number of ways in the local public conscience. As such, this research is designed to uncover the ways in which Kentucky conceptualizes the phenomenon, as well as the policy and practice response enacted to help respond to victims of human trafficking. The research employs a qualitative case study approach as well as ethnographic content analysis and participant observation. Each of these methods will be discussed in turn before addressing the primary and secondary data used in this research

The Case Study Method

Case studies focus attention on one or a few instances of some social phenomenon, such as a village, family, or a juvenile gang (Babbie & Potter, 2003). In this research, the social phenomenon of the case study is the policy and practice response to human trafficking in Kentucky. Kentucky was selected as a case study as anti-human trafficking efforts appear to be a particular focus of local polity and interest in the phenomenon continues to grow and expand through a variety of local media outlets, newspapers, fundraising events, scholarly medical journals, and social media websites. In addition, as of this past summer, materials about human trafficking have been introduced into local school curricula and have spread across the country (Refuge for Women, 2015c). Furthermore, the case study method is appropriate here, within a localized

context, due to its' consistency with Weitzer's (2012) recommendations to look beyond and question quantitative data that currently exists in the local, national, and international human trafficking movement. This was a bounded case study, meaning the study of the phenomenon was restricted to a particular time frame (Silverman, 2000), that of 12 months spanning from December 2015 to December 2016. The time period was selected because it allowed for an adequate time frame to gather data from varying sources.

Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA)

Another method utilized in this research was ethnographic content analysis (ECA). ECA allows for the searching of data for similar patterns and/or messages that are being conveyed. Altheide (1987) refers to ECA as a method used to “document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships. Its distinctive characteristic is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection, and analysis” (p. 68). This particular method is appropriate here as it allows for an analysis of themes that emerge from the narratives, rhetoric, and tropes about trafficking that are disseminated by those who are situated as “experts” and are the most vocal in their response to the issue.

Participation Observation

Dewalt, Dewalt and Wayland (1998) describe participant observation as “a way to collect data in a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied” (p. 260). Participant observation was critical in this research as it allowed

for the observation of the understandings of human trafficking in Kentucky as they were disseminated through various trainings, meetings, lectures, fundraisers, community events, and victim intervention efforts. Participant observation methods seek to understand the purpose and meaning of people's behavior, while obtaining these understandings from the unique viewpoint of the people being studied (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Through participant observation, researchers have the potential to learn about purposes and meanings behind people's behavior from the unique viewpoint of their study participants. Because this research was dedicated to gathering a state-wide perspective of the nature of trafficking it was important that the method of gathering data was flexible and natural. Gaining people's insights through relaxed conversation or through community events allowed for the understanding of various conceptualizations and opinions about human trafficking on a multitude of levels, both formal and informal.

Data

The data used in this study came from a wide variety of sources including both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected from five major anti-trafficking NGOs (Help Our Prostituted and Exploited (HOPE) Children's Campaign, Lexington Human Trafficking Task Force, Kentucky Rescue and Restore, LYNC-8, and the Refuge for Women), four smaller anti-trafficking NGOs (Reclaim Our Culture Kentuckiana (ROCK), Rescue Our Sexually Exploited (ROSE), People Against Trafficking Humans (PATH), and Scarlet's Angels) and one student run anti-trafficking organization (Stop Human Injustice eNslavement & Exploitation (SHINE)) at Eastern Kentucky University.

Although not explicitly stated, all ten NGOs were faith-based. Data were also collected from State Police, and interactions with individuals directly involved in human trafficking advocacy, education, trainings and intervention practices. Access was obtained through both word-of-mouth and snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling is a method in which primary participants recommend further eligible participants for potential study recruitment to the researcher (Browne, 1981). This method is advantageous as it allows the researcher access to participants that would otherwise be difficult to reach. This allowed for the recruitment of further participants, as by attending local anti-trafficking trainings and meetings I was often referred to additional potential study participants who may have shown interest in the research, through word of mouth.

The primary data were collected through participant observation where the researcher was able to attend events, trainings, and lectures that were hosted by each of the five major anti-trafficking organizations. Typically, meetings consisted of NGO advocates sharing their personal expertise or supplemental training materials with community members who were interested in anti-trafficking efforts. Lectures were often run by faith-based NGO advocates on a number of college campuses. The lectures included basic information about understanding human trafficking on a local and national level, as well as promotions for upcoming mission trips or volunteer work pertaining to anti-trafficking advocacy. Community gatherings specifically related to events presented by faith-based NGOs. Events involved the recruitment of volunteers to work with residents from rehabilitative homes as well as a purity ceremony. During both events, the

NGO leaders shared their insights about the phenomenon of human trafficking as well as their perceptions about the best methods for intervention with trafficking victims.

The participant observation during trainings most often involved the partnering of NGO experts and Kentucky State Police in educating law enforcement, social workers, and faith-based or secular communities about the nature of human trafficking and responses to trafficking from an occupational or individual perspective. For example, one annual NGO-sponsored fundraiser occurred during the research. The event was hosted by a local news anchor and included a 500-seat three-course meal dinner at an upscale hotel in the city of Lexington, Kentucky. The intent of the fundraiser was to collect donations for a local rehabilitative home for women who escaped sex trafficking or left the stripping or pornography industry. The fundraiser had been considerably successful in the past several years as it included local famous faces from television as well as politicians, an art auction, speeches by local business owners, and live music performed by one of the residents from the rehabilitative home.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected to help provide a broader picture of the issue of human trafficking in Kentucky. Data were collected from electronic newspaper articles that had been “posted” by each organization’s Facebook page. The articles reported cases of human trafficking arrests and prosecutions that had recently occurred. As argued by Denton (2010) contemporary popular media representations of trafficking offenders and victims falsely reflect the significance of cases related to sexual exploitation and forced labor offering a skewed understanding of the subject. Due to the frequency with which

the media may generate false information about the nature of trafficking, it was important to closely scrutinize specific cases on the local level, and over a span of time. Finally, informational videos were examined and local laws were analyzed. The secondary data were collected, organized in a chronological fashion and then analyzed using ECA. The following chapter provides the findings from the data. Generalized findings are presented before addressing the specific themes that emerged from the analysis.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Throughout the course of this research, a number of themes emerged from the data: constructions and connotations of the problem, the role of morality in anti-trafficking campaigning, the prominence of religion and evangelical Christianity, constructions of the victim, immigration and racialization of the issue, and law and policy implications. Before addressing each of these themes in turn I will provide a brief overview of the scope of the problem of human trafficking in Kentucky as reflected by “official” statistics collected by NGOs.

Scope of the Problem

The first charges/indictments utilizing human trafficking statutes in the state of Kentucky have been documented as early as 2008. Kentucky Rescue and Restore, an anti-human trafficking non-profit of Louisville Catholic Charities, compiles and regularly updates a “fact sheet” listing all such charges in local human trafficking trainings. The non-profit gathers their data from local and federal law enforcement, Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, The Center for Women and Families, Catholic Charities of Louisville, and local media sources. According to the document, last updated in June 2015, there have been 332 criminal cases of human trafficking since 2008. Of these cases, 79 percent were identified as sex trafficking (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2015). The increased number

of cases entering Kentucky’s criminal justice system may provide a basis for heightened attention to the issue.

The fact sheet also reveals that of the 332 cases, there have been 60 state and eight federal charges/indictments for human trafficking. In addition, the number of labor trafficking cases rose from 41 cases in 2014 to 52 cases in 2015, and the number of sex trafficking cases jumped from 113 in 2014 to 264 cases in 2015 (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2014e; Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2015). This marked increase in the number of cases of human trafficking in Kentucky in the last two years suggests that there is either an increased number of cases of human trafficking, or law enforcement have increased attention and resources to tackling the issue.

Mirroring the increased criminal justice response to the issue, within the past twelve months there has been a surge in local media attention on the subject. This includes coverage of criminal arrests (Smith, 2014a) and criminal trials (Hasch, 2014), as well as commentary from local “experts” on the nature and pervasiveness of the problem in Kentucky. During the course of the research there were several prominent “advocates” for the cause that emerged as having considerable involvement in the anti-trafficking movement in Kentucky, as educators, trainers, and “experts” on the issue – individuals who can be identified as moral entrepreneurs. The most prominent of these figures was Marissa Castellanos, the Human Trafficking Program Manager for Kentucky Rescue and Restore. Castellanos was not only a favored speaker on the issues, but trained other important figures in the movement and was present at many of the local anti-trafficking events. Other important names that emerged as having considerable impact included Ked Frank, the Executive Director of the Refuge for Women, Brittney Thomas, the Director

of HOPE Children's Campaign and Co-Chair of the Lexington Human Trafficking Task Force, Chad and Chandi Mays, married couple and Co-Leaders of the non-profit LYNC-8, Kentucky Congressman Andy Barr, and Kentucky Senator Rand Paul. These actors and their respective organizations largely shaped the rhetoric surrounding the issue of human trafficking, as well as the other frames ascertained from the data. Each of these themes will be discussed in turn, beginning with the theme that underscored almost all of the other understandings on human trafficking in Kentucky: the conflation of sex trafficking with prostitution.

Sex Trafficking and Prostitution: the dominant frame

One of the most significant understandings of “human trafficking” was that of “sex trafficking,” which was then further convoluted with behaviors that would have been characterized differently a few years ago – particularly prostitution or child abuse. This greatly impacted data on the scope of the problem. For example, a human trafficking coordinator in Northern Kentucky, someone who could be considered a moral entrepreneur, argued that the “full potential” of the laws on human trafficking allow cases previously labeled as sexual abuse or prostitution five years ago, now fit the criteria for human trafficking. The coordinator explained, “When a parent sells (his or her) child to a neighbor to get money for drugs, is it sexual abuse, prostitution or trafficking? It’s all three” (Darst, 2010, p. 21). Thus, in cases where several different criminal labels may legally apply, prosecutors will often select the most severe of the three charges-human trafficking.

Media coverage on the issue was also found to support this re-classification of offenses that were previously considered outside the scope of trafficking. Coverage of human trafficking in the local news focused exclusively on sex-related offenses (15 sex trafficking cases, 0 labor trafficking cases from October 2014 to February 2016), particularly on the role of the perpetrators. For example, Lex18 news reported that in July 2015, 46-year-old male Walker Wright Jr. engaged in sexual intercourse and smoked crack-cocaine and marijuana with a fifteen-year-old female. Wright was alleged to have “intentionally recruited, enticed, harbored, transported, provided or obtained a 15-year-old female, knowing she would be trafficked” (Lex18 News, 2015a). That same month another man’s mug shot was displayed in an article along with charges of human trafficking of two teenage girls. The man allegedly facilitated meetings for the purposes of exchanging sex for money between the teens and potential clients on Backpage.com (Lex18 News, 2015b). Other cases reported on a 19-year-old “pimping” 15 year old girls (Lex18 News, 2015c), and a woman allowing her 12-year-old daughter to be sodomized by her boyfriend for \$80 (Lex18 News, 2015d). This focus is not reflective of national statistics which indicate that labor trafficking is much more pervasive (Feingold, 2005), or even the previously mentioned official statistics for 2015 where 52 of the 316 cases in Kentucky involved labor not sex trafficking (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2015). Possible explanations for this focus were found to relate to how human trafficking is defined in Kentucky.

The prevailing definition of human trafficking in Kentucky is driven by faith-based perspectives – often by a few moral entrepreneurs. While attending a meeting for the Lexington Human Trafficking Task Force where the subject of conversation was an

outreach campaign that distributed information on chapsticks to potential trafficking victims, I began to understand the ways in which anti-trafficking groups conflate the definition of human trafficking and downplay the prevalence of labor trafficking.

Lexington Task Force leader Brittney Thomas announced that in 2014, HOPE (Help Our Prostituted and Exploited Children's Campaign) successfully distributed 5,561 chapsticks. "A lot of businesses have 'owned' the HOPE campaign," she announced. By this, she explained, she meant that several hotels have taken the distribution of the chapsticks into their own hands by giving girls their hotel room key with a chapstick. Marissa Castellanos [Program Director of Kentucky Rescue and Restore], who also stood at the front of the room, clapped lightly for this endeavor, asking, "Brit, have you gone into strip clubs? Amy (another worker from KY Rescue and Restore) found it's best to go early in the day and talk to managers (Participant Observation, 2015b).

Though the HOPE campaign distributes both sex and labor trafficking chapsticks - they have two labels in both English and Spanish, one designated for sex trafficking, the other for labor - the volunteers had fewer chapsticks for labor trafficking than sex trafficking. While volunteering with the group, we ran out of labor trafficking chapsticks within the first thirty minutes of driving around town. I inquired about the small number of labor trafficking chapsticks and one of the volunteers shrugged her shoulders. "Oh well!" She said. "We still have a ton of the other ones" (Participant Observation, 2015d).

This shortage of labor trafficking chapsticks did not pose a problem because the HOPE volunteers predominantly visited and discussed locations that are stereotypically associated with sex workers and popular culture references to sex trafficking (Besson & Morel, 2008; Fleiss & Roth, 2005; Milchon & Marshall, 1990). Furthermore, and illustrated by the above comments, there was no evidence that they went to locations where victims of labor trafficking would likely frequent (i.e. fields, construction, domestic servitude (suburbia), and Keeneland – the popular Lexington horse track).

When the subject was addressed, labor trafficking was often glossed over in favor of the more salacious discussion about the horrors of the sex industry. For example, on February 10th, 2010 KET television aired a special about human trafficking. The network invited Marissa Castellanos, Gretchen Hunt (Staff Attorney for Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs), and an advocate from the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center to speak on a panel regarding the issue. In response to the question whether sex trafficking or labor trafficking was more prominent in Kentucky, Castellanos hesitated, before answering; “It is too early to state one way or the other because the statistics are so new to Kentucky.” The labor trafficking conversation quickly fizzled and jumped back to the issue of the commercial sex industry. In a similar vein, in an online training video (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2014a) Castellanos again reemphasizes the preoccupation with sex trafficking and the sex industry, “300,000 American children are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation every year in the United States.” Additionally, Castellanos further downplayed the prominence of labor trafficking in Kentucky during a task force meeting in Lexington, “I mean, there are more victims in labor but there are more *cases* in sex trafficking” (Participant Observation, 2015b).

The lack of attention to labor trafficking is significant, as it sends the message that it is not as problematic as sex trafficking. This is supported in the larger literature as argued by Musto (2010) in an interview with an immigration case coordinator who noted, “To be able to talk about labor exploitation in a right way, we really have to shift focus and take on a bigger paradigm than just solely (sex) trafficking but we can’t because sex trafficking is kinda hot” (p. 392). Indeed, it is the scandalous nature of sex trafficking and the sex industry as a whole, that appears to energize the community and attract volunteers

to local training events. The following excerpt is from a KY Rescue and Restore training (Participant Observation, 2015a).

The audience is titillated by the topic of sex trafficking. They squeal when Castellanos describes how prostitutes found at truck stops are often referred to as “lot lizards.” Their eyes bulge at photographs of girls who have been branded with tattoos by their “pimp-trafficker,” as Castellanos calls them. In one image, a girl has the word “Successful” etched across her chest and surrounded with stars. Castellanos also offers the audience an example of a pimp named “Worm” who fittingly tattooed an apple on his girls with a worm wiggling through it.

The use of terminology like “pimp-trafficker” extracts language from prostitution and human trafficking and synthesizes the two, creating a vocabulary that further conflates the definition of human trafficking by omitting any possibility for an individual to consent to sex work.

Despite the prevalence of anti-trafficking advocates who fuse sex trafficking and sex work, there are a few behind the scenes actors who offer a different perspective. Lieutenant Matt Brotherton of the Lexington Police department voices his frustration with local awareness campaigns,

Here’s my big problem with this. Calling it ‘sex trafficking’ and the numbers they [NGOs] want to give-it seems like they want to paint everything with one broad brush. Like, if there’s a woman and she’s engaging in prostitution then she must be doing it because someone is *making* her do it through physical force, threats, violence, or, y’know... (Participant Observation, 2015f).

In conflating the definition of human trafficking, Kentucky ignores the voluntary nature of prostitution and the fact that they are often very different crimes. However, by meshing “sex slavery” and “prostitution”, the anti-trafficking work of NGOS, legal workers, and law enforcement are better able to make the claim that women who choose to involve themselves in sex work are psychologically damaged, abused, naïve, and most importantly, without agency. This oversimplification is illustrated succinctly by Ked Frank, the Refuge for Women’s Executive Director, as he describes strippers and prostitutes alike as “women looking for love in the wrong places.” Here, the merging of

prostitution and trafficking denies women the ability to consent by eradicating their personhood and decision-making power, *only* allowing for the presumption of absolute victimization consistent with Zimmerman's (2005) passive victim. Brotherton further confirmed this perspective,

I see a lot of the NGO conferences, sponsor conferences mostly are about sex...like they get all bent out of shape about this dirty sex component. The little secret is there is absolutely no prostitution investigated by the Lexington Police Department. None. We just don't have the staffing or manpower to do it. The only time any prostitution is actually investigated is when we get some sort of report that someone is underage (Participant Observation, 2015f).

Whether the Lexington police department actually prioritize the investigation of prostitution or not, the faith-based advocates who drive the public's conception of human trafficking lump all forms of sexual commerce within the definition. Attention to the scandalous elements of sexual labor turns a sex workers' legitimate financial decision into a question of moral aptitude, a matter of personal choices versus individual deviant actions rather than a problem of structural institutions of economics, gender, and race (Bernstein, 2007).

Kentucky's conflation of human trafficking with sex work has evolved from the perspectives of a few prominent non-profit actors into the rehabilitative responses that shape how individuals learn to define their victimization. The conflation of human trafficking and prostitution by faith-based organizations was apparent in my interactions with one of the residents and staff members of the Refuge for Women, Lila. Lila and her sister worked together prostituting in Lexington whenever they needed money.

Lila said she realized that she had hit rock bottom when she started selling herself for pain pills. "That's a form of prostitution," Lila said to me. One of the Refuge staff members quickly inserted herself into the conversation. "It's *trafficking*," she corrected Lila. (Participant Observation, 2015g).

Here, it is evident how entirely new categories of victims and criminals have surfaced, fitting within a vast definition of human trafficking that privilege and implicate *all* sex work. Therefore, when abolitionist public figures and advocates enmesh the terms of sex trafficking and sex work, they disregard a definition of human trafficking that is presently used by the larger international political community – all trafficking that is not sex trafficking. This net-widening is indicative of broader law and order agenda, where the solution to human trafficking is that of increased criminalization and punitive measures as a means to prevent violence against women (Bernstein, 2007). Here, a number of offenses that were previously categorized as sex work, domestic abuse and child abuse, now amount to the more serious charge of human trafficking. This represents what Bernstein (2007) would call a ‘carceral feminist’ approach to the issue of trafficking in Kentucky.

Children as Victims

Also arising from the data, and blurring with the aforementioned theme of conflating sex trafficking with sex work, was a narrative that focused on children as victims of sex trafficking. The dominant discourse stresses the risk sex trafficking poses to Kentucky’s children. For example, Castellanos argues “What we’re seeing is that younger children are being trafficked by caretakers...Caretakers will rent their child out for a few hours in exchange for drugs....or they’re renting out their child to pay a drug debt” (Smith, 2014a, p. 3).

Throughout my observations I became keenly attuned to the frequency in which concern for trafficked children was raised. As a Facebook subscriber to both the Lexington Human and Louisville Trafficking Task Force Pages, I discovered that in between the posts about human trafficking cases and local events, both organizations would regularly post images of missing children in the state. According to the local task forces, runaway children and in particular teenage girls are at high risk for being trafficked. Kentucky's latest update on local case demographics claims that 60 percent of human trafficking cases in the state are cases involving children (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2015). These statistics are contrary to the human trafficking literature (Doezema, 2000; Marcus, Horning, & Curtis, 2014; Musto, 2013), which recognizes that the idea of children being abducted and sexually ravaged by strangers is disturbing, yet it is uncommon.

The aforementioned HOPE Children's Campaign, albeit focused on adult *and* children victims, use children as the face of their campaign. The following comes from observations made accompanying HOPE volunteers on a chapstick outreach effort,

Brittney said that most places were already familiar with the HOPE campaign so we shouldn't have too much trouble getting hotel managers and desk clerks to take the chapsticks. "However," she noted,

Just in case they aren't familiar with us...here's how we actually frame the campaign to businesses that we target. It's on the second page of your packet. We say that we're passing out chapsticks for missing and exploited children because people get upset when they think *we* think people are being trafficked at their business (Participant Observation, 2015d).

I flip the pages of my packet and find the scripted monologue clearly lay out:

Here is a short synopsis of what you can say when asking for permission to leave the chapsticks!

Hello! We are with the HOPE Campaign in Lexington, KY. We are trying to help rescue missing and exploited children. These are posters of missing children who we believe might be in the area or pass through this area. These chapsticks are labeled with a hotline number that children and/or adults can call if they need help. We would like to leave some of these chapsticks at your place of business in case these children pass through the area and are in need of help.

On the next several pages of my packet are flyers copied from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. All of my flyers have the smiling faces of young girls from around Kentucky. I notice that all but one of the girls are white and have been missing for a long time- between three and five years.

The HOPE organization has been warmly received by the venues in which they post flyers and donate chapsticks. This is because promoting a cause through the use of children elicits a morally digestible response. The focus on missing youth illustrates how the organization uses emotional morality to advance their cause and further confuses the issue of human trafficking. Initiatives like the Safe Harbor Provision and the HOPE campaign suggest a significant and specialized concern for minors who are being trafficked for sexual purposes. Of the various anti-human trafficking events I observed, there appeared to be a general consensus between non-profits and state actors that children are Kentucky's main priority in the campaign to end human trafficking. The preoccupation with children may certainly include simple, obvious reasons about their fragility and helplessness. However, there is also the possibility that it is the innocence and purity of children that align with some of the iconic characteristics of what a 'good' victim of human trafficking looks like. The focus on child victims is also reflected in prevention and intervention approaches utilized at the state and federal levels.

Prevention curriculums are targeted primarily towards young women to teach them about self-esteem, indicators of abusive behavior, and signs of exploitation (My

Life, My Choice, 2015; Refuge for Women, 2015c). For example, the stated purpose of one nationally recognized initiative curriculum is to “change girls’ attitudes and perceptions about the commercial sex industry, as well as build self-esteem and personal empowerment” (My Life My Choice, 2015). Curriculum topics include understanding risks to personal safety, importance of the heterosexual, patriarchal nuclear family, self-advocacy and identifying the link between assertiveness and reducing their risks of exploitation (Refuge for Women, 2015c). The emphasis here is on the victim and the behaviors they can change to avoid being trafficked. This is further illustrated by the narrative used by a local law enforcement officer, Scott Harvey, to demonstrate how no one is exempt from the threat of human trafficking- not even high school students.

Harvey describes the following scenario in which he assumes the role of a teenage girl,

I have a great life at home. But maybe I send a pic to my new boyfriend. And it’s a pic that my parents wouldn’t be real proud of. And now he tells me if I don’t do more for him, that pic might be released. And then my parents find out. And I can’t have that. See, that’s coercion. And that’s what will get people to do pretty much what you want them to do because they’re afraid that what they did in the dark is gonna come out into the light so they’ll do anything to keep that from happening. Welcome to the world of human trafficking (Refuge for Women, 2015c).

Harvey’s use of this scenario to represent a “classic case” of human trafficking is deliberate and misleading. Though Harvey mentions that victims of human trafficking can be male, the DVD content is focused explicitly on girls and behaviors they can change in order remain safe. It also exclusively covers sex trafficking (more specifically behaviors that are representative of the sex industry and not necessarily trafficking, such as sex work, prostitution, stripping and pornography), ignoring the larger issue of labor trafficking. Additionally, the messages within the DVD incorporate a level of fear,

implying that becoming romantically involved outside of marriage and/or using the Internet, cellphones, or any electronic device could easily lead to sex trafficking victimization (Refuge for Women, 2015c).

What is most problematic in both preventive curriculum strategies are that they are explicitly directed towards teenage girls to teach them how to protect themselves and navigate through the innately violent and exploitative world of men. In focusing on the importance of educating young women to *avoid* being trafficked, these curricula fail to address a larger, systemic problems; that of larger structures such as patriarchy and economic inequality that may make women vulnerable to exploitation. This again is classifying the problem of trafficking as being caused by individual deviant actions – behaviors that can be prevented - rather than broader structural causes (Bernstein, 2007). Furthermore, such preventive measures harken back to restrictions imposed upon youth during the Child Saving movement of the 19th century. From this movement, Platt (1969) describes how white middle class women raised concerns to society about the negative aspects of youth culture. These “child savers” created new ideas of what defined criminal activities related to sex, drinking, and staying out late at night. Through the support of government sanctions, the Child Saving campaign emphasized parental authority, traditional family values, and dependence on the social order, as all three motifs were on the verge of deteriorating during this time. Platt further reflects, “What seemingly began as a movement to humanize the lives of adolescents soon developed into a program of moral absolutism through which youth was to be saved from movies, pornography, cigarettes, alcohol, and anything else which might possibly rob them of their innocence” (1969, p. 28). With regards to human trafficking, this same process of moral absolutism has been

adopted, where a range of behaviors associated with the sex industry such as prostitution, stripping, pornography and texting “tit pics” to the cellphones of teenage boys, have been deemed dangerous trafficking behaviors for girls.

In a manner reminiscent of Platt (1969) Castellanos has explained that the state focuses on trafficked children because it is a “neutral and widely agreed upon moral problem” (Participant Observation, 2015a). This suggests that the issue of human trafficking in Kentucky is less about the illegal act and more about sanitizing the state of morally reprehensible behavior. Musto (2013) argues that the focus on underage victims is “strategic in that it sidesteps debates about the voluntary nature of prostitution” (p. 263). In other words, Kentucky’s focus on underage victims excludes certain types of victimization (such as labor trafficking and the trafficking of adults for sex), but includes a host of other “morally” rejected behaviors such as prostitution, pornography, and stripping. Not only are children the favored symbol of victimization, but they have also become the chosen leaders in the next generation of social justice activism in efforts to fulfill what Bernstein (2007) might view as a human trafficking law and order agenda.

Accompanying the symbolism of children representing the core of the campaign, has been recent legislation catered specifically to child victims. The implementation of the Safe Harbor Act has been the most successful piece of human trafficking legislation in the state. This law maintains that when authorities discover that someone is soliciting sex under the age of 18, they must be treated and labeled as a victim, rather than a criminal (Safe Harbor Act, 2013). Plainly stated, the Safe Harbor act prevents police from being able to arrest minors and instead requires that they escort them to a shelter or social services to receive housing, medical, and legal aid. As exclaimed by Castellanos

“Domestic minor sex trafficking is a big problem but our Safe Harbor laws now protect all kids from being arrested.” She then pauses. “Well, not all kids, actually.

Unfortunately, labor trafficking minors still have the burden of having to prove that they were controlled” (Participant Observation, 2015a). Human trafficking commissioner of Kentucky, Theresa James, has described the passing of this provision as “a win for Kentucky’s children” (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2014b).

Once a child reaches adulthood, however, winner’s luck may run out. In adult human trafficking cases, an individual’s perceived moral character is susceptible to the scrutiny of officials so that they can gauge the degree to which they think an adult was victimized. This subjective idea of morality became another dominant theme throughout the research.

Morality

Many of the new and well-established anti-trafficking organizations possessed underlying tones of conservative morality, along with the added presumption that the larger society shares these beliefs. For example, anti-sex industry group ROCK (Reclaim Our Culture Kentuckiana) was initially formed in 2004 to protest the growth of businesses promoting sex entertainment (i.e. sex shops) in Louisville. While maintaining this focus, they have since gravitated towards the campaign to end human trafficking through awareness. ROCK’s stated mission is “to promote core American principles and values, including decency, moral virtue and human dignity, and to serve as an advocate for people harmed by the sex industry” (Adams, 2013). This past October they sponsored an all-day summit for over 400 law enforcement, non-profits, healthcare workers,

schools, the local community and the general public on the issue of human trafficking (of the nine hours of “educational” material only one hour was dedicated to labor trafficking towards the very end of the day, having spent the prior seven on the topic of sex trafficking). It was at this summit I met a bright-eyed advocate from a newly formed anti-trafficking organization and the following occurred;

Kathy, a blonde woman in pearls gently pulled me by the arm, closer to her booth. She parted her pastel pink mouth to present what seemed like a purposeful, yet natural speech,

ROSE (Rescue Our Sexually Exploited) is a brand new non-profit here in Louisville. This summer I went to Baltimore on a mission trip and learned about the horrific crime of human trafficking and at that point, I had no IDEA about the magnitude of this epidemic! So, I was called by God to action and knew I had to do something about it (Participant Observation, 2015k).

As exemplified by Kathy’s commentary, non-profit agencies like ROSE (an emerging organization that has yet to overtly affiliate themselves with a particular religion) materialize quickly, with little more credentials than having a “heart” for the issue. Their “heart” for human trafficking is usually grounded in a spiritual calling that then justifies their interest.

This issue of morality is reflected at the national level where last February, the Refuge for Women garnered attention through their organization’s ties to someone who had also developed a “heart” for the issue. United States Senator and former 2016 Republican Presidential candidate Rand Paul published an opinion article titled, “Out of Darkness, Light” which centered around one of the residents he met at the rehabilitative home. Paul described in detail how this resident went blind at an early age, was raped by her father throughout childhood, and sold by him for sex in exchange for drugs and money. Once she was able to escape from him in her teens, women from her church sent

her to the Refuge for Women. According to Paul's op-ed, the resident is healing through the power of music and her songs "tell of hope and redemption" (Paul, 2015). Following his anecdote, Paul identified the Refuge for Women as the largest organization in the country to provide free housing and a Christian environment for women recovering from the sex industry/sexual exploitation.

Further accolades for the Refuge for Women have come from Kentucky Congressman Andy Barr. At a fundraising event, Barr delivered a speech commending the Refuge for their service as well as offering a summary report of the organization's annual results,

In almost five years this organization has treated 104 women, 40% of whom came from Kentucky. Over 90% of the women have not gone back into the sex industry. Over 70% are clean and sober. Over 70% are employed or in college. And 70% have given their life to Christ! Thank you for your hard work on behalf of the women who need you. You are an excellent example that faith-based approaches to healing and recovery can and DO work (Participant Observation, 2015h).

Here, the praise revolves around victim success being associated with their dedication to God and a faith-based approach to recovery. Throughout the course of this research, this was another strong theme to emerge from the data; that of the evangelical Christian influence, which shaped understandings and responses to human trafficking.

Evangelical Christianity and Human Trafficking

In line with the theme of morality, Judeo-Christian influence emerged from the data as a dominant frame of human trafficking. Evangelical Christian organizations in particular have established what Bernstein (2010) describes as the "justice generation" to lead the war on human trafficking in the coming decades (p. 60). Members of the justice

generation have moved away from traditional hot-button issues in Christian politics related to abortion and gay marriage, towards more global social justice issues. Although their beliefs surrounding such topics remain the same, these new groups of young, educated, and middle to upper class evangelicals focus their efforts towards global humanitarian issues that they perceive to be universally agreed upon sentiments. In transforming their cause to target broader issues regarding gender and sexuality, evangelical Christian adults and the youth of the justice generation have become some of the most socially influential people in state and national anti-trafficking campaigning. This was a prominent understanding of the issue of trafficking in Kentucky.

Of the ten anti-trafficking organizations I had contact with during this research, all of them were not only faith-based, but were Christian in their denomination. Furthermore, although there was little direct self-identification from the organizations as being of a particular faith, conversations, educational materials, and rehabilitative solutions often included references to God. Most events I observed began or ended in prayer. In order to understand how such religious beliefs are utilized in the human trafficking conversation, it is important to first isolate the defining features of what is often termed evangelical Christianity.

Evangelicalism is characteristically understood as involving commitments to believing in the literal truth of the Bible, believing that one can be saved only by committing themselves to a personal relationship with Christ or by being “born again.” It also includes the belief that one must share their faith with others in order to save them – “sharing the good news”. There are four primary characteristics of evangelicalism:

1) Conversionism, the belief that people must be transformed through a “born-again” experience with Jesus Christ; 2) Activism, Christians must “evangelize” or spread the word of God to Christians and non-Christians alike through social reform efforts; 3) Biblicism, a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority; 4) Crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity (Bebbington, 1989, pp. 1-2).

Bernstein (2007) argues that an element of the neoliberal sexual agenda is the pursuit of solutions through private organizations and criminal justice interventions instead of the welfare state. Since private organizations that deal with human trafficking are also Christian organizations in Kentucky, religious solutions for victims have become more heavily emphasized than criminal justice interventions. For example, Rand Paul reinforces such solutions in his praise of the Refuge for Women,

There is a government role in combating sex trafficking and the abusers-but what about the victims? These women are broken physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They need healing in all areas and Christian-based programs have proven to be successful over and over. Refuge for Women provides these women with hope, and the promise that they will be loved unconditionally-a love that most of these women have never experienced (Paul, 2015).

Through Paul’s support, he conveys that faith-based (or even more specifically, Christian-based) aspects of the rehabilitative program are what make the Refuge for Women exemplary to the rest of the nation.

One of the most recognizable aspects of the evangelical Christian anti-trafficking efforts involves their missionary work with women in the sex industry. Middle-class Christian women comprised a large number of the participants I came in contact with who dispersed themselves within the community to spread God’s word and (a phrase I became familiar over time) “just love on the girls”. For example, in an October 2012 blog written by the Development Director of Refuge for Women, Cindy Warr, she recalls her experience participating in mission work with a Refuge for Women Director, Jewellan

Morrison in Atlanta, Georgia. The two women took part in what another religious NGO, the Atlanta Dream Center, refers to as “Princess Night.” The purpose of Princess Night is to reach out to sex workers and aid in removing them from the streets. Warr describes how she, Jewellan, and twelve other IHOP (International House of Prayer) missionary workers “arm” themselves with red roses and scripture cards that have an anti-trafficking hotline number as well as encouraging messages about God’s love. The following text is from her blog post, describing her interaction with a woman named “Tay.”

We asked her if we could pray for her and she said ‘Oh yes please!’ That is when I spotted our two male prayer warriors praying over her boyfriend/pimp about 30 yards away. WOW, that was powerful! Jewellan had the opportunity to pour into Tay about a different lifestyle—a beautiful life that she and her son can have away from pain and abuse. She also shared how she sensed the woman was trying to fill a void in her life. That she knew there was something better out there than the life she was living and we could all tell from the tears in her eyes that that was exactly what Tay was thinking! (Warr, 2012, p. 2).

At the end of the blog entry, Warr includes one of the verses from the scripture cards she handed out; “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you, not to harm you. To give you a hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11).

As previously articulated, the state of Kentucky has embraced a faith-based definition of human trafficking to frame the issue in a way that regards all consensual and non-consensual sex work as sexual exploitation. Here again, perceptions of sex work as being synonymous with sexual exploitation become the focus of the street outreach. Such perceptions are independent of Tay’s status as a sex worker or a victim of trafficking, or whether such an intervention may pose safety risks for Tay (i.e. risk of violence from her pimp/boyfriend for engaging with the NGOs), as she is subjected to their particular method of salvation.

As indicated by Ked Frank (Executive Director of Refuge for Women), there are other organizations with similar faith-based motives. For example, Hookers for Jesus volunteers enter night clubs dressed in what they consider to be “stripper apparel” in order to seem approachable to the workers. Their intent is to preach the word of God to women working in the clubs. This type of outreach work presents human trafficking as a problem of individual actions with individualized solutions. By framing human trafficking in this way, the evangelical Christian perspective is in accordance with tenets of a neoliberal sexual agenda (as described by Bernstein 2007) that replaces structural issues of race, class, and gender with an individualized solution that begins with the love of Christ.

The micro level focus is also evident in the alliance between feminists and religious conservatives. This alliance has been extremely effective in framing anti-trafficking politics in a way that is able to merge traditionally controversial issues surrounding sexuality and reproductive rights to fit within the same category. This became apparent in a speaking event at Eastern Kentucky University’s campus ministry, where LYNC-8 (Love Your Neighbor in Christ-8) speakers Chad and Chandi Mays provided a lecture on the issue of human trafficking in Kentucky to student non-profit organization Stop Human Injustice eNslavement and Exploitation (SHINE). What follows is a synopsis of the event:

The event took place at the Wesley Foundation, an on-campus ministry for students. Before the presentation a young woman from the Student’s Right to Life Group compared anti-trafficking efforts to what she considered to be another similar issue,

During SHINE’s anti-trafficking week next month we’ll also be celebrating Right to Life week on campus. So we’ll put up blue and pink

crosses across the lawn for all the lives lost to abortion. We'll also have a Q&A where students can learn about the reality of the issue and the heinous crimes committed by Planned Parenthood (Participant Observation, 2015e).

The students in the audience clapped, and the Mays walked to the stage. After a short prayer, Chad added to the discussion about human trafficking and abortion, "Y'know, a lot of these abortions that are happening are a result of human trafficking." The students in the audience contorted their faces in disgust. Chad continued, explaining that women being sold for sex often have four to five abortions and then must deal with those scars for the rest of their lives. The couple also discussed topics including the definition of sex trafficking and the concept of agency in regard to sex work. Chad was facetious in his remark, "None of these women got up early this morning and said, 'You know, it's always been my childhood dream to become a prostitute. So that's what I'm going to do today'" (Participant Observation, 2015e).

This flippant remark coupled with the use of unproven statistics to redirect the focus to the issue of "trafficking" was not uncommon in Kentucky. As has become evident in much of the data the issue of sex work is once again confused with human trafficking but is clearly propagated as an evangelical cause for concern.

This again is evidence of the evangelical youth of the "justice generation" (Bernstein, 2010) steering away from openly protesting issues of gay marriage and shifting towards what they claim to be less politically-oriented topics of social justice that lends them legitimacy— i.e. human trafficking, homelessness, and general exploitation. Here, rather than overtly opposing abortion the justice generation have reframed their agenda to promote a social justice narrative that also encompasses issues of reproductive rights, gender, and sexuality. For example, linking issues of human trafficking and abortion evoke a women's rights discourse but simultaneously advocate *against* women's rights. In this way, "hot-button" issues have been incorporated and framed within a social justice context that can be ambiguous and often unverifiable.

Meshing women's rights with issues that simultaneously diminish or reduce women's agency is a common theme. For example, Refuge for Women's slogan that is on all their paraphernalia is "We believe in women!" (Facebook, 2012). However, this belief, along with the services they provide, are contingent upon the following values and goals for the residents receiving services: "the value of each woman is immeasurable, the Bible is our guide, healing happens in a family environment, [and] sex is a gift from God" (Refuge for Women, 2015a). The Refuge for Women uses faith-based curriculum, prayer, baptism, and a mentoring style approach for residents throughout the duration of the program. The program design requires weekly church attendance as well as twelve counseling sessions from a clinical pastoral counselor on staff. I was invited by Ked Frank to watch one of the program's interventions that occur in a resident's second phase of the program (a phase purportedly designed to prepare the residents for employment), which includes a purity ceremony.

The Refuge for Women uses a purity ceremony as ritualized intervention for residents. I was able to observe three of the residents take vows of purity in the basement of a volunteer's home. I recorded the following observations:

Ked Frank had told me that the dress was casual, however, I noticed that the girls who were participating in the ceremony were dressed a bit more formally than others residents in attendance and wore jewelry and make-up. Prior to the ceremony, I met Jasmine (one of the participants), who shook my hand up and down and shrieked, "I'm getting married today....to JESUS!" She and Brooklyn (another participant) threw their heads back, laughing.

Traditionally, a purity ceremony (also known as a purity ball) is a ritual that takes place for fathers and their adolescent to college aged daughters. During this ritual a young woman takes a pledge to remain sexually abstinent until she is married. In turn,

her father vows to help his daughter uphold this commitment to the best of his abilities and protect her virginity for her future spouse (Gibbs, 2008). Formal ceremonies often evoke a wedding-like atmosphere in that they may involve cake, prayer, and dancing. It is not uncommon for fathers to attend these event dressed in tuxedos. Daughters may accompany their dates adorned in elaborate (frequently white) ball gowns and tiaras.

After several prayers, some singing, and a speech by the Executive Director the ceremony began,

Jewellan (a program director) remarks at how special this particular moment must be for the three women who will be receiving their rings. Her voice then rises, and she proceeds to share a dream she had the night before, “At 3 o’clock this morning, no exaggerations-God woke me up, showed me a mason jar, gave me a word for each of you-it’s in this jar.” She brandishes a glass mason jar from behind her back, displaying it for the entire room to see. Inside the jar are small scraps of white paper, folded up. Jewellan inhales, deeply,

God literally mapped out what he wanted me to say to you today and what he has done for your life. So I want you to take a piece of paper out of the mason jar...Do NOT open the piece of paper. Take the piece of paper out...

Jewellan waits silently until the three girls have successfully fished out their slips of paper. She continues, “This is a word that God wanted me to let all three of you know today as you’re about to make this covenant.” She instructs the girls to open the paper slips and share what they say with the audience.

In describing her previous night’s sleep, Jewellan inserts her dream world into the purity ceremony. Jewellan presents herself as a messenger of God, delivering his forgiveness in the tangible form of scraps of paper inside of a mason jar.

Brooklyn’s eyes dart back and forth as she digests the message. She then raises her head and says, softly, “It says ‘you are redeemed, bought back’.” Both Melody (the third participant) and Jasmine read the same message aloud. Jewellan nods, staring intently at each girl and continues,

Yes. You are redeemed and you have been bought back by Christ, k? So, we’re gonna talk about that a little bit. You are redeemed. You have been

bought back with a price. So I want you to listen to this. Bridget, I want you to read really loudly-what does redemption mean?

Brooklyn reads from a packet propped up in her lap,

Redemption is, in biblical times meant to buy back property. It basically meant paying back a loan. It could also mean the freeing of slaves or helping someone come out of a state of poverty. When we look at the definition of redemption and apply it to our faith we see that it takes on a much more significant meaning. As we ponder on our own freedom from sins, enslavement, or knowing that we have been given eternal life with Christ, meaning we choose life over death.

Jewellan continues, “You’ve been bought back. You are his creation. You know that but get that in your spirit. You are redeemed. You have been bought with a price. You have been bought. Back. What brought you back?” Brooklyn, Melody, and Jasmine reply, uncertainly, “Redemption?”

“Yes, *redemption*,” Jewellan elongates the word, syllable by syllable. “He is your *owner*. You are no longer your vessel unto yourself. You are now enslaved under his word. We balk under our new owner’s truth and his truth is that we keep ourselves pure until when?”

“Marriage!” The girls cry out, together.

“When you’re not married you don’t want to put yourself in tempting situations” Jewellan states.

The purity ceremony can be understood as a powerful mechanism intended to re-label Refuge for Women residents from “fallen women” to “saved women” through the intervention of redemption. The Fallen Woman archetype is a Victorian era model, defined by her failure to uphold the moral and material expectations of the time (Auerbach, 1980). Unmarried sexually active women were perceived as a threat to the institution of marriage and the family, the character of the upper class, and above all, to the honor of national identity. These behaviors are similarly regarded by evangelical Christian organizations in contemporary times.

The girls recite a pledge with varying levels of enthusiasm:

Lord, more than anything in this world I want an intimate, pure relationship with you. I want to glorify you in every aspect of my life. I am in you. This is your body. I am your bride. You are the groom... Amen.

Jewellan then instructs the girls to read another set of statements: "I commit to a life of purity. I commit to being pure one day at a time. Forgive me for the days and years I have spent watching, reading, listening, and experiencing vile and impure things." The women are each awarded a ring inscribed with the words "true love waits" and a certificate before with one last *Amen!* The ceremony concludes with photos of the participants, flashing their new rings in front of the camera (Participant Observation, 2015i).

Like the traditional purity ceremony where the highlight is the daughter's purity pledge, followed by her father's presentation of a ring, bracelet, or similar token of jewelry, the ring in this ceremony is symbolic in that it serves as a tangible reminder of the commitment the young woman has made to stay "pure" and, most importantly, committed to God.

Significantly, none of the women who participated or observed the purity ceremony at the Refuge for Women were trafficking victims. Each woman had been involved in the sex industry and/or had been exposed to sexual abuse. Also, the purity ceremony had no relevance to the supposed second phase objective of obtaining employment. Instead, the ceremony existed for a purpose larger than the women who undergo vows of purity. During the Refuge for Women purity event, the participating program directors are married, moral, and therefore in positions to accept penance from the sexually immoral women and restore them as virtuous and valuable people. The program participants serve as a vehicle between immorality and morality and their role in the ceremony establishes social solidarity and an acceptance of these individual deviants

back into the fold of the moral order. The service providers offer interventions based on evangelical Christian tenets by making sure that sexual activity outside of a biblical marriage is framed as an act of deviant and immoral behavior and that love is defined within the heteronormative patriarchal understanding of marriage. Purity rituals cater specifically to heterosexual relationships. Throughout the ceremony, Jewellan warns her residents that their temptations will arise in response to men only. To be “pure” not only means to be sexually abstinent until marriage, but that purity is only achievable for heterosexuals.

A crucial aspect of the purity ceremony is to recognize personal powerlessness and the inability to achieve redemption on your own. Jewellan conducts the ceremony as a program director but also as a teacher. She asks the women multiple questions about biblical stories, commitments to the religion, and asks for testimonies of faith. Jewellan describes how residents may be absolved of their deviancy by accepting Jesus Christ as their new owner and submitting to his laws. From this purity ceremony we can see how residents attain freedom from oppression by becoming Christian.

The purity ceremony seeks to help women perceive their past history in sex work in a way that acknowledges faulty individual choices, attributes their behavior to trauma, and reinforces the importance of Christianity and God’s love in order to overcome these behaviors in the future. Above all else, purity ceremonies associate a woman’s worth to her physical body. In this way, it is no different than sex trafficking (i.e. a women’s value is her body). The Refuge for Women purity ceremony occurring as part of an anti-trafficking organization’s victim recovery program, displays the extent to which Kentucky has conflated the issue of human trafficking with immoral sex. This conflation

underscores the prevailing narrative of trafficking in Kentucky, including the focus of the next section, that of dominant framings of the victim.

Construction of the Victims

Anti-trafficking campaigns circulated a particular narrative about victims through relying on certain images and characteristics and through propagating specific slogans. For example, the background on the Lexington Human Trafficking Task Force's Facebook page is an image of a dejected, young white female peering out of a window. Above her head, the words "Slavery still exists...and it could be in your backyard" span the length of the banner (Facebook, 2014). Another flyer shows a young, white girl, staring at a computer screen with the caption "If you aren't with her online, who is?" (Reclaim Our Culture Kentuckiana, 2015). The imagery used is that of traditional, heteronormative, white femininity drawing out characteristics such as vulnerability, youth and innocence that have been historically associated with being young, white and female in the United States (Grittner, 1990; McDonald, 2004). The descriptors of trafficking victims support characteristics of what Bumiller (2008) refers to as an "iconic portrayal of the victim" (p. 11) in the war against sexual violence. The iconic portrayal of a victim serves the purpose of providing the general public with a recognizable, albeit slanted, representation of what victimization looks like.

Irrespective of local anti-trafficking advocates spreading a message to the public that no one of any age, race, or class is impervious to becoming a victim of human trafficking, the dominant understanding of the human trafficking victim in Kentucky, is that of a female child who has been exploited for sex. For example, despite the vast

number of victims reported as being trafficked by Louisville Catholic Charities, their victim-experience narrative during events and fundraisers, comes from the same young, blind, white female who has survived sexual exploitation that began during her childhood (being prostituted by a male acquaintance) (Gray, 2014; Highland, 2014; Smith, 2014c; Yetter, 2015). Another organization uses the testimony of a young, blind, white female who speaks of her sexual exploitation at the hands of her father (Broadway Christian Church, 2015; Participant Observation, 2015h; Paul, 2015). In rehabilitation, I was also made aware of how adult victims are treated like children through a Refuge for Women volunteer recruitment. Ked Frank said to the group, “When our girls come into the program they don’t know who they are-heck-they might not even know what their favorite color is!” (Participant Observation, 2015c). This dominant understanding extends beyond outside appearance to include a conventional victim narrative that narrowly constructs the victim as entirely innocent having been sexually exploited or abused at a young age.

The few individuals who represented trafficking victims at local events offered clear-cut accounts about their complete victimization. The following excerpt from the Refuge for Women Annual Gala, a black tie event costing \$100 per seat, illustrates an example of one of these iconic portrayals of the victim in local anti-trafficking campaigning:

The residents I had seen loafing around in jeans and sweatpants just days before in Lancaster, KY were almost completely unrecognizable. They swirled in waves of sashes and silky shawls, poufy princess dresses, and dramatic eye makeup. Inside the ballroom, there were rows upon rows of fancy black table-clothed tables with glass stemware, and flower centerpieces holding each table number. I noticed there were tables lined with paintings for auction. A piece that caused me to stop in my tracks was what looked like a large oil painting of long-haired white

Jesus Christ in a bow-tie and tuxedo, as if he knew about the dress code. His lips were slightly parted so that you could see his perfectly wide smile. In his arms, Jesus held a young blonde girl in a poufy white dress and matching white bow. She leaned back, grasping both of his shoulders, lightly, and her gaze focused on him.

“Tonight,” the host for the evening announced, “we celebrate each woman saved.” Though residents from the Refuge for Women were allowed to attend the event, they remain anonymous dinner party participants dispersed through the crowd. Only one resident gave her testimony to the ballroom. “When you think of prison, you probably think of metal bars and suffocating walls that confine criminals who deserve to lose their freedom.” A young woman named Allie says, “I am 21 years old and I am a recovering addict, a survivor of domestic violence and sex slavery, and I was one of those prisoners for 17 years.”

As Allie continues speaking, her pale and paper-thin figure is illuminated on the stage. She stands in a long white gown with silver sequins and a string of pearls dance gently across her collarbones. Her voice echoes softly through the microphone, “By the time I went to kindergarten I knew how to read, write, and how to give a blowjob.” I hear audible gasps around the rest of the room. Allie describes in detail the sexual abuse she endured from her father and other men throughout her childhood. She finally reveals that when she went to the Refuge for Women, her life began to change and she learned what it meant to be loved, valued, and cared for. “I want to show people that though we’ve all been beautifully broken, God is an expert at creating masterpieces out of brokenness” (Participant Observation, 2015h).

Though there were dozens of residents from the Refuge present at the gala that night, Allie’s appearance differed from the other residents who were heavier-set, brazen, dark-skinned, and less apologetic in their presence and speech. Allie was the picture of fragility and vulnerability. She occupied the smallest amount of space possible as she spoke meekly so that her audience had to strain to hear. Additionally, in comparison to several of the other residents who had participated in sex work, Allie was sexually and physically abused throughout her childhood. Not only is she representative of the iconographic victim but she also represents the “sexually blameless” victim (Doezema, 2000, p. 13) in anti-trafficking campaigning whose exploitation will be more palatable to

the public and approved by policy makers. In contrast, women who had been involved with prostitution or stripping were rarely used for fundraising events. Instead, their voices and stories were used to scare and shock in educational materials directed towards teenage girls, as examples of what happens when you make bad life-decisions. This same pattern of the iconographic victim emerges in the media where most of the news coverage contained stories of young females being victimized. Interestingly, these media stories often contain non-white perpetrators.

Racialized imagery is deeply embedded within local human trafficking education when discussing criminals but rarely acknowledged. The historical imagery of the threatening black or brown man, ravaging, harming or otherwise corrupting the innocent white woman (Doezema, 2000; Saunders, 2005), a legacy of the days of slavery and the “white-slave trade” (Kneeland, 1913; Knepper, 2012; Peck, 2004), is ever present. For example, during a Lexington Task Force meeting, one of the educational topics of the day was gangs and their involvement in human trafficking. The Task Force Leader for the HOPE Campaign asked, “Are there a lot of gangs present in our community?” To which Castellanos replied,

I haven’t worked with any law enforcement who work with gangs but...if we think that gangs aren’t in our community then they’ll dig in and infiltrate. What we’re learning nationwide is that sex trafficking is becoming more prominent in gangs. If we don’t stay alert they’ll use that to take over-when we least expect it (Participant Observation, 2015b).

Despite not having any specific information on gangs being tied to trafficking in Kentucky, Castellanos still insists it is a serious problem. Even though she suggests this is a nationwide problem, the literature on human trafficking suggests the actors involved in human trafficking are predominantly individuals, and small groups, who play small parts

in large criminal networks that have no or little associations with traditional organized crime and gang activity (Bush, 2004; Feingold, 2005; Klueber, 2003).

Furthermore, educational material such as the video titled “Gang TRAP,” presents information on the sexual exploitation of minors by gangs (Shared Hope International, 2015). In reenactment scenarios intended to educate the gangs are depicted specifically as black and Hispanic young men. This is despite Kentucky having a notable decrease in street/drug gang activity since 1996 (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2002).

The portrayal of the iconic victim also extends to their internal characteristics, emotions and needs. According to Kentucky Rescue and Restore’s website, victims of trafficking are full of fear, self-blame and hopelessness due to extreme trauma. They blame themselves for their abuse or may see no way out of their situation. While some victims do indeed share these feelings and characteristics, this is a particularly narrow understanding of the trafficking victim experience. Very often victims of violence, especially sexual violence, behave in “unvictim-like” ways (Buzawa, Buzawa & Stark, 2012; Garcia & McManimon, 2011). For example, in an educational video from Kentucky Rescue and Restore a young Haitian woman named Joceline attempts to explain what happened to her as a victim of trafficking (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2014d). However, she becomes visibly upset and is unable to speak through tears. Marissa Castellanos comforts her and hands her a tissue. She then sits next to Joceline and speaks for her former client, “Joceline is doing well and has goals towards school and work.” As Joceline sniffles, Castellanos says, “Even though she’s sad that she can’t go see her family back in Haiti she is the happiest I’ve ever seen.” Here, in what appears like a very staged interview, we see the obviously distraught victim, who so overwhelmed

with her trauma is speechless in front of the camera. Instead of waiting for Joceline to tell her own story, Castellanos, arguably the most prolific moral entrepreneur on the issue of trafficking in Kentucky, tells her version on Joceline's story. Not only is the narrative controlled through Castellanos speaking Joceline's truth, her obvious trauma is further exploited by being showcased as the *acceptable* manner in which a victim's emotions are expressed. This moment is extremely powerful when we consider how Kentucky Rescue and Restore was able to use the simple moment of Joceline's tears and vulnerability to justify their organization's philanthropic value and the need for NGO heads, like Marissa Castellanos, to literally speak for them.

Interestingly, women that do not adhere to the widely propagated iconographic portrayal of trafficking victims are subjected to rules and regulations in their recovery process that appear to be informed by this victim construction. For example, one of the rehabilitation directors at Refuge for Women, described the initial process of rehabilitation for women healing from sexual exploitation, several of which involved controlling their access to basic items such as food,

In the initial phases of the program they're under 24-hour supervision. They come from such crazy backgrounds we lock up all the food because we had girls gain like 90 pounds because of all their addictions so we rationed their sugar, even peanut butter we rationed. If you go from total lockdown to freedom you'd freak out (Participant Observation, 2015c).

This explanation was reinforced by some of the residents themselves during my visit to one of the Refuge houses.

I entered the room and discovered some of the residents walking at a moderate pace on three treadmills set up behind the couches. The treadmill triplets responded breathily as they walked. They explained to me that the Refuge took a mind, body, and spirit approach to therapy. Therefore, residents were expected to complete three hours of exercise each week. Recognition of this exercise had to

be checked off and initialed by a staff member in each girl's homework binder. "When this program first started the girls all got really, really fat," one resident told me. She pressed a button on the treadmill screen in front of her and her pace began to quicken,

Because they had all this access to food and we're depressed and like, dealing with shit all of a sudden-so they finally decided to lock up the food in the refrigerator and cabinets and make us exercise. I ain't getting fat while I'm here. I'm getting *skinny*.

Another resident agreed stating, "I had a hard time with that when I first got here. Like, I panicked when I realized they were gonna lock up the food. Like, am I a child?" (Participant Observation, 2015g).

While exercising has health benefits, restricting food by putting locks on the refrigerator seems extreme. However, it is in accordance with broader heteronormative ideals of femininity and attractiveness in the United States- i.e. to be thin is to be attractive. This again reinforces Bumiller's (2008) iconographic victim who is traditionally feminine.

According to Bumiller (2008), the American feminist movement has used symbolism and familiar imagery as a strategy for gaining political momentum in the war against sexual violence and to spark a surge in activism. The use of symbols in feminist campaigning have been extremely successful and "given structure to the motivating ideologies that incite local activism" (Bumiller, 2008, p. 29). However, symbols and imagery also have dangerous potential to limit the public's understanding surrounding the diversity and complexity of a cause.

Commonly used symbols that extend beyond the aforementioned iconographic victim include manicured hands and/or wrists bound by ropes and chains (Asbury University, 2015; Facebook, 2013; Participant Observation, 2015k), young women and/or children crying (Facebook, 2015b; Participant Observation, 2015h; People Against

Trafficking Humans, 2015), appearing distraught (Facebook, 2014; Thomas, 2014), and a pair of high heeled shoes (Facebook, 2015a). These images are narrow in their conceptualization and represent only one type of human trafficking victim – female victims of sex trafficking. They do not represent those who are trafficked for labor or organs, nor do they represent trafficked boys, men, and transgendered youths and adults. This simplistic and narrow understanding of the trafficking victim in Kentucky has potentially harmful implications for policy responses that are supposed to meet victim’s needs.

This portrayal of a victim of human trafficking by key moral entrepreneurs in Kentucky, dictates public perception of the problem as it relates to what they can do to provide assistance to trafficking victims. Although there are many key resources that are needed for women in immediate crisis, such as housing, clothing, and even special foods for foreign-national victims (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2014c), there is a disproportionate focus on small gestures. For example, Staff Attorney of KASAP (Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs) Gretchen Hunt provides an anecdote of one of her first encounters she had with a trafficking victim. “There was a case of a girl who was rescued and *all* she wanted...was a hoodie. It’s as simple sometimes as that.” While the victim may have wanted a warm sweatshirt in the moment, it is very doubtful that is *all* the resources she would need in her long and complex road to recovery.

Another example emerged during the Louisville human trafficking summit, when Castellanos emphasized the simplicity of alternative ways to help a survivor in need. In the middle of each table was a jar with a sign taped to the front that read, “Quarters for

survivors to do laundry”. Before the presentation began, Castellanos told event participants that they could make a huge difference in a survivor’s life as well as lighten the load in their pockets or purses by donating change. Additionally, during the Refuge for Women Gala, the event sponsors were from a local day spa, Prive Medspa. One of the sponsors gave a teary-eyed speech about the role she and her business partner have had in helping trafficking victims,

We decided the best way to serve these women was to bring them in and give them facial treatments and products to use during their healing process. Many of these women, as you can imagine, have never had facial treatments. They’ve never even been pampered in their lifetime! (Participant Observation, 2015h).

While these efforts may resolve temporary problems, the focus on overly simplistic and arguably superfluous needs in the case of a makeover, has dominated the local public trafficking discourse on victim services. The exaggeration of short-term needs can lead to a one-dimensional and problematic understanding of the type of critical financial, legal, and long-term aftercare that trafficking victims require. This is an outreach tactic with the goal of involving a greater number of people in the anti-trafficking movement, rather than trying to convey the complexity of the challenges that face someone recovering from being trafficked. Another theme that emerged from the data that reflects this complexity is the ever-present, yet largely ignored, connection of trafficking with issues of immigration. This is the focus of the following section.

Immigration

Anti-immigration sentiment and the resulting policies have created particularly complicated situations for people who are victims of human trafficking. Yet,

immigration as well as the aforementioned politics of race as part of human trafficking in Kentucky are issues that are scarcely addressed in awareness campaigning. The immigration information provided by Kentucky Rescue and Restore's statewide training has one slide dedicated to immigration protections for victims of trafficking, as well as the potential options they may have once recovered from trafficking (Participant Observation, 2015a). The slide identifies the "T-Visa" as a visa for victims of severe forms of trafficking whose case is being investigated or prosecuted as trafficking. This visa is subject to a victims' decision to cooperate with law enforcement. The issue of obtaining legal residency in the United States as a victim of trafficking in the Kentucky anti-trafficking movement, is marginalized. This is especially ironic considering that this issue is likely to feature highly as a concern for the victims (Karvelis, 2013). In Kentucky Educational television segment Gretchen Hunt, the Kentucky Attorney for Sexual Assault Programs, is asked what is in place federally as well as on the state level for victims? She answers,

Well a lot of it is contingent upon an individual's willingness to cooperate in a criminal investigation. If a participant is willing to participate in an investigation or a prosecution, for example, a foreign-national can apply for a T-Visa...and with the T-Visa that individual gets the ability to stay here for a temporary basis with the chance to remain more permanently and then may receive the federal-public benefits that refugees get.... So I think that's one protection (Hopkins, 2010).

This finding is in line with the broader literature on trafficking that finds that one of the barriers to receiving services as a victim of trafficking is the requirement to cooperate with law enforcement (Brennan, 2007; Musto, 2013; Musto & Boyd, 2014; Vandenberg, 2007). Specific to Kentucky, there is a provision that allows victims to sue their traffickers for damages. Gretchen Hunt explains,

Some survivors have sued the traffickers civilly because if you think about it trafficking is extremely profitable for the trafficker and if you can manage to mount the evidence and actually seize those assets, that can be a way to make a survivor whole and maybe position them so that they won't be re-trafficked again (Participant Observation, 2015j).

Although Hunt claims that there has been one successful civil lawsuit for human trafficking in Kentucky (Hopkins, 2010), this illustrates a larger problem with how sex trafficking is conflated with sex crimes in Kentucky. As has been established in the criminological literature, trafficking involves a large network of individuals and groups that have specialized roles in the trafficking network (Bales, 2010). Therefore, each actor represents a small cog in a larger machine, making it somewhat futile to target only one of these actors for a civil lawsuit. However, as is the case in Kentucky, if trafficking has become synonymous with commercial sex work, familial sexual abuse, and street level prostitution, the perpetrators that are being pursued are domestic abusers and pimps – not traffickers. Furthermore, the asset-forfeiture law utilized to pursue such lawsuits is only effective, providing that the “traffickers” are, in fact, wealthy individuals. While this idea has been celebrated as a solution for trafficking victims by Hunt, others such as social workers who have greater interactions with victims, are skeptical of its effectiveness, “I’m sorry, I don’t think Shorty and Snoop are gonna pay up” (Participant Observation, 2015j). The social worker’s choice of fictional trafficking names is indicative of the type of perpetrators that Kentucky most often pursues for trafficking charges - small-time pimps, racial minorities, parents and relatives selling their children in exchange for money/goods, or individuals who have paid for sex with a minor.

In the following chapter I provide further discussion and analysis of the findings presented here, before concluding this thesis with some implications from this research and some directions for future research.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This research was designed to examine the ideological underpinnings of, and collaborative organizational approaches to, anti-human trafficking efforts in the state of Kentucky. Throughout my fieldwork I discovered that within these NGOs were several clear “moral entrepreneurs” such as Marissa Castellanos, Ked Frank, and Chad and Chandi Mays - who were driving this issue (Becker, 1963). Becker coined the term “moral entrepreneur” to describe an individual, group, or even formal organization whose self-appointed purpose is to persuade society to establish rules that are consistent with its own moral beliefs. It is these moral entrepreneurs that are driving the faith-based approach to human trafficking in Kentucky, while simultaneously blurring the phenomenon with other “moral” issues. This has led to increased coverage of the issue in the media, as well as a spike in the number of cases interacting with both law enforcement and anti-trafficking initiatives. Yet, as indicated in the findings chapter, the cause of this increase is complex because the scope of human trafficking has widened to include non-consensual and consensual sex work; crimes previously defined as prostitution, child abuse, and domestic violence. This is not only problematic because of net-widening, but also because it undermines issues of agency and consent for adult women engaged in sex work.

These moral-entrepreneurs have a faith-based agenda, and along with other anti-trafficking advocates have pushed for policies that cater specifically to sex trafficking, ignoring the much more prevalent issue of labor trafficking in Kentucky. This focus has

assigned human trafficking a broader social meaning – that of sex trafficking – that the NGOs and moral entrepreneurs have propagated through their numerous outreach events, such as the Refuge for Women’s Annual Gala, and educational curriculum that they themselves constructed and disseminate as fact. It is these actors that exercise their “hierarchy of credibility” over the issue to label human trafficking in a specific way – that of a faith-based morality issue. This allows for faith-based understandings/constructions of an issue, such as human trafficking, to be reintroduced into society as a seemingly secular issue worthy of a social justice response. Despite the evangelical Christian community’s objection to taking interest in politics, their theological convictions have surfaced to the front of anti-trafficking campaigning and policy efforts (Bebbington, 1989). Furthermore, the focus on sex trafficking (or sex work) sensationalizes the issues and attracts volunteers who are shocked and horrified by the abuses offered as examples of the harm suffered by victims. This labeling of the issue also has impacted the narrative surrounding victimhood, victim assistance as well as the importance to which evangelical Christians identify themselves as justice warriors in a campaign against human trafficking.

In accordance with Bernstein (2007) human trafficking in Kentucky has been constructed as an individual problem, ignoring broader structural issues that may intersect leading to the crime. This individual focus constructs human trafficking victimization as the product of poor moral decision-making, attributing it to the collapse of traditional patriarchal institutions, such as marriage, where women are, as Ked Frank once suggested, “looking for love in all the wrong places” (Participant Observation, 2015c). This is consistent with Bumiller’s (2008) assertion, that those providing services to

victims make “judgments about battered women or rape survivors [that] follow from already defined expectations about their problems, needs, and patterns of recovery” (p. 68).

The dominant human trafficking narrative emphasizes the preoccupation with sexual exploitation, which has been extended to include all forms of sex work. It is this individual decision-making that becomes the target for rehabilitation, where victims are expected to acknowledge their poor choices and commit to making better ones in the future (i.e. the purity ceremony). This illustrates the alliance between the Religious Right and anti-prostitution feminists (Bernstein, 2007) where the solution to the problem of trafficking has become one for private NGOs and criminal justice interventions opposed to the welfare state.

Those most engaged in fighting the war on trafficking in Kentucky, are those involved in charitable activities, donating their time and money to improve the lives of the women and girls as well as shaping their life trajectories so that they obey the broader heteronormative capitalist culture. This means to survive human trafficking, a victim must conform to larger capitalist structures, such as entering the legitimate workforce, or marrying a man. Ked Frank once explained, "These girls need to be content with minimum wage...so they're going to work low level jobs because they haven't done any work that's credible" (Participant Observation, 2015c). This not only represents the dominance of predominantly white, evangelical and middle/upper class populations that occupy the activism role (Bernstein, 2007) in Kentucky, but also the transference of their values.

This individualization of the problem extends beyond the victim to include perpetrators who are largely ignored in the dominant construction of the issue. However, when they are identified they are viewed as being dangerous or immoral actors (often poor and nonwhite). In addition, their criminality is framed as a product of their individual decisions opposed to larger structural issues related to poverty, migration, and patriarchy. Interestingly, the focus on the poor or immoral decision-making of the victims and perpetrators as *the* cause for trafficking is in direct contradiction with the denial of victim agency when it comes to sex work. This hypocrisy is not acknowledged, rather those pushing the activism agenda substitute their own narrative of victimhood – the sex trafficked, vulnerable woman or child victim – as the norm, irrespective of the reality (an ex-stripper, or prostitute trying to make life changes).

As noted in the opening of this chapter, the conflation of human trafficking with *all* sex work has led to a greater number of offenses that previously would have not amounted to human trafficking, now being prosecuted as such. This has led to the public perception that human trafficking is a larger problem than it has been in the past. This is also indicative of a net-widening approach that is symptomatic of the carceral feminist approach to violence against women (Bernstein, 2007). By looking to law as *the* solution, the nuanced and complicated experiences of women who have been trafficked are lost amongst the multiple narratives of child incest, child abuse, domestic violence, and sex work. Furthermore, the end-goal of assisting a victim then becomes the incarceration of the trafficker (who in this instance are often pimps or family members), rather than the long-term and complex needs necessary to move on from a traumatic experience.

Additionally, expansion of the legal definition of trafficking to include these other sex offenses, guarantees that the issue remains salient, continues to garner attention and legitimizes the behaviors and actions of the numerous NGOs involved. It also allows for the reproduction of iconographic victim (Bumiller, 2008) that arouses the empathy necessary to attract public attention. This serves as proof of the success of these faith-based non-profits, as the victim narratives and images selected for use, such as those asked to speak at local fund-raising events, are those of the most palatable victim experiences (i.e. the white, female child victim of violence). This understanding of human trafficking in Kentucky has huge implications for law and policy.

Policy Implications

The faith-based definition of human trafficking in the state of Kentucky has received the support from feminist, conservative, and faith-based organizations, the media, the public, and local, state, and even federal politicians. Bernstein (2007) asserts that we must reconsider our interpretation of the human trafficking movement once we recognize “the most strident activism around sexual slavery has not been fomented by individuals who are especially disenfranchised, but rather by the emergent professional middle class” (p. 136). Arguably, faith-based advocates have presented a limited understanding of human trafficking in efforts to gain funding for anti-sex trafficking initiatives, to spread messages of morality, and to dodge the controversial conversation regarding immigration. This needs to be recognized and addressed.

Musto (2010) calls for scholars to “question whether protective services administered by collaborative teams of police and NGO professionals in fact supports

trafficked persons, particularly since such protective possibilities are contingent upon trafficked persons' cooperation with law enforcement" (p. 384). If a victim is not willing to work with law enforcement to aid in the prosecution of their trafficker, they are in violation of state and federal law. This is particularly problematic for foreign-national victims who will likely need to apply for a temporary visa (T-Visa) in order to remain in the United States. Consequences for non-compliance are arrest or deportation. Victims are frequently at risk for being re-subjected to trafficking if they are sent back to the country where the initial exploitation occurred. In Kentucky this approach is problematic for two reasons. First, the net widening that includes offenses that previously would not have been considered trafficking, such as domestic abuse, sexual abuse and prostitution, leads to the arrest and prosecution of offenders that do not fit within this policy solution. This solution to the problem is targeted at transnational human trafficking offenders. Therefore, the victims of these crimes fall outside this policy-driven victim narrative – that of the foreign-national trafficked through a complicated, multi-state network. Secondly, when there are representations of foreign national victims, who are more often victims of labor trafficking (Kentucky Rescue and Restore, 2014d; Participant Observation, 2015k), they are used to support this approach as *the* solution for trafficking victims. However, the attention to the individual labor trafficking cases is short-lived, as it does not fit within the socially constructed and now accepted, understanding of human trafficking in Kentucky – that of the morally reprehensible faith-based definition that prioritizes sex trafficking and sex work. To be effective and more inclusive in responding to victims, there needs to be a revisiting of the dominant understanding of the issue, moving away from narrowly focusing on sex victimization crimes.

Furthermore, law itself should not be viewed as *the* solution to human trafficking. As argued by Zimmerman (2013) the constructions of federal human trafficking policy are gendered, reinforcing the same victim/perpetrator tropes that have been found in Kentucky. These tropes prioritize sex trafficking over other forms of trafficking. This is also a concern for those who criticize carceral feminists (Bernstein, 2007) arguing that the feminist movement, in fighting violence against women, has been overly dependent on law as the solution. In Kentucky, this would mean reviewing the existing focus on prosecution and/or asset forfeiture cases, to better aid victims in what *they* truly need. The emphasis should be on short and long term care, without requirements to participate in faith-based programs. As found here, there are no alternatives in Kentucky to faith-based victim support services. This is largely linked to federalized requirements for funding.

Zimmerman (2013) notes that the lack of secular alternatives for victims of human trafficking is due to the federal requirement that all non-profit agencies must sign and adhere to the Prostitution Loyalty Oath in order to be eligible for federal funding. This oath requires NGOs to sign a contract, which states that under no circumstances will they assist or support anyone who is willingly involved in or advocates for the legalization of prostitution or the commercial sex industry. In Kentucky, the dominance of the faith-based organizations in assisting victims of human trafficking can be explained by the fact that they receive the majority of their funding from churches and private donors (many of which are upper/middle class men who support their wives philanthropic endeavors), but also that their faith-based values align with federal government policies so that they are able to receive state supported funding. For victims

to receive secular services in Kentucky, there would be a need for a change to this federal requirement.

Furthermore, the problem with the faith-based solution is that they offer limited options, post-sex work. Transitioning from sex work to basic labor is difficult, as past work experience may not translate well onto a resume. Therefore, many of the women who secure employment during their time in the Refuge are going into the fast-food industry or other entry-level positions. The problem with this is that moral solutions often cause women to become part of the working poor. Additionally, the push for women to marry as an alternative solution to minimum wage work is not only perpetuating the need for female dependency on men, but also has the potential to put an already vulnerable person into another exploitive situation. This ignores the fact that the traditional family in the United States is a patriarchal institution, where intimate and familial violence is rampant (Garcia & McManimon, 2011). This emphasis should be eradicated to ensure the best physical and psychological health for victims.

Although the policy implications suggested here may greatly improve the services for victims in Kentucky, there were limitations to the research that will be addressed in the next section.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the research that must be acknowledged. First, due to the dominant framing of human trafficking as sex trafficking and sex work, the victims that were observed were found to be victims of sex work or familial sexual abuse, and not transnational human trafficking. Therefore, although this exposes bias in the way

Kentucky understands and responds to victims of human trafficking, it is not necessarily representative of all types of victims of human trafficking. In addition, as the focus was anti-trafficking responses to the issue, victim's voices were not represented in this study. Additionally, as the attention to labor trafficking was comparatively insignificant in Kentucky, I was unable to obtain information about how these victims receive services – if at all. Labor trafficking victims were not represented at fundraising events, nor prioritized in the educational material. This means there is a large population, along with their needs, that were not specifically addressed in this study.

As acknowledged by ethnographic researchers, “observation can never be objective” (Margot, 1991). Throughout the course of my research I attempted to be reflexive in my own subjectivities and life experiences that may have shaped my interpretation of what was happening. Although this is something I strived to do, it is impossible to say with any certainty that my faith background, age, race, class, gender, and sexuality did not impact my objective reality. I attempted to minimize any biases by taking time to reflect, as well as by being introspective about the direction of the research as it was happening, along with the themes that emerged from the analysis. Related to these limitations, is the potential for future study. In the next section I briefly discuss some possible subjects for future research.

Directions for Future Research

Due to the nature of this study being a thesis project, there were many findings that could have been further developed had time permitted. One such finding was the connectedness of the faith-based network in Kentucky. It would be of particular interest

to examine the reach of these faith-based organizations beyond Kentucky state borders, considering the narrow construction of human trafficking that emerged. This is of particular importance as I began to see connections between Kentucky and Georgia (through an invitation extended to me to attend a “mission trip” to Atlanta), and the building of rehabilitation centers outside of Kentucky. This suggests that the faith-based response and the narrow construction of human trafficking as sex trafficking and sex work could become the normalized or preferred solution to the trafficking problem in the United States. If more traditional transnational victims of sex trafficking may find themselves in one of these rehabilitation centers (perhaps having to attend a purity ceremony), there is considerable concern for their potential to experience extreme re-victimization and trauma.

Building on this it would also be of use to understand the response to victims of trafficking outside of Kentucky. This does not mean that a state approach should be abandoned, rather as indicated by Weitzer (2012) a state-by-state approach is preferred due to the variability in statistics, reporting and services provided. This would lend itself to comparative studies that may help unearth a preferred approach. This would also allow for a similar approach to what was taken here, that of ethnographic participant observation, which has led to rich, in-depth understandings of the issue.

Also, it would be beneficial to conduct research on the effectiveness of the faith-based approach as it is *the* approach in Kentucky. This would advance abilities to understand how victims navigate through the rehabilitative approach offered, how former trafficking victims (or sex workers) perform as they reenter the labor market (often minimum wage employment) and recover from any trauma.

Conclusion

In the state of Kentucky, human trafficking has become a policy phenomenon that derived its legitimacy from basic changes in the scope of who and what actions can be labeled criminal. Kentucky's current spotlight on human trafficking suggests that there is a dramatic rise in the number of victims and survivors. In reality, what has happened is a shift in how we categorize criminals and victims to fit within a definition of human trafficking that implicates any sexually "immoral" behavior.

This shift has been made possible by neoliberal policies that have led to the expansion of the private sector in efforts to reduce the need for government-sponsored funding and services. As noted by Senator Rand Paul, the conservative movement has begun to emphasize the importance of private organizations in serving victims of human trafficking in efforts to replace state welfare programs. However, in places such as Kentucky, the role of private organizations has become code for "Christian organizations." Zimmerman (2013) describes how "explicitly religious and spiritual interventions in social problems are portrayed as standing in the gap to do the essential work that governments and government policy *cannot* perform" (p. 74). However, the relinquishment of government involvement in social problems such as human trafficking is not, in fact, about incapability but rather it is about their passivity. For example, as discussed previously, the federal Prostitution Loyalty Oath statute requiring non-profit organizations to declare that they will not promote, support, or advocate for the legalization or practice of prostitution in order to receive federal funding is still in effect. Therefore, government sponsored funding opportunities not only privilege anti-trafficking organizations who are morally opposed to the sex industry, but they systematically exclude organizations who may possess an alternative stance on the topic or even seek to remain neutral while providing support for victims.

Furthermore, Christian rehabilitative solutions to end the commercial sex industry and sexual exploitation are ones that either steer women into the low-income workforce or into the

institution of marriage. If either of these solutions were to fail, a lack of government services would require them to seek private charitable options, which often come with varying forms of overt and covert religious ideology. This supports Zimmerman's (2013) argument that the religious discourse used in the United States' anti-trafficking project, as well as conceptions of moral sex and freedom, are rooted in entirely Protestant-Christian understandings of the heterosexual patriarchal family. This has allowed for the definition of human trafficking to morph into a faith-based problem with faith-based solutions. The faith-based definition embraces an abolitionist approach which equates all forms of sexual commerce to sex trafficking and seeks to eradicate the commercial sex industry altogether.

This definition of human trafficking is popular not only because it is prevalent but also because it is simplistic. As a consequence the evangelical Christian vision of human trafficking is one myopic perspective to a multifaceted problem. It is a tonal solution that fails to acknowledge problems of violence against women, gender inequality, economic inequality, racial disparities, access to opportunity, and more. The faith-based definition snubs problems of masculinity, racism, and economics with the most basic solution – to become a Christian.

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