

The Sex Trade: Language Ideology Behind “Sex Work”
and “Sex Trafficking”

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1. Introduction

My research is an exploration of the language ideologies behind the terms “sex work” and “sex trafficking,” using lexical choices of interviewees as evidence for their attitudes. The main questions that I am asking are: Does the vocabulary used to talk about “sex work” versus “sex trafficking” differ? If yes, how so and what is its significance? Does the language used to discuss “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims” reveal different attitudes towards sex work and sex workers versus sex trafficking and sex trafficking victims? Does use of the terms “sex work” versus “sex trafficking” affect how severely the interviewee rates the problem of sex trafficking to be?

In the media and in academic papers alike, the terms “sex work” and “sex trafficking” are frequently used interchangeably. In fact, the term “sex trade” is often used as a blanket term to encompass both “sex work”, a term that implies choice, and “sex trafficking”, a term that implies force. Because of this overgeneralization of what the “sex trade” is, I predicted that the vocabulary used to talk about “sex work” and “sex trafficking” as distinct entities differs, and that these vocabulary differences lead to different attitudes towards sex work and sex workers versus sex trafficking and sex trafficking victims. The use of “sex trade” as a blanket term, however, also leads to confusion between the two groups, leading people to rely on the social group “prostitution” as the reference group for both “sex work” and “sex trafficking”.

Additionally, I predicted that using “sex work” and “sex trafficking” interchangeably leads to a numbing effect about the significance of sex trafficking in the world today. Through exploring the formation of social groups and attitudes of people towards these groups, I hoped to establish “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims” as social groups and compare the attitudes that people have towards “sex workers” versus “sex trafficking victims.”

In examining the data I gathered, I found that “sex work” and “sex trafficking” are discussed differently. Discussions of sex work include terms related to sex workers having agency and choice in being involved in sex work, treating sex workers as businesswomen willingly selling themselves, and describing sex workers as desperate and overall undesirable. Discussions of sex trafficking include terms related to lack of agency and choice for sex trafficking victims, commodification of sex trafficking victims, helplessness and victimization, the cruelty of sex trafficking, and describing sex workers as pitiable and undesirable. Despite these differences, participants often used “sex work” and “sex trafficking” interchangeably, as well as using “prostitution” interchangeably with and as a blanket term for both “sex work” and “sex trafficking”.

Additionally, I found that there were assumptions on the part of the interviewees about the gender of prostitutes/sex workers/sex trafficking victims and the gender of pimps, the socioeconomic status of prostitutes/sex workers/sex trafficking victims, wealth of pimps, race of pimps, and gender of buyers. Morality (or lack thereof) was also a frequent topic brought up by the interviewees. There was also a general “othering” or distancing from prostitutes/sex workers/sex trafficking and confusion about the terms prostitution, sex work, and sex trafficking.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I review the relevant literature related to the formation of social groups, attitudes towards social groups, and “the sex trade” in general. In Section 3, I discuss the relevance and importance of the study. In Section 4, I introduce the goals of this study. In Section 5, I discuss the methodology behind the study. In Section 6, I discuss the results of the interviews. In Section 7, I provide a conclusion for the study.

2. Literature Review

In order to explore these questions, it is first necessary to look at three main areas: sex work/sex trafficking today, social groups and their formation, and attitudes and their formation. Since “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims” are categorized into exclusive social groups, in order to examine these groups, it is necessary to discuss what social groups are and how they are formed. What attitudes are and how attitudes towards groups are formed must also be examined so that attitudes toward “sex workers” and “sex trafficking” can be investigated. Even though “sex work” and “sex trafficking” are distinct, they are used interchangeably. I propose that this interchangeable usage leads to a lack of differentiation between the two groups, and ideas towards “sex work” are used to define “sex trafficking”.

Through analyzing the groups “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims” separately, I am hoping to reveal attitudes towards these groups. These attitudes will be used to demonstrate how “sex work” and “sex trafficking” are linguistically constructed. By looking at how social groups are formed and how attitudes towards these groups are formed, I will be able to elicit from interviewees their perceptions of and attitudes towards the social groups “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims”. I am proposing that the ways in which these groups are differently linguistically constructed could produce a numbing effect, leading to denial of sex trafficking as a legitimate global and local issue. Additionally, I am proposing that through confusion about terms related to the sex trade and ignorance of what the definitions of these terms are, as well as interchangeable use of terms that in reality have different definitions, the realities of sex trafficking are expunged.

Sex work and sex trafficking

With 27 million slaves in the world currently, there are more slaves in the world today than there were during any other time in the history of the world (Human Trafficking 2010). This is often shocking to those who think of slavery as a thing of the past. These modern slaves are victims of human trafficking, and 90% of these slaves are victims of sex trafficking (Human Trafficking 2010). As defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, sex trafficking is “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” through the use of force, fraud, and coercion on the part of the recruiter(s) (Sex Trafficking 2010). Worldwide, human trafficking has a profit of \$32 billion per year (Human Trafficking 2010).

Key players in sex trafficking are “pimps” and “prostitutes” or “sex trafficking victims”, sometimes called “sex workers”. The media has often constructed “pimps” as flashy dressers who drive expensive cars and “prostitutes” as women who consensually and voluntarily engage in the business of prostitution, living glamorous lives as a result (Walker-Rodriguez 2011: 1-2). In reality, a pimp is a person who sells people completely against their will by force or threat of force. Trafficking is big business. In fact, it is the fastest-growing business of organized crime and in 2011 it was the third-largest form of organized crime (Walker-Rodriguez 2011: 2).

Even though prostitution is recognized as something that occurs both within the United States and abroad, sex trafficking and sex slavery are seen by the media in the United States and by the average American university student as problems that are “over there”, occurring only in foreign or exotic places. In reality, the United States has its own interstate sex trafficking. In fact, an estimated 293,000 American youth are currently at the risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation (Walker-Rodriguez 2011: 2). In the United States, the average age at which girls enter or are entered into prostitution is twelve to fourteen, while boys and

transgender youth enter or are entered into prostitution between the ages of eleven and thirteen. At ages this young, it is highly unlikely that these children are consciously and voluntarily entering into prostitution; instead, they are being trafficked (Walker-Rodriguez 2011: 3).

There are many ways in which force, fraud, and coercion are enacted. Victims of trafficking are frequently locked up in rooms for weeks or months, drugged, terrorized, and raped repeatedly. Traffickers use drugs, force, emotional tactics, and financial methods to control their victims. They may promise marriage and an attractive lifestyle the youths often did not have previously, claiming they “love” and “need” the victim and that any sex acts are for their future together (Walker-Rodriguez 2011: 3). Despite this manipulation, sex trafficking resembles any other business activity: the aim is to make a profit and to expand business (Jyrkinen 2009: 74). And just like any other business, “Because human trafficking involves big money, if money can be made, sex slaves can be sold. Sex trafficking can happen anywhere, however unlikely a place” (Walker-Rodriguez 2011: 6). When “sex trafficking” is included under the term “sex work”, implying choice and legitimacy as a career, these horrors are erased, and it becomes easy to ignore the realities of sex trafficking.

To be able to draw conclusions about sex work and sex trafficking, it is necessary to first see how sex work is defined. In papers regarding the topic, the term “sex trade” is often given as a blanket term that includes all forms of sex-related work or trafficking. The sex trade is defined as “economic transactions in which people’s bodies and sexualities are offered for sale, and are sold, bought, or delivered further and (ab)used in the name of clients’ sexual wishes and desire” (Jyrkinen 2009:74). It is interesting to point out that even here, in an academic paper, the definition includes no distinction between “sex work” and “sex trafficking” or between “forced” and “voluntary”.

This is an example of the blurring in the line between the “forced” versus “voluntary” nature of prostitution, sex work, and sex trafficking. Later in the same paper, this quote appears in discussing sex trafficking:

“There is an increasing need for common international, or rather global, policies on the sex trade, in particular because of the intensification of trafficking in human beings and other forms of organized crime within the sex trade” (Jyrkinen 2009:93).

Again, “sex trafficking” is included within the “sex trade”, and there is no distinction drawn between forced and voluntary participation in sex work or sex trafficking. Generally, the term “trade” has a positive connotation, as both parties want to trade for their mutual benefit. It is used to discuss an established, legitimate, positive exchange or career choice. The use of the term “trade” further serves to disguise “sex trafficking”, something that is truly negative, as a subcategory of something positive. Including “sex trafficking” under the heading of “sex trade” negates the fact that trafficking is not a “fair trade” for those who are trafficked. As long as this distinction is not drawn, and “sex trade” is used to include both willful prostitution and sex trafficking, the problem of sex trafficking, especially within the United States, will remain invisible.

Social Groups

“What are social groups?” is a relevant question here, since the hypotheses necessitate some kind of construction of “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims” as groups. A social group is a group of people who share a common social identity. This social identity can appear in various forms, including race, gender, socioeconomic status, and interactions of these. In the

group, a particular, shared parts of one's identity become salient, and members are aware of their group membership and the value, positive or negative, that comes from membership (Tajfel 1982: 7-9). When examining other groups, we attribute behavioral, social, and psychological or mental characteristics not with the individuals within the group, but with the group as a whole. Thus, we assign characteristics to group members because of their membership in the group, not because of who they are as individuals (Turner 1987:3-4)

This theory of social identity proposes that humans obtain value from the memberships they perceive themselves to have, and that these memberships exist only through comparison of our groups to other groups (Spears 2011: 203). For example, there are many different skin tones that are equated with being "white" or "black". In comparison to someone of African origin, someone of Swedish origin is considered "white". However, there are some people that are considered "white" whose skin-tones are actually quite dark, or some people who are considered "black" whose skin-tones are quite light. These groupings are also not universal, and different cultures compare skin tones differently and put people in groups that may not be considered cohesive by those in the United States, perhaps even more specifically, white, middle-class people in the United States.

When inter-group comparisons are favorable, with our group ranking higher than other groups, we can then fulfill our need for significance and belonging. Not only are we part of a group and perceive ourselves as such, but we gain a positive sense of esteem when comparisons are favorable. This identity in itself is valuable in that it gives us a sense of belonging to a group, and its relative value as compared to other groups is valuable in that it gives us a sense of superiority and accomplishment (Spears 2011: 203-204). Groups desire to distinguish themselves

from one another through salient and relevant dimensions of their identities, hoping to gain a positive sense of group, and consequentially, of self, through this comparison.

Groups are not merely groups out of convenience, but groups share a bond due to a certain salient aspects of self that group members have. It has been shown that having a sense of group identity can be a source of strength, support, and coping and can even lead to protection against psychological stress and physical illness. There is something innate to humans that longs for belonging and for significance, and belonging to a group that one defines as superior and valuable can contribute to the fulfillment of that longing (Spears 2011: 217). People are also motivated to evaluate themselves as positively distinct from other groups, thus creating a sense of superiority of “self” and one’s group in relation to “others” (Turner 1987: 30).

These groupings are not inherent, however. People are not merely born with innate characteristics that define them as belonging to a certain group. Instead of being a passive idea of identity, group identities are created out of active negotiations between groups attempting to define what reality is. It is only true that social groups reflect reality in the sense that these salient aspects of identity that place people into groups are agreed upon by actors in society (Spears 2011: 203). These psychological groups are sometimes formed based on categorizations given by others from the outside (Turner 1987: 29). In fact, once the group is formed and defined based on a certain aspect, and people are assigned to that group based on stereotypes, ingroup members act like and are attracted to other members merely because of their common membership in the group (Turner 1987: 28). From this, it follows that merely being part of a group can lead to identification with that group, and looking at an undesirable group as “them” increases identification with the formed group of “us” and leads to distance from “them”.

These aspects of identity are agreed upon through many different phenomena in society. The first of these is socialization. Children are born into groups that are already pre-defined and pre-constructed by society. Oftentimes, in a binary identity, children are only exposed to one group and one set of norms. This is to say that a child born into an upper class family is not exposed to the norms of a child born into a lower class family. Thus, through these processes, children learn what is normal, good, and right for their group, and the relative standing of their group in society (Tajfel 1981: 132-133). Even children derive a sense of worth or lack of worth from their group memberships, and research has shown that children are not only aware of high and low status groups but express desires to be part of higher rather than lower status groups or express lack of self-esteem due to being part of a lower status group (Nesdale et. al. 2010: 475).

This socialization leads to stereotyping, a process that further cements these norms and divides people into different groups given relative values. As children categorize people and learn how society categorizes people, order and cohesiveness is created in a place where there is actually quite a bit of complexity and variation. Once these stereotypes are cemented, they are very difficult to dispel. Even when facts are presented that directly contradict these stereotypes, we can be so focused on the apparent truth of these stereotypes that we find ways to preserve the content of these categories we have created (Tajfel 1981: 132).

From there, the stereotype provides support for prejudice, which can lead to hostile judgments. Once individuals define themselves as members of a specific social group, and are defined by others as members of that same social group, the stereotype of this group is both formed and learned by members, and it becomes normative. Members begin to see themselves as fitting the stereotype of the group to which they belong. There is little possibility for these stereotypes to be rejected since these judgments feed on one another and are apparently

confirmed through evidence of the truth of these stereotypes. While at any given time, the similarities and differences between a person and the relevant ingroup and outgroup will vary, that person will remain defined as part of his or her group, and intragroup differences and intergroup similarities will again be reduced (Turner 1987: 50).

Evidence of the truth of these stereotypes may be seen in attributes correlated with a particular social group or certain ways of behaving that are correlated with a social group. This “evidence” is highlighted when these attributes or behaviors are used to define this social group as different from other social groups (Turner 1987: 56-57). As the stereotypes are confirmed and evidence to the contrary is ignored, prejudice and discrimination are justified. Instead of seeing how individuals within a group really are, we construct stereotypes for what is deemed to be appropriate and expected behavior for a group and are now able to justifiably define people, as members of that group, as inferior or their activities as negative (Spears 2011: 210-211).

We are then led to further comparisons of our group to other groups. The derivation of positive value from a group identity can only happen when there is a comparison to another group. For a group to be “better” or “superior”, there must be a group that is “worse” or “inferior”. Spears presents the idea of “meta-contrast”, a way of calculating group similarities and differences. With meta-contrast, between-group differences are seen as large and within-group differences are seen as small (Spears 2011: 209-212). As introduced by Turner,

Within any given frame of reference, any collection of stimuli is more likely to be categorized as an entity to the degree that differences between those stimuli on relevant dimensions of comparison are perceived as less than the differences between that collection and other stimuli (Turner 1987: 46-47).

Again, Turner states this alongside evidence that intra-group differences are perceived as less than inter-group differences. Another way of phrasing this is as S. Taylor presents it: “as a result of the categorization process, within-group differences become minimized and between-group differences become exaggerated” (Tajfel 1982: 21).

Through viewing a group different from oneself (the “outgroup”) as a cohesive group rather than as a group of individuals, we are able to construct for ourselves a positive sense of self and construct these outgroup members as “others”, distancing ourselves from them and defining them based on their alleged group cohesiveness. Through this comparison of identities and the perception of outgroup members as identical, we are able to distance ourselves from the reality that outgroup members are individuals and it becomes easier to attribute negative values to the outgroup and positive values to ourselves and our ingroup (Tajfel 1981: 132-134).

Attitudes

As follows from the above review, we form attitudes about people based on the categorizations we give them. Since there is an assigned value given by society for each category, there is a corresponding attitude for each category. We are socialized to give certain values to certain categories and bombarded with ideas about what the best social groups are. Categorization is not merely an individual act; it is propelled and reinforced by society and the values that society gives to each category (Tatum 2003: 18-23). As we grow up, we are continually exposed to these values, and we are socialized to assign values to specific groups, leading to the formation and concretion of attitudes, both positive and negative, towards our groups and other groups.

The question that is posed related to this research, then, is what is language ideology and how is it related to attitudes about groups? I will first define what language ideology is.

According to Eckert, language ideology is formed through indexical fields, or a set of potential social meanings for linguistic variables. Through using these variables, the ideology, or the set of social meanings linked to the usage of linguistic variables, is formed. As categories are formed, linguistic variables are used to reinforce social values, and language use surrounding the value of a social group is developed. Every stylistic choice of a speaker shows his or her positioning with respect to the world, and in turn, with respect to other social groups (Eckert 2008: 453-457).

One example of the social meaning of linguistic variables is Labov's study on the use of variants of the use of /ay/ on Martha's Vineyard. Centralized /ay/ was found to be correlated with the social categories of fishermen, people living at the fishing end of the island, and teenagers who planned to spend their adulthoods on the island. These correlations were seen to be linked with the values of local authenticity and resistance to the invasion of the mainland values. (Eckert 2008: 454). With the development of the tourist industry on Martha's Vineyard, this distinction between centralized and non-centralized /ay/ was made even more clear between mainlanders and year-round Martha's Vineyard residents, further solidifying the meaning of centralized /ay/ of loyalty to Martha's Vineyard, and with it solidifying social meaning of centralized /ay/ (Irvine 2000: 47).

Another example of linguistic variables that are perceived as defining a social group is the variables used in African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Examples of linguistic variables that are seen as representative of AAVE are the use of habitual "be" (such as "She be here [most of the time] but she ain't here now"), use of "be" as an essential and permanent state, the use of "be done" as an equivalent of the future perfect, -t and -d deletion, copula absence, and

use of “-in” instead of “-ing” to end a progressive form of a verb. These features, although highly functional and grammatical in AAVE, are seen as inferior and “ungrammatical” by speakers of Standard American English. Since these features are associated with AAVE, they are hence associated with the African American population. Since these features are seen as negative, speakers of AAVE are also seen negatively.

The vision of these linguistic variables as inferior serves to perpetuate the view that the people who use them are inferior, leading to justification of discrimination against the African American population since they are “less intelligent”, “less articulate”, or “less capable of using ‘correct’ language” (Labov 2008: 220-227). As these “inferior” linguistic variables come to be associated with a specific group, they are used to form and justify attitudes towards this group. They also, then, are used to perpetuate discrimination against this group and increase the inequality between this outgroup and the majority ingroup.

Language, then, forms and solidifies social groups through constructing a group via language ideology, or linguistic styles and features that are typically used by or associated with that group. Language features, then, are seen as representative of that social group. As Irvine and Gal state, “Participants’ ideologies about language locate linguistic phenomena as part of, and evidence for, what they believe to be systematic behavioral, aesthetic, affective, and moral contrasts among the social groups indexed” (Irvine 2000:37). Linguistic features used by an “outgroup” are then linked to a language ideology that defines certain characteristics of that “outgroup” in contrast to the “ingroup”. These features create and perpetuate discrimination towards and unequal treatment of the “subordinate” outgroup by the majority ingroup.

Related to this is the concept of erasure. This occurs when the sociolinguistic field is oversimplified by the ideology surrounding a group or topic, and with this, people and activities

within this field are rendered invisible. Any facts that may be presented that contradict this supposed “reality” are simply ignored or justified with half-hearted explanations (Irvine 2008: 38). Even though an uncomfortable element may be ignored, it does not mean that it actually disappears. Instead, erasure merely makes invisible anything that does not fit within an ideology and covers this “inconsistency” with stereotypes found within the ideology. One example of erasure would be the ignorance towards an intelligent speaker of AAVE and the denial that this person is smart. Instead, “all” African Americans are seen as using the same language, and people outside of this group see “all” African Americans as the same and evaluate them at the same inferior level.

The same concepts can be applied towards the use of language surrounding “sex work” and “sex trafficking”. While it is not linguistic variables that are used BY these groups that define these social groups, the discourse surrounding discussions of these groups function to define these social groups and attitudes that people have towards them. Instead of the language ideology focusing on the language used BY “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims”, the language ideology of people who talk ABOUT these groups is examined. In this case, the language ideology is the discourse surrounding a topic, that topic being either “sex work” or “sex trafficking”. The language used to discuss “sex workers” or “sex trafficking victims”, then, serves to construct and define these groups. As these groups are further discussed, the language used to discuss them is further standardized by those who are outside of these groups. Through this standardization of language used to discuss these groups, attitudes towards these groups are formed and solidified. Here, it is the discourse ABOUT them that defines them instead of the discourse used by them.

As social groups are formed, it follows that attitudes towards these groups are formed. In assigning value to these attitudes, people are attracted to others that are part of groups with positive qualities, or at least groups that are less representative of negative categories. This leads to a positive evaluation and attitude towards people who are seen as holding desirable qualities. Evaluations are given, and what determines the positive or negative evaluation of others is whether the person doing the evaluating sees this other group as “self” or “not self” (Turner 1987: 58-59). A positive evaluation has largely to do with whether a person is seen as conforming to or deviating from characteristics and actions that are considered ideal, appropriate, or desirable. Additionally, positive evaluation of and attitude towards one’s own group is a function of positive distinctiveness from other groups. Thus, if a person is seen as conforming to our “good” social groups, attitudes towards that person will be positive. If that person is seen as deviating from these “good” attributes, and thus “we” are positively distinct from that person, then that person is evaluated negatively (Turner 1987: 60-62).

When these attitudes are formed and shared, there is a felt need for social consensus and agreement about the attributes of a group. Through this agreement, our subjective opinions about individuals, and as a result, groups, are validated. The greater the subjective uncertainty about value judgments and attitudes about groups, the greater will be the need to find an agreement about how to define a group (Turner 1987: 72-74). Using the influence of others to form agreement and create a cohesive attitude about an outgroup can be summarized as follows:

“The social influence process ... is believed to originate in the need of people to reach agreement with others perceived as ‘interchangeable’ in respect of relevant attributes (psychological ingroup members in the given situation) about the same stimulus situation in order to validate their responses as correct, appropriate, and

desirable (reflecting the requirements of the objective situation rather than subjective biases and errors).” (Turner 1987: 72).

Thus, we look to others who are like us, or in our same social groups, to form our opinions about people that we are unsure how to define or groups towards whom we are unsure what attitudes to have.

It is here that the social identity theory is applicable. Through formation of social groups, we are prompted to create attitudes towards these groups. According to social identity theory, the creation of the groups we label as “us” and “them” is due to self-categorization caused by in-group preference and then followed by subjective identification with fellow members of our in-group (Griffiths 2006: 736-737). We come to identify with members that we perceive to be “like us” and see people who are “not like us” as “others”. Through this “othering”, we form prejudices and stereotypes towards outgroups, and our attitudes towards an outgroup are a reflection of these stereotypes, justifying the distance between “us” and “them” (Griffiths 2006: 736). Additionally, because of our own social identities and our knowledge of membership in a group, as well as the value and emotional significance of belonging to that group, we are able to form attitudes about ourselves and our groups relative to other groups (Tajfel 1982: 24).

To examine attitudes towards specific groups, qualities that are seen as differentiating an ingroup and outgroup need to be made salient. When attempting to assign somebody to a group, given two categories, whichever category best fits the given input will become salient. Again, with meta-contrast, within a given frame of reference, differences between ingroup and outgroup members are perceived as greater than differences among ingroup members. Given a salient negative attribute, an ingroup member will differentiate himself or herself from the outgroup

member who has that negative attribute, and an attitude of distance between the ingroup and the outgroup is formed (Turner 1987: 126-130).

Another way of stating this is that we “distill simple impressions from a complex stimulus array” (Tajfel 1982: 4). The complexity of the individuals within a social group is reduced to a cohesive impression of the group, and it is this relatively simple and one-dimensional impression that is used to form the basis of attitudes towards a group. Instead of considering each individual within a group, and forming unique attitudes about each individual, we look at the group as a whole and ignore differences between individuals. Again, this is the principle of meta-contrast. When outgroup similarities are highlighted and ingroup differences are minimized, the outgroup becomes a group of “undifferentiated items in a unified social category” (Tajfel 1982: 13), and attitudes are formed towards that group as a whole and justified based on the alleged cohesiveness and uniformity of people within the group.

One of the ways to linguistically analyze attitudes is through the use of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA). A discourse is a set of statements that constructs and assigns value to an object. One way to be confident of the assignment of values through discourse is through highlighting patterns of association in discourse (Baker 2005: 198-199). These patterns are determined through the analysis of how lexical items co-occur in corpora. These ideas are often unconscious, but convey clear messages (Baker 2005: 199). Through CDA, we can determine “How do (more) powerful groups control public discourse? How does such discourse control the mind and action of (less) powerful groups, and what are the social consequences of such control, such as social inequality?” (Baker 2005:198).

One example of CDA is the study done by Baker and McEnery on the use of the terms *refugee* and *asylum seeker* in British news and in the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR) papers. These two terms are related, but they have rather different meanings and connotations. Despite these different connotations, they are often used interchangeably. Journalists who tend to be majority group members define the discourses that are constructed around the terms refugee and asylum seeker. Hence, these minority groups are robbed of the ability to speak for themselves. Instead of “refugees” and “asylum seekers” being given the ability to construct themselves, then, they are constructed by other people who are often not representative of these groups, either being members of the majority or extremists within the minority who do not give an accurate picture of the group itself (Baker 2005: 200). Similarly, sex trafficking victims are rarely allowed to speak for themselves in the media, and they are hence constructed by the majority, more powerful groups.

Through looking at concordances of the terms *refugee* and *refugees*, as well as *asylum seeker* and *asylum seekers*, Baker and McEmery uncovered semantic and discourse systems that revealed attitudes to these people. For example, the UNHCR looked at the existence of refugees as a global issue instead of focusing on a specific group in a specific area. The UNHCR also gave refugees specific countries of origin when discussing them, looked at problems that refugees encounter, and did not usually refer to them as helpless victims or nuisances, all of which defined refugees as human, as groups deserving of aid and respect (Baker 2005: 209-213).

On the other hand, the news corpus often constructed refugees as problematic, comparing them to natural disasters, for example discussing the “flood” or the “streaming in” of refugees, and presenting them as a cohesive group rather than considering their individual identities. This prejudiced construction is created in four topic classes within the discourse: they are different, they do not adapt, they are involved in negative acts, and they threaten our socio-economic interests. Through this, not only are refugees and asylum seekers constructed as a threat to

national British identity and to the status quo, but national identity is constructed through articulating elements in the identity of “refugee” that are counter to national British identity, thus creating further opposition between “refugees” and “British people” (Baker 2005: 222).

Similarly, sex workers and sex trafficking victims are constructed as “others”, seen as cohesive groups, and negatively stigmatized. These groups are casually discussed, frequently under the all-inclusive heading of “prostitution” or “sex trade”. “Sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims” are often unfamiliar groups to people on a personal level, and so ideas about these groups are formed based on their representation in the media, in pop culture, and in the opinions of other people. In order to closely examine the attitudes towards these groups, it will be necessary to analyze the discourse surrounding these groups, combing through the similarities and differences and using these to draw conclusions about the attitudes people have towards these groups.

Attitudes towards groups can influence evaluations of people. In Niedzielski’s study “The Effect of Social Information on the Perception of Sociolinguistic Variables,” Detroit-area residents were presented with a speech sample of a Detroit resident and asked to choose the vowel that most closely matched the vowel that they heard. The same speech sample was used for all participants, but half of the respondents were told that the speaker was from Detroit and the other half were told that the speaker was from Canada. One of the foci for the researchers was on raising of the vowel /a/. This variable was used in order to determine perceptions of Canadian raising where the /a/ is pronounced closer to /aw/. This is considered a non-standard and undesirable feature of speech for most Detroiters. Even though the speech sample was the same for all participants, those that believed that the speaker was from Michigan rated the

vowels as closer to /a/, while those who believed that speaker was from Canada rated the vowels as closer to /aw/ (Niedzielski 1999: 64-69).

This is just one example of how our attitudes are formed through stereotypes, and our evaluations of individuals are formed out of these stereotypes we have of groups. Once we believe someone to be part of a certain social group, our attitudes towards that person are set, whether or not there is evidence that confirms or refutes the data we have used to form our attitudes. For my research, I adapted this technique by using either the term “sex work” or “sex trafficking” in my interviews. Through this, I am presenting participants with either the group “sex workers” or the group “sex trafficking victims”. Just as people’s responses altered when Niedzielski presented her participants with a “Canadian” or “Michigan” speaker, I presented my participants with either the group “sex workers” or the group “sex trafficking victims”, with the expectation that people’s responses would alter based on the group about which they were being interviewed. Through our culture, people have formed opinions about “sex work” and “sex trafficking,” and by asking the same questions under different guises, my hope was to see what set attitudes people have towards these two groups.

This is also a continuation in a similar vein to Baker 2005. Through examining the lexical choices of interviewees when discussing “the sex trade”, I am parsing out attitudes that people have towards the groups of “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims”. I am examining the language ideology that students use surrounding these groups, and through comparing them, I am revealing attitudes that students have towards these social groups.

3. Relevance and Importance of the Study

The focus of this paper is on how young adults linguistically construct the identities of “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims”. One of my hypotheses is that using the terms “sex work” and “sex trafficking” interchangeably leads to a numbing to the truth of the intensity and magnitude of sex trafficking. If people think of “sex trafficking victims” as “sex workers”, they might lose sight of the fact that not all people working in “the sex trade” are there voluntarily; in fact, many have been victimized and forced to sell themselves for sex. For sex trafficking to be an issue that people view as important and urgent, it will be necessary to highlight the vastness of this issue. Until this vastness is realized, it will be all too simple for people to ignore its existence. One way of doing this is to recognize and change the language that is used to discuss these groups of people and these practices.

In the way that the sex trade is discussed, its existence is often justified through empathy with the clients, who are the buyers of sex. These buyers are thought to be justifiably acting on their “naturally strong sexual needs” (Jyrkinen 2009:87). Another way of constructing the buyers is thinking of them as a small minority made up of “lonely farmers and sick people”, and the sex trade is thought of not as abuse but as therapy for these people (Jyrkinen 2009:88). Finally, sex trafficking is often thought of as enacted by or to “someone else with problems”, and prostitutes are thought of as “others”, as buying or selling sex is not seen as a common procedure done by a common person. However, research does not support these views; instead, clients are often rather average people (Jyrkinen 2009: 91-92).

My hope is that by revealing the language ideologies surrounding “sex work” and “sex trafficking”, I will also reveal that “sex work” and “sex trafficking” are used synonymously. Yet despite this interchangeable use of terms, attitudes towards these two terms and groups of people

differ. This is a strange contradiction: “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims” are seen as both different, and the same. This blurs the line between the “forced” or “voluntary” nature of sex in these industries. Through blurring the line of “choice”, those who did not choose to be in “sex work” are ignored. I hope that this study can be used as a springboard for future research that may be able to dispel the myth that sex trafficking is not a local problem, to reveal the erasure of sex trafficking, and to lead to a growing awareness of sex trafficking, its brutality, and the need to stop it.

4. Study Goal

The sex trafficking industry is largely covert in the United States, and hence, it is frequently referred to under the blanket term of the “sex trade”. Because of its covertness, there is the idea that prostitution happens willfully in the United States, and that “sex trafficking” or “sex slavery” is something that happens “over there”, something that is foreign and does not directly affect us in the United States. Because of this, “sex trafficking” and “sex work” are often used interchangeably. While “sex work” implies legitimacy as a trade or career, as well as implying choice, “sex trafficking” is defined by force, fraud, and coercion. Although these terms are used interchangeably, they are quite different, with different connotations and meanings.

The goal of this study is to show that even though “sex work” and “sex trafficking” have different connotations, they are used interchangeably. This interchangeable use of different terms removes the ideological difference between them, which blurs the line between the agency of “sex work” and the victimization of “sex trafficking”. This can lead to ignorance of “sex trafficking” as an issue; through using these terms synonymously, the difference between force and agency is disregarded, and the fact that not all involved in “sex work” are there voluntarily is hidden.

5. Methodology

The Participants

I interviewed twenty University of Michigan students. Each interview was conducted in a study room in either the Shapiro Undergraduate Library or Hatcher Graduate Library. Through conducting the interviews in these study rooms, I was able to interview students in a quiet environment with which most University of Michigan students are familiar. The students interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 24, with 12 female students and 8 male students. They were recruited from my 100-level biology class that includes students of many different graduating classes and with many different concentrations, allowing me to hear from students of multiple different backgrounds and specialties.

Procedure

Through interviews, I collected data regarding how these students think other people view either “sex work” or “sex trafficking.” These interviews were based on Labov’s sociolinguistic interview, with the goal of producing a conversation that was as natural as possible. Each interview lasted between fifteen and thirty-five minutes.

I conducted these interviews orally using questionnaires that included open ended questions about vocabulary surrounding “sex work” and “sex trafficking” and questions using a scale rating system (See Appendix A). There were two sets of interviews that included nearly the same questions. However, for ten of the interviews, I interviewed the subjects about “sex work”, called Condition 1. For the other ten interviews, I interviewed the subjects about “sex trafficking,” called Condition 2. This is like Niedzielski’s method, where she had one condition

where the interview was about “Canadian” speakers and one condition where the interview was about “Michigan” speakers (Niedzielski 1999: 64-68).

For interviews on “sex trafficking”, I replaced any instances of the phrase “sex work” or “sex workers” in my questions with “sex trafficking” and “sex trafficking victims”, respectively. I hoped to see how the questions were answered differently and what words were used to describe “sex work” as compared to “sex trafficking.” At the end of each interview, I asked each participant to rate how severe they believe sex trafficking to be, specifically defined through force and through the person performing any sexual acts not receiving any of the money, both abroad and in the United States.

Since “sex work” and “sex trafficking” are topics that may make people feel uncomfortable, the questions were framed asking students to think through the eyes of other people. For example, instead of asking “What would you say are some synonyms for prostitute?” I would ask “What do you think other people would say are some synonyms for prostitute?” This technique is used a little in sociolinguistic interviews, and is used extensively in this study. I believe that this allowed for greater honesty since students were much less likely to assuage or mitigate their answers to questions in an attempt to protect themselves from any judgment or make themselves look better. Although they were allegedly just reporting what others think, I believe that the interviewees were really reporting their own views. I also collected general information about each subject including the subject’s name, age, year in school, familiarity with social justice issues in general, and exposure to sex trade-related topics around friends, through the news, and through university classes.

In the interview as a whole, I showed pictures related to sex work, asked interview questions related to sex work or sex trafficking respectively, and asked participants to rate

certain aspects of sex work or sex trafficking orally on a scale from 1 to 10, with values differing by question and thoroughly described to each participant. Through conducting the scale questions orally, I allowed students to expound upon their answers if they desired to do so. The pictures I showed were followed up by asking participants what words they think would come to mind for other people if they were to look at the pictures. The purpose of this was to see how the media has conditioned people to view prostitution and pimping, to see what background views participants had of “the sex trade”, to get participants comfortable with talking about the topics of sex work or sex trafficking, and to see what other words or topics were introduced by the interviewee when discussing each picture. All of the interviews were then transcribed by me for analysis.

Data Analysis

After the data were transcribed, both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the answers given were completed, comparing the answers given in the surveys under the guise of “sex work” to the answers given in the surveys under the guise of “sex trafficking”. Words that were used in responses to interview questions about “sex work” were compared to words used in responses to interview questions about “sex trafficking.” Occurrences of words used in answers to each question were counted and the answers given on the questions that were on a scale of 1 to 10 were averaged. The numbers were averaged for all twenty interviews in total, and then for the ten interviews about “sex work” compared to the interviews about “sex trafficking”. This information is presented in Section 6.8.

By doing this, I hoped to figure out whether “sex work” and “sex trafficking” were used interchangeably. If “sex work” and “sex trafficking” were used interchangeably, I predicted that

most of the vocabulary used in talking about “the sex trade” ignores the severity and brutality of sex trafficking, leading to an erasure of the problem and the viciousness of sex trafficking.

6. Research Findings and Discussion

In this section, I will discuss the results of the interviews. What patterns were revealed in the discourse surrounding “sex work” and “sex trafficking”? How were they similar? How were they different? How were the associations with “sex work” versus “sex trafficking” similar or different? Was there any confusion for the interviewees? If so, where?

I will first discuss the interviews in which I used the term sex work, then those in which I used the term sex trafficking. The following topics emerged in the interviews about sex work: agency and choice, business terms, character and characteristics of sex workers, and desperation and survival. The following topics emerged in the interviews about sex trafficking: agency and choice, business terms, character and characteristics of sex trafficking victims, blame and pity, and desperation. Following this foundation, I will discuss how “prostitution” was used throughout the interviews, assumptions of interviewees, the formation of “pimp” versus “ho”, morality, corruption of the prostitute rather than the pimp, “othering” and distancing in the interviews, scale questions and their answers, and confusion and tentativeness of interviewees surrounding terms used.

6.1. The Language Behind Sex Work, The Language Behind Sex Trafficking

Upon examining the data, there was one glaringly obvious trend: there is clear confusion about the terms “sex work” and “sex trafficking”, their meanings, and their usages. There were some times when an interviewee would draw clear distinctions between the terms, but that was far less common than answering questions with a hodgepodge of beliefs about sex work and sex trafficking appearing in response to questions.

6.1.1. Sex Work

There were ten students interviewed under the heading of “sex work”. Six of the ten students were female and four were male. Although there was some confusion about terms, there were some clear patterns, characteristics, and actions that these students associated with sex work. There were no significant differences between answers provided by male interviewees as compared to those provided by female interviewees.

Agency and choice

One of the things that arose in every interview was the idea of choice. The idea of choosing sex work versus being forced into sex work was introduced initially by the interviewee in three of the interviews. In all interviews, I specifically addressed choice through the question “What do you think people would say the relationship is between choice and sex work?” Those who initially introduced this topic (before the question about choice was introduced) discussed the “varying degrees of force” when it comes to sex work and seemed unsure how much was choice. Those who did not initially introduce the idea of choice (before the question about choice was introduced) often used words that, while not directly addressing choice versus force, used language that implies agency on the part of the participant. Example of words and phrases introducing agency included “selling yourself”, “sleeping around”, “having sex to get money”, “selling your body for money”, “doing sexual favors for money”, and “advertising sexual relations”.

A belief of agency of the sex workers was clear in the terms used to talk about interaction between sex workers and their clients. Active forms of verbs were used, such as “selling yourself”, some “choose to do it”, “selling your body”, “people who sell their body for sex”, “advertising” themselves, “calling out” to people in cars to offer sex to them. When discussing

sex workers prior to my question specifically addressing choice, there was a clear consensus that sex workers have agency over their sex work. Prior to the specific question about choice, the two people who mentioned potential force quickly glossed over this and the topic of conversation moved onto “doing sexual favors, being done with it, and getting paid for it” and “inappropriate sexual relations”, respectively.

When addressing choice specifically, two students directly stated that women involved are forced into sex work. Words related to force for these two were “implementation” by others, and force through “persuasion”, being “schemed” into it, and “power-based forces.” Of the other eight remaining students, seven mentioned force but were inconclusive about what “force” means. In this sense, force was discussed as “forced through life circumstances”, and not directly, physically forced into sex work. This, while perhaps not implying agency, does not imply helplessness or abuse that may coincide with being physically forced or coerced into sex work. The remaining student emphatically stated, “Oh they don't have to do that, it was their decision to go into this business; if that's what they're doing, then that's what they're doing.” Even for students who thought force might be involved with sex work, this sentiment was echoed frequently, with other students stating, “Is that really all you can do to make money? There are so many other things you could do, but you chose that?”

Overall, the consensus seemed to be that there was agency and choice in sex work. Despite this, there was still some confusion and mixed feelings, with eight out of the ten students stating that sex workers maybe had choice and maybe had no choice. Only two of the students emphatically stated an opinion, with one discussing sex work being “implemented” by others, and one stating that “they don’t have to do that”, that sex workers absolutely have a choice.

Business terms

Sex work was also discussed frequently in business terms. Terms used discussing sex work included “sex trade”, “industry”, “work”, “a form of exchange”, “using people as a form of currency”, “selling yourself for sex”, “transaction”, “advertising sexual relations”, “business”, “the pornography industry” and a “job involving sex”. Talking about sex work in business terms lends legitimacy to the transactions that are happening when sex is being given and money is being received in return. Even for those students who believed that people could be forced into sex work, sex work was perceived as a business for the women involved. Ten out of ten students, in discussing money, stated that the money goes to the woman, the sex worker, and not to somebody else who has forced this woman to be in sex work. This, again, erases the possibility of force, and re-introduces agency for the women involved.

This further supports the idea that, although some students would say that sex workers are probably forced into it, there is still an underlying idea of legitimacy behind sex work as a job to make money. Specifically with sex work, the businesswomen are the sex workers, the objects of exchange are their bodies, and the reward they receive in return is money. Again, agency is part of being a businesswoman; here, sex workers are perceived as willingly participating in a business transaction where their bodies are the commodities to be bought and sold and the buyers are people who solicit their services.

Character and characteristics

In discussing the character and characteristics of the people involved in sex work, the words used were not complimentary. Sex work was described as undesirable, slutty, sad, gross, wrong, immoral, shady, dishonorable, disgusting, sleazy, dirty, unfortunate, illegal, disturbing, upsetting, not appropriate, grimy, depressing, frowned upon, below society, gruesome, and

lustful. Sex workers were described similarly, in words such as slutty, skanky, “ho-y”, dishonorable, shady, “just not a good person”, golddigger, dumb, sad, gross, depressing, drugged out, poor, and unfortunate. There were a few complimentary adjectives: almost appealing, pretty, and lean. However, the occurrences of negative attributes given to sex work and sex workers far outweighed the occurrences of positive attributes given to sex work and sex workers. In all ten interviews, negative attributes were assigned to sex workers and sex work ninety-eight times and positive attributes were assigned to sex workers only four times. These few positive attributes only appeared in two out of the ten interviews.

It is interesting that the negative attributes ascribed to sex workers are all in terms of character and personal characteristics, while the few positive adjectives were all in relation to physical appearance. The fact that the only positive things given about sex workers were related to their physical appearance further cements the idea that the worth and value of a sex worker comes from her (or his) appearance and not from who she (or he) is or what non-physical characteristics she (or he) has.

It is perhaps not surprising that the sexuality of sex workers was frequently discussed. Words used in relation to this were slutty, skanky, lustful, and sleazy. It is interesting that these words are frequently used to describe women who are not sex workers, but who are instead generally promiscuous women. These women who are considered slutty, skanky, lustful, and sleazy are women who dress provocatively, and “like to have sex”. Use of these words attributed to sex workers says that sex workers like to have sex, meaning they have sex freely and want to have sex without regard for whom their partner may be. There is a sexual looseness, a focus on the desire to have sex to fulfill a physical desire, and an absence of an emotional connection in the sex involved within these terms used to discuss sexuality.

It follows from this that if you are a sex worker, you are slutty, skanky, and sleazy. If you are both a sex worker and like to have sex, then you must have chosen to go into sex work because you like sex and want to have sex no matter what partner may come along. Sex work is, then, seen as a way to fulfill carnal desires for women who are concupiscent and nothing more. These traits are certainly not lauded in society, but are used to describe people who are undesirable. By describing sex workers as a group that “just likes to have sex”, this creates an “othering” effect and provides justification for why sex workers do what they do, as well as justification for feelings of disgust or disdain towards them.

There were also a lot of adjectives used to describe the cleanliness (or lack thereof) of both sex work and sex workers. Adjectives such as dirty, disgusting, grimy, and gross were used to discuss sex work and sex workers. This has a very “othering” effect, pushing sex workers further into a social group that is highly differentiated from the social group of “students”. It is unlikely that adjectives such as dirty and grimy would be treated as desirable. Thus, these adjectives further demonstrate that sex workers are a group different from “us” (the students), and justification is found for distancing ourselves from sex workers and making judgment calls about them.

Desperation and survival

The idea that sex work is the only thing that a sex worker has to turn to in order to make money, and that she is desperate to do so, was mentioned throughout the interviews. If there was a specific item for which sex workers are desperate, it was money. Interviewees discussed sex workers being “desperate for money” or being “forced out of desperation or a bad life event” into sex work. Other themes related to desperation and survival were force into sex work through

circumstances, women being forced into “this life” because they have no other way to provide for themselves, women choosing sex work because they were “brought up in a bad environment,” and something bad happening that required them to have a lot of money, so they chose to go into sex work to make that money.

Within this, there are two levels of desperation and force. One level is when there really is another option, but the woman doesn't take it. The other is when there really isn't any other option, at least not one about which she is aware. Interviewees usually described sex workers as thinking that the latter is true and acting that way, turning to sex work because they believe that is the only way they will be able to make money. However, the interviewees expressed that they themselves believe that the former is true. One interviewee stated, “Is that really all you can do to make money? Like there's so many other things you could do, but you chose that, so is that really all that's left?”

It is interesting that even along with this, there appears to be little to no sympathy for those who are involved in sex work. The thoughts of having bad life events happen to them or desperation for money because of these events did not elicit thoughts of desire to help or pity for those involved. Although interviewees expressed that perhaps something bad happened to the person who chose to go into sex work, many of the interviewees also expressed that there had to be other options for the woman that she chose not to take it. Hence, it is her choice to be in sex work, and there is no reason to feel any pity for her.

It seems as though the idea of choice and agency of sex workers trumps the idea of desperation and need from the perspective of those who are in a social group that is in opposition to sex workers (the students). Instead of feeling sympathy for the situations that sex workers are in, people turn to the idea that it was the women's choice to go into sex work. Therefore, the

woman deserves whatever happens to her because she should have known what she was going to encounter when she chose to go into sex work. There is no sympathy or pity felt for her situation. This further divides “sex workers” as “others” who are different from “us”.

Comparison to sex trafficking

Even with the interview questions directed towards sex work, there was some overlap between sex work and sex trafficking. The significance of this will be expounded upon in Sections 6.1.2, 6.2, and 6.9, but there are a few things that are worth mentioning at this point. One interviewee described sex trafficking as “spreading sex work”, which shows a clear connection between the definitions of sex work and sex trafficking, sex trafficking being defined here as just sex work on a more mobile or widespread scale. Additionally, when asked what people would say the relationship is between law and sex work, another interviewee answered that “law is trying to stop sex trafficking,” showing the perceived interchangeability of the two terms. Out of the ten interviews about sex work, five of the interviewees showed an association between sex work and sex trafficking by either using them interchangeably, answering a question about sex work using the term “sex trafficking”, or associating force with sex work two or more times.

6.1.2. Sex Trafficking

There were ten students interviewed under the heading of “sex trafficking”. Six of the ten students were female and four were male. Again, although there was some confusion about terms, there were some clear patterns, characteristics, and actions that these students associated

with sex trafficking. There were no significant differences between answers provided by male interviewees as compared to those provided by female interviewees.

Agency and choice

The idea of choice (or lack thereof) on the part of those being sex trafficked is a topic that, again, surfaced in each of the interviews. I again had the question regarding choice included in the interviews, this time being “What do you think people would say the relationship is between choice and sex trafficking?” However, even before this question was asked, ten out of ten interviewees introduced the topic of choice without being prompted by me. In addition, seven out of the ten interviewees emphatically stated that sex trafficking victims were just that: victims. They had no choice in the matter and were being forced into being sold for sex completely against their will. Each interviewee stated at some point before the question about choice was asked that either force or being a “slave” were part of sex trafficking. Since each interviewee associated force and/or slavery with sex trafficking, it is clear that each interviewee believed that the women involved are being sold as opposed to choosing to sell themselves.

When the question about choice was directly asked, there was a bit of hesitancy for some interviewees to say that absolutely everyone was forced into sex trafficking. Seven out of the ten interviewees did state that there is no choosing involved for those who are being sex trafficked. Only one interviewee stated that “a majority of the time the person has chosen to go into that industry” when asked about choice, but still following that up by saying that “some are forced or recruited”. There were two interviewees that said that some choose to go into sex trafficking and some do not choose to go into sex trafficking but are forced.

There was a clear belief about a lack of agency for the women being sold in sex trafficking situation. Instead of discussing the women “selling themselves”, the women were

described as being sold by somebody else for the purpose of sex. Interviewees discussed either other people exchanging money or other things of value for a human life or the exchange of females for sex, sexual favors, or their services. There was no mention of these females exchanging themselves, only other people doing the exchanging or the females “being exchanged”. One interviewee discussed the idea of those being sex trafficked having no choice in the matter, stating that “I think, that the woman has no choice, and they’re being trafficked like it’s not their choice, they just have to, they’re being controlled and you just go where you get pushed I guess.” This brings to my mind the image of a puppet, where someone else is pulling the strings and the puppet merely does what its puppet master desires it to do.

An interesting association with sex trafficking is the idea of sex trafficking victims being “taken” by someone for the purpose of selling them for sex. Four out of the ten interviewees specifically described sex trafficking victims as being “taken” by somebody else. Two of these interviewees specifically mentioned the movie “Taken”, a movie that came out a few years ago about a girl who goes on vacation in Europe and is kidnapped and sold for sex. While this is an example of sex trafficking (although fictional), this is not the only way that trafficking happens. However, “Taken” is one of the few representations in popular culture of sex trafficking as it really is, being forced into sex for money through fraud or coercion of those who are doing the recruiting, and hence it is where some people get their ideas about sex trafficking.

Although there was some mention of the people in sex trafficking situations having a choice in the matter, it was clear overall that people associate sex trafficking with force and lack of agency and choice for those being trafficked. Interviewees also discussed those being trafficked as being recruited to have sex with other people. This recruitment also involved other people, some apparently controlling and powerful person, receiving the money for the sexual

deeds. One quote sums up the ideas towards sex trafficking and choice quite well: “Nobody would willingly put themselves in a situation where they're gonna be trading their body and services, well not even them, it's like somebody else is using them as a pawn, as like a good or a service.” This is a very dehumanizing thought of someone not only having no agency or choice, but being treated as a pawn, a good, or a service instead of a human being.

Business terms

Like sex work, sex trafficking is also frequently referred to as a business, with interviewees frequently using business-related terms to describe sex trafficking. Four out of the ten interviewees directly stated that sex trafficking is a business, two that it is an industry, and one that it is related to the black market. The ideas of exchange and trade were mentioned in two of the interviews. As mentioned in the previous section, sex trafficking was described as exchange of females. Sex trafficking was also described as fair trade, “as in I give you something and you give me something in return, but worse” and related to the sex trade and the slave trade. Five out of the ten interviewees under the sex trafficking condition referred to sex trafficking as slavery.

The ideas of buying and selling were frequently discussed in the interviews. The women being sex trafficked were extremely commodified (c.f. Johnstone 2009), described as “items”, “pawns”, “goods”, and “services”. Again with the ideas of sex trafficking being a business with exchange occurring, those soliciting or buying sex from trafficked women were described as clients, a term usually used to discuss the recipient of a service or good in a legitimate business deal. Interestingly, there is also no discussion of agency or choice on the part

of the “client”, the person choosing to solicit sex. Instead, they are seen as a legitimate third party outsider, rather than someone who is participating in sex trafficking.

In these interviews, in discussing selling sex, the women were described as being sold, with someone else doing the selling, as opposed to the women selling themselves. This is an alteration from the views of business as related to sex work. Here, women are not the ones choosing to offer up their bodies as a good or service, but instead, the women themselves are seen as a good, an item, or a service, and the control is all in the person doing the selling. Here, the pimp is the businessman, and the woman is merely an object that the pimp can sell (repeatedly) to make a profit. The women are no longer businesswomen; instead, they are victims, items, and slaves.

Character and characteristics

In discussing the character and characteristics of sex trafficking and sex trafficking victims, the words used were, again, not complimentary. Sex trafficking was described as dangerous, violent, intricate, complex, powerful, sly, horrible, illegal, wrong, immoral, terrible, international, criminal, ruining, disgusting, underground, victimizing, disrespectful, not classy, slutty, harsh, cold, sick, cruel, shocking, hurtful, bad, forceful, rarely occurring, unlawful, involving drugs and alcohol, controlled by men, a problem, common, and having pimps. Sex trafficking victims were described as pathetic, sad, accountable, self-accountable, desperate, innocent, unfortunate, in a bad situation, hopeless, victim, needing help, backed into a corner, forced, not careful, degraded, broken down, women prostituting themselves, miserable, pitiable, having STDs, having diseases, strong, wasted (“as in wasted part of their life”), whore, skeaze, trashy, slutty, druggie, young, naïve, and submissive.

Interestingly, two of the interviewees mentioned the sexuality of sex trafficking victims. It seems contradictory that each interviewee would state that force is definitely involved with sex work, yet two of the interviewees still introduced the idea of sexuality. The specific words, skeaze and slutty, as mentioned in the section of sex work, are usually used in describing promiscuous women who throw themselves at men willingly, desiring sex purely to fulfill a physical desire, and ignoring a desire for any emotional or relational connection through sex. The idea that some sex trafficking victims really just like sex and want to have sex through any means necessary and that's why they're doing it is paradoxical to the idea that sex trafficking victims do not put themselves in situations to be trafficked but are instead trafficked by an outside party.

Sex trafficking is often associated with cruelty. Victimization and control were topics of interest in discussing sex trafficking and sex trafficking victims. They were described as submissive, backed into a corner, and sad. What they are part of was described as cold, sick, cruel, shocking, hurtful, horrible, and terrible. This is yet another piece of evidence that there is a belief of lack of agency and choice for those who are involved in sex trafficking. Instead of choosing to sell themselves for sex, victims of sex trafficking are being sold for sex in a cruel, violent, abusive environment. The only phrases used that imply fault on the part of or blame on the person being sex trafficked were "not careful", "self-accountable", and "women prostituting themselves." Here, there is some doubt that about a potential lack of control for women being trafficked. However, these few phrases were overshadowed by the negative judgment phrases directed towards the situation that sex trafficking victims are in as opposed to the sex trafficking victims themselves.

It is interesting that sex trafficking victims are described both as innocent, with the trafficking not being their fault, and being not careful. Overall, six interviewees described people being sex trafficked as either innocent or victims. Only one person described sex trafficking victims as being “not careful”. Interestingly, this person also described sex trafficking victims as a victim in the adjacent sentence. When asked what adjectives other people would use to describe a sex trafficking victims, this interviewee responded, “Someone maybe that should have been more careful I guess.” This interviewee then related this to rape, stating, “I think it kind of goes hand in hand with like rape, like some people say victims of rape are like dressed slutty, dressed whorish, it’s like their fault, so I think it can kind of go hand in hand with that.” The portrayal of a victim right next to someone who should have been more careful is an interesting and unexpected contradiction, both portraying the person as blameless and victimized and questioning the person’s morality and judgment.

The idea of sex trafficking being systematic and complex was mentioned throughout the interviews. While sex work was seen mostly as one woman independently choosing to sell herself, or perhaps being forced into it, the idea of a system of sex trafficking was introduced frequently. This is shown through words such as complex, intricate, system, systematic, criminal, unlawful, common, and controlled by men. In this construct, men have implemented a system where women are recruited, “taken”, kidnapped, or otherwise forced into being sold for sex repeatedly, and controlled by these men.

Sex trafficking is presented as a criminal market, a common occurrence, and an underground bazaar where women are on display and their bodies are objectified. It is a market that is so intricate that it is very difficult to explain exactly how it happens, so it is easier to summarize it as a system that is really sad, disturbing, disgusting, and miserable and at the same

time is too complex to be able to truly tackle. These are, again, adjectives that serve to distance “us” (the students) from “them” (those being sex trafficked). Even though it is recognized and described as a horrible system that ruins the lives of the women being trafficked, the adjectives related to the repulsiveness of sex trafficking victims and sex trafficking overpower this recognition. It is overwhelming to think about; it is too much, so people fall back on the ideas that they can count on of sex trafficking being something that is gross, hopeless, and trashy.

Connections to the illegality of sex trafficking, as well as its connections with other illegal or “immoral” activities were common. Descriptions related to this were: illegal, immoral, wrong, bad, having STDs, unlawful, slutty, and involving drugs and alcohol. By connecting sex trafficking with other things that are frowned upon by society, it becomes easier to distance oneself from sex trafficking. These things are undesirable, and hence we believe we would benefit as people to keep these undesirable things and people at arm’s length and write them off as bad people involved in illegal activities, a group negatively distinct from our own group.

Blame and pity

As mentioned earlier, few interviewees blamed the people being sex trafficked for their situations. Instead, the fault was placed on somebody else. Again, six interviewees described sex trafficking victims as innocent, hence moving the blame away from the victim. Who, then, is the blame placed on? Only one interviewee specifically mentioned who is doing the controlling of a sex trafficking victim, and even then it was very vague, with sex trafficking victims being described as “controlled by men.”

An interesting aspect of the depiction of sex trafficking victims is pity. The word victim itself brings along a connotation of pity. A victim is inherently somebody who has been harmed

by someone or something else, and we as humans tend towards feeling sorry for people who have been hurt or are in unfortunate situations. Six of the ten interviewees described sex trafficking victims as sad or pitiable. Three of the ten interviewees described sex trafficking victims as children, which is one of the most vulnerable populations and hence the easiest for people to feel pity for their situations. When asked how someone would describe a sex trafficking victim, one interviewee responded with, “Poor child.... I pity you, or like I can’t believe this happened to you, I’m so sorry.” This pity and sympathy serves to put sex trafficking victims on a more human, relatable level, making it more difficult to distance oneself from them and their situation. Perhaps, though, the pity is not strong enough to break the desire to distance oneself from getting involved. One interviewee stated, in response to questions about sex trafficking victims, that it’s “sad, but I’m sorry, I’m not getting close to you.”

Desperation

Four interviewees described sex trafficking victims as potentially desperate, but it did not seem like it was desperate in terms of desperate for survival. One interview described it as a desperation that there is no way we can understand until we feel it ourselves, and hence we cannot judge them for anything they do or anything that happens to them. Only one out of the four interviewees that mentioned desperation described the kind of desperation here as desperation for money. The other three that mentioned desperation depicted desperation as desperation of the victim to get out of the situation that she is in instead of desperation for money or willingness to do anything necessary to survive.

Again, this lends the idea of helplessness and victimization. Instead of the sex trafficking victim being considered a sex worker determined to do anything necessary to survive, the sex

trafficking victim is depicted as an innocent victim who was “at the wrong place at the wrong time.” Because of this, the victim is forced into a situation that she cannot get out of, but it is a situation from which the victim desperately wants to escape.

Comparison to sex work

Only four out of the ten interviewees in the sex trafficking condition alluded to sex work as being related to sex trafficking. One person stated that “sex worker” and “sex working” are synonyms for “prostitute” and “prostitution. The other three out of four described sex trafficking as work of some kind, either “working the streets,” “slave work,” or “work of a sexual nature.” The only other mentions of sex work, sex workers, or sex working in the interviews about sex trafficking were in relation to prostitute or prostitution.

6.1.3. Summary: sex work versus sex trafficking

All in all, sex work and sex trafficking were depicted as similar but distinctive entities. In the answers given, blanket statements were made about all sex workers or all sex trafficking victims. These social groups, though very diverse and multi-faceted, were thought of as cohesive groups all experiencing the same things. As mentioned in the section on groups, within-group similarities were underscored, and between-group similarities were minimized. Both sets of interviews mentioned language that was related to the sexuality of the sex worker or the sex trafficking victim, respectively. They both used language that distanced “sex workers” or “sex trafficking victims” (“them”) from students (“us”).

One of the big differences between the two groups (sex workers versus sex trafficking) was the idea of agency or choice. On the whole, sex workers were seen as individual women

who were choosing to sell themselves for sex. Business-related terms for sex workers further served to emphasize the choice that sex workers must be making to sell themselves for sex to clients. Sex workers were seen as businesswomen participating in a legitimate business transaction. Sex trafficking victims, however, were portrayed with little to no agency or choice in the matter. They were innocent victims, part of an intricate and complex system and unable to extricate themselves from the system. Business-related terms for sex trafficking victims portrayed sex trafficking victims as items, commodities, or currency, with a controlling other selling them instead of the women choosing to sell themselves for sex.

Another difference was the focus on the cleanliness (or lack thereof) of sex workers, and the focus on the despondence and viciousness of the situation that sex trafficking victims are in. Adjectives discussing sex work focused a lot on how disgusting, gross, or dirty sex work and sex workers are. Adjectives discussing sex trafficking focused a lot on how miserable, hopeless, and cruel the situation in which sex trafficking victims are is. This again plays into the idea of sympathy. There is much more sympathy and pity directed towards sex trafficking victims than there is towards sex workers. More interviewees about sex trafficking expressed sadness or pity, with six expressing it directly, while only four mentioned sadness as associated with sex work in the other set of interviews.

Overall, both social groups are situated as undesirable. However, sex workers are considered a slightly lower and less worthy group than sex trafficking victims. Many of the same ideas and descriptions are used to describe both sex workers and sex trafficking victims, but sex trafficking victims have something that sex workers are not perceived to have: innocence. The sexuality and sluttiness of sex workers is a frequent object of discussion, while the overarching theme behind interviews about sex trafficking was a beginning of recognition of the horror of the

situation and sadness for the innocent victims of sex trafficking. Despite this horror when looking at sex trafficking specifically, the interviewees did not always relate misery to sex trafficking. The following section will expand upon how interviewees overlooked the cruelty of sex trafficking.

6.2. The Link Between Sex Work and Sex Trafficking: Prostitution

Even though sex work and sex trafficking are thought of by interviewees, overall, as distinguishable, they are still thought of as inextricable from each other. There is one piece of data that has yet to come into play, and that is the interviewees' thoughts on prostitution. While sex work and sex trafficking are thought of as distinguishable, prostitution and the sex trade are used as the link that brings these two allegedly distinct things together. Prostitution is something that most people have a view of and opinions on, at least on some stereotypical level. Prostitution is included in interviewees' categories under sex work, and sex trafficking is included under prostitution. Even though prostitution implies choice and does not imply force, interviewees often used it as a synonym for sex trafficking. Since people are not accustomed to discussing sex trafficking, but they are at some level comfortable with discussing prostitution, at least in an abstract way, it is prostitution that becomes the main focus in any discussion on either sex work or sex trafficking.

Synonyms for prostitute and prostitution

In each set of interviews, I asked what some synonyms for prostitute and prostitution are. I also asked what synonyms are for sex work or sex trafficking, depending on the interview situation. Synonyms given for prostitute were similar in both conditions. They included hooker,

whore, slut, street walker, call girl, sex worker, ho, floozy, hussy, stripper, tramp, skank, promiscuous women, sex trade, someone who sells their body, sex slave, booty call, and skeeze. Synonyms given for prostitution were also similar in both interview conditions. They included business, black market, whoring out, selling yourself for sex, paying for sex, buying sex, hooking, sex trafficking, sleeping around, stripping, working the streets, selling your body, sex working, human trafficking, fair trade (as in I give you something and you give me something in return), sex for money, sex for drugs, dirty sex, selling a body, sex work, getting money, work, human sex trafficking, being slutty, taking advantage of somebody, whoring, and sex trade.

Interviews in sex work condition

In the set of interviews on sex work, there were several synonyms given for sex work and sex workers. Synonyms given for sex work included selling yourself for money, selling yourself for sexual favors, prostitution, escorts, sex trafficking, sex trade, white slavery, pornography, stripping (if you were having sex while doing it), a “different” person, whoring, hooking, industry, form of exchange, manipulation, and using people as a form of currency. Nine out of ten interviewees included prostitution as a synonym for sex work. The only person who did not include prostitution directly as a synonym instead listed “sex for money,” “sex trade,” and “stripping (if you were having sex while doing it)” as synonyms for sex work, perhaps indirectly connecting prostitution and sex work.

In the set of interviews on sex work, there were several synonyms listed for sex worker in various descriptions of sex workers and associations given with sex workers. These synonyms included prostitute, strippers, “people behind pornography sites”, “people online who have the live web cam”, “people involved with human sex trafficking”, “girls who are actually having sex for money”, “guys getting men to have sex with their girls for money”, women, poor women,

sluts, people doing things outside of marriage, choosing to have sex for money, people who sell their body for sex, women more than men, slutty girls, skanky girls, and golddigger, Again, ten out of ten stated that prostitute is a synonym for sex worker and used the terms interchangeably.

Interviews in sex trafficking condition

In the set of interviews on sex trafficking, there were several synonyms given for sex trafficking. Synonyms given for sex trafficking included prostitution, forced prostitution, slave work, slave trade, sex trade, child prostitution, human trafficking, wide scale prostitution, operation of prostitution, slavery, illegal trade, pimping, abduction, business, “girls selling their bodies, or not necessarily them but people making money off of that”, girls selling themselves or having sex for money, being sold, and being treated as items instead of actual women. In discussing synonyms for sex trafficking, eight out of ten interviewees at one point or another equated prostitution with sex trafficking and used the words interchangeably. The other two mentioned sex for money, but not specifically prostitution, leaving it unclear whether they consider prostitution and sex trafficking to be able to be used interchangeably.

In the set of interviews on sex trafficking, there were not many synonyms listed for sex trafficking victim in various descriptions of sex trafficking victims and associations given with sex trafficking. There is not a term that is productive in talking about somebody who is or was being sold in sex trafficking. The most widely used term is sex trafficking victim, so that’s what I used in my interview questions, but victim can be a leading term. Thus, I did not ask for synonyms specifically for sex trafficking victim, and most of the stated associations of interviewees with sex trafficking victims involved lack of choice, force, or victimization of some kind.

Summary of interviews under both conditions

Overall, eighteen of the interviewees considered prostitution and either sex work or sex trafficking to be synonymous and used them interchangeably. The remaining two interviewees discussed sex trafficking or sex work as sex for money, perhaps referring to prostitution indirectly. It seems fair to conclude that most people consider prostitution to be a blanket term that covers sex work and sex trafficking. If people are relying on their constructs of prostitution when they are not forced to specifically differentiate between prostitution and sex work, or between prostitution and sex trafficking, then their attitudes towards prostitution and sex work will certainly affect their attitudes towards sex trafficking.

We tend to rely on knowledge that we already have when we confront something that is confusing or something that we are unfamiliar with, even if that knowledge is merely based on stereotypes. Hence, the attitudes that people have towards prostitution and prostitutes, unless someone is educated about sex trafficking, will be reflected in the way that they talk about sex trafficking. But how are prostitutes portrayed? If they are portrayed negatively, then, it follows that sex trafficking is also a recipient of these negative attitudes, since it is included under the umbrella of prostitution, which is in turn under the umbrella of the sex trade.

Character and characteristics

Character and characteristics of prostitutes and prostitution were given in all twenty interviews. Prostitutes were described as pathetic, desperate, unsettling, sad, slutty, tramps, very open and wanting to have sex, disgusting, trashy, low-class, shocking, inappropriate, lewd, shameful, soliciting, dirty, wrong, bad, desirous, cheap, “just a whore”, whore, sleazy, looking for money, skimpily dressed, hos, immoral, impoverished, promiscuously dressed, not very respectable, low, having STDs, lack of respect in general, degraded, the lowest point a woman

could reach, not very clean, lacking self respect, whorish, dependent, vulnerable, low morals, nothing to live for, morally loose, scandalous, sketchy, having bad morals, houses full of women, homewreckers, lack of clothing, confused, not normal, wanting, skeazy, and druggie. Prostitution was described as disgusting, harmful, hurtful, weak, business, trade, dirty, entanglement, perhaps voluntary, victim blaming, they're doing it because they like having sex, they're just slutty girls, they're just objects to have sex with, and weak. Prostitutes and prostitution were also associated with poverty, low class, STDs, disease, (dirty) money, drugs, and alcohol.

Again, these descriptions were less than complimentary. The only non-negative adjective used was sad. Nine out of the twenty interviewees described prostitution or prostitutes as sad, six of which were in the sex work condition and three of which were in the sex trafficking condition. While this adjective does not necessarily imply a negative moral judgment, it is also not positive. The sadness was not even necessarily mourning for the situation that the prostitute is in. One interviewee stated, "It's really sad, but I'm glad I'm not involved in that kind of scene", again distancing the interviewee from the person involved. Another interviewee stated that it was only sad if the prostitutes were younger girls.

In examining the social group of "prostitutes", generally prostitutes are not seen as good, moral people. They are described as immoral or not moral, as having a lack of respect, and as associated with illegal activity. Highlighting this perceived aspect of all prostitutes' character serves to justify negative treatment of prostitutes. "They're just bad people" associated with "bad, sketchy areas and places", and "they get what's coming to them" were sentiments I heard multiple times throughout the interview process. One interviewee stated that the popular perception is that "women choose to be prostitutes because they're morally not very upright." Getting into prostitution is attributed to making poor choices, with the correlation between

choice and prostitution described by one interviewee as, “it’s more like the choices they make like running away and getting involved in drugs that lead to prostitution”. Running away and drugs are not associated with “morally upright” people, giving further evidence that it is justifiable to believe that prostitutes deserve to be treated badly.

Even with the thought of prostitutes choosing to be prostitutes, there is a stigma associated with making that choice. Many interviewees expressed skepticism about that being the only option available. One interviewee said, “I think there's always other options out there. Maybe they don't seem as good, like money-wise or not as lucrative but there's still other choices.” Another said,

“I personally think there’s a choice. You know, yeah you can be born into the environment, but I feel like there are so many opportunities in our world that there’s some way you could get out of it. Like the first step is just to remove yourself from the situation, like you have a choice to leave where you’re at and go somewhere else and make a new life for yourself. And it sounds like, oh it’s not that easy just to go somewhere else and make a new life for yourself, but you can choose to try, like at least try, you know? Don’t just sell yourself short and automatically assume there’s nothing that can be done because you can choose to change your life.”

This quote reveals a lot about the attitudes people have towards prostitutes: what they are involved in is disgusting and low, and they must be prostitutes for immoral reasons. Why don’t they at least TRY to find something else? Why did they choose prostitution when there are so many other moral, better options available?

Prostitution is also described as not respectable. It is not a profession that other people look kindly on, but it is a profession that includes a group of people that society tends to ostracize. Not only is prostitution described as not respectable, but the people who are prostitutes are described as not respectable and having no self-respect. Again, they are not good people. They are not confident, clean, or moral people, so they do not need to be treated as equals or even as humans. Not only this, but they are ruled by their carnal desires. Prostitutes are described as “unable to control themselves sexually” and as choosing to be prostitutes because they like having a lot of sex without any emotional or relational connection. Focusing on this idea prevents outsiders from seeing that there is complexity to prostitution, that someone who on the outside looks like a prostitute could really be a sex trafficking victim. Instead of seeing that sex trafficking victim clearly, he or she is looked on as “just a whore” or a prostitute who has no respect and just likes sex, and is treated as a prostitute instead of a victim.

Ties to sex trafficking

The inextricability of sex trafficking from prostitution is shown clearly in this quote from one of the interviews. When asked about adjectives that could be used to describe a sex trafficking victim, this person said, “someone maybe that should have been more careful I guess.” It can also be a tough reality to recognize that sex trafficking actually does exist. It is much easier to ignore it and to focus just on prostitution, that even though prostitutes aren’t good people and they’re gross and dirty, at least they are doing it out of their own volition. One interviewee stated, “It really scares me to think that actually exists. I think of sex trafficking as something that doesn’t exist in reality, which obviously is completely false, but when you don’t know anyone who’s involved, it’s desensitized it sort of, like it’s not real.” By thinking of sex

trafficking as prostitution, it becomes possible to ignore the fact that sex trafficking exists. Then, if sex trafficking is seen by an average person, they will be able to think of that sex trafficking victim as “just a whore” through using the framework they have of prostitution as an all-containing term for any sort of work related to selling sex or being sold for sex.

Summary

As long as prostitutes and prostitution are seen as synonyms for sex trafficking victims and sex trafficking, people will be unable to completely separate prostitution and the negative connotations that go along with it from sex trafficking. When they see or hear of someone who appears to be “just a whore”, but in reality is a victim of sex trafficking, they will automatically apply the stereotypical views that they are comfortable with of that people group: those views associated with prostitutes and prostitution. By seeing a sex trafficking victim as “just a whore” who likes sex, is trashy, is not respectable, and is immoral, the horrors of what that sex trafficking victim is experiencing will be completely negated. In order to make this happen, it will be necessary to not refer to sex trafficking as prostitution, or even forced prostitution, and to remove any association or stigmas that go along with prostitution from sex trafficking.

6.3 Assumptions of Interviewees

There were a few themes that, although not introduced by me, ended up being nearly universal within the interviewees’ comments (if mentioned by them). These were the gender of prostitutes and pimps, the socioeconomic status of prostitutes, the wealth of pimps, and the gender of any buyers.

Gender of prostitutes

Prostitutes, sex workers, and sex trafficking victims were almost always referred to as women or with the pronouns “she” or “her”. Only three interviewees mentioned that prostitutes, sex workers, or sex trafficking victims might not be women. Even for those three, the majority of the time gender was referred to, the gender of a prostitute, sex worker, or sex trafficking victim was assumed to be female.

Gender of pimps

In all interviews, a pimp was always a man. There was only one interviewee who mentioned women in relation to pimps, and even then it was a statement saying that women could never be pimps. This interviewee stated, “I mean, I don’t see women going around grabbing women really to make them have sex with people for money. I can’t really picture that. I feel like women have that kind of respect in the first place.” None of the other interviews even mentioned that there was a possibility of a woman being the one who sells other people for sex.

Race of pimps

Out of the twenty interviews, only three of them mentioned the race of pimps. However, all of those who did mention race described pimps as either black or African American. It is unclear whether this is the association of an African American man being someone who sells women for sex, or of African American being “cool”, like the other meaning of pimp says. The meaning of pimp will be further explained in Section 6.5.

Socioeconomic status of prostitutes

Twelve of the twenty interviewees clearly associated low socioeconomic status with prostitutes. This is yet another reasoning that people may give to look down upon prostitutes and think of them as inferior or less able. It was frequently mentioned that prostitutes were unable to

get good jobs or were unable to find ways to legitimately make money, again being looked down on not only for their poverty but for their lack of ability to get out of poverty or make money using anything besides their body.

Wealth of pimps

Interestingly, even though prostitution was associated with low socioeconomic status, which is associated with poverty, pimps were associated with wealth. Ten out of the twenty interviewees associated pimps with being well-to-do, using words such as rich, wealthy, having lots of money, and buying lots of expensive things. This is an interesting juxtaposition, with women being sold associated with low class and men doing the selling being associated with affluence.

Gender of buyers

Five out of the twenty interviewees mentioned the gender of people buying sexual services of sex workers, prostitutes, or sex trafficking victims. Of those five, all of the interviewees stated that the buyers were men. These men were described as rich men, CEOs, perverts, high-up officials, men taking up girls, and lustful men. The connotation given with that is that “average” men do not solicit sex. In reality, as stated earlier, it is more often that a man who is considered “average” is the one who solicits sex.

6.5 Pimp Vs. Ho

Perhaps one of the most interesting word pairings related to the sex trade is that of pimp versus ho. These two words are very closely associated, often used in the same sentence or phrase, such as “a pimp and his hos”.

Pimp

“Pimp” is a word that is currently experiencing semantic shift. What was once only “someone who sold others for sex” is now also defined as a “cool guy”. This is similar to what happened with “dude”. What once meant “old rags” is now a term of address that indexes “cool solidarity”, or something that indexes both camaraderie and distance (Kiesling 2004: 284). “Pimp” and “dude” are both interesting words in that they have many usages, and their different meanings and implications gain salience based on context. Through the word “dude” indexing solidarity and detachment simultaneously, a “dude” is seen as someone who is both a friend and is unfamiliar and unknown (Kiesling 2004: 297-298). “Pimp” is similar in this way. Its usage evokes the idea of someone or something non-mainstream, whether this person is “cooler” than the mainstream or someone from whom people in the mainstream want to distance themselves.

There were a lot of words associated with pimp throughout the interviews. Although there was mention of pimp being someone who sells other people for sex, the most common usage of pimp was something entirely different. It was clear that there were two separate meanings of pimp: one being a “cool guy” and one being a man who sells and controls prostitutes. Although this distinction was clear, both definitions were often used in response to questions about sex work or sex trafficking, also showing a lack of differentiation between appropriate usages of the word “pimp”.

The main way pimp was described included words such as cool guy, awesome, ghetto (“but not in a derogatory way”), guy who gets all the girls, rap, hos, bitches, pop culture, player, the boss, in charge, pimp daddy, gangsters, guy who talks to a lot of girls, a man with a lot of girls, someone who gets girls, a cool person, a guy who’s good with women, a guy that’s good with getting girls at bars, seeing several women at a time, “an African American person with a fur coat, a top hat, wearing really nice clothes, having girls around all the time”, decorate, womanizer, manipulative, really cool or really awesome, macho, having a lot of money, having the ability to have a lot of women, control, power, top dog, no one can touch him, man in charge, has means, controlling, go-to-guy, main man, having all these girls swoon around you, player, you must be someone, you’ve made a name for yourself, smooth with the ladies (but not in a benevolent way), and a protector or caregiver for prostitutes.

There were words that are also frequently associated with pimp that were used to describe the pictures I showed interviewees of an ad for the TV show “pimp my ride” (about detailing and adding expensive, nice features to cars) and of a “pimp cup.” Those included ghetto, bizarre, kind of violent, bejeweled, trophy, cheap, ridiculous, cool, retro, “Flavor Flav” (an African American male celebrity who is considered representative of a “pimp”), dominant male in power, in charge, hypermasculine, aggressive, meme, trashy, bold, obnoxious silly, macho, extravagance, blingy, drinking, alcohol, dripping diamonds, really rich, bling bling, funny, stupid show, goofy, outrageous, inappropriate joking, fancy, bright, money, over the top, person who owns it is full of themselves or shows off a lot, gang banger, exciting, party or special occasion, and shiny.

The adjectives directed towards pimp are largely positive. A pimp is seen as a friend to all, someone to be looked up to with a lot of skill in getting women to come home with him. But

a pimp was also seen as someone who was outside of the mainstream, whether being defined as someone who sells other people for sex or being cool in a sort of “untouchable” way. Nineteen out of the twenty people were aware of that definition of pimp being someone who controls prostitutes, with the twentieth person thinking that pimp means “male prostitute”. Despite their awareness of the definition of pimp being someone who sells other people for sex, and despite the fact that there is no other term for that concept, people above all described pimp in positive terms when asked in general how other people perceive a pimp. He is seen as a true leader, a man’s man who has power, control, charisma, masculinity, money, and skills. He is associated with fun and being carefree. This image is entirely different from the original definition of pimp.

As mentioned earlier, “pimp” is a word that is undergoing semantic shift. It is in an awkward phase where it is mostly used to mean “cool” or “awesome” but is still widely known as a term for someone who sells others for sex. It is further complicated by the fact that there is no term that can replace “pimp” being one who sells other people for sex. These two meanings get confounded, and because “pimp” is used almost exclusively in a positive light in everyday conversation, it is difficult to know where the word “pimp” who sells other people for sex fits into the world and the English language. Because “pimp” is now used in a mostly positive sense, its usage erases the reality of the horrible things that some pimps do to the people that they are controlling, covering it over with the image of a cool, fun, charismatic, caring, charming guy.

Ho

Ho is often talked about with the word “pimp”, in phrases such as “pimps and hos” or “a pimp and his hos”. This term, however, does not have positive connotations. Words and phrases used to describe a “ho” included a woman who would easily enter into sexual intercourse, “a

woman who dresses in a very lack of clothing way and shows off her curves”, sexual fantasy, exotic, exoticism, a slut, somebody who doesn’t care and is going to have sex no matter what, a trashy girl, prostitutes, derogatory, dirty, slut, not respectable, whore, girl who sleeps around, sexual looseness, not much self-confidence and low self-esteem, a woman who throws herself around sexually at guys, somebody who has sex a lot, somebody poorly dressed, somebody who can’t control themselves sexually, someone who is desperate, selling sex, making money off of sex, gaining something from having sex with people they probably don’t know or aren’t familiar with, having STDs, not very careful, and skeazy.

Since hos are seen as out of control, and pimps are seen as in control, this helps to further cement the image of many girls swooning over one man, trying to gain his attention and affection. A ho will freely throw herself at a pimp because she needs him in order to have a high self-esteem and she gets her self-confidence from him. She is merely a sexual object, and a pimp is benevolently caring for her and offering his masculinity and strength to her, seen as her protector and caregiver.

These terms, pimp and ho, help to display evidence for the fact that not only is sex-related work or trafficking gendered, with pimps being men and hos being women, but that the men in a sex-related work or trafficking situation are not seen as morally corrupt or hurtful to others; instead, it is the women who are put down, judged negatively, and said to be morally corrupt. It is easy, then to dismiss someone who appears on the surface to be a prostitute as “just a ho”, when in reality, that person could be sex trafficked. This is easily overlooked since the constructs of “pimps and hos” and prostitution is what people look to when they are discussing any kind of sex-related work, from prostitution to stripping to sex trafficking.

Since prostitution is what people know and are familiar with in an abstract sense, prostitution is what people see when somebody is selling herself for sex or being sold for sex. “Hos” are seen as all the same—slutty women who throw themselves at men and get sex for money, and as stated by one interviewee, “sex for money is always derogatory”. Again, this is a product of “erasure” as presented by Irvine and Gal (Irvine 2000: 38). It is uncomfortable to think of “hos” as individuals, and hence the individuality is explained away by portraying these women as nothing more than a cohesive group of identical “hos”. Within-group differences of “prostitutes” are minimized, and hos, prostitutes, sex workers, and sex trafficking victims are all lumped into one category, where the woman involved is sexually promiscuous, dirty, and morally corrupt. The blame is put on the woman, and the man involved, potentially selling her, is ignored, not labeled as morally corrupt but hailed as a fun guy or somebody who has truly made a name for himself, somebody who is admired for his ability to “get women”.

6.6 Morality

As has been mentioned earlier in this paper, morality was a concept frequently addressed by the interviewees. Thirteen out of the twenty interviewees mentioned the perceived morality of the people involved in sex work, sex trafficking, or prostitution without being asked anything specifically about morality. Interestingly, it was not the pimp or the person selling others for sex who was labeled as morally corrupt. Instead, it was either the prostitute, the sex worker, the sex trafficking victim, or the actual act of sexual favors and deeds for money that was labeled as immoral and wrong.

In discussing prostitution, one of the interviewees stated that it is “looked down on, it's a dirty thing, it's wrong, the people who do it are dirty and wrong, it's always been sort of

personified as evil.” Prostitution was associated with bad morals, being a bad person, “bad things” being done, and having a bad reputation that was earned from being in “that line of work.” Another interviewee stated that prostitutes are portrayed as “these people who are really like pushy and like gross and trying to like get with you and stuff, so they portray them as kinda bad, like bad people, and just their decisions.” Sex workers are further described as “dishonorable” and just “not good” people. Through portraying people involved in sex work, sex trafficking, and prostitution as unilaterally “bad”, it is easy to justify distancing oneself from them. They do not deserve to be helped, nor do they need to be helped. They’re just bad people choosing to do bad things. Again, sex trafficking victims and their situations are erased, covered over by the construct of the “immoral sex worker”.

Again, this is an instance of within-group differences being minimized and between-group differences being highlighted. Prostitutes, sex trafficking victims, and sex workers are, as a whole, unified in their “badness” and “immorality”. They are bad people who do bad things, and that’s all there is to it. When someone sees another person who on the surface appears to be a prostitute, but is really a sex trafficking victim, that person is identified as a prostitute and is hence seen as immoral, and the horror of her (or his) situation is completely erased. Evidence that people do that was shown through the use of the term “prostitution” in response to questions about sex trafficking. It is easier to think of prostitute or prostitution, relatively familiar groups, than to think about somebody actually being forced into selling herself (or himself) for sex, having no agency, and not truly being “just a whore” or “just a bad person”, but a victim.

It is also interesting that the morality of pimps was never commented upon. It was mentioned throughout the interview that pimps might be involved in selling women. Even when this was mentioned, there was no judgment directed towards the pimp. There were no comments

upon his character. Instead, the interviewees brushed over the fact that one of the definitions of pimp involved men selling women and went on to explain that really, the word “pimp” just means a cool guy who’s good at getting women. However, being “good at getting women” was described in a positive way as a man who is smooth and charismatic with women, rather than a man who obtains and controls women as commodities. Through not recognizing the responsibility of the people behind trafficking who are recruiting women to be sold for sex, the blame is indirectly placed on the sex trafficking victim. This is apparent when people describe sex trafficking victims as “somebody who should have been more careful” or getting into sex trafficking because they were involved in other illegal activities or addicted to drugs.

6.7 “Othering” and Distancing

Ultimately, one of the clear trends was that prostitutes, sex workers, and sex trafficking victims were seen as “others”, people who are not like “us”. They were seen as one distinct, cohesive social group. There was some recognition of different people being in different situations within the reality of selling oneself or being sold for sex, but overall, there was not distinction of prostitute versus sex worker or prostitute versus sex trafficking victim. In thinking about social groups, it has been shown that it is easier to think of “others” who are different from us as one cohesive group (see Tajfel 1981, Turner 1987, and Spears 2011), and that was shown through the use of talking about prostitutes, sex workers, and sex trafficking victims as a cohesive, distinct “them” group different from “us”, students who are not morally corrupt or slutty enough to put themselves in a situation where they sell themselves for sex or are in danger of being sold by others for sex.

There were many instances of specific quotes that were related to the need that people feel to keep oneself at a distance from “those people” or people associated with “that area of society”. Especially with the adjectives universally describing prostitutes, sex workers, and sex trafficking victims as gross or disgusting, there was a clear chasm between “them” and “us”. We do not want to be associated with a group that is so gross, so we define them as one group and we define ourselves as the binary opposite, people who are not morally corrupt, gross, or disgusting. Upon asking one interviewee about the attitude that other people have towards sex trafficking victims, this person responded with, “sad, unwilling to get involved. That’s deep shit. Um...and, just, distancing. So sad, like, I’m sorry but I’m not getting close to you.” There is a definite sadness or pity associated that “we” feel for “them”, but it is not enough to move us to action. One possible reason for lack of action is that prostitutes, sex workers, and sex trafficking victims are seen as too helpless, too sad, too deeply entrenched, or too disgusting. Another interviewee stated that “It sucks for them, but they chose to do this” and “It’s really sad, but I’m glad I’m not involved in that kind of scene”, again showing lack of sympathy and desire to distance oneself from the “them” group.

Another idea that was introduced by interviewees was the idea of people forming judgments from the media and not from what is actually happening. One interviewee stated, “Most people don’t know people who do that, so the only people they see doing that is movies and television shows, so I guess they get that association from there. Or just being judgmental and not knowing the full understanding of it.” This shows that it is generally thought that people do not seek out the truth; they merely accept what they are taught through the media or through other people. Another interviewee, when asked to describe sex workers, specifically described them as an “other” or “something that’s not expected or seen a lot.” This again shows that there

is very little actual data that people use to form their opinions of prostitution, leading to a skewing of sex-related work and erasure of sex trafficking as an issue.

Another interviewee stated that ignorance plays into not seeing the truth behind trafficking. This person stated that contributing to the ignorance is people “not being aware, or not seeking information about it, and just using other people’s opinion as the right opinion.” Sex trafficking is difficult and uncomfortable to talk about, so instead of looking into what sex trafficking truly is, people form their ideas about all forms of selling sex or being sold for sex from the way that prostitution is represented in the media. This leads to an erasure of the force, cruelty and lack of agency on the part of those being trafficked that is universal in sex trafficking.

6.8 Scale Questions and Their Answers

One thing that I want to briefly touch on was the preconceptions that people had going into the interview. These were measured with questions I asked students to answer orally on a scale of 1 to 10. When asked how many prostitutes other people would say are prostitutes by choice on a scale of 1 to 10, one being none and ten being all, the average answer was 5.7. This shows that the general opinion is that slightly more than half of all prostitutes are prostitutes by choice. Since sex trafficking is often thought of as interchangeable with prostitution, this number of 5.7 covers over the idea that sex trafficking victims are never “prostitutes by choice”, since sex trafficking is defined by forced sex due to fraud and coercion of those who recruited people to be trafficked.

For another piece of data, although the original question I wanted to pose was “On a scale of 1-10, how deserving do you think prostitutes are of the injuries they receive from clients?”

After hearing from the first four interviewees adamantly that no one deserves to be hurt, I amended the question to “On a scale of 1-10, how deserving do you think other people would say prostitutes are of the injuries they receive from clients?” Through allowing the interviewees to distance themselves from the fear of any judgment of them, I was able to hear more accurately what people think the average person thinks about the deservingness of injuries prostitutes might receive.

When I asked the question under the guise of “what do you think other people would say,” the average answer, with one being not at all deserving and ten being very deserving, was a shocking 6.5, with the lowest answer being a 2 and the highest answer being a 9.5. Along with this, people offered their opinions of what other people would say if a prostitute was injured. One person said, “They get what’s coming to them.” Another interviewee stated, “If it’s the prostitution by choice, they would say you put yourself at that risk, so you can’t be surprised by what you got. I don’t think I would say that necessarily but I think that’s what a lot of people would say.” Another person stated, “You can’t really admit that someone deserves to be injured, but at the same time I think you kind of have to know what you’re getting yourself into.” This person answered saying others would say a prostitute deserves injuries at a 7 on the scale of 1 to 10.

Yet another person answered by saying, “I think that some people would say that very strongly that they do deserve it because they’re doing it to themselves and it’s illegal, but I think other people would say that no person deserves that regardless of whether they had a choice or not”. This person answered with an 8 on a scale from 1 to 10. Another person had some sympathy, but still placed some blame on the victim, saying “I could see someone saying like, well you shouldn’t hurt them, but what were you doing in that car?” The final related comment

was, “I think most people assume they put themselves in that situation, and whatever happens to them, it’s their fault”. This shows a clear bias towards a belief of deservingness of any injuries prostitutes may receive from clients. These were all the comments related to the deservingness of prostitutes of injuries. Only four people stated a number lower than six, with the remaining twelve people stating a number of 6 or higher.

To show that pimp is a word that people are very confused about, fluctuating between being used as a word for someone who sells other people for sex and the popular meaning of someone who is cool or awesome, I asked how aware people think others are of the definition of pimp being one who sells women. The average answer given was 5.4, with answers ranging all the way from 1 to 10. The wide range of numbers given and the average being pretty close to the middle both show that pimp is a word with a meaning that is in transition. People are aware of both definitions, but are unsure which definition to rely upon when the word pimp is heard. It depends on context for people, but it seems like overall, even though pimp is still the word used for “a man who sells women for sex”, it has become more of a word used to describe something cool or awesome or someone who is really fun, charismatic, and attractive.

I also asked participants how severely they would rate sex trafficking as a problem both abroad and in the United States, defining sex trafficking as involving force in this particular question. The average answer given about sex trafficking abroad was 7.7 overall and the average answer given about sex trafficking in the United States was 5.45. I also calculated the averages given by the people interviewed about sex work to the averages given by the people interviewed about sex trafficking. Those interviewed about sex work rated sex trafficking in the United States at a 5.05 and sex trafficking abroad at a 7. Those interviewed about sex trafficking rated sex trafficking in the United States at a 5.85 and sex trafficking abroad at an 8.45. This tentatively

confirms my hypothesis that those interviewed about sex trafficking would rate sex trafficking as more of a problem than those interviewed about sex work.

As far as demographics, the average education level about social justice issues given by those interviewed about sex work was a 4.5, with answers ranging from 1.5 to 7, and the average education level about social justice issues given by those interviewed about sex trafficking was a 5.3, with answers ranging from 3 to 8. It is possible that education levels about social justice contributed to higher ratings of sex trafficking as an issue, since higher ratings of personal education level correlated with slightly higher ratings of sex trafficking as a problem both abroad and in the United States.

6.9 Confusion and Tentativeness

One of the, perhaps, most important findings of this research is that there is a large amount of confusion around the terms surrounding prostitution, sex work, and sex trafficking. Of the twenty interviews, twenty interviewees expressed confusion about terms used related to sex work or sex trafficking, respectively. This was shown through the interviewee directly asking me a question about what a term meant, the interviewee questioning me about whether their answer was right or not, the interviewee using the words “maybe” a lot in their answers, the interviewee providing contradictory answers to a question, and the inability of the interviewee to come to a conclusion one way or the other about what people think about prostitution, sex work, or sex trafficking. When they asked what I meant by a certain term, I told them that I did not want to influence their answers by providing definitions. This allowed them to answer based on what their perceptions of terms were, not on how I defined a word.

The fact that there was a lack of consensus even within each interview about prostitution, sex work, and sex trafficking shows that people do not have very much data to go off of when they are asked to draw conclusions about these topics. Instead of basing their answers upon solid evidence, they give their best answer. Due to the availability of the framework of prostitution, this is usually what people rely on when asked about any kind of sex-related work or trafficking. This was also shown through twenty out of the twenty interviewees stating that they believe that most people get their conceptions of prostitution, sex work, and sex trafficking from the media, mainly relating “media” to shows or movies that have featured sex work, sex trafficking or prostitution rather than news stories that have discussed these topics.

When people were asked specifically about sex work or sex trafficking, there were a few distinctions that were made: choice versus no choice, agency versus no agency, cruelty versus no cruelty, and no pity versus pity for those involved. This shows that yes, there is a clear idea that sex trafficking is something that is forced and cruel while sex work does not have that aspect of lack of choice or sympathy for people involved. However, in each interview about sex trafficking, in the general discussion, nine out of the ten interviewees clearly related sex trafficking to prostitution by using the terms interchangeably in sentences. Even though when they were specifically asked to describe sex trafficking, most of them stated that it is wrong, hurtful, bad, cruel, or forced, this distinction did not remain when interviewees were talking about being sold for sex in general.

This shows that when sex trafficking is discussed in general terms or brought up as a topic of conversation, it is more equated with prostitution by choice than with forced prostitution. Because of this, people who are really being sex trafficked may be labeled as “prostitutes” and all of the negative connotations that go along with being a prostitute can then be used to label

someone who is being sex trafficked. The lexical choices in the interviews suggest that people form their attitudes about sex trafficking victims through examining their attitudes about prostitutes. Because sex trafficking victims are seen as prostitutes, and the negative connotations that go along with being a prostitute are attached to someone who is being sex trafficked, the horrors, the cruelty, the force, the abuse, and the violence that goes along with sex trafficking are erased. Instead, sex trafficking victims are lumped under the label of “prostitutes” involved in the “sex trade”, and they too are held at a distance by society and disregarded as people who need help.

7. Conclusion

Looking at the data as a whole, it is clear that “prostitutes” are considered a cohesive social group. Any data that suggests that someone who appears to be a prostitute may be more than “just a whore” is erased because it is uncomfortable to look at the individuality of those involved in prostitution (Irvine 2000:38). When looking at “sex workers” or “sex trafficking victims” specifically, there are certain ideas that go along with these groups. However, in general discussion about these groups, it is easier to lump all of these groups under the common heading of “prostitution.” Prostitution and sex trafficking are considered interchangeable, and because prostitution is a notion that people are familiar with, all of their associations that they have that go along with prostitution are transferred onto sex trafficking. Instead of seeing sex trafficking victims as victims of a terrible crime, the brutality of the situations that sex trafficking victims is covered over by viewing a victim as “just a whore” who chose to be in the situation that she is in.

I propose that until there is a distinction drawn between prostitution by force and prostitution by choice through distinctive terms, this line will continue to be blurred. Sex trafficking victims and the reality that they are experiencing will be erased, and prostitution will be what people see when they look at sex trafficking. This involves victim blaming, judgment of prostitutes as morally corrupt, viewing sex trafficking victims not as victims but instead as businesswomen freely offering themselves as a commodity, ignoring abuse of sex trafficking victims by their pimps, and defining sex trafficking victims as women who are merely “slutty” and have this job because they desire sex and lack control over their own sexual desires.

These attitudes perpetuate the erasure of sex trafficking. It is clear that people have negative attitudes towards prostitutes, and these negative attitudes are bleeding over to define sex trafficking victims as the same as prostitutes. This is an erasure of modern-day slavery. This is an

ignorance of people being used as pawns, as commodities, of being systematically raped and abused. This is a justification of poor treatment of sex trafficking victims because they “should have been more careful” or “should have seen this coming” or “should have known what they got themselves into.”

In conclusion, it has been made clear that “sex workers” and “sex trafficking victims”, although in certain contexts seen as separate groups, are overall lumped into the category of “prostitutes” under the “sex trade”. When two types of money-driven sex, one forced and one not, are placed in a single category, we look to the topic with which we are most familiar. For most, that most-familiar topic is prostitution. Instead of acknowledging this distinction and the need to change our culture, we are erasing the force and cruelty of sex trafficking. There is a clear negative stereotype of the social group “prostitutes”, and the attitudes revealed through the language ideology surrounding prostitution are harsh. The words that people choose in talking about “prostitutes” construct and perpetuate inaccurate and negative stereotypes of sex trafficking victims, a systematically victimized group.

What I have presented here is just the beginning. There was also a moderate correlation between interview topic and ratings of severity of sex trafficking abroad and in the United States. This suggests that when the topic of sex trafficking has already been introduced, it is more likely to be acknowledged as a true problem. Further topics to explore include how this language ideology can be changed, how education surrounding sex trafficking affects language used to discuss it, how to counteract the erasure of sex trafficking and its victims, and how to recognize the distinction between prostitutes and sex trafficking victims in our culture.

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Appendix A

Pictures:

1. What words come to mind when you see this picture?
(See Appendix B)

Interview Questions:

1. Introduced as an interview about “sex work” or “sex trafficking”
 - a. What do you think other people would say are some synonyms for prostitute?
 - b. What do you think other people would say are some synonyms for prostitution?
 - c. What do you think other people would say are some synonyms for sex trafficking (sex work)?
 - d. Where do you think these ideas came from?
 - e. What do you think people think of when they think of prostitution?
 - f. What do you think people associate with the word “pimp”?
 - g. What do you think people associate with the word “ho”?
 - h. What do you think people associate with the phrase “sex trafficking”? “Sex trafficking victims”? (Alternatively, “sex work” or “sex workers”)
 - i. Where do you think these ideas came from?
 - j. How do you think people would describe “sex trafficking”? (or “sex work”).
 - k. What do you think people would say the relationship is of law to “sex trafficking”? (or “sex work”).
 - l. What do you think people would say the relationship is between choice and “sex trafficking”? (or “sex work”).
 - m. Where do you think these ideas came from?
 - n. What adjectives do you think other people would you use to describe a prostitute?
 - o. What adjectives do you think other people would you use to describe a sex trafficking victim? (or sex worker)
 - p. What adjectives do you think other people would you use to describe “sex trafficking”? (or sex work)
 - q. Where do you think these ideas came from?
 - r. How do you think choice and prostitution relate to each other?
 - s. On a scale of 1-10, how many prostitutes do you think other people would say are prostitutes by choice?
 - t. On a scale of 1-10, how deserving do you think other people would say prostitutes are of the injuries they receive from clients?
 - u. On a scale of 1-10, how aware do you think people are of the definition of “pimp” being someone who sells others for sex?
 - v. How severe would you rate sex trafficking (force, fraud, and coercion) as a problem? (1-10) Abroad? In the US?

Demographics:

1. Name
2. Age

3. School year
4. How educated do you consider yourself to be about social justice issues? (1-10)
5. How often do you talk about these issues with your friends? (1-10)
6. How often are these issues on the news? In class? (1-10)

Appendix B
Photos shown to interviewees

1.



5.



2.



6.



3.



7.



4.

