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Kaylen Runyan

Abilene Christian University, krr09b@acu.edu

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores various facets of human trafficking ranging from signs of victims to recruitment methods of traffickers, focusing specifically on the inherent connection of complex trauma as an effect of experiencing exploitation. Trauma serves as the overarching theme throughout this paper as I analyze anti-trafficking institutional organizations and their training curricula as well as non-institutional organizations and their awareness-raising material. The questions I focus on are: How do institutional texts and training curriculum prepare individuals to interact with victims of trauma? And how do non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking on trauma?

By utilizing a rhetorical framework for analysis, I use social norms, framing, and standpoint theory to examine the texts of each institutional and non-institutional organization. I find that being educated on and comprehending the social norms of trafficking victims, how to frame messages about trafficking, and understanding the experiences lived by victims of trafficking, are all fundamental to institutional and non-institutional organizations' goal of effectively training individuals to work directly with trafficking victims as well as creating a heightened and realistic sense of awareness for varying audiences who do not work directly with victims of human trafficking.

Bound to a Brothel:
A Rhetorical Analysis of Institutional and Non-Institutional Anti-Trafficking Training
Curriculum and Awareness-Raising Material

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate School
Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts
Communication

By
Kaylen Runyan
May 2017

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts



Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs

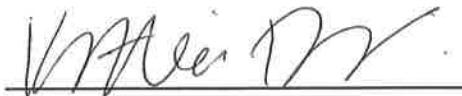
Date

5-2-2017

Thesis Committee



Dr. Lauren Lemley, Chair



Dr. Kristina Davis



Dr. Paul Lakey

To each survivor of trafficking who I have crossed paths with and to each victim who has
yet to experience freedom,
God's eye is on you, the sparrow.

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF TRAFFICKING

Stacy sits adjacent to me, occupying the passenger seat of my car as she incessantly taps her manicured fingernails across her yellow-stained tooth enamel.¹ We're driving to the local Wal-Mart to pick up some cigarettes for her, a mere four miles from the safe house, arguably a ten minute trip if we are not distracted by the snack aisle. Stacy's body quivers in my peripheral vision, cueing me to pull over to allow her to breathe. I know as well as Stacy does that these brief errands pose the risk of nervous breakdowns resulting in drained tear ducts and subsequent days spent in self-punishing four-wall isolation.

"What if we see him?" she asks, not expecting an answer in return. "What if he finds me? He'll find me. He'll slit my throat. He's tried it once. Shit, K. He'll do it again. He'll find me and do it right." She trails off into an abyss of living fears, playing through the not-so-unrealistic scenarios as I turn the car around and head back to the safe house. "Shhh," I console her through hushed tones as I try to conquer the demons in her mind, "you are safe."

Externally, Stacy is safe. But internally, Stacy is suffering from severe trauma.

For three years Stacy had a pimp who forced her to prostitute at a local strip club. For three years Stacy had a pimp who groomed her into his "Barbie," bleaching her hair, buying her clothes with price tags displaying more numbers than Bill Gates' salary, bi-weekly manicures, and steak dinners on Thursdays. Stacy's pimp assumed the role of her boyfriend, wining and dining her when she brought him a quota she made with her body. When Stacy did not bring home a sufficient quantity of George Washington's, her pimp would lock her in a dog cage. Metal caging keeping her in plain sight, mental caging keeping her nearby. He would only allow her to live on Hot Cheetos and Red Bulls until she "learned her lesson". The psychological abuse turned into physical abuse through broken ribs and a shattered face, atypical of your everyday Barbie-in-a-box.

When Stacy came to us she was underweight, anxious, and entirely introverted. I was working for a nonprofit in Houston, TX at the time that aids in the holistic healing of individuals who have survived sex trafficking.

1. "Stacy," is an alias used for the purpose of this story and for the anonymity of the trafficking victim being portrayed.

The effects of trauma on Stacy were intricate, deeply embedded, and irreversible without proper care given by individuals trained specifically in trauma. The trauma as a result of her three years as a trafficking victim dismissed and overrode the entirety of her lived years on earth. When triggered, Stacy's brain retreated back to the darkest of days. The smell of his cologne, the same make of his car, his favorite restaurant.

"Shhh," I console her through hushed tones, "you are safe."

Human trafficking is an evasive crime that affects each individual it exploits.

Trauma, a guarantee from repetitive abuse, is omnipotent in the lives of sex trafficking victims. This chapter, as well as the entirety of the study, will focus heavily on how individuals and organizations communicate messages about the intricacies of trauma and its effects. But before I can begin analyzing these messages in Chapters II and III, I will provide some background on concepts that are key to the practice of sex trafficking: the signs of trafficking victims, recruitment of victims, the stages of change that victims cycle through, and the relationship between trafficking and trauma. These literature reviews set the study up to analyze various organizational texts through social norms, framing, and standpoint theories, which aid in answering two research questions: How do institutional texts and training curriculum prepare individuals to interact with victims of trauma? And how do non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking on trauma?

Human Trafficking

For a more intricate understanding of the trauma victims of trafficking face, it is important to contextualize the definition of trafficking and the population it affects. Unfortunately, people who are trafficked face many different kinds of oppression. Two of these are sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Both types of trafficking include the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of exploiting of an individual. Traffickers

employ these tactics to diminish victims' mental and physical mentalities so they will become fully dependent on the perpetrator. Traffickers may use force by kidnapping or isolating an individual so he or she is separated from what is familiar. Fraud appears in the pretense of a job offer or the promise of a large sum of money. Traffickers can also use coercion by implementing perceived violence against the victim's family members or emotionally blackmailing the victim. Marketing scholars Vernon Murray, et al. explain that "the connection between force and coercion is that the former fulfills the latter. For instance, a trafficker may threaten violence and then engage it."² Force, fraud, and coercion are all key elements in defining human trafficking. Trafficking, as defined by the UN, is:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, or fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.³

The U.S. Department of State, the United Nations, and various other entities working with federal human trafficking legislation aid in the evolving definition of trafficking that now includes both sex and labor trafficking, though the two forms of slavery have clear distinctions that separate them. Sex trafficking will always include sexual exploitation, whereas labor trafficking or indentured servitude does not. Sex trafficking does not always include the transportation or transfer of an individual, or smuggling, while victims

2. Vernon Murray, Sherry Dingman, Julia Porter, and Maria Otte, "Victim Intervention Marketing: An Application of Social Activist Marketing in Proposition to Human Trafficking," *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice* 23, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 272.

3. Michelle Madden Dempsey, Carolyn Hoyle, and Mary Bosworth, "Defining Sex Trafficking in International Domestic Law: Mind the Gaps," *Emory International Law Review* 26, no. 1 (April 2012): 143.

of labor trafficking have a greater likelihood of being transferred from their home and transported to a different location. Sex trafficking is prevalent in all fifty states of the United States, where victims can be trafficked out of and sold in their own hometown. With this more complex understanding of what trafficking is, I will first delve into the potential signs of a victim before addressing how victims are recruited, and how trauma and trafficking are interrelated.

Signs of Trafficked Victims

Victims of human trafficking come from all socioeconomic statuses, races, and genders. Victims of trafficking can be U.S. citizens, foreign nationals, women, men, children, LGBTQ individuals, wealthy, and destitute. Vulnerable populations at risk of becoming trafficked can include runaway/homeless youth, victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, and individuals with low self-esteem or self-worth. Registered nurse and health scholar Dawn Eccleston explains that trafficking victims often suffer from “physical abuse or psychological trauma. Anxiety, lack of memory, and a sense of shame and stigma are [also] common.”⁴ She also concludes that victims “may undergo unhealthy weight loss and experience extreme fatigue.”⁵ In my own experience of working with trafficking victims through interning at anti-trafficking nonprofits, common physical signs include a tattoo of a name that is not their own (can be in the form of symbols, numbers, or a name), noticeable shift in dress and appearance, bruises, cuts, malnourishment, and potential needle marks if the victim suffers from substance abuse. Psychological symptoms of a trafficking victim can include fear, anxiety, PTSD,

4. Dawn Eccleston, “Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking,” *Community Practitioner* 86, no. 5 (May 2013): 41.

5. Ibid.

depression, becoming overly submissive, and showing evidence of being controlled. Triggers like familiar locations, scents, and cars will induce these symptoms. Cases vary person to person, but physical signs and psychological indicators typically share similar qualities. The National Human Trafficking Hotline echoes these signs of trafficking, listing common signs such as “fearful, anxious, submissive, tense, avoids eye contact, lacks medical care, and has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story.”⁶ If individuals ever suspect that trafficking is occurring, it is essential to call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Due to the traumatizing, deceptive, and exploitative nature of human trafficking, most victims do not typically self-identify as victims, making it difficult to accurately detect these signs and symptoms.

Social worker David R. Hodge extends Eccleston’s description by breaking the identification of trafficking victims into three elements: situational, story, and demeanor. Hodge defines situational identification as referring to “contextual markers” that include “absence of documentation, the constant presences of another individual, signs of physical abuse, and frequent changes of address or physical location,” story identification as “elements of a person’s narrative that suggest the presence of trafficking,” and finally demeanor identification as “signs of fear or depression or a tendency to answer questions evasively.”⁷ Eccleston’s findings suggest these three indicators as specific ways to identify a victim of trafficking. And just as trafficking occurs in different ways, pimps and perpetrators also use different methods to recruit their victims.

6. “Recognizing The Signs,” accessed March 30, 2017, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/what-human-trafficking/recognizing-signs>.

7. David R. Hodge, “Assisting Victims of Human Trafficking: Strategies to Facilitate Identification, Exit from Trafficking, and the Restoration of Wellness,” *Social Work* 59, no. 2 (April 2014): 114.

Recruitment of Victims

Recruitment of human trafficking victims looks different for domestic and foreign national victims, as well as for minor victims and those over the age of 18. For the purpose of this paper I will focus specifically on how traffickers lure domestic victims. For minor victims of trafficking, pimps often look for vulnerable youth who are runaways or homeless. Polaris Project, a notorious nonprofit organization aiming to eradicate human trafficking, has “survivors who [cite] chronic homelessness as a particularly significant factor in their susceptibility to the recruitment efforts of their traffickers. Several individuals reported that they were approached . . . within days . . . these controllers offered to act as a benefactor.”⁸ Because there is an obvious need for provision, it is an explicit indicator to the trafficker that individuals without stable home lives are vulnerable and long for provision. Often, “traffickers identify and leverage their victims’ vulnerabilities in order to create a dependency. They make promises aimed at addressing the needs of their target in order to impose control. They may make elaborate promises of a place to live, a job, or gifts.”⁹

Other methods of child recruitment involve scouting at malls or large shopping centers where the perpetrator will prowl on minors who avoid eye contact or appear to have little self-worth. Social media is a large outlet pimps use to recruit youth as well, appearing typically in the form of a fellow partier or adolescent looking to get out of the house. Sometimes it is not always the trafficker directly who does the recruitment. In an FBI brief written by Amanda Walker-Rodriguez and Rodney Hill, they explain that

8. “Sex Trafficking in the U.S.: A Closer Look at U.S. Citizen Victims,” accessed March 30, 2017, <https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/us-citizen-sex-trafficking.pdf>.

9. Ibid.

traffickers who have more than one victim often have a “bottom,” who sits atop the hierarchy of prostitutes. The bottom, a victim herself, has been with the trafficker the longest and has earned his trust. Bottoms collect the money from the other girls, discipline them, seduce unwitting youths into trafficking, and handle the day-to-day business for the trafficker.¹⁰

The term “bottom” is interchangeable with “bottom bitch,” a term that is commonly heard as slang in “the life”. The bottom can recruit other individuals on behalf of the trafficker through outlets like social media. Familial pimping exists as well, where family members recruit other family members. Authors Janice G. Raymond, Donna M. Hughes, and Carol J. Gomez explain that “in some families, girls were seen as burdens and liabilities, and lack of family support, or direct family pressure or coercion, precipitated women’s entrance into the sex industry. Sometimes older brothers or uncles acted as conduits for recruitment.”¹¹

Victims of trafficking older than the age of 18 are recruited in different ways than minors are recruited. Pimps often lure women into a relationship, “grooming” them with fancy dinners and expensive gifts, later to use this grooming phase against them. Pimps will start to request reimbursement for the gifts, or use emotional manipulation to blackmail the women so they feel stuck. Psychologist Dr. Wendy L. Patrick explains that “similar to grooming techniques used by child molesters, the use of professed love and attention in the recruitment process is an easier method of manipulation than force or

10. “FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin: Human Sex Trafficking,” last modified March 2011, <https://leb.fbi.gov/2011/march/human-sex-trafficking>.

11. Janice G. Raymond, Donna M. Hughes, and Carol J. Gomez, “Sex Trafficking of Women in the United States,” in *International Sex Trafficking of Women and Children: Understanding the Global Pandemic*, eds. Leonard Territo and George Kirkham (Flushing: Looseleaf Law Publications, 2010), 7.

violence due to the strong emotional bond victims form with the offenders.”¹² This form of coercion and manipulation is prevalent in adult trafficking victims when recruited by pimps, due to the emotional investment that was typically evident prior to the exploitation. With this more nuanced understanding of specific facets of trafficking in mind, I can now move to a discussion of how a trafficking victim moves from a place of not self-identifying as a victim to removing themselves from a trafficker.

Stages of Change

A common question circulating society when looking face-to-face at the stark statistics of trafficking is, “Why don’t they leave?” If a victim of trafficking is bound to a brothel, why do they not leave? The psychological answer to this question is more complex and intricate than what is commonly understood. The Transtheoretical Model, specifically the Stages of Change model within the Transtheoretical Model, aids in the explanation of individuals’ behavior. This model, created by Prochaska and DiClemente in 1983 and updated in 1992, showcases cyclical stages of behavior change. Stages of Change is the second element of the model which depicts intentional change in an individual, and the various stages it takes to access and implement a specific behavior change. Psychology authors John C. Norcross and Marvin R. Goldfried identify “five basic stages of change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance”¹³ although these stages may vary across organizations, therapists, and

12. “Human Trafficking: Psychology and Recruitment,” last modified January 13, 2014, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/why-bad-looks-good/201401/human-trafficking-psychology-recruitment>.

13. John C. Norcross and Marvin R. Goldfried, “The Transtheoretical Approach,” in *Handbook of Psychotherapy Integration*, ed. John C. Norcross and Marvin R. Goldfried (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 149.

researchers based on the population of clientele. The stages of change can be adapted to various behaviors and topics, from addiction to dieting to, in the case of this paper, sex trafficking. Because I will be discussing the stages of change specific to trafficking, it is important to note an additional stage that is studied within anti-trafficking organizations which is relapse.

When an individual is in the first stage, precontemplation, he or she is typically unaware of the need for a change to take place. For a sex trafficking victim, due to the coercion and manipulation of their trafficker, this stage depicts the victim now self-identifying as a victim. When there is a lack of awareness of their own victimization, it can be because of the pimp's control over their mind. The victim may view their pimp as a boyfriend, a father figure, a friend, or a provider. When there is dissonance in reality, the victim cannot contemplate escaping her captor thus, he or she would be in the precontemplation stage. Victim Service Providers must create safety plans for trafficking victims based on which stage of change the victim is currently in. If the victim is only in the first stage of pre-contemplation, the service provider cannot create an action plan yet. While in this stage, the victim may "[deny] being sexually exploited, discloses involvement in the life, but does not present it as a problem, is defensive, and does not want . . . help."¹⁴

The second stage, contemplation, is when a shift takes place in the attitude of an individual who starts to notice signs of problem behavior. Social worker, Kimberly A. Calderwood, explains in the context of bereavement "the contemplation stage is

14. Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, "The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth," *Connections*, Summer 2011, <http://www.ccsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/CommericalSexualExploitationofYouth2011.pdf>.

characterized by the individual beginning to accept that her or she has a problem that requires transformation in him or her and that the process will be longer and more difficult than what was believed during the precontemplation stage.”¹⁵ In this stage, victims of trafficking may start to realize that there is a loss of sense of self. For example, he or she may begin to realize that there is little freedom in their day-to-day life, and that the person they believe to be their boyfriend, is actually aggressive and controlling over things like documents, money, and other possessions. These realizations happen gradually and over time. When in contemplation stage, the victim may begin to assess barriers to implementing the action, like money, lack of friends or family, nowhere to go, etc. Additionally, the victim is likely “not ready to leave but processing the abuse and the effects of the abuse, ambivalent about actually leaving, and open to self-reflection, weighing consequences and talking about feelings.”¹⁶ It is during this time that the victim may also assess potential benefits to taking action, like control over self and no more abuse. In my experience of working with victims in Houston, victims may start to actually relocate their belongings one at a time, or start to stow away money, while working with or without a Victims’ Service Provider to make a safe plan to escape, which is a part of the fourth stage, preparation. In the preparation stage, the victim has made the commitment to leave the life and begins preparing to make his or her exit from the

15. Kimberly A. Calderwood, “Adapting the Transtheoretical Model of Change to the Bereavement Process,” *Social Work*, 56, no. 2 (2011): 110.

16. Devereux Florida, “Treatment with Commercially Sexually Exploited Children” (participant guide, Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, Orlando, Florida, August 4, 2017). https://www.fadaa.org/archive/Annual_Conference/2014/documents/presentations/wirsing/w8d1.pdf, p.20.

trafficker. At this point, he or she may begin to get in touch with available resources that offer help to victims of trafficking.

With enough time, the victim can move into the fifth stage, action. Author and policy on trafficking scholar, Andrea Nichols, explains that it is in the action stage that “the individual actually makes the change, exiting the commercial sex industry and/or relationship with the boyfriend pimp.”¹⁷ Maintenance, the sixth stage, occurs when the individual maintains the change in lifestyle. Maintenance is crucial to the overall healing of the individual who has made the commitment to leave the commercial sex industry or his or her trafficker. During maintenance, the former victim (now survivor) cuts off communication with the trafficker and individuals who are still in the life to avoid temptations. At this point, the survivor of trafficking “may maintain job/school, [might be] living in a stable environment, develops new relationships, begins to address trauma of experiences” and “successfully . . . avoids triggers”¹⁸ like avoiding common areas that individuals in the life hang out in.

Due to the nature of trafficking and the experience of trauma, many victims of trafficking experience the additional stage of change, relapse. At this point, the victim may be feeling a sense of shame or guilt, experiencing feelings of low self-esteem that the life is all there is. Nichols explains

the stages of change are not necessarily progressive; rather, they are fluid, and someone may backtrack” due to “many external forces involved in addition to internal forces. The boyfriend pimp/trafficker might be calling, saying he loves her. The trafficker/pimp may be coming to the house, or

17. Andrea Nichols, “Social Services and Health Care Responses,” in *Sex Trafficking in the United States: Theory, Research, Policy, and Practice*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 245.

18. “Treatment with Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.”

sending texts, emails, or Facebook posts. Former friends in the life might be trying to get her to come back to the “family.”¹⁹

This is especially important for organizations working directly with victims of trafficking to understand and educate on. The fluidity of the stages of change model accounts for the fact that it is not a fixed scale of progressive stages. Rather, it is entirely dependent on the individual how quickly or slowly he or she moves through the stages, or whether or not they make it through each of the stages.

By understanding this model, anti-trafficking organizations as well as individuals wishing to raise awareness will be more adequately prepared to answer the question, “Why don’t they just leave?” The stages of change model within Prochaska and DiClemente’s Transtheoretical Model is beneficial for those seeking to understand the complexity of exiting the commercial sex industry and sex traffickers. With a more involved understanding of the dynamic process that victims of trafficking experience in preparing to leave their trafficker, I will now move on to a discussion of how trauma is embedded fully in the lives of victims.

Trauma and Trafficking

The longevity and effects of trauma has the potential to extend through the entirety of a victim’s life. Its effects are haunting and symptoms omnipresent, but little literature exists detailing the correlation between trafficking and mental health.

Psychologists John Briere and Elisha Agee echo the sentiment of previous research studies, noting the strong correlation between traumatic events and psychological distress. Briere and Agee state that there is “an association between exposure to traumatic

19. Nichols, “Social Services and Health Care Responses,” 245.

events and a range of subsequent psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, substance abuse, suicide, self-injurious behaviors, dissociation, and interpersonal difficulties.”²⁰ When an individual is subjected to repetitive rape, physical and psychological abuse, manipulation, and degradation, subsequent neurological consequences often result in ongoing psychological outcomes.

Trafficking victims experience complex trauma events rather than a singular impersonal or interpersonal event, such as an earthquake or death of a loved one. Social worker Becca C. Johnson explains this complex trauma experience as a “multiplicity of trauma events [which] leads to a complete sense of instability” resulting in “emotional dysregulation, loss of safety and the ability to detect or respond to danger cues.”²¹ When this complex trauma occurs, where repeated events and experiences interrupt the normal emotional and psychological structure of an individual, desensitivity to internal factors like feelings and danger cues exists. Victims of trauma dissociate with the traumatic events that have occurred, where the individual disengages interpersonally, cognitively, or intuitively. Individuals learn over time how to respond to and survive danger, typically through either a fight, flight, or freeze response. The brainstem and limbic system coordinate to respond to danger and automatically create a response mechanism designed to ensure safety when an individual senses threats. But when victims have experienced severe, complex trauma, their ability to respond to danger in this way is numbed, and the effectiveness of proper brainstem and limbic system coordination diminishes. Their brain

20. John Briere and Elisha Agee, “Cumulative Trauma and Current Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Status in General Population and Inmate Samples,” *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 8, no. 4 (2016): 439.

21. Becca C. Johnson, “Aftercare for Survivors of Human Trafficking,” *Social Work & Christianity* 39, no. 4 (2012): 375.

has worked in overtime, constantly calling on survival responses to secure safety. Over time it is only natural for victims' physiological response mechanisms to become less effective and worn down. Trauma experts Elizabeth Hopper and Jose Hidalgo explain that

constant triggering of survival responses can lead to chronic states of fear, anxiety, or agitation - even in situations where there is no threat. Victims often become less able to discriminate between threatening and nonthreatening stimuli. In this case, they view much of their environment as a potential threat.²²

This hyperarousal that victims experience is due to an imbalance in their bodies, causing unusually high levels of fear.

In a qualitative research study of six trafficking survivors and their narratives, psychologists Stacy J. Cecchet and John Thoburn found that the experience of trauma had been existent through relationships within their families and was maintained through their relationships in the sex trade. Cecchet and Thoburn's work paralleled Johnson's findings, noting that "this pattern of trauma within the system of interpersonal relationships led to participants developing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder."²³ Trauma can affect an individual for an extended period of time, showcasing its existence through a plethora of signs. For the purpose of this study I will focus on posttraumatic stress disorder, trauma bonding, and revictimization.

22. Elizabeth Hopper and Jose Hidalgo, "Invisible Chains: Psychological Coercion of Human Trafficking Victims," *Intercultural Human Rights Law Review* 1 (2006): 204.

23. Stacy J. Cecchet and John Thoburn, "The Psychological Experience of Child and Adolescent Sex Trafficking in the United States: Trauma and Resilience in Survivors," *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 6, no. 5 (2014): 490.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and trafficking.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) occurs at the exposure to traumatic events.

Psychology scholars Casey L. May and Blair E. Wisco explain the criterion for an individual with PTSD as

exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways: 1) directly experiencing the traumatic event(s), 2) witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others, 3) learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend (in cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental), or 4) experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse). Note: Criterion A4 does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work-related.²⁴

Currently, very little academic literature studies posttraumatic stress disorder as it relates to trafficking victims. It is necessary to study trauma and trafficking hand-in-hand as all trafficking victims are exposed to traumatic events repeatedly, such as rape or other forms of physical abuse by either their trafficker or the individuals buying sex. While studies do address it as an effect of trafficking, only limited literature emphasizes its symptoms or expounds on its prevalence. Health scholar Stacey Hemmings and her research team echoed this fact, noting that there is a need for additional trauma-informed care and material that would address trafficking victims' mental health. They define trauma-informed care as including "a commitment to empowerment, victim safety and [recognizing] the impact of multiple traumatic events across the individual's life-

24. Casey L. May and Blair E. Wisco, "Defining Trauma: How Level of Exposure and Proximity Affect Risk for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *American Psychological Association* 8, no. 2 (2016): 234.

course.”²⁵ More work needs to be done on PTSD and trafficking, but currently the strongest connections in existing literature are between complex trauma and trafficking.

Trauma bonding and trafficking.

Often compared to, or defined similarly to, Stockholm Syndrome, trauma-bonding is a specific interpersonal relationship formed between the victim of trauma and his or her abuser. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crimes explain this further in their Trafficking in Persons Report, noting that

Stockholm syndrome has been seen in a number of trafficking cases. It may be difficult to determine if a person is complying with traffickers because they are suffering from the syndrome (an apparently irrational bond with their victimizers) or because they have made a rational decision that compliance is required to survive.²⁶

The attachment formed between the two individuals through trafficking is a traumatic response to complex stress and trauma, rather than solely a dysfunctional relationship.

More often than not, trafficking victims would not testify against their pimp in a courtroom due to an inexplicable bond felt for the pimp. The victim feels as if he or she would be betraying their pimp, regardless of the emotional and physical turmoil they have gone through. Additionally, because a romantic relationship between a trafficker and trafficking victim usually exists for the purpose of coercion, the bond becomes more complex. The pimp communicates a contradictory series of feelings and actions, spanning from abuse to gifts and affection. Sometimes the pimp may make “concessions

25. Stacey Hemmings, Sharon Jakobowitz, Melanie Abas, Debra Bick, Louise M. Howard, Nicky Stanley, Cathy Zimmerman, and Sian Oram, “Responding to the Health Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking: A Systematic Review,” *BMC Health Services Research* 16, no. 320 (2016): 5.

26. “Anti-Human Trafficking Manual for Criminal Justice Practitioners,” *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (2009): 13.

to help maintain control or reduce the chances of victims trying to escape. Examples are small amounts of freedom, allowing victims to keep a small amount of money or “privileges” such as making a phone call.”²⁷ Because coercion and manipulation factors are constantly at play in these relationships, victims fear angering their pimp while conversely desiring signs of love. Trauma scholars Chitra Raghavan and Kendra Doychak reframe the idea of trauma bonding as trauma-coerced attachment, concluding that this attachment is a result of “chronic interpersonal trauma” and that the contradictory positive feelings felt toward pimps are

a direct result of: (i) perceived threat to one’s physical or psychological survival at the hands of an abuser(s); (ii) perceived small kindnesses from the abuser to the victim; (iii) isolation from perspectives other than those of the abuser; and (iv) the inescapability of the situation” and are used as a coping and defense mechanism to trauma.²⁸

This explanation aids in understanding two things. First, it helps victims’ service providers and the general public understand why victims of trafficking do not always self-identify as victims. If the victim views his or her captor through the lens of romanticism, then it is unlikely that he or she would view the pimp as exploitative. Feminist scholars Andrea J. Nichols and Erin C. Heil explain how “traffickers may manipulate victims through promises of love and security, where victims themselves keep their activities hidden due to ‘traumabonds’ or love for their traffickers, who may have initially posed as boyfriends” so the traffickers use the bond to keep their victims from

27. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Anti-Human Trafficking Manual For Criminal Justice Practitioners” (training manual, UNODC, New York, 2009). https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/TIP_module4_Ebook.pdf.

28. Chitra Raghavan and Kendra Doychak, “Trauma-Coerced Bonding and Victims of Sex Trafficking: Where Do We Go From Here,” *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, (2015).

being identified by law enforcement or victims' service providers.²⁹ Conversely, if the victim fears his or her pimp, it is unlikely that he or she would speak out against the trafficker. Lawyer Allison Cross mimics this notion in the context of a courtroom, noting that

even if the trafficking victim has no feeling of intimacy towards the trafficker, due to the coercion and fear the trafficker uses to control trafficking victims, a trafficked person is not likely to be forthcoming and implicate the trafficker as a criminal.³⁰

Second, the explanation and literature surrounding trauma-bonding aids in the actual contextualization and framework of the phrase. The individual experiencing the traumatic events bonds with the individual who is inflicting the trauma. Typically, the power dynamic between victim and captor is largely at play in the instance of trauma-bonding. Because there is an uneven distribution of power, a false sense of attachment creates a bond between the two individuals, whether through physical, emotional, or psychological strings. The trauma-bonding victims of trafficking experience is complex, and more literature and research needs to be done on it.

Revictimization and trafficking.

Revictimization of a trafficking survivor can happen at any point in his or her healing process. Revictimization itself can happen as a result of external or internal factors. For example, an

abused and/or neglected [individual] may, as he or she matures, engage in various activities and defenses (e.g., substance abuse, dysfunctional sexual behavior, or aggression) as a way to reduce posttraumatic distress, only to

29. Andrea J. Nichols and Erin C. Hell, "Challenges to Identifying and Prosecuting Sex Trafficking Cases in the Midwest United States," *Feminist Criminology*, 10, no. 1 (2015): 13.

30. Allison Cross, "Slipping Through the Cracks: The Dual Victimization of Human-Trafficking Survivors," *McGeorge Law Review* 44 (2013): 412.

have such coping strategies ultimately lead to even more victimization and, perhaps, even more self-endangering behavior.³¹

When an individual has been exposed to generational abuse, such as abuse within the family, there is greater propensity for that individual to be a victim of abuse later in life as it becomes their norm.

Within the current literature that exists on the revictimization of trafficking victims, there is a substantial lack of research done on the intricacies of revictimization. This gap in literature is crucial and needs to be addressed. Scholars acknowledge that the possibility for revictimization exists in human trafficking cases, but further investigation on how a victim can be revictimized or how to avoid revictimization within the confines of service provider organizations is missing. This area of research is monumentally important for understanding the cyclical nature of human trafficking as well as for the purpose of understanding what communicative strategies can be implemented to prevent a victim from facing revictimization.

Methodology

The purpose of this project is to analyze specific domestic anti-trafficking nonprofit organizations that utilize a trauma-informed training curriculum for volunteers, and staff, and frontline professionals. In addition to training curricula, I will look at various non-institutional awareness-raising materials such as forums and public speakers, documentaries, and advertisements. In order to examine these texts I will utilize a close reading technique. Communication scholar Barry Brummett defines close reading as “the mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its

31. John N. Briere and Cheryl B. Lanktree, *Treating Complex Trauma in Adolescents and Young Adults* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016), 8.

meanings.”³² Close reading allows for an intentional analysis of texts in order to understand the messages being communicated. By using a close reading technique, I can extract deeper meanings of the texts in order to make sense of what the organizations are communicating.

I will separate the chapters by looking at non-institutional organizations in Chapter II, and institutional organizations in Chapter III. Chapter II will include analysis of the organizational institutions’ training curriculum designed for volunteers and Direct Victim Service Providers. Chapter III will analyze various awareness-raising material created by non-institutional organizations who do not necessarily work directly with victims of trafficking, but exist to inform and educate. By looking at both institutional training curriculum and non-institutional materials, I will be able to expound on the importance of trauma awareness to existing institutions, such as anti-trafficking NPOs, and encourage the awareness of trauma in their training in order for those working directly with victims. By using trauma as the umbrella for this project, I hope to discover how being trauma-informed affects the efficacy of Direct Service Providers within NPOs as well as those who exist for education and awareness purposes such as key speakers at forums or anti-trafficking coalitions. I intend to delve into specific facets of trauma including trauma bonding, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and its effects on survivor communication. Non-institutional education encourages people, such as the general public, everyday citizens who do not necessarily work directly with victims. This is necessary to include in this study because these texts allow all individuals to expand their

32. Barry Brummett, *Techniques of Close Reading* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 3.

knowledge. It is important for the general public to be informed, especially if they encounter a victim at a church, or workplace, or gym who does not want to go to an institution for help, so they can identify the victim as a victim and be able to work from a baseline of awareness and knowledge about how to interact with him or her.

This project is important because of its implications for all direct victim service providers and education/awareness organizations. Analyzing trauma and trafficking together has not previously been studied from a rhetorical perspective, creating a new opportunity for literature that will emphasize the need for trauma-informed practices to be set in place when working with victims. By creating tangible and palpable arguments for why being trauma-informed is necessary when working with victims of trafficking, this project possesses “real world” value in helping nonprofits to implement material that will better serve this population.

This thesis will specifically explore various curricula from nonprofits who are either direct service providers or exist for the purpose of awareness and education to understand how each curriculum addresses trauma. This core area of information should be included in training curriculum for any service provider or educational organization as it is one of the most pressing pieces of information for volunteers and staff members working with victims of trafficking to understand. Trauma will always be part of a trafficking victim’s recovery due to his or her repeated exposure to traumatic events, so it is necessary to know how to interact with these individuals appropriately to create effective opportunities for healing and preventing revictimization. The questions I will address through this study are: How do institutional texts and training curriculum prepare individuals to interact with victims of trauma? And how do non-institutional awareness-

raising materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking on trauma?

By asking and answering these questions through rhetorical analysis, I will identify key ways in which organizations effectively prepare for and work with trauma victims, and provide recommendations for organizations who do not currently have trauma-informed care and information in their training curriculum. Additionally, I hope to identify useful connections between institutional and non-institutional texts, recognizing the significance of both forms of education and highlighting lessons each group could learn from the other's advocacy and education practices.

Texts

The training curricula and non-institutional texts I will analyze in this thesis are: (1) a presentation done by Love146, a nonprofit in New Haven, Connecticut, titled "The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking and CSEC"; (2) a presentation utilized by United Against Human Trafficking with information from YMCA International, both located in Houston, TX, titled "Trauma-Informed Care"; (3) a field guide from The Landing, a nonprofit in Houston, TX, titled "Intake Specialist Field Guide"; (4) a documentary based in New York, "Very Young Girls"; (5) the City of Houston's Anti-Trafficking PSA kit implemented by the Mayor's office; and (6) two informative videos, first, a forum titled "Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims", the second, an MSNBC special titled "Inside the Mindset of Sex Trafficking Victims." The texts are broken up into non-institutional texts in Chapter II and institutional texts in Chapter III. I divided the texts I will analyze between institutional and non-institutional for the purpose of exploring various ways individuals can use rhetoric to educate different audiences.

Non-institutional texts.

The non-institutional texts I will examine include a documentary, a PSA campaign, and two short videos. I choose these specific texts because each represents a different perspective on communicating the reality of human trafficking. Because most Americans do not work directly with victims of human trafficking, it is important to study the different mediums the average concerned individual can access to learn more about the prevalence of trafficking. Human trafficking extends across all domestic borders, increasing the likelihood of an average civilian coming across a victim at some time or another. Thus, it is important to study how individuals utilize rhetorical strategies to communicate both the signs of a trafficking victim and a basic understanding of how to engage in dialogue with him or her through mass mediated channels such as online videos, news outlets, and public service messages.

The documentary I will analyze, titled *Very Young Girls*, is a candid look into the lives of two pimps and girls they pimp out. The documentary initiated when two brothers from New York thought they would make money by videoing their lives as pimps, not realizing the legal ramifications of that action. Now, the documentary serves as an up-close look into the harsh reality of trafficking, the bond between victim and pimps, and the space for healing that exists when a victim works to get out of “the life.” This documentary plays a vital role in education and awareness due to its explicitly callous representation of prostitution and trafficking, not sugar-coating the harsh reality that the victims live in. Because the documentary presents footage of interactions between pimps and their victims, it will play a vital role in analyzing rhetorical messages about trauma-bonding, and how everyday girls fall victim to the hands of their perpetrators.

The second non-institutional text is a series of ad campaigns presented by the Mayor's office in the city of Houston. The Mayor's office is taking a 365-day approach to combating trafficking in Houston and has created a Strategic Plan that details their efforts. The plan is available in PDF format to anyone through the website humantraffickinghouston.org, communicating the message that any person can play a role in eliminating human trafficking. Strategic Plan includes a timeline of goals for addressing Houston trafficking. One of their goals for 2016 is to change public perception of human trafficking. The website provides links to awareness-raising materials called "toolkits," one of which is the "Watch for Traffick Media Campaign Toolkit." This toolkit includes a list of printable Public Service Announcements aimed at various kinds of and locations for human trafficking, from sex to labor trafficking, within illicit spas or massage establishments, and other places of the like. Houston hosted Super Bowl 51 in January 2017, which made these PSA's increasingly necessary so that as many residents and visitors as possible are aware of the signs of trafficking and the National Human Trafficking Hotline number. Analyzing this toolkit will aid in the understanding of how governmental offices are working to educate and communicate with the general public about human trafficking.

The third and fourth texts are a talk and news segment, which both represent the discussion of trafficking in a more formal environment. The first video is a speech entitled "Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims" that was presented by a licensed clinical psychologist at a forum for anti-trafficking partners. This video addresses how to recognize trauma in a victim and the difference between short-term acute stress and complex trauma. The second video, titled "Inside the Mindset of Sex Trafficking

Victims,” is an MSNBC special featuring trauma expert Dr. Chitra Raghavan. This video focuses on the relationship between trafficking victims and their abusers, educating anyone who has access to the news on how certain types of abuse lead to psychological captivity. I chose the MSNBC video specifically to show how news has a unique opportunity to present information about human trafficking in layman’s terms. Typically, news segments on human trafficking are quick glimpses into a prosecution case or discovery of an underground brothel. Instead, the MSNBC video presents a deeper analysis of the intricacy of trafficking. Thus, the first video touches on the science behind trauma in a trafficking victim, while the second addresses specific effects of the trauma. Both videos are relatively short, around six minutes each, so I plan to analyze them each as a way to consider how different forms of video reach different audiences in a meaningful way. In order to better understand how I will analyze all six texts, it is important to discuss the theories I will be using.

Institutional texts.

The three institutional texts I will examine are from a nonprofit in New Haven, Connecticut (Love146), which focuses on education as well as rehabilitation, a nonprofit in Houston, TX (United Against Human Trafficking, or, UAHT), that focuses on education for frontline professionals, and a nonprofit in Houston, TX (The Landing), a faith-based assessment center which focuses on outreach, awareness, and healing. I specifically selected artifacts from two Houston-based nonprofits because this is a major epicenter for human trafficking in the United States. The large demand for prostitution in Houston results largely from its proximity to the border and access to major highways, making the Houston metro area a hub of anti-trafficking work. I also selected artifacts

from both faith-based and secular organizations to provide an additional layer of diversity to this project.

The curriculum from Love146 is a presentation focusing specifically on the mental health impact that human trafficking has on a victim. The curriculum is based on research and experience with exploited children and serves as an educational tool. This curriculum begins with an overview that defines trafficking and its various facets, then moves into a discussion of specific mental health impacts. The presentation will be beneficial for this study as it addresses the mental health of a trafficking victim, complex trauma, PTSD, and trauma-bonding. This curriculum offers a well-developed example of a trauma-informed approach to working with survivors of trafficking.

UAHT's curriculum takes this information a step further, addressing the entirety of what it means to have trauma-informed care. This presentation covers topics such as the layers of trauma, the key principles of trauma-informed care, and ways to respond to individuals who have experienced trauma. It also briefly addresses the "stages of change" model, which presents a pictorial description of how victims can get out of a trafficking situation by moving through various stages such as pre-contemplative, contemplative, and action. The stages show how a victim may start as in denial and not self-identify as a victim, but overtime move into a contemplative state where they question the situation they are in. My analysis will explain how this portion is crucial to understanding the victim service provider's role in communicating appropriately depending on where the victim falls within the stages of change.

Finally, I will be analyzing The Landing's curriculum as a field guide for service providers working within a nonprofit. This field guide is a training manual intended

specifically for intake specialists who facilitate case management for individuals in the commercial sex industry and victims of trafficking. The manual identifies tips for conducting interviews with survivors, pointing out various ways to communicate with a sensitive approach. The manual later addresses the effects of trauma and victimization and how to take those effects into consideration when interviewing a victim who suffers from trauma. This curriculum will be helpful in identifying ways in which direct victims' service providers can communicate through the lens of being trauma-informed.

Theoretical Frameworks

To analyze both the institutional and non-institutional texts in this study, I use three theories. Social norms theory will serve as an umbrella for framing both chapters. Because social norms are pervasive in society and the realm of trafficking, it is necessary to address and explore how both institutional and non-institutional texts present them. I will use this theory specifically in Chapter II when analyzing non-institutional texts by looking at how norms about trafficking differ across particular audiences. Each non-institutional text focuses on a different audience; thus, I will consider how to effectively reach and educate those audiences where norms are dissimilar. To complete my analysis of non-institutional texts, I will also use framing theory in Chapter II to see how rhetors use different frames in each non-institutional text to communicate a similar message. While all of these texts exist to bring light and awareness to the reality of sex trafficking, their audiences differ in demographics, education, and previous awareness of trafficking. Therefore, social norms theory and framing will work together in Chapter II to illustrate that while norms exist, it is necessary to see how non-institutional texts frame their education to either break or tailor to those norms.

In Chapter III, I use both social norms theory and standpoint theory to analyze institutional texts. Similarly to Chapter II, I will use social norms theory in this analysis to understand norms specifically held by staff and/or volunteers who work directly with victims of trafficking in nonprofit organizations. It is critical for these individuals to understand the norms victims hold. For example, victims are likely used to highly sexualized conversation. This norm is necessary to understand in order to create an environment of understanding rather than judgment or condemnation. While norms are not universal, they do provide a framework for understanding a victim's standpoint. By using social norms theory and standpoint theory in this chapter, I argue that both theories are necessary to comprehend and implement findings on how to transfer them in a training environment. To further understand how these three theories will be used, it is imperative to briefly overview each. First I will look at social norms theory, as it serves as an overarching framework for my analysis in this thesis, and then I will overview framing and standpoint theories.

Social norms theory.

Social norms theory argues that norms within society affect the thinking and behavior of an individual. Family studies scholars David C. Bell and Mary L. Cox define norms as “a widely-shared expectation about action” and posit the assumption that social norms “are most often seen as a mechanism for social control.”³³ As a society, we deem actions, such as murder and rape, evil. But within sub-cultures and ritualistic activities, lines might blur as social norms become less explicit or universal. For example, a unit of

33. David C. Bell and Mary L. Cox, “Social Norms: Do We Love Norms Too Much?,” *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 7, no. 1 (2015): 28-29.

individuals involved in sex trafficking is sometimes considered a “family” though they are not, in reality, related legally or by blood. This sub-culture exists outside of universal norms like viewing the selling of a human body as a permitted action. The perception of a norm, therefore, does not constitute the norm. Rather, it is societal constructions that affect an individual’s behavior and make a belief a norm.

Political scholar Bryan H. Druzin explains how norms affect daily life, describing how “social ordering born from social norms is all around us, from the spontaneously self-assigned seating arrangements of students in a classroom, to the social rules of lining up, or the complex customary law of pre-political societies.”³⁴ Social norms theory posits that social norms are the daily assumptions we live by in day-to-day lives. As church members sit in the same spot every Sunday or students sit in the same seat in a classroom, society operates based on societal expectedness, or normative behavior. Social psychologists Gilad Feldman and Dolores Albarracin note that

[norm] theory argues that the affective response to an outcome is affected by the magnitude of the difference between the expected outcome and the actual outcome. Events are cognitively classified as normal or abnormal, with abnormal outcomes being more cognitively mutable than normal outcomes. Meaning, that it is harder to elicit alternatives to an expected normal behavior than it is to imagine alternatives to an unexpected abnormal behavior. Therefore, higher mutability and more abnormal outcomes elicit more counterfactual thought.³⁵

Rooted in sociology and social psychology, this theory provides a rationale for various phenomena in society.

34. Bryan H. Druzin, “Social Norms as a Substitute for Law,” *Albany Law Review*, 79, no. 1 (2016): 68.

35. Gilad Feldman and Dolores Albarracin, “Norm Theory and the Action-effect: The Role of Social Norms in Regret Following Action and Inaction,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 69, (2017): 112, doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2016.07.009.

Social norms theory, therefore, provides a theoretical framework for understanding how societal expectations guide an individual's behavior. Psychologists Christina N. Dardis, Megan J. Murphy, Alexander C. Bill, and Christine A. Gidycz explain that

social norms theory predicts that individuals make errors reflective of pluralistic ignorance and the false consensus effect; that is, individuals with healthy attitudes underestimate the extent to which others hold the same healthy norms they hold (pluralistic ignorance), and individuals with unhealthy attitudes overestimate the extent to which others hold the same unhealthy norms.³⁶

Though social norms theory is largely used in literature studying drinking and health, this explanation offers insight into how norms operate within the confines of a “family” in the context of prostitution and sex trafficking. A victim's experience becomes his or her reality, a tactic of manipulation by the trafficker who is able to influence the victim to feel as though his or her life is normal. Psychologists Esposito, van Bavel, Baranowski, and Duch-Brown explore the idea of normative behavior based on the influence of others and explain how “the subjective norms construct attempts to bring the element of social influence into the equation by capturing an individual's perception of what significant others think he or she ought to do.”³⁷ In the case of trafficking, victims view their captors as their significant other, especially in the instance of “Romeo-pimps” who groom their

36. Christina N. Dardis, Megan J. Murphy, Alexander C. Bill, and Christine A. Gidycz, “An Investigation of the Tenets of Social Norms Theory as They Relate to Sexually Aggressive Attitudes and Sexual Assault Perpetration: A Comparison of Men and Their Friends,” *Psychology of Violence*, 6, no. 1 (2016): 163.

37. Gabriele Esposito, Rene van Bevel, Tom Baranowski, and Nestor Duch-Brown, “Applying the Model of Goal-Directed Behavior, Including Descriptive Norms, to Physical Activity Intentions: A Contribution to Improving the Theory of Planned Behavior,” *Psychological Reports*, 119, no. 1 (2016): 8, doi:10.1177/0033294116649576.

victims with gifts and attention. These norms train the victim to view “right” and “wrong” through the lens of his or her pimp.

Social psychologists Saeri, Ogilvie, La Macchia, Smith, and Louis explain that “injunctive norms (what others approve or disapprove of) and descriptive norms (what others actually do) are distinct norm components.”³⁸ But for trafficking victims, injunctive norms and descriptive norms coincide, meaning that what the trafficker approves or disapproves of indicates what the victim should or should not do. The trafficker is the driving force for the victim’s behavior and thought processes, as the trafficker is the one who dictates the victim’s descriptive norms. Mass media scholars Mou and Lin extend provide a rationale for how injunctive and descriptive norms work together, noting that “perceived descriptive norms and injunctive norms could interfere with each other and the impact of injunctive norm could be mediated by descriptive norms.”³⁹ Thus the relationship between what others approve or disapprove of and what others actually do seems to be dependent on the context. If there are perceived consequences, such as pending abuse, then it is likelier for an individual to act based on the injunctive norm. But a trafficking victim exists in a different scenario than teenagers who experiment with drinking, even though they know their parents disapprove, because the trafficking victims have greater perceived threats if they do not act in accordance with what their pimp views as normative.

38. Alexander K. Saeri, Claudette Ogilvie, Stephen T. La Macchia, Joanne R. Smith, and Winnifred R. Louis, “Predicting Facebook Users’ Online Privacy Protection: Risk, Trust, Norm Focus Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior,” *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 154, (2014): 354, doi:10.1080/00224545.2014.914881.

39. Yi Mou and Carolyn A. Lin, “Exploring Podcast Adoption Intention via Perceived Social Norms, Interpersonal Communication, and Theory of Planned Behavior,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 59, no. 3 (2015): 478.

A victim of sex trafficking might not self-identify as a victim because she sees her life, and the lives of those around her, as a normalized experience. Health researchers Kroshus, Garnett, Baugh, and Calzo explain that

misperceived norms tend to persist because group members who believe their preferences are deviant relative to the group norm are less likely than conforming members to express those preferences for fear of social disapproval, a self-perpetuating process that has been termed the “spiral of silence.”⁴⁰

This silencing affect becomes a psychological representation of the tangible hold pimps have on the individuals they victimize. The norm for the victim not to express disapproval of his or her abuse becomes self-perpetuating, as the authors stated. Because pimps create an illusion of reality for those they exploit, the individual affected only sees those around her as having similar norms, when in actuality they are misconceptions. Social norms theory will be a helpful framework as I analyze the institutional texts in this thesis to understand how organizations and cities educate their volunteers about the psychology of those they serve.

Framing theory.

Within rhetoric, framing theory encourages the rhetorical critic to focus on the projection of a particular message in a specific way. Visual rhetoric scholars Hullmann and Diakopoulos explain that “communication scholars have developed framing theory to investigate opinion formation processes in light of how people orient their thinking about an issue,” but that there is an equal need to look at “framing effects, situations where often small changes in the presentation of an issue or an event . . . produce measurable

40. Emily Kroshus, Bernice R. Garnett, Christine M. Baugh, and Jerel P. Calzo, “Social Norms and Concussion Education,” *Health Education Research*, 30, no. 6 (2015): 1005.

changes of opinion.”⁴¹ Global studies scholar Marie-Eve Desrosiers extends Hullmann and Diakopoulos’s explanation of framing theory, noting that

framing theory specifies the “processes” and delineates “the precise mechanisms” between factors too often studied in vacuum by other approaches: the purposefulness of human beings, social structures, as well as environmental factors and opportunities. Framing theory contends that frames, when effective, allow framers and their publics to interpret particular circumstances as opportunities and turn these opportunities into a springboard for mobilization.⁴²

In framing, therefore, the rhetor shapes how the public, or those who are viewing the frames, understand messages often diluted through other approaches. Desrosiers’ contention is that framing presents a unique way of viewing the world through the lens of the framer, or the individual who is responsible for the choice of frame. She argues that “framing theory shed[s] light on what publics follow, looking at what appeals, resonates, motivates, and why.”⁴³ This argument presents a way for those who study activism media, like documentaries about sex trafficking, to take notice of frames the framer uses to create resonance with or motivate the audience.

Frames can also be seen as a way of interpreting reality. Communication scholar

A. Ardevol-Abreu explains that

framing can be defined as a process in which some aspects of reality are selected, and given greater emphasis or importance, so that the problem is defined, its causes are diagnosed, moral judgments are suggested and appropriate solutions and actions are proposed.⁴⁴

41. Jessica Hullman and Nicholas Diakopoulos, “Visualization Rhetoric: Framing Effects in Narrative Visualization,” *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics* 17, no. 12 (2011): 2232.

42. Marie-Eve Desrosiers, “Tackling Puzzles of Identity-Based Conflict: The Promise of Framing Theory,” *Civil Wars*, 17, no. 2 (2015): 121.

43. Ibid.

44. A. Ardevol-Abreu, “Framing Theory in Communication Research. Origins, development, and current situation in Spain,” *Revista Latina de Comunicacion Social*, 70, no. 1 (2015): 433, doi:10.4185/RLCS-2015-1053.en.

The heterogeneity of framing approaches allows the framer to create his or her own definition for what framing is and what aspect of reality is necessary to communicate importance to the public who he or she wants to interpret a message as significant.

Because framing a message in a particular way influences the opinion of the audience viewing a frame, it is essential for the rhetor to be diligent in choosing frames that are persuasive in the presentation of an issue. Risk analysis scholars Steinhardt and Shapiro explain that

framing influences choice in the same manner whether it is presented as a discrete decision or as part of a story. However, there is reason to think that framing embedded in a narrative might be different. One purpose of a narrative is to reveal something about characters in the story. The choices a character makes within a narrative may influence how the audience perceives that character; a character who chooses an option in line with the decision predicted by prospect gain/loss framing research may be perceived as less of a risk taker than a character who chooses against what research suggests people will choose. Second . . . how a decision is framed may not have the same effect on preference when expressed in the context of a story.⁴⁵

This juxtaposition of framing as an influencer of narrative choice will be essential in my analysis later in this thesis to understand how rhetors utilize the narratives of trafficking victims. Steinhardt and Shapiro's discussion of framing aids in understanding how audiences are affected by the decisions of characters that framers portray in specific ways.

Crafting frames within a text presents rhetors with an opportunity to communicate a message that is deemed important or necessary. Communication scholars Maria Jose Canel and Mario Garcia Gurrionero suggest that "framing is seen as a strategic action . . .

45. Joseph Steinhardt and Michael A. Shapiro, "Framing Effects in Narrative and Non-Narrative Risk Messages," *Risk Analysis*, 35, no. 8 (2015): 1423, doi:10.1111/risa.12368.

because it involves strategic decisions on matters such as which frame to sponsor, how to sponsor it, and how to expand its appeal” and that “a situation is open to different frames and angles.”⁴⁶ There may be multiple ways to communicate a message, so various frames exist to fulfill the same purpose. Thus, frames exist to send particular messages to an audience and embed specific ideas in their mind. In the context of trafficking, various documentaries and talks exist to bring awareness to reality. Some of these documentaries present frames that depict the harshness of prostitution, while others present frames lighter in tone that represent a life of healing once out of “the life.” Both frames provide similar messages, but they are presented in different ways.

As framing theory exposes individuals to certain messages and experiences, standpoint theory similarly seeks to help understand how messages rhetorically craft a shift in perspective. By moving from a place of understanding one’s own lived experience to that of others, an individual increases his or her ability to sympathize on a deeper level. Framing theory helps to explain how an individual is exposed to messages, such as the example of prostitution which elicits awareness. Standpoint theory examines a message with a frame from the position or standpoint of the victim to further understand his or her lived experience.

Standpoint theory.

Standpoint theory in its entirety relies on taking the perspective of others within various social structures. Its purpose, according to philosopher Joseph Rouse, is to recognize “how power relations help shape both the world we seek to understand and our

46. Maria Jose Canel and Mario Garcia Gurrionero, “Framing Analysis, Dramatism and Terrorism Coverage: Politician and Press Responses to the Madrid Airport Bombing,” *Communication & Society* 29, no. 4 (2016): 133.

efforts to understand it.”⁴⁷ Standpoint theory seeks to assess imbalances and narrows in on the continuous idea of power in social structures, but more specifically it takes the perspective of oppressed or marginalized individuals for the purpose of breaking structural dominance. Communication scholar Brooke Lenz dissects the meaning of standpoint, explaining that it

refers . . . to an understanding of perspective and experience as part of a larger social setting . . . Standpoint theorists anchor their methodology in “outsider within” positions – positions inhabited by groups who are included in dominant cultural practices.⁴⁸

In many studies, this theory addresses the positions inhabited by marginalized members of society who are under the influence of someone who bears greater authority.

Feminist scholars have a particular interest in this theory as it relates to the oppression of women. Feminist scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson explains that “feminist standpoint theories have assisted in mapping feminism’s epistemological boundaries [by challenging] dominant patriarchal paradigms . . . by exposing the partiality of the universal male standpoint.”⁴⁹ From this perspective, individuals who study feminist standpoint theories are able to analyze how a systematic patriarchal society aids in the universal male standpoint. Meaning, historically and globally, society has been a construct of dominating male existence. This dominance results in a society that views men as superior to women. This, by default, results in oppressing women when under the influence of a primarily male society, where positions are dictated by the dominant

47. Joseph Rouse, “Standpoint Theories Reconsidered,” *Hypatia* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 202, doi:1527-2001.2009.01068.x.

48. Brooke Lenz, “Postcolonial Fiction and the Outsider Within: Toward a Literary Practice of Feminist Standpoint Theory,” *NWSA Journal* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 98-9.

49. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Towards an Australian Indigenous Women’s Standpoint Theory,” *Australian Feminist Studies*, 28, no. 78 (2013): 332.

gender. Feminist scholar Janet A. Kournay extends this argumentation, explaining that standpoint theory

claims that all knowledge is situated, positioned in a particular time and place; that where power is organized hierarchically – for example, by class or race or gender – persons can achieve only partial views of reality from the perspective of their own positions in the social hierarchy.⁵⁰

Thus, individuals who are positioned by a specific category or demographic, be it class or gender, are in tune with only his or her own version of reality. This idea is important to note when considering the standpoint of a trafficking victim and how that standpoint is communicated to individuals who are not victims and therefore have only a partial view from which they can understand this reality.

Researchers and scholars who study this topic often take the standpoint of a woman in relation to the privilege of men. Communication scholar Julia T. Wood explains feminist standpoint theory as providing rhetoricians the ability to “analyze how patriarchy naturalizes male and female divisions, making it seem natural, right, unremarkable that women are subordinate to men” with the “key claim that women’s lives are systematically and structurally different from men’s lives.”⁵¹ Standpoint theory takes the literal location of a human being and seeks to understand his or her position as a means of breaking the barriers of power and oppression that are systematically incorporated into multiple facets of society. Communication scholar Patrice M. Buzzanell and her research team explain how “using feminist standpoints allows us to examine in detail what happens in diverse women’s lives, how these women comprehend different

50. Janet A. Kournay, “The Place of Standpoint Theory in Feminist Science Studies,” *Hypatia*, 24, no. 4 (2009): 210.

51. Julia T. Wood, “Feminist Standpoint Theory and Muted Group Theory: Commonalities and Divergences,” *Women and Language* 28, no. 2 (2005): 61.

lived experiences, and how they construct their identities, voices, and actions in light of these understandings.”⁵² Utilizing a feminist standpoint approach gives researchers and society alike the opportunity to develop a sense of empathy for individuals who experience oppression. Because critical theorists view power as a contributing factor to injustice, this theory extends the critique of social structures which contribute to all forms of injustice. Prostitution is, explicitly and overtly, a social structure that lacks justice.

Communication scholar Kristina Rolin refers to power as “a particular conception of power, namely, the ability of an individual or a group to constrain the choices available to another individual or group.”⁵³ In sex trafficking, specifically, women are constrained from free choice or decision-making. Thus, analyzing prostitution and sex trafficking from the perspective of standpoint theory will be beneficial, as it relates to the deconstruction of power relations for the purpose of empowering oppressed and marginalized groups of people. Women in prostitution do not always lack friends and family. Many times, these women have children, siblings, parents, and sometimes even spouses. Standpoint theory becomes key to addressing injustice and the distortion of power in environments like prostitution. It is especially significant to note that for those in an aftercare, outreach, or educational setting, it becomes necessary for these individuals to take the standpoint of a trafficking victim to better serve him or her.

52. Patrice M. Buzzanell, Robyn V. Remke, Rebecca Meisenbach, Meina Liu, Venessa Bowerds, and Cindy Conn, “Standpoints of Maternity Leave: Discourses of Temporality and Ability,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 40, no. 1 (2017): 71.

40. Kristina Rolin, “Standpoint Theory as a Methodology for the Study of Power Relations,” *Hypatia* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 219, doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01070.x.

Conclusion

Social norms theory, framing, and standpoint theory will all intersect in my analyses in Chapters II and III. Each of the theories navigates the complexity of trafficking and constructs a deeper understanding of how to effectively work with a victim of human trafficking. By analyzing non-institutional texts through social norms theory and framing, specifically, I will be able to answer the question, how do non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate audiences who do not directly work with victims of trafficking on trauma? Looking at social norms that victims of human trafficking have will aid in answering this question by viewing how non-institutional organizations explicitly address these norms and educate the general public on them. Looking at how non-institutional organizations frame messages pertinent to expanding awareness of trafficking will additionally answer this first question by noting how organizations can reach various audiences with the same message in mind.

By analyzing institutional organizations through social norms and standpoint theory, I will be able to answer the question, how do institutional texts and training curriculum prepare individuals to interact with victims of trauma? By examining how institutional organizations depict social norms of trafficking victims, I will be able to answer this question as the training curriculum of these organizations equips volunteers and VSPs to work with individuals who have suffered from trauma through understanding the victims' norms. Similarly, by looking into how organizations that works directly with victims of trafficking take on various standpoints of individuals who suffer from trauma, this will further allow me to answer the research question. Each theory is essential to undressing both research questions for the purpose of furthering

research designated specifically to the rhetorical analysis of organizations aiming to combat, alleviate, and eradicate human trafficking.

CHAPTER II

NON-INSTITUTIONAL TEXTS AND TRAUMA

June 2006 -- Natalie¹ was fifteen when she ran away from her foster home, leaving behind the father who touched her and the mother who drank the truth away, down to the last drip . . . drip . . . drip of alcohol. Her family was not a home, and her home was no sanctuary. Natalie was waiting for the next bus to the mall, hoping for an escape that only a fifteen-year-old could dream of. The stranger who found her at the bus stop promised her he would take care of her. He was handsome and smelled nice; she thought God was giving her a new dad, a better dad.

November 2008 -- Sunglasses cover the shame locked behind her eyes, clouded by an overwhelming bruise to remind her of her seemingly shrinking worth. Natalie's daddy had set up a date for her. Typically, Natalie would comply, afraid to act contrary with what was expected of her. Only this time the pungent cologne and wedding ring of the john who was paying for her body set her off. She spat on him and ran out the door, only to be met by the splitting end of a bat.

March 2010 -- Torn mesh accompanies the blood rimmed around her left kneecap. Swollen, bruised, bleeding. Natalie faintly laughs at the metaphor of her life as she continues running. Fragments of gravel pierce the flesh of her feet, but she knows all too well not to stop moving. She was free.

The timeframe of exploitation varies individual to individual. Similarly, the escape to freedom is equally dependent on the individual being exploited. Natalie's case is not uncommon in that her abuse started in her home. Natalie's case is not uncommon in that her running away made her vulnerable to exploitation. Individuals who do not work directly with victims of human trafficking may not know that these two scenarios create vulnerability in populations at-risk for being trafficked. This chapter analyzes the

1. "Natalie" is an alias used for the purpose of this story to protect the anonymity of the trafficking victim being portrayed.

non-institutional texts from *Very Young Girls*, the City of Houston's Anti-Trafficking Strategic Plan, an Empower Talk, and an MSNBC segment. By analyzing awareness-raising material from each of these non-institutional organizations, I will explore how they achieve effectively communicating with their audiences about trauma who do not necessarily work directly with victims of trafficking.

Non-Institutional Texts

The non-institutional organizations whose texts I selected to analyze in this chapter each provide education and awareness about the complexities of human trafficking. By exploring a documentary, a strategic plan, and two videos, I hope to achieve diversity in the way each of these texts raise awareness about human trafficking. Because each of the texts are available to the public, it is important to look at how each of them communicate about trafficking to individuals seeking to learn more about trafficking who may not be in a setting that works with victims. First I will provide an overview of *Very Young Girls*, then the City of Houston Anti-Trafficking Strategic Plan, thirdly I will overview the Empower Talk, and finally the MSNBC segment.

Very Young Girls

Very Young Girls is a 2008 documentary that follows the lives and stories of girls in New York City who have been exploited and abused through the commercial sex industry. Director of the documentary, Nina Alvarez, creates a realistic portrayal of modern day slavery in the form of sex trafficking. The film uses real footage shot by pimps in New York, presenting a firsthand look into the exploitation of sex trafficking victims and their perpetrators. Throughout the documentary, the girls share narratives of their experiences, making their vulnerability and fear tangible. An article published on

NewsWorks, a public radio station in Delaware, recaps one of the narratives the film portrays, stating that

the internationally acclaimed film includes the story of Dominique who grew up in a household filled with domestic violence. Tired of the abuse, she ran away and walked right into what is being called modern-day slavery by getting into a stranger's car. She didn't know that he was a pimp and that he was in her neighborhood to recruit another girl. She was just 14 years old when she was introduced to the sex industry.²

The startling reality that many victims of human trafficking are “very young,” as young as thirteen, is a central focus of the documentary. Though the tone of the film is somber due to its candid nature, there remains a glimmer of hope as the girls find refuge in an organization called GEMS (Girls Education and Mentoring Service). GEMS is a recovery agency founded in 1998 by Rachel Lloyd, a co-producer of *Very Young Girls*, who is a survivor of sex trafficking and now serves as an advocate on behalf of victims. Lloyd’s own survival of human trafficking equips her to effectively serve those who have walked similar treacherous paths. In an interview for the *Daily Bruin*, journalist Ashley Vu discusses Rachel Lloyd’s pivotal role in paving the way for survivors of trafficking to find healing. Vu states that “Lloyd has helped foster the largest service provider for commercially exploited children in the nation, weaving hope with empowerment to girls and young women moving forward.”³

2. “Very Young Girls Documentary Highlights Problem of Sex Trafficking in the U.S.,” last modified February 15, 2012, <http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/mt-airychestnut-hill/33797-very-young-girls-documentary-highlights-problem-of-forced-prostitution>.

3. “GEMS CEO Rachel Lloyd Discusses Documentary ‘Very Young Girls’,” last modified March 4, 2015, <http://dailybruin.com/2015/03/04/qa-gems-ceo-rachel-lloyd-discusses-documentary-very-young-girls/>.

The film is featured on the GEMS website as a way to reach the public and spread awareness of the brutal reality that is domestic human trafficking. According to their website,

GEMS is committed to ending commercial sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking of children by changing individual lives, transforming public perception, and revolutionizing the systems and policies that impact commercially sexually exploited youth. *Very Young Girls* will change the way law enforcement, the media, and society as a whole look at the commercial sexual exploitation, street prostitution, and human trafficking that is happening right in our own backyard.⁴

Because *Very Young Girls* addresses human trafficking boldly through blunt footage and a lack of sugar-coating, this documentary creates a new way of viewing human trafficking - through the lens of victims and pimps themselves. This view will be key in analyzing the way the documentary frames trafficking.

City of Houston Anti-Trafficking Strategic Plan

Houston, Texas is an epicenter for human trafficking, a common hub for exploitation. This fact is gaining significant attention, driving various governing parties in the city, especially Mayor Sylvester Turner, to shift their attention to the issue. Mayor Turner, who began a four-year term in office on January 4, 2016, has been a leading force in the fight against human trafficking in Houston. In May of 2016, Mayor Turner revealed Houston's first comprehensive plan to fight human trafficking. Prior to 2016, there had not been a strategic plan in place to actively address and work to alleviate human trafficking. Minal Davis was appointed in 2015 to serve in the Office of the Mayor and is responsible for the execution of the Strategic Plan. Chris Graves, Human

4. "Get Involved – Very Young Girls," <http://www.gems-girls.org/get-involved/very-young-girls>.

Services Program Coordinator for Human Trafficking, is responsible for the coordination of human trafficking outreach materials and facilitating affairs of Mayor Turner's Houston Area Council on Human Trafficking.⁵ Together, Davis and Graves co-wrote the City of Houston Anti-Trafficking Strategic Plan.

In an article on Houston Public Media, journalist Al Ortiz depicts the scope of the issue of trafficking in Houston, explaining that "data compiled by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center's hotline indicate that, out of the roughly 2,000 cases which occurred in Texas from December of 2007 until June of [2015], more than a third originated in Houston."⁶ With the significance of the statistics in mind, Ortiz notes that within the Strategic Plan

two of the main goals . . . are raising awareness about human trafficking victims and better coordinating the legal and social services that are offered to them. The plan also has a policy aspect. It could include changing the municipal ordinance on message establishments.⁷

The long-term goal of the plan is to decrease human trafficking, but the plan outlines five specific objectives, which serve as a framework of the strategic plan:

(1) institutionalize the City of Houston's response to human trafficking, (2) raise awareness and change public perception, (3) coordinate victim services and engage in direct outreach, (4) implement joint Houston Area Council on Human Trafficking initiatives, and (5) establish Houston as the national model for anti-human trafficking efforts.⁸

5. Chris Graves' LinkedIn page, accessed March 28, 2017, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/christopherpgraves/>.

6. "Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner Unveils Strategic Plan to Fight Human Trafficking," last modified May 9, 2016, <https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2016/05/09/149722/houston-mayor-sylvester-turner-unveils-strategic-plan-to-fight-human-trafficking/>.

7. Ibid.

8. "City of Houston Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan," May 2016, <http://humantraffickinghouston.org/strategic-plan/>.

The text offers tangible steps to alleviate the issue in the city of Houston while noting that “the complex nature of human trafficking ensures that additional challenges will emerge as the Special Advisor implements the above objectives,” meaning that “the best solution . . . is adopting that [which is] advocated for by this Strategic Plan – a 365 day-a-year approach that invests resources in solutions that have the potential to undermine human trafficking for good.”⁹ The plan has several short-term objectives with the intention of reaching an overarching long-term goal. By 2019, the plan aims to “institutionalize response to human trafficking from within the City of Houston, ensuring that trafficking is structurally addressed.”¹⁰

The City of Houston’s Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan is specific to audiences who have some level of background knowledge about the issue of human trafficking. The introduction to the strategic plan explains that the purpose of the document is to “lay the groundwork for comprehensively addressing human trafficking as a public health and safety issue through community-based partnerships with service providers, law enforcement, and elected officials from all levels of government.”¹¹ These specific audiences are central to eradicating human trafficking in Houston, TX. The strategic plan is broken down by statistics, objectives, strategies, and tactics, and each section seeks to communicate information in an educational manner.

Through the Strategic Plan, anti-trafficking organizations wishing to partner with the City of Houston have access to free toolkits at www.humantraffickinghouston.com which will help them “understand how to pass municipal ordinances, raise awareness by

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

partnering with the transportation industry, engage in direct victim outreach, launch an anti-human trafficking media campaign, and be informed about large events and human trafficking.”¹² Because it is a rarity that victims self-identify as victims, the City of Houston is taking initiative by teaching individuals who are likely to encounter these victims to identify signs of exploitation. The Strategic Plan provides support for the Houston Area Council on Human Trafficking to train key individuals and groups from taxi companies, to hotel management, to city public health department employees. By analyzing the Strategic Plan, other cities may be able to learn from the structures Houston had adopted to address human trafficking in their communities. This plan is pertinent to understanding how institutions equip others to interact with victims of trauma through identification, with the long-term goal of eradicating trafficking in mind.

“Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims”

The first of two shorter video presentations I will analyze in this chapter, “Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims,” is a talk given by Dr. Paul VanValin, the founder of Eden Counseling Center in Norfolk, Virginia. Dr. VanValin specializes in psychological evaluation as well as abuse and trauma recovery.¹³ The video was published on November 3, 2014 as a part of a series put on by End Human Trafficking called Empower Talks. End Human Trafficking is a global initiative based in Virginia that seeks to educate individuals about human trafficking, and their Empower Talks feature various speakers who are experts in their fields for the purpose of providing knowledge and

12. “Learn How the City of Houston is Fighting Human Trafficking and Access Free Information and Toolkits,” last modified May 25, 2016, <http://www.houstontx.gov/citizensnet/HumanTrafficking20160525.html>.

13. “Eden Counseling and Consulting,” accessed May 28, 2017, http://www.edencounseling.com/paul_van_valin.php.

wisdom on different topics related to trafficking. This specific talk presented by Dr. VanValin gives insight into the cognitive process of trafficking victims who have experienced trauma. The video is set up like a TED Talk, where the speaker stands in front of a specific live audience. In this speaker-to-audience setting, it is more likely for the audience to already have some awareness of trafficking due to the thematic nature of the Empower Talks event. Thus, Dr. VanValin is able to present more complex content within her presentation.

“Inside the Mindset of Trafficking Victims”

The second video, “Inside the Mindset of Trafficking Victims,” was published on MSNBC on October 29, 2015. In this video, Dr. Chitra Raghavan, Internal Medicine Specialist at Baptist Health Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, explores the rationale and justification inside the heads of trafficking victims who bond with their abusers or defend their actions. Contrary to the first video, this talk is less about the intricate science surrounding trauma in victims and more about how the trauma impacts a victim’s relationship with his or her captor. This video, aired on MSNBC, provides content valuable to the general public, whether or not individuals are already aware of what human trafficking is or what it looks like. Dr. Raghavan’s talk provides a basic understanding of what a victim looks like and why it is they cannot just “run away.”

Dr. Raghavan has also spoken on the Vera Institute of Justice’s podcast series, Vera Voices, where she “explains the concepts of coercive sex and sexual assault as they apply to people who know one another.”¹⁴ Dr. Raghavan’s experience as a psychologist

14. “Chitra Raghavan: Intimate Aggression: Understanding Sexual Coercion,” YouTube Video, 6:35, from an interview that is a part of Vera’s Neil A. Weiner Research Speaker Series, posted by Vera Institute, August 25, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLJAnGP5fAQ>.

gives her a unique understanding and perspective on the cognitive process victims of trafficking face. She has also co-authored a paper on trauma-coerced bonding specific to trafficking victims where she argues that “trauma bonding be reconceptualized as trauma-coerced attachment to adequately reflect the abusive dynamics at play.”¹⁵ Dr. Raghavan and Dr. VanValin each have experience in trauma and crisis that will be beneficial when analyzing the effects of trauma on victims of human trafficking. Both videos will provide different perspectives on the cognitive processes trafficking victims face due to the setting and audience for each of the videos.

Analysis

This analysis will look at the awareness-raising material of the non-institutional organizations previously overviewed. By analyzing each of these materials through social norms and framing theory, I will answer the question, how do non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking on trauma?

Social Norms Theory

Social norms persist throughout non-institutional awareness-raising material. These organizations frame their educational messages to tailor to norms that exist within the lives of sex trafficking victims so that individuals who do not work directly with victims are able to see third-hand how trauma impacts how victims operate on a day-to-day basis. Because the audiences who view, read, or listen to the awareness-raising material from these specific organizations and individuals presenting information on

15. Chitra Raghavan and Kendra Doychak, “Trauma-Coerced Bonding and Victims of Sex Trafficking: Where Do We Go From Here?,” *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience* 17, no. 2 (2015): 583.

trafficking likely hold different social norms than those of victims, these organizations and speakers effectively reach audience members who hold dissimilar norms. By displaying four common norms: the victim viewing the trafficker as family, perceiving a loss of his or her childhood, believing that his or her body is not owned by him or herself, and the acceptance of violence, these three organizations are able to capture normalized experiences of victims and depict them to educate audiences not working directly with victims of trafficking.

Trafficker as family.

A prevalent social norm that victims of trafficking become accustomed to is viewing the trafficker, and others who the pimp traffics, as family. In *Very Young Girls* one of the girls who presents her story, Dominique, explains how her experience with her birth family became a framework for seeing her pimp as real family. Dominique shares part of her story in the film:

“Before I left my house, a lot of fist fights, violence, violence like crazy. I could do better without this you know? I’m leavin’. 13 years old, where am I going? I walk outside myself and four steps, no lie, a van pulls up. And it’s this guy, but I’ve seen him before ya know so I’m kinda familiar with him. He says, “I can really help you, I can be like your father. We’re a family.” She says “Family? Okay I’m gettin’ in the car.”¹⁶

In this instance, Dominique’s birth family was inherently abusive. Her norm for what family was became reframed as soon as her pimp told her that he was going to be like her father and that they were going to be a family. This scenario frames the norm of what family looks like for trafficking victims who have already experienced a lack of love in their familial setting. Dominique goes on to explain,

16. “Very Young Girls,” biography/documentary, 1:21:50, from Vimeo released on July 4, 2008, posted by ZoCALO in 2013, <https://vimeo.com/60571430>.

“It felt like I was his daughter. He used to say things like ‘when me and your mother was makin you’ or ‘when me and your mother had you’” He used to buy me blues clues and stuff, he was like a father, he tried to make that role his role. He would sleep in my bed and hold me. He took care of me.”¹⁷

With this disillusioned sense of what a family looks like, built on a view of family that was broken from the start, the norm for a victim of trafficking becomes that her trafficker is a better family member to her than her real family ever was. In the MSNBC video, Dr. Raghavan offers another explanation of how this social norm of victims viewing their trafficker as family comes to be. In the context of a human trafficking victim who testifies in court on the side of her trafficker rather than against him, Dr. Raghavan explains that the victim does not speak out against her trafficker “because she doesn’t view him as a guy who’s been selling her on the street. It’s her boyfriend, or the father of her child.”¹⁸ In this instance, her trafficker is not someone she views as abusive, but rather someone she views as having an intimate bond with like a family member. Dr. Raghavan explains that the level of seduction and subsequent vulnerability that ensues between the trafficker and his victim solidifies a bond. Dr. Raghavan argues that, to understand this relationship where the victim has a bond with her trafficker as he or she would with a family member,

it is important to understand that seduction touches a particular vulnerability of the woman or sometimes man and that vulnerability might be as simple as “I grew up without any affection and I’m getting all this affection” or it could be “I had long periods of sexual abuse so I don’t enjoy sex but you understand that and you make me feel good sexually” so there’s a

17. Ibid.

18. “Inside the Mindset of Sex Trafficking Victims,” YouTube video, 6:34, from an MSNBC segment, posted by MSNBC, October 29, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjLy9L0FgHo&t=52s>.

connection but the connection is really hinged on some kind of exploited vulnerability.¹⁹

It is important to make note of Dr. Raghavan's explanation, especially for individuals seeking to understand the connection between trauma and trafficking. While victims may view their captors as family, this relationship is not based on what society deems familial love. This social norm that trafficking victims experience where they feel as if their traffickers are family can be related to the next norm, the loss of childhood. If a victim of trafficking sees her abuser as family, this norm can be directly correlated to the fact that she was forced into growing up at an early age when childhood should have been filled with dolls or bicycles instead of sex with strangers.

Loss of childhood.

A common theme in *Very Young Girls* is that trafficking victims are, as the title suggests, very young girls. Dominique, one of the girls the documentary follows, tells the camera,

“When I was a kid I wanted to be an archeologist. Don't ask me why. I wanted to be an archeologist, I wanted to find things, I wanted to find Cleopatra, King Tut. All these people in Egypt. I wanted to be 14, girl went to England to discover some plants or something. Not 14, girl on Huntspoint Avenue shakin' her butt, you know? It's not how I wanted it to be.”²⁰

This vivid imagery of how Dominique wished her childhood had been presents a vivid picture of her childhood reality for those viewing *Very Young Girls*. Through Dominique's narrative, the rhetor gives genuine insight into how the loss of childhood becomes a norm for many victims of human trafficking. Most children dream of futures as doctors, singers, and even archeologists. Even though these dreams are typically

19. Ibid.

20. “Very Young Girls.”

future-minded, victims of trafficking do not imagine that as a 14-year-old they are going to be turned out for sex with strangers. The experience that a victim of trafficking has through which the loss of his or her childhood is normalized echoes throughout the entirety of *Very Young Girls*. In another brief scene, a different young girl looks into the camera as she reminisces on the trauma she lived through at a young age pondering, “at the age 13, what choices do I have?”²¹ This sentiment is persistent through the film, as the home footage of the two pimp brothers shows one speaking to a recent victim they are recruiting as he says, “you can’t be a little girl here. You’re gonna represent me and I’m gonna represent you.”²² The explicit acknowledgment made by the pimp in this scene highlights the social norm victims experience when their childhoods are stripped from them as their abusers expect the young girls to act like adults. By overtly telling the underage girl that she cannot be a little girl on the streets, the pimp shows the societal expectation within the culture of pimping that the pimps accept the young age of the girls they exploit, yet expect them to grow up through sexual exploitation. In these examples of the social norm of lost childhood, *Very Young Girls* educates audiences who may not directly work with victims on the effect trafficking has on girls that young.

Houston’s strategic plan parallels *Very Young Girls*’ examples of the social norm of lost childhood through the plan’s definition of human trafficking itself. The strategic plan states that,

strictly speaking, human trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel someone to perform a commercial sex or labor act. Force, fraud, or coercion is not required if the person involved in a commercial sex act is under 18.²³

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. “City of Houston Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan.”

This very definition of trafficking, according to Houston's strategic plan, says that if an individual under the age of 18 is involved in a commercial sex act, he or she is automatically a victim, whether or not the other factors of trafficking can be proven.

The plan also emphasizes the social norm of the loss of victims' childhoods through statistical evidence, where between the years 2007 and 2015, out of roughly 25,000 trafficking cases, 7,768 of those cases involved minors.²⁴ *Very Young Girls* gives the account of a minor victim, Nicole, who was 15 when she was arrested for prostitution. The film shows Nicole's lawyer with her in the courtroom. The attorney tells the camera that "the day [Nicole] was arrested she was 14. In any other situation she would be too young to consent to sex."²⁵ In "Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims," Dr. VanValin echoes the social norm of lost childhood through his explanation of complex trauma, stating that

if you take a young child and expose that child to enough trauma, you alter the brain development, you alter the personality. The child can be hard-wired for those elements of distress for the rest of his or her life.²⁶

Dr. VanValin's analysis of how children and trauma interact cognitively presents another perspective on how the norm of losing formative years of one's life, during childhood specifically, can impact that person for the rest of their life.

By showcasing the social norm that trafficking victims are stripped of a childhood through their awareness-raising material, organizations can provide individuals who do not work directly with victims an enhanced understanding of trafficking's impact on

24. Ibid.

25. "Very Young Girls."

26. "Paul VanValin: Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims," YouTube video, 7:01, from End Human Trafficking Empower Talks, posted by End Human Trafficking, November 3, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNBOVIbxX4Y>.

young victims and how that might filter into their recovery from trauma. When childhood has been lost, victims coming out of trafficking may not know how to operate within their age group. As it is difficult for victims of trafficking to gain time lost during exploitation like childhood, it is also difficult for victims to understand their ownership over their own body as the next norm suggests.

Body not owned by self.

When a victim of human trafficking is subjected to daily rape, the body of the victim becomes mere supply to a historically existent demand for sex. Pimps and johns view their girls as commodities. Because this is the case, it is often normal for victims to feel as if they do not have ownership over their own bodies. In *Very Young Girls*, a victim named Shaneuqia shares her experience that supports this norm. Shaneuqia confesses, “I felt like at that point in time, this was his body. That whatever he felt like should go inside of it, or whatever should happen to it is gonna happen because he said so.”²⁷ Shaneuqia’s experience with her pimp and her experience of being pimped created a reality for her that suggested her body was her pimp’s body. This statement is crucial for audiences of the film as it educates those who are not familiar with trafficking about the lack of choice involved with the victims’ own bodies. Common arguments in the context of prostitution dispute the idea of choice, questioning whether a woman selling her body is taking ownership of her body. While the argument exists based on the notion that there are women who make a choice to self-prostitute, the refuting argument exists in Shaneuqia’s words a belief in the lack of freedom over her own body. In “Inside the

27. “Very Young Girls.”

Mindset of Trafficking Victims,” Dr. Raghavan explains the gradual process through which victims develop this norm, explaining that there becomes

a point where the victim loses her sense of self, adopts the abuser’s worldview . . . it starts slowly, but it starts to happen more and more when she feels like she has no choice . . . or that her choices are limited and/or that she is responsible for what has happened.²⁸

The gradual adoption of the abuser’s worldview begins to consume the victim to the point that her choice about what happens to her body is met with disregard for what she wants, and is replaced with what her abuser wants to happen with her body. Dr. VanValin’s talk is more medical and informative, so it does not address this norm as heavily, but he does note that trafficking victims experience similar elements to war victims when it comes to PTSD. He says that

some of the elements that trafficked individuals have with people of war are that they can’t leave the situation. They have to stay. They are forced to sacrifice themselves, sometimes doing things that are dehumanizing. Actually reduce our capacity to see ourselves as valuable humans. And they have to shut down part of themselves to cope with what’s going on.²⁹

Dr. VanValin’s comparison of elements experienced by a trafficking victim and a victim of war still parallels this norm that a victim does not own his or her own body. His argument that an individual’s reduction in capacity to see his or her value can be applied to the norm that a victim of trafficking is also, perceivably, reduced in value when his or her body is not under his or her own will. The norm that victims of trafficking believe their bodies are held under the power of a pimp is pervasive in the culture of human trafficking. Organizations educate the general public about this norm through sharing stories like Shaneuqia’s, and by explaining the gradual shift from freedom to lack of

28. “Inside the Mindset of Sex Trafficking Victims.”

29. “Paul VanValin: Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims.”

freedom. The lack of ownership victims of trafficking have over their bodies coincides with the next norm, where the victim comes to accept the violence that abusers inflict.

Acceptance of violence.

When trafficking victim experiences brutal beatings, multiple rapes a day, kicking, and abuse of the like, that individual is likely going to come to a place of acceptance that the violence is normal, or at least expected. In *Very Young Girls*, Shanequia recalls an experience with her pimp, saying “and he started raping me anally. Then I started crying and stuff, and I honestly felt like that was my fault. I felt like I shouldn’t have wanted to go outside, I shouldn’t have disobeyed him.”³⁰ Shanequia’s account in this scene of the documentary evokes feelings of shame, because violence became a normal response to disobeying her pimp. Her statement in this part of *Very Young Girls* educates individuals who do not work directly with trafficking victims on the victims’ acceptance of violence once they start to believe they deserve the abuse. Dominique’s account that *Very Young Girls* shares, parallels Shanequia’s experience of violence being normalized. Dominique came from an abusive family and went to an abusive pimp, but she rationalizes that her pimp beat her because she did not make enough money for him, whereas she felt like her family did not have a reason. The violence from her pimp was so normalized that Dominique says, “I justified everything when I was in the game.”³¹ Victims of trafficking, as made evident through the two accounts of victims in *Very Young Girls*, are made to feel deserving of the violence and

30. “Very Young Girls.”

31. Ibid.

responsible for the abuse, rather than viewing the violence as inherently abusive by the pimp.

In Dr. VanValin's talk, he explains the trauma response victims of trafficking have to abuse after getting out of the life, noting that victims of trauma "have hyper-arousal. It's like having antennas that are invisible, that are constantly looking for signs of danger."³² Dr. VanValin's claim maintains the idea that victims of trafficking who suffer from significant trauma as a result of their exploitation normalize their experience of violence. Because of this, the victims are hyper-aroused when in a situation that might be potentially dangerous or violent because they assume any sign of danger as a threat to their being, or with the potential to lead to abuse. Houston's strategic plan is organized as a strategy for combating trafficking in Houston, so the plan itself is less informative of the effects of violence on victims. One of the plan's core objectives is to "coordinate victim services and engage in direct outreach to ensure efficiency and comprehensiveness of service delivery and to increase victim identification."³³ While this goal does not explicitly share the social norm of acceptance of violence in the lives of victims, it does share the need for efficient services to provide resources to victims. It is important to understand the norm of acceptance of violence that victims cling to in order to provide victims effective services. Without understanding this norm, resources available for victims will be less effective. This objective in the plan also calls on individuals to identify victims. If individuals who do not work directly with trafficking victims are

32. "Paul VanValin: Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims."

33. "City of Houston Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan."

aware of the acceptance of violence victims have, then the general public can aid in the identification of victims through their enhanced education about this norm.

Organizations can similarly educate the general public about human trafficking and how it affects exploited individuals by framing the message about human trafficking in a way that reaches audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking. The rhetors who crafted the messages in *Very Young Girls*, Houston's Strategic Plan, the MSNBC segment, and the Empower Talks video also use these texts to frame human trafficking in a way that educates audiences about how trauma affects the individuals who are exploited.

Framing Theory

Within each of these non-institutional texts, rhetors used different frames to communicate similar messages. Each organization and text exists to increase awareness about human trafficking's existence and impact. They accomplish this rhetorically by offering different frames that each communicate to a specific audience. *Very Young Girls*, The City of Houston Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan, Dr. VanValin's presentation, and the MSNBC news segment each frame the message of human trafficking in unique ways to draw attention to and educate about the issue. In some texts, such as *Very Young Girls*, the rhetors frame their message through shocking tones to gain attention from audiences who may not know the intricacies of human trafficking. Yet in other artifacts, such as Houston's Strategic Plan and the two videos from MSNBC and Empower Talks, the rhetors use more clinically or scientifically toned frames to prevent their messages from being overloaded with pathetic appeals. The variety in these frames offers rhetors the opportunity to communicate the same message through different lenses

to reach audiences who have any level of awareness and knowledge about trafficking. Other frames that the rhetors utilize are frames of relatability for audiences who might not otherwise have a frame of reference.

Framing through tone.

Explicit tone.

The documentary *Very Young Girls* mostly frames messages about trafficking through an emotional tone that highlights the explicit nature of trafficking by providing a direct look into the life of pimps and their victims. The first frame of *Very Young Girls* is a still shot that reads: “In the United States, the average age of entry into the commercial sex industry is 13 years old.”³⁴ This initial message sets a tone for the rest of the film. By stating the age of entry for victims into the commercial sex industry, the rhetor is explaining to the audience that victims are often under the age of 18 when first recruited, hence the name of the documentary.

The film then moves into the stories of different girls who were exploited. The first girl who speaks is named Shanequia and was initially trafficked at the age of 12. The camera zooms to her legs, swinging over her seat where the audience can see a pair of pure-white shoes and Barbie-pink socks kicking back and forth. The picture portrays innocence, a young child’s shoes carelessly swaying, but the words spoken out of the girl’s mouth represent a lack of when she states, “I got into the life when I was 12 years old; I was still in school.”³⁵ This brief sentence exposes the emotion behind the film, framing the message in a way that stirs empathy from the audience. *Very Young Girls*

34. “Very Young Girls.”

35. Ibid.

provides footage of two brother pimps, Chris and Anthony Griffith, who shot home videos of themselves pimping girls in hope of becoming famous. With access to this footage, the documentary provides a shock factor that other forms of awareness-raising material might not otherwise depict. In one of the first shots *Very Young Girls* shows of the pimps, the conversation between the brothers shows the explicit dehumanization involved in pimping. The conversation goes:

Brother 1: How long have you been doing this?

Brother 2: Six mother fucking years.

Brother 3: How many hoes you got up in yo stable? What are we gonna do today?

Brother 4: We're gonna find me a bitch.³⁶

The rhetor frames this message of explicit disregard for women by the pimps in a way that produces emotions of repugnance and disturbance by the audience viewing the frame. By presenting this conversation between the two brothers, *Very Young Girls* captures an exclusive look into the world of trafficking through a particular lens that would not otherwise be available to the audience. In another shot of the pimps' home-video footage, the camera shows one of the pimps having an older victim beat a newer victim who they are collectively pimping out. The older girl who is being exploited is shown slapping the younger girl saying, "this is what you get for wasting time." The pimp is heard, not shown, saying "Smile. Smile now. Say you'll be back."³⁷ This further illustrates the rhetor's use of framing through an emotional tone that generates a feeling of distress to the audience and communicates the unfiltered reality of sex trafficking.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

By communicating to the audience in an explicit tone, non-institutional organizations have the opportunity to present real experiences of victims who have been sexually exploited through first-hand narratives. Non-institutional organizations have a rare opportunity to present the authenticity of trafficking in a light that does not sugar coat or water down the harshness of exploitation. Though communicating through explicit tone creates a “shock factor” by presenting realistic and emotional accounts of victims, this is not the only effective method of framing. Framing through a clinical tone is another way in which rhetors can effectively present information about human trafficking.

Clinical tone.

The rhetors who created Houston’s Strategic Plan, MSNBC’s “Inside the Mindset of Trafficking Victims,” and Empower Talks’ “Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims” use more of a clinical tone when relaying the message of sex trafficking to their audiences. The Strategic Plan, communicated through writing, is available to anyone interested in seeing how Houston is combating and planning to combat human trafficking. Because of the written format, the plan is conveying itself strategically rather than emotionally. The plan is filled with facts and figures, providing a more dry and statistical analysis of human trafficking. The strategic plan states “the Special Advisor aims to bring about the structural changes needed to decrease human trafficking in Houston for the long-term. Ultimately, the City of Houston will be recognized as the national model for addressing human trafficking.”³⁸ This introduction into the strategic plan lays the groundwork for the entirety of the plan. Framing the text as a way to bring

38. “City of Houston Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan.”

structural change establishes a cut and dry tone for the document. For audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking, the strategic plan is usefully framed through a clinical tone because it allows the general public to gain insight through a statistical approach. If every organization crafted their awareness-raising material with an emotional tone, there would be less awareness of the true scope and nature of human trafficking. Narratives that display emotion do not depict the entire nature and existence of trafficking because the story of one girl is not going to be the same for another. This is why clinical tone, presented through information like statistics, is helpful in addressing a more realistic and generalizable understanding of trafficking. The strategic plan displays pages with graphs and charts to visually depict the individuals affected by trafficking, framing the existence of trafficking in a way that provides the audience with a realistic approach of awareness.

The quantifiable tone of the plan presents information through the display of numbers such as “from December 2007 to June 2015, out of 9,253 calls, Polaris confirmed 2,035 cases of human trafficking in Texas. Out of those confirmed cases, 717 originated from Houston, 299 of which were placed by potential victims of trafficking.”³⁹ The clinical tone of this sentence does not disregard the trauma victim’s experience, but does present the actuality of human trafficking in a way that gives audiences who do not work with victims a quantifiable understanding of the gravity of the issue. Having awareness-raising material that is framed clinically allows audiences to spread information based on facts. Additionally, without awareness-raising material that is framed clinically, there would be no way to quantify if trafficking is spreading or

39. Ibid.

reducing in size. Houston's Strategic Plan notes that part of the plan's purpose is to "map optimal system flow for victims identified by law enforcement and direct outreach."⁴⁰

The clinical tone these rhetors use to frame their approach to spreading awareness of trafficking presents the intention to also increase victim identification. This allows the audience to see how groups other than nonprofits are acting on combating trafficking locally.

Similarly, MSNBC's "Inside the Mindset of a Trafficking Victim" video is also framed with a clinical tone. The set-up of the video shows the host, Seema Iyer, and guest, Dr. Chitra Raghavan, facing each other in their chairs, talking only to one another and not to an actual audience or the camera. This indicates that the talk is more informational or educational, and not as interactional. Rather, the audience is present via the Internet or television where the general public can tune in to watch the video. This set-up is clinical by nature. The rhetor's framing clearly communicates that this text is less about stirring emotions through explicit imagery, as *Very Young Girls* does, and is more about presenting facts about how trauma affects victims in ways such as trauma bonding. When discussing the bond that victims have with their abusers, Dr. Chitra Raghavan explains that

the detachment is a little elastic but there's a band with a frequency where it can move from, where at some point depending on the context the woman can say "you know I love him but I can see that he's abusive." And then when she's threatened . . . meaning someone is saying put her in the stand, testify against the guy whom you love, whom "I was willing to admit in private as abusive," then it moves along that bandwidth to being very defensive and rigid. So the way to think about that is there is attachment, but it's not unmoving.⁴¹

40. Ibid.

41. "Inside the Mindset of Sex Trafficking Victims."

This explanation that Dr. Raghavan provides of how attachment and bonding works for a trafficking victim who has been traumatized by abuse and exploitation gives insight in a manner that is not necessarily poignant as much as it is a scientific metaphor. Through clinically framing information about how a victim of trafficking acts after experiencing trauma, audiences who do not work directly with victims can gain insight into commonly misunderstood questions such as “Why doesn’t she just leave?” The clinical framing of the MSNBC video gives the general public answers to questions not often addressed in everyday conversations. For individuals who have not been exposed to or who have not interacted with victims of trauma, the type of awareness raising that the MSNBC video offers is effective in understanding the effects of trauma, such as trauma-bonding, that Dr. Raghavan educates about. Another common question among individuals who do not work directly with victims of trafficking that I have repeatedly heard is “Well now that we know about it, what do we do about it?”

An additional example of clinical framing that answers this question is Dr. Raghavan’s statement in the MSNBC video where she offers two ways to approach combating trafficking after awareness has been addressed, politically and through research. She says that

politically, I think we need to decriminalize prostitution for the women not the buyer or the trafficker . . . possibly even strengthen the laws. But for the women or sometimes men who are working I think we need to decriminalize, so they’re no longer being arrested. And in terms of research I think we need to start looking at what are the processes that lead to the attachment.⁴²

42. Ibid.

Dr. Raghavan clinically frames these two ways to address human trafficking as pertinent to any individual who does not work directly with victims but still seeks information on how to combat trafficking.

Similarly, in his video “Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims,” Dr. Paul VanValin depicts examples of framing through a clinical tone. Dr. VanValin addresses complex trauma through a quantifiable lens that looks at how often a person has been exposed to trauma, and therefore how long it will take that person to heal from the traumatic events he or she has experienced. He says,

take a trafficked person who is exposed multiple times each day to threats of violence, threats of coercion, and look at the accumulative stress in that person’s life. Stress is additive. The faster stressors come together, the faster it is to recover.⁴³

With this statement, Dr. VanValin educates individuals who may not have direct experience with trafficking victims to present information that is clinical by nature. The scientific presentation of information, such as how long it takes a trafficked person to recover depending on the amount of trauma he or she is suffering from educates the audience about the correlation between trafficking, trauma, and recovery. Another example of this clinical framing is when Dr. VanValin specifies, “the recovery process [from trauma] can be as brief as one trauma event for three months, or it can be a lifetime of recovery.”⁴⁴

The continual presentation of information regarding trafficking victims as broken up into formulaic representations allows the audience to gain education that they might not receive from awareness-raising material that educates on an emotional level through

43. “Paul VanValin: Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims.”

44. Ibid.

primarily narrative examples. Dr. Raghavan and Dr. VanValin, as licensed therapists, are able to effectively frame their ideas through a clinical tone. Though the tone is clinical, emotions are not disregarded when these rhetors present their audiences with information about trafficking victims and the effects of trauma. Rather, this clinical tone provides the audience with an alternate view and perspective that does not merely pull at their heart strings, but also gives a fuller view of trafficking and how it affects victims. Another way of framing the message of human trafficking and its existence that these non-institutional organizations utilize is framing through relatability.

Framing through relatability.

Not every individual who is interested in learning more about human trafficking has a frame of reference that allows them to effectively empathize or even sympathize with the plight of a trafficking victim. Another way that non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking on trauma is by framing messages through relatability. In the beginning of *Very Young Girls*, the camera scans across several different girls' faces as they state how old they were when they were first exploited by the commercial sex industry:

Girl 1: I was 13.

Girl 2: I was 12.

Girl 3: I was 15.

Girl 4: 16.

Girl 5: 13 and a half going on 14.

Girl 6: I got in when I was 12.⁴⁵

45. "Very Young Girls."

These repetitive statements of different victims' ages of exploitation serve as the rhetor's way of framing through relatability. The audience viewing the documentary can hear these ages of entry in the commercial sex industry and remember when they were that age, or think of their daughter, sister, niece, or granddaughter who is currently that age. By framing the message of the existence of trafficking and reality of how very young exploited girls often are through a relatable lens, societal conversations can circulate among people who do not work with victims to spread awareness about how young victims really can be. This sparks a larger conversation, helping individuals who do not work with victims of trafficking to educate their daughters, sisters, and nieces about safety and avoiding situations where exploitation can occur.

One section of *Very Young Girls* shows a mom, LaSharon, driving around Brooklyn trying to find her daughter who had gone missing. The documentary shows LaSharon on the phone attempting to determine where her daughter could be. Finally, a local prostitute let LaSharon know that a pimp had her daughter and a few other girls. LaSharon goes to the local precinct to let the police know "these girls said [the pimps] are armed and dangerous, there's three of them . . . they're at the apartment . . . this is where he's keeping the girls at, he locked them in there . . . he beats them" to which the police officer responds with, "what do you want me to do for you?"⁴⁶ This interaction between a mother, whose daughter is confirmed as missing and in the hands of a pimp, and the police officer's lack of action and empathy frame this story in a way that would be relatable for any mother watching the documentary, even if she has not had the experience of working with victims or having her exploited by a pimp.

46. Ibid.

Further into the documentary, the camera pans to a building in Brooklyn where a room full of males are sitting, listening to the Attorney General. The set-up is lecture style, and there is little interaction among the group of men as they pay attention to the individual at the front of the room. The men are attending what is called “Brooklyn John School,” where men who have paid for sex attend a course that gives them the option to have their case dismissed and record wiped clean among completion of the course. The room shows men of all ages and ethnicities, framing the message that any male who buys sex might be supporting human trafficking. The District Attorney tells the room of johns the average age of a girl who is working the streets, and one of the johns responds with a whistle of surprise, as shocked as if someone had just told him the New England Patriots won the Super Bowl. Almost immediately after, one john raises his hand and asks “Question, how long before the break?” to which the rest of the men in the room respond with laughter.⁴⁷ This brief scene in *Very Young Girls* frames the message of human trafficking as supply and demand by displaying through real footage the lack of importance men who pay for sex place on the issue of trafficking.

By placing this scene in the documentary, the rhetor educates audiences who do not work with trafficking victims on several things. First, a john can be someone of any age, ethnicity, status, or background. A man who pays for sex can be married; he can be single; he can be twenty or sixty. Men who pay for sex are not limited by a specific demographic. This provides the audience with a frame of reference for what a john is and who a john could be – anyone. This provides a sense of relatability for the audience, taking into consideration that an individual who buys sex could be someone that the

47. Ibid.

audience knows. Second, it frames the message that not all individuals take the issue of human trafficking seriously. This educates the audience who views the documentary about the fact that not everyone who is aware of sex trafficking will care to see it end. This could subsequently result in individuals caring to see harsher consequences for the johns instead of just a course that wipes their record. This provides a frame of reference for audiences who care about policy implementation, relating them on a level that is in alignment with their own visions and goals. The Strategic Plan for Houston presents similar examples in their written plan to combat trafficking by framing their message through relatability.

The City of Houston's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan states that "human trafficking affects everyone living and working in Houston."⁴⁸ This provides an example of framing through relatability so that individuals reading the strategic plan understand the reality that human trafficking is not an issue facing one demographic or status; rather it affects anyone and everyone who lives in a city where trafficking occurs. Because individuals who do not work directly with victims of human trafficking might not have previously realized the scope of the issue, this brief sentence exposes them to the reality of trafficking and will hopefully encourage them to look further into the plan where it provides statistics about how many trafficking victims exist in Houston and where. Through giving Houston's citizens the information they need to understand how prevalent trafficking is in their city, the Strategic Plan's rhetors have the potential to effectively alter the way the general public responds to human trafficking once they realize it is devastating their home city.

48. "City of Houston Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan."

One of the initial visions and goals of the Mayor's office in the plan is changing "the public's perception about human trafficking, leading to an increased awareness about, and reporting of, human trafficking."⁴⁹ This directly correlates to the initial statement in the plan where the rhetor relates trafficking to each individual living and working in Houston. When individuals living in Houston who do not work with victims of trafficking have an enhanced and more realistic understanding and awareness of trafficking, it is probable that more citizens will feel empowered to report potential trafficking cases. By framing the message of trafficking through relatability, the strategic plan stresses to its audience the importance of acknowledging trafficking's reality.

Dr. VanValin also considers how he can appeal to the audience's frame of reference in his talk "Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims" as he tells the story of a girl who experienced trauma, explaining that she was a

17-year-old girl [who] was abducted from a public place on a Sunday afternoon. It was a place she had frequented many times, a safe environment. But on this particular occasion, an adult male grabbed her, forced her into the car, punched her, choked her until she was passed out, and drove off with her.⁵⁰

The whole ordeal lasted maybe three hours, but Dr. VanValin explains that "in these three hours she felt that her life was threatened, she anticipated horrible things happening to her. It was clearly a potentially traumatic event."⁵¹ By providing this narrative to the audience, Dr. VanValin is able to portray the reality of traumatic events occurring in the lives of any human being at any place at any time. Though the intention in this narrative

49. Ibid.

50. "Paul VanValin: Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims."

51. Ibid.

is not to scare the audience, the rhetor does work to provide a realistic portrayal of the reality that human trafficking can affect anyone.

Dr. VanValin ends his talk with the following statement to the audience: “The most significant thing we can do is prevention. So I thank you for coming today and being a part of that solution.”⁵² This endnote creates a sense of responsibility for the audience as Dr. VanValin calls on those who are listening to be a driving force in ending sex trafficking. Rather than asking the audience to be part of the solution, he thanks the audience for their attendance, suggesting that by attending the talk, they are already a part of the solution. In this statement, the rhetor uses a frame of responsibility to let the audience know that they do not have to be direct victim service providers to end human trafficking. Rather, by having an increased sense of awareness and heightened perception of the trauma victim’s experience, individuals of any background can be a part of the solution.

Framing through tone and relatability are two ways in which rhetors crafting non-institutional texts can educate individuals who do not work directly with victims of human trafficking about the complexity of trafficking in a unique way that they might not otherwise hear from most awareness-raising material. By framing through tone, rhetors have the opportunity to present awareness-raising material in a light that both invokes emotion as well as statistical clarification regarding the reality of trafficking. Framing through relatability is equally important for non-institutional texts to reach audiences who do not work directly with trafficking victims because it lets individuals understand that

52. Ibid.

every single person plays a part in ending human trafficking whether or not they realize it.

Conclusion

Framing and social norms theories both aid in answering the question, how do non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking about trauma? The non-institutional awareness-raising material crafted by *Very Young Girls*, Houston's Strategic Plan, the MSNBC segment, and the Empower Talks video highlight four key social norms of trafficking victims: viewing the trafficker as family, loss of childhood, body not owned by self, and the acceptance of violence. By communicating these four social norms, this non-institutional awareness-raising material presents real examples of normalized experiences that victims of trafficking live through as a result of complex trauma. By framing through tone and relatability, the rhetors who craft these non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate various audiences by framing their message through two opposite, yet complementary lenses. Framing through tone allows the rhetor to create shock by presenting emotional appeals, which stirs the audiences' own emotions. Framing through tone also allows the rhetor to present a more clinical message that provides the audience with more statistical information about human trafficking, increasing the audience's knowledge of trafficking through a more factual lens.

CHAPTER III

INSTITUTIONAL TEXTS AND TRAUMA

She sat on the end of a bleak bench, shivering off the final cold droplets from the morning's thunderstorm. Metal binds her wrists together, an explicit reminder that prompts her to exclaim:

"I wasn't gonna even go out today, y'know, because of the weather. But I knew I needed to make money."

She tugs at her dress, nonverbal shame accompanied by guilt pours over her face as the storm starts again. I tell her who I am, explaining that I am not associated with law enforcement but rather a friend who wants to help her. She looks at me incredulously, aware of our distinct differences given the situation. I tell her that the holding cell in jail will be cold and offer her some sweats. Her shackled hands open comically, helpless in their bondage. I mimic her rain-drenched shiver, in tune with the recognition that this defenseless girl needs me to literally clothe her. I put one pant leg on at a time, sentimentally recalling how I used to dress my baby niece.

Yet here I sit with a young woman, an eighteen-year-old who knows the streets of Houston better from walking them than I can navigate with my car. She has seen the dark of the night as closely and intimately as she has seen the darkness of humanity.¹

The experience of this woman is one I witnessed first-hand through working with The Landing in Houston, TX. My time with her was an opportunity present solely because of my work with an organization that teaches what it looks like to sit alongside an individual who has suffered extensively as a result of trafficking and trauma. I went through training that teaches how to communicate with someone who suffers from trauma with love, acceptance, and nonjudgment. This chapter analyzes training curricula

1. Kaylen Runyan, "The Landing," *First Colony Neighbors*, October 2016, 12.

from three institutional organizations, Love146, United Against Human Trafficking, and The Landing that train volunteers and staff members to similarly walk alongside victims. In this chapter, I will delve into how each institutional text serves as a way to train individuals working directly with victims of trafficking on trauma that these victims inherently face.

Institutional Overviews

The institutions whose materials I selected to analyze in this chapter each exist for the purpose of serving individuals who have been exploited by the commercial sex industry and/or exploited by human trafficking. My intention in picking these three specific organizations was to create diversity in types of curriculum. Two of the three organizations are based in Houston, Texas. I specifically focus on this city due to the considerable number of trafficking victims located in the city of Houston. By honing in on two Houston organizations, I hope to increase awareness regarding the scope of trafficking and what local organizations are doing to combat it. First I will provide an overview of Love146, then United Against Human Trafficking, and finally The Landing.

Love146

Love146 is an international anti-trafficking organization based in the United States working toward the abolition of child sex trafficking. Love146 began in 2002 when

the co-founders . . . traveled to Southeast Asia on an exploratory trip to determine how they could serve in the fight against child sex trafficking. In one experience, a couple of [their] co-founders were taken undercover with investigators to a brothel where they witness children being sold for sex.²

2. "Why Love146?" Love146, accessed March 25, 2017, <https://love146.org/love-story/>.

The brothel was filled with young girls dressed in scarlet, with numbers pinned to their dresses. The co-founders recalled the girls, ranging in age from presumably eleven to thirteen, sitting and watching cartoons on a TV while predators stared from behind a glass screen, pondering which girl to choose. They noticed one particular girl, unmoved by the cartoons disguising the plaguing reality of men lusting over her childish body, who met their own eyes with a piercing gaze that they observed as fight left inside of her. Her number was 146. In an interview with the *New Haven Register News*, president and CEO of Love146 says the young girl with number 146 “had not had the life stripped of her yet, she had this fight in her eyes, she was staring at us through this glass with a sense of determination.”³

Based in Connecticut, Love146 focuses on serving children in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Asia. When they began as an organization in 2002, they built safe homes in Asia and trained individuals in the area about the signs and symptoms of trafficking and how to provide care. By 2006, Love146 conducted the Certificate Training Program in Aftercare in a number of Asian countries.⁴ In 2008, Love146 expanded to building safe homes for both girls and boys in the Philippines, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Because Love146 has their base in Connecticut, the existence of trafficking in the state is noteworthy, and an important factor in Love146 having their operation as a nonprofit there. In a 2013 op-ed, the “*Stamford Advocate* revealed that Connecticut's Department of Children and Families reported serving 108

3. “Love146 partners with Amistad for New Haven homecoming to raise awareness for human trafficking,” last modified July 23, 2013, <http://www.nhregister.com/article/NH/20130723/NEWS/307239917>.

4. For the purpose of confidentiality, these countries and particular regions remain anonymous on Love146’s website.

child victims of human trafficking over a five-year period.”⁵ The nature of the existence of national trafficking in the hometown of Love146 became even more explicit.

Eventually, Love146 saw prevention education as critical to meeting their own question of “What can we do to actually prevent exploitation from occurring in the first place?”⁶ Their Prevention Education Program focuses on educating children in various settings, both through the school and community, to empower them and make them more aware of the risk of sex trafficking. In addition to direct survivor care and prevention education, Love146 trains professionals such as law enforcement, teachers, and social workers. Anyone can come across a trafficking victim at any given time, so Love146 is committed to equipping individuals in various professions to recognize signs of potential victims. One of the ways Love146 trains professionals is by educating them on the mental health impact of trafficking. The presentation I am analyzing in this chapter covers this topic specifically. Love146 presented it at the 2016 California Annual Conference for the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The presentation, “The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC,”⁷ includes: an overview of human trafficking and exploitation, vulnerability and risk, prevention and identification, red flags, mental health impact and response, practical application for community-based settings, and discussion for the audience. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus specifically on the mental health impact and response portion of the presentation. My analysis of these presentation slides will aid in furthering literature that studies the mental

5. “Love146 CEO to Speak on Child Sex Slavery and Exploitation,” last modified July 09, 2013, http://articles.courant.com/2013-07-09/community/hcrs-77251-west-hartford-20130708_1_human-trafficking-calvary-fellowship-rob-morris.

6. “Our Work,” Love146, <https://love146.org/programs/>.

7. CSEC stands for “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.”

health impacts victims of trafficking suffer from, thus creating a larger conversation direct victim service providers (VSPs) can introduce in trainings.

United Against Human Trafficking (UAHT)

United Against Human Trafficking (UAHT) began in 2005 as a coalition of individuals seeking to eradicate human trafficking in the city of Houston. Composed of nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies (such as the Office of the Mayor), and others dedicated to spreading awareness about human trafficking, UAHT is a driving force in Houston, TX to end this injustice. The mission of UAHT is “to end human trafficking through awareness, education and outreach,” and their vision is the aspiration “for all people to experience freedom and live beyond bondage to others.

[UAHT] envision[s] a world that is intolerant of buyers and sellers of human beings;” as a result, UAHT commits to a 365-day approach to human trafficking.⁸ There is continuous speculation that exploitation heightens during major sporting events, such as the Super Bowl that was held in Houston this year. However, “a research committee organized by a coalition led by United Against Human Trafficking further found no scientific evidence that trafficking increases around Super Bowls” but that sporting events such as this are still an opportunity to get the word out that trafficking exists daily in the city of Houston.⁹ United Against Human Trafficking seeks to educate the masses about the intricacies of human trafficking and provide opportunities for individuals to learn about the daily acts of exploitation that are present in Houston.

8. ”About Us,” UAHT, <http://uaht.org/about-us/>.

9. “Groups Raise Awareness of Human Trafficking in Advance of Super Bowl,” last modified January 4, 2017, <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Groups-raise-awareness-of-human-trafficking-in-10835009.php>.

As a nonprofit dedicated to education surrounding the facts of trafficking, a core component of their operation is education awareness. One program UAHT focuses on is Community Outreach. An essential part of raising awareness about human trafficking, Community Outreach educates the masses of Houston, TX through various events and campaigns. For example, Human Trafficking 101 is a community training tailored to individuals who have possibly not yet been exposed to the stark reality of trafficking. This training covers the fundamentals of trafficking and can be given to any community group. Other parts of Community Outreach include a resource center, human trafficking awareness month every January, an art exhibit, and a media campaign.

An additional UAHT program is their Youth Program, which focuses on youth prevention. Education specialists of UAHT speak at juvenile detention centers, schools, and other areas where vulnerable youth are educated on what constitutes trafficking and how to engage in healthy friendships. Their newest program, a recent addition, is Direct Outreach. The nonprofit will start to engage in direct outreach in Houston, reaching potential victims of trafficking through street outreach in hot spots for prostitution and trafficking.

One of UAHT's main programs is the Front-line Professional Training Program. This includes the training of first responders, education professionals, health professionals, hospitality professionals, law enforcement, and social services. It is essential that front-line professionals from a variety of industries who are likely to come across victims of trafficking, are educated on the signs and symptoms of a trafficking victim, as well as steps of action to take if the professional does identify a victim. Each

set of professionals has a unique ability to sharpen their awareness within their specific workplace.

Hospitality professionals, for example, are essential because traffickers often bring victims in and out of hotels or motels to meet clients. Trained hospitality professionals are essential to identifying these individuals who are being exploited. If the owner of a hotel recognizes frequent traffic of visitors to one individual's hotel room, or notices an individual checking in but the man with him or her has all of his or her belongings and documentation, the owner would have the proper training to know he or she needs to call the trafficking hotline and report the situation. Trained hospitality professionals would be able to notice and recognize the signs of trafficking so that they can act and get immediate help for the victim if a trafficking situation is occurring.

Education professionals interact with girls and boys on a daily basis and have the potential to spot trafficking in schools. Because minor recruitment of victims can occur within a school setting (where it is possible that students even recruit other students), it is essential for these professionals to recognize any possible signs of a child who is being victimized. Jenna Cooper, an education outreach specialist for UAHT, says "the trafficker can be anyone, including the case of a high school cheerleader who exploited students with special needs and another teenager who exploited students during his lunch hour."¹⁰

Within UAHT's Front-line Professional Training, they focus on trauma-informed care and victim identification. The presentation used by United Against Human Trafficking in these trainings consists of slides created by YMCA International in

10. "Specialist Educates NSRW About Modern-day Slavery," last modified March 2, 2016, <http://www.yourconroenews.com/news/article/Specialist-educates-NSRW-about-modern-day-slavery-9476444.php>.

Houston, TX. Within this training, an emphasis exists on the Stages of Change as well as utilization of a Trafficking Victims Identification Tool created by the Vera Institute. My analysis of this training presentation will identify key components of trauma and its usefulness in frontline professionals' ability to identify victims.

The Landing

Opening its doors in 2016, The Landing is the first drop-in assessment center in Houston, Texas for victims of human trafficking and individuals in the commercial sex industry. A drop-in assessment center is a short-term care facility where individuals who are in the commercial sex industry and potential victims of human trafficking can come and go on their own time. Most care facilities for victims of trafficking in Houston are long-term residencies that have a minimum stay. Drop-in assessment centers exist to provide immediate resources based on individual needs. The mission of The Landing is “to serve survivors of human trafficking and those involved in the commercial sex industry with a trauma-informed approach fueled by the love of Christ,” and their vision is “to give those in the commercial sex industry and survivors of human trafficking a stabilizing base of support and dignity with the goal of engaging their hope and desire for a future of freedom.”¹¹

The Landing is located on Bissonnet, Street, a central point for human trafficking and prostitution in Houston known as the “track.” Their office is strategically located inside a large building complex on the sixth floor to provide maximum safety, security, and anonymity for any individual seeking services. Rather than serving as a long-term facility for victims of trafficking, The Landing exists as a place of rest for individuals, no

11. “Who We Are,” The Landing, <http://www.thelanding.org/who-we-are/>.

matter where they are in their healing journey. The nonprofit is a place of empowerment and refuge, a safe haven to escape the streets.

The Landing has a variety of resources available to anyone seeking specific services, including counseling, mentorship, job search support, GED preparation, lockers for safe storage of personal belongings, a supply of free hygiene products, computer access, a resting room, referral line, transportation support, food and clothing, and enrichment workshops. Among these services, staff and volunteers at The Landing are trained to perform intake assessments with each client to increase victim identification and understand how to best serve each individual. The Landing creates plans of action for each client based on his or her particular needs – from finding a job to finishing school. Because each individual is different, with different needs, the diversity of available resources at The Landing provides the nonprofit with various ways to serve individuals who come from all walks of life, ranging from teenagers to late adults, both men and women, and individuals in the LGBTQ community. In addition to available resources at The Landing, the nonprofit also engages in direct street outreach and operations with the Houston Police Department, SEAL Security, and the FBI. In 2016, The Landing reached over 130 potential victims in the community and was a part of over ten law enforcement operations with the Houston Police Department VICE Division to speak to potential victims about resources offered. Director and Co-Founder of The Landing, Natasha Paradeshi says they have “seen what can be done and we want to be able to do that in Houston.”¹²

12. “Human Trafficking Victims Center Built Along Prostitution ‘Track,’” last modified January 21, 2016, <http://www.fox26houston.com/news/77998241-story>.

I was fortunate enough to intern with The Landing in the summer of 2016 and take part in each of these facets of their operation. One of the largest tasks I faced was interacting with dozens of individuals, some of who were involved in the commercial sex industry, and others who were potential human trafficking victims, but all of these individuals faced some form of trauma in their lifetimes. The Landing has field guides for all volunteers and staff members wishing to work with the nonprofit. The curriculum I will analyze from The Landing is a field guide for service providers at the nonprofit, which functions as a training manual specific to intake specialists who are case managers for individuals in the commercial sex industry and victims of trafficking. This manual identifies important points to understand when conducting interviews with survivors who have experienced trauma, as well as how to approach clients with sensitivity due to the lasting impacts of prior trauma. My analysis of this curriculum aids in educating direct victims' service providers who interact with human trafficking victims one-on-one.

Analysis

This analysis looks at the training curricula of the following institutions: The Landing, Love146, and United Against Human Trafficking. I will look at The Landing's Intake Specialist Field Guide, Love146's presentation titled "The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking and CSEC," and the presentation UAHT utilizes for trainings with information from the YMCA titled "Trauma-Informed Care." By analyzing each of these organizational training curricula through social norms and standpoint theory, I will answer the question, how do institutional texts and training curricula prepare individuals to interact with victims of trauma?

Social Norms

Within nonprofits that work directly with victims of human trafficking, direct service providers, as all people, hold particular norms about the individuals they serve. These norms may vary from organization to organization, but there are common norms that victims of trafficking experience which influence how organizations train employees and volunteers who work with the victims. I will analyze six specific social norms that are integrated in the lives of sex trafficking victims and how institutions that work directly with victims communicate these norms to the individuals they train. These six norms are: distrust, deprivation of basic needs and lack of freedom, prostitution as normalized, blaming the victim, a lack of privacy/security, and silence. Individuals working directly with trafficking victims to understand the norms of victims and ultimately provide better service. Therefore, I will analyze how The Landing, UAHT, and Love146 utilize their training curricula to prepare VSPs to work with trafficking victims by understanding each of these six norms victims of trafficking hold.

Distrust.

The initial pages of The Landing's intake specialist field guide explain the purpose of the manual. From the get-go, The Landing notes

for best outcomes, questions may have to be asked at a time when the potential victim trusts the intake specialist and is ready to respond. Also, responses that initially appear to indicate a lack of victimization may actually be demonstrating forgetfulness or reasonable fear, which is a potential symptom of trauma. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the non-verbal signals (ex. avoiding eye contact, etc.) that the client may be showing that could be indicators of trafficking.¹³

13. The Landing, "Intake Specialist: Field Guide" (training manual, The Landing, Houston, TX, 2016).

In the preface to their field guide, *The Landing* argues that trafficking victims often share a common social norm -- distrust. A victim who has recently escaped or left the sex industry and/or his or her pimp, is likely to feel and express skepticism when meeting new people, especially when others have taken advantage of the victim's trust so many times before. It is normal for individuals who have been victimized and exploited to feel confusion. Building trust and rapport is key for victim service providers (VSPs) if they hope to best serve the individuals they are given the chance to help. VSPs know that victims who are unaware of their exploitation may not self-identify as victims. The norm for the victim is the life he or she is living, rather than the life that could be lived through freedom and healing from the trauma he or she has experienced. *The Landing's* field guide additionally specifies ways to develop trust and to demonstrate respect for the victim during the interview process itself, after the initial introductions have been made and the individual is as comfortable as possible. This is essential for individuals being trained to work with trafficking victims. VSPs should be confident that clients are comfortable with their service provider before being asked information that might trigger the client or make him/her feel fearful. While it is normal that questions during the interview will make the client experience existing emotions, the VSP should focus on ways to create a powerful environment that will allow the client to wade through his or her emotions to reframe existing norms. *The Landing* notes that during the interview, the VSP should "be respectful of the victim's cultural background, including social etiquette, religious observances, societal status, ethnic community ties, customs of clothing, and

attitudes toward prostitution. These may make topics of sex and mental health uncomfortable for some clients to discuss.”¹⁴

UAHT also explains in their training presentation slides that part of the emphasis on building trust requires respect for diversity “(gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.).”¹⁵ By respecting the norms the victim holds toward these topics as well as the victim’s diversity, the VSP is able to maintain a disposition of understanding and non-judgment. This disposition is important when training individuals to work with victims suffering from trauma because creating a space of trust is critical. UAHT echoes the sentiment that The Landing offers regarding the norm of distrust. UAHT explains that a key principle of trauma-informed care is the importance of safety, noting that “because trauma survivors are often sensitized to potential danger, work toward building physical and emotional safety for clients and service providers” is critical.¹⁶

Part of ensuring trust between a victim and a VSP occurs through creating emotional safety so victims do not feel as if the individuals working to help are a threat. Love146 explains in their presentation slides that emotional safety is compromised in trafficking victims, so the victim’s self-presentation usually represents “distrust [and] fear of strangers.”¹⁷ By training VSPs and volunteers to actively work toward trust with trafficking victims, they can understand and potentially reframe a victim’s common norm

14. Ibid.

15. YMCA International Services, “Trauma-Informed Care” (presented by United Against Human Trafficking in their trauma trainings, Houston, TX, 2016).

16. Ibid.

17. Love146, “The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC.” Presentation at the National Association of Social Workers California Chapter Annual Conference, Burbank, CA, 2016.

of distrust. A portion of a victim's distrust can come from the next norm, where a victim's deprivation of basic needs and lack of freedom becomes normalized.

Deprivation of basic needs/lack of freedom.

Another norm victims commonly experience is deprivation of basic needs and lack of freedom. The Landing uses their field guide to present tips for conducting intake interviews with the victim, noting ways the VSP can make the victim feel the most safe and comfortable. The first intake assessment with a victim is a significant step for the individual's healing process, so

the setting in which an interview takes place is just as important as the questions being asked. Many of these clients¹⁸ have often been held through threats of harm and fear. It is essential to establish a safe space to help clients feel more comfortable and protected.¹⁹

Knowing that the victim is often the product of a violent environment, it is essential that VSPs acknowledge the client's lived experiences that result in harm and fear to reframe the client's social norm for a healthy, comfortable, and safe environment. The Landing captures specific ways to do make clients feel safe upon entering the space where the intake will take place (in this case, the nonprofit's office). The Landing suggests actions like

before conducting the interview, ask how you might best fulfill their basic needs, such as providing food and something to drink" and to "be mindful of the client's needs for breaks (including restroom and time to regain their composure if needed).²⁰

These two specific actions are crucial to acknowledging social norms evident in the lives of every victim of sexual exploitation, deprivation of basic needs and lack of total

18. Using client and victim interchangeably. For The Landing, victims are clients.

19. The Landing, "Intake Specialist: Field Guide."

20. Ibid.

freedom. By offering the client snacks or something to drink, VSPs can immediately create rapport by meeting basic needs through providing something as simple as a Coke or peanut butter crackers. In my experience doing intake at The Landing, this preliminary action was typically met with positive reaction. Clients often took me up on the offer, and at times even asked for another snack and drink for the road. The minimal gesture of providing food and drink to a victim of trafficking speaks to the level of deprivation he or she has been accustomed to. Their norm of what they can eat and drink rests in the decision of what their pimp wants them to eat or drink, and if they even get to.

UAHT explains that there are three major psychological needs to consider when responding to survivors: “to feel safe, to express emotions, and to know ‘what comes next?,’” and that the best thing for VSPs to do is to meet basic needs of the victims.²¹ Like the women mentioned in the introductory narrative, I met women who had diets consisting of Hot Cheetos and Red Bull alone because their pimps wanted them skinny and able to work all hours of the day or night. For VSP’s, it is necessary to provide opportunities for freedom, even by asking something as simple as, “are you thirsty? Can I offer you something to drink?” These training curricula argue that meeting basic needs is one of the first steps in equipping a volunteer or VSP to work with a victim of trafficking. Specifically, Love146 notes that one sign that an individual might be a trafficking victims is that he or she is “not in control of their own money or documents,” so when victims escape trafficking and come to a VSP, that is possibly one of the first experiences the victim has had with access to his or her own belongings.²²

21. YMCA International Services, “Trauma-Informed Care.”

22. Love146, “The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC.”

Additionally, offering clients bathroom breaks during the interview process allows them to feel further freedom and empowerment, essentially the ability to control their actions and needs. VSPs should remain focused on this norm throughout the entire intake process, remembering that their goal is to serve the victim as best as they can, and to give him or her as much empowerment and freedom through the interview process as possible to break his or her belief that he or she is not free. Love¹⁴⁶ echoes this by explaining that it is essential for VSPs to “empower them to believe that they can change their behavior and meet their needs in a safe manner.”²³ VSPs can effectively train individuals to work with victims of trafficking and trauma through education on how to meet basic needs and provide opportunities for empowerment and freedom. When basic needs have not been met and freedom is not present for victims, this can be directly related to the next norm where the victim’s idea of prostitution becomes normalized when they are used to not having freedom over their own body.

Prostitution is normal.

An additional norm for victims of human trafficking and individuals in the commercial sex industry is their view of prostitution as normalized. Victims may not yet self-identify as victims or see themselves as being forced to sell their bodies. The Landing expresses that “victims of human trafficking and those in the commercial sex industry may not think of forced prostitution or rape as work. Intake specialists should pay attention to the word choice used by potential victims, especially when associated with shame, humiliation, and violence.”²⁴ By paying attention to victims’ communicative

23. Ibid.

24. The Landing, “Intake Specialist: Field Guide.”

choices, VSPs might clearly identify a client as a victim of trafficking. But because of the propensity for victims to not think of forced prostitution or rape as work, VSPs should carefully consider this norm and take care to not force their own norm of the victim's behavior as "wrong" onto the individual they are trying to help. A victim must come to accept victimization on his or her own. If prostitution is a normalized experience for the victim, the VSP's understanding of this norm will prevent him or her from assuming the victim feels negatively toward prostitution.

Love¹⁴⁶ encourages VSPs to "use language from "the life" and words that demonstrate [the VSP's] knowledge and comfort with the topic of sex trafficking and exploitation."²⁵ By utilizing slang terms familiar to the victim as intricately related to language spoken in "the life," the VSP can help the victim feel understood rather than alienated. Training VSPs and volunteers through training curricula to disassociate the VSP or trainee's pre-existing thoughts about whether prostitution is or is not normal will help victims feel they are in a place of safety, understanding, and non-judgment rather than like outsiders.

UAHT explains in their training guide that, when responding to victims who are currently being trafficked and have not yet escaped, those "who are 'rescued' without seeking help may need time to shift mindset."²⁶ When a victim is first picked up by law enforcement without seeking help from a VSP, it is likely that the victim has yet to come to a place of self-identifying as a victim. In this instance, the victim may still view his or her prior "work" as normalized. UAHT notes that, in this instance, it is important for

25. Love¹⁴⁶, "The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC."

26. YMCA International Services, "Trauma-Informed Care."

VSPs to “identify [the victim’s] barriers to leaving” and “if barriers are primarily psychological, [VSPs should] use motivational interviewing strategies to help person shift into readiness for action.”²⁷ By asking questions such as “What makes you stay?” “Do you get to keep your money?” or “Do you have the option to leave?” motivational interviewing questions like these will prompt the victim to reconsider his or her view of prostitution as normalized. Training curricula like those created by The Landing, UAHT, and Love146 train individuals to work with victims who have experienced trauma by expressing non-judgment when discussing prostitution, especially if the victim has not moved from a place of identifying as a victim of trafficking. Lack of self-identification and the view of normalized prostitution can typically coincide with the next norm, where the victim feels as if he or she is to blame for abuse.

Victim is to blame.

Another important suggestion The Landing makes that aids in breaking the victim’s existing social norms is for VSPs to “not imply that a victim was responsible for their own abuse and exploitation. Reassure them that as victims of a crime, they are not to blame, and [that] there have been others in their situation.”²⁸ This reassurance gives the opportunity for victims to start seeing themselves as victims, and ultimately survivors, of a crime rather than as responsible for their own abuse in a trafficking scenario. Love146 explains that one of the key signs of trauma bonding is “self-blame for situation and abuse.”²⁹ When a victim has bonded with their pimp, it is likely that the pimp has created the narrative for the victim that he or she is the cause behind any abuse. When a victim of

27. YMCA International Services, “Trauma-Informed Care.”

28. The Landing, “Intake Specialist: Field Guide.”

29. Love146, “The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC.”

trafficking has become by default a victim of manipulation and deception, it is not uncommon that his or her relationship with his or her pimp pushes the victim into a place of blame for the abuse the victim receives.

UAHT explains that when survivors are in a place of rescue or escape and are in a position to meet with a VSP, the victim's "shame, self-blame, and fear can interfere with disclosure."³⁰ This is especially important to note when considering how training curricula prepares VSPs and volunteers to work with individuals who suffer from trauma. When attempting to do an intake assessment with a victim of trafficking, it is necessary for a training curriculum to articulate the correlation between blame and disclosure. When a victim of trafficking is still taking the responsibility his or her own victimization, it decreases the likelihood that the victim will disclose an exorbitant amount of information about his or her trafficker. In this instance, UAHT explains that VSPs should "realize that defending potential trafficker is not inconsistent with trafficking."³¹ So when a victim of trafficking is suffering from trauma and is blaming him or herself for the situation he or she is in, VSPs should not discount the possibility of the case being trafficking. Victims take on the norm that they are to blame, much like many victims of different kinds of abuse. When VSPs gives victims the space to process the notion that they are not at fault, they offer a new norm to the victim that says he or she is a survivor. These training curricula equip both VSPs and volunteers to appropriately respond to an individual suffering from trauma who suffers from self-blame. Self-blame can relate to

30. YMCA International Services, "Trauma-Informed Care."

31. Ibid.

the next norm, lack of privacy and security, when a victim who views their lack of privacy as a result of the situation that he or she believes to have placed themselves in.

Lack of privacy and security.

Another way for VSPs at organizations to understand the norms accepted by victims is by providing reassurance of the victim's confidentiality. The Landing explains that when a VSP opens a dialogue with victims,

often their lives are at stake when they try to get out or escape their current situation. As such, intake specialists should remember to discuss with the client exactly how and when confidentiality will be maintained, and what limitations on confidentiality there may be, depending on the situation.³²

The promise of confidentiality breaches a pre-existing norm of victims who have not before had the security or privacy all individuals should be granted. Through the VSP's assurance that the information the victim provides during intake will be kept confidential, the staff member or volunteer breaches the norm a trafficking victim has that his or her pimp will come after him or her (via abuse or death threats) when he or she tries to escape. UAHT discusses in their presentation slides that "safety issues [should be] an ongoing conversation" between VSPs and victims of trafficking who are clients, noting that "privacy, confidentiality, and mutual respect" should be a part of this continuous conversation about safety for the client.³³ These training curricula for individuals working with victims of trafficking include information for long-term communication with survivors that promotes privacy and security post-trafficking. It is necessary for VSPs and volunteers to identify potential triggers as a response to trauma, meaning that after the victim has been rescued, he or she will still face residual effects. UAHT offers

32. The Landing, "Intake Specialist: Field Guide."

33. YMCA International Services, "Trauma-Informed Care."

suggestions for VSPs to aid victims in long-term solutions for privacy and security such as “increase awareness of triggers/build regulatory skills, assist in future planning, development of role, identity, sense of purpose, problem-solving, assistance with confronting barriers, and develop a longer-term support network.”³⁴ By creating a long-term action plan for survivors of trafficking who experience residual trauma through triggers, VSPs can plan ahead for these individuals’ continual privacy and security. The last norm these three training curricula account for, silence, is a significant effect of trauma and important to address so VSPs and volunteers working with trafficking victims can potentially break the silence victims have become accustomed to.

Silence.

Since trauma is such a monumental component of trafficking, it is necessary to communicate with trafficking victims in a way that does not further traumatize them, and in a way that portrays understanding. It is essential for trained VSPs and volunteers to learn how to empower individuals who have been previously silenced by trauma. The Landing’s field guide for intake specialists has a section dedicated to understanding the effects of trauma and victimization and how to respond to those effects through effective communication. One of their proposals is to

be understanding when clients do not wish to repeat the details of any situation. Keep in mind that recounting stories many times for various people may cause victims to re-experience trauma. Try to minimize the potential for re-traumatization when possible.³⁵

The norm for victims until the point of the intake interview has likely been to remain silent to avoid further abuse by their captor.

34. Ibid.

35. The Landing, “Intake Specialist: Field Guide.”

Having the ability to speak their experience out loud might be the first time they have broken this norm. UAHT explains that when trafficking victims have not yet been rescued or escaped, there are often “psychological factors [that] are often ‘holding’ someone in the situation.”³⁶ The continuous silence victims experience when trafficked can be a reason that they have not yet been removed from the situation; they are afraid of speaking out against their abuse. UAHT explains in their training curriculum that early on in their relationship with victims, VSPs can offer resources and build trust. When trust has been established, it is likelier that the victim will reach out and break his or her previously perpetual silence and be more open to receiving help. Love146 explains in their training that symptoms of PTSD associated with trafficking can include “feeling detached/withdrawn” and “avoiding thoughts or feelings associated with the traumatic events.”³⁷ The norm of silence a trafficking victim experiences does not always refer to a lack of speaking out loud. A victim can experience psychological silence as well by repressing his or her thoughts about their traumatic experiences. By keeping this norm in mind, VSPs can understand that a victim’s choice to remain silent has been indicative of how little freedom he or she has had.

Social norms are always present. With trafficking victims in particular, the six norms of distrust, deprivation of basic needs and lack of freedom, the normalization of prostitution, blaming the victim, a lack of privacy/security, and silence, are common experiences. By acknowledging each of these six norms and using training curricula as a platform to educate VSPs and volunteers who work with victims, individuals will be

36. YMCA International Services, “Trauma-Informed Care.”

37. Love146, “The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC.”

better equipped to more effectively reach trafficking victims who have experienced trauma. When VSPs and volunteers attend trainings that educate about the norms held by trafficking victims, the VSPs and volunteers will be better prepared to work with victims based on pre-existing norms to reframe any norms hindering the victim's progress in healing and recovery. Social norms are integrated into the lives of every individual; similarly, the standpoint of individuals are equally noteworthy to analyze in order to better serve trafficking victims suffering from trauma. By taking into account the social norms victims of trafficking hold, VSPs and volunteers working directly with victims are able to better recognize and take on various standpoints held by victims once victims' normalized experiences are understood.

Standpoint Theory

It is critical that all employees and volunteers of organizations who work with human trafficking victims be able to take the standpoint of a victim who has been exploited by human trafficking. By taking this standpoint, institutional providers have the ability to turn their knowledge into action. Through their training curricula, The Landing, UAHT, and Love146 all equip individuals to work with trafficking victims by taking two critical standpoints: the standpoint of a trafficking victim who has experienced trauma and the standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify as a victim of trafficking.

Standpoint of a victim with trauma.

The first standpoint that the three organizations' training curricula teach their VSPs to understand is the standpoint of a trafficking victim who has experienced trauma. The Landing's intake specialist field guide specifies the importance of understanding the effects of trauma. The Landing notes that

[their] clients have often endured profound physical and psychological injuries that may impede [their] efforts to interview them and develop strong relationships. Minimization, denial, and memory loss, which are symptoms of psychological trauma, can make it difficult to elicit consistent information.³⁸

By emphasizing and acknowledging the trauma many of The Landing's clients experience, they communicate the importance of understanding that the trauma trafficking victims suffer directly impacts the way they interact and form relationships. The Landing encourages VSPs and volunteers going through training and working with victims of trafficking to

be aware that the clients may experience lasting effects of psychological and physical abuse, traumatic experiences, chronic substance abuse, or violent physical and psychological assaults. Intake specialists can learn to recognize common signs of trauma and may be the first person to whom victims have reported trauma or mental distress.³⁹

By becoming aware of and taking on the perspective, or standpoint, of an individual who has experienced violent abuse and subsequent trauma, VSPs and volunteers are able to more adequately communicate with victims. Fixed knowledge, or knowledge based on specific and limited experiences, limits trafficking victims from moving beyond communicating from a place of mental distress because the trauma they have experienced has been engrained into their cognitive processing. VSPs and volunteers, therefore, must be educated on and acknowledge the effects of abuse and trauma to reach past a victim's mental distress.

Taking the standpoint of a trafficking victim who has experienced trauma can be key to helping the individual break any barriers preventing him or her from healing.

38. The Landing, "Intake Specialist: Field Guide."

39. Ibid.

UAHT expresses the importance of trauma-informed care in their training, explaining that

trauma-informed refers to all of the ways in which a service system is influenced by having an understanding of trauma, and the ways in which it is modified to be responsive to the impact of traumatic stress. A program that is “trauma-informed” operates within a model or framework that incorporates an understanding of the ways in which trauma impacts an individual’s socio-emotional health. This framework should, theoretically, decrease the risk of re-traumatization, as well as contribute more generally to recovery from traumatic stress.⁴⁰

This trauma-informed lens allows organizations working with victims of trafficking and their service providers to have a framework for the victim’s standpoint they are taking.

UAHT explains four key principles of trauma awareness in their training curriculum, effectively communicating that VSPs and volunteers will learn how to adopt a trauma lens to better serve those who suffer from trauma. UAHT defines trauma awareness as the “incorporat[ion of] awareness of trauma (philosophical shift on them meaning and symptoms of behaviors),” which includes “staff training, consultation, and supervision [by] adopt[ing] a trauma lens [and] assum[ing] that every person has been impacted by trauma.”⁴¹ For VSPs to adopt the assumption that every person they serve has been impacted and affected by trauma, sets the provider up to immediately take on the standpoint of an victim suffering from trauma and take on the oppression and injustice the victim has experienced. This is noteworthy, especially if VSPs come across victims who are not yet self-identifying as victims. The VSP is then set up to treat a client as someone who has potentially been trafficked through the VSP’s education on symptoms of trauma. Additionally, UAHT notes that “agency practices [should] reflect trauma

40. YMCA International Services, “Trauma-Informed Care.”

41. Ibid.

awareness [through] screening for trauma history [and] access to trauma-specific services” and that institutional organizations working with trafficking victims should acknowledge “potential impact on staff [via] vicarious trauma.”⁴² VSPs should be aware, but not weary, of the potential for vicarious trauma to occur when working with victims who have suffered extensive abuse and trauma themselves. A risk that exists when taking the standpoint of an individual, especially in this case, is that the VSP or volunteer takes on the trauma as his or her own. Training curricula, like UAHT’s, are necessary for calling out the possibility of vicarious trauma and how to provide self-care amidst caring for victims.

The Landing’s field guide discusses behavioral and developmental effects of trauma, aiding in the education of VSPs and volunteers who work with trafficking victims to further understand the impact of trauma. The Landing writes that trauma “can alter biological stress systems and adversely effect brain development, cognitive and academic skills, and language acquisition, [and] changes in the levels of stress hormones [are] similar to those seen in combat veterans.”⁴³ By understanding the impact of trauma through the lens of brain development and cognitive and academic skills, VSPs will be able to adjust the way they communicate with victims who have experienced trauma in case there are delays in these specific areas. Additionally, The Landing notes that “traumatized individuals feel that the world is uncertain and unpredictable” and that “their relationships can be characterized by problems with boundaries, distrusts, and suspiciousness [so] as a result, traumatized individuals can become socially isolated and

42. The Landing, “Intake Specialist: Field Guide.”

43. Ibid.

have difficulty relating to and empathizing with others.”⁴⁴ Because standpoint theory is situated in the deconstruction of oppression, when they are taking the standpoint of an individual who has problems with boundaries and distrust as a result of oppression and dominating abuse, VSPs are in a unique position to deconstruct the social isolation and issues with relationships that victims of trafficking face.

Love146 similarly uses their training curricula to address how to take the standpoint of a victim suffering from trauma and put the standpoint into action. There is an immediate need to put this standpoint of a victim suffering from trauma into action due to the sensitive nature of trauma. In their training presentation, Love146 explains that VSPs need to “understand that certain survivor behaviors are a response to trauma” and that a trauma informed approach “begins with understanding the physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma on the individual through victim-centered practices.”⁴⁵ These practices incorporate “realizing the prevalence of trauma, recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, and responding by putting this knowledge into practice.”⁴⁶ Love146 uses their training curriculum as a way to portray the need for VSPs and volunteers working with victims to understand the impact of trauma on an individual so that the provider can appropriately respond to the victim. Love146 also utilizes four trauma informed core principles in their training curriculum, which demonstrate that “trauma is a defining life event; [that] victims complaints, behaviors, and symptoms are coping mechanisms; [that] the primary goals of service are empowerment and recovery; and [that] the service relationship is

44. Ibid.

45. Love146, “The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC.”

46. Ibid.

collaborative.”⁴⁷ These principles train individuals how to view the world from the perspective of an individual who has experienced trauma, what the foundation of the victim’s needs are, and how the trauma the victim has experienced has shaped who he or she is. By understanding these five core principles, VSPs and volunteers working with victims of trafficking are more adequately equipped to understand where the victim is coming from and how he or she might discover the capability of going moving forward.

Standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify.

Taking the standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify as a victim of trafficking requires VSPs and volunteers working with trafficking victims to engage in active listening to watch out for signs of trafficking. By taking this particular standpoint, institutional providers have the opportunity to put a trained staff member’s awareness of possible trafficking scenarios into action. In The Landing’s field guide, the organization explains that victims of trafficking “experience a feeling of detachment or depersonalization, as if they are ‘observing’ something happening to them that is unreal.”⁴⁸ The Landing notes that withdrawal is often a sign of trafficking, so even if the individual appears detached from the situation, there are still symptoms of trafficking at hand. Observing individuals who withdraw, detach, and depersonalize allows VSPs and volunteers to use their training to identify common signs of trafficking. By taking the standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify as a victim, providers are able to see through the lens of an individual that is not yet aware of his or her need for help. It is in these stages that institutional providers most need to create an environment of trust.

47. Ibid.

48. The Landing, “Intake Specialist: Field Guide.”

In The Landing's general guidelines of "do" and "do-not" when working with victims, the "do" list reads "build trust, love unconditionally, exercise patience, show humility, speak truth and be positive, pray for women you've talked with, and be safe and exercise discernment."⁴⁹ A portion of the "do-not" list encourages providers to not "use 'victim' talk. Initially the client will not consider herself a victim."⁵⁰ By not using victim talk, providers are able to deconstruct the mindset of victimization, which breaks down the injustice the trafficking victim has continually experienced. This perspective creates a shift through which providers are able to empower individuals who have been exploited to reach understanding on their own time. Training curricula that educates VSPs and volunteers to be sensitive to the possibility that the victim does not self-identify, like The Landing does, teaches providers to aid in the repositioning of an individual who has only been taught that prostitution is his or her reality.

When victims of human trafficking do not self-identify as victims, they are likely in the first stage of the Cycles of Change, pre-contemplation, where the victim has not yet made the decision to leave his or her trafficker (who the victim may view as his or her boyfriend, father, friend, etc.). UAHT notes that VSPs must be aware of the "boundary violations and abuse of power in trafficking."⁵¹ This portion of UAHT's training curriculum is useful to providers and volunteers receiving training on the power dynamics of trafficking and how these transfer into the mentality of trafficking victims. When providers take the standpoint of a trafficking victim who is a victim of unequally distributed power roles between the him or herself and his or her pimp, the provider has a

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. YMCA International Services, "Trauma-Informed Care."

better view of reality from the victim's perspective. With a more complete view of reality from this standpoint, providers can help victims understand boundaries that have been violated during their trafficking, and, as UAHT suggests, aid victims in viewing a reality other than their partial way of understanding their world.

The partial reality victims are living in when not self-identifying can include feeling too close to their captor to see the abuse. Love¹⁴⁶ notes that common signs of trafficking victims include "denial [and] Stockholm syndrome."⁵² When providers understand the existence of Stockholm syndrome in the lives of trafficking victims, it can better assist them in communicating with victims. Conversation comes from a place of understanding that the victim views his or her trafficker as someone other than an abuser. This makes it more difficult to get the victim to come to a place of self-identification because he or she is unable to see the abuse for what it is. In a narrative that Love¹⁴⁶ presents in their training curriculum, they write of a boy named Kyle who went missing for three days, but

when Kyle returns home his aunt brings him to counseling due to his behaviors of running away and substance abuse. Initially Kyle is very reluctant to talk but during one session he mentions that he must be bisexual because of what a teacher did to him in elementary school.⁵³

This narrative example offers institutional providers with a framework to understand victims who do not self-identify as victims if they have been previously abused. When victims do not self-identify, it may not always be because they do not view their trafficker as an abuser, it could also mean that the victim views the abuse as an error on their part. Offering narratives like this in training curricula as examples of real-life

52. Love¹⁴⁶, "The Mental Health Impact of Human Trafficking & CSEC."

53. Ibid.

scenarios of victims who did not self-identify provides additional preparation for VSPs and providers when seeking to understand a victim in this setting. Within institutional settings, VSPs have the opportunity to address, with sensitivity, the process of trafficking with trafficking victims who have not come to terms with their victimization. Love146 notes that a key task in therapy is “psycho-education on recruitment strategies, grooming process, cycle of violence, and sexual exploitation as an economic commodity.”⁵⁴ In a therapy setting within the organization, VSPs can restructure the victim’s perspective on his or her lived experience by educating the victim on how individuals become entrapped and exploited. By teaching the victim through psycho-education, as Love146 suggests, the victim may start to see patterns of abuse in his or her life that suggest he or she is a victim of sexual exploitation.

Through taking the standpoint of a trafficking victim who has not yet self-identified as a victim of trafficking, VSPs and volunteers will be better equipped to serve this population and empower victims to gradually view reality through a wider lens. The training curricula of The Landing, UAHT, and Love146 prepare individuals to work with victims of trauma by understanding the structural dominance that has occurred in a trafficking victim’s life, and how that inhibits the victim from obtaining an empowering perspective of his or her life. Comprehending the colossal impacts of continuous oppression and abuse that a victim suffers from enables VSPs and volunteers to more sensitively and effectively serve the victims.

54. Ibid.

Conclusion

By analyzing institutional training curricula through social norms and standpoint theories, it is evident that Love146, The Landing, and UAHT approach training through a trauma-informed lens. Looking at social norms that exist within the lives of sex trafficking victims such as distrust, silence, prostitution as normal, lack of security/privacy, victim is to blame, and deprivation of basic needs and lack of freedom, institutions can effectively utilize their training curricula to prepare VSPs to work with trafficking victims through the understanding of these six norms. After they are trained on these specific norms embedded in the lives of trafficking victims, VSPs are better set up to work with victims of trafficking in an effective way. Additionally, by understanding the standpoint of a trafficking victim who has experienced trauma and the standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify as a victim of trafficking, VSPs are able to approach their work with victims in a more empathetic light by taking on these three different standpoints. Through training VSPs how to identify and work alongside victims who hold tight to unhealthy norms and taking the standpoint of a victim's perspective, institutions are effectively training providers how to work with individuals who have experienced severe trauma.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

I was loading up my car to head to an event when a male and female approached me outside my home. I immediately took mental note of their physical appearance, the time they arrived, and the odd nature of walking door-to-door in 90 degree weather.

“Ma’am?” The male with a thick twang in his accent (which told me he was obviously not from Houston) gestured with his hand, palm raised above his head to wave me down. “We are with an organization called Dreams for Success, it helps young adults like me and this lady make money. We are selling magazine subscriptions. Do you read them?” I noted that it was odd to still be selling magazines in 2017.

I told the young man I was not a magazine subscriber, prompting him to respond to my polite decline with, “Well, you can donate a subscription to one of these organizations. Maybe Texas Children’s Hospital? Or the Red Cross?” He pointed to a laminated piece of paper with a list of organizations written in Comic Sans, a typeface I realized was as legitimate as Dreams for Success. I began to ask him and his door-to-door friend how old they were, where they were from, how they got here, and dug more into the organization they were with. He was from Mississippi, she from Tennessee. They found out about Dreams for Success from ads in their hometown newspaper, and the organization subsequently sent them bus passes to travel from their respective towns to Houston, Texas, roughly a 24-hour ride for each adult. They told me that they must earn 2,000 credits to go back home. They had been walking for eight days and were only at 120 credits. I asked them where they stayed while working with Dreams for Success, to which they responded that the company provided room and board. I asked to take a picture of their laminated paper so I could send money to them because I did not have any cash on me. Without any intention of sending money I did a Google search on the organization and its address, which not to my surprise, does not exist. I called the National Human Trafficking Hotline to relay my 10-minute experience with two individuals who I believed to be victims of labor trafficking.

Human trafficking does not solely happen underground. Human trafficking is not limited to brothels, strip clubs, or poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Human trafficking can exist in a normal neighborhood of Houston, Texas. Knowing the signs, knowing what questions to ask, and

knowing who to call can help save the lives of individuals who are potentially being exploited. The information and analysis from this thesis can be tailored to any individual, any community group, any nonprofit, and any governing body.

This thesis analyzed educational information on the nature of human trafficking and the impact complex trauma has on the individuals who have been victims of this specific kind of exploitation. This information is substantial as it provides an intricate analysis of why it is important to understand how trauma affects the way individuals communicate with and learn about victims of human trafficking. Understanding the social norms of trafficking victims, how to frame messages about trafficking, as well as the experiences lived by victims of trafficking, are all essential to institutional and non-institutional organizations' goal of creating a heightened and realistic sense of awareness for varying audiences. I used social norms, framing, and standpoint theory to analyze institutional and non-institutional organizations' training curricula and awareness-raising materials and answer the questions: How do non-institutional awareness-raising materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking on trauma? And how do institutional texts and training curricula prepare individuals to interact with victims of trauma?

Non-Institutional Takeaways

In Chapter II, "Non-Institutional Texts and Trauma," I analyzed the documentary *Very Young Girls*, the City of Houston's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan, the "Trauma Responses in Trafficking Victims" Empower Talk, and the MSNBC segment "Inside the Mindset of Trafficking Victims." In this chapter I used framing and social norms theory to answer my first question: How do non-institutional awareness-raising

materials educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of trafficking on trauma? I answer this first through framing.

These non-institutional organizations educate the general public about trafficking and trauma by framing through tone, both explicit and clinical, and framing through relatability. By framing through an explicit tone, non-institutional organizations capture the authentic tragedy victims of trafficking experience through exploitation and the longevity of its affects due to trauma experienced. This gives audiences who do not work directly with victims the ability to see firsthand, through *Very Young Girls* specifically, how complex trauma results from repetitive abuse. By framing through a clinical tone, as in the Strategic Plan, segment, and talk, non-institutional organizations are able to educate audiences about trafficking and trauma through factual information that presents a realistic picture of the scope of human trafficking. Framing through each of these tones provides audiences with two different perspectives, which in turn create a fuller understanding and awareness of the issue. Through the narratives of girls who have been exploited and unsettling statistics that represent the impact of trafficking, non-institutional organizations educate audiences who do not work directly with victims and may not otherwise have access to this information.

Framing through relatability also allows non-profits to educate audiences who may not otherwise have a frame of reference to understand trafficking. By including narratives of girls who are thirteen, or citing the existence of human trafficking in a specific city, non-institutional organizations frame messages about trafficking in a way that feels relatable to the audience. For audiences who are not VSPs or volunteers with anti-trafficking non-profits, it can be easy to question the significance of the issue if it

seems out of reach. But when awareness-raising material frames trafficking in a way that suggests its victims are not dissimilar from an “average person,” the issue all the sudden becomes digestible for the general public. Similarly, it is unlikely that audiences who do not work directly with victims have a complete understanding of victims’ social norms. Through rhetorical texts such as those I analyzed in this chapter, non-institutional organizations can highlight normalized thoughts and behaviors of victims, and even create a distinction between facts and myths that the general public may have a cloudy understanding of.

The four social norms I unpack through these non-institutional organizations’ awareness-raising material are the victim viewing the trafficker as family, loss of childhood, body not owned by self, and acceptance of violence. The first social norm, the victim viewing the trafficker as family, is communicated in both *Very Young Girls* and the MSNBC segment. A common victim experience rhetors communicate in both of these texts is that girls, especially, who are exploited become attached to their pimp as a father figure or boyfriend. In *Very Young Girls* we see the pimp talking about his “stable,” a term synonymous with “family” that includes the pimps and girls being pimped out. These awareness-raising materials educate the general public about this norm through highlighting the abuse many victims of trafficking suffer in their homes growing up, so that audiences watching the documentary have a frame of reference for understanding the context surrounding a victim’s decision to leave his or her biological family and be exploited by a pimp. The second norm, loss of childhood, echoes through each of the texts. Non-institutional organizations educate individuals about this norm through quantifying how many minors are affected by human trafficking, as well as

through narratives of girls who were all exploited under the age of sixteen. Fully understanding the young age at which many girls are prostituted convinces the audience that there is a more immediate need to act and protect such a vulnerable population. The third norm, body not owned by self, is communicated through the awareness-raising materials as constant in the way victims perceive their own freedom. This norm is important for non-institutional organizations to discuss because societal misconceptions about women who prostitute and women who are being prostituted are common. Non-institutional organizations educate the general public on this norm in which a victim's body becomes the supply to an overwhelming demand. The last norm I look at in this chapter is the acceptance of violence, which is seen in *Very Young Girls*, the Empower talk, and the Strategic Plan. This norm is essential to understand because is a critical component for understanding how complex trauma affects an action that is taught from childhood as wrong. When an individual is exposed to violence over and over, it makes the individual less likely to self-identify as a victim of trafficking if he or she views the violence as normal and not as abuse. Non-institutional organizations that depict this norm in their awareness-raising material educate individuals who might not otherwise have identified this characteristic in a possible trafficking victim. By framing through tone and relatability and depicting social norms that are omnipresent in the lives of trafficking victims, non-institutional organizations are able to educate audiences who do not work directly with victims on trauma.

Institutional Takeaways

Chapter III looked at the training curricula of three institutions: Love146, United Against Human Trafficking, and The Landing. I used social norms and standpoint theory

to discover how institutions equip individuals who work directly with victims of human trafficking through both direct services and volunteer work. These two theories were pertinent to answer the question: How do institutional texts and training curricula prepare individuals to work directly with victims of human trafficking? To answer this question I first look at social norms.

My analysis illustrated that, within the training curriculum that each of the three institutional organizations employs to train volunteers and VSPs, six social norms are present: distrust, deprivation of basic needs and lack of freedom, prostitution as normalized, blaming the victim, a lack of privacy/security, and silence. By educating VSPs and volunteers who access the nonprofits' training curricula on the norm of distrust, these institutions help individuals who work directly with victims learn how to create an environment of trust. Love146, UAHT, and The Landing collectively address the need for anti-trafficking organizations to create a space of emotional and physical safety for the victim to address underlying and inherent distrust. These organizations tackle the second norm I found in analysis, deprivation of basic needs and lack of freedom, in their training curricula through explaining how a victim of human trafficking is often deprived of his or her basic needs, which is inexplicably tied to a lack of freedom. The institutional texts prepare individuals to work directly with victims by encouraging VSPs and volunteers to meet the victims' basic needs immediately and consistently, thus empowering the victim to make decisions as simple as what he or she wants as a snack during the intake process. The third norm, prostitution as normalized, is evident throughout the three training curricula as well. The institutions prepare individuals to work with victims through educating on this norm, which is important for

any VSP to be aware of if he or she hopes to meet victims exactly where they are. If victims view prostitution as normal, the institutions must educate individuals working with these victims to create a safety net that explores the victim's mindset and allows the victim to not feel judged by the VSP or volunteer. Institutional texts and training curricula additionally prepare individuals in this setting to work with victims by exploring the fourth norm, where the victim believes that he or she is to blame for abuse. The curricula educates individuals that where this norm exists, it is also likely that the victim has not yet self-identified as a victim of trafficking. It is necessary for the VSP or volunteer working with a victim who believes he or she is at-fault for any violence and abuse to understand that trauma often absorbs proper responses to violence, and that repetitive abuse that is partnered with manipulation and coercion often results in the victim not viewing the trafficker as the abuser. The fifth norm, lack of privacy and security, is also an important component in the institutions' texts and training curricula. When victims have not had privacy or any sense of security in the past, the organizations educate through their curricula that VSPs and volunteers can affirm victim confidentiality to create privacy as well as a plan of action that seeks to create security. The final norm analyzed in Chapter III, silence, is shown throughout the institutions' texts and training curricula as a prominent experience of human trafficking victims. Because victims have been continuously silenced in their exploitation, the organizations prepare VSPs and volunteers to work with victims by empowering them to help victims use their previously repressed voice. In the presence of a direct service provider, victims might be speaking about their experience for the very first time. Breaking the victim's norm of silence is essential for VSPs and volunteers to understand so they can reframe the victim's

experiences and generate an atmosphere of trust within which the victim feels comfortable speaking. Looking at these six social norms that victims of trafficking experience, it is evident that institutions must train individuals working directly with victims how to understand these norms if they hope to effectively communicate with victims. Paralleling the importance of comprehending normalized experiences of human trafficking victims, understanding the lived experience of trafficking victims through standpoint theory is also of importance from my analysis in Chapter III.

Within standpoint theory analysis in Chapter III, I identified two standpoints that institutions take on in their training curricula: the standpoint of a trafficking victim who has experienced trauma and the standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify as a victim of trafficking. Institutions prepare individuals to work with victims of trafficking by first taking the standpoint of a trafficking victim who has experienced trauma. This initial standpoint that I analyze demonstrates the necessity for anti-trafficking organizations to operate out of a trauma-informed lens. When VSPs and volunteers understand the inherent trauma suffered as a result of sexual exploitation, individuals working with victims are better prepared to view the world from the perspective of someone who has experienced trauma, what the foundation of the victim's needs are, and how the trauma the victim experienced has shaped who he or she is. Experiencing complex trauma is also related to the second and final standpoint I analyze, which is the standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify as a victim of trafficking. Institutions prepare individuals to work with victims of trafficking by training VSPs and volunteers to understand the experience of someone experiencing exploitation who may not yet self-identify as a victim of human trafficking for a myriad of reasons that are perpetuated by

trauma. By taking the standpoint of a victim who does not self-identify, VSPs and volunteers are better prepared to serve this specific populace and empower trafficking victims to progressively view reality through a wider lens than what the victims' abuse has allowed them to see. By analyzing the four social norms and two standpoints I identified in Love146, UAHT, and The Landing's training curricula, it is clear that institutions must think carefully about how to educate individuals who are preparing to work directly with victims of human trafficking.

Limitations and Future Research

Non-institutional organizations educate audiences who do not work directly with victims of human trafficking on trauma through illustrating social norms prevalent in the lives of victims, as well as framing the message on trafficking through tones that reach the audience and relating the message to the audience. Alternatively, institutions prepare individuals who work directly with victims of trafficking through text and training curricula by educating VSPs and volunteers in social norms that victims hold tight to, as well as specific standpoints that are necessary to take on in order to better serve victims of human trafficking. This information is applicable to institutional and non-institutional organizations wishing to train individuals to work with victims as well as those who exist solely for awareness and education purposes. However, this information is also relevant to anyone outside these settings. By understanding the complex nature of trafficking and the traumatic effects victims encounter, anyone has the ability to gain tremendous insight and perspective. With these conclusions in mind, it is also important to consider a few limitations to this study that indicate important opportunities for future research in this area.

One of the first limitations of this study is its solely domestic focus. Because all the organizations materials I analyzed were located in the United States, this study lacked global diversity. This limited my conclusions to ideas that are less generalizable than they would be if I had considered the global scope of trafficking and discussed the rhetoric created by both domestic and foreign institutional and non-institutional organizations.

The second limitation to this study was my use of institutions' training curricula that is not available to the general public. I received both UAHT's presentation and The Landing's training manual directly from each organization. The information itself is not accessible on the Internet. This creates a limitation because if a community group was seeking more information on how to help combat trafficking, or if an individual wished to learn more about the issue, or was looking for specific education, neither of the training curricula I used from these two organizations would be freely available to them. Because I worked for The Landing and have been a part of UAHT's training, I was able to access these texts for this study.

The third and final limitation of my research was the fact that two of the three organizations I analyzed were located in Houston, Texas. Due to the prevalence of trafficking in Houston, I wanted to focus on this city as a "hot spot" for trafficking where a plethora of organizations were working to fight trafficking. But this choice inherently created a lack of national diversity in the texts I examined. Although clear limitations existed, these elements have also established interesting lines of future research for future communication scholars.

Specifically, future researchers can and should expand this important research into a global study. By analyzing institutional and non-institutional texts, training

curricula, and awareness-raising material on a global level, future research can reach organizations wishing to expand their education to a global audience of VSPs, volunteers, and the general public. Additionally, by utilizing training curricula that is accessible to anyone, future research can lead this study to analyze additional ways in which organizations can train individuals who do and do not work with victims of trafficking on complex trauma's impacts.

Conclusion

In 2006, Three Six Mafia's song "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp" won an Oscar. The song glorifies the lifestyle of a pimp, harkening listeners to empathize with the struggle of making money to pay rent but also enjoy luxurious cars, explaining how the pimp has to put girls on the track to afford his lifestyle. America applauded Three Six Mafia's song, encouraging it to the point of receiving a major award for best song. There is an obvious dissonance in the way society views and understands the plight of individuals who are exploited.

Anti-trafficking organizations that exist to provide resources for victims of human trafficking have an obligation to work with victims through a trauma-informed lens that aids in reversing the lack of concern that society generally holds for a victim. VSPs have perhaps one of the first opportunities to relay tangible love to victims that is not based on how much money the victim is making with his or her body. By training staff members and volunteers of an organization how to work and communicate with victims of trafficking who have experienced severe and repetitive trauma, these organizations are equipping their employees to be proactive in ending the glorification of an abusive and exploitative industry and instead providing literal freedom and healing for victims.

Non-institutional organizations that provide education and awareness on the reality of human trafficking through materials like documentaries, talks, and news segments can reach audiences all over the world. This leverage has the capacity to reverse the illusory societal notion seen through awarding songs that glorify pimps and rather calling on society to recognize the signs and symptoms of individuals who are being sold for sex.

One of the victims I worked with at The Landing turned eighteen during my time there. Two of the staff members and myself took her to dinner for a birthday celebration. When we were finished eating and getting ready to take her home, she quietly told us, “This is all new to me. I’ve never had anyone do this kinda stuff for me. No one has given me a birthday dinner.” In this moment, I broke for the years of pain she had suffered, I broke for the absence of love in her life, and I broke for her bewilderment at the celebration of her own life. But I similarly rejoiced at the possibility of new beginnings for victims of trafficking and beautiful redemption in the midst of unimaginable abuse.

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