# anti trafficking review

## Special Issue - Public Perceptions and Responses to Human Trafficking

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# ANTI-TRAFFICKING REVIEW

Special Issue
**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

## Issue 13, September 2019

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# Editorial: Knowledge is Power, Ignorance is Bliss: Public perceptions and responses to human trafficking

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'Scientia potentia est', or 'knowledge is power', a quote commonly attributed to sixteenth-century English philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon, has become a popular axiom for the transformative power of learning and knowledge. In his address to the 1997 World Bank Conference 'Global Knowledge 97', Kofi Annan, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, proclaimed that knowledge was, indeed, power, and that information was liberating.[1] However, a more critical stance on what constitutes knowledge (including the questions of *what* we know and *how* we know it) by some of the key philosophers of the twentieth century, including Althusser, Foucault and Bourdieu, and, recently, scholars focussing on the study of ignorance, have highlighted the complexities of power relations that underpin both the spatialities and temporalities of knowledge production, distribution and manipulation. One of the key questions for agnotology—a study of manufactured and productive ignorance—is not just '*how we know*' but '*why don't we know what we don't know*?'.[2] It suggests that power sits not with those in possession of knowledge, but with those in control of its production and distribution. These questions are equally important in the field of human trafficking as academic, political and public interest in the issue has grown exponentially over the past two decades.

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[1] United Nations, Press Release SG/SM/6268, 23 June 1997, https://www.un.org/press/en/1997/19970623.sgsm6268.html.

[2] R Proctor, 'Agnotology: A missing term to describe the cultural production of ignorance (and its study)' in R Proctor and L Schiebinger (eds.), *Agnotology: The making and unmaking of ignorance,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2008, pp. 1-33.

## Raising Awareness: Of whom? Of what?

The focus of this issue of the *Anti-Trafficking Review*—public perceptions and responses to human trafficking—reflects the growing unease and disagreements among anti-trafficking practitioners and scholars about the current state of public awareness of human trafficking: how and by whom such awareness is produced and manipulated, whom it is targeting, and whether it leads, or can lead, to any meaningful anti-trafficking action.[3] A central assumption in the anti-trafficking field is that the general public still lacks sufficient knowledge about human trafficking, and that creating more knowledge and awareness will lead to its reduction.[4] However, there neither exists a common understanding of who should know what in order to achieve this goal, nor is there sufficient information available about the awareness of the general public or, especially, the impact of this awareness.

Moreover, acknowledging the heterogeneity of public opinion, the diversity of cultural, socio-economic and political contexts in which individual perceptions are formed and responses are enacted, one of the key messages that runs through the contributions in this issue is that public awareness of 'wicked' social problems[5] (including issues that are directly experienced by only a small proportion of the general public) does not emerge out of nowhere—it is actively manufactured, sustained and manipulated by those in the position of economic and political power to set the agenda.

While we were working on this issue, the European Commission allocated a multi-million euro budget towards 'raising awareness of the risks of smuggling and irregular migration…[to prevent]…prospective migrants and asylum seekers

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[3]   See, for example: K Kempadoo, 'The Modern White (Wo)Man's Burden: Trends in anti-trafficking and anti-slavery campaigns', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 1, issue 1, 2015, pp. 8-20, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1006120; E O'Brien, *Challenging the Human Trafficking Narrative: Victims, villains, and heroes,* Routledge, New York, 2019; K Sharapov and J Mendel, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Made and cut to measure? Anti-trafficking docufictions and the production of anti-trafficking truths', *Cultural Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2018, pp. 540-560, https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975518788657.

[4]   For example, out of 43 prevention initiatives reviewed by a 2015 European Commission study, 39 referred to raising awareness as one of their objectives. See: European Commission, *Study on Prevention Initiatives on Trafficking in Human Beings: Final report*, Brussels, 2015, retrieved 10 April 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/study_on_prevention_initiatives_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_0.pdf.

[5]   B W Head, 'Wicked Problems in Public Policy', *Public Policy,* vol. 3, issue 2, 2008, pp. 101-118.

[from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe], … from embarking on hazardous journeys towards the EU'.[6] Such an extraordinary hollowing out and folding of the unwanted non-European *Others* and of their extraordinary suffering along the borders of 'Fortress Europe' into an issue of *their* poor awareness (where 'negative information [about Europe] presented in campaigns was either not believed, or was insufficient to overcome the appeal of the alternative positive information presented by friends, family or smugglers'[7]) reasserts and re-establishes the relationship of differentiated belonging and abandonment across the neoliberal world, in which the mobility of some is restrained 'in order to enable freedom for others'.[8]

At the same time, in the United States, President Trump used the imagery of women and girls 'tied up in the backseat of a car' and 'with tape on their mouth' to consolidate the public imaginary of a national emergency at the US-Mexico border to secure public support and funds for a border wall to 'protect' the country from an 'invasion' of migrants and asylum seekers from Latin America.[9] This reflects the common portrayal in the media of human trafficking as an issue of sexual exploitation of women,[10] as opposed to other, less salacious, forms of exploitation. This focus on migration and sex work and the simplification of the nature of the problem feed into a broader battle of 'storytelling about migrants'—a battle fought 'today in the public squares, at political conventions, on the

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[6]     European Commission, 'Awareness raising and information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration in selected third countries and within Europe', Single Electronic Data Interchange Area, European Commission, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/amif-2019-ag-call-04.

[7]     *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[8]     J Engelbert, I Awad and J van Sterkenburg, 'Everyday Practices and the (Un)making of "Fortress Europe": Introduction to the special issue', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 22, issue 2, 2019, pp. 133-143, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549418823055 and other articles in the special issue exploring how borders of Europe are erected and guarded through cultural practices, border control and security technologies.

[9]     D Trump, 'Remarks by President Trump on the National Security and Humanitarian Crisis on our Southern Border,' *White House,* Rose Garden, 15 February 2019, retrieved 22 August 2019, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-national-security-humanitarian-crisis-southern-border.

[10]    See, among others: T Bonilla and C H Mo, 'The Evolution of Human Trafficking Messaging in the United States and its Effect on Public Opinion', *Journal of Public Policy,* vol. 39, issue 2, 2019, pp. 201-234, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X18000107 and R Andrijasevic and N Mai, 'Editorial: Trafficking (in) Representations: Understanding the recurring appeal of victimhood and slavery in neoliberal times', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 1-10, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121771.

television, in the opinion pages.'[11]

From a practical point of view, having *some degree* of awareness is better than having none. However, the very notion of awareness, which informs public perceptions and, as a consequence, results in individual and public responses to human trafficking (or lack thereof), can never be static. It should be recognised and treated as a process, or a continuum, rather than a binary state of being fully aware or fully unaware—an approach adopted within much of the increasing and diverse anti-trafficking awareness-raising. This now includes human trafficking songs,[12] mobile applications,[13] computer games,[14] 'docufictions',[15] feature films,[16] theatre,[17] opera,[18] dance projects[19] and other forms of popular culture.

Awareness-raising and information provision is the most common tool in the arsenal of *prevention* activities (one of the main pillars of anti-trafficking responses, described as the 'three Ps' of prevention, prosecution and protection). However, it remains grounded in the binary of aware/unaware and informed/uninformed, without recognition that people may be aware of human trafficking (or their rights in the context of labour migration) but their ability to act on such information/awareness may be severely constrained by external factors, including

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[11]   S Mehta, 'Immigration Panic: How the west fell for manufactured rage', *The Guardian*, 27 August 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/27/immigration-panic-how-the-west-fell-for-manufactured-rage.

[12]   See, for example, a YouTube channel, dedicated to 'human trafficking songs': https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4-42hn_MPYD1MfmFUpXLIk2wSZNi8CC4.

[13]   J Mendel and K Sharapov (forthcoming), '"Stick them to the Cross": Anti-trafficking apps and the production of ignorance'.

[14]   E O'Brien and H Berents, 'Playing games with child trafficking in India', *Open Democracy*, 24 May 2018, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/playing-games-with-child-trafficking-in-india, as well as E O'Brien and H Berents' article in this issue.

[15]   Sharapov and Mendel, 2018.

[16]   N de Villiers, 'Rebooting Trafficking', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 161-181, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121779.

[17]   International Organization for Migration, '"A Theater against Human Trafficking" Project Launched in Peru', IOM, 11 August 2017, https://www.iom.int/news/the-ater-against-human-trafficking-project-launched-peru.

[18]   E A Gordon, 'Human trafficking and sex slavery: The opera', *People's World,* 22 July 2016, https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/human-trafficking-and-sex-slavery-the-opera.

[19]   The Natashas Project, https://www.thenatashasproject.co.uk/#about.

a lack of power.[20]

At the same time, like many of the dominant policy and legal anti-trafficking frameworks, awareness-raising remains unilinear, monological, teleological and extremely elastic.[21] Its unilinear aspect is a one-directional future-facing goal of the 'fight against trafficking in human beings': more policing and raids; more border control; more prosecutions and convictions; more 'rescue' and more awareness.[22] High-level policy aspirations to build 'a future without human trafficking'[23] often fail to recognise human trafficking as, first and foremost, an issue of social and economic justice, and of human rights, deeply rooted in the colonial past, and sustained in the post- and neo-colonial present by neoliberal structures of exploitation, and 'heavy, often violent, restraints on freedom in the contemporary world'.[24] It is monological in claiming to be true for all victims (who are poor, uninformed, vulnerable, more often female, and in need of 'rescue', awareness and 'rehabilitation') and all members of the general public (who are nationals and should be 'the eyes and ears of their communities' and demand action by the authorities[25]). It is teleological in that it is aimed at a known outcome—no victims and no criminals as an ultimate and at-all-cost endpoint of the 'fight' against human trafficking rather than securing the rights of millions of migrant, female and low-wage workers moving within and across borders on a daily basis. It is elastic in that the endpoint is always near—just one more anti-trafficking strategy, directive, conference, or an awareness campaign—yet the end

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[20]    See, for example: T Blanchet and S K Watson, 'Learning to Swim in Turbulent Waters: Women's migration at the agency-exploitation nexus', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, published online 8 July 2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1612935 and D Feingold, 'Raising awareness: of what? for what? by whom? for whom?', *Open Democracy*, 20 June 2019, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/raising-awareness-of-what-for-what-by-whom-for-whom.

[21]    Based on Deborah Bird Rose's discussion of time in relation to the concept of Anthropocene. D B Rose, 'Anthropocene Noir' in *People and the Planet 2013 Conference Proceedings,* RMIT University, 2013, retrieved 10 April 2019, http://global-cities.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Anthropocene-Noir.pdf.

[22]    See Sharapov and Mendel, 2018, commenting on the process of raising awareness through spectacle with the only call to action being one to raise awareness.

[23]    A Guterres, 'Remarks at Ministerial Open Debate on Trafficking in Persons in Conflict Situations: Forced labour, slavery and other similar practices', United Nations, 15 March 2017, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-03-15/trafficking-persons-conflict-situations-remarks.

[24]    J O'Connell Davidson, 'Editorial: The Presence of the Past: Lessons of history for anti-trafficking work', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 9, 2017, pp. 1-12, p. 3, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121791.

[25]    United States Department of State, *2019 Trafficking in Persons Report*, USDS, Washington DC, 2019, p. 12.

of human trafficking never comes, calling, as a consequence, for more and more of the same. All this is despite the fact that so little is known about the impact of anti-trafficking measures,[26] including awareness and information campaigns.[27]

## This Special Issue

In setting out to develop this issue, we thought about a variety of dimensions and questions—from both scholarly and activist perspectives—that we hoped would help untangle the 'wicked' problem of public awareness and understanding of as well as responses to human trafficking. The final selection of articles—informed by robust empirical research—sets out a series of key findings that we hope will benefit not only practitioners, policy-makers and activists, but also members of the general public concerned about their role in eradicating human trafficking and exploitation.

The issue starts with a contribution by Lauren Martin and Annie Hill, who compiled a set of empirical data to challenge the common myth that large sporting events cause an increase in human trafficking for sexual exploitation. They highlight the need for reliable evidence in designing public awareness campaigns, and demonstrate the success of such an approach within the context of the 2018 Super Bowl in the US city of Minneapolis. The authors conclude that even in an age of 'fake news' and post-truth politics, a cross-stakeholder group comprising women's rights and anti-trafficking organisations, law enforcement, social service providers and academics, can commit to evidence-based and accurate communication about human trafficking, even when the evidence contradicts a dominant discourse.

The importance of empirical data is also highlighted by Kiril Sharapov, whose article focusses on the outcomes of three national opinion polls—one of the first attempts to capture representative snapshots of public opinion and understanding of human trafficking—in three European countries, Great Britain, Hungary and Ukraine. The outcomes of his research suggest that the general public in these three countries have a relatively high awareness, at least in general terms, of human trafficking. At the same time, this awareness reflects a simplistic interpretation of the issue as a criminal transaction between individual victims and individual

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[26]   B Harkins, 'Constraints to a Robust Evidence Base for Anti-Trafficking Interventions', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 8, 2017, pp. 113-130, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121787.

[27]   N Cyrus and D Vogel, 'Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from demand-side campaigns against trafficking in human beings', *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, vol. 10, issue 1, 2018, pp. 57-93.

criminals involving irregular border-crossing rather than an issue of social justice and human rights. Sharapov calls for further reliance on public opinion surveys as one of the approaches to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of awareness-raising campaigns.

In the next article, Peter Olayiwola analyses how ignorance finds its way into anti-trafficking awareness campaigns in the context of child domestic work in South-West Nigeria. The author highlights two types of ignorance: anti-trafficking activists' assumption of parents' and child domestic workers' ignorance about abuse and exploitation, and perceived opportunities within the context of child domestic work; and the ignorance of anti-trafficking activists themselves in relation to the root causes of trafficking, including economic inequalities, as key enablers of precarious migration journeys. Olayiwola concludes that information and 'awareness-creation' do nothing to address poverty and economic inequality and thus can have little, if any, impact on preventing trafficking—for child domestic work or otherwise.

For their part, Jen Birks and Alison Gardner examine the public perceptions of human trafficking and 'modern slavery' created by newspapers at the *local* level in the East Midlands region of the United Kingdom. Through a review of the coverage in five local newspapers, they find a gradual increase in the quantity and quality of articles on these subjects and a move away from coverage of trafficking in the sex industry to other labour sectors, such as agriculture, construction and manual labour. Birks and Gardner supplement these findings with the results of focus group discussions (FGD) with seventeen participants. The FGD data produces an important, if perhaps inconvenient, revelation for anti-trafficking campaigners: members of the general public in the region do not feel comfortable reporting potential cases of human trafficking and 'modern slavery'. This is because, first, the indicators promoted by 'spot the signs' campaigns are overly broad and vague and, secondly, because they worry that the UK's 'hostile environment' to migrants may result in the arrest and deportation of potential victims of trafficking, rather than their assistance and support.

In addition to the complexities of measuring the effectiveness of 'traditional' awareness-raising (such as media campaigns and public service announcements), this issue also draws attention to the emergence of new forms of anti-trafficking awareness-raising. The article by Erin O'Brien and Helen Berents focusses on digital games as a new form of 'virtual humanitarianism', which relies on digital technologies to convey narratives of suffering and humanitarian rescue. In doing so, they interrogate whether new technologies are used to present a new dimension to humanitarian problems, in this case human trafficking, or reinforce the old and problematic stereotypes of ideal victims and ideal criminals. Their review of three desktop and mobile games shows that games can achieve both; however, overall, despite their interactiveness, games have limited potential to tell complex stories, disrupt dominant narratives, and convey the idea that human trafficking

is rooted in structural socio-economic and political issues.

The ignorance of the socio-economic and political issues—this time among corporate actors—that leave workers across the world vulnerable to exploitation is further developed in the article by Ilse A. Ras and Christiana Gregoriou. By focussing on corporate 'modern slavery' statements published by companies in response to the requirements of the UK *Modern Slavery Act*, Ras and Gregoriou analyse the role of metaphors embedded into such statements. They show how metaphors erase the complexity of the inherently exploitative nature of modern neoliberal supply chains from the public field of vision, and disenfranchise workers by casting aside their agency. This kind of individual and institutional erasure, where the need for structural interventions to secure human rights of workers is reduced to a set of specific linguistic narratives, reflects increasingly reactionary rather than preventative approaches that characterise so many anti-trafficking initiatives in the Global North.

The issue concludes with Jeremy Norwood's review of the book *Trafficked Children and Youth in the United States: Reimagining Survivors* by Elżbieta M. Goździak (Rutgers University Press, 2016). Norwood's review focusses on three important contributions that the book makes for anti-trafficking advocates and scholars: first, it highlights the economic, social and political root causes that underpin human trafficking; secondly, it reveals the complex interactions between victims and criminals, in particular in cases where minors were first smuggled to the United States and then exploited by their family or relatives; and lastly, it deconstructs many of the myths and assumptions about human trafficking evident in anti-trafficking campaigns and policies. Norwood also highlights the fact that the book is based on much-needed empirical work with trafficking survivors.

## Conclusion

Although the articles in this special issue focus on different countries and communication mediums and strategies, ultimately, they all converge around one central message: overall, public perceptions of human trafficking—whether created by the media, NGOs, governments or corporations, and conveyed through campaigns, apps, newspapers or corporate statements—remain incomplete and, often, misleading regarding the nature of trafficking, its root causes and, consequently, its prevention.

Despite their diversity, most awareness-raising messages continue to deliver simplistic narratives of 'victims, villains, and heroes',[28] while leaving the structural root causes of human trafficking and the systems of domination that underpin

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[28]   O'Brien, 2019.

them intact. The failure to highlight these root causes removes the call for structural reforms from the public imagination and shifts accountability and responsibility away from governments. In response to this failure, and by drawing on the contributions in this issue, we offer a few suggestions for a way forward.

For one, anti-trafficking campaigners need to do a better job at drawing public attention to the root causes that render people vulnerable to trafficking and promoting measures that would address these root causes. The stereotypical narrative of 'she was looking for a better life' (and was lured by a trafficker into a life of exploitation) is not enough if precarious lives, in which 'insecurities, dangers and maybe termination are forever present',[29] are not part of this narrative. Different narratives can lead to different solutions: rather than more anti-trafficking manuals, committees, or inter-ministerial working groups, they would call for access to decent work in one's own country, for unemployment, old-age and child care benefits, and accessible and affordable hospitals and kindergartens. In fact, in some countries, it is 'possible that a kindergarten might do more to prevent trafficking than an anti-trafficking committee'.[30] The link between the lack of social protections and underfunding of public services, on the one hand, and migration and (vulnerability to) trafficking on the other hand, especially for women, cannot be overstated,[31] yet remains conspicuously absent from public inquiries.[32]

Anti-trafficking campaigns must also acknowledge the fact that human trafficking is not just caused by deviant individuals, 'traffickers, criminals, clients, pimps, corrupt immigration officers or policewomen or men, or greedy businesspeople—specific "bad" corporations and companies that violate labor laws and codes of conduct, or isolated national governments',[33] and that their criminalisation alone will not stop it. One of the key messages lacking from anti-trafficking awareness raising is that human trafficking is the result of a power imbalance between

[29]   C Philo, H Parr and O Söderström, '"On edge?": Studies in precarious urbanisms', *Geoforum*, vol. 101, 2019, pp. 150-155, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.04.020.

[30]   B Gerasimov, 'Human Trafficking—From a criminal justice to social justice approach', Keynote speech delivered at the conference Disrupting Traffick?, University of Chicago Delhi Centre, New Delhi, India, 17 May 2019, https://gaatw.org/advocacy/DT-Keynote%20Speech-BG.pdf.

[31]   Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, *Social Protection, Public Services, and Sustainable Infrastructure for Women Migrant Workers and Trafficked Persons*, Background paper of the Global Alliance on Traffic in Women (GAATW) for the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Bangkok, 2019, https://gaatw.org/advocacy/GAATW%20Paper%20Social%20Protections%20CSW%2063.pdf.

[32]   F Mullin, 'How can the Tories' moralising report on prostitution completely ignore austerity?', *The Guardian*, 29 July 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2019/jul/29/how-can-the-tories-moralising-report-on-prostitution-completely-ig-nore-austerity. See, also, more generally: S Walby, *Crisis*, Polity, Oxford, 2015.

[33]   Kempadoo, p. 16.

employers and workers and the normalisation of workers' exploitation. Anti-trafficking campaigns need to call for the recognition of and labour protections in unregulated sectors, such as domestic work and sex work; the adequate implementation of labour laws; and the strengthening of labour inspection systems across all sectors of the economy, so that working conditions can be effectively monitored and abuses reported. Such monitoring must be government and worker/union-led, and not the corporate and technology-led voluntary social audits (or 'modern slavery statements') promoted by anti-trafficking stakeholders despite their well-known inefficiency.[34] Binding measures for the private sector, rather than requirements for symbolic statements, will bring more positive changes for workers.

Further, campaigns that expose the root causes of trafficking must be accompanied by calls for meaningful collective action by the public—not the clicktivism of taking selfies, liking and sharing, or dancing, singing and squatting against trafficking. These actions must also go beyond the perhaps more meaningful questioning of 'who made my clothes', ethical shopping for 'slavery-free' or fair-trade products, or pledges not to pay for sexual services. Those who truly care about ending trafficking and exploitation must not allow neoliberalism to con them into fighting them as individuals.[35] People need to demand that their governments and the international community restrict the power of multi-national corporations, put an end to tax evasion, introduce progressive tax policies for the financing of public services, and enact labour and migration policies that work for the many, not the few.

Finally, we must be mindful of who speaks and who raises awareness of whom and on behalf of whom. Those of us who hold the power of production and distribution of knowledge must let the people in vulnerable and exploitative situations, or in irregular work, speak for themselves and demand the change they need. With their engagement, perceptions of human trafficking can change and knowledge can be built from the ground up.

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[34] P Kyritsis, G LeBaron and M Anner, 'New Buzzword, Same Problem: How 'worker voice' initiatives are perpetuating the shortcomings of traditional social auditing', Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 12 March 2019, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/new-buzzword-same-problem-how-worker-voice-initiatives-are-perpetuating-the-shortcomings-of-traditional-social-auditing.

[35] Cf. with regard to climate change: M Lukacs, 'Neoliberalism has conned us into fighting climate change as individuals', *The Guardian*, 17 July 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2017/jul/17/neoliberalism-has-conned-us-into-fighting-climate-change-as-individuals.

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# Thematic Articles: Public Perceptions and Responses to Human Trafficking

# Debunking the Myth of 'Super Bowl Sex Trafficking': Media hype or evidenced-based coverage

*Lauren Martin and Annie Hill*

## Abstract

A large body of scholarship has described the narrow set of media narratives used to report trafficking for sexual exploitation to the public. This article examines US media coverage of human trafficking in relation to the Super Bowl, American football's championship game. Available empirical evidence does not suggest that major sporting events cause trafficking for sexual exploitation. Yet, we find that 76 per cent of US print media from 2010 to 2016 propagated the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative. Local coverage of the 2018 Super Bowl in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was different, presenting a sceptical stance toward this narrative. The article describes how this substantial shift resulted from our research group and anti-trafficking stakeholders employing an action research approach to craft a Super Bowl communication strategy that aligned with empirical evidence. Although sensationalist narratives are difficult to dislodge, the Minnesota case shows that evidence on trafficking can be effectively used to inform media and impact public perceptions, when researchers work with stakeholders on the ground. Lessons learnt are shared to enable others to replicate these results.

**Keywords**: human trafficking, sports, media coverage, action research, public perceptions, Super Bowl

## Introduction

The Super Bowl is an annual US sporting event in which a city hosts the final game of American football to decide that season's champion. Over the past decade, media coverage of the game has included stories about so-called 'Super Bowl sex trafficking', which links this sporting event to the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation.

For example, a story published shortly after the 2011 Super Bowl in the city of Dallas declared: 'reports estimated that the big game would lure 10,000 to 100,000 prostitutes to the area'.[1] A 2015 story, headlined 'The Super Bowl is the largest human trafficking event in the country', claimed 'over 10,000 "prostitutes"—many of whom were trafficking victims—were brought into Miami for the Super Bowl in 2010'.[2] Both of these stories link the Super Bowl with commercial sex, and with trafficking for sexual exploitation, while invoking vast numbers and various populations.

Between 2010 and 2016, we found that 76 per cent of US print media stories reported a causal or correlative link between the Super Bowl and trafficking for sexual exploitation. As we show below, the media represented 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' as a pressing problem that host cities should confront, echoing many anti-trafficking advocates and law enforcement officials. Typical anti-trafficking responses included increased policing of commercial sex, temporary ramping up of emergency services and raising public awareness.

Local media reporting on the 2018 Super Bowl in Minneapolis, Minnesota, differed substantially from previous Super Bowl coverage. Nearly 70 per cent of these print news stories presented a *sceptical* stance toward 'Super Bowl sex trafficking', and anti-trafficking efforts were designed to disseminate an evidence-based message. Informed media coverage matters. News stories are a trusted source of information and the public learns about trafficking primarily via the media.[3]

How did the shift in media coverage occur in Minnesota? Anti-trafficking stakeholders wanted their efforts to be evidence-based because they felt that action premised on previous campaigns or inaccurate information would be ineffective

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[1]  S Solis, 'Arlington Makes Dozen of Super Bowl Prostitution Arrests', *NBC DFW*, 14 February 2011.

[2]  L Anderson, 'The Super Bowl is the largest human trafficking event in the country', *Deseret News*, 30 January 2015. It is not clear why the reporter used quotation marks around the word 'prostitutes'.

[3]  R Sanford, D Martinez and R Weitzer, 'Framing Human Trafficking: A content analysis of recent U.S. newspaper articles', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, pp. 139-155, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1107341.

at reducing harm and helping victims. Due to our expertise researching commercial sex and trafficking for sexual exploitation, stakeholders asked our research group, at the University of Minnesota's Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC), to examine evidence on the link between Super Bowls and 'sex trafficking'.[4] In creating a partnership, we all agreed to an action research approach in order to build trust among diverse stakeholders and ensure that evidence was clearly conveyed to the media. This article offers insights into how to engage stakeholders with different ideological positions, craft evidence-based anti-trafficking messages and reduce media coverage that misleads the public.

## The Big Game: Super Bowls and anti-trafficking preparations

The Big Game is big business. In 2014, the US National Football League (NFL) chose Minneapolis to host the 2018 Super Bowl after a bidding process in which cities pitched their desirability and readiness to put on this huge event.[5] Hosting a Super Bowl involves years of preparation and requires public and private investments in a stadium, visitor accommodations, public safety and recreational activities, including food and entertainment venues.[6] The Minneapolis Super Bowl Host Committee, made up of civic and business leaders, raised more than USD 50 million to finance the Super Bowl and the regional economy received an estimated USD 370 million in new spending.[7]

In 2016, two years before the Minneapolis Super Bowl, an Anti-Sex Trafficking Committee (hereafter 'the Committee') was convened to prepare the region for an anticipated increase in trafficking for sexual exploitation, based on media reporting about previous Super Bowls. The Committee sought support and coordinated efforts with law enforcement, social services (e.g., emergency shelters and street outreach), volunteer training and other potentially sustainable anti-trafficking initiatives.[8] The Committee consisted of more than 100 representatives

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[4]   The authors were part of a research group that the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, one of the co-chairs of the Committee, commissioned to review scholarly literature on major sporting events and 'sex trafficking' and to analyse past media reporting on 'Super Bowl sex trafficking'. Additional members of the research group included Cheyenne Syvertson, Nicolas Demm, Prerna Subramanian and Zoe Wisnoski.

[5]   M Wells, 'Minneapolis to Host 2018 Super Bowl', *ESPN*, 21 May 2014.

[6]   Super Bowl LII Anti-Sex Trafficking Committee, 'Minnesota's Replicable Plan to Prevent & Disrupt Sex Trafficking During Major Events in Any City in America', July 2018, p. 4.

[7]   T Nelson, 'Minneapolis Super Bowl Netted $370 Million, Report Says', *MPR*, 29 May 2018.

[8]   Super Bowl LII Anti-Sex Trafficking Committee, p. 1.

from these sectors as well as leaders in business and government, and it raised and spent above one million dollars in 'financial contribution and in-kind donations of media and other sponsored activities'.[9] These efforts did not focus on trafficking for labour exploitation, although at least one non-profit organisation raised the issue and it was mentioned in some training materials.[10]

Researchers at UROC conduct studies of commercial sex and trafficking in Minnesota *with* community partners, including people who trade sex, community members, service providers, law enforcement and other groups.[11] The UROC research group uses an action research (AR) approach that 'brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern'.[12] AR values the knowledge and experience of all participants, co-constructs research questions and fosters shared meaning-making. AR practitioners seek to build trust and practical knowledge that can drive action.[13] An AR approach is therefore particularly relevant for research with marginalised people and meaning-making about hidden and stigmatised experiences, such as commercial sex and trafficking.[14]

For the project outlined here, we wanted to know: What does the available empirical evidence say about major sporting events and trafficking for sexual exploitation? How should evidence inform both anti-trafficking efforts and media messaging? All partners agreed that the UROC research group would answer these questions and share the results with stakeholders.

Terminology in this research area is varied and contested. We recognise that debates, policies and beliefs about commercial sex and human trafficking are often highly-charged and polarising. The Committee, media and public in Minnesota generally used the term 'sex trafficking' to refer to trafficking for sexual exploitation.

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[9]   *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[10]  Super Bowl LII Anti-Sex Trafficking Committee, personal communication on 18 January 2019 with advocates, including an anti-trafficking advocate specialising in trafficking for labour exploitation.

[11]  For past project reports and publications, see: 'Sex Trading, Trafficking and Community Well-Being Initiative', UROC, University of Minnesota, https://uroc.umn.edu/sextrafficking.

[12]  H Bradbury, 'Introduction: How to situate and define action research', *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, Third Edition*, SAGE Publications Inc., London, 2015.

[13]  E Stinger, *Action Research, Fourth Edition*, SAGE Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California, 2014.

[14]  L Gerassi, T Edmond and A Nichols, 'Design Strategies from Sexual Exploitation and Sex Work Studies among Women and Girls: Methodological considerations in a hidden and vulnerable population', *Action Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2017, pp. 161-176, https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750316630387.

We also used this term to review the scholarly literature and media coverage because we were analysing the dominant discourse. This rhetorical strategy enabled stakeholders to navigate ideological differences and communicate with members of the media in terms they understood, while also working to shift the discourse on 'Super Bowl sex trafficking'. Our project did not try to resolve terminological tensions but focussed on learning from available evidence and co-creating action steps based on that shared evidentiary base. At the same time, we were well aware that terminological tensions help misleading narratives and ungrounded claims to construct the dominant discourse on trafficking, which we discuss in the media analysis below.

The UROC research group reviewed the published evidence on sporting events and trafficking for sexual exploitation and analysed US media coverage of past Super Bowls. In September 2016, we shared our findings and recommendations in a research brief and a presentation to the Committee.[15] Our main finding was that available empirical evidence did not support a causal or correlative link between Super Bowls and 'sex trafficking'. In the action phase of the project, the UROC research group engaged in ongoing consultation with the Committee, joined a June 2017 press event that it sponsored and gave other print, radio and television interviews.[16]

Although our findings may have been surprising given past Super Bowl coverage, the Committee used our report and recommendations to create a media communication strategy.[17] The final report by the Committee states it 'knew media attention on sex trafficking would increase as the Super Bowl approached. Our key goal to leverage this opportunity was to communicate our core message that sex trafficking happens 365 days a year. We also sought to dispel the myth that the Super Bowl causes a huge spike in sex trafficking'. The report notes the communication strategy resulted in more than '34 million media impressions', which is an industry-standard estimate of the number of people exposed to communications.[18]

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[15]   L Martin and A Hill, *Sex Trafficking and the 2018 Super Bowl in Minneapolis: A research brief*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2017, https://uroc.umn.edu/sextrafficking.

[16]   We also presented our review of empirical evidence and past media coverage to the Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force and disseminated it via the UMN website.

[17]   Super Bowl LII Anti-Sex Trafficking Committee, p. 1.

[18]   *Ibid.,* p. 8.

## Evidence Review of 'Super Bowl Sex Trafficking'

The UROC research group conducted an extensive literature review of academic articles from January 2005 to June 2016 on major sporting events and trafficking for sexual exploitation. We identified 95 potentially relevant publications of which 40 were excluded from detailed review because they were not empirical (e.g., opinion pieces, theoretical treatments or predictions).[19]

Scholars locate the origins of the narrative that links major sporting events and trafficking for sexual exploitation to the 2004 Athens Olympics.[20] This narrative, and hyperbolic claims about commercial sex and the need for police action, recirculated at other international sporting events (e.g., World Cups and Olympic Games) and set the template for Super Bowl coverage in the United States.[21] Academic articles about 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' are either premised on the assumed link or they dismiss potential links as part of a moral panic.[22] US and English-language research finds that the media tends to sensationalise trafficking, emphasise rescue and connect trafficking with commercial sex and *sexual* exploitation only, as our media analysis confirms.[23]

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[19] Using the terms 'sex trafficking', 'prostitution', 'super bowl', 'football', and 'sporting event', we searched the following databases for relevant publications: Google Scholar, ProQuest, JSTOR, Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCOhost, Medline and PsychINFO.

[20] C H Brackenridge, D Rhind and S Palmer-Felgate, 'Locating and Mitigating Risks to Children Associated with Major Sporting Events', *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events,* vol. 7, issue 3, 2015, pp. 237-250, https://doi.org/10.1080/1940 7963.2014.911516; International Organization for Migration (IOM), 'Trafficking in Human Beings and the 2006 World Cup in Germany', IOM Migration Research Series No. 29, 2007; see also J Flynn, 'The myth of super bowl and sex trafficking obscures real issues', *San Jose Inside*, 21 January 2016.

[21] B Boecking *et al.*, 'Quantifying the Relationship Between Large Public Events and Escort Advertising Behavior', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2018, pp. 220-237, p. 223, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2018.1458488.

[22] R Finkel and M L Finkel, 'The "Dirty Downside" of Global Sporting Events: Focus on human trafficking for sexual exploitation', *Public Health*, vol. 129, no. 1, 2015, pp. 17-22, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2014.11.006; M Emser and S Francis, 'Media Waves and Moral Panicking: The case of the FIFA World Cup 2010', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2014, pp. 169-180.

[23] Sanford *et al.*; B Friedman and A Johnston, 'Blame Narratives: News discourses of sex trafficking', in C L Armstrong (ed.), *Media Disparity: A gender battleground*, Lexington Books, New York, 2013; A Hill, 'How to Stage a Raid: Police, media and the master narrative of trafficking', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 39-55, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121773.

The scholarly literature reflects ongoing international debates about trafficking and commercial sex intertwined with issues of migration, labour, race and gender.[24] The few empirical studies considering the impact of sporting events on trafficking were of two types: (1) analyses of online advertisements offering sexual services and (2) interviews with self-described sex workers in cities hosting a major sporting event. Due to the difficulties of gathering data on trafficking prevalence, such sources were identified as potential proxies to measure trafficking for sexual exploitation.

There is some empirical evidence that large events can temporarily impact the local online sex market. For example, Boecking *et al.* used quantitative machine-learning methods to analyse close to 37 million online sex advertisements in the United States.[25] They identified 'important changes in the online escort market activity—such as increased advertisement and advertiser volume as well as increased movement to event location—correlating with a range of events and event types'.[26] The changes were temporary and noted for dates and locations both with *and* without a large event. The Super Bowl was not unique among events correlated with an impact, which included car races, boxing matches, a Consumer Electronics Trade Show and a Memorial Day motorcycle rally.[27] The Boecking *et al.* study therefore raises serious doubts about claims that the Super Bowl is the 'largest trafficking event' in the country.

Scholars have also analysed online sex markets in connection with Super Bowls using qualitative methods, such as interviews, and they identified similar patterns in sex ads but without the ability to place these patterns in a vast online advertising context.[28] For instance, Martin *et al.* observed that different events, such as concerts, conventions and athletic competitions, may be associated with a short-term increase in the overall marketplace for sex.[29]

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[24] L Martin *et al.*, 'Sex Trafficking and the Super Bowl: A review of the scholarly literature', September 2016, unpublished report. See also B Meshkovska *et al.*, 'Female Sex Trafficking: Conceptual issues, current debates, and future directions', *Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 54, no. 4, pp. 380-395, https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2014.1002126.

[25] Boecking *et al.*, p. 4.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

[28] M Latonero *et al.*, *Human Trafficking Online: The role of social networking sites and online classifieds*, University of Southern California Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy, Los Angeles, 2011; D Roe-Sepowitz *et al.*, *Exploring the Impact of the Super Bowl on Sex Trafficking 2015,* Arizona State University School of Social Work, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research, Phoenix, 2015.

[29] L Martin *et al.*, *Mapping the Demand: Sex buyers in the State of Minnesota*, unpublished report, 2017, available at https://uroc.umn.edu/sextrafficking.

Conversely, extensive qualitative studies in relation to World Cups and Olympic Games did not identify increases in commercial sex or trafficking for sexual exploitation. These studies suggest that major sporting events may constrict sex markets. Deering *et al.* interviewed sex workers about the Vancouver Olympic Games and found 'a statistically significant reduction in the availability of clients in the Olympics period' as well as an increase in police harassment.[30] Likewise, studies in South Africa related to its World Cup discerned little impact on commercial sex besides increased policing.[31]

After reviewing the available academic research, we concluded that 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' as reported in the news media is not empirically supported. We shared our findings with the Committee and this talking point became part of its media communication strategy. Based on the evidence, it can be claimed that online ads for sex may temporarily increase in tandem with large public events, but this claim must be qualified to clarify that ads are used as a proxy measure for trafficking and should not be understood as the same thing.

Anti-trafficking efforts spurred by sporting events tend to focus on addressing 'sex trafficking', rather than trafficking for labour exploitation. This emphasis holds true for anti-trafficking campaigns more generally.[32] Yet, there is reason to investigate labour exploitation in relation to major sporting events. An increase in the number of visitors to a city, alongside the need to build facilities and prepare for and staff events, can exacerbate exploitation in sectors such as construction and hospitality. Recent research highlights trafficking, extreme abuse and the death of workers connected to Russia's 2014 Winter Olympics and Qatar's preparations for the 2022 World Cup.[33] However, the media and anti-trafficking stakeholders often neglect these victims and forms of violence in favour of a focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation.

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30   K N Deering *et al.*, 'Sex Work and the Public Health Impacts of the 2010 Olympic Games', *Sexually Transmitted Infections,* vol. 88, no. 4, 2012, pp. 301-303, p. 302, https://doi.org/10.1136/sextrans-2011-050235.

31   W Delva *et al.*, 'Sex Work During the 2010 FIFA World Cup: Results from a three-wave cross-sectional survey', *PLOS One,* vol. 6, no. 12, 2010, pp. 1-6, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0028363; M Richter *et al.*, 'Female Sex Work and International Sport Events—No major changes in demand or supply of paid sex during the 2010 Soccer World Cup: A cross-sectional study', *BMC Public Health,* vol. 12, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-12, https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-763.

32   Sanford *et al.*, p. 142.

33   S K Ganji, 'Leveraging the World Cup: Mega sporting events, human rights risk, and worker welfare reform in Qatar', *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2016, pp. 221-259, https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241600400403; Human Rights Watch, 'Race to the Bottom: Exploitation of migrant workers ahead of Russia's 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi', 6 February 2013, https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/02/06/race-bottom/exploitation-migrant-workers-ahead-russias-2014-winter-olympic-games.

## Media Coverage of 'Super Bowl Sex Trafficking', 2010-2018

As part of our action research approach with anti-trafficking stakeholders, we also reviewed print media to ascertain whether empirical evidence can be embedded in news stories and, if so, how. We conducted three content analyses of US print media,[34] searching the terms 'prostitution', 'sex trafficking' and 'super bowl' in LexisNexis Academic and Google News.[35] First, we identified 111 unduplicated stories from 31 December 2009 to 1 July 2016. Second, in order to compare past coverage and 2018 Super Bowl reporting, we conducted another review from 1 June 2017 to 4 February 2018 and identified 68 stories. Third, we analysed a sample of print news media in Minnesota after the Super Bowl from 4 February to 14 February 2018 and identified 18 stories.

We did not analyse television or radio broadcasts. Our sample included print media that used the selected keywords in the headlines. Stories that may have mentioned keywords in the text but not in the headline were excluded from the sample. Many news outlets picked up stories in whole or in part and we removed duplicates before conducting our analysis. Thus, the following review does not include the total volume of US media coverage on this topic, but it does cover the range of content.

### *The Mass Circulation of a Myth, 2010-2016*

Three main themes were identified in the 2010-2016 sample of US print media. First, 76 per cent of the stories posited a causal or correlative link between Super Bowls and 'sex trafficking'. Second, stories supported the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative by the citational practice of quoting authoritative sources (e.g., police, politicians, anti-trafficking advocates). Third, stories circulated numbers without citation, and conflated terms, such as trafficking and prostitution or 'teen hookers' and trafficking victims.

*The Assumed Link*
The primary theme was the assumed link among Super Bowls, 'sex trafficking' and commercial sex. Of the 111 stories reviewed, 92 contained content affirming this link, frequently employing sensationalist language. The excerpt below is exemplary:

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[34]   V Wilson, 'Research Methods: Content analysis', *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2011, pp. 177-179, https://doi.org/10.18438/B86P6S.

[35]   Some stories were likely not captured because not all print media are accessible through these search engines.

> It's the ugly side of the Super Bowl—the reality that America's most popular sporting event is also likely America's biggest day for sexual slavery [...]. In a cruel outplay of the economic reality of "supply and demand," it is not only local pimps who make a big profit—women and girls from all over the country are often brought in to the destination city to ensure that travellers for the big game have enough "side entertainment" available.[36]

This story from 2014 suggests 'sexual slavery' is the 'ugly side' of football and it invokes trafficking, sexual slavery and prostitution interchangeably. News stories also claimed the Super Bowl was the 'largest' event driving trafficking for sexual exploitation in the United States.

Only 22 stories, fewer than a quarter, presented content that cast doubt on the assumed link. Another news story, headlined '5 things to know about the Super Bowl and sex trafficking', illustrates this less common media coverage:

> Myth-busting website Snopes said the claim that "legions of prostitutes flock to the city where the big game is being held" was "mostly false," citing a 2011 report by the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women […]. The report found no evidence of a link between sex trafficking and large sporting events.[37]

*Authoritative Sources Support the Assumed Link*
The media also quoted specific individuals and groups as experts to support the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative. These authoritative sources were quoted in relation to host cities' efforts to combat the expected increase in commercial sex and trafficking, describing security measures and policing (N=47), victim rescue (N=33), anti-trafficking public awareness campaigns (N=34), legislative changes (N=28) and social services (N=24). Sources spoke about arrests, referred to earlier Super Bowls and repeated previous claims about the assumed link using the authority of their positions.

During the run-up to the 2014 Super Bowl in New York, a Republican congressman discussed the potential impact on the nearby state of New Jersey:

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[36] R Denhollander, '16 Teens Rescued from Sex Trafficking in Super Bowl Sting', *Lifenews*, 7 February 2014.

[37] A Pond, '5 things to know about the Super Bowl and sex trafficking', *Deseret News*, 6 February 2016.

"New Jersey has a huge trafficking problem," said U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., who is also co-chairman of the House anti-human trafficking caucus. "One Super Bowl after another after another has shown itself to be one of the largest events in the world where the cruelty of human trafficking goes on for several weeks".[38]

This source contends the Super Bowl is not only one of the largest events driving trafficking in the United States, but in the world. The claim about the game's unique status is thereby even further inflated. The Associated Press recirculated the congressman's claims in its coverage.

Print media also turned to law enforcement as an authoritative source. For example, New York's Attorney General and Police Department commented on a Super Bowl 2014 pre-game sting operation against a prostitution ring, after which police checked if the women were trafficking victims. This story describes men 'flooding into the city' for sex and the Super Bowl, claiming that a commercial sex organisation 'wooed wealthy men with "party packs" of cocaine and hookers'.[39] The article notes that most of the arrests were of women providing sex rather than of men buying sex or profiting from the sale of sex.

Other stories cited the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to highlight how law enforcement stings have now become a routine part of Super Bowl preparations in host cities.[40] Additionally, stories mentioned efforts to change existing law. For example, a story from Indiana before the 2012 Super Bowl quoted a senator advocating for unspecified legislation because it was important to 'get something on the books' to stop trafficking and 'the sex trade'.[41]

Anti-trafficking advocates and NGO staff were likewise interviewed as authoritative sources. Such news stories focussed on rescuing victims and providing services, while also conflating trafficking and commercial sex.[42] These stories tended to amplify the voices of people calling for action against 'Super Bowl sex trafficking'

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[38] K Zezima and S Henry, 'NJ Works to Curb Sex Trafficking before Super Bowl; Law-maker Calls Problem in State "Huge"', *The Capital*, 6 January 2014.

[39] G Solis, 'Huge Prostitution Ring Tackled Days Before Super Bowl, Authorities Say', *DNA Info*, 30 January 2014.

[40] E Gaillard, 'FBI's new approach to crack down on Super Bowl Sex Trafficking', *CBS News,* 12 January 2016.

[41] A Yeager, 'State lawmakers race to pass sex trafficking laws ahead of 2012 Super Bowl', *WXIN-TV*, 22 June 2011. This story was presented on air and as a print document on the station's website. It thus came up in our review of print sources.

[42] No Author, 'Catholic Charities Prepares for Influx of Sex Trafficking Victims During Super Bowl', *The Catholic Sun*, 23 January 2015.

without clarifying the specific agendas or political leanings of anti-trafficking advocates and organisations. For instance, a story described religious groups offering to 'serve' trafficking victims who the police arrested, implying that an arrest can lead to rehabilitation and exit from the 'lifestyle' of prostitution.[43]

Stories covering police and NGO interventions may mention how many people were contacted for services or outreach but rarely indicate whether the people contacted were trafficked or had any connection to the sporting event. One such story states, 'More than 70 women and children were provided services and referrals to programs to help them, according to the [FBI]',[44] without providing additional information about whether the women and children were victims of trafficking or what happened to them as a result of service referrals.

*Conflating Terms and Inflating Numbers*
Half of the news stories (N=56) in our sample gave data on the Super Bowl and trafficking for sexual exploitation. Unlike the media's citational practice of quoting police, politicians and anti-trafficking advocates, these stories routinely used numerical data *without* citing sources. In other words, numbers were circulated but their sources were not. A story about the 2011 Super Bowl, headlined 'Dallas hunts teen sex rings before Super Bowl; big game said to attract throngs of pimps, hookers', is typical in offering numbers without reference to specific research or data sources:

> The Super Bowl games annually attract as many as 10,000 teen hookers and human trafficking victims, as well as an international array of pimps seeking to rake in profits from johns, according to police and anti-trafficking organizations.[45]

Moreover, a headline with the terms 'sex trafficking' and 'Super Bowl' can in itself perpetuate the assumed link regardless of the story's content. Adding to the confusion and conflation, many of these stories discuss arrests for prostitution, not trafficking.[46] A New Orleans newspaper ran this lead sentence: 'In an effort to combat the rampant sex trafficking that authorities say has historically accompanied the Super Bowl, a multi-agency task force arrested 85 people during

[43] A Hill, 'Demanding Victims: The sympathetic shift in British prostitution policy', in C R Showden and S Majic, *Negotiating Sex Work: Unintended consequences of policy and activism*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2014.

[44] S A Feeney, 'Pimps Arrested, Victims Rescued in Super Bowl-Related Sex Trafficking', *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*, 4 February 2014.

[45] P Caulfield, 'Dallas hunts teen sex rings before Super Bowl; big game said to attract thousands of pimps, hookers', *Daily News*, 1 February 2011.

[46] M Casserly, 'Sex and the Super Bowl: Indianapolis puts spotlight on teen sex trafficking', *Forbes*, 2 February 2012.

the week leading up to Sunday's game'.[47] The sentence suggests that the 85 arrests refer to 'rampant sex trafficking'; however, the full story lists the criminal charges as 'human trafficking, prostitution, pandering, narcotics and weapons' and does not give the number of people actually charged with trafficking.

Only a minority of news stories addressed the confusion over terms and numbers. This 2016 story dealt directly with the confusion caused by conflation:

> The problem with the Super Bowl "trafficking" numbers is that not all the victims were trafficked. [FBI agent] Fairries tells SF Weekly that some of the 129 prostitutes the [FBI] "contacted" were just independent sex workers conducting business as usual. But much like the [San Francisco Police Department], which counts every sex worker it encounters as trafficked, the FBI considers all prostitutes "victims".[48]

Terminological conflation was common to how sources, generally perceived by the public as authoritative, framed trafficking and anti-trafficking efforts. The three themes we identified in print media coverage—the assumed link, the citation of authoritative sources, and the confusion over terms and numbers—shape public perceptions of trafficking in ways that do not align with available empirical evidence. We now turn from this analysis of our 2010-2016 sample to the substantial shift in media coverage of the Minneapolis Super Bowl.

### *Media Coverage of the Minneapolis Super Bowl*

Print media coverage of the 2018 Super Bowl engaged the themes above, but within a different frame. The majority of the 68 articles (57 per cent) prior to the game (1 June 2017 to 4 February 2018) displayed doubt about 'Super Bowl sex trafficking'.[49] Additionally, the eighteen stories in the two weeks after the game quoted law enforcement in ways that cast uncertainty on the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative. In total, the majority of local print coverage (66 per cent) did not support the narrative or established themes. This finding demonstrates a

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[47]   N Martin, 'Authorities Nab 85 in Effort to Combat Super Bowl Sex Trafficking', *The Times-Picayune,* 7 February 2013.

[48]   J Lynbarger, 'Massaging the Super Bowl's Sex Trafficking Stats', *SF Weekly*, 17 February 2016.

[49]   The Anti-Sex Trafficking Committee found that there were 141 published stories related to their efforts from June 2017 through 5 February 2018. We identified far fewer. There are two reasons for the difference. First, our data examined only news stories published in Minnesota. Second, news stories are often recycled and we eliminated duplicates for our analysis.

major change in media communication to the public about trafficking.

Most of the stories in the Minnesota sample characterised 'sex trafficking' as an activity that can happen all year rather than as something specifically tied to the Super Bowl. Indeed, 48 out of the 68 stories used the phrase 'year round'. Fifteen stories used the phrase '365 days a year' in relation to trafficking for sexual exploitation, which echoed one of the Committee's main talking points. This point stressed the need for long-term services for sexually-exploited women instead of episodic interventions connected to events like the Super Bowl. This type of media coverage was not restricted to the 2018 Super Bowl, but only appeared in seven stories in the 2010-2016 sample. The increased use of this frame underscores the impact of the Committee's efforts to influence media coverage to more closely match evidence gathered by our research group.

Unlike previous Super Bowl coverage, most Minnesota stories debunked the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative (N=23) or evinced a sceptical stance (N=16). This deeper contextualisation was typical:

> As the Twin Cities prepares to host Super Bowl LII, planning has long been underway to address any accompanying uptick in prostitution or sex trafficking. While people elsewhere have made claims that the Super Bowl is the biggest time for sex trafficking, a University of Minnesota report noted "the Super Bowl does not appear to have the largest impact".[50]

Seventeen news stories published in the months before the Super Bowl cited our research. These stories quoted the UROC research group, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, other members of the Committee and/or the official Super Bowl Host Committee.

Slightly more than 30 per cent of media coverage contained content that supported the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative (N=22), a substantial drop compared to the 76 per cent between 2010 and 2016. Stories in Minnesota also used less sensationalist language and fewer inflated numbers compared to previous coverage.

Yet, a notable portion continued to focus on public awareness efforts and law enforcement. About a third (N=29) mentioned the Committee's response plan, including the awareness campaigns 'Don't Buy It' aimed at people who purchase sex and 'I am Priceless' aimed at youth. These stories noted plans to improve access to social services, shelter beds and street outreach, and create a more

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[50]  M Gottfried, 'Super Bowl the Biggest Time for Sex Trafficking? That's a Myth. Here's What Happens Every Day in the Twin Cities', *Twin Cities Pioneer Press,* 29 January 2018.

coordinated police response to target traffickers and people who purchase sex, while avoiding the arrest of trafficking victims and sex workers.

All eighteen stories published after the Super Bowl reported on police sting operations in the run-up to game day. All but one mentioned a ten-day sting operation by the Minneapolis and St. Paul Sheriffs' offices with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

Nevertheless, post-game coverage supported the sceptical view and debunked claims that traffickers and men who want to purchase sex came from out of state and that women were trafficked to Minnesota for the Super Bowl. Some stories (N=12) highlighted that men arrested for trying to purchase sex were local. They used phrases like 'men in our own communities' and they did not recirculate the established theme that women and children were 'brought in' from elsewhere or that traffickers 'gravitate' to host cities. Less frequently, stories cited law enforcement participating in myth busting, such as when a Shakopee Police Sergeant stated, 'In our operations we just didn't find the connections to the Super Bowl'.[51]

## How to Build Evidence-Based Media Coverage of Trafficking

In the absence of evidence, the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative influences how the public, politicians, police and other stakeholders comprehend trafficking and therefore how they choose to intervene in commercial sex markets. From 2010 to 2016, the vast majority of US print media presented authoritative sources circulating claims about sporting events and commercial sex while conflating trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation (such as economic coercion) and consensual sex work. Although Super Bowl coverage occasionally questioned this narrative, the sceptical view was drowned in a sea of stories that suggested a natural, obvious or inevitable link.

News media misrepresentations amplify, and are amplified by, abundant trafficking narratives in film, television and anti-trafficking awareness campaigns.[52] The linkage of sporting events and trafficking reflects and reinforces broader narratives about sexuality and sexual exploitation that depict men as aggressive and autonomous, and women as victims in need of rescue or criminals who should

51    D Winter, '16 Arrests Made in Shakopee During Super Bowl Sex Trafficking Sting', *Shakopee Valley News*, 9 February 2018.

52    L Fedina, 'Use and Misuse of Research in Books on Sex Trafficking: Implications for interdisciplinary researchers, practitioners, and advocates', *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2015, pp. 188-198, https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838014533337.

be arrested. The Super Bowl adds stereotypes about masculinity, male fans and the purchase of sex that represent commercial sex in ways that obscure the wide range of people who sell sex (including boys, men and transgender people). The myth of 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' also depends on cultural narratives that stereotype people in the sex trade and thereby ignore context, a wide range of experiences and the complex realities of people's lives. Responses to these narratives lead to arrest, stigma and missed opportunities to inform the public and avoid the harms caused by misguided interventions.

Yet, we found that empirical evidence *can* be used effectively to inform media, debunk myths and propel action. The successful shift in media coverage in Minnesota during the 2018 Super Bowl emerged from a partnership between researchers and anti-trafficking stakeholders. We all agreed that media coverage on this topic needed to be better informed and that sensationalist stories can mislead the public and harm the people whom anti-trafficking efforts seek to support. We thus co-created a media communication strategy based on an action research approach. Through the AR approach, the UROC research group reviewed the evidence on major sporting events and 'sex trafficking', and these data guided the subsequent communication strategy. The partnership of researchers, anti-trafficking advocates, law enforcement and civic leaders adhered to this strategy by employing talking points that were clear and accessible to the media. Addressing the 'Super Bowl sex trafficking' narrative with an AR approach proved vital because it was evidence-based, collaborative and directed at concrete action.

The fact that stakeholders came together in 2016 specifically to confront trafficking related to the Super Bowl suggests that Committee members and other Minnesota stakeholders believed that there would be an increase in commercial sexual activity and trafficking for sexual exploitation. The Women's Foundation of Minnesota, which commissioned the research, and other members of the Committee expressed a desire to ground their work in evidence in order to have a positive impact on preventing sexual exploitation, with the belief that nuanced understanding is required for effective action. Within the context of 'fake news' and post-truth claims, a cross-stakeholder commitment to evidence and accurate reporting about the Super Bowl and 'sex trafficking' was exceptional, especially when the evidence contradicted a dominant discourse.

Our partnership offers a potential counterpoint to what Elizabeth Bernstein termed a 'coalition of strange bedfellows', wherein groups with competing agendas establish ideological convergence in relation to trafficking.[53] Bernstein studied

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[53] E Bernstein, 'Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary antitrafficking campaigns', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2010, pp. 45-71, p. 47, https://doi.org/10.1086/652918.

the unlikely alliance between evangelical Christians and feminists advocating for the abolition of commercial sex and increased criminal penalties for traffickers, people who purchase sex and sex workers who do not comply with 'rehabilitation'. By contrast, our partnership did not share a commitment to 'carceral paradigms' premised on the rescue or punishment of women and recrimination of men.[54] Instead, it brought interested parties together with the aim of reviewing, respecting and acting on an evidence base. This shared aim fostered a clear method and subsequent message among diverse stakeholders that resulted in a successful media intervention.

## Acknowledgements

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54    *Ibid.*

# Public Understanding of Trafficking in Human Beings in Great Britain, Hungary and Ukraine

*Kiril Sharapov*

## Abstract

This article provides a summary of research undertaken to investigate public awareness and understanding of human trafficking in Great Britain, Hungary and Ukraine. Responding to the lack of reliable empirical data on this issue, the research relies on representative national opinion surveys to assess the extent of public awareness of what constitutes human trafficking, the sources of knowledge underpinning this awareness, and respondents' attitudes towards key dimensions of human trafficking as embedded in international and respective national legal and policy frameworks and discourses. Conceptually, this article reinforces recent calls for policy and media paradigm shifts from understanding human trafficking as a phenomenon of crime and victimhood, to, above all, a human rights concern linked to the broader issues of sustainable development and social justice. Methodologically, the study highlights the role of opinion surveys as a measure of effectiveness and impact of anti-trafficking awareness campaigns. In practical terms, the article presents a set of data which can be useful for policy-makers, anti-trafficking activists, and national media in designing impactful awareness-raising campaigns and interventions.

**Keywords:** public opinion, anti-trafficking policies, awareness-raising, news media, trafficking in human beings, survey research

## Introduction

In arguing that the monitoring of public understanding of human trafficking can be one of the elements of the 'universal gold standard for anti-THB initiatives',[1] this paper provides a summary of research undertaken to investigate the extent of public awareness and understanding of human trafficking in Great Britain, Hungary and Ukraine. It suggests that longitudinal representative surveys of national opinion or surveys of specific demographic groups could provide a methodologically reliable measure of gaps in public understanding of human trafficking, which can be used to inform the design of awareness-raising campaigns. In addition, in case of a longitudinal and, depending on the study design, comparative nature of such research, it could be used to evaluate the efficiency and impact of awareness-raising activities, highlighting areas for potential legal and policy interventions.

The paper begins by setting out the context which has allowed for continuing calls for more anti-trafficking awareness without providing any means to assess the need for such campaigns, their content, and, finally, their efficiency. It then describes the methodology used to gain a snapshot of public understanding of human trafficking in three European countries/territories: Great Britain, Hungary and Ukraine.[2] It then presents the outcomes of these representative surveys, highlighting gaps in knowledge among the general public in these countries. It concludes with a series of recommendations that can inform future research, policy and practitioner agendas in the field of anti-trafficking.

## Setting out the Context

In 2015, the European Commission released a report on the content and impact of prevention initiatives on trafficking in human beings in Europe.[3] The study was carried out by Deloitte,[4] on behalf of the European Commission, to

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[1]    European Commission, *Study on Prevention Initiatives on Trafficking in Human Beings: Final report*, Brussels, 2015, p. 7, retrieved 10 April 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/study_on_prevention_initiatives_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_0.pdf. The report uses 'THB' as an abbreviation for 'trafficking in human beings'.

[2]    A representative survey reported in this paper included Great Britain, south of the Caledonian Canal, excluding Northern Ireland.

[3]    European Commission, *Study on Prevention Initiatives*.

[4]    Deloitte is a global provider of audit and assurance, consulting, financial advisory, risk advisory, tax, and related services. It was mandated by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Home Affairs to conduct a study on prevention initiatives on trafficking in human beings following an invitation to tender.

'systematically evaluate [among other activities] the impact of anti-trafficking prevention initiatives, in particular awareness-raising activities (including online activities)'.[5] About 85 per cent of the projects assessed in the study dealt with information and awareness-raising measures. The report highlighted significant gaps in the evaluation of effectiveness of such initiatives, suggesting that projects tended to focus on monitoring rather than the evaluation of impacts. The report noted a lack of 'universal gold standard for anti-THB initiatives to be implemented in a particularly effective and impactful fashion'[6] resulting in a situation where, for example, '…mass media campaigns may increase people's awareness regarding the problems of THB, but this may not necessarily be translated into changes in people's daily and cultural behaviours that eventually lead them to boycotting labour and services produced through exploitation, or to actively monitor the incidence of THB in their environments'.[7]

One of the problematic assumptions embedded in the statement above and, perhaps, reflecting the report's own assertion about the lack of a 'universal gold standard', is that boycotting labour and services produced with the involvement of exploited labour would necessarily lead to lesser reliance on such labour without altering structural relations of labour exploitation within the context of increasingly globalised neoliberal economies.

In December 2018, the European Commission issued its second report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings.[8] In setting out a range of measures to counter 'the culture of impunity and [to prevent] trafficking in human beings', the report allocated a specific role to members of the general public by suggesting that increased awareness would 'target demand for services exacted from victims of trafficking', and emphasising the need for 'campaigns or educational programmes aimed at discouraging demand for sexual exploitation'.[9] Despite identifying awareness-raising actions as a priority, the report provided no insights into what type of awareness it alluded to: awareness aimed at preventing unsuspecting citizens from becoming victims (within the context where almost half of the reported victims [44 per cent] were EU citizens[10]); awareness aimed at enabling members of the general public to recognise and report suspected cases

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5    *Ibid.*, p. 7.

6    *Ibid.*, p. 8.

7    *Ibid.*, p. 30.

8    European Commission, *Second Report on the Progress Made in the Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings (2018)*, Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_com-2018-777-report_en.pdf.

9    *Ibid.*, p. 8.

10   *Ibid.*, p. 2.

of trafficking or labour exploitation; or awareness aimed at turning the general public into 'responsible' consumer-citizens questioning the human (and environmental) cost of goods and services and demanding corrective actions from governments and businesses. Furthermore, the underlying implication of calling for more awareness-raising is that the current levels of public awareness are not achieving what they should (even though the ultimate goals of awareness-raising are rarely specified) and, therefore, more awareness-raising is needed. However, little is known and revealed about the extent to which the general public is aware of what human trafficking is; whether awareness translates into any meaningful action; and who is shaping public understanding and knowledge of human trafficking.

The study reviewed in this paper was carried out in 2013-2014—in the run up to the reporting period of the second European Commission report (covering the period 2015-2016). It relied on representative surveys of public opinion in Great Britain, Hungary and Ukraine which remains one of the trafficking routes from Eastern into Central and Western Europe. A key conclusion of this study is that although the majority of citizens are generally aware of what human trafficking is and consider it to be a problem of crime (rather than a broader human rights concern), they do not consider it to be a problem that affects them directly. Although a minority, a significant number of survey respondents in these three countries could not explain what human trafficking was. This finding raises a question about the extent to which such a lack of knowledge may put citizens at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking, or render them unable to identify and report victims as they go about their daily lives.

Despite a number of methodological and conceptual limitations, including a relatively limited 'shelf-life' of opinion polls, the survey analysis presented in this paper responds to the following two broad questions: (a) What does the general public know about human trafficking, and what are the underlying attitudes? and, importantly, (b) What is missing from the public understanding of trafficking as a problem?

## Methodology

Opinion polling, as Stromback notes, remains the 'best methodology yet invented to investigate public opinion'.[11] This is despite the contested methodological issues of sampling, question ambiguity, wording and context, and a more fundamental

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[11]   J Stromback, 'The Media and Their Use of Opinion Polls: Reflecting and shaping public opinion' in C Holtz-Bacha and J Stromback (eds.), *Opinion Polls and the Media: Reflecting and shaping public opinion*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2012, pp. 1–22.

question about the extent to which general population surveys provide a valid representation of the public's views. Yet, opinion polls still hold a significant potential to reveal 'essentially rational collective preferences'[12] formed through a complex interaction of public, media and policy agendas. In understanding citizens as products of their surrounding political culture, the two key questions that the study of public opinion may answer are how they—the citizens—think at present, and how, under different conditions, they might think (and act) differently. Within this context, it is generally accepted that having a knowledge and understanding of public opinion as expressed by outcomes of opinion polls is usually '…better for democracy than not having it. Good information is better than misinformation.'[13]

Social science survey research can never be completely free of bias, subjectivity or even methodological errors. However, survey errors can be minimised within the constraints of cost, time and ethics. This research relied on the 'survey research triangle', proposed by Weisberg[14] to address the following concerns: (a) survey errors, including the issues of measurement, nonresponse, sampling and coverage; (b) survey constraints, including costs, time and ethics, and (c) survey effects, including question-related, mode and comparison effects. The issues of measurement, nonresponse, sampling and coverage were, in part, addressed by appointing three experienced market research companies in the case-study countries to undertake face-to-face surveys of representative national samples as part of national omnibus surveys.[15] The survey methodology details for each national sample are provided in the table below. In the analysis that follows, national-level results are presented using national-level weights[16] supplied by survey providers. Time and cost limitations prevented having three national surveys administered by a single market research company. Instead, three national

[12] V Price, 'The Public and Public Opinion in Political Theories' in W Donsbach and M W Traugott (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, Sage, London, 2008, p. 21.

[13] H Taylor, 'The Value of Polls in Promoting Good Government and Democracy' in J Manza, F L Cook and B I Page (eds.), *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, policy and the future of American democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 316.

[14] H F Weisberg, 'The Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses of Survey Research' in W Donsbach and M W Traugott (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, Sage, London, 2008, pp. 223–231.

[15] An omnibus survey is a shared cost, multi-client approach to survey research, where a market research company carries out a survey on behalf of commissioning organisations. As a result, each omnibus survey consists of several 'blocks' of questions to collect the data on a wide variety of subjects during the same interview.

[16] See an explanatory note provided by the UK Data Service (available: at https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/using-survey-data/data-analysis/survey-weights) for further information on survey weights, weighting variables and weighted data.

companies were recruited following a competitive bidding process. As a consequence of relying on three different survey providers, the outcome datasets include slightly differing demographic and social classifications, and, despite being representative of national populations (within the established margins of error), they are based on different quota sampling methods and weighting procedures administered by the three national survey providers. These limitations may have affected the outcomes of the subsequent comparative analysis, without diminishing the robustness, validity and representation of the national survey outcomes. The original design of the study made a specific focus on the potential benefits of the national-level rather than comparative-level outcomes for a diversity of actors involved in anti-trafficking prevention initiatives at the national levels.

## Table 1: Survey methodology

|  | Ukraine | Hungary | Great Britain |
|---|---|---|---|
| Methodology and Date | Omnibus face-to-face, PAPI (paper-and-pencil interviewing), January 2014 | Omnibus face-to-face, PAPI (paper-and-pencil interviewing), December 2013 | Omnibus face-to-face, CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing), January 2014 |
| Sample Size | 1,000 representative of national population within the specified age range | 1,000 representative of national population within the specified age range | 1,000 representative of GB population within the specified age range |
| Sampling | Multi-stage sample based on random probability approach with respondents selected by the random route technique with the 'last birthday' method employed at the end stage of selection | Multi-stage sample selected with proportional stratification with final respondents selected by random walking sampling | Multi-stage sample - 125–150 sample points per survey week at the first stage; addresses were randomly selected from the Post Office Address file (PAF); residents were interviewed according to interlocking quotas on gender, working status and presence of children |
| Age range | 15–59 | 18 and older | 16 and older |
| Coverage | Ukraine, national, six regions singled out on a geographic and economic basis | Hungary, national, eight regions (including Budapest) | Great Britain, south of the Caledonian Canal |
| Weighting | Quota & weight | By gender, age group, type of settlement and educational level | By gender, age group, social class and region |
| Quality control | 4% of completed interviews controlled by face-to-face method and 6% by telephone (100 interviews) | Multiple techniques, including random visits by regional instructors (10%), postal or by telephone post-survey quality control when required | 10% back check |
| Company used | GfK Ukraine, www.gfk.ua | TARKI, www.tarki.hu/en | UK-based market-research company; name not released for contractual reasons |
| Representation | Representative of the national population, age range 15–59, margin of error (95% confidence level) +/- 3.1 percentage points | Representative of the national population, age range 18+, margin of error (95% confidence level) +/- 3.1 percentage points | Representative of the national population, age range 16+, margin of error (95% confidence level) +/- 3.1 percentage points |

The questionnaire for the survey was developed in consultations with anti-trafficking activists and scholars; questions were drafted using procedures proposed by Booth, Colomb and Williams[17] and Hader,[18] where the problem was 'operationalised' by identifying its key dimensions in the first place. The next step involved collecting a series of statements to describe each of the dimensions, and the transformation of these statements into a series of questions by applying the technique of asking 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', and 'how'. Each question was then assigned an objective to understand what type of information it was likely to solicit and how this information contributed to the overarching research objective. Unsuitable, duplicate and equivalent statements and questions were eliminated in an iterative manner. The remaining questions were standardised by constructing a scale using the Likert scaling technique with a five-point scale response format. The analysis that follows assumes that all given responses represent a 'good approximation of the attitude of a respondent under study'.[19] To address a reported tendency where some respondents are likely to answer 'agree' to all questions if all of them are positively formulated, about 40% of items in the final questionnaire were negatively formulated in order to reduce response acquiescence.

In addition to the questionnaire design, the issues of conceptual equivalence are particularly relevant within the context of cross-cultural and cross-language research, where word-by-word language equivalence does not always guarantee the equivalence of ideas and concepts. To ensure the equivalence of meaning and measurement between three different versions of the questionnaire (English, as the original 'source' questionnaire, Ukrainian and Hungarian) both qualitative and quantitative methods were deployed, including the detailed annotation of the source questionnaire and the iterative back-translation (as advised by Fu and Chu[20]). A multi-stage pre-testing and a piloting process to ensure equivalence at both linguistic and conceptual levels accompanied this process.

The final survey questionnaire included four questions overall. The first question was open-ended; it included no prompts and asked respondents to explain, using their own words, what human trafficking was. The SPSS Text Analytics for Surveys software was used to identify key textual patterns. Each dataset consisted of about a thousand qualitative responses (including 'do not know/no opinion' responses).

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[17] Cited in K A Rasinski, 'Designing Reliable and Valid Questionnaires' in W Donsbach and M W Traugott (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, Sage, London, 2008, p. 367.

[18] M Hader, 'The Use of Scales in Surveys' in W Donsbach and M W Traugott (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, Sage, London, 2008, p. 389.

[19] Hader, p. 390.

[20] Y-C Fu and Y-H Chu, 'Different Survey Modes and International Comparisons' in W Donsbach and M W Traugott (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, Sage, London, 2008, p. 286.

Each response was manually assigned one or several codes pre-extracted by SPSS Text Analytics following a series of iterative readings. Once this process was completed, the identified codes were contextually approximated: for example, 'violence and abuse' in one dataset was matched against 'abuse and coercion' and 'force and dependency' in two other datasets, resulting in a single code applied across all three datasets; the 'buying and selling of people' was used as a single term to cover a diversity of semantic references to either the process of selling and/or buying of people; or to the description of crime, i.e. 'trade in people' or 'the sale of people'. Inevitably, a number of semantic nuances may have been lost in the process of standardising responses; however, these were not deemed significant within the context of a comparative multi-language study.

SPSS Text Analytics was also used to generate visual representations of the key categories and of any interrelationships between them, shown in the figures below. Each visual representation consists of a series of dots representing codes, and lines pointing to the existence of an association between the codes; or, in other words, a situation, where an individual response may have been assigned two or more codes. The frequency of codes in the dataset is represented by the size of the dots, which are arranged in a random circular order. The thickness of the connecting lines identifies the strength of the overall relationship between a pair of codes. The analysis of associations was limited to binary associations for key codes only: for example, the association between 'Slavery' and 'Immigration' is noted (a binary association of codes), however no analysis of the association between 'Immigration', 'Slavery' and 'Crime' was undertaken.[21] 'Codes' and 'Categories' are used as technical terms in discussing the methodological aspects of this analysis. In the discussion of outcomes, the word 'vector', drawn from Aradau's work,[22] is used when referring to methodological codes/categories. Aradau, in discussing the politicisation of trafficking as a socially constructed category, applies the concept of 'vectoring' to metaphorically describe a force that acts in a certain direction. This article uses the notions of a 'vector' and 'vectoring' to describe a range of issues or actions interacting in a certain pattern to form an overall aggregate picture of how human trafficking is understood by the general public in the three case-study countries.

The second question was closed and asked respondents to identify how they learnt what human trafficking was (prior to the interview) and provided a list of potential sources of information. The remaining two questions included a series of statements covering different aspects of human trafficking, asking respondents to

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[21] For further details on associations within individual datasets refer to the research report available at: https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/cps-working-paper-upkat-public-knowledge-and-attitudes-towards-thb-2014.pdf.

[22] C Aradau, *Rethinking Trafficking in Women: Politics out of security,* Palgrave, Basingstoke 2008.

indicate whether they agreed or disagreed on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, do not know). The 'do not know' option was included to prevent a situation where respondents were willing to offer opinions that were obscure or fictitious.

# Findings

## *Knowing About Human Trafficking*

### Ukraine
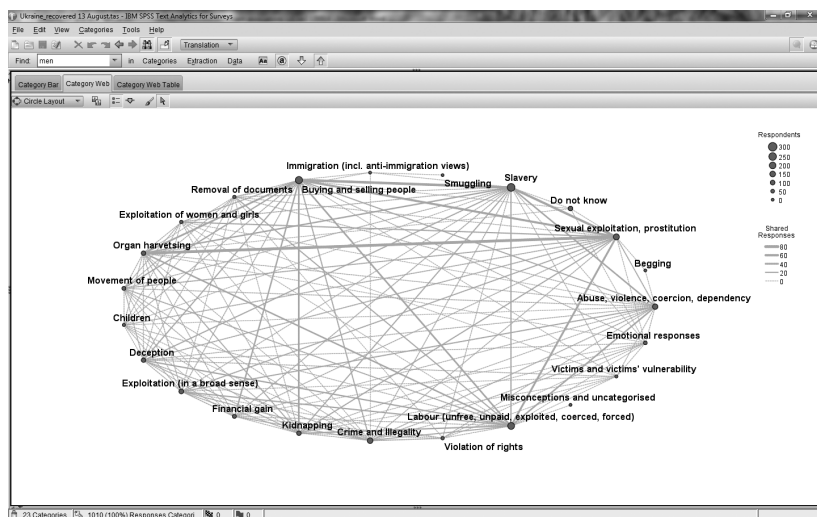


Figure 1: What is Human Trafficking? Key codes and associations identified in the dataset for Ukraine

In Ukraine, the predominant understanding of human trafficking centres around the issues of slavery, buying and selling of people, and unfree labour. These three vectors characterise about 70% of responses. The general pattern suggests that the general public understands human trafficking as a process that involves buying and selling of people into slavery for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation.

Anti-trafficking legal and policy frameworks in Ukraine[23] refer to 'the sale of people' or 'trade in people' to describe trafficking in human beings as understood by the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol. The terms 'trafficking in human beings' (no equivalent term in Ukrainian) or 'slavery' (equivalent term in Ukrainian: 'rabstvo') do not appear in any of the official documents. The decision by the Ukrainian government to avoid using 'slavery' as a policy/legal term is significant given that the references to 'slavery' and 'slaves' became commonplace in the reporting of human trafficking by Ukrainian news media. In Ukraine, newspaper stories about 'slavery' and sexual and labour 'slaves' are not only commonplace but also specific in providing often sensationalist and highly individualised stories of Ukrainian 'slaves' subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation abroad.

Another finding, which highlights the role of mass media in influencing public perceptions, is a relatively high share of respondents (9%) identifying organ harvesting as a vector of human trafficking in Ukraine. Organ harvesting remained a low priority within the context of the anti-trafficking policy and legislation in Ukraine at the time of survey research;[24] nevertheless, sensationalist stories about organs cut out of unsuspecting patients by healthcare professionals and sold abroad by criminal groups were regularly featured in the national media.[25] About 21% of Ukrainian respondents associated human trafficking with unfree labour; however, no survey respondents referred to the phenomenon of 'zarobitchanstvo', which relates to the post-Soviet labour market changes in Ukraine, including a large-scale labour migration of Ukrainian citizens abroad and internally in search of employment.

About 16% of Ukrainian respondents associated human trafficking with sexual exploitation and prostitution. About half of these respondents also mentioned organ harvesting reflecting the sensationalisation of 'sexual slavery' and 'human organs trade' by Ukrainian news media. About 15% of respondents described trafficking as crime or illegal activity. This was followed by 13% of respondents expressing their concern about violence, abuse and violation involved in trafficking.

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[23] See Parliament of Ukraine, *The Law of Ukraine on Combating [the process of] the Sale of People*, 20 September 2011, and Government of Ukraine, *State Targeted Social Programme on Combatting [the process of] the Sale of People up to 2015*, 21 March 2012.

[24] Organ transplants in Ukraine are regulated by a separate law, see *Parliament of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine on Transplantation of Organs and Other Anatomical Materials*, 16 July 1999.

[25] See, for example, an article (author unknown) distributed widely on Russian-speaking online media sources: 'Na Ukraine protsvetaet chernaya transplantologiya (Black Market in Human Organs is Flourishing in Ukraine)', *Rambler*, 28 April 2018, https://news.rambler.ru/world/39734307-na-ukraine-protsvetaet-chernaya-transplantologiya.

Overall, public understanding of trafficking in Ukraine can be described as a 'patchwork' of views, with slavery, buying and selling of people, and unfree labour dominating the overall pattern. Links between various vectors remain weak, with little or no significant associations to allow for the identification of a more complex pattern of views and opinions. This, however, may be due to the specific research methodology, where respondents had limited time to express their views and no prompts were used to encourage further discussion. About 10% of Ukrainian responses were coded as 'Do not know'.

## Hungary
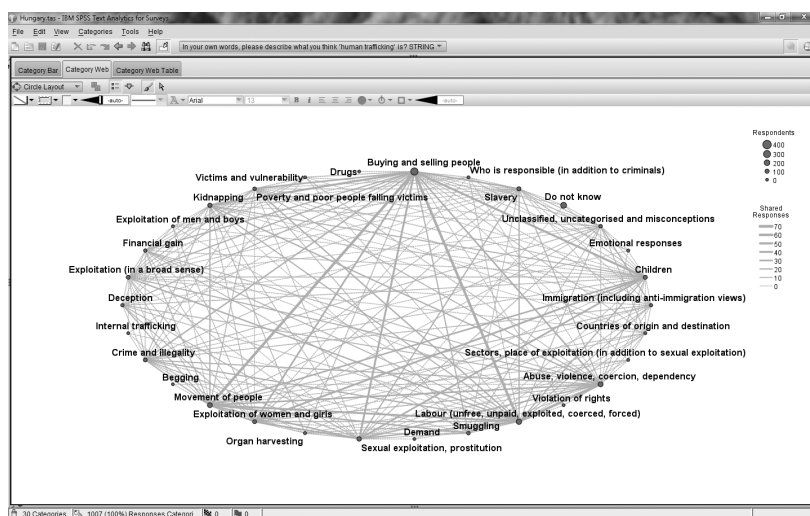


Figure 2: What is Human Trafficking? Key codes and associations identified in the dataset for Hungary

There was no single predominant public view of human trafficking associated with the Hungarian sample; a range of vectors included: buying and selling of people (31%), unfree labour (18%), abuse, violence, coercion and dependency (16%), and movement of people (15%). Together, these vectors characterise about 80% of responses. The general response pattern suggests that trafficking involves coercion, violence and abuse to sell and buy people, transport and exploit them. The other two significant aspects were sexual exploitation and prostitution (12%) as well as kidnapping (11%). In 2013, the Hungarian government published its

2013-2016 anti-trafficking strategy.[26] Vulnerable women trafficked for sexual exploitation by organised criminals, victim identification, assistance and support are key priorities of the Hungarian government as well as of national NGOs, whilst combatting criminal groups or individual traffickers is passed on to the national law enforcement. As a policy and legal concern, human trafficking has been identified as having little relevance to the everyday lives of Hungarian citizens. Within this context, almost a quarter of Hungarian respondents were unable to explain what human trafficking was, or recognise it as a problem for the country, or as a problem which may affect them directly.

## Great Britain
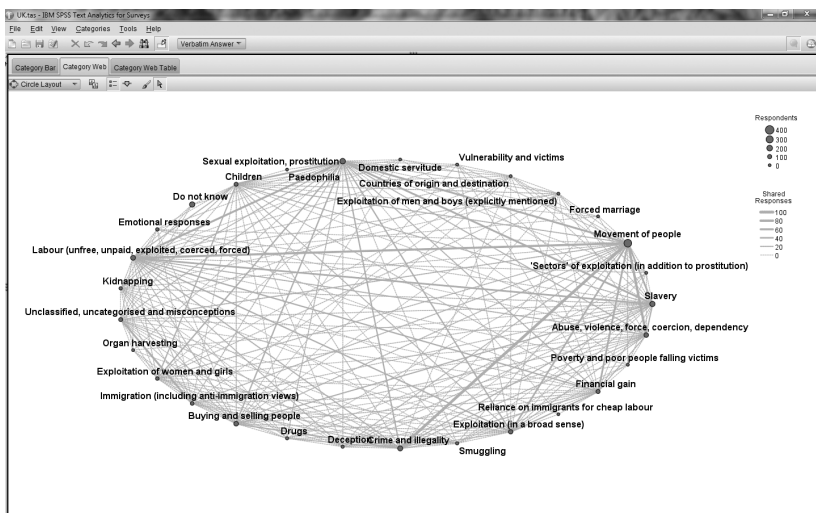


Figure 3: What is Human Trafficking? Key codes and associations identified in the dataset for Great Britain

About 34% of respondents in Great Britain associated human trafficking with the movement of people without explicitly mentioning immigration. This was followed by sexual exploitation and prostitution (19%), slavery (17%), crime and illegality (16%). These four vectors characterised 86% of responses. These responses, as the association analysis indicates, were interrelated: for example,

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26    Government of Hungary, *4-Year Plan Document Related to the Directive against Human Trafficking and the European Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings and Replacing the National Strategy against Human Trafficking 2008–2012*, 2013 [on file with the author].

28% of respondents identifying 'movement of people' as a distinguishing feature of human trafficking also mentioned crime and illegality, while 16% mentioned sexual exploitation and prostitution, and 14% slavery. Out of 154 respondents who described trafficking as associated with crime and criminality, 62% identified it as related to the movement of people, and 20% to sexual exploitation and prostitution. The overall understanding of trafficking as involving people—or 'slaves'—being moved for labour exploitation and prostitution by criminals reflects a specific representation of trafficking by the UK Government as a problem of crime and 'illegal immigration' that threaten the security of the UK borders.[27] At the time the survey was conducted, human trafficking had already been framed by some of the NGO campaigns as 'modern slavery', a framing that was subsequently adopted in 2015 with the passing of the *Modern Slavery Act*. About 18% of respondents were unable to explain what human trafficking was.

In comparing the three national sets of responses, a number of findings need to be highlighted. In all three countries, public opinion can be described as a patchwork of views mirroring the fact that national and international policy-makers, activists, practitioners and scholars identify human trafficking as a matter of concern for very different reasons. In Ukraine and Hungary, human trafficking is predominantly understood as the process of the selling and buying of people and labour exploitation. This may reflect the fact that both countries remain, predominantly, source and transit countries for women and girls subjected to trafficking for sexual exploitation, and for men and women trafficked for labour exploitation.[28] In Great Britain, human trafficking is understood as the process of movement (of people), and sexual exploitation and prostitution, reflecting the overall UK government approach towards trafficking as a subset of 'illegal' migration, and the dominant association of human trafficking with sexual exploitation and prostitution in UK media reporting.[29] In terms of the general levels of knowledge of human trafficking, the highest level of awareness was among respondents in Ukraine (with only 10% of respondents not being able to provide an explanation), followed by Great Britain (18%), and Hungary (22%). Further research is required to explore the consequences that such gaps in knowledge may have for respondents belonging to various socio-demographic groups; the extent to which public service announcements and human trafficking awareness campaigns respond to the specific demographic and socio-economic characteristics of their target audiences; and whether such campaigns, overall, remain the most

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[27]   K Sharapov, '"Traffickers and *Their* Victims": Anti-trafficking policy in the United Kingdom', *Critical Sociology*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2015, pp. 91–111, https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920515598562.

[28]   For further details/country profiles, see https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/member-states.

[29]   Sharapov, 2015.

effective approach to improving public awareness.[30]

## Learning about Human Trafficking

In order to understand how respondents gained their knowledge of human trafficking, they were asked to identify sources of information that informed their knowledge before the day of the interview. The answers were recorded as given, without any further prompts or follow-up questions. Identifying key sources of information and public knowledge of human trafficking could be one of the first steps in assessing the impact of anti-trafficking awareness-raising campaigns— something that despite the proliferation of awareness-raising campaigns is still missing. Table 2 provides a comparative overview of what sources of information were mentioned by respondents. It is based on the data drawn from samples subjected to a sample-reduction procedure to allow for the selection and comparison of responses falling within the age range of 18-59 shared across the three samples. The final number of respondents for each sample decreased from 1,000 to 693 (N=693) resulting in the increased margin of error of 3.72 at the standard 95% confidence level. The table includes items which recorded a minimum of 10% of responses in at least one of the samples.

**Table 2: How respondents got to know about human trafficking (national samples, N=693, age: 18-59)**

| Sources of information | Ukraine, % of respondents | Hungary, % of respondents | Great Britain, % of respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| Someone I know told me about it | 7.3 | 14.4 | 4.4 |
| Watched a news programme on TV | 53.4 | 80.4 | 59.8 |
| Watched a documentary on TV | 44.8 | 26.3 | 38.7 |
| Watched a film on TV | 30.5 | 18.1 | 16.1 |
| Listened to a programme on the radio | 8.9 | 25.6 | 20.0 |
| Read an article in a newspaper | 17.7 | 35.6 | 40.0 |
| Read about it on the internet | 22.7 | 23.0 | 14.0 |

A number of implications can be drawn from the results above. The role of various media sources, in particular TV programmes, in influencing public understanding

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[30]   See a series of contributions under the theme of 'The Wastefulness of Human Trafficking Awareness Campaigns' arguing that awareness-raising as such and as an isolated activity does not change anything and may, if badly performed, have counterproductive or even harmful impacts: E Shih and J Quirk, 'Introduction: Do the hidden costs outweigh the practical benefits of human trafficking awareness campaigns?', *Open Democracy*, 11 January 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/introduction-do-hidden-costs-outweigh-practical-benefits-of-huma.

of what human trafficking is should not be underestimated. The impact of the stereotypical media imagery of human trafficking and 'simplistic solutions [embedded in such imagery] to complex issues without challenging the structural and causal factors of inequality'[31] has been investigated by both practitioners and scholars in a number of geographical contexts and, also, in relation to specific media forms.[32] Within this context, the key task for anti-trafficking activists, practitioners and scholars is to start, or continue, working in partnership with specific media outlets to ensure that any media reporting of human trafficking (and related categories of human smuggling and irregular migration) engages with more complex social meanings of exploitation and agency,[33] rather than relying on 'convenient labels'[34] of individualised 'criminals' and 'their victims'. Further context-specific research is required to investigate which media outlets could be relied upon in reaching out to members of the general public who may not be fully aware of what human trafficking and its associated risks are.

## Human Trafficking and Respondents' Attitudes

The two remaining survey questions asked respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements, organised around five broad topics: who the victims of human trafficking were; whether human trafficking was a problem at the national level and whether it affected respondents individually; who the criminals and victims were; how victims could be assisted; and how trafficking could be prevented. The analysis of responses revealed a number of cross-national differences: for some questions, the results were broadly similar; for others, public opinion remains markedly distinct, with responses from Hungary standing out for the worse, from the UK for the better, and those from Ukraine often in the middle. The summary below covers some of the headline findings (categorised into 'No gap in knowledge' and 'Gap in knowledge' on the

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[31] R Andrijasevic and N Mai, 'Editorial: Trafficking (in) Representations: Understanding the recurring appeal of victimhood and slavery in neoliberal times', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 1–10, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121771.

[32] See, for example, issue 7 of *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 'Trafficking Representations', http://www.antitraffickingreview.org/index.php/atrjournal/issue/view/15.

[33] For a more detailed discussion of human trafficking representations in the media and on the internet reviewed through the lens off agnotology, a study of how ignorance is produced and becomes productive, see: J Mendel and K Sharapov, 'Human Trafficking and Online Networks: Policy, analysis, and ignorance', *Antipode*, issue 48, 2016, pp. 665–684, https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12213.

[34] R Zetter, 'Labelling Refugees: Forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 4, issue 1, 1991, pp. 39–62, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/4.1.39.

basis of the 50+% majority), which indicate the extent of respondents' agreement with a pre-set statement. Rather than providing any endorsements of a particular viewpoint on what human trafficking is and how it could be addressed, these findings highlight a series of significant gaps in public knowledge and understanding of human trafficking (identified in square brackets below).

- Anyone, including men, women and children, can be trafficked (93% of respondents in Great Britain and Ukraine agreed, 94% in Hungary) [No gap in knowledge[35]]; however, the majority of victims are women trafficked for sexual exploitation (92% agreed in Ukraine, 91% in Hungary, 70% in Great Britain) [No gap in knowledge[36]];
- Most victims come from poor countries (89% in Hungary, 82% in Ukraine, 76% in Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge[37]]; most of them are irregular immigrants looking for work (84% agreed in Ukraine, 80% in Hungary, 56% in Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge[38]];
- Human trafficking is a problem in respondents' countries (77% in Great Britain, 73% in Ukraine, 64% in Hungary) [No gap in knowledge[39]] but it does not affect respondents directly (81% in Hungary, 75% in Ukraine, 72% in Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge[40]];
- Respondents do not normally think that goods or services they purchase may have been produced with the involvement of forced labour (79% Ukraine and Hungary, 67% in Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge[41]] but declared their preparedness to pay more to ensure goods and services are produced without labour exploitation (73% in Great Britain, 53%

[35] See: UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, UNODC, Vienna, 2018, p. 10, retrieved 10 April 2019, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[38] See: IOM, *Global Migration Indicators 2018*, UN Migration, Geneva, 2018, retrieved 10 April 2019, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/global_migration_indicators_2018.pdf.

[39] UNODC.

[40] The impact of human trafficking and associated criminal activities on the overall population in both sending and receiving countries is acknowledged; however, it remains poorly theorised, including the issues of crime control by national governments as well as the suggested yet contested (for failing to address structural factors) consumers' involvement (direct and indirect) in creating and sustaining demand for exploitative (including trafficked) labour.

[41] G LeBaron and N Howard, 'Forced Labour in the Global Economy' in G LeBaron and N Howard (eds.), *Forced Labour in the Global Economy. Beyond Trafficking and Slavery Short Course | Volume 2*, Open Democracy, 2015, p. 8.

in Hungary, 48% in Ukraine) [No gap in knowledge[42]] and to boycott companies that rely on exploited labour (86% in Great Britain, 72% in Hungary, 65% in Ukraine) [No gap in knowledge[43]].

- Organised criminals bear the main responsibility for human trafficking (90% in Hungary, 86% in Ukraine, and 81% Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge[44]];

- Victims of trafficking need to be provided with assistance (91% in Hungary, 89% in Ukraine, 87% in Great Britain) [No gap in knowledge]; victims who crossed international borders need to be deported after a short recovery period (82% in Hungary, 78% in Ukraine, 47% in Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge] or allowed to stay if they face danger back home (78% in Hungary, 76% in Great Britain, 69% in Ukraine) [No gap in knowledge[45]].

- There is a need for tougher border controls to stop victims from crossing borders (90% in Ukraine, 89% in Hungary, 84% in Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge[46]] and tougher law enforcement to tackle criminals (94%

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[42] Given the scale of exploitative labour within the context of the global economy, 'demand for cheap products or services that are always and quickly available have led to adjustments in some of the industries where trafficked persons tend to work'. See UN.GIFT, *The Vienna Forum to fight Human Trafficking 13–15 February 2008*, Austria Center, Vienna, Background Paper, 2008, p. 4, https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2008/BP010SupplyManagementILO.pdf. However, as Cyrus and Vogel note, if low price is taken as indicator of potential labour exploitation, 'a higher price does not necessarily signal fairer or exploitation-free labour conditions'. See N Cyrus and D Vogel, 'Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from demand-side campaigns against trafficking in human beings', *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice,* vol. 10, no. 1, 2018, pp. 57–93.

[43] See: AA Aronowitz, 'Regulating Business Involvement in Labor Exploitation and Human Trafficking', *Journal of Labor and Society*, vol. 22, 2019, pp. 145–164, https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12372.

[44] See: G Vermeulen, Y Van Damme and W De Bondt, 'Perceived Involvement of "Organised Crime" in Human Trafficking and Smuggling', *Revue Internationale de Droit Pénal*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2010, pp. 247–273, https://doi.org/10.3917/ridp.811.0247.

[45] For critical discussion of 'deserving' victims of human trafficking and the 'masses that remain undeserving of rights and freedoms' see J O'Connell Davidson, 'New Slavery, Old Binaries: Human trafficking and the borders of "freedom"', *Global Networks*, vol. 10, 2010, pp. 244–261, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2010.00284.x. For discussion of assistance and support offered to victims of human trafficking in the UK, see K Roberts, 'Life after Trafficking: A gap in UK's Modern Slavery efforts', *Anti-Trafficking Review,* issue 10, 2018, pp. 164–168, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.2012181012.

[46] For a discussion on the role of states in depriving migrants of their freedom see: J O'Connell Davidson, 'De-canting "Trafficking in Human Beings", Re-centring the State', *International Spectator*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2016, pp. 58–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2016.1121685.

in Ukraine and Hungary, 90% in Great Britain) [No gap in knowledge[47]];
all European countries should criminalise the purchase of sex (92% in
Hungary, 91% in Ukraine, 72% in Great Britain) [Gap in knowledge[48]],
and countries of victims' origin should do more to increase standards
of living as a way of managing economic migration (92% in Ukraine
and Hungary, 81% in Great Britain) [No gap in knowledge[49]].

- Companies relying on trafficked labour need to be identified and
prosecuted (93% in Great Britain, 92% in Ukraine and Hungary) [No
gap in knowledge]; companies need to ensure that their workers are not
exploited and paid a living wage even if this may result in higher
consumer prices (91% in Great Britain, 89% in Hungary, 88% in
Ukraine) [No gap in knowledge[50]].

- More awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking are required
in the media (92% in Ukraine, 91% in Great Britain, 90% in Hungary),
on the internet (92% in Ukraine, 89% in Ukraine, 86% in Great Britain)
and at schools (93% in Ukraine, 90% in Hungary, 80% in Great Britain)
[Neutral[51]].

The time-specific snapshot of public attitudes described above highlights a number
of issues that are similar across all three samples. News media, as noted in the
previous section, appear to be a key source of information for the general public
on the matters related to human trafficking, whilst policy discourses, to a
significant degree, set the space in which the construction of human trafficking
media 'truths' takes place. The outcomes of the study and the existing critical
accounts of how human trafficking remains a politicised and increasingly

47 See: SH Krieg, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: The EU approach between border
control, law enforcement and human rights', *European Law Journal*, vol. 15, 2009,
pp. 775–790, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0386.2009.00490.x.

48 See: A Lepp and B Gerasimov, 'Editorial: Gains and Challenges in the Global Move-
ment for Sex Workers' Rights', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 12, 2019, pp. 1–13,
https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201219121.

49 See: S Castles, 'Why Migration Policies Fail', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 27, no.
2, 2004, pp. 205–227, https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000177306.

50 See: J Planitzer, 'Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Labour Exploitation:
Can Obligatory Reporting by Corporations Prevent Trafficking?', *Netherlands Quar-
terly of Human Rights*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2016, pp. 318–339, https://doi.
org/10.1177/016934411603400404.

51 See: K Sharapov and J Mendel, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Made and cut to
measure? Anti-trafficking docufictions and the production of anti-trafficking truths',
*Cultural Sociology*, vol. 12, issue 4, 2018, pp. 540–560, https://doi.
org/10.1177/1749975518788657, and other contributions in the present volume.

weaponised[52] political construct suggest that these processes allow people to be aware of human trafficking but, at the same time, to craft and maintain a sense of distance from it—an invisible yet facilitated and managed process of social production of ignorance and manufactured denial.[53] It appears that the 'information deficit model', increasingly relied upon by anti-trafficking stakeholders in calling for more awareness campaigns, may be irrelevant in a situation where the majority of respondents are aware of human trafficking, its exploitative contexts, declare their preparedness to act 'ethically', and are supportive of measures to hold businesses and corporations to account for unfree labour. At the same time, most respondents continue to think of human trafficking as a phenomenon of unabated crime, 'illegal' immigration and sexual abuse (and call for greater policing and border control as well as for criminalising the purchase of sex), and, therefore, as something that remains removed from their everyday lives. Within this context, repeated calls for more 'awareness-raising'[54] fail to recognise the already existing public knowledge (and significant gaps within it), or to tailor awareness-raising campaigns to address the lack of knowledge of human trafficking among certain demographic groups.

## Conclusion

The 'snapshot' of public understanding of human trafficking in the three case-study countries highlights its complexity, where a number of 'vectors' intersect in a complex pattern of individual responses to form three distinct national-level patterns of opinion. Although the majority of these vectors can be found in all three national samples, these national-level patterns remain distinctly unique. They appear to reflect the dominant representations of human trafficking embedded within the context of national anti-trafficking policies and media reporting. The findings raise a series of questions about the timeliness, content and objectives of many anti-trafficking initiatives. The majority of such initiatives, reviewed by the European Commission,[55] appear to be based on an assumption

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[52] See, for example: KD Gleason, CK Baker and A Maynard, 'Discursive Context and Language as Action: A demonstration using critical discourse analysis to examine discussions about human trafficking in Hawai'i', *Journal of Community Psychology,* vol. 46, 2018, pp. 293–310, https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21940.

[53] For further discussion of ignorance and denial in relation to human trafficking, see Mendel and Sharapov, 2016.

[54] See Sharapov and Mendel, 2018, for an overview of how anti-trafficking awareness raising is often achieved through the dramatisation and fictionalisation of human trafficking in the mass media, and without identifying who is being targeted or what the goals of awareness-raising are.

[55] European Commission, *Study on Prevention Initiatives.*

that at any point in time and at any geographical location, *more* people need to know *more* about human trafficking. Without taking stock of what is already known, and without having a concrete set of achievable and measurable objectives, such initiatives offer little in terms of new ways of thinking about the personal relevance of what is constructed (in policies and the media) to be a remote and personally irrelevant problem.

The study identified that public awareness of human trafficking does differ within specific national contexts and among members of different demographic groups. It means that any future awareness-raising campaigns would only make sense when basic parameters and baseline differences in knowledge and attitudes are known to the campaigners, practitioners and policy-makers. Methodologically, the study also highlighted the role of opinion surveys as a measure of gaps in public understanding of human trafficking. Identifying such gaps, especially if undertaken from a longitudinal perspective, could inform the design of future awareness-raising campaigns, and enable practitioners and activists to gain an evaluation of their efficiency and impact, highlighting areas for potential legal and policy interventions.

One of the key messages emerging from this study is that current levels of public knowledge and understanding of human trafficking need to be improved, both in terms of the reach of such knowledge (i.e. reaching out to people unaware of what human trafficking is) and in terms of its content. The latter, however, remains a dilemma that requires an urgent solution regarding the type of knowledge that the general public genuinely needs in order to be able to respond to the hardships and poverty of people—either in other parts of the world or in nearby factories or farms—in such a way that the politics and ethics of encounters with the exploited 'Other' are channelled through and framed by the politics of human rights and justice, and (re)produced through the cultural and economic practices of our everyday lives.

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# 'Killing the Tree by Cutting the Foliage Instead of Uprooting It?' Rethinking awareness campaigns as a response to trafficking in South-West Nigeria

*Peter Olayiwola*

## Abstract

Child domestic work is one of the issues often connected with human trafficking in popular discourses. The idea of ignorant and unsuspecting parents and children being tricked into situations of trafficking for domestic labour is rife and has driven education and awareness campaigns as keys to addressing trafficking. This paper offers a critique of awareness creation as an anti-trafficking strategy. Based on an ethnographic study of child domestic work in South-West Nigeria and an analysis of secondary sources, this article reviews the ignorance assumption in trafficking discourses. It contends that the existing strategy of awareness creation, often framed to discourage migration and work, misrepresents young domestic workers and/or their parents and fails to address the issues that children and/or their parents are faced with. The paper concludes by arguing for the need to address the structural root causes of trafficking rather than simply raise awareness of individual migrants.

# Introduction

Different organisations, activists and scholars working in the field of anti-trafficking have identified a number of factors as contributing to child domestic work (CDW)[1] and the related issues of child labour and child trafficking. One of these is ignorance—of parents, children and the wider society. The ignorance explanation is multi-dimensional, according to them. For example, it is believed that most parents, when sending their children into domestic service, are simply not aware of the consequences of their actions and in most cases, children also do not know what awaits them before leaving their parents' homes;[2] or that the general public in some countries is simply uninformed, according to the UNESCO.[3]

Olubukola Adesina corroborates the UNESCO's view by claiming that many parents in Nigeria are ignorant of what constitutes trafficking in her study of 'modern day slavery in Nigeria'.[4] With regards to child domestic workers, it is also claimed that even in cases of abuse and exploitation, most of them are ignorant of their rights and often do not know where to go to for support.[5] The ignorance explanation is also usually linked to certain customs and traditions in Africa and other parts of the world.[6]

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[1] In this paper, I use the term 'child domestic work' loosely to refer to domestic tasks undertaken as an economic activity by under-18s in households of third parties, and the terms 'young domestic workers', 'adolescent domestic workers' and 'child domestic workers' interchangeably to refer to individuals engaged in such tasks. Although I recognise that anti-trafficking organisations try to distinguish between 'acceptable child domestic work' and 'exploitative child labour', I also recognise that such rigid distinction and binary classifications do not reflect the dynamics of work relations.

[2] Save the Children, *Abuse among Child Domestic Workers: A research study in West Bengal*, Save the Children, Calcutta, 2006; O S Adesina, 'Modern Day Slavery: Poverty and child trafficking in Nigeria', *African Identities*, vol. 12, issue 2, 2014, pp. 165-179, https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2014.881278.

[3] UNESCO, *Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Root causes and recommendations*, Policy Paper, Poverty Series no. 14, issue 2, Paris, 2006, p. 38.

[4] Adesina, 2014.

[5] See, for example: C Flores-Oebanda, R Pacis and J Alcantara, *Reaching out Beyond Closed Doors: A primer on child domestic labor in the Philippines*, Visayan Forum Foundation, Manila, 2004; S Chodhuary, M Islam and J Akter, *Exploring the Causes and Process of Becoming Child Domestic Worker*, Working Paper no. 35, Research and Evaluation Division (RED), BRAC, Dhaka, 2013.

[6] See, for example: C Flores-Oebanda, R Pacis and J Alcantara, 2004; H van de Glind, 'Child Trafficking: A modern form of slavery' in Gary Craig (ed.), *Child Slavery Now: A contemporary reader*, Polity Press, Bristol, 2010, pp. 99-116; ILO-IPEC, *Ending Child Labour in Domestic Work and Protecting Young Workers from Abusive Working Conditions*, ILO, Geneva, 2013.

Given the predominance of this supposed ignorance, campaigners against child trafficking and child labour, including child domestic work, often emphasise the need to raise public awareness—especially through campaigns and empowerment programmes for vulnerable children and parents—as a way of eradicating child trafficking, child labour and child domestic work.[7] In Guinea, Mali and Senegal, for example, NGO services for domestic workers include literacy and vocational classes and providing sensitisation programmes in rural areas 'to alert domestics about the hazards of urban migration'.[8] In spite of these initiatives, scholars note that 'the level of awareness of the issue (of trafficking in general) is quite low in practically all spheres'.[9]

Against this backdrop, in this paper, I use agnotology (the study of ignorance) to examine whether such claims as above, that the awareness of the public about 'human trafficking' is generally low, are indeed correct and whether more aware-ness of trafficking will lead to fewer instances of it. By investigating how awareness campaigns are perceived and received by child domestic workers and/or their parents, I argue that the ignorance assumption misrepresents the situations of young domestic workers and/or their parents, and fails to address the structural root causes of trafficking, including poverty and inequalities that influence their decisions.

Robert Proctor's example of the tobacco industry's practices to hide tobacco hazards from the public shows how powerful institutions, in their bid to promote their interests, could be actively engaged in the process of 'manufacturing ignorance'.[10] Proctor argued that beyond being a 'native state' or a 'lost realm', ignorance could be 'a deliberately engineered and strategic ploy'.[11] In this sense, ignorance is significant in creating uncertainty; it makes one's actions excusable and also manufactures the ignorance of others by diverting attention and ignoring alternative explanations.[12] Thus, ignorance as '"strategic unknowns" remains a

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7   C Flores-Oebanda, R Pacis and J Alcantara, 2004, p. 16; B Moens *et al.*, *Study on the Practice of Trafficking in Persons in Senegal*, Development Alternatives, Bethesda, 2004; Human Rights Watch (HRW), 'Bottom of the Ladder: Exploitation and abuse of girl domestic workers in Guinea', vol. 19, issue 8, New York, 2007.

8   B Moens *et al.*, p. 52; HRW, 2007.

9   B Moens *et al.*, p. 58.

10  R Proctor, 'Agnotology: A missing term to describe the cultural production of ignorance (and its study)' in R Proctor and L Schiebinger (eds.), *Agnotology: The making and unmaking of ignorance,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2008, pp. 1-33, pp. 13-14.

11  *Ibid.*, p. 3.

12  M Smithson, 'Social Theories of Ignorance', in *ibid.*, pp. 209-229, p. 223; T Slater, 'The Myth of "Broken Britain": Welfare reform and the production of ignorance', *Antipode*, vol. 46, issue 4, 2014, pp. 948–969, p. 961, https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12002.

resource—perhaps the greatest resource—for those in a position of power and those subject to it'.[13] Consequently, there is a need to '…understand how and why various forms of knowledge have "not come to be," or disappeared, or have been delayed or long neglected, for better or for worse, at various points of history…'.[14]

The remainder of this article is divided as follows: the next section briefly discusses the methodology which underpinned the arguments presented here. Following that, I examine the nature of awareness campaigns in Nigeria before I move on to the responses of the intended beneficiaries to awareness creation. In the last section, I argue that by not addressing the underlying reasons behind CDW, awareness campaigns have contributed to creating doubts and uncertainties about the plights of child domestic workers and their parents. I conclude by presenting alternative ways of addressing CDW.

## Methodology

This article draws on individual and group interviews with key actors working on CDW, including children in domestic service, their parents, employers, intermediaries, government and NGO officials, conducted in South-West Nigeria between December 2017 and May 2018. The choice of the south-western region was informed by the fact that major cities in southern states attract substantial numbers of migrants, and it is in this context that many children are believed to be 'trafficked' into the region[15] for domestic work.

Initial participants were recruited through existing contacts in Lagos, Ibadan and Abeokuta, and snowballing was used to recruit others in these sites as well as in nearby villages. In addition, my familiarity with the geography and culture of the region was significant in the choice of the study location, as I speak the local language (Yoruba) and have personal and professional networks in these cities.

In all cases, I conducted the interviews in either the local languages (Yoruba or Pidgin English) or English. In total, I interviewed 49 current and eleven former CDWs; thirteen employers; eight government and NGO officials; and 21 other adults, including parents, intermediaries and key informants in the villages. I

[13]    L McGoey, 'Strategic Unknowns: Towards a sociology of ignorance', *Economy and Society,* vol. 41, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–16, p. 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2011.637330.

[14]    R Proctor and L Schiebinger (eds), *Agnotology: The making and unmaking of ignorance*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2008, p. vii.

[15]    Adesina, 2014.

interviewed representatives of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and of the following NGOs: Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) and Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)—well-known and established within the country and beyond.[16] My efforts to interview officials of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Nigeria were unsuccessful as they did not respond to my emails or answer calls to the designated mobile numbers. In addition to primary sources, I also relied on information from these organisations that are available in the public domain.

## CDW and Awareness Campaigns in Nigeria

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the officials I interviewed echoed most of the claims in the literature even when they have little or no empirical justification. According to one NIS official in explaining the causes of trafficking and CDW:

> … *poverty might not be enough, someone that is poor but knowledgeable will know that taking care of the future of the child will be paramount in his/her mind—not to send such a child into servitude…*[17]

Similarly, an official of NAPTIP noted:

> … *apart from poverty, there is need to re-orient our citizens…. Increase in awareness creation is key. Most parents don't know… If they know… they wouldn't fall prey to the antics of traffickers. … That is what traffickers capitalise on—painting a rosy picture.*[18]

And an NGO employee explained:

> *I think if you want to change this, it has to do with the parents… The parents have to understand… that not every story is true…*[19]

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[16]  *Ibid.*; V Nwogu, 'Anti-Trafficking Interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 3, 2014, pp. 41-63, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121433.

[17]  Interview, Government Official, Ibadan, 17 April 2018.

[18]  Interview, Government Official, Lagos, 19 March 2018.

[19]  Interview, NGO Official, Abuja, 23 March 2018.

In all these narratives, the ignorance of the poor is correlated with their poverty. These narratives in many ways stigmatise the poor and reduce trafficking to an attitudinal problem. Thus, based on the widespread claim about people's ignorance, these organisations as well as their international partners, are involved in awareness creation as a preventive strategy in child trafficking and/or exploitation of child domestic workers, with the major goal being to '*sensitise and help*' the people because '*people feel it* [sending their children out to work in domestic service] *is normal*'.[20]

NAPTIP is the main institution tasked with preventing and combating trafficking in Nigeria. The agency was established to enforce and harmonise the implementation of anti-trafficking legislation. Although the organisation is more notable for its work on trafficking for sexual exploitation of Nigerians abroad, it has also been involved in combating internal trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation.[21] For example, NAPTIP undertakes sensitisation visits to communities where adolescent domestic workers migrate from, as well as rehabilitation schemes for 'victims'.[22] Like NAPTIP, the three NGOs I visited implement advocacy and sensitisation programmes because they believe that people just do not know the implications of their actions and decisions. These programmes take place in different settings and may take different forms including occasional visits to some 'endemic communities', markets and motor parks, partnerships with NAPTIP and NIS in monitoring movements along Nigerian borders, or with community leaders, traditional rulers and religious organisations, among others, as exemplified by the following quotes:

> We liaise with the traditional rulers… we also visit motor parks and market places for outreaches in those locations.[23]

> …we started… to campaign against child trafficking and labour… We encouraged parents, we held household sensitisation talks, we had rallies, we had psychotherapy sessions for the children that were victims of these problems that we are talking about… And … we set up a stakeholders' committee.… It comprises the Nigerian Police, the Nigerian Immigration...[24]

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20   *Ibid.*

21   V Nwogu, 'Nigeria' in M Dottridge (ed.), *Collateral Damage: The impact of anti-trafficking measures on human rights around the world*, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, Bangkok, 2007; O O Oluwaniyi, 'Internal Child Trafficking in Nigeria: Transcending legal borders' in O Agbu (ed.), *Children and Youth in the Labour Process in Africa*, CODESRIA, Dakar, 2009, pp. 81-110.

22   Nwogu, 2007, p. 158.

23   Interview, Government Official, Lagos, 19 March 2018.

24   Interview, NGO Official, Ibadan, 13 April 2018.

> *We entered radio jingles in a number of radio houses that have wide coverage… we targeted some core programmes that they listen to…*[25]

There are also popular home videos and documentaries in the country on the subject of human trafficking.[26] Additionally, some of these organisations partner with youth organisations (like the National Youth Service Corps) and secondary schools to establish anti-trafficking clubs to prevent trafficking among young people. The idea is that classmates or peers can detect cases of trafficking more easily and *'in fact, they can go to places that we cannot go to because we are busy with office work'.*[27]

Awareness campaigns also involve partnerships between NGOs and security agencies. NGO and NAPTIP officials explained that their sensitisation programmes also target security personnel to alert them on the tactics of traffickers and how to handle them.[28] Thus, awareness campaigns are also supplemented by an increase in surveillance and raids by security operatives. According to participants, NIS officials also visit markets and other public places to arrest adolescent domestic workers as a preventive measure. In addition, NIS officers admitted that with the free movement of people in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), it is difficult to monitor or control everyone.[29]

Awareness campaigns are often supported by 'empowerment programmes', i.e. income-generating activities proposed by some NGOs as alternatives to children working in domestic service. However, the fact that NGOs' funds are often limited means that there is usually little or no follow-up after the short-term lifecycle of such projects. One NGO representative told me of a project that they executed in Shaki town in 2002 to assist residents in generating income and stop them from sending their children out to work. Back then, it was lauded as a success model,[30] but a few years later, the town is still believed to be a 'trafficking hub'.[31] A major reason for this is that while empowerment programmes may help locals start small businesses, they often fail to take into account the shocks and downturns they are susceptible to, or the (near) absence of basic infrastructures such as good roads and electricity that affect the marketing of their products. For farmers, for example, the problems of preservation and marketing of their crops, and the

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[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Nwogu, 2014

[27] Interview, NGO Official, Abuja, 23 March 2018.

[28] Interview, Government Official, Lagos, 5 March 2018; Interview NGO Official, Abuja, 23 March 2018; Interview, NGO Official, Ibadan 13 April 2018.

[29] Interview, Government Official, Ibadan, 5 March 2018.

[30] Interview, NGO Official, Lagos, 5 March 2018.

[31] Adesina, 2014.

fluctuations in the prices of agricultural products make them vulnerable and susceptible to economic shocks—a major reason why some send their children into domestic service during the 'lean months or years'.[32]

Furthermore, in all cases, although NGO and government offices were laced with campaign posters and anti-trafficking materials, there were no such materials in public places in urban centres or anywhere in the rural areas. When I asked one official if they ever considered that their radio and TV programmes might not be reaching the people in the villages who may not have access to TV or even electricity, as my observation in the villages shows, she went on to explain that *'Seriously, government is the one saddled with such responsibilities* [of providing basic amenities]…' on one hand, and on the other, that the local government or the community do *'employ the services of town criers in such cases'.*[33]

In this regard, campaigners do not seem to understand that their approach is lopsided at best—they are not addressing the supply side of 'trafficking' simply because most of their programmes are concentrated in urban centres as opposed to rural areas where many young domestic workers originate from.[34] Most NGOs are based in urban centres, and their activities depend on funding and/or donors' agendas.[35] As a result, they only visit rural areas when the opportunity presents itself. Beyond their limited geographical scope, the reduction of trafficking to an attitudinal problem as stated above means that much of the campaigning is underlined by the assumption that awareness would necessarily translate into a meaningful behavioural change. To assess how these messages are received by the intended beneficiaries, I sought the views of adolescents, parents and adults in some of the communities I visited. I asked them about their knowledge on the phenomenon of trafficking and what campaign strategies mean to them.

## Perception of 'Trafficking' by 'Victims' and the 'Ignorant'

I found that, contrary to popular rhetoric, most of the parents and children had fairly good knowledge of what is commonly called 'trafficking' or 'modern slavery', even if they did not view their situations as such. For example, in one group discussion, several adolescent workers were asked whether they knew anything

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[32] Interview, Village Group 1, Ego village, 11 January 2018; Interviews, Owo village, 29 March 2018.

[33] Interview, NGO Official, Ibadan, 13 April 2018.

[34] ILO, *Rural-Urban Migrants Employed in Domestic Work: Issues and challenges*, Briefing note no. 5, Dar es Salaam, 2013.

[35] Nwogu, 2014.

about child trafficking and/or any government policy regarding working children. Below is an excerpt of their responses:

> R2: I know of child abuse.
> R3: I know of human trafficking. Trafficking is the transportation of human beings from one country to another by means of (hmmm) maybe through the desert or any means for hard labour, slavery, sexual exploitation.

Interviewer: Then, what else?

> R1: Child rights…[36]

At another time, a former domestic worker responded:

> Yes, I do hear about such, that it is against the law…[37]

And one parent said:

> … they said that child labour or child domestic work is not good…[38]

In another instance at Ego village, while trying to explain trafficking and anti-trafficking campaigns to some adults, they all chorused:

> Everyone listens to such on the radio.[39]

Employers and intermediaries also explained to me in different ways that they were aware of these topics and the associated policies and campaigns against them. In short, although there were some participants who said they had no knowledge of trafficking, the majority demonstrated basic understanding of what they believed trafficking is and what they thought the government and/or anti-trafficking campaigners were saying. But what do they do with such information? To them, it is just that—information that does not affect them in practical ways, and one that the campaigners themselves only pay lip service to, since campaigns do not address the reasons why children are engaged in domestic service. The next section discusses how the intended beneficiaries respond to campaigns and sensitisation programmes.

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[36]    Interview, Adolescent Group 1, Ibadan, 11 May 2018.

[37]    Interview, Former child domestic worker 6, Ibadan, 26 February 2018.

[38]    Interview, Parent 6, Ibadan, 16 May 2018.

[39]    Interview, Village Group 1, Ego village, 11 January 2018. All names of individuals and villages (not the major cities) have been either changed or anonymised to protect the identity of informants. Details can be provided on request.

## Responses to Awareness Campaigns

Most respondents felt that awareness campaigns and anti-trafficking policies in general were not in their best interests, and as such they developed a range of alternatives that defy the message being passed across by campaigners. For example, for many rural dwellers, 'the city' is a land of opportunity, real or imagined, compared to the hardship and challenges of rural life. Moreover, for many rural children, their fantasy about the city is enhanced through interactions with, and observation of, returnee city dwellers, and they would readily jump at any invitation to live in the city. This is quite different from the idea of 'ignorant' and unsuspecting children and parents being tricked by traffickers as the dominant literature on CDW often explains:[40] it is a choice often made in consideration of potential benefits and actual costs. Victoria, for example, recollected how she left for the city, where she now works in domestic service:

> *During our church camp meetings in the village, people from the city do come and I do observe the way they relate with us, the way they dress, the way they speak English, and all that… there are also people that come to the village during Christmas that would bring gifts for their parents, and go around greeting everybody. So, I have always been impressed by that, and I do tell myself that I would be doing that in the future, too.*[41]

When an opportunity came through a woman who would 'take care' of her and send her to school in the city while she would assist the woman at home, she did not hesitate. Even though it was her parents' and grandparents' decision, she said *'I liked it, too; I was looking forward to coming to the city'.*

This challenges some of the dominant assumptions and stereotypes of anti-trafficking campaigns[42] of a wily trafficker painting rosy pictures to deceive unsuspecting parents and/or children. Indeed, for all participants in my study, there was not a single case of a person being recruited as part of a group, or being promised 'big stuff' like cars or huge sums of money, as claimed by government and NGO-run campaigns. Rather, young people are in domestic service, in some cases, for basic sustenance and education, and in other cases, particularly for rural migrants or those from neighbouring West African countries, because it offers them opportunities for a better life.

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[40]   See, for example: ILO, 2004; UNESCO, 2006.

[41]   Interview, Former child domestic worker 9, Ibadan, 2 March 2018.

[42]   See, for example: UNESCO, 2006; Adesina, 2014.

In the latter case, and as the example of Victoria above shows, the status that migrants command in the village may serve as motivations for others to desire to migrate.[43] This explains why children themselves (or their parents) may decide to look for an intermediary that will facilitate their migration for work. Thus, in almost all cases, migration decisions and recruitment were not through 'a closely-knitted and organised network', as it is popularly presented, but through informal channels such as extended family members, church members, Christian missionaries, neighbours, customers or clients, etc.

Also, like Victoria, other respondents explained that the prospects of being educated or raising capital for future businesses, which working in domestic service offered them, was more realistic than 'what the government is saying'. According to one young girl:

> I was living with my mum before. But there was no money, no means of sending me to school. If I were staying with them, there is no way I would be going to school.[44]

A former domestic worker, who is now a trained tailor, said:

> … I think that kind of job is just a temporary thing—a stepping stone to have something better to do in life… I cannot tell my younger one for example not to work for money now. He does not have anything to do now, and if he wants to go to school, there is no money for him to go to school… it is only a stepping-stone; a temporary work till he is able to learn a trade or something.[45]

Given the above, a recurring theme in my interactions with government and NGO officials was how some children (with or without the support of their parents) could be relentless in their attempts to migrate and/or work. The officials explained to me that even when potential young migrants had been repeatedly warned against migrating for work, and were subsequently arrested and reunited with their families, they almost always found ways to return to work.[46]

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[43] See, among others: S Castle and A Diarra, *The International Migration of Young Malians: Tradition, necessity or rite of passage?*, Research Report, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, 2003; A De Lang, 'Child Labour Migration and Trafficking in Rural Burkina Faso', *International Migration*, vol. 45, issue 2, 2007, pp. 147-167, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2007.00407.x.

[44] Interview, Child domestic worker 12, Ibadan, 26 February 2018.

[45] Interview, Former (young) domestic worker 6, Ibadan, 26 February 2018.

[46] Interview, Government Official, Ibadan, 5 March 2018; Interview, NGO Official, Ibadan 13 April 2018.

However, for potential young migrants or domestic workers (and/or their parents), such actions are normal responses to messages of anti-trafficking campaigns that may be described as almost irrelevant to them and as removed from their lived realities. Individuals explore different channels, both legal and illegal,[47] of migration and finding jobs when the official narrative does not address their needs. A study of anti-trafficking discourses and policies in Benin confirms this finding of (potential) young migrants seeking alternative means of migration when or where the legal channels are criminalised.[48]

Likewise, the idea that parents are often unaware of what their children do or the conditions they live under did not reflect the situation of my interviewees. Many domestic workers explained that in some cases when they had complained to their parents, they were encouraged to continue to 'endure' till they could get another job, or another means of sustenance or education—depending on their reasons for engaging in domestic service:

> *They always encourage me to endure till I complete my senior secondary school.*[49]

According to one parent, speaking in relation to her two children in domestic service:

> *Sometimes, they may not be properly fed; they may be physically assaulted at work, and in some cases, they may not give them what they need in school. So, it is not as if all is perfect where they are, but they know that things are even worse at home in terms of basic provisions, so they'd rather endure whatever ill-treatment they face there, and they don't even tell me some of these things.*[50]

These accounts show that the decisions to keep children in supposedly negative environments or to withdraw them are not taken lightly or presumptuously by the parents, but in considerations of the (immediate and future welfare of the child.[51]

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[47] These, according to respondents may include migrating through illegal routes, bribing officials at the borders, or bribing officials during raids. These often lead to additional costs that could potentially contribute to the exploitation of child domestic workers.

[48] N Howard, 'Accountable to Whom? Accountable for what? Understanding anti-child trafficking discourse and policy in southern Benin', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 1, 2012, pp. 43—59, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201213.

[49] Interview, Adolescent domestic worker 25, Ibadan, 28 February 2018.

[50] Interview, Parent 2, Ibadan, 28 January 2018.

[51] I Hashim, and D Thorsen, *Child Migration in Africa*, Zed Books, London and New York, 2011.

Similar to the above, it was made clear to me that when cases of extreme exploitation, such as non-payment of wages, are discovered, people do not report them to government agencies for fear of being misunderstood and/or prosecuted themselves, or even their children being deprived of the means of livelihood. An elderly woman in one of the villages explained:

> *You know with the government's stance that children should not be in domestic service again… they are saying children should not be lured into slavery now. So, you cannot go to report such to the law enforcement agents; such matters are usually resolved among the parties involved.*[52]

While this means that children and parents have ways of escaping exploitation, it also means that elements of exploitation by some intermediaries cannot be checked, as they are not reported. As other studies have shown, legislation or specific interventions against working children in general can actually have negative consequences on the children and their families.[53]

Overall, when I presented some of the challenges that rural dwellers and children in domestic service (or their parents) raised with me to NGO and government officials, both were evasive in their responses. For example, as much as they agreed that poverty is a major contributing factor, when I asked NGO officials about poverty, I got responses like the following:

> *No doubt government has failed Nigerians as far as addressing poverty is concerned, but…*[54]

Or when I asked a government official, I was told:

> *That (poverty question) is not a matter for Immigration!*[55]

The above shows the politics of awareness creation—one that hides (or seeks to hide) the realities and constraints faced by the poorest or most vulnerable individuals under the guise of their ignorance, as I discuss in the next section.

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[52] Interview, Village Group 1, Ego village, 11 January 2018.

[53] See, among others: M Jacquemin, 'Can the Language of Rights Get Hold of the Complex Realities of Child Domestic Work? The case of young domestic workers in Abidjan', *Childhood*, vol. 13, issue 3, 2006, pp. 389-406, https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568206066358.

[54] Interview, NGO Official, Abuja, 23 March 2018.

[55] Interview, Government Official, Ibadan, 17 April 2018. The official here meant that the issue of poverty is beyond the purview of his agency (the NIS).

## Discussion and Conclusion

Although there has been a great deal of media attention and awareness creation, this has not resulted in enhanced knowledge of, or effective policies to tackle trafficking and child domestic work; rather it has resulted in the production of certain kinds of ignorance.[56] This is because campaigns are often about 'individualizing explanations and exceptionalizing representations of trafficking'[57] while ignoring macro-level realities that confront parents and children. Thus, questions should go beyond asking what parents and/or their children do or do not know about trafficking to how and why they do not know what they do not know—do they not want or prefer not to know? To put it differently, is it the outcome of the lack of information or of how the information is presented? Arguably, it is the latter.

For poor or the most vulnerable people, the problem is not just that they are faced with poverty, but that the circumstances contributing to their poverty are not addressed. For these individuals, it is not a matter of 'not knowing', as anti-trafficking campaigners claim, but of how the alternatives available to them are depicted. To them, awareness campaigns without any formal support system do nothing to help them alleviate their respective situations, and they would rather stick with the means of survival—a form of social protection—that CDW serves them. On the other hand, for those who are in domestic service for reasons other than absolute deprivation, it simply makes no sense to tell them not to work when it represents the best means to fulfil their life projects.

As one agnotological critique[58] of the UK Centre for Social Justice's work on welfare and poverty shows, presenting trafficking as a problem of ignorance means deflecting attention away from the reality of structures and processes within which exploitation occurs. Thus, the structural causes of trafficking are strategically ignored in favour of a single problem, of ignorance, to be tackled by 'awareness creation'. By ignoring such structural constraints, awareness creation creates doubts and uncertainties for the general public about the difficulties faced by children in domestic service and/or their parents, as some of the responses above show. As the head of the anti-trafficking unit of a government agency in one of the sites explained when asked about the challenges with anti-trafficking efforts in general,

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[56]   J Mendel and K Sharapov, 'Human Trafficking and Online Networks: Policy, analysis, and ignorance', *Antipode*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2016, pp. 665–684, https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12213.

[57]   K Sharapov and J Mendel, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Made and cut to measure? Anti-trafficking docufictions and the production of anti-trafficking truths', *Cultural Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2018, pp. 540–560, p. 544, https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975518788657.

[58]   Slater, 2014.

the issue relates to wider social structures where people do not have access to quality education, decent employment and social protections. To him, campaigns and the actions of the government amount to 'killing the tree by cutting the foliage instead of uprooting it.'[59]

Further, as Kempadoo has argued,[60] anti-trafficking campaigns do not learn from and respect the views of those classified as 'victims'—in this case, children in domestic service and/or their parents—about their lives and work situations. Instead, their views are presented as uninformed, and they are depicted as incapable of knowing, at least not without help from 'the experts'.

What the above has shown is that the ignorance assumption that drives awareness campaigns is greatly flawed because it distorts the realities of young domestic workers and/or their parents and misrepresents their motivations for entering into domestic service. While this article acknowledges that there are exploitative practices in CDW, it also argues that it presents a viable alternative for many households to navigate their disadvantaged positions in a structure of inequality and a society without any formal support system or social protection. Although organisations like the ILO have identified the significance of social protection in addressing poverty, economic vulnerabilities, business shocks, etc. as factors driving children to work,[61] these do not become the subjects of campaigns. This is why such campaigns do not seem to have any impact on the poorest households and/ or potential young migrants or labourers. To them, NGOs and government agencies should not be 'creating awareness' when they themselves do not seem to be aware of the grinding poverty of young migrants and their families or the limited opportunities available to them.

The lingering question for anti-trafficking campaigners is this: if poverty is identified as a root cause or contributing factor to children being sent by their parents or deciding for themselves to work in domestic work, which makes them vulnerable for exploitation and child trafficking, how do awareness campaigns address the issue of poverty? As has been observed,[62] although information about trafficking is useful, Nigeria as a country is already saturated with it; the fact that information does nothing to address the reasons for migration makes it even less effective as a means of preventing trafficking—for domestic work or otherwise.

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[59] Interview, Government Official, Ibadan, 17 April 2018.

[60] K Kempadoo, 'The Modern-Day White (Wo)Man's Burden: Trends in anti-trafficking and anti-slavery campaigns', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2015, pp. 8-20, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1006120.

[61] ILO, 'World Report', 2013.

[62] Nwogu, 2014.

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# Introducing the Slave Next Door

*Jen Birks and Alison Gardner*

## Abstract

Past studies have indicated that the British public consider human trafficking to be remote from their personal experiences. However, an increase in local press reporting, alongside the emergence of locally co-ordinated anti-modern slavery campaigns, is starting to encourage communities to recognise the potential for modern slavery and human trafficking to exist in their own localities. In this article, we examine how local media and campaigns may be influencing public perceptions of modern slavery and human trafficking. We draw upon a content analysis of local newspapers to review how reports represent cases of modern slavery, and use focus group discussions to understand how local coverage modifies—and sometimes reinforces—existing views. We find that, whilst our participants were often surprised to learn that cases of modern slavery and human trafficking had been identified in their area, other stereotypical associations remained entrenched, such as a presumed connection between modern slavery and irregular migration. We also noted a reluctance to report potential cases, especially from those most sympathetic to potential victims, linked to concerns about adequacy of support for survivors and negative consequences relating to immigration. These concerns suggest that the UK's 'hostile environment' to migrants may be undermining the effectiveness of 'spot the signs' campaigns, by discouraging individuals from reporting.

## Introduction

Evidence on public perceptions of human trafficking in the United Kingdom (UK) suggests that the majority of people associate it with illicit and criminal activity at the margins of society; studies agree that around four in five people are familiar with the term, although understandings are varied and partial.[1] Sharapov shows that the strongest associations revolve around the movement of people, sexual exploitation, slavery, and crime and illegality, meaning that survey respondents considered trafficking to be an issue without relevance or proximity to their daily lives. The vast majority (72% in Sharapov's report[2] and 79% in Dando *et al.*) report that trafficking does not directly affect them. As Sharapov puts it: 'human trafficking remains separated from the immediate economic, social or ethical universe of the "normal" person's life' with the result that individuals—and societies—tend to ignore structural and societal drivers of the problem such as the demand for cheap goods and services.

Yet, increasingly, local statutory services, media coverage and local awareness campaigns are challenging the idea that such crimes are remote occurrences, by highlighting local cases as part of 'place-based' campaigns against modern slavery. This article explores the extent to which more localised representations of modern slavery and human trafficking impact upon that sense of detachment amongst members of the public. We utilise both the terms 'modern slavery' and 'human trafficking' as both are prevalent (and used interchangeably) in the UK media and public discourses, which in recent years have been influenced by the framing of the 2015 *Modern Slavery Act* and accompanying government policy.[3] Whilst we understand that the value of the term 'modern slavery' is contested and there

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[1]   K Sharapov, *Understanding Public Knowledge and Attitudes towards Trafficking in Human Beings, Part 1*, Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, 2014 p. 25, retrieved 8 December 2018, https://cps.ceu.edu/publication/working-papers/ up-kat-public-knowledge-attitudes-towards-thb; C J Dando, D Walsh and R Brierley, 'Perceptions of Psychological Coercion and Human Trafficking in the West Midlands of England: Beginning to know the unknown', *PLOS ONE*, vol. 11, no. 5, 2016, pp. 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0153263.

[2]   K Sharapov, *Understanding Public Knowledge and Attitudes towards Trafficking in Human Beings, Part 2*, Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, 2015, p. 10, https://cps.ceu.edu/publication/working-papers/up-kat-public-knowledge-at- titudes-towards-thb-2.

[3]   Under the *Modern Slavery Act*, modern slavery serves as an umbrella term, encompass- ing offences of human trafficking as well as slavery, servitude and forced or compul- sory labour (Ss1 and 2).

is variance in social and legal interpretations,[4] our focus on the UK means that it is essential to engage with this terminology.

Following the adoption of the 2015 *Modern Slavery Act*, police and criminal justice responses to modern slavery have come under scrutiny,[5] and an increase in attention to the problem by local police forces has resulted in rising numbers of arrests and increased referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the government's support framework for victims.[6] This has, in turn, prompted an uptick in coverage from local press and media, with one East Midlands newspaper publishing more than seven times as many stories on modern slavery and trafficking in 2017 than in 2016 (see below for further analysis).

In addition, previous research by Gardner *et al.* identified 42 examples of local multi-agency anti-modern slavery partnerships in the UK, most of which list training and awareness-raising amongst their activities.[7] The UK Home Office also invested in an awareness campaign in 2014 ('Modern Slavery is closer than you think') and local areas have extended this work with targeted campaigns such as Manchester's 'Would you?' (recognise the signs of modern slavery) campaign, or Nottingham's pledge to become a 'slavery-free' city and community.[8] This local action is underpinned by academic literature highlighting examples of exploitation

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[4]   See: J O'Connell Davidson, *Modern Slavery: The margins of freedom*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2015, and J Chuang, 'The Challenges and Perils of Reframing Trafficking as "Modern Day Slavery"', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 5, 2015, pp. 146–149, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121559.

[5]   HMICFRS, *Stolen Freedom: The policing response to modern slavery and human trafficking*, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, London, 2017, https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/stolen-freedom-the-policing-response-to-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking.pdf.

[6]   For statistics on referrals to the NRM, see National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics', http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/national-referral-mechanism-statistics. The number of people entering the NRM rose steadily from 1,746 in 2012–13 to 5,145 in 2017, and 6,993 in 2018, although NRM statistics are not an accurate reflection of the prevalence of modern slavery and human trafficking, as many adults choose not to engage with the system.

[7]   A Gardner *et al., Collaborating for Freedom: Anti-slavery partnerships in the UK*, University of Nottingham, 2017, http://iascmap.nottingham.ac.uk/CollaboratingforFreedom.pdf.

[8]   A Gardner, 'How the home of Robin Hood is trying to free itself of modern slavery', *Independent Online*, 2 October 2017, retrieved 8 December 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/how-the-home-of-robin-hood-is-trying-to-free-itself-of-modern-slavery-a8011481.html.

within the UK[9] and encouraging us to recognise the possible existence of the 'slave next door'.[10] Visual representations, such as Amy Romer's photographic series 'The Dark Figure', also serve to highlight the mundane character of UK sites associated with identified cases of modern slavery and human trafficking, featuring images of industrial estates, suburban streets, and rural settings which resonate in many local contexts.[11]

But to what degree does this local framing contribute to challenging perceptions about the remote-ness of modern slavery, and moving the conversation towards a more nuanced understanding of the problem, as one which is connected to our everyday lives?[12] One academic critique of media representation and awareness-raising campaigns is that they tend to reinforce a narrow view of modern slavery—often associated with sexual exploitation.[13] However, these analyses of press and media stories on modern slavery and human trafficking generally focus on national

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9    See, for instance: G Craig, 'Modern Slavery in the UK: The contribution of research', *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2014, pp. 159–164, https://doi.or g/10.1332/175982714X13971194144714 and H Lewis, P Dwyer, S Hodkinson and L Waite, *Precarious Lives,* Report funded by the ESRC, University of Leeds and University of Salford, Leeds, 2013, https://precariouslives.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/precarious_lives_main_report_2-7-13.pdf.

10   K Bales and R Soodalter, *The Slave Next Door*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2009.

11   See The Dark Figure* Mapping modern slavery in Britain, http://www.thedarkfigure. co.uk/the-dark-figure.

12   Sharapov and Mendel highlight the importance of linking 'everyday lives, values and social problems' as a means to stimulate new thinking about the personal relevance of otherwise remote social problems. See K Sharapov and J Mendel, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Made and cut to measure? Anti-trafficking docufictions and the production of anti-trafficking truths', *Cultural Sociology*, vol. 12, issue 4, 2018, pp. 540–560, https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975518788657. This concept also relates to the broad tradition of the sociology of everyday lives, which explores the connections between macro theory and micro-level practice and behaviours. D Kalekin-Fishman, 'Sociology of Everyday Life', *Current Sociology Review*, vol. 61, no. 5-6, 2013, pp. 714–732, https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392113482112.

13   See D M Marchionni, 'International Human Trafficking: An analysis of the US and British press', *International Communication Gazette*, vol. 74, no. 2, 2012, pp. 145–158, https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048511432600 and E O'Brien, 'Human Trafficking Heroes and Villains: Representing the problem in anti-trafficking awareness campaigns', *Social and Legal Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2016, pp. 205–224, https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663915593410.

rather than local-level press coverage.[14]

By contrast, this study combines a media content analysis and focus-group discussions to look at representations of modern slavery and human trafficking in the local media of the UK's East Midlands region, and the reception of those media representations by members of the public. It examines the degree to which certain myths and misconceptions are maintained at local level, and how the nature of local reporting maintains or challenges those myths. Whilst confirming findings that members of the public are confused about recognising modern slavery, it suggests that local campaigns can help frame a broader understanding of the issue.[15] It also notes that even amongst those sympathetic to potential victims, discomfort with immigration policy and a fear of increasing vulnerability may be discouraging some members of the public from acting as the 'eyes and ears'[16] to 'spot the signs' of modern slavery.

## Significance of Local Press and Broadcast Media Responses

Previous research has suggested that TV and newspapers are significant sources of information on human trafficking for UK audiences.[17] Whilst local press circulations have been falling in recent years, many local papers still retain a presence in community life, and provide a trusted source of local news, in hard copy and online. The UK government has also recognised the significance of local media, recently requiring the BBC to contribute to resourcing local journalism

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[14]   See, for instance: R Sanford, D E Martínez and R Weitzer, 'Framing Human Trafficking: A content analysis of recent US newspaper articles', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, pp. 139–155, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.110734 1; A Johnston, B Friedman and M Sobel, 'Framing an Emerging Issue: How US print and broadcast news media covered sex trafficking, 2008–2012', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2015, pp. 235–254, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.20 14.993876; and M Sobel, B Friedman and A Johnston, 'Sex Trafficking as a News Story: Evolving structure and reporting strategies', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2017, pp. 43–59, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2017.1401426.

[15]   Dando *et al.*

[16]   See US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* 2018, which discusses the role of local communities in anti-trafficking as the 'eyes, ears and hearts of the places they call home', p. 2, retrieved 4 April 2019, https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2018.

[17]   Sharapov, 2014, p. 29.

through the Local Democracy Reporting Service.[18]

Local media is important to local anti-trafficking initiatives such as those in Nottingham and Manchester because events and awareness-raising are more likely to attain media coverage locally than nationally. Furthermore, there can be political implications to the impact of local campaigns, as it is often local, rather than national, politicians who allocate relevant front-line resources to training, enforcement, awareness-raising and survivor support services. As a recent police inspectorate report highlighted, an absence of political attention to modern slavery and human trafficking is sometimes attributed to the perceptions that the local electorate does not see the issue as a problem,[19] so if local media contribute to raising public concern about modern slavery, resources will potentially follow.

Research has shown development in the way that modern slavery and human trafficking are represented in press coverage over time. Both Marchionni[20] and Sanford *et al.*[21] find a tendency for early reports to be dominated by government perspectives and a focus on individual stories of victims, with a resulting over-emphasis on sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children, as compared to individuals whose experiences of exploitation do not fit the mould of an 'ideal' or 'legitimate' victim.[22] The popular press typically uses simplified victim framing, with victims frequently characterised as passive and vulnerable women, who have been deceived (rather than more complex stories that explore individual agency and choice).[23] However, later studies describe a more critical framing of the issue, which emerged as legislation matured and the issue became more widely understood.[24] These studies found an increase in debates on why trafficking occurs and discussions of appropriate strategies for intervention, including a greater critique of law and policy.

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[18]   Information on the service can be found at https://www.bbc.com/lnp/ldrs. Commentary on the role and significance of the scheme was published in 2019 by the Department for Culture Media and Sport as *The Cairncross Review: A Sustainable Future for Journalism,* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779882/021919_DCMS_Cairncross_Review_.pdf.

[19]   HMICFRS.

[20]   Marchionni.

[21]   Sanford, Martínez and Weitzer, p. 141.

[22]   S Rodríguez-López, '(De)Constructing Stereotypes: Media representations, social perceptions, and legal responses to human trafficking', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2018, pp. 61–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2018.1423447.

[23]   J Langer, *Tabloid Television: Popular journalism and the 'other news'*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006, pp. 79–80.

[24]   Johnston, Friedman and Sobel, and Sobel, Friedman and Johnston.

Although this trajectory suggests that media framing of trafficking and modern slavery is becoming more nuanced as time goes on, there are some key issues for transferability of lessons to the local level. As Sanford *et al.* point out, journalists who regularly cover the same area or topic ('beat reporting') tend to be desk-based and more reliant on press releases and publicity events[25] than the elite national press, which can devote resources to longer investigative and analytical studies. In Sanford's view, beat reporting makes greater use of 'official' sources of information such as policy documents, and is less likely to offer critical perspectives on government policy.[26] In the context of resource-challenged local media in the UK, this is a pattern we might realistically expect to observe in local press reports.

Another concern about media representations of modern slavery is that they tend to reproduce and reinforce existing myths about modern slavery and human trafficking, which persist in society.[27] Andrijasevic and Mai argue that trafficking representations should not be seen as 'free-floating' but 'embedded within narrative tropes and discursive constructions about gender, sexuality, race and class that are culturally, geopolitically and historically specific'.[28] Examples of common assumptions include the conflation of human trafficking and people smuggling; a belief that it does not happen in developed nations; that it is usually associated with sex work or irregular migration; and that an element of consent or payment means that trafficking has not occurred.[29] Sharapov's research shows clear associations in public perception between trafficking and people movement, sexual exploitation, and illegality.[30] In order for local media to create a less remote narrative of 'the slave next door', it must therefore challenge, rather than underpin, such myths.

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[25]  See also B Franklin (ed.), *Local Journalism and Local Media: Making the local news*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005.

[26]  Sanford, Martínez and Weitzer.

[27]  See S Hall, 'Encoding/decoding', in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (ed.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working papers in cultural studies, 1972–79*, Hutchinson, London, 1980, pp. 128–38 and D Morley, *The Nationwide Audience*, British Film Institute, London, 1980. These studies found that audiences responded differently to the same media content, accepting, negotiating or rejecting the dominant meaning encoded in the text, depending on their prior knowledge, experience, critical skills, class identification and political beliefs.

[28]  R Andrijasevic and N Mai, 'Editorial: Trafficking in Representations: Understanding the recurring appeal of victimhood and slavery in neoliberal times', *Anti Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 1–10, p. 5, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121771.

[29]  K C Cunningham and L D Cromer, 'Attitudes About Human Trafficking: Individual differences related to belief and victim blame', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2016, pp. 228–244, https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514555369, and Polaris, 'Myths & Facts', n.d., https://humantraffickinghotline.org/what-human-trafficking/myths-misconceptions.

[30]  Sharapov, 2014.

## Methodology

This article draws upon ongoing exploratory research in the East Midlands region of the UK to understand whether local place-based initiatives on modern slavery and human trafficking are influencing local media reporting and public perceptions. The East Midlands was interesting partly because of its internal contrasts in anti-modern slavery campaign activity. Derbyshire had been an early actor on the modern slavery agenda, being one of the first counties in the UK to establish a multi-agency approach to awareness-raising, victim identification and response. Nottinghamshire had also established a partnership in late 2016, which promoted its work through a public commitment to a 'slavery-free community'. Other parts of the region had little or no multi-agency work when we started the research. We therefore conducted an analysis of news reporting over a two-year period from January 2016 to December 2017 to understand whether local campaigns were influencing press coverage.

The sample comprised 148 articles returned in a Nexis database search on 'modern slavery' and on 'human trafficking' in five local newspapers, excluding passing references. The main city or county newspaper for each of the main counties in the East Midlands was selected.[31] All articles were imported into NVivo, where news sources and themes were coded to determine what aspects of modern slavery and human trafficking were highlighted and which groups in society were driving that framing.

The sample reflects a general growth in coverage of the issue of modern slavery in the East Midlands press between 2016 and 2017 (see Figure 1 below). In part, this can be explained by an increase in detection efforts by police forces following the introduction of the *Modern Slavery Act* in 2015, but the impact has been uneven across the region. The Nottingham Post and Derby Telegraph lead the region in the amount of reporting on modern slavery and have registered the greatest year-on-year increases in coverage other than the Lincolnshire Echo, which had started from a very low base.

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[31] The East Midlands comprises Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Rutland. Rutland has been excluded from the sample as one of the smallest counties in the UK, lacking a sizeable city or county newspaper.
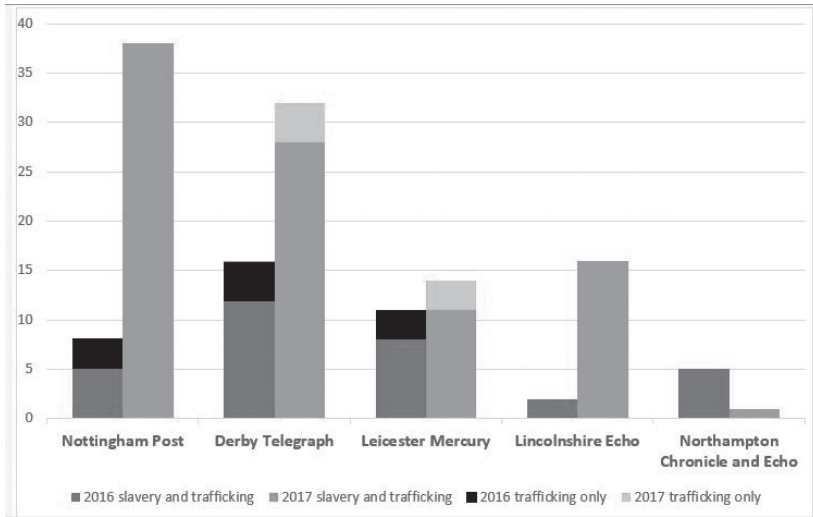
Figure 1: Newspaper sample – number of articles by year

Focus groups were then conducted as a means to understand whether different aspects of press coverage confirmed or challenged attitudes and shared meanings. The intention of this qualitative approach was not to produce results that could be generalised to a population, but rather to test whether local reports confirmed or challenged attitudes to trafficking that we expected our groups to exhibit, based on the literature.[32] Participants were first asked about their existing understanding of the issue and their associations with it, as well as the sources of those impressions. They were then shown selected media reporting of the issue, one news report with a crime and enforcement angle, an editorial demonising the perpetrators of modern slavery as 'human parasites', and a longer piece that included material on public responsibilities and a personal account from a survivor. We were then able to see how participants processed new information that might contradict prior assumptions, as well as identify limitations with the media reporting in terms of confusion and unanswered questions.

Three focus groups were conducted, with 17 participants in total, gender balanced and all resident in Nottingham. We wanted to test how groups with differing levels of familiarity with modern slavery and human trafficking responded to the reporting. The first group was recruited through Nottingham Citizens, the local branch of Citizens UK, which has had some involvement with anti-modern slavery campaigning and therefore represents an older and a more engaged public. There

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[32] For a discussion of generalising to theory rather than populations, see R K Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods,* 2nd edition, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1994.

were also further participants at this group recruited through the Call for Participants online tool. As a whole, this group was more diverse in ethnicity than the other groups, and four participants were born overseas (in Europe, Southeast Asia, the Arab peninsula and North Africa). It became clear in the first stage of the focus group that some participants (involved with the Church and a local refugee charity) were more familiar with the concept than the others, so the group was split in two (more familiar FG1a, mainly from Nottingham Citizens, and less familiar FG1b, mainly from Call for Participants). Focus Groups 2 and 3 were entirely white British. FG2, comprised of students, was recruited through internal advertising within the university. Finally, to identify a less-engaged (not self-selecting) working-age group outside higher-education, we recruited FG3 from a group of participants that knew each other from a local climbing centre, recognising that group cohesion is important to exploring difficult and sensitive topics.[33]

## Reporting Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in the East Midlands Press

The content analysis showed that the terms 'modern slavery' and 'human trafficking' both featured in press reports, but the former is gradually replacing the latter as time moves on. Where a definition was offered in the reports, both trafficking and modern slavery were frequently associated with the issue of migration, as well as criminality. However, whilst human trafficking was conflated with people smuggling (in three articles in the Derby Telegraph), modern slavery was more likely to be framed in terms of forced labour, with less emphasis on immigration offences. Furthermore, there were also examples of modern slavery being presented as a social justice issue, especially in the areas where there had been campaigning activity. There was a sixfold increase in the volume of reporting on anti-modern slavery initiatives in 2017 that kept pace with the overall growth in coverage, although the proportion focused on business responsibilities had fallen.

In 2016, modern slavery was largely raised in passing as one of the new challenges for police forces to tackle in the context of limited resources; whereas in 2017, there was a dramatic increase in specific cases (from under a tenth of overall volume to over half), and a shift from arrests (down from almost half of crime-focused volume to 15.5%) to court reporting (up from 1.9% to 52.4%). Interestingly, despite being one of the first newspapers to pick up the issue of

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[33]   T O Nyumba *et al.,* 'The Use of Focus Group Discussion Methodology', *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, vol. 9, issue 1, 2018, pp. 20–32, https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-210X.12860.w.

modern slavery in the abstract, the Derby Telegraph was slow to frame specific arrests and court cases in these terms, describing two modern slavery cases in terms of the specific trafficking offences ('conspiracy to arrange travel with the view to exploitation').

The most marked outcome of the increase in reporting of modern slavery cases was an increase in human interest angles. Human interest news stories are often associated with sensationalist reporting, and there was some evidence of discourses vilifying the perpetrators with shocking details of their lavish lifestyles in contrast with the poor conditions in which victims were kept. However, these kinds of news stories can also convey the significance of the issue to audiences and give a voice to those affected.[34] In the press sample, just under a quarter of human interest coverage drew on survivors' own accounts (compared to a fifth from police and legal sources), including a woman who had set up a charity supporting fellow survivors (in the Nottingham Post), and a British man who had been trafficked within the UK when sleeping rough in London (in the Lincolnshire Echo). The majority of the 'victim's plight' framing came from eyewitnesses, largely from police interviews and court reporting. Neighbours' reactions were particularly prominent in the Derby Telegraph (44.4% of human interest, compared to 8.5% on average across the five newspapers), and did pick up the question of why they had not reported their concerns to the police.

The shift toward court reporting also led to a shift in the types of cases that were specified in coverage. In 2016, police sources dominated and their definitions of modern slavery would include sexual exploitation, but, when court reporting began to drive the agenda, the big cases involved manual labour in agriculture, construction and the warehouse of a high street retailer. Sexual exploitation therefore went from being mentioned in 71.3% of the volume on types of modern slavery in 2016 to just 9.6% in 2017; conversely, manual labour more than doubled in proportion, from 31.6% to 69%. Interestingly, sex work was the only kind of labour that appeared in articles that referred to human trafficking but not modern slavery.

Education and awareness angles declined slightly as a proportion of all coverage, but the volume nevertheless increased significantly (from 1,407 to 5,471 words of content in total across the reporting period). In the newspapers with less overall attention to modern slavery, approaches differed. In the Lincolnshire Echo there was a focus on the definition and extent of modern slavery, but nothing on the public's role and responsibilities in tackling the problem. Conversely, the Northampton Chronicle & Echo did not define modern slavery, though it did

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[34] For example, see J Birks: '"Moving Life Stories Tell us Just Why Politics Matters": Personal narratives in tabloid anti-austerity campaigns,' *Journalism,* vol. 18, no. 10, 2017, pp. 1346–1363, https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916671159.

highlight the public's responsibility to recognise the 'signs of modern slavery' in nail bars in one article on a specific campaign. Only the Nottingham Post and Derby Telegraph, however, specified in any detail what those signs were.

Furthermore, only the Derby Telegraph and Leicester Mercury gave significant attention to the responsibilities of businesses as employers. The Derby Telegraph quoted Derby's police commander at length, warning businesses that they risk arrests if they do not demonstrate 'due diligence' to ensure that workers have not been trafficked and are not being controlled. Both newspapers reported a local campaign to persuade businesses to sign up to the Athens Ethical Principles.[35] Whilst the principles themselves do not mention 'modern slavery', the term was included in the framing of the articles.

## Public Perception and Reception of Local Media Coverage

Focus group participants varied in their familiarity with the issue of modern slavery, but most had a broad sense of what it involved, although they found it difficult to define where the boundaries lay between modern slavery and other forms of labour exploitation. For example, participants raised sweatshop labour practices in China (Dante, FG1b) and Bangladesh (Sally, FG2), and other exploitative practices in the UK such as unpaid overtime (Ryan, FG3). In two cases, participants questioned these associations by identifying coercion as the distinguishing feature (Diana, FG1a, Maria, FG3). This suggested some confusion related to the more figurative uses of the term 'slavery', supporting the aforementioned critiques on the term's definition and application.

In line with the myths and misconceptions discussed above, participants in all three focus groups immediately associated modern slavery with trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced prostitution, although a surprisingly wide range of types of forced labour were also spontaneously mentioned, including in domestic work and in the construction industry. Most of the groups with lower familiarity assumed that it was something that occurred mostly or wholly elsewhere in countries with poor labour regulations, and where people might have few other options, even if they were not held against their will. They were surprised to learn from the media stimulus material that it not only occurred in the UK, but in the local area.

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[35]  For an explanation of the principles and subsequent implementation guidelines, see End Human Trafficking Now, *Luxor Implementation Guidelines to the Athens Ethical Principles: Comprehensive compliance programme for businesses*, 2006, https://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/Resources/Luxor_Implementation_Guidelines_Ethical_Principles.pdf.

When participants were aware of cases in the UK, they associated it with 'trafficking', which they defined as moving people illegally (Ryan and Anne, FG3) and explicitly conflated it with people smuggling, especially in relation to the recent 'migration crisis' from conflict zones such as Libya (Marigold, FG1a). In response to the news items, they were able to readjust their perceptions to some extent in light of the cases involving EU citizens. However, many participants in all groups were nonetheless reluctant to let go of assumptions that entrapment was usually associated with undocumented migrants without legal rights to work in the UK, commenting that victims could not go to the police because they might be deported (Tony, FG1b, William, FG2, Maria, FG3).

Whilst this conflation with people smuggling reflects the dominant myths and associations described above, the most common assumption expressed in our focus groups was that exploited individuals might be consenting to exploitation on the basis that it was preferable to conditions in their country of origin, that 'they're so desperate to leave their own country that they're thinking "well, this is much better than what I get in Lithuania" so they won't, they won't want to complain perhaps' (Shirley, FG1b; also Calum, FG2, and Ryan, FG3). This was persistently understood as a willing choice.

> 'If you think about America in the very past, those people didn't have a choice, they were forced into it, whereas modern day slavery, actually these people might be, err, willing to do it because even though it's that bad, it's still better than what they have at home'. (Dante, FG1b)

The concern most often expressed by participants from all the focus groups was that by reporting their suspicions they could actually make matters worse for that individual by getting them deported, because 'no matter how badly paid or treated, it's better than what they might get in their home country' (Calum, FG3), or by making them homeless since 'even in slavery they had somewhere to stay' (Anne, FG3). Indeed, some in FG1a recognised that those most affected by exploitation believed the police to be corrupt, and considered their choice not to report rational. This group expressed a strong preference for measures that empowered individuals to report their exploitation themselves over any surveillance role.

Most participants agreed that, in any case, the 'signs' listed in the newspaper article were unhelpfully broad. None would have felt confident to raise concerns on the basis of lots of apparently unrelated people living in one house (common to large houses locally rented as Houses of Multiple Occupancy [HMOs][36]) or

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[36]  Houses of Multiple Occupancy are residential properties in which bedrooms are rented out under separate tenancy agreements but tenants share common areas such as kitchens and bathrooms.

looking unkempt with long hair (Jo: 'That could be half of Nottingham', Ryan: 'that could be me', FG3). William worried that 'I'd feel like I was being a bit discriminatory in a way' to assume someone speaking another language at a car wash was a 'slave'. On the other hand, Diana (FG1a) identified assumptions about how Eastern Europeans choose to live as themselves discriminatory, when neighbours failed to raise the alarm about 'a dozen Polish men living in this small house and being taken off every morning' because they think 'that's just the way these people live.'

Many were surprised to learn that people could be forced to work for legitimate businesses like farms and warehouses, rather than directly for organised crime. Participants were particularly frustrated that one of the companies implicated in employing slave labour via agencies was an ethical egg brand that charges a higher price on the basis of animal welfare (Maria, FG3) and wanted to know how they could shop responsibly.

Whilst most did not spontaneously mention the responsibility of employers to ensure that workers were not exploited, when it was raised, focus group participants agreed that businesses should be more engaged in pro-active measures to reduce vulnerability and promote reporting of exploitation. However, there was some scepticism about the practicality of large corporations keeping a check on all their employees, and little challenge to the widespread use of labour agencies offering casual contracts. There was more agreement about the responsibility of employers to give information about legal rights to support individuals who wished to disclose their own exploitation. Interestingly, the one sector that two of the three groups raised as having some responsibility was not mentioned in the media coverage— namely, that banks could have measures in place to prevent people from forcing others to open accounts and then controlling their finances, though again, there were disagreements on how feasible those measures could be in practice.

## Discussion and Conclusions

It is clear that for many individuals, modern slavery is still a distant issue; despite having a general awareness, most participants were surprised that examples of exploitation could be found so close at hand. In some respects, our research confirmed expectations about local press reporting and reception—there were examples of confusing definitions, conflation of human trafficking and people smuggling, and a heavy emphasis on the criminal justice system and the role of police in addressing the issue. It was, nonetheless, interesting to see that cases framed in terms of 'modern slavery' seemed to present a more nuanced perspective on the problem as time progressed, moving from a primary association with sexual exploitation to a broader association including a range of labour abuses.

On the surface, there was a correlation in the East Midlands between areas actively pursuing local anti-modern slavery campaigns and higher levels of local press coverage, but more detailed and longitudinal research is necessary to understand whether this is a causative factor. There was also a suggestion that these areas tended to generate reports offering a thoughtful and challenging presentation of the issue that went beyond the expectations of basic 'beat reporting'. In the next stage of our research, we intend to look in greater detail at the drivers behind the framing of press releases and media reports, to understand why myths are repeated, as well as what influences coverage to adopt a social justice perspective.

Additionally, whilst some media coverage helped to dispel myths, even those focus group participants who were favourable to police intervention thought the local press focus on court reporting unhelpful. Personal narratives in survivors' own voices were found to be more revealing, and our participants wanted to know more about how people found themselves in these situations and what happened to them after their stories came to light, showing a willingness to engage beyond a reductive framing of victims' stories. Our local sample of press and media also included some more detailed stories of survivor empowerment post-exploitation, demonstrating that local press and media can help to amplify these messages. However, such examples remained the exception rather than the rule.

It was also interesting to observe that perceptions were not all about victim-blaming; indeed, our focus groups indicated that people can be sympathetic to trafficked persons and forced labourers, yet still be unwilling to report suspicions to authorities, with those who were most sympathetic also the most distrusting of the police and immigration enforcement. Participants understood that some workers chose to work under exploitative conditions, and respect for that choice, as well as a fear of worsening these people's situations, were reflected in an unwillingness to act on simplistic 'spot the signs' indicators. However, our focus group participants also recognised that making assumptions about others' willingness to accept exploitation could be discriminatory. They sought increased emphasis on enabling self-reporting, on one hand, and a more convincing picture of victim and survivor support on the other, which might persuade those who were in situations of exploitation (and potential advocates) that reporting would improve their situation. As this article was completed, a new policy was announced that could effectively place a 'firewall' or a barrier between police and UK immigration enforcement, citing comments from the head of the Modern Slavery Police Transformation Unit that police connections with communities were being compromised by perceived links to immigration.[37] However, more extensive policy shifts, such as changes to the 2016 *Immigration Act*, are needed to reshape the

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[37] V Dodd, 'Police to Stop Passing On Immigration Status of Crime Victims', *The Guardian*, 7 December 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/dec/07/police-to-stop-passing-on-immigration-status-of-victims.

existing 'hostile environment' for migrants who experience exploitation, and there are no quick fixes to public distrust in the current system.

Finally, our research accords with arguments that there are not yet enough prompts in press and media coverage on how we want society to change to undermine current drivers for modern slavery and human trafficking. Our focus group participants recognised the implications of the UK's 'hostile environment' and the importance of employer responsibility, but these received limited attention in the press. Addressing such issues in local and national press and media campaigns could provide a stronger foundation for de-normalising the conditions which allow exploitation to occur, and greater confidence for those wishing to report abuses.

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# Virtual Saviours: Digital games and anti-trafficking awareness-raising

*Erin O'Brien and Helen Berents*

## Abstract

In recent years, digital games have emerged as a new tool in human trafficking awareness-raising. These games reflect a trend towards 'virtual humanitarianism', utilising digital technologies to convey narratives of suffering with the aim of raising awareness about humanitarian issues. The creation of these games raises questions about whether new technologies will depict humanitarian problems in new ways, or simply perpetuate problematic stereotypes. This article examines three online games released in the last five years for the purpose of raising awareness about human trafficking. In analysing these games, we argue that the persistent tropes of ideal victims lacking in agency continue to dominate the narrative, with a focus on individualised problems rather than structural causes of human trafficking. However, the differing approaches taken by the games demonstrate the potential for complexity and nuance in storytelling through digital games.

## Introduction

Anti-trafficking awareness-raising has long relied on stereotypes of victims, villains and heroes to raise awareness and generate public action.[1] In recent years, such efforts have expanded from solely print or filmic formats to include digital games. This article explores three distinct digital games for anti-trafficking awareness-raising released in the last five years: the *BAN Human Trafficking* game by Balkans ACT (Against Crime of Trafficking) Now!, released for desktop and smartphone in 2014, in which players can choose to play as one of six protagonists, representing different experiences of human trafficking in Europe; the desktop game *(Un) Trafficked*, released in 2017 and promoted by the foundation of Indian Nobel Peace Prize recipient Kailash Satyarthi, in which players take on the role of a thirteen-year-old girl; and *Missing: Game for a Cause* (referred to as *Missing* in this paper), released in 2016 and developed by anti-trafficking activist Leena Kejriwal, in which players act as 'Champa', a girl held prisoner in a brothel where she must 'service' clients and attempt to escape.

Games about human trafficking are just one example of the trend towards what we term 'virtual humanitarianism'—the use of digital technologies to demonstrate, or depict, the suffering of others for the purpose of raising awareness about humanitarian issues. Virtual humanitarianism includes the development of games designed to bring attention to political issues such as those explored in this paper, as well as the use of virtual reality or simulation platforms such as the problematic virtual reality tour of Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria, hosted by Mark Zuckerberg via Facebook.[2]

Our use of the term 'virtual humanitarianism' is distinct from the field which has been termed 'digital humanitarianism'—the increasing use by humanitarian and aid organisations of digital technologies and practices to try to improve provision of aid and responses to disasters. This can include digital mapping of disaster zones such as in Typhoon Haiyan; use of biometrics by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to facilitate tracking and support of refugees on the move; algorithmic monitoring of social media following a disaster; or use of remote technologies

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[1]  E O'Brien, *Challenging the Human Trafficking Narrative: Victims, villains and heroes*, Routledge, London, 2019, p. 57; R Andrijasevic and N Mai, 'Editorial: Trafficking (in) Representations: Understanding the recurring appeal of victimhood and slavery in neoliberal times', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 1-10, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121771.

[2]  C McGoogan, 'Zuckerberg apologises for "tasteless" Puerto Rico VR video', *The Telegraph*, 11 October 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/10/10/mark-zuckerberg-criticised-tasteless-puerto-rico-vr-video. See also: V Kaussen, 'Zooming In: Virtual disaster tourism in post-earthquake Haiti', *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 64, no. 3/4, 2015, pp. 33-78.

including drones in the provision of aid.[3] Such approaches have been critiqued for re-inscribing capitalist models of aid and development, the distancing of suffering, and the subjugation of local and subaltern voices and expertise.[4] Our analysis of the advocacy and awareness-raising games explored in this paper draws on related critiques, but our focus here is more specific and distinct than this broader discussion as we are focused not on the use of digital technologies to assist or 'improve' service delivery of humanitarian aid, but rather more public-audience facing efforts to raise awareness about various forms of violence and suffering.

New technologies to communicate suffering and raise awareness can be termed 'humanitarian communication' that 'distanc[es] the spectator from the spectacle of the sufferers through [a framing device] while enabling proximity between the two through narrative and visual resources that invite our empathetic judgement toward the spectacle'.[5] In traditional forms of awareness-raising such as poster and ad campaigns, social media campaigns, and documentary storytelling (including what Sharapov and Mendel have termed 'docufictions'[6]), the audience observes the story.

For the audience of these messages, any action on their part comes as a consequence of observing messages and thus being catalysed to act by, for example, signing petitions, donating money, sharing content, or lobbying decision-makers. Some of this activity has been called 'commodity activism'.[7] For example Brough *et al.* describe it as 'the branding and consumption of humanitarian projects—and the

[3]   See, illustratively: M Duffield, 'The Resilience of the Ruins: Towards a critique of digital humanitarianism', *Resilience*, vol. 4, issue 3, 2016, pp. 147-165, https://doi.or g/10.1080/21693293.2016.1153772; K L Jacobsen, *The Politics of Humanitarian Technology: Good intentions, unintended consequences and insecurity*, Routledge, London, 2015; R Burns, 'Moments of Closure in the Knowledge Politics of Digital Humani- tarianism', *Geoforum*, vol. 53, 2014, pp. 51-62, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geofo- rum.2014.02.002; L Shanley, R Burns, Z Bastian and E Robson, 'Tweeting up a Storm: The promise and perils of crisis mapping', *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing*, vol. 79, 2013, pp. 865–879, https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2464599.

[4]   For example: Duffield; Burns.

[5]   B Irom, 'Virtual Reality and the Syrian Refugee Camps: Humanitarian communica- tion and the politics of empathy', *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 12, 2018, p. 4269. See also: L Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the age of post-humanitarianism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2013.

[6]   K Sharapov and J Mendel, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Made and cut to measure? Anti-trafficking docufictions and the production of anti-trafficking truths', *Cultural Sociology*, vol. 12, issue 4, 2018, pp. 540-560, https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975518 788657.

[7]   S Cottle and D Nolan, 'Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid–Media Field: "Everyone was dying for footage"', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 8, issue 6, 2007, pp. 862- 78, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700701556104.

humanitarian identity—as products'.[8] Extending on these forms of activism, virtual humanitarianism situates the audience within the artefact itself. The audience moves within the virtual environment, notionally 'experiencing' the problem and playing some role in directing the outcome of the story. Like other forms of awareness-raising, the audience of these games are also assumed to be motivated to take action outside of the simulation, although Waldorf notes the translation of online activism to 'offline, sustained participation' continues to be difficult.[9] As a form of narrative politics, these simulations allow the audience to engage in a more active process of 'anomalous replotting',[10] in which the audience is encouraged to imagine how the story could have been changed if things had been done differently. Even in traditional forms of awareness-raising, the audience is always able to engage their mind in anomalous replotting, but through forms of virtual humanitarianism they become participants[11] in guiding the plot.

In this article we focus on the narratives and storytelling devices used in the three examined games. This exploration allows a close examination of the ways in which digital games, as an emerging aspect of anti-trafficking awareness-raising, reflect or challenge existing stereotypes in public discourses on human trafficking; and a consideration of what the medium of digital games offers advocates for humanitarian causes. Through this analysis, we argue that while digital games may offer opportunities for extending the impact of anti-trafficking awareness-raising, the games examined here demonstrate that, just like other coverage of the issue of human trafficking, digital games can also reinforce damaging stereotypes and perpetuate limited stories about victims, perpetrators and saviours.

## Games as Awareness-Raising Tools

Digital games—whether played on a console or on the phone in your pocket—have been hailed as a new form of technology, a new way to tell stories, often as something *more* than other mediums like print or film. Digital games that explore political events and other issues—whether real or fictionalised—have proliferated in recent years. These include games like *Papers, Please*, in which players act as

8    M Brough, '"Fair Vanity"' in R Mukherjee and S Banet-Weiser (eds.), *Commodity Activism: Cultural resistance in neoliberal times*, New York University Press, New York, 2012, p. 178.

9    L Waldorf, 'White Noise: Hearing the disaster', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, vol. 4, issue 3, 2012, pp. 469-474, https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/hus025.

10   R Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the psychological activities of reading*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, p. 177.

11   B Keogh, *A Play of Bodies: How we perceive videogames*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2018, p. 182.

border guards of a fictional communist country;[12] the 'newsgame' *September 12*, released after 9/11, in which players have to identify civilians or terrorists in split-second choices;[13] or *Unmanned*, in which players take on the role of a bored drone operator.[14] These and other similar games present new challenges for considering the role of digital games as tools for awareness-raising and activism.[15]

There are features of digital games that are different and unique, and the pervasiveness of the technology that enables individuals to access and engage with digital games has had a significant impact on the use of this technology by advocacy and humanitarian aid organisations. Digital games have been touted as more interactive and are also, sometimes, (problematically) framed as more impactful than watching a video or reading a story.[16] There are certain features of digital games that offer opportunities for those trying to convey a message. Allowing the player to make choices and then demonstrating the consequences of those choices can be a powerful awareness-raising tool in some circumstances.[17] However, as will be discussed below, the potential for complexity and nuance in storytelling through digital games has mixed success in games for awareness-raising purposes, just like most forms of humanitarian awareness-raising.

## The Game Worlds of Human Trafficking

This section briefly introduces the three games explored in this article, before moving to analyse how narratives of trafficking are present in the following section.

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[12] J Morrissette, 'Glory to Arstotzka: Morality, rationality, and the iron cage of bureaucracy in Papers, Please', *Game Studies*, vol. 17, issue 1, 2017.

[13] I Bogost, S Ferrari and B Schweizer, *NewsGames: Journalism at play*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010, pp. 11-13.

[14] T Smethurst and S Craps, 'Towards an Understanding of Drone Fiction', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, vol. 12, issue 1, 2019, pp. 85-102, https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2018.1514759.

[15] It is important to note that not all these games were made as 'activist' tools, or by humanitarian or advocacy organisations. We mention them here to situate the growth of games designed explicitly as awareness-raising tools within the broader digital ecology.

[16] See, for example: A R Galloway, *Gaming: Essays on algorithmic culture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006; M Eskelinen 'The Gaming Situation', *Game Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1, 2001.

[17] G Sou, 'Trivial Pursuits? Serious (video) games and the media representation of refugees', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 39, issue 3, 2018, pp. 510-526, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1401923.

The Balkans ACT Now! *BAN Human Trafficking* game[18] was first released as an app and desktop game in 2014 with the financial support of the European Union, coordinated by the Serbian NGO ASTRA in partnership with several national anti-trafficking organisations from North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro as well as a partner in the Netherlands. The game gives players an option of selecting from six possible characters—Sarah, Kate, Anna, Cody, Aaron or Max. While the game can be played in nine different languages, the curiously anglicised character names remain the same, regardless of the language selected. There is no publicly available information on how many times the game has been played.

The 2017 browser-based game *(Un)Trafficked*[19] was developed by Canadian-based studio FFunction for Indian Nobel Peace Prize recipient Kailash Satyarthi's Children's Foundation and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation. The user plays as Alisha, a 13-year-old Indian girl, who is taken from her village and, depending on the choices the game-player makes, is exploited either in a private home or in a brothel. Available in both English and Hindi, it is designed to raise awareness of child-trafficking as part of a larger national campaign. Reports indicate that the game has been played more than 100,000 times since its launch, with most players being based in India.[20]

*Missing: Game for a Cause*[21] is a mobile app created by Indian game studio Flying Robot Studios with artist and anti-trafficking activist Leena Kejriwal. The game was created in conjunction with Kejriwal's wider public art project; the website reports over half a million downloads 'worldwide' since the game's launch in 2016. Following the release of the prototype, the game designers raised more than USD 50,000 from 455 backers via the funding platform Kickstarter to produce a more extended version. A free preview of the extended version of the game allows the user to play as Champa, a girl from an Indian village. Our analysis is based on the prototype version of the game that is available as a free app. In this version of the game, which can be played at an 'easy' or 'hard' setting, very little background information is given about Champa. The game commences with her being held prisoner at a brothel.

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[18] Balkans ACT Now! BAN Human Trafficking game, http://www.banhumantrafficking.com/en/play-the-game.

[19] *(Un)Trafficked* game, http://www.bharatyatra.online/untrafficked.

[20] M Thomas, 'What is it like to be a child trafficking victim in India? An online game will put you in her shoes', *Quartz India*, 17 November 2017, https://qz.com/india/1131165/untrafficked-if-you-want-to-know-what-its-like-to-be-a-child-trafficking-victim-in-india-play-this-online-game.

[21] *Missing: Game for a Cause*, https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/missing-game-for-cause/id1161113559.

The stated intention behind all three games is to raise awareness of the problem of human trafficking, positioning these games as educative tools within a wider anti-trafficking movement. Information about the reach and impact of these games is extremely limited. With the exception of the report that the *(Un)Trafficked* game had been played more than 100,000 times, mostly by people in India, there is currently no publicly accessible data reporting on the players of the games, and no evaluation of their impact on the audience's awareness and understanding of human trafficking. Without further access to data about the players of these games, it is impossible to analyse audience reception and draw conclusions about how the games' narratives may have appealed to gamers' identities or resonated with their life experiences.[22] Thus, we are limited in this paper to an analysis of how these games portray trafficking, how this compares with traditional approaches to awareness-raising, and how the interactive nature of the game may impact upon the storytelling.

The games utilise a choose-your-own-adventure style of storytelling, although the potential outcomes are limited, which raises questions about the way in which games are used. Anti-trafficking awareness-raising approaches utilising more traditional media have often been criticised for depicting trafficking as an individualised problem, with limited agency afforded to victims who are depicted in simplistic, infantilising ways,[23] adhering to conceptions of the 'ideal victim'.[24] We conducted a narrative analysis of these games, treating them as texts that have inherent meanings.[25] We experienced them as the audience would, using a desktop computer to play *(Un)Trafficked* and the Balkans ACT Now! game, and an iPad to play *Missing*, which was not available as a desktop game at the time. Each game was played several times while making notes to fully explore the different options and routes available to the player, and we reflected on the narratives and choices presented to us both collectively and individually to inform our analysis here.

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[22]  A Shaw, 'Do you Identify as a Gamer? Gender, race, sexuality, and gamer identity', *New Media & Society*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2011, pp. 28-44, p. 29, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811410394.

[23]  K Kempadoo, 'The Modern-Day White (Wo)Man's Burden: Trends in anti-trafficking and anti-slavery campaigns', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2015, pp. 8-20, p. 12, https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1006120.

[24]  N Christie, 'The Ideal Victim' in E Fattah (ed.), *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy: Reorienting the justice system*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1986.

[25]  See Keogh; E Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on ergodic literature*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1997. It is important to note that we consider games cultural texts that, just like television, film, literature and other forms of popular culture, generate cultural meaning and are a meaningful part of culture.

In the next section, we examine how the depiction of trafficking in these three games compares to the ideal victims and individualised narratives most common in traditional awareness-raising campaigns. We also question whether or not the medium of games provides an avenue through which to offer a more nuanced narrative.

## Game-Based Storytelling: Reflecting or subverting stereotypes

The stories presented in online games do not purport to be real but rather present fictionalised or amalgamated narratives. Awareness-raising games like these are premised on the assumption that the stories *could* be real. They are not fantastical; they are representations of what the game-makers believe human trafficking to be. As such, they adhere to narrative conventions in the presentation of stories. They seek to make a story compelling by demonstrating some form of 'breach' with the everyday,[26] yet they also aim to give the story 'cultural resonance' with audiences[27] to enable them to sympathise with the victim and accept that the circumstances are not so impossible to believe. Human trafficking awareness campaigns commonly achieve elements of breach through the depiction of horrific aspects of physical abuse,[28] while resonating with an audience's understanding of victims as young, female and innocent.[29] In so doing, they represent the problem of trafficking in a particular way, drawing upon persistent, and limiting, stereotypes. In particular, trafficking awareness campaigns have been criticised for disseminating narratives that depict trafficking as a problem of criminal migration rather than structural inequality,[30] for denying the agency of victims,[31] and for relying on notions of an 'ideal victim'. All of these problematic narratives are evident in the three games analysed here, though to varying degrees.

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[26]   M D Jones and M K McBeth, 'A Narrative Policy Framework: Clear enough to be wrong?', *Policy Studies Journal,* vol. 38, issue 2, 2010, pp. 329-353, p. 343, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2010.00364.x.

[27]   R D Benford and D A Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An overview and assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 26, issue 1, 2000, pp. 611-639, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611.

[28]   Andrijasevic and Mai.

[29]   O'Brien, 2019.

[30]   E Bernstein, 'Militarized Humanitarianism meets Carceral Feminism: The politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary anti-trafficking campaigns', *Signs*, vol. 36, issue 1, 2010, pp. 45-71, p. 61, https://doi.org/10.1086/652918.

[31]   R Andrijasevic, 'Beautiful Dead Bodies: Gender, migration and representation in anti-trafficking campaigns', *Feminist Review*, vol. 86, issue 1, 2007, pp. 24-44, p. 41, https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400355.

## *Individualised Narratives*

Digital games individualise the story. In all of the games, the player follows the story of an individual character and thus, human trafficking is represented in these games, as in much anti-trafficking awareness-raising, through an individual narrative, or a 'highly individualized cautionary tale'.[32] However, these games also demonstrate that some attempts to convey the factors that impact on individuals' lives in the trafficking story are certainly better than others. While *Missing* and *(Un)Trafficked* fail to convey the intricacies of human trafficking, *BAN Human Trafficking* indicates that it is possible for games to communicate complexity.

The gameplay in all three games relies on predominantly binary choices, which are extremely limited and fail to capture the complexity of the larger factors that condition choices. Anti-trafficking awareness campaigns typically depict an individual victim in one moment in time, usually the point of their victimisation, obscuring the many factors in their lives that may have led them to this point. *Missing* provides no origin story at all for the victim Champa. Her story begins in a locked room, where she awakes from presumably being drugged, kidnapped and brought to the brothel. Her captor, brothel madam Masi, makes a vague reference to the fact that someone from her village must have helped the 'pimp' to kidnap and sell her, but this is all we will ever know. As noted earlier, the preview for the extended version indicates that more details about Champa's background are included; however, this is absent from the initially developed, free version of the game. While it is not unusual for a free preview game to require players to pay for more complexity, as an educative tool the free game effectively detaches from the story Champa's age, where she is from, her education level, her prospects for further education and employment, and her relationship with her family and local community.

*(Un)Trafficked* offers slightly more explanation of the circumstances in which Alisha comes to be victimised. Her father is offered the choice of sending her to the city with a strange man, or the ostensibly 'correct' choice of keeping her at home. The player is provided with an information box explaining that parents of children aged between six and fourteen years old are 'legally obliged to make sure they have access to an education', and that children over fourteen years of age can investigate 'skill-building programs'. However, the choice presented to Alisha's father oversimplifies the conundrum faced by parents struggling to provide an education and a future for their children. The binary choice whether to keep Alisha at home or not also subscribes to a frequent assumption of anti-trafficking

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[32] Sharapov and Mendel, p. 6.

policies that potential victims can be saved by keeping them at home.[33] Seeking opportunities elsewhere, especially for young women, is depicted as unacceptably dangerous without much consideration of whether or not the situation at home is any safer or better. This deflects attention from the task of ensuring that young women can travel, migrate, and pursue opportunities, while also remaining safe.

*BAN Human Trafficking* does a much better job of contextualising the victim's journey. This is partly because the game provides six narratives to choose from, rather than just one, thus adding greater complexity to the overall depiction of trafficking. In the individual narratives, the level of detail contained in each stand-alone story demonstrates that it is possible to depict greater complexity in the experiences of trafficked persons. Each of the six characters is offered several choices at the beginning of the game, showing them trying to seek out a safe path to further education, employment or migration. Unlike the other two games analysed, and most other anti-trafficking advocacy, their victimisation is not portrayed as a quirk of fate or individual criminal behaviour of villains. Instead, the game path demonstrates several reasons why young people may find themselves in a situation of forced labour or servitude. For instance, one character, Aaron, lives with a disability as a result of a car accident. He is not able to finish high school, and thus his work options are limited. Another character, Kate, is a 22-year-old medical graduate who wants to find a 'nursing position in Western Europe'.

Depicting human trafficking through individualised narratives, without providing enough detail about the many factors that contextualise victims' lives beyond their experience of exploitation, can result in the representation of trafficking as a problem to be solved through greater law and order.[34] This focus on the criminal aspects of trafficking, rather than the factors that lead to the exploitation, reinforces a law enforcement response, and fails to 'challenge structural and causal factors of inequality'.[35] However, *BAN Human Trafficking* demonstrates that it is possible to depict the causes of the problem as structural, even through individualised narratives, with the difficulties of migrating for work in the absence of reliable networks and appropriate financial support a central element in several of the stories.

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[33]  L M Agustin, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, labour markets and the rescue industry*, Zed Books, London, 2007.

[34]  E Kinney, 'Victims, Villains, and Valiant Rescuers: Unpacking sociolegal constructions of human trafficking and crimmigration in popular culture' in Joao Guia (ed.), *The Illegal Business of Human Trafficking*, Springer, New York, 2015, p. 105.

[35]  Andrijasevic and Mai.

## *Choices and Agency*

In contrast to most anti-trafficking awareness-raising campaigns in which the victim is static and the story complete, games offer an element of real-time choice and the demonstration of agency. The choices belong to the game-player, but this storytelling technique clearly conveys messages about the degree of agency trafficked persons possess. Anti-trafficking awareness-raising campaigns frequently depict victims as helpless, passive actors,[36] lacking in the ability or initiative to avoid, resist or escape their exploitation. The three games analysed for this research reinforce the helplessness of victims to a certain extent. But while *Missing* and *(Un)Trafficked* afford no or very little agency to the victim, *BAN Human Trafficking* depicts characters who maintain an element of agency throughout the entire narrative arc.

In *(Un)Trafficked*, none of the choices belong to the victim, starting from the moment at which the game-player is offered the option to 'customise' their trafficking victim by choosing a name and hometown for her, in the same way that a player might choose an avatar's clothes and hair. This sets the tone for a game in which Alisha has no agency and is simply moved through the game as a token on which others act. The game-player makes all the choices, but these are never Alisha's choices. They are decisions taken by the other characters in the game, including her father, her friends, an employment agent, a sex work customer, the wife of an employer, or a police officer.

The lack of choices or agency granted to Alisha may be an intentional design decision to emphasise the powerlessness of her situation. Her helplessness, and the inevitability of her exploitation, are further emphasised through the use of a common digital game aesthetic—a 'hearts bar' positioned at the top of the screen, just as other games might depict the 'health' or 'lives' of an avatar. In *(Un)Trafficked*, when a character makes a bad decision, for example a policeman refusing to help, an animation shows two hearts break and then fall away, accompanied by the sound of a small sob, assumed to be from Alisha. This sob is the only voice Alisha is granted in the game, demonstrating that Alisha is a victim not only of exploitation, but of a life in which none of the choices were ever hers.

In *Missing*, and *BAN Human Trafficking*, all of the choices belong to the victims. While *(Un)Trafficked* may instead have been attempting to convey a message about the roles and responsibilities of other actors, the games in which the story

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36    R Andrijasevic, 'The Figure of the Trafficked Victim: Gender, rights and representation' in M Evans *et al. (eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, SAGE Publications Ltd., New York, 2014, pp. 359-373.

revolves around the choices of the victim is a positive departure from one which gives no choices and no voice to a child victim. However, the degree of choice and agency afforded to the victims differs significantly between *Missing* and *BAN Human Trafficking*.

In *Missing*, the player is offered different types of choices—textual and physical. The text choices give Champa binary options, for instance, whether she will or will not help another girl in the brothel. The physical choices enable the game-player to move Champa, though these choices are tightly constrained by the field of play. For example, in one scenario, Champa is offered the opportunity to escape, and she can choose to run down one corridor or another. This choice, while affording some agency to the victim, still relies on an individualising narrative in which her imprisonment is a personal problem to be solved. The educative purpose behind the depiction of this type of choice is questionable, as the choice of a particular corridor conveys nothing about the possible solutions to the problem of trafficking.

In *BAN Human Trafficking*, the choices are presented as individual, with characters shown to have agency and initiative. They are presented with choices that include conducting due diligence, or exhausting all alternatives, before making decisions that may place them in greater danger of exploitation, such as taking a day to think about a job offer, and doing some research on the labour hire company before accepting the offer. Some of the circumstances depicted do highlight the relative helplessness of victims. However, instead of depicting helplessness as the result of a physical inability to escape (as in the case of *Missing*), this is shown as being more directly connected to wider structural conditions outside of the victim's control. For example, in Kate's story, she is able to escape from a situation of domestic servitude, but the police do not recognise her as a victim. The game reports: 'They treat you like a criminal at the police station because you're a foreigner without a work permit. They soon deport you to your country'. These limitations on the agency of victims are depicted as occurring in spite of the personal strength and initiative of victims. The characterisation of trafficked persons as rendered helpless not by their own personal characteristics but by either inaction or 'crimmigration'[37] by law enforcement agencies serves as an important counter-narrative to much anti-trafficking awareness-raising that fails to convey this complexity. As compared to posters, leaflets or even short stories on webpages, the longer form narrative provided by the game may be an important element in enabling the inclusion of villainous characters beyond the initial 'trafficker', and demonstrating how government agencies also contribute to the victimisation of migrants.

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[37]   J M Chacon, 'Tensions and Trade-Offs: Protecting trafficking victims in the era of immigration enforcement', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, vol. 158, issue. 6, 2010, pp. 1609-1653.

## *Ideal Victims*

The 'ideal victim'[38] is a persistent feature of anti-trafficking awareness campaigns,[39] which have been heavily criticised for perpetuating the expectation that victims should be young, female, innocent and passive.[40] While all three games rely on some elements of ideal victimhood, *BAN Human Trafficking* again does a better job at diversifying the central figure of the trafficked person beyond young, female and weak.

Both *Missing* and *(Un)Trafficked* rely on the stereotypical image of the trafficked person as young, female and virginal. In *(Un)Trafficked*, Alisha is described as a teenage girl, while in *Missing*, we are not told Champa's age, though she is visually depicted as young. The innocence of these girls is emphasised through their youth, but also through indications of their virginity.[41] This is explicitly declared in the case of *Missing.* In the first chapter of the game, ominously titled 'Chapter One: Death of Innocence', Champa is told by the brothel madam Masi that she is going to 'take her purity from her', before leaving her in a locked room with a male character, Shonty. As Masi closes the door and Shonty advances on Champa, the screen fades to black. Champa reappears in the aftermath of her presumed rape, having now 'lost her innocence'. The sexual abuse of Champa is always implied, rather than explicitly shown. Later in the game when Champa is forced to sell sexual services to customers, the rapes are signified with Champa and the customer entering a room, closing a door, and a screen fading to black.

There are some differences in the depictions of Alisha and Champa. Alisha is shown as completely passive in her victimisation, during which the abuses she suffers are primarily instigated by an adult stranger with criminal intent. In some contrast, Champa is depicted as making a decision to 'allow' her sexual abuses, in order to earn an opportunity to escape. As noted earlier, an element of the game involves the player, as Champa, attempting to secure money by offering sexual services to customers. If her 'bid' is too high, the customer will walk away, placing the player (and thus Champa) in the situation of working to actively

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[38]  Christie.

[39]  E O'Brien, 'Ideal Victims in Human Trafficking Awareness Campaigns' in K Carrington *et al.* (eds.), *Crime, Justice and Social Democracy: International perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013.

[40]  J O'Connell Davidson, 'Will the Real Sex Slave Please Stand up?', *Feminist Review,* no. 83, 2006, pp. 4-22, https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400278. See also: C Hoyle *et al.*, 'Labelling the Victims of Sex Trafficking: Exploring the borderland between rhetoric and reality', *Social and Legal Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2011, pp. 313-329, https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663911405394.

[41]  Kinney, p. 97.

secure a customer. The depictions of both Alisha and Champa rely on very familiar tropes of victimhood. In addition to the youth of victims and the innocence inferred through virginity, victims are also expected to demonstrate some elements of resistance to their abuse, to reinforce their status as ideal victims.[42] The games offer a slight twist on this depiction. Where Alisha is shown as completely incapable of offering resistance, assumedly by virtue of her age and gender, Champa is shown as resisting her initial assault, but then resigned to her fate for long enough to enable her escape. In relying on common tropes, these depictions offer little by way of reflection on structural forces that leave girls in positions of vulnerability and precarity, and undermine their agency.

The fact that two of the three games focus exclusively on trafficking for sexual exploitation and sexual abuse is consistent with the heavy focus on this form of trafficking in awareness-raising efforts.[43] *BAN Human Trafficking* demonstrates some similarities with this depiction of victims in its characterisation of Anna, a victim of trafficking into the sex industry. This character appears to be slightly more sexualised than the others, with the cartoon drawing depicting Anna as voluptuous, blue-eyed and blonde. She is described as 18 years old, and her story leads to a point where she is depicted as continuing to 'service' clients in an attempt to work off a debt. Both Champa and Alisha are also depicted as providing sexual services without repeated performances of resistance. But where Anna and Alisha's experiences are both contextualised through the refusal of police officers to assist them, serving some educative purpose, Champa's victimisation is turned into a measure of success in the game. The more men she 'seduces', the more successful the player, and the more opportunities they create to ultimately win the game by escaping.

Beyond Anna's story, however, *BAN Human Trafficking* offers a much broader narrative about trafficked persons, partly through the diversity reflected in the six characters depicted, but also through a greater contextualisation of the characters' backgrounds and choices. There are three male and three female characters, though notably all victims are young adults aged between 18 and 22 years old. The stories also offer some diversification on the 'ideal victim' trope by explaining different factors that have rendered the central protagonists vulnerable to exploitation. For example, Max is described as vulnerable partly due to an unstable family life, while Cody is depicted as vulnerable due to his status as an irregular migrant. Therefore, the Balkans ACT Now! game subverts the message most often

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[42]   O'Brien, 2019, p. 63.

[43]   O'Brien, 2013, p. 318.

communicated by awareness campaigns that in order to be 'worthy of pity'[44] victims must be easily recognisable to the audience and thus meet the stereotypical notion of the ideal victim.

Games such as *Missing, (Un)Trafficked,* and *BAN Human Trafficking* also individualise both the problem and the solution. As Knowlton notes in relation to a game about the genocide in Darfur, the switch from depicting horrifying events to a positive call to action signals that the player's role in the game can affect change.[45] It 'renders the Darfuris the passive instrument of, in this instance, Western teenage agency'.[46] While *BAN Human Trafficking* offers more complex narratives about victimisation and highlights the potential for games to express more complex framings of victims' experiences, the games analysed here often reproduce the same limited understandings of victims, with trafficking represented as an individual problem, to be solved by an individual's intervention.

## The End Game: Education versus recreation

Games as awareness-raising tools walk a fine line between education and recreation. The social impact of a given game may depend on the extent to which the player is able to recognise the game as an awareness-raising tool, rather than simply a recreational activity. In the three cases examined for this research, the games achieve this to different degrees. *(Un)Trafficked* and *BAN Human Trafficking* have limited recreational elements. While they employ a familiar game-based structure through the 'choose your own adventure' style, and present cartoon graphics that offer a more playful rendering of the characters than is likely to be found in awareness campaign posters and reports, they are clearly recognisable as educative tools. Their main aim is very obviously to depict a version of the trafficking story, where the only outcome for the player is learning about the problem.

*Missing* is a jarring contrast to this. In this game, while the stated aim is to illustrate the complexities of human trafficking and how the problem might be prevented, the way in which the story has been gamified undercuts the message being shared.

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44   C Aradau, 'The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and pity in the securiti-sation of human trafficking', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 33, issue 2, 2004, p. 260, https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298040330020101.

45   A Knowlton, 'Darfur is Dying: A narrative analysis', Masters Thesis, School of Communication, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2009.

46   J Auchter, 'Playing War and Genocide: *Endgame: Syria* and *Darfur is Dying*' in L J Shepherd and C Hamilton (eds.), *Understanding Popular Culture and World Politics in the Digital Age*, Routledge, New York, 2016.

The aim of *Missing* is to earn items such as keys and money, and 'win' the game by escaping, presenting itself as a much more conventional single-player quest game. At the resolution of the story, Champa is saved by a man from her hometown, with the player controlling the hero 'Shakti' rather than Champa, as he fights her traffickers in a dramatic scene on top of a train. The transfer of the game-player's control from Champa to Shakti is yet another indication of the lack of agency afforded to the victim in the narrative. Ultimately, the game offers a win for the player, not the victim. Rather than using a game-based platform to convey the complexity of life for trafficked persons, this game instead uses a shallow depiction of trafficking for sexual exploitation in order to provide a narrative for a game.

The resolutions to all three games present an unexpected element of the narrative, eschewing the common trope of characterising the hero as a Western saviour. In *Missing*, Champa is saved by a man from her hometown. In *BAN Human Trafficking*, several of the victims are shown returning home as a result of intervention from law enforcement, but not triumphantly. Rather, they are depicted as somewhat damaged by their experiences. Nevertheless, this depiction of the aftermath of a trafficking experience is rare in awareness-raising materials,[47] and presents an important element of the story through the depiction of the rehabilitation of victims and their efforts to seek justice.

In *(Un)Trafficked*, Alisha is never rescued. This conclusion to the story is in contrast to much anti-trafficking activism, which puts Westerners in the roles of heroes, raiding brothels to rescue victims from traffickers.[48] The medium of the digital game transports players into the role of virtual saviours, as their actions will guide the journey for the victim. While this might suggest a Western saviour, it is important to note that the audience for these games is not always from the Global North. Whether the player is from India, the Balkans, or a country far removed from the location of the narrative, players are nevertheless granted power over the narrative, functioning as virtual saviours in the hope that they will transition from screen action hero to real life activist.

We have focused here on the narratives and storytelling used by digital games that are designed to raise awareness about human trafficking. In focusing on the narratives, we have made visible the ways in which these games reproduce already-

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47  D Brennan and S Plambech, 'Editorial: Moving forward—Life after trafficking', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 10, 2018, pp. 1-12, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr. 201218101.

48  G Soderlund, 'Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. crusades against sex trafficking and the rhetoric of abolition', *NWSA Journal,* vol. 17, issue 3, 2005, pp. 64-87, https:// doi.org/10.1353/nwsa.2005.0071.

dominant and problematic framings of victims, heroes and villains in trafficking stories. This exploration has not considered the audience explicitly; in part, this is due to a problematic lack of available information about who the audience of these games are, where geographically they are located, and what they do with the information gained from these games. We would argue that critical evaluation of these games (and others like them)—like many efforts in the humanitarian and advocacy fields[49]—could be more embedded and publicly accessible to be able to evaluate the impact of such efforts.

This article has highlighted that, as with many awareness-raising efforts in other mediums, games about the experience of trafficking often reproduce limited narratives that rely on damaging stereotypes about victims as well as solutions to the problems presented. *(Un)Trafficked* and *Missing* rely heavily on these tropes, presenting individualised narratives that overlook more structural causes of the problem, present ideal victims, and deny victims any agency. In contrast, *BAN Human Trafficking* diversifies and complicates the trafficking narrative. These differing approaches to using digital games as tools for awareness-raising demonstrate the pitfalls of repeating the same narratives in different mediums, while also showing the potential of digital games to offer spaces for more complex stories to be told about the causes and consequences of human trafficking.

Games blur the lines between recreation and awareness-raising. This may assist anti-trafficking groups in communicating their messages to younger audiences,[50] though it also has the potential to evolve into the use of games for training purposes. If educative games about human trafficking remain beholden to the same storytelling conventions that plague more traditional forms of media used in awareness-raising, limited narratives will persist. The only point of difference, therefore, will be the problematic positioning of the audience within the narrative, playing the virtual saviour, rather than a more fundamental understanding of the lives and experiences of trafficked persons. Games may offer some avenue through which to diversify the narrative, but in their storytelling they must afford more agency to their protagonists and serve to subvert the audience's expectations.

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[49]   J Chapman and A Wameyo, *Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: A scoping study*, ActionAid, 2001; J H Marshall and D Suarez, 'The Flow of Management Practices: An analysis of NGO monitoring and evaluation dynamics', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 43, issue 6, 2013, pp. 1033–1051, https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764013494117.

[50]   Y Hashamova, *Screening Trafficking: Prudent or perilous*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2018, pp. 116-117.

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## Introduction

The case for examining representations of modern slavery[1] may, by now, be assumed to have been made (and eloquently so).[2] As Andrijasevic and Mai show, such representations:

> mobilise stereotypical narratives and visual constructions about sexuality, gender, class and race that end up demarcating people's entitlement to social mobility and citizenship in increasingly unequal times, […and ] distract the global public from their increasing and shared day-to-day exploitability as workers because of the systematic erosion of labour rights globally. In doing so, they become complicit in the perpetuation of the very social inequalities, hierarchies and conflicts that allow exploitation […] to occur.[3]

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[1] We use the term 'modern slavery' in this article to label the issue that corporate reports ostensibly cover in accordance with the UK *Modern Slavery Act* 2015. It must be noted that this term is, itself, contested and problematic. Chuang describes 'modern slavery' as an 'elastic and undefined term' that has come to encompass many different forms of exploitation through 'exploitation creep' (see: J A Chuang, 'Exploitation Creep and the Unmaking of Human Trafficking Law', *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 108, issue 4, 2014, pp. 609-49, p. 628, http://doi.org/10.5305/amerjintelaw. 108.4.0609). The term is problematic because it encourages 'naming and shaming', rather than cooperation; and it can trivialise the trans-Atlantic slave trade and other 'historical' forms of slavery, in turn 'reducing any sense of responsibility for the countries that profited from [historical] slavery', but also put a focus on exceptional and extreme forms of exploitation, which would suggest, for instance, that certain extremely abusive and exploitative (labour) practices are somehow fundamentally different from less extremely abusive and exploitative (labour) practices, and from ordinary work (see: M Dottridge, 'Eight reasons why we shouldn't use the term "modern slavery"', *Open Democracy*, 17 October 2017, retrieved 3 June 2019, https://www.opendemocracy. net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/eight-reasons-why-we-shouldn-t-use-term-modern-slavery). Chuang similarly notes that equating trafficking and slavery would mean that cases of trafficking (and exploitation) would have to be particularly severe in order to be recognised as a case of modern slavery, whilst it could also result in 'the situation and experiences of those subject to [chattel] slavery be(ing) diminished' (J A Chuang, 2014, p. 634). Readers are further directed to issue 5 of the *Anti-Trafficking Review*, in which what constitutes appropriate terminology is debated in more detail.

[2] E O'Brien, *Challenging the Human Trafficking Narrative: Victims, villains, and heroes*, Routledge, London, 2018; R Andrijasevic and N Mai, 'Editorial: Trafficking (in) Representations: Understanding the recurring appeal of victimhood and slavery in neoliberal times', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 1-10, https://doi. org/10.14197/atr.20121771.

[3] Andrijasevic and Mai, p. 9.

In other words, these representations simplify complex issues without challenging the structural and causal factors of inequality that underlie them. In this paper, we address how UK commercial organisations, whose economic and social power exceeds that of NGOs and even many states, communicate their understanding of modern slavery through metaphors in their modern slavery statements (MSSs), since metaphors reflect underlying thought processes, and as such play a central role in the way we structure experiences and conceptualise the society we live in.[4] We also compare the metaphors of these MSSs to the metaphors found in media texts that focused specifically on human trafficking, as described in Gregoriou and Ras, since the guidance produced by civil society organisations, commercial pressures, and media reporting on modern slavery (a term which also covers human trafficking) may have influenced these MSSs, and may have been influenced by these MSSs in turn.[5] The understanding of modern slavery as communicated and negotiated through these documents may be assumed to influence (regulatory) measures taken in response to this issue.

These MSSs are published in compliance with Section 54 (S54) of the UK *Modern Slavery Act* 2015 (MSA), which calls for companies trading in the UK to publish, annually, a statement outlining what, if anything, they have done to prevent and respond to risks of modern slavery in their supply chains. It must be noted here that the MSA consistently refers to MSSs as 'modern slavery and human trafficking statements'.[6]

In this article, we use the term 'modern slavery' as an umbrella term that includes practices such as 'chattel slavery, forced labour, debt bondage, serfdom, forced marriage, the trafficking of adults and children, child soldiers, domestic servitude, the severe economic exploitation of children and organ harvesting', as set out in the MSA.[7] At the same time, we are conscious of the debates around this term, as acknowledged in footnote 1.

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4   G Lakoff and M Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980.

5   C Gregoriou and I A Ras, '"Call for Purge on People Traffickers": An investigation into British newspapers' representation of transnational human trafficking, 2000-2016' in C Gregoriou (ed.), *Representations of Transnational Human Trafficking: Present-day news media, true crime and fiction,* Palgrave, London, 2018.

6   Modern Slavery Act 2015, retrieved 2 April 2019, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/introduction/enacted.

7   G Craig, A Balch, H Lewis and L Waite, 'Editorial Introduction: The modern slavery agenda: Policy, politics and practice' in G Craig, A Balch, H Lewis and L Waite (eds), *The Modern Slavery Agenda: Policy, politics and practice in the UK*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2019, p. 8.

The UK government seems to assume that greater transparency leads to greater anti-slavery efforts, and that consumer behaviours and investments are affected by increased transparency or greater anti-slavery efforts. The UK government explicitly hopes that S54 will 'create a race to the top' amongst companies in an effort to retain consumer and investor goodwill.[8] However, some suggest that making statements indicating that a given commercial organisation has done very little or nothing to reduce the risk of modern slavery in its supply chains does not carry the necessary repercussions that would create such a race to the top. As New notes, for instance, despite the admission by the US doughnut chain Krispy Kreme, in their statement made under the *California Transparency in Supply Chains Act* 2010(CTISC), that they do not take any of the expected measures, they met little to no backlash in return. Importantly, they experienced no impact on sales.[9] Indeed, Öberseder, Schlegelmilch and Gruber note that corporate social responsibility is of less concern to many consumers in purchasing decisions than aspects such as price and quality, suggesting that the presence and quality of an MSS will have limited, if any, effect on consumer behaviour.[10] It is, in fact, possible that the understanding of the issue of modern slavery communicated by MSSs and related documents is what stops consumers and investors from prioritising corporate social responsibility (at least in relation to labour practices) as a purchasing factor. Furthermore, an MSS is not necessarily indicative of the amount of efforts actually expended by the company to prevent and respond to modern slavery in its supply chains; as LeBaron and Rühmkorf note, many corporate modern slavery policies tend to be aspirational, rather than truly forcing business decisions by both retailers and the company itself to be made in a manner that improves labour conditions.[11]

The three UK high street retailers whose statements we examined have a history of engagement with debates and reporting practices on modern slavery in supply chains: they are Marks & Spencer (M&S); the John Lewis Partnership (JLP), which includes Waitrose, and Mothercare. These companies are full members of

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[8]   Home Office, *Transparency in supply chains etc. A practical guide*, 2017, retrieved 16 April 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/649906/Transparency_in_Supply_Chains_A_Practical_Guide_2017.pdf.

[9]   S J New, 'Modern Slavery and the Supply Chain: The limits of corporate social responsibility?', *Supply Chain Management*, vol. 20, issue 6, 2015, pp. 697-707, https://doi.org/10.1108/SCM-06-2015-0201.

[10]  M Öberseder, B B Schlegelmilch and V Gruber, '"Why don't Consumers Care about CSR?": A qualitative study exploring the role of CSR in consumption decisions', *Journal of Business Ethics,* vol. 104, no. 4, 2011, pp. 449-460, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0925-7.

[11]  G LeBaron and A Rühmkorf, 'Steering CSR through Home State Regulation: A comparison of the impact of the UK Bribery Act on global supply chain governance', *Global Policy*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2017, pp. 15-28, https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12398.

the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and have published an MSS every year since the introduction of the MSA.[12] JLP and Mothercare also signed a letter sent in 2014 by the ETI and the British Retail Consortium (BRC) to the Prime Minister, advocating measures beyond voluntary compliance with the MSA, whilst M&S argued independently in favour of S54.[13] Furthermore, M&S and JLP continue to work with the UK government on the topic of modern slavery in supply chains.[14] Lastly, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC), which examined the MSSs of the then-top 100 companies trading on the London Stock Exchange (also known as the FTSE 100), scoring the coverage of the topics outlined above on a scale of 0-5 on quality and quantity of information and then placing each company in one of ten possible tiers, classified M&S's 2017 statement as 'tier nine'.[15]

## Benchmarking Corporate Statements

There are multiple standards against which an MSS can be benchmarked. Firstly, there is the relatively basic question of legal compliance. A legally compliant MSS must, firstly, have been approved by the board of directors, partnership members, or equivalent, where relevant, and subsequently signed by a director or partner; it must also be published on the organisation's website, with a link to the MSS placed on the homepage.[16] This low threshold can be useful in highlighting those companies unwilling to even make this effort, and is sufficiently low and clear to encourage otherwise averse organisations to at least consider the question of whether their company is linked to the issue of modern slavery and labour exploitation.

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[12]  ETI, *Our members*, retrieved 15 November 2018, https://www.ethicaltrade.org/about-eti/our-members#block-views-block-member-organisations-block-1. ETI is an alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights.

[13]  ETI and BRC, *ETI & BRC letter to the PM on modern slavery,* 2014, https://www.ethicaltrade.org/resources/eti-brc-letter-to-pm-modern-slavery; Marks & Spencer, *M&S modern slavery statement 2015/16,* 2016, retrieved 15 November 2018, https://corporate.marksandspencer.com/documents/plan-a-our-approach/mns-modern-slavery-statement-june2016.pdf.

[14]  Prime Minister's Office, *UK fashion brands take action to tackle modern slavery*, 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-fashion-brands-take-action-to-tackle-modern-slavery.

[15]  BHRRC, *First Year of FTSE 100 Reports under the UK Modern Slavery Act: Towards Elimination?*, 2017, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/first-year-of-ftse-100-reports-under-the-uk-modern-slavery-act-towards-elimination.

[16]  MSA, 2015.

A second benchmark is the comprehensiveness of the MSS. Conveniently, the MSA and 2016 Home Office guidance suggest six topics that an MSS 'may' cover:

a) the organisation's structure, its business and its supply chains;
b) its policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking;
c) its due diligence processes in relation to slavery and human trafficking in its business and supply chains;
d) the parts of its business and supply chains where there is a risk of slavery and human trafficking taking place, and the steps it has taken to assess and manage that risk;
e) its effectiveness in ensuring that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in its business or supply chains, measured against such performance indicators as it considers appropriate;
f) the training about slavery and human trafficking available to its staff.[17]

There is scope for some gradeability of comprehensiveness, in the sense that some statements cover all six topics, and some only one or two. However, even that is a relatively crude measure, and still marks exemplary and sufficiently comprehensive (if barely) as equal.

Other approaches to assessing the quality of an MSS have generally focused on the level of detail offered in these MSSs. Such assessments have been carried out by Ergon and Sancroft and Tussell, albeit for different groups of companies.[18] In November 2018, the ETI launched a framework that indicates exactly what level of detail, per topic, is sufficient. Such detailed guidance is necessary and useful for all stakeholders, seeing that '[b]usinesses need to know what to aim at, while investors, parliamentarians and consumers need to know how to hold businesses to account.'[19]

As indicated, in this article, we examine the language used in these MSSs as an additional marker of whether an MSS meets expectations, since even compliant, comprehensive and detailed MSSs may use problematic language. For instance,

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[17] Home Office, 2017, p. 11; MSA, 2015, section 54, article 5.

[18] Sancroft and Tussell, *The Sancroft-Tussell Report: Eliminating modern slavery in public procurement*, 2018, https://sancroft.com/2018/03/22/the-sancroft-tussell-report-eliminating-modern-slavery-in-public-procurement/; Ergon, *Reporting on Modern Slavery. The current state of disclosure – May 2016*, 2016, retrieved 21 November 2018, http://ergonassociates.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Reporting-on-Modern-Slavery2-May-2016.pdf:x74739.

[19] O Johnstone, 'First ever framework for writing "good" Modern Slavery statements produced', Ethical Trading Initiative, 2018, https://www.ethicaltrade.org/blog/first-ever-framework-writing-good-modern-slavery-statements-produced.

O'Brien notes that texts on the consumption and retail of goods that may have been manufactured by exploited people tend to avoid discussing the culpability of consumers who, knowingly or negligently, create a demand for such goods.[20] They also tend to avoid discussing the culpability of corporations who, also knowingly or negligently, cater to this demand, exploit employees and workers (who, as opposed to employees, are not directly contracted by the primary retailer), have neglected to stop the exploitation of employees and workers, and/or continue to encourage the exploitation of employees and workers, all for commercial benefit. Instead, these texts tend to cast both consumers and commercial organisations as either ignorant (and thus innocent) or as (potential) heroes simply for doing their due diligence. These texts also tend to encourage continued consumption, albeit now *with* regard to the labour situation of workers. They tend to steer clear of more radical solutions that scrutinise consumption culture and capitalism. One particularly relevant aspect that O'Brien highlights is the continued focus on the supply chain as the general 'area' in which this problem occurs. Suggesting that the issue is in the supply chain, rather than in retail or consumption, creates distance between the issue and the retailer/consumer, 'insulating us from responsibility'.[21] This also plays into the idea that modern slavery is endemic to the Global South, 'spreading' to the Global North. These issues found by O'Brien relate both to the comprehensiveness of such texts (in avoiding particular topics), but also the language used, e.g. agency and word choice.

In this paper, we focus specifically on metaphors; as we note in the next section, metaphors are both indicative of, and affect, the way in which (parts of) society understand(s) particular concepts and events. We hope that our assessment of the metaphors used in the MSSs reviewed in the current study prompts other assessments of the language used in MSSs, and encourages those responsible for the actual writing of these MSSs to continue developing their awareness of their language use.

## Analysing Metaphor

Metaphors 'involve understanding one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience' by mapping a source domain (where the concept area is drawn from) onto a target domain (where the area is metaphorically applied).[22] To give a classic example, in 'she attacked his position' (in a debate or discussion), the argument between the individuals involved is conceptualised along the lines of

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[20]   O'Brien, 2018.

[21]   *Ibid.*, p. 359.

[22]   Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 116.

war, and hence the source domain of the metaphorical WAR is mapped onto the target domain of ARGUMENT, in the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR (since, in cognitive linguistic contexts, metaphors are usually presented in small caps). Importantly, 'the people who get to impose their metaphors on [a] culture get to define what [members of that culture] consider to be true'.[23]

In analysing metaphors in MSSs, we combine a qualitative with a quantitative approach.[24] Our quantitative approach adapts Gabrielatos and Baker's concept of constant collocates to determine constant semantic domains.[25] Archer, Wilson and Rayson define a semantic domain as 'group[ing] together word senses that are related by virtue of their being connected at some level of generality with the same mental concept'.[26] In other words, a semantic domain is a group of words that all link to the same topic. Archer *et al.*, for instance, note the semantic domain 'colours', which includes words such as *red, blue, yellow*, but also the semantic domain 'debt', which includes words such as *bankrupt, overdraft, insolvency*.[27] As such, semantic domains generally indicate the topics discussed in the text(s) examined. Furthermore, semantic domains may, according to Koller, Hardie, Rayson and Semino, also be indicative of metaphorical source domains.[28] The next step is then to examine whether these semantic domains are target or source domains. As such, examining which semantic domains are present in a text can be both a starting point for examining how particular topics are (metaphorically) described, and for examining which metaphors are used to describe particular topics. In this study, we examine, in particular, constant semantic domains, which, following Gabrielatos and Baker, occur with a frequency above a pre-defined threshold, in a pre-defined number of constituent parts of the corpus.

The pre-determined threshold was one of statistical significance, i.e. for each semantic domain it was noted whether it occurred with a statistically significant frequency in each constituent part of the corpus. We used Wmatrix to statistically compare the frequencies of semantic domains in each of these nine MSSs (all generated yearly: in 2016, 2017 and 2018) to the frequencies of these same

23    *Ibid.*, p. 160.

24    Gregoriou and Ras, 2018.

25    C Gabrielatos and P Baker, 'Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding: A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press, 1996-2005', *Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2008, pp. 5-38, https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424207311247.

26    D Archer, A Wilson and P Rayson, 'Introduction to the USAS category system', Lancaster University, 2002, retrieved 4 April 2019, http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/usas_guide.pdf.

27    *Ibid.*

28    V Koller, *et al.*, 'Using a Semantic Annotation Tool for the Analysis of Metaphor in Discourse', *Metaphorik.de*, vol. 15, 2008, pp. 141-160.

domains in the BNC Written Sampler, which is a one-million-word sample of written British English as collected for the British National Corpus. The significance threshold was set at a log-likelihood-score >15.13, which indicates that a semantic domain occurs at a statistically significantly different frequency in the primary corpus compared to the BNC Written Sampler, at $p$ <.0001.

As we examined three retailers with three MSSs each, we have, in practice, three corpora of three constituent parts each, so there are three lists of constant semantic domains, one for each company. It was pre-determined that a semantic domain must be statistically significant in two out of the three constituent parts of each corpus, i.e. in two out of the three documents for each retailer. We then focused on those constant semantic domains that all three retailers have in common. We used the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) to examine metaphors in all of the sentences in which these common constant semantic domains occurred, focusing on head nouns, verbs, and modifiers.[29] The tables in this paper show, in the column on the left, the constant semantic domains that were examined in further depth, with the right-hand column showing the metaphors found in this in-depth examination.

Figure 1 explains how to interpret the tables in the remainder of this paper. The first column of each table shows the semantic domains for which the metaphorical mappings, detailed in the second column, were found. In the second column, metaphors are indicated in the standard form X is Y, Z, whereby X indicates the target domain and Y, Z indicate source domains, listed in order of frequency; source domains that are mentioned first occur with a greater frequency, in relation to the target domain, than source domains that are mentioned later.



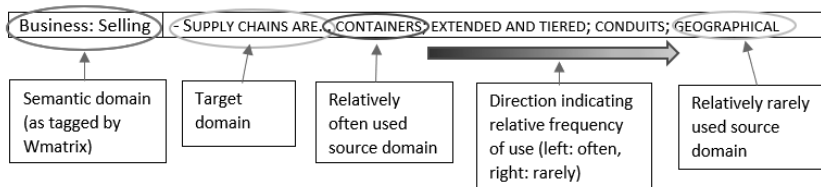Figure 1: Figure explaining how to read the tables

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29    Pragglejaz Group, 'MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse', *Metaphor and Symbol,* vol. 22, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-39, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms2201_1.

The qualitative aspect of our study closely analysed each MSS, also to identify linguistic realisations of prominent metaphors employed in relation to modern slavery, which we were then able to group into types/categories. Though the quantitative and qualitative parts of the analysis were each initially conducted separately and independently by each author, the results of the latter came to ultimately support those of the former, hence the analysis being showcased altogether below.

As indicated in the introduction, the metaphors found were, where possible, linked to those also found in the relevant statutory and civil society guidance, and to metaphors across media (including news and documentaries).[30] As we have discussed before, newspaper writers employ a range of metaphors when reporting on human trafficking, some of which we found to be extended across the whole of our UK newspaper corpus, and some of which were not.[31] Systematic metaphors in the corpus of British newspaper reporting on human trafficking include TRAFFICKING IS A TRADE, TRAFFICKING IS A SPREADING UNWANTED SUBSTANCE and one which CAN BE BROKEN, and RESPONDING TO TRAFFICKING IS WAR. Less prominent (but nevertheless noteworthy) were the TRAFFICKING IS DRAMA/SPECTACLE, the TRAFFICKING IS HIDDEN/NOT VISIBLE, and TRAFFICKING IS ANIMATED AND BEASTLY metaphors.

## 'Taking Steps to Eradicate Modern Slavery'

### *Businesses, Supply Chains, Workers and Workplaces*

An important difference between the companies writing these MSSs and the people who are actually affected by the employment policies of these companies and their suppliers relates to their grammatical agency. Companies, factories and mills are, in systemic-functional terms, actors.[32] In these MSSs, companies do, as if they were singular living organisms (e.g. 'the steps taken by Marks and Spencer Group plc', 'M&S […] to dig deeper and think harder in the year ahead'). However, a company's supposed ability to act as a legal person is a legal fiction, as in reality decisions are made and acts are performed on behalf of the company (as a collective) by people affiliated with that company.

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30  Gregoriou and Ras, 2018.

31  *Ibid.*

32  M A K Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 2nd ed., Edward Arnold, London, 1994.

On the other hand, workers are portrayed as having little agency, being primarily acted upon, and as a singular entity, despite each worker, in reality, having a varying capacity for making decisions and performing acts on their own behalf. Table 1 shows the metaphors relating to business, supply chains, workers and workplaces, and in particular shows the overall mappings of workplaces and supply chains as containers and conduits in which workers are placed and through which products flow.

**Table 1: Metaphorical mapping related to conceptualising business and work**

| Semantic Domains | Metaphors |
|---|---|
| Business: Selling | - Supply chains are… containers; extended and tiered; conduits; geographical<br>- Retail products are… channelled<br>- Shops are… containers; conduits; instruments<br>- Suppliers are… strategic items |
| Work and employment: Generally | - Employment is… a location; precious item<br>- Work (non-employment) is… a conduit; a journey; an object with spread and scope; made of different parts; a spreading thing<br>- Workers are… in the container that is the supply chain<br>- Employees are… targets<br>- Workplaces are… containers |

As indicated in table 1, workers are described as located within the conduit that is the supply chain, as though they were a substance rather than a group of people. They are described as 'vulnerable' in 4.56% of the 833 instances of *worker**, which is the second-most frequent content collocate to *worker** after 'supply' (as opposed to function words such as 'and', 'to', 'the' and 'in'). Furthermore, there is a tendency to talk about 'protect[ing] workers' (3.24%), 'worker engagement' and 'engage' or 'engaging' 'workers' (5.76%) and 'worker dialogue' (1.56%), which leaves the focus on the agent doing the engaging and protecting, rather than on the workers who are being engaged with. There is some acknowledgement that workers have a 'voice' (1.68%), 'health' (1.20%), and 'safety' (1.32%), but these remain items that the retailer takes agency for hearing or improving. These tendencies are very similar to the ones found in relation to the representation of victims of modern slavery more generally, as workers are agentless entities to be rescued and acted upon, rather than agents in their own right, suggesting a general 'side-lining' of these workers.[33]

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[33]   Gregoriou and Ras, 2018; O'Brien, 2018.

The function of these MSSs is thus not to highlight what is done to assist these workers (which would allow them some agency), but to highlight the actions performed by these companies upon these workers (which focuses solely on the agency of these companies). This is also reflective of power relations, whereby the supplier depends on the end-retailer, and the worker depends on the supplier (and thus, indirectly, the buyer), leaving the retailer as the primary decision-maker and the worker as decision-taker. Anner, Bair and Blasi show that it is retailers' ability to find new suppliers when existing suppliers, for any reason, become less desirable that drives the exploitative labour conditions of workers in the fashion industry, as it stops workers from being able to demand better labour conditions, out of fear of losing the work altogether.[34] Their proposed response is for both suppliers and retailers to be made not just jointly responsible, but jointly liable, for securing and improving the labour conditions of workers in these supply chains, as agreed with representatives of the workers.[35] The focus, in these MSSs, on the actions taken by these companies does suggest an acceptance of (some) responsibility for improving labour conditions, which seems to generally be taken as meaning the termination of contracts to force improvements, but, perhaps more positively, also as working directly with suppliers to enable suppliers to make these improvements. It is unlikely that suppliers and buyers both will be held liable for improving these conditions until workers have the opportunity to exercise their agency.

### *(Assessing and Responding to) Risks and Aspects of Modern Slavery*

Table 2 shows the metaphors relating to modern slavery/a lack of power, as well as some pertinent aspects of modern slavery, such as the risk thereof, and recruitment processes; it also shows the metaphors that relate to responses to modern slavery, such as 'helping' and 'investigating'.

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[34]   M Anner, J Bair and J Blasi, 'Toward Joint Liability in Global Supply Chains: Addressing the root causes of labor violations in international subcontracting networks', *Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal*, vol. 35, issue 1, 2013, pp. 1-43.

[35]   *Ibid.*

**Table 2: Metaphorical mapping related to conceptualising modern slavery and labour exploitation**

| Semantic Domains | Metaphors |
|---|---|
| No power | MODERN SLAVERY... IS AN OPPONENT; IS VISIBLE; IS KNOWABLE; HAS A SIZE; IS TRACKABLE; IS A CONTAMINANT; IS AN UNWANTED SUBSTANCE; IS A JOURNEY TARGET; IS A RECIPIENT OF COMMUNI-CATION; IS REPARABLE; HAS A LEVEL; IS A STRATEGIC TARGET; IS A SUBSTANCE; IS A WEAPON; IS A CONTAINER; IS A DISEASE |
| Danger | THE RISK OF MODERN SLAVERY... HAS A SIZE; HAS A LEVEL; IS GEOGRAPHICAL; IS VISIBLE; IS A RECIPIENT OF COMMUNICATION; IS AN OPPONENT |
| Work and employment: Generally | - RECRUITMENT FEES ARE... UNWANTED SUBSTANCES<br>- MODERN SLAVERY IS... AN UNWANTED SUBSTANCE<br>- RECRUITMENT PROCESSES... CAN BE REPAIRED; ARE HIDDEN<br>- WORKING CONDITIONS ARE... AN OPPONENT<br>- DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE IS... THEATRE |
| Helping | - HELPING IS... BUILDING<br>- COMPANIES ARE... ON A JOURNEY GUIDED BY EXTERNAL DOCUMENTATION<br>- HELPING IS... SHIELDING WORKERS FROM DANGER [BEING MODERN SLAVERY-RELATED ISSUES]<br>- WORKING ON THESE ISSUES IS... FIGHTING |
| Investigate, examine, test, search | - INFORMATION IS... A GEOGRAPHICAL AREA; A SUBSTANCE/STRUCTURE WITH GAPS; A GUIDE; A BASIS/STEPPING-STONE; A TOOL; TRACKS; A TRANSFERABLE ITEM<br>- KNOWING IS... SEEING<br>- GATHERING INFORMATION IS... A QUEST |
| Wanted | - PARTIES ARE... GUIDES<br>- DEALING WITH THE ISSUE IS... DONE STRATEGICALLY; A QUEST TARGET |
| Business: Selling | - RETAILERS ARE... LEADING ON THIS JOURNEY |

As shown in table 2, one conceptualisation of modern slavery is as an object or substance that can be made visible (but is implied to be, as of yet, hidden or unknown). This is the systematic metaphor of MODERN SLAVERY IS A SUBSTANCE THAT CAN BE MADE VISIBLE that we also found in newspaper writing.[36] The companies refer to this 'hidden' crime needing to be 'uncovered', as it occurs in so-called 'blind spots', with M&S even employing a 2017 awareness-raising toolkit entitled 'Many Eyes' with which to 'spot' the issue. Similarly, the trackability, visibility, and knowability of modern slavery are also apparent in the list of source domains. Related is the metaphor of THE RISK OF MODERN SLAVERY IS LOCATABLE.

The visibility and knowability of modern slavery are consistent with other mappings. The first of these describes modern slavery as a contaminant or unwanted substance that, presumably, contaminates or disrupts the product conduits and/or the locations in which workers work to maintain the flow of product. The qualitative analysis similarly reveals that all MSSs employ the MODERN SLAVERY IS A SPREADING UNWANTED SUBSTANCE metaphor systematically. The 'spreading' aspect of this metaphor is evident in references to modern slavery, and the crimes included under this umbrella term, as a 'growing', 'deep-rooted'

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[36]   Gregoriou and Ras, 2018.

issue. Such language use echoes Szörényi's analysis of an Australian current affairs documentary TV programme, in which modern slavery is also portrayed as a contaminant.[37] The acknowledgement that modern slavery is unwanted is emphasised through the reference to these crimes as 'issues' in need of 'corrective'/'remedial action', to be 'eradicated' or 'eliminated'.

One set of metaphors that particularly relates to the understanding of modern slavery as an unwanted spreading substance, is that of a virus/stain-metaphor through references to no industry being 'immune' or 'untainted' by this crime, the need for 'diagnosis', and, most notably, the need to '[f]ocus on understanding and remediating issues and embedding the learning in [company] DNA'. [38]

It follows that, as an unwanted substance, modern slavery must be 'eradicated', 'tackled', 'targeted', and 'combat[ted]'. This related mapping is RESPONDING TO MODERN SLAVERY IS WAR/VIOLENCE, which establishes MODERN SLAVERY IS AN OPPONENT/STRATEGIC TARGET. This mapping is also very common in British news reporting on human trafficking.[39] Furthermore, this set of related systematic metaphors is also evident in the statutory guidance to the CTISC, (which, much like the MSA, also requires large manufacturers and retailers to disclose their efforts to eradicate modern slavery within their supply chains), Home Office guidance, and civil society guidance.[40] 'Tackle' and 'tackling' occur, cumulatively, with a frequency of 33 (total) in the two Home Office documents, whereas the CTISC guidance prefers 'combat' and 'combating', with a frequency of 6 (the two Home Office documents also include 'combat', but at a cumulative frequency of 4). Civil society guidance also uses these words, in similar ratios. This indicates some linguistic similarity between advice of the Home Office and civil society. Words with military connotations, such as 'aim*', 'target*', 'objective*', 'mission*' and 'strateg*' are also used in all documents.

A much more frequent systematic metaphor in MSSs is that of RESPONDING TO MODERN SLAVERY IS A JOURNEY MADE OF A SERIES OF STEPS, which is a metaphor also found in Home Office, civil society and corporate writing on this issue; the

[37] A Szörényi, 'Expelling Slavery from the Nation: Representations of labour exploitation in Australia's supply chain', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 7, 2016, pp. 79-96, p. 90, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121775.

[38] Marks & Spencer, *M&S modern slavery statement 2017,* 2017, https://corporate.marksandspencer.com/documents/plan-a-our-approach/mns-modern-slavery-statement-june2017.pdf; Marks & Spencer, 2016.

[39] Gregoriou and Ras, 2018.

[40] California Senate Bill No. 657, An act to add Section 1714.43 to the Civil Code, and to add Section 19547.5 to the Revenue and Taxation Code, relating to human trafficking, 2015.

MSA itself asks for 'a statement of the steps the organisation has taken […]' and 'the steps it has taken to assess and manage […] risk'. As such, MSSs may merely be mirroring the legislation's language. All documents under scrutiny refer to 'reasonable', 'immediate', 'next' or 'further' 'steps' that need taking to prevent modern slavery in company supply chains, with John Lewis wanting to 'drive' change. These commercial retailers are further 'guided' by some of the Home Office and civil society publications released before and between the publication of the MSSs. The metaphor of the journey is also present in the Home Office guidance, and much more frequent than the metaphor of violence/war, with 'step*' occurring with a cumulative frequency of 78, compared to the 33 of 'tackl*'. Civil society organisations such as CORE and the ETI also tend to use 'step*', with a cumulative frequency of 41 (compared to 'tackl*' at 24).[41] However, this metaphor is absent from the CTISC guidance. Nevertheless, the CTISC does use 'eradicate', 'hidden' and 'taint' in relation to modern slavery.

These metaphors of violence can also be found (and are equally problematic) in academic texts on the topic. For instance, in an analysis of what the term 'modern slavery' means, who sees it, what they see, and so on, O'Connell Davidson argues that modern slavery narratives are simplistic fairy-tale-like ones, or narratives of good and evil, and then notes that

> Kevin Bales [somewhat similarly to the eradication metaphor] likens 'modern slavery' to smallpox, a definite condition that 'we' can eradicate. The disease metaphor makes powerful rhetoric, but also disregards the serious divisions that exist between those who study slavery historically, as well as those who research the phenomena dubbed 'modern slavery' [… T] here is no equivalent consensus on the nature, defining characteristics, and proper definition of 'slavery' amongst the community of researchers who study it […] Modern slavery no longer exists […] In the contemporary world, the term 'modern slavery' names not a thing, but a set of judgements and

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[41] CORE, *Beyond Compliance: Effective reporting under the Modern Slavery Act*, 2016, retrieved 8 December 2018, https://corporate-responsibility.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CSO_TISC_guidance_final_digitalversion_16.03.16.pdf; CORE, *Recommended Content for a Modern Slavery Statement*, 2017, https://corporate-responsibility.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Core_RecommendedcontentFINAL-1.pdf; CORE, *Tackling Modern Slavery Through Human Rights Due Diligence*, 2017, https://corporate-responsibility.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Core_DueDiligenceFINAL-1.pdf; ETI, *Base Code Guidance: Modern slavery*, 2017, https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared_resources/eti_base_code_guidance_modern_slavery_web.pdf.

contentions about political authority, belonging, rights and obligations, about commodification, market and society, about what it means to be a person, and what it means to be free. As such it *should* be a zone of political contestation.[42]

## Discussion

We focused, primarily, on a small selection of MSSs that were written in response to S54 and Home Office and civil society guidance, published on behalf of/by three major high street retailers who have pro-actively engaged in debates on this topic.

Some of the metaphors we found in these MSSs indicate that, however one defines it, and whether unseen or unsightly, modern slavery is ultimately unwanted. This, in itself, is not problematic. The responses to modern slavery are also, in terms of source domain, described in a less 'violent' manner than the responses de/prescribed in news articles.[43] More problematic aspects of the metaphors used in the MSSs, when taken together, are of a narrative nature, as also highlighted by O'Brien: who (or what) is the villain, who is the protagonist, and who is the damsel in distress?

The main issue with these texts is that the retailers writing these MSSs have cast themselves as protagonists, or at least active, independent agents in this story, who remediate an issue that is presumed to have been, if caused by any party, caused by some *other* party. In this regard, it is also noteworthy that it is the *company* that is heroic, rather than the individual. This personification of the company has a long legal history and was indeed intended to shift responsibility for the actions of the company—or, rather, the liability for the debts and obligations of the company—away from investors and executives.[44] As such, the personification of companies in corporate discourses (and in newspaper writing) is highly conventional.[45] However, it can have effects beyond simply protecting investors' and executives' personal assets (as in the case of liability for corporate debts) by also distracting from those individuals who make the business decisions that end up (both unwittingly and consciously) encouraging modern slavery.

[42] J O'Connell Davidson, *Modern Slavery: The margins of freedom*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015, p. 207.

[43] Gregoriou and Ras, 2018.

[44] R Breeze, *Corporate Discourse*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013.

[45] I A Ras, *A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the Reporting on Corporate Fraud by UK Newspapers 2004-2014,* PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2017.

This neg(oti)ation of complicity and culpability for creating, and responsibility or even liability for remediating the risks of modern slavery, is continued through the focus on and characterisation of the supply chain and the issue as geographically spread out, as shown in both Table 1 (in relation to supply chains) and Table 2 (in relation to the risk of modern slavery). These metaphors suggest that whilst the issue of modern slavery indirectly touches these British high street retailers, it remains a geographically far-removed problem that occurs in non-Western countries in particular.[46] This portrayal of the problem as far-removed ignores the prevalence of labour exploitation and, indeed, modern slavery in parts of the supply chain that are located 'closer to home', let alone the potential for exploitation on the British high street itself.

Such findings indicate a simplified understanding of what modern slavery is, and what causes it. Describing modern slavery as a contaminating substance disguises human agency and glosses over the persons (both legal and natural) who exploit workers. This simplification also allows these organisations to ignore, or recast, their complicity in adopting and creating sourcing practices (of both labour and material) that leave workers in precarious, exploitable positions, and their lack of liability for creating better labour conditions.[47] These organisations are thus not encouraged to reflect on their image of 'ethical' actors, beyond simply adopting or accepting the label. In this regard, MSSs are, in some ways, similar to, for instance, the docufictions examined by Sharapov and Mendel, in which cases of modern slavery are portrayed as issues involving over-simplified ideal victims and offenders, wherein the ideal offender is the only party held responsible for these crimes, without consideration of issues such as agency and consent, (global) power and economic inequities, and the role of the end-consumer. As Sharapov and Mendel note, rather than improving knowledge and understanding of the issue of modern slavery, such docufictions instead are an 'erasure of complexity—and failure to engage with the broader systemic issues that make people vulnerable—[which] helps to construct ignorance around trafficking and exploitation'.[48] Furthermore, as Sharma's examination of responses by various parties to the (irregular) arrival of 599 Chinese migrants in Canada shows, the rhetoric around migration and trafficking is linked to a moral panic to police the global movement of the dispossessed, with no recognition of why certain people are vulnerable, and to structural causes, such as loss of livelihood and loss of security through globalisation and war.[49]

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[46]  See also O'Brien, 2018.

[47]  See also Anner *et al.*, 2013.

[48]  K Sharapov and J Mendel, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Made and cut to measure? Anti-trafficking docufictions and the production of anti-trafficking truths', *Cultural Sociology,* vol. 12, no. 4, 2018, pp. 540-560, p. 11, https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975518788657.

[49]  N Sharma, 'Anti-Trafficking Rhetoric and the Making of a Global Apartheid', *NWSA Journal,* issue 17, no. 3, 2005, pp. 88-111; See also O'Brien, 2018.

Even more worryingly, the metaphor of an unwanted, spreading substance that requires 'eradication' can lead to a shift of focus away from solutions that include improving labour conditions across the supply chain (and beyond), and onto solutions that entail an expulsion of those labourers who are seen as illegal, or even just those labourers who are more vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous suppliers, from the supply chain.[50] Simply removing these labourers from the supply chain would allow retailers to claim to have a clean supply chain. However, doing so would also increase these workers' vulnerability and likelihood of being exploited, since it is those most vulnerable to exploitation that this metaphor suggests companies need to remove. In short, this metaphor implies a reactionary rather than preventative response to the problem of modern slavery.

This risk is further heightened by the lack of attention to workers in the supply chain, and the lack of acknowledgement of their agency and indeed humanity. There appears to be little attention to the workers who are exploited; they are mentioned, as 'workers'; they are described as contained in the supply network (as though a substance, not people); and they are acted upon, rather than described as acting. This is consistent with work by Andrijasevic who too found that exploited bodies are portrayed as passive objects, severed from materiality, and ultimately confined within traditional positions and subjectivities.[51] This is a disenfranchising use of language to describe people, regardless of the attempts that these relatively pro-active retailers may have made to engage with workers and enable them to make their voices heard. Indeed, the continued disenfranchising of workers would also stop them from having sufficient power to not just force both buyers and suppliers to accept responsibility, but even liability, for genuinely and sustainably improving labour conditions.

As indicated, companies did, and do, not write these MSSs in a linguistic vacuum. Analysing metaphors used across the whole range of UK statutory and civil society guidance on MSSs is beyond the scope of the present study, although we have referred to metaphor use in these documents where possible. That said, our findings do suggest that these MSSs were greatly influenced by the guidance published by the Home Office and civil society organisations. The influence of popular representations of modern slavery, which suggest it must be violently responded to, is also apparent.

In other words, these metaphors are common in the texts of even ostensibly pro-active and 'good practice' parties. They are likely to continue being so common in these, and similar, materials, given that these are the texts of those to whom

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50   Szörényi, 2016.

51   R Andrijasevic, 'Beautiful Dead Bodies: Gender, migration and representation in anti-trafficking campaigns', *Feminist Review,* vol. 86, issue 1, 2007, pp. 24-44, https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400355.

other (commercial) organisations may look for guidance or examples on writing about modern slavery. However, these texts and the metaphors within contribute to a problematic narrative on the (corporate) responsibility for (responding to) modern slavery. This is, then, also where an intervention in linguistic practices may have the greatest effect.

## Conclusion

Our corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of metaphors in Mothercare, M&S and JLP 2016, 2017 and 2018 MSSs revealed that, not unlike our earlier study of UK newspapers, modern slavery is once more conceptualised as a substance that spreads and must be fought.[52] Unlike our newspaper study, however, corporate responses to the issue are seen as more like a journey or a quest than a war or battle. This language has been influenced by relevant civil society and statutory guidance on modern slavery and, despite the undoubtedly good intentions of these retailers, is problematic, as it glosses over or recasts underlying factors that contribute to an increased risk of modern slavery, obscures complicity and culpability, and side-lines workers, whose agency is not acknowledged. Further to improving the level of detail in each MSS, as encouraged by the ETI, more needs to be done to encourage the adoption of a narrative and a linguistic practice that also accounts for the (systemic) causes of modern slavery, and hence addresses this problem as one that needs responding to in a truly preventative rather than merely reactionary manner.

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[52] Gregoriou and Ras, 2018.

# Book Review

# Deconstructing Underlying Assumptions about Trafficked Minors and Children

*Jeremy Norwood*

Review of: *Trafficked Children and Youth in the United States: Reimagining Survivors*, Elżbieta M. Goździak, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2016, 978-0813569697.

In *Trafficked Children and Youth in the United States: Reimagining Survivors,* Elżbieta M. Goździak (2016) not only explores the experiences of children and youth who have been exploited by their traffickers, but she also addresses the system in the United States that seeks to intervene and assist them. In order to understand this apparent process of victimisation, Goździak articulates the need to deconstruct popular conceptions of human trafficking itself, particularly as she seeks to give voice to the survivors and lend credibility to the trauma that they have endured. In order to accomplish this larger purpose, Goździak begins by identifying service providers which assist in the aftercare process for those impacted by human trafficking. She then spends time visiting these aftercare facilities, listening to the children and youth survivors of human trafficking, and documenting their stories and life circumstances.

While Goździak focuses specifically on children and youth who mostly have been smuggled from their countries of origin into the United States and later trafficked, she also makes several major contributions which should be taken seriously by scholars and practitioners who work on the topic of human trafficking. Firstly, she demonstrates that human trafficking is very much a social phenomenon which is exacerbated by the structural ('push' and 'pull') factors at play between so-called 'origin' and 'destination' countries. Secondly, individuals often find themselves in positions where they have to take chances in order to better their circumstances, as well as those of their families. Finally, Goździak makes a significant contribution

by interrogating many of the overarching myths that frame the captivity, rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked children and youth. What is especially powerful about this final contribution is that she debunks the popular myths surrounding human trafficking by using quantitative and qualitative data to reshape commonly held perceptions about the issues. This review will seek to elaborate on these scholarly contributions to the field of human trafficking by dissecting the larger points made by Goździak throughout the text.

One of the first contributions to the existing critical scholarship on human trafficking embodied in Goździak's work is the understanding of structural factors at play in the process of trafficking itself. First and foremost, the author uses a critical lens to highlight a range of contested ideological perspectives on human trafficking. In order to do this, she first deconstructs the popular, widely utilised framework through which some academics and practitioners view the process of 'captivity, rescue, and rehabilitation' (p. 17). According to Goździak, the moral and political agenda often shapes the research on human trafficking, leading to distorted statistics on its nature and prevalence, which have been contrived without rigorous research methodologies (pp. 31-32). She uses examples of how such statistics abound, despite the lack of particular methodologies in assembling them. This agenda often incorporates a rather paternalistic viewpoint, which conveniently places those who have been trafficked into a set of categories to be studied and analysed, and views them as helpless individuals to be 'saved' or 'rescued' instead of acknowledging the complexities of individual circumstances that do not fit easily into prescribed binaries (p. 32). For example, how do we reconcile the definition of a 'child' as anyone below the age of 18, when in some socio-economic contexts, children take on 'adult' responsibilities earlier in life than they might in the United States? How do we situate various understandings of 'adulthood' within a global context (pp. 113-117)?

As part of this process, Goździak also seeks to place trafficked persons within a larger web of social structures. These include, but are not limited to, how those who are exploited are situated in an economic, educational, political and social context. In other words, she utilises the literature on migration in order to provide more context to the situations individuals find themselves in based on 'push' and 'pull' factors, which transcend their day-to-day choices. This informed discourse is particularly important in some political and cultural contexts where labels are used to dehumanise individuals into roles as if these terms fully embodied their humanity and identity. For example, using terms such as 'illegal' or 'prostitute' often perpetuates this process of dehumanisation. In fact, such labelling nomenclature not only serves to minimise the structural impetus for the social phenomenon of human trafficking, but it also dispels any supposed agency exercised by trafficked people. As Goździak articulates, it is imperative to understand the structures which shape our understanding of reality, particularly in the case of those who have been trafficked.

A second major contribution Goździak makes involves her ability to portray 'the coexistence of agency and vulnerability, the interplay of trauma and resiliency of survivors of human trafficking' (p. 5). While the moral and political bias is inherent in much of the quantitative data on human trafficking, the data Goździak collected through the stories of trafficked children and youth reveal a deep sense of connection between the survivors and the individuals responsible for their captivity and exploitation. This level of agency is at times overshadowed by the supposed vulnerability of those who are being trafficked, particularly if they are children. Those *de jure* 'perpetrators', according to Goździak, did not fit the common perceptions moulded by the popular representations of trafficking, the majority of which focus on the vulnerability of the supposed victims to the detriment of any level of relationship between the parties involved. In fact, while there are undoubtedly organised criminal elements which engage in child trafficking, an overwhelming number of cases unearthed by Goździak involved people close to the survivors such as mothers, fathers, uncles, siblings, other close family members, and intimate partners or spouses (pp. 55-57). Furthermore, many of these family members and/or relatives had initially sought to assist the survivors, who often found themselves unknowingly constrained by the structural 'push' factors of their respective countries of origin, in order to attain a better standard of living in the United States (one of the 'pull' factors). As the author describes the complex dynamics of the process of human trafficking beyond the 'trafficker/trafficked' oversimplification, it is much easier to conceptualise the various stages at which survivors have been 'recruited, harbored, transported, provided for, obtained, solicited, or patronized' (Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000).

The paradigm shift, however, comes in as these survivors have sought assistance from those they know and sometimes love as part of this process. In order to encourage the reader to fully grasp the enormity of this paradigm shift, Goździak asks some fairly compelling questions: What happens when members or acquaintances of traditional or nuclear families have taken part in this process only to find out later that the individuals they were trying to help have been trafficked? Does that make the well-intentioned family members complicit in the crime of human trafficking? What if one of these well-intentioned family members is complicit in either smuggling or trafficking? What if the survivors do not want to disclose details which would help investigations because of a duty to provide for their families in lieu of observing their own rights—a knowing renunciation of expressing voice or agency? (pp. 66-67). This level of connection amongst survivors and those who have played a role in helping them secure a more stable standard of living presents some compelling legal challenges to identifying trafficked persons in the United States. This level of connection can also, as Goździak points out, pit these survivors against those who have raised them and supported their passage to the US, and limit their prospects of employment indefinitely (pp. 66-67). As a result, this connection may shape the level of 'captivity' survivors find themselves in, as well as severely hamper the success of

'rescuing' them, and cause friction when discussing the best action plan in terms of recovery.

In addition to establishing the confluence of terms such as agency and vulnerability, and trauma and resiliency, a final contribution that Goździak makes is her attention to many myths, which inform our current understanding of human trafficking. While many of these myths result from an incomplete (and sometimes ignorant) understanding of the phenomenon, Goździak suggests that they often help shape various levels of intervention. In particular, she provides data to debunk the myth that individuals are often found chained or bound in their places of captivity. While this is true in a minority of cases, this imagery continues to embody certain aspects of the anti-trafficking rhetoric through several decals, graphics, and advertisements by well-meaning anti-trafficking actors, including NGOs and governments. Per the discussion on agency, the majority of survivors were unbound, willing participants in the initial stages of what later turned out to be, in many cases, human trafficking. This realisation profoundly shapes our understanding of survivors, who desperately seek 'to rebuild their lives by securing good jobs, being able to send remittances home, learning English, developing friendships, and finding love' (p. 5).

The author also addresses the question of what happens when trafficked persons are the ones who are charged for crimes committed during the human trafficking situation. If trafficked persons are charged with a crime related to the trafficking situation, they begin to mistrust the authorities. It should come as no surprise, as Goździak points out, that one of the first steps in making a recognisable dent in the fight against human trafficking is to focus on those who are profiting from trafficking instead of re-victimising those who are being continuously exploited (pp. 98-99). These power dynamics shed light on the structural causes of human trafficking, which are often driven by demand for cheap and exploitable domestic, sexual and other services and labour. This also serves to take the focus off of the stigmatisation and labelling, which take place with marginalised and exploitable populations who are most vulnerable to being trafficked. In other words, if the causes of human trafficking are more clearly understood, there is less of an onus of responsibility placed on the victims.

I found this book remarkable in terms of questioning many of the commonly held assumptions about human trafficking. While it may be more convenient to assemble a study on human trafficking which provides a decent bird's eye view from the treetops, Goździak's book instead begins with grassroots research, which consciously lends voice to the survivors in order to understand not what human trafficking 'looks like', but instead what it actually is through personal interactions and conversations. In doing so, the author was able to deconstruct many of the assumptions regarding human trafficking circulated by some professionals in order to better inform those working with survivors as well as policymakers. All in all,

Goździak's project successfully recaptures the scholarship on human trafficking, some of which currently embodies the presumptuous tones of moral and political elitism, and returns it to the survivors by telling their stories and allowing them to speak their minds about what types of 'captivity' they are most familiar with, the types of intervention that are most needed, and the recovery that would best serve their interests.

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# ANTI-TRAFFICKING REVIEW

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# review

The Anti-Trafficking Review promotes a human rights-based approach to anti-trafficking. It explores trafficking in its broader context including gender analyses and intersections with labour and migrant rights. It offers an outlet and space for dialogue between academics, practitioners, trafficked persons and advocates seeking to communicate new ideas and findings to those working for and with trafficked persons.

**Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women**
www.antitraffickingreview.org