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Human trafficking: as viewed through the eyes of criminal justice students

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Human trafficking: As viewed through the eyes of criminal justice students

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking is a crime that has seen increased media awareness over the past few decades. However, the media's representations of human trafficking are very one-dimensional and sensationalized. This is problematic, because media representations have an influence on the perceptions of those who consume the media imagery. This study explores the way that media representations of human trafficking have influenced the perceptions criminal justice students have about human trafficking. Grounded theory was used to uncover that criminal justice student's perceptions are based on four narratives that create images that influence criminal justice student's perceptions. These narratives are: human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking, human trafficking victims are exclusively women and children, human trafficking is experienced by specific racial and ethnic groups and human trafficking victims are to blame for their victimization. These narratives are then investigated within the context of the 2008 film *Taken*, which was mentioned by 17 of the 20 participants interviewed, and was found to be important in shaping the perceptions of the participants about human trafficking.

CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW

Introduction

The enslavement of people for economic and sexual exploitation has been occurring for thousands of years. This enslavement continues today with human trafficking. Globally, it is estimated that 600,000 to four million victims are trafficked annually (McCabe and Manian 2010). In the United States between 2008-2010 federally funded task forces documented 2,515 suspected cases of human trafficking (US Bureau of Justice 2011), but it is estimated that approximately 50,000 people are trafficked in the United States each year (TVPA 2000).

In the United States the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 was passed to combat human trafficking and offered a national definition for human trafficking. The TVPA was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008, and most recently in 2013. However, while the TVPA does offer a definition of human trafficking, it is difficult to gauge the scope of human trafficking in the United States. Victims of trafficking may not perceive themselves to be a victim, or the illegal activities they are forced to partake in may cause police officers to view them as an offender or conspirator (Stolz 2010). This misidentification as an offender can result in victims of human trafficking being arrested, imprisoned and deported. A victim who has been trafficked is awarded special protections under the law (Hyland 2001). In cases where a victim has been misidentified as an offender they may not receive the special protection they are entitled to. Because human trafficking victims rely on being properly identified by those in the criminal justice system, this study seeks to understand the way that criminal justice students perceive human trafficking.

Criminal justice students tend to be interested in pursuing careers within the criminal justice system (Krimmel and Tartaro 1999). Because many criminal justice students are interested in pursuing careers in the criminal justice system, criminal justice students are more likely in their future careers than other majors to find themselves in a position of authority, where they may make decisions about whether or not a victims of human trafficking is a victim or offender. While there is research that explores criminal justice student's attitudes and beliefs in regards to convicted offenders (Falco and Martin 2012; Makey and Courtright 2000; Ricciardelli et al 2009; Ricciardelli et al 2012) and student's beliefs and attitudes in regards to social issues (Bjerregaard and Lord 2004; Bouffard et al 2012; Cannon 2005; Courtright et al 2007; Miller and Kim 2012; and Payne and Riedel 2002), there is a lack of research that explores criminal justice student's perceptions of crimes.

This study investigates criminal justice student's perceptions of human trafficking, and explores where those perceptions originate. Barthe et al (2013) found that criminal justice students can be influenced by media depictions of the criminal justice system to choose criminal justice as college major. In this study I will uncover the way that media depictions of human trafficking have influenced the perceptions criminal justice students have of human trafficking, and I will situation those perceptions in relation to the data that is available on human trafficking.

Organization of the Thesis

The overview offered a brief introduction to the research conducted and its importance. The remainder of this thesis includes a review of pertinent literature, methods and procedures, findings and discussion. Chapter 2 is the literature review that draws on three distinct areas of literature. The first of these is human trafficking literature, which is used to explore the history of human trafficking and human trafficking legislation. The second is literature investigating criminal justice students, and situating them as a unique population. The third is media literature that explores the way media depicts events and social phenomenon and how these depicts influence those who see them.

Chapter 3 relays the methods and procedures used in this study. I used grounded theory, and began without a formal hypothesis to allow for flexibility when analyzing the data. My sample came from declared criminal justice student majors at a large midwestern university, and participants participated in semi-structured interviews. In this chapter I show how I collected, coded and analyzed the data. I then show how I established trustworthiness and the limitations of my research.

Chapter 4 investigates my findings, and develops the four narratives that influence criminal justice student's perceptions of human trafficking. These four narratives are: human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking, human trafficking victims are only women and children, human trafficking victims and race and human trafficking victims are to blame for their victimization. These four narratives are then explained in relation to the film *Taken*, which was identified by the majority of students as having in some way impacted their understanding of human trafficking. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of

the findings and links the findings to other social phenomena. Chapter 5 also lays out suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In this section, I will draw on three distinct sets of literature. The first will focus on human trafficking. In my discussion of human trafficking I will lay out a brief history of human exploitation, present day legislation and definitions of human trafficking, discuss the confusion that still surrounds human trafficking, and conclude by pointing out the gaps in the current human trafficking literature. The second will explore the literature available on criminal justice students. In my discussion I will examine the attitudes criminal justice students have towards convicted criminals, the personality and character traits of criminal justice students, and culminate by pointing out the gaps in the current literature on criminal justice students. The third will explore the media's presentation of human trafficking. I will begin by laying out a brief explanation of the media and then discuss the way the media influences those who consume media. This will be followed by an examination of the way the media influences perceptions of crime and human trafficking. I will conclude by pointing out the gaps in the current literature on media and human trafficking.

Human Trafficking Literature

Human trafficking is a complex issue that is deeply rooted in human history. To understand the need for comprehensive literature on the perceptions of human trafficking, one must understand the way human trafficking is situated in history, the legislation and movements to combat human trafficking, and the criminal justice systems difficulties and confusions in identifying cases of human trafficking.

The exploitation of humans for the benefit of others is not a new phenomenon. In ancient Mesopotamia and Babylon the worship of temple goddesses created a market for “sacred prostitutes” (Parrot and Cummings 2008). Slave women would offer sexual favors to men, who in turn would donate to their temple (Parrot and Cummings 2008). The donations would go to self-serving individuals, usually priests, who would profit from the sexual sacrifice of the temple prostitute (Lerner 1986). In Rome slaves kept the economy running by working in agriculture and production into the fourth century A.D. (Harper 2011). There is documentation of slavery during the Renaissance period in Italy (McKee 2008) and Spain (Weissbourd 2013; Flynn-Paul 2008). The colonial period brought the Transatlantic slave trade between the Americas, Europe and Africa. Slavery continued in North America following the end of the colonial era until Canada abolished slavery in 1834 (Reese 2011) and the United States abolished slavery in 1863.

The abolishment of slavery was not the end of slavery in the United States. At the end of the nineteenth century feminists began to focus on ending prostitution and what was being called “the white slave trade” (Dozema 2000). Fears of white slavery led to the first international agreement to be drafted in 1902, and then signed by 16 states in 1904 (Dozema 2000). This agreement condemned the recruitment of women by fraud or coercion into prostitution in another country, and in 1910, the trafficking of women within national borders was included (Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997). This was followed by the 1933 convention signed in Geneva, *International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women*, which condemned the recruitment of persons for prostitution in another county. The 1949 *UN Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the*

Prostitution of Others stated that trafficking in persons was, “incompatible with the dignity of a human person.” Seventy countries had ratified the 1949 *UN Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* by 1996 (Gozdziak and Collett 2005).

It wasn't until the 1980's the world saw a renewed interest in combating human trafficking (Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997). In the 1990's human trafficking became of interest in world affairs and on the agenda of international meetings and conferences (Gozdziak and Collett 2005). In December 2000 an international definition of human trafficking was created to help differentiate between human trafficking and other illegal migration (Laczko 2002). This definition came with the signing of the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* (Kangaspunta 2007). The Protocol defined trafficking as:

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean 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, of 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. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs." (UN 2000)

In the United States, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was authorized on October 18th, 2000, as a way to combat human trafficking. The TVPA defined human trafficking as:

“(A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or

(B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery”(TVPA, 2000: Section 103, 8a and b)

The TVPA put into place provisions to protect victims of human trafficking, strengthened statutes, and established the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The TVPA has been reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008, and most recently 2013. Figure 1, listed below, shows a timeline of significant legislation and agreements to combat human trafficking.

Even with a definition it is difficult to gauge the scope of human trafficking in the United States. There are obstacles to identifying victims of trafficking. A victim of trafficking might not perceive himself or herself to be a victim, or the illegal activities they are forced to partake in may cause police officers to view them as an offender or coconspirator (Stolz 2010). Because of confusion about human trafficking, and the surreptitious way it is carried out (Laczko and Gramengna 2003; Tyldum and Brunovski

2005) law enforcement agencies rarely identify cases of human trafficking (Farrell et al 2010). Farrell et al (2010) found that many law enforcement agencies were not prepared to identify human trafficking and perceived human trafficking to not be a problem in their community.

1902 First International Agreement on the Suppression of White Slavery	1949 <i>UN Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others</i>	December 2000 <i>UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons</i>
	1933 <i>International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women</i>	October 18, 2000 Authorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act

Figure 1.
Timeline of Significant Agreements and Legislation

An added confusion in understanding human trafficking is illegal immigration in the United States (Farrell et al 2010). A person who has been smuggled into the country is typically deported, whereas a person who has been trafficked is awarded special protections under the law (Hyland 2001). But, victims of trafficking are occasionally identified as being smuggled and smuggled individuals are occasionally identified as being trafficked (Gozdziak and Collett 2005). In some regions all illegal migrants are categorized as trafficked, and in other regions all sex workers are categorized as trafficked regardless of consent (Gozdziak and Collett 2005). The gray area between human trafficking victim

and perpetrator of a crime creates confusion on the part of law enforcement. This confusion, along with the use of previous experiences to help categorize ambiguous situations, can cause police officers to misclassify victims of human trafficking as offenders (Farrell et al 2010).

The literature available today on human trafficking focuses mainly on the history of trafficking/sexual slavery, defining the problem and the legislative movements, and evaluations of those movements on behalf of victims (Gozdziak and Collett 2005). This is the first study to explore the perceptions of criminal justice students about human trafficking. It is also the first to analyze the way the media impacts criminal justice student's perception of crime. Gulati (2010) offered the first analysis of human trafficking and the media's representations of it. Since then, there have been a handful of scholars who have looked at media's representation of human trafficking (Baker 2014; Johnston 2014; Marchionni 2012; Small 2012; Szörényi and Eate 2014). However, none have explored the way these representations impact those who are working in the criminal justice system or who are interested in working in the criminal justices system.

Criminal Justice Students Literature

Criminal justice students are those who are interested in pursuing careers within the criminal justice system (Krimmel and Tartaro 1999). This desire for a career in the criminal justice system makes these students more likely than other majors to come into contact with potential victims of human trafficking, and to be in a position of authority when dealing with these victims. As previously mentioned lack of clarity about what

constitutes human trafficking can cause confusion about whether or not a victim is actually a victim of human trafficking or a perpetrator of a crime. This is why it is important to understand the way criminal justice students perceive human trafficking.

There has been previous research that has explored the attitudes of criminal justice students towards the punishment of those convicted of crimes. Shelley et al (2011) found that criminal justice students tend to hold more punitive views towards offenders than students in other majors. Makey and Courtright (2000) also found that criminal justice students tend to hold more punitive views than students in other majors, but by the time they are seniors their punitive views have diminished. However, Falco and Martin (2012) found that criminology students tend to hold less punitive views than students in other majors, and by the time they are seniors their punitive views have diminished. Ricciardelli et al (2009) found that as criminal justice student's progress through CJ programs they become more sensitive to those who are wrongfully convicted. Participating in innocence projects impacted criminal justice student's perceptions of those who were wrongfully convicted in a way that caused the criminal justice students to empathize with the wrongfully convicted and lose faith in the justice system (Ricciardelli et al 2012). While the attitudes of students towards the punishment of those convicted of crimes has been investigated, there is a lack of research on the criminal justice student's perceptions of the crime itself.

Previous research has also focused on the character and personality traits of criminal justice students. Criminal justice students tend to be less empathetic than other majors (Courtright et al 2007). However, they are also more trusting of other people and

consider themselves to be unlikely to engage in unethical behavior (Bjerregaard and Lord 2004). Students majoring in criminal justice may be more conservative than other majors based on research that suggests they are: more likely to not support gun control (Payne and Riedel 2002), more likely to desire the opportunity to carry a legally concealed gun (Bouffard et al, 2012), and more likely to hold anti-gay views (Cannon, 2005; Miller and Kim, 2012).

The literature available on criminal justice students is scarce. What is available focuses on the way criminal justice students view convicted criminals, even those wrongly convicted, and the traits of criminal justice students compared to other majors. Barthe et al (2013), offers the only study that investigated media's influence on criminal justice students. Barthe et al (2013) found that criminal justice students may be influenced by media images of the criminal justice system to choose a major in criminal justice. This study is the first that explores the way criminal justice students perceive human trafficking, and the influence the media has on those perceptions.

Media Literature

The current media consists of many different tools for communication, but the primary ones discussed in this paper are news media and entertainment media. Large media conglomerates control the consumption and production of most media (McChesney 1999). These conglomerates are profit driven, and focus on dispersing information that catches consumer's attention (McChesney 1999). The media functions as a claims-maker that constructs reality, and influences the way that consumers view reality (Best, 1991;

Rhineberger-Dunn 2013). The influence of media on those who consume it has been investigated across many different areas of inquiry including: body image (Groesz et al 2002; Pritchard and Cramblitt 2014), politics (Casero-Ripollés and López-Rabadán 2014; Kühne 2012; Prior 2013), athletic performance (Brown 2014), construction of gender-identity (Hartley et al 2014) and even choice of pet (Ghirlanda et al 2014).

Media's construction of crime and the way that construction influences media consumers has been examined by many previous studies, and it has been demonstrated that media consumers perceptions of crime are influenced by media depictions (Best 1991; Best 1999; Berns 2009; Callanan 2012; Rhineberger-Dunn 2013). This can be problematic because current literature suggests that the media sensationalizes crime and gives media consumers an inaccurate portrayal of crime (Best 1999; Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993; Goidel et al 2006; Kupchik and Bracy 2009; Menifield et al 2001). The media is a consumer driven business, and graphic depictions of crime grab the attention of consumers (Menifield et al. 2001), and appease a consumer fascination with sensationalism (Duwe 2000). This results in graphic and sensationalized depictions of crime being portrayed as more frequent and extreme than they really are.

In the past two decades, with the reemergence of human trafficking on the international stage, human trafficking has become a popular story for both news and entertainment media (Gulati 2010; Marchionni 2012). Human trafficking in the media has been framed in a way that generalizes experiences (Gulati 2010), and the media primarily depicts human trafficking as sex trafficking (Marchionni 2012). This is problematic because

as previously discussed, the media influences perceptions of crimes, and human trafficking is not just sex trafficking.

Cheng (2008) found that the media depictions of human trafficking are one-dimensional in their portrayals of victims and human traffickers, and that it is presented in an oversimplified way to media consumers. The news media tends to focus on episodes of human trafficking in a way that emphasizes official reports as opposed to the actual stories of human trafficking survivors (Guliati 2010; Johnston et al 2014). In contrast, the entertainment media focuses on dramatized stories that are often hyper-sexualized of victims of human trafficking (Baker 2014; Small 2012). Fictionalized accounts of human trafficking have been used by governments and NGO's to attest to the truthful experiences of victims (Small 2012). The 2002 film *Lilja 4-Ever* was given out by the Swedish government to raise awareness of human trafficking, but the story was fictional and the writer admitted it was a creation of his imagination (Small 2012).

In her analysis of films that depict human trafficking, including the film *Taken*, Baker (2014) found that the narrative of the innocent white girl being kidnapped off the street by foreign or non-white men was the predominate narrative. However, this type of narrative is incredibly rare according to the data available and Baker (2014) calls for films to be created that offer more broad experiences and a deepening view of human trafficking. Szörényi and Eate (2014) found in their analysis of human trafficking in film, including the film *Taken* that the narratives surrounding human trafficking films are set up in a way to allow for a white American male to save an innocent girls virginity from foreign or non-white men. This harkens back to the original white slavery narratives in films such as

Traffic in Souls (1913), and influences viewer’s perceptions of human trafficking (Szörényi and Eate 2014). Figure 2, listed below, shows a timeline of significant media depictions of human trafficking. It is important to note the large gap where the media stopped depicting human trafficking in film. That does not mean that representations of human trafficking did not still appear in media, but the media did not use human trafficking as a focal point.

1910 Reginald Wright Kauffman’s <i>The House of Bondage</i>	1914 <i>The Exposure of White Slave Traffic</i> (film) <i>Traffic in Girls</i> (film)	2001 <i>Bucharest Express</i> (film) <i>Anonymously Yours</i> (film)	2004 <i>Born into Brothels</i> (film)	2007 <i>Trade</i> (film)
1913 <i>Traffic in Souls</i> (film) <i>Inside the White Slave Trade</i> (film) <i>White Slave Trade</i> (film)		2002 <i>Trading Women</i> (film) <i>Lilya 4-ever</i> (film)	2005 <i>Human Trafficking</i> (TV series)	2008 <i>Taken</i> (film)

Figure 2.
Timeline of Significant Media Representations of Human Trafficking

There is an extensive literature available on media and depictions of crime, and a growing literature available on media’s depictions of human trafficking. However, there has not been a study that explores the way that media shapes viewers perceptions of human trafficking, and there has not been a study that looked at those within or interested in the criminal justice system and how the media shapes their perceptions of crimes. This study

will fill these gaps in the literature available on media and crime, and media and human trafficking.

Conclusion

In this section I have examined three relevant areas of literature. These areas of literature focus on: human trafficking, criminal justice students, and media's influence on perceptions of crime. When discussing the literature on human trafficking I laid out a brief history of human exploitation, which today would be considered human trafficking under the TVPA (2000). I offered the definitions of human trafficking from the United Nations, and the federal definition created under the TVPA in the United States. I then proceeded to explain the confusions surrounding human trafficking, and the difficulties encountered by law enforcement in combating human trafficking. I concluded by demonstrating the gaps in the literature, and the way this study will fill those gaps.

When discussing the literature on criminal justice students I examined the attitudes criminal justice students have towards convicted criminals, and those wrongfully convicted, and the personality and character traits of criminal justice students, and concluded by laying out the gaps in the current literature on criminal justice students, and the way this study will fill those gaps. The final area of relevant literature explored the way that media influences those who consume it. I discussed the way that media influences perceptions of crime, and the recently growing literature on the way the media represents human trafficking. I then concluded by identifying gaps in the literature and the way this study will help to fill those gaps.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study's goal was to examine the way that criminal justice students perceived human trafficking. I chose criminal justice students because they are frequently interested in careers in law enforcement and the criminal justice system (Krimmel and Tartaro 1999). A career in law enforcement would increase the likelihood of being in a position of authority over a victim trafficking. Those who are in authority can identify the victim as either a victim or a perpetrator. Others within the criminal justice system may come into contact with a victim of trafficking and have the opportunity to identify that victim during critical points where they can address the victim's status as a victim (Timmins 2011). There is a lack of research on the way that those within the criminal justice system perceive human trafficking.

I used semi-structured, in-depth interviews that allowed participants to use their own words to describe and express their opinions (Esterberg 2002). The use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews is important because human trafficking is an abstract concept with variation in attitudes, ideas and meanings associated with it. Interviews are useful for finding meaning, and theory building (Esterbeg 2002)

I began this study without any formal hypothesis, and chose to use Grounded Theory. Grounded theory allows for a, "systematic, yet flexible guideline for collecting and analyzing data" (Charmaz 2006). Grounded Theory allowed the flexibility to change direction and narrow the focus throughout the analysis of the data.

Participants and Sampling

The participants for the study were selected from students currently attending a large, public, Midwestern university with a declared major in Criminal Justice. This population was used out of convenience and because the study was specifically focusing on Criminal Justice students. The study was approved by the IRB, and then sampling began. The sample frame was created in the spring 2012 by receiving a list from the Registrar of all registered students with a declared major in criminal justice, and again in the fall 2012 by receiving a list of all registered students with a declared major in criminal justice. I then sent out a mass email to 328 (spring 2012) and 327 (fall 2012) students inviting them to participate. In the spring of 2012, I received three responses and interviewed those three students. In the fall of 2012, I received two responses and conducted two interviews as a result of the mass email sent out. I then sought the help of a Criminal Justice professor in advertising my study to his courses. After he informed his students of my research I had three more participants in the fall of 2012. By the end of the fall 2012 semester, I had conducted 8 interviews.

In the spring of 2013, I began to offer participants \$25. I attended a Criminal Justice Club meeting to invite students to participate, and the academic advisor for the Criminal Justice students sent out emails informing students of my research as well. In the spring of 2013, I had 13 responses and conducted 12 interviews. The remaining respondent did not show up to the scheduled interview. I established that 20 interviews were sufficient for reaching data saturation (Guest et al 2006; Creswell 1998; Morse 1995).

The participants ranged in age from 18-33, with a mean of 22. There were seven males who participated and 13 females who participated. Half of the participants were seniors, and the remaining half was split evenly between sophomores and juniors. There were no freshman who participated in the study, although they were invited to participate. There were 17 participants who identified as white or Caucasian, two who identified as Hispanic and one who identified as black.

Interview Procedure

Participants were asked to set aside one hour for the interviews. I conducted the interviews between April 2012 and February 2013. They were conducted in conference rooms on campus at the Midwestern University that I had reserved. In October 2011, I pre-tested an interview schedule by conducting two interviews with Criminal Justice students. The pre-test allowed me to refine my questions (Esterberg 2002). I then used this pre-constructed interview schedule with open-ended questions to explore the perceptions of criminal justice students about human trafficking, and from where those perceptions originated. After conducting three interviews I edited my interview schedule to eliminate all questions about media representations of trafficking. I felt the questions were leading, and I wanted to see if media representations came up organically in the conversation.

To maintain confidentiality of participants, each was assigned a number and letter at the beginning of the interview. The number and letter combinations were kept in a locked and secure location that only I had access to when not in use. These measures were

taken to ensure identifying information was not made public. The final report omits the names of participants, and uses non-identifiable information (i.e. female freshman).

Collecting and Analyzing the Data

I began by transcribing all 20 interviews myself. This allowed me to become familiar with the data. Next, I coded the transcripts beginning with open coding. I started by going line by line and looking for recurring concepts about the criminal justice student's perceptions of human trafficking. Open coding left me with dozens of concepts that I collapsed into a few concepts that I used to develop significant codes (i.e. victim characteristics). The next step I took was to use focused coding to take those significant codes and sort through the data to begin developing analytic categories (i.e. victim's flaws). Focused coding caused me to think about how participants talked about these codes, and what these codes meant to them. The third step I took was to use axial coding to develop dimensions and properties of the analytic categories (i.e. personality flaws, behavior flaws). The final step I took was selective coding, where I identified a core category "narratives of human trafficking" that runs through the data and bind subcategories together. The "narratives of human trafficking" are the images and beliefs about human trafficking that criminal justice student shared that provide insight into their perceptions.

The process of coding was continuous throughout the analysis of the data, and included the development of analytic memos to identify key concepts, as a means of theory building. Throughout the coding process I attended a grounded theory seminar where I presented some of my transcripts and memos for feedback on codes and help in theory

building. This allowed me to think critically about my codes, and the meanings associated with them.

Establishing Trustworthiness with Credibility, Dependability and Transferability

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), taking constructs developed by Guba (1981), identify the establishment of credibility (internal validity), dependability (reliability) and transferability (external validity) as ways of creating trustworthiness in qualitative research. To establish credibility, I chose a research method that is well established within the discipline. I engaged in debriefing with my first major professor (who had to step down from the position) and reviewed transcripts and field notes with her during open coding and focused coding. I attended a Grounded Theory seminar where I shared my transcripts, codes and memos with peers and my second major professor who helped develop alternate ways of examining the data.

To establish dependability I describe in-depth the data collection and analysis process. This enables future researchers to repeat the research if desired, or evaluate the study. Having my first major professor review and discuss the codes to ensure consistent interpretations of them during initial coding and focused coding created inter-rater reliability, as these codes were the foundation for those used in axial coding and selective coding.

To establish transferability I used grounded theory, which is based on the belief that theory is grounded in the data. I did not have a hypothesis or theory that guided my research. This allowed me to continue searching for concepts and categories within the data until saturation was reached. Once saturation was reached I was able to develop an

interpretation of the perceptions criminal justice students have of human trafficking. This includes the meanings criminal justice students associate with human trafficking and how they developed those meanings.

Methodological Limitations

This study is not without limitations. A limitation of this study is the site, a large Midwestern university that was chosen for convenience. Future research should take into account geographical variations in exposure to human trafficking and variations in criminal justice curriculum. Future research may benefit from sampling other research sites, in addition to other college majors. Because of this limitation I can only generalize my findings to the criminal justice students at the large Midwestern University.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Introduction

The interviews with criminal justice students yielded four predominant perceptions regarding human trafficking. These four perceptions were reinforced by the images seen in the media, but were based on how criminal justice students explained human trafficking in the interviews.

The first of these perceptions is that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking. The second perceptions is that only woman and children are trafficked. The third perception is that only certain racial groups and ethnics groups are prone to trafficking. The final perception is that victims play some role in their victimization. These perceptions are supported and reinforced by media imagery. Through the interviews with participants it was discovered that the entertainment media plays a significant role in helping shape criminal justice students understanding and perception of human trafficking.

Human Trafficking is Synonymous with Sex Trafficking

In the United States, the *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000*, distinguishes two purposes of trafficking: sexual exploitation and labor exploitation (TVPA 2000). Sexual exploitation occurs when victims experience sex trafficking, which is defined as, “a commercial sex act that is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (TVPA 2000). Labor exploitation occurs when victims experience labor trafficking, which is defined as, “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to

involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery” (TVPA 2000). These two types of exploitation can occur simultaneously, or victims may experience only one type of exploitation. During the two year period between 2008-2010 federally funded task forces documented 2,515 suspected cases of human trafficking in the United States, with 8 in 10 classified as sex trafficking and 1 in 10 classified as labor trafficking (US Bureau of Justice, 2011).

The prominent discourse surrounding human trafficking, pushed by media, NGO’s and policy makers, is one that focuses on sex trafficking, and in particular sex slavery (Bernstein 2007). Sex slavery is a term that is used by certain anti-trafficking/anti-slavery groups to create more vivid imagery and a more emotional response (Bernstein 2007). This discourse has penetrated so deeply into people’s understanding of human trafficking that the term sex trafficking is often used as a synonym for human trafficking. The establishment of human trafficking being a term that is synonymous with sex trafficking is found in our cultural expectations of morality, and the emphasis placed on protecting women’s virginity and sexuality (Bernstein, 2007; Doezema, 2000; Hua & Nigorizawa 2010).

The original policies and legislation for combating human trafficking focused on preventing the sexual exploitation of white women. White slavery was the forced abduction and transportation of women for sexual slavery (Doezema 2000). In 1902 the first international agreement against white slavery was drafted, and two years later signed by 16 states. This agreement condemned the recruitment of women by fraud or coercion into prostitution in another country. In 1910, the trafficking of women within national

borders was included (Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997). This was followed by the 1933 convention signed in Geneva, *International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women*, which condemned the recruitment of persons for prostitution in another country. Then in 1949 *UN Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* was signed and by 1996 seventy countries had ratified the 1949 convention (Gozdziak and Collett 2005). These policies were the foundation for modern policies that now include labor trafficking, but perceptions based on historical policies still persist.

The problem is that the construction of sex trafficking as human trafficking overlooks labor exploitation, and creates a caricatured image of victims based on stereotypes of gender and race, while reinforcing a specific narrative that creates a binary between the innocent and the guilty. I will talk about the stereotypes of gender and race, the binary of innocent and guilty in the discussion of future perceptions.

Criminal justice students predominantly identify sexual exploitation as the purpose of trafficking, and believe the term sex trafficking is synonymous with human trafficking. Only 3 of the 20 students interviewed identified labor exploitation as a potential purpose of trafficking when asked how to define human trafficking, or what images come to mind upon hearing the term trafficking. The remaining 17 participants turned to sexual exploitation as the purpose of human trafficking.

Researcher: What images come to mind when you hear the term human trafficking?

Participant 8: Sex crimes, um people living in deplorable conditions, the only thing I've ever heard human trafficking being used for is sex rings, prostitution rings that kind of thing.

Researcher: Why do you think you associate those images, that you just told me about, why do you think you associate those with trafficking?

Participant 8: Media, whenever a story about human trafficking is in the news that's usually what it's for and then the media will go all gung ho about this big problem even though it's been a problem for years.

(Junior, Female)

Of the 20 criminal justice students interviewed, 13 specifically pointed to the media as the source of their information about human trafficking, with 12 of these participants identifying the media's portrayals of sexual exploitation as the reason they believe sex trafficking is synonymous with human trafficking.

Participant 17: When I think of human trafficking... sex trafficking is the first word that comes to mind. Images of prostitution, pornography different things come to mind.

Researcher: Why do you think that these are the images that you associate with trafficking?

Participant 17: I think in part because of the majority of my exposure through films I've seen.

(Sophomore, Female)

This is problematic because while there were 2,065 cases opened between 2008-2010, by federally funded task forces, that investigated sex trafficking; there were 350 cases opened that investigated labor trafficking (US Bureau of Justice, 2011). This means that nearly 17% of all cases investigated between 2008-2010 were cases of labor trafficking, but 17 criminal justice students interviewed did not identify labor trafficking as an option when they were discussing human trafficking. In fact, when asked about labor trafficking one participant stated:

Participant 3: I just think that's just not something you would think of because it's not in the media. At least I haven't seen it so the only thing I think of is sex trafficking. I've never thought of labor trafficking as an option.
(Senior, Male)

There is confusion within the criminal justice system about who is, and is not, a victim of human trafficking (Gozdziak and Collett 2005; Hyland 2001). All of the criminal justice students interviewed were interested in pursuing careers within the criminal justice system; meaning, that they are likely to have contact, at some point within the system, with a victim of trafficking. If they understand human trafficking as only sexual exploitation, they will miss the opportunity to properly identify other victims of human trafficking. They may perceive the victims to be offenders themselves or coconspirators, and arrest, detain, imprison and/or deport them (Stolz 2010).

Human Trafficking Victims are Exclusively Women and Children

Sex trafficking is something that is predominantly experienced by women. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice found that confirmed victims of sex trafficking were 91% of the time female (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). However, it is likely the number of men who are victims of human trafficking is underestimated because of preconceived ideas about what it means to be a victims of trafficking (Surtees 2008). The use of term human trafficking as synonymous with sex trafficking, has caused human trafficking to become a gendered crime. The gendering of human trafficking is creating an imbalance where men victims of trafficking are being missed and mislabeled as perpetrators who are charged with crimes committed because their exploitation (i.e. immigration violations) doesn't fit preconceived ideas about what human trafficking is (U.S. Department of State 2013).

Researcher: When I say the term "human trafficking" what images come to mind?

Participant 2: Women and children.

Researcher: Women and children doing what?

Participant 2: Being smuggled into the country for probably sex slaves.
(Senior, Male)

Of the 20 participants interviewed, 8 mentioned women or girls/children as the victims of human trafficking when asked what images come to mind when hearing the term human trafficking, or how to define human trafficking. These participants used the belief that, "Human Trafficking is Synonymous with Sex Trafficking", as support for their belief that women and girls/children are the only victims of human trafficking.

Researcher: So, when I say the term human trafficking what images come into your mind?

Participant 1: Women being on a street, and selling their bodies for money.
(Senior, Male)

As previously demonstrated the media plays an important part in sustaining the belief that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking, but the media also maintains the image of women and girls as the only victims of trafficking. Jones (2010) points out that in Larry King's 2010 special on human trafficking made only references to women and girls being victims of trafficking, and that media depictions of men as victimizers and women and girls as victims makes male victims of human trafficking invisible.

Researcher: When I say the word human trafficking what images come into your mind?

Participant 10: Women being stolen and used for sex slaves.

Researcher: And why do you think that those are the images that you associate with human trafficking?

Participant 10: Because that's what you hear on TV like TV shows and stuff.
(Senior, Female)

The above participant specifically identifies television shows as the reason they imagine women as victims of human trafficking, and connects to the previous perception by stating the women are being used as sex slaves. There were 4 participants who specifically identified media sources as the reason they imagine women and children as being the victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking has become a gendered crime, because it is synonymous with sex trafficking. This has caused male victims of trafficking to be missed, and misidentified within the criminal justice system. Participant's perceptions of human trafficking as a crime that is only experienced by women and children is reinforced by media depictions and media discussion about human trafficking.

Human Trafficking Victims and Race and Ethnicity

All races, ethnicities and nationalities are victims of human trafficking in the United States. However, media portrayals and preconceived expectations create certain narratives surrounding race, ethnicity and human trafficking. These narratives are entrenched in popular culture through films, books and television, and have persisted for over a century. In this section I will address two perceptions: 1) human trafficking victims are white and 2) human trafficking victims are foreign.

In November 1913, the silent film *Traffic in Souls* was released in the United States. This film was one of the first motion pictures to depict human trafficking, or as it was also known at the time "white slavery", and contributed to raising awareness and increased panic about "white slavery" in the United States (Diffie 2005). The success of *Traffic in Souls*, and the sensationalism surrounding "white slavery" led to the production of many

films focusing on the white slave trade. These included: *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* (1913), *White Slave Traffic* (1913), *The Exposure of the White Slave Traffic* (1914) and *The Traffic in Girls* (1914). (Steffan n.d.)

The fear of “white slavery” was not a new fear, as the panic about “white slavery” began in England and Europe in the 1880’s, but it did receive new attention in the decade prior to WWI in the United States. In 1910, Reginald Wright Kauffman wrote the best seller, *The House of Bondage*, which followed the coercion and exploitation of 16-year old Mary a white New Englander coerced away from her stable home by a man working with a Madam in New York. The threat of “white slavery” was also popular in plays and stories in the US during this time. (Steffan n.d.).

The predominant themes that appeared within popular culture in the early 20th century surrounding human trafficking focused on virginal white girls being enslaved for sexual exploitation by non-white slavers (Doezema 2000). A century later, the same themes appear in popular media depictions of human trafficking, and the same perceptions surrounding race influence the expectations of who a human trafficking victim is. When asked about race 25% of the participants identified white women and girls as the likely victims of trafficking.

Researcher: Demographic wise what is your image?

Participant 16: I see Caucasian women.

(Sophomore, Female)

One participant specifically stated that white teenagers were more at risk for trafficking than black teenage girls. This participant cited the naivety and innocence of white teenagers, as compared to black teenage girls, as the reason they are more at risk.

Researcher: Who do you think would be a high risk group, like if you were trying to prevent people from being victims of trafficking who do you think would be the high risk groups?

Participant 13: I think white young teenagers. I think they're more naive and innocent than a black teenage girl.

(Senior, Female)

The above participant's comments reinforce that the white slavery myth, the enslavement of white innocent and naive (virginal) girls, is still being used to understand human trafficking. The participant not only uses the white slavery myth to state that white girls are at an increased risk for trafficking, but to support the belief that black girls are less likely to become victims of trafficking. Other participants used the white slavery myth as well to describe the reasons why they believed white girls and women were more likely to be victims of human trafficking than other racial groups.

Researcher: When I say the term human trafficking what is the thing that pops into your head like what do you think of what is the image?

Participant 18: Someone being just like taken and sold into like a sex slave you know.

Researcher: When you say someone is it..

Participant 18: Like a young a younger woman who like obviously a pretty girl they aren't going to take like you know they want the younger skinner prettier girl that they know every man will be attracted to.

Researcher: We've established it's a young girl in your head, pretty, race at all?

Participant 18: I'm assuming more particularly the younger white girls.

(Junior, Female)

The participant above reinforces the white slavery myth by stating that the "someone" that is trafficked fits the qualities of a victim in the white slavery narrative. The narrative being, a young, pretty, white girl who is valuable because these attributes are attractive to *every* man. Even one participant who expressed the belief that human

trafficking crossed racial lines, still touched on the white slavery myth, by linking white women to prestige.

Researcher: Do you think of the race?

Participant 7: I think a lot of white women are too. Just because every culture sees America as so prestigious and Europe as so prestigious and that's mainly white people but it's across all different races. Slavery was mainly Africans but I think human trafficking crosses racial lines.

(Junior, Female)

The "white slavery myth" does not reflect the statistics available on human trafficking in the U.S. The reality of trafficking in the U.S. is that while approximately 20% of trafficking victims identify as white, approximately 31% of all victims of human trafficking identify as black (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). Only one of the participants interviewed specifically identified black women and girls as likely victims of trafficking.

Of the other participants interviewed, there were 25% who believed trafficking crossed racial and ethnic boundaries, and another 25% who were not asked about race or ethnicity and did not mention it in the interviews. The remaining 25% used terms such as "foreign", "international", "immigrant" or "Mexican" to describe the ethnic, as opposed to racial, background of human trafficking victims. These terms align with media depictions of human trafficking, and these media depictions were mentioned by participants. When asked why they thought of immigrants as human trafficking victims one participant stated:

Participant 9: I'm gonna say either media outlets there's I do watch a TV show every once in a while called Border Patrol and its' about the CBP I think other than that it's probably major news networks you see some of the old footage of them opening up and it's just people all the way in this container on a semi or whatever.

(Junior, Male)

The foreign victim's narrative has also been supported by recent films such as, *Trade* (2007) which focuses on trafficking Mexicans and Russians into the United States

and *Crash* (2004) which has a scene depicting human trafficking of Asians. The foreign victim narrative is not new, and was present in *Traffic in Souls* (2013) because the victims were Swedish immigrants.

Human trafficking victims in the United States being of foreign or international origin does not reflect the available statistics. Data from human trafficking cases between January 2008 and June 2010 shows that in 56% of those cases the victim was a U.S. Citizen/U.S. National, and if permanent U.S. residents are included the number goes up to 59%. (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). Only 9% of the cases included an undocumented immigrant as a victim of human trafficking, and 30% of cases included someone of unknown origin. It is important to note that this is strictly in a U.S. context, as in many European countries foreign nationals do make up the majority of victims of trafficking.

The white slavery and foreign victim narratives of human trafficking influenced the participants in their beliefs about the victims of human trafficking and perpetuate the myths that human trafficking victims are white and human trafficking victims are foreign. However, data collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that human trafficking crosses racial lines and trafficking victims are predominantly domestic.

Human Trafficking Victims are to Blame for Their Victimization

Victim blaming appeared in 45% of the interviews conducted. Victim blaming was used as a way to separate victims into a distinct group with certain behaviors or character traits. These behaviors and character traits were used to describe the “flaws” that caused the victims to become victims and to distance the victims from the participants. The

perceptions that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking, and the perception that human trafficking victims are women both play roles in influencing the behaviors and character traits that participants focused on.

Researcher: Do you think you could identify a potential victim of trafficking?

Participant 12: Well I don't really want to say like major party girls but the girls that are more vulnerable to get in a car with someone or not as careful with themselves probably. Because there's other people go out and drink all the time but they would get in the car with somebody or they wouldn't let somebody drug them in their drink. Or they would try to be cautious about it.

(Sophomore, Female)

It is implied that if victims were cautious in their drinking, partying, and acceptance of a ride they would not have become victims. Therefore, it is implied a specific behavior needs to be avoided to avoid becoming a victim.

The participant is also influenced by the perception that woman and girls are the victims of human trafficking. The participant does not identify men or boys in her answer, and does not indicate that drinking or partying increases men's likelihood of becoming victims of human trafficking.

Identifying certain behaviors, such as clothing choices (Whatley 2005; Workman and Freeburg, 1999) or alcohol consumption (Schuller and Wall, 1998), as the cause of people's victimization is common in cases of sexual assault and rape. This avoids placing the blame on the actual perpetrator of the violence. This same pattern appears in the participant interviews for this study as participants focused on the victims of trafficking as opposed to the traffickers when asked about human trafficking. There were only two participants who mentioned human traffickers without being prompted in a question or hearing the term from the researcher. This is similar to cases of domestic abuse. Berns

(2009) found that the focus in domestic abuse cases is on the victim and few people think about the abusers and their role in the abuse. One participant who did mention human traffickers after being prompted in a question, still placed blame on victims by identifying a personality trait, as the reason why victims become victims.

Participant 16: I know that traffickers want to target younger women or teenage girls, because they aren't to that stage yet where they're feeling confident and they like attention and they like being told they're beautiful. That's kind of how they draw them in. I also know women who have just tried to prostitute themselves for a little while and they start it but end up not being able to survive just self-sustaining, find themselves being controlled by somebody.

(Sophomore, Female)

Female victims who have a perceived character flaw experience increased amounts of victim blame (Howard 1984). The above participant identifies the desire for attention, desire for beauty and a lack of confidence as character flaws that cause the victim to allow the traffickers "in". Even though the above participant identifies that the traffickers are active participants in the human trafficking process, the blame is still shifted to the victim. The above participant is also using the perception that human trafficking victims are women and girls and the perception that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking to talk about victims of trafficking.

Another participant blamed human trafficking victims for lacking a certain socioeconomic status, and character traits to overcome that socioeconomic status.

Researcher: When you're saying that they're bringing people in where do you think they are what images do you imagine these people look like and where they're coming from?

Participant 1: Dirty, can't speak much, and uneducated. They just people that grew up in third world areas they don't have the same luxuries that we do they were born

into low rent they don't know anything better and they are easily susceptible to tricks that you know they can do so the images that pop into my mind is just these masses of people that don't know what's going on follow orders because they think something good will come from it.

(Senior, Male)

The participant implies if the victims had only educated themselves or were born into higher socioeconomic classes, they would've known better than to fall for human trafficker's tricks. Victims of human trafficking are often forced to portray themselves in a specific narrative of "backwardness" to fit a preconceived victim stereotype (Hua and Nigorizawaga 2010). These stereotypes build on victim blame, because the victim must both fit the stereotype to be a "real" victim, but at the same time the victim is considered at fault because of the stereotype. The need to fit a specific narrative of abuse to be a "real" victim is also seen in domestic assault, and those who do not fit the stereotypes of "real" victims can be denied access to support systems (Loseke 1992).

Victim blame appears prevalently in the interviews that were conducted. This blame ranges from identifying flaws in behavior to identifying flaws of character. Participant's choice to focus on the victims of trafficking when describing human trafficking, as opposed to the human traffickers demonstrates the emphasis placed on victims during the human trafficking process.

Taken

Researcher: When I say the term human trafficking what images come to your mind?

Participant 3: You've seen the movie Taken? Shit like that.

(Senior, Male)

The vast majority of Americans learn about crime from the mass media (Surette, 1992; McNeely, 1995). As mentioned previously, human trafficking has been depicted in the mass media for over 100 years, but in the past decade it has seen a resurgence as a plot line for Hollywood blockbusters. The biggest of these blockbusters is the 2008 film *Taken*. The film *Taken* was mentioned by 17 of the 20 participants at some point during the interview or after the conclusion of the interview. Because of its role in helping participants make sense of trafficking, I am including a short synopsis of the film.

Taken follows the exploits of former CIA operative Bryan Mills (played by Liam Neeson), as he tries to rescue his 17-year-old daughter Kim Mills (played by Maggie Grace) from a human trafficking ring in France. At the beginning of the film Kim and her friend Amanda (played by Katie Cassidy) travel to Paris, France to stay at Amanda cousin's apartment. Prior to leaving for Paris, Kim lies to her father about where she is traveling to, and why she is traveling to Europe. After arriving in Paris by plane, the two meet a young man named Peter (played by Nicolas Giraud) at the airport. Peter is a scout for a human trafficking ring, and he offers to share a taxi with Kim and Amanda, he also offers to take the girls to a party. The girls accept his invitation, and Amanda informs Kim she plans to have sex with Peter at the party. After discovering where the girls are staying Peter informs the trafficking ring, and several men break into the apartment and kidnap Amanda and Kim. At the time of the kidnapping Kim is on the phone with Bryan and she shouts out the physical descriptions of the men so her father can later identify them.

After the kidnapping Amanda is sent to a brothel, where she is drugged and is eventually found dead of an apparent overdose by Bryan during his search for Kim. At the

brothel Bryan finds Kim's kidnappers and kills them all. Because Kim is a virgin, unlike her companion Amanda, she is more valuable as a sex slave than a prostitute. She is sold to auction owner Patrice Saint-Clair (played by Gerard Watkins), who auctions Kim off to the highest bidder. Bryan discovers the auction, and at gunpoint forces a middle-eastern bidder to purchase Kim. Bryan is discovered and captured by Saint-Clair's men and the middle-eastern bidder leaves with Kim bound for the yacht of a sheikh. Bryan breaks free, kills all of Saint-Clair's men, and Saint-Clair and rushes to the yacht where he kills every man onboard. He finds the sheikh and Kim in the bedroom, and shoots the sheikh in the head. Bryan rescues his daughter, and protects her virginity.

Taken reproduces all four perceptions of human trafficking, and thus helps to influence the perpetuation of these perceptions. The students who identified *Taken* as influential in their understanding of human trafficking reproduced these perceptions in their descriptions of human trafficking, and in their descriptions of what they remembered from the film.

Human Trafficking is Synonymous with Sex Trafficking

In the film *Taken* Kim Mills and her friend Amanda are kidnapped to be sold for sexual exploitation. This reinforces the notion that sex trafficking and human trafficking are synonymous. Participants used the imagery of *Taken* to explain human trafficking, and thus explained human trafficking as sex trafficking.

Researcher: So what image comes into your head when you hear the term human trafficking? What do you picture?

Participant 7: Honestly, I picture *Taken*.

Researcher: Can you tell me a little about *Taken*? What do you picture from *Taken*?

Participant 7: Well the first thing when I hear human trafficking, before I saw *Taken*, but then I see his daughter being taken from the room and then when he goes and looks for her he finds the little area where all the women are who are drugged up and all the guys who are there who are having sex with them and doing whatever they want and then he follows the lead to an actual house where there's more women and then he goes to where his daughters being sold to the highest bidder. And then he goes to the personal yacht of the guy who bought his daughter. I kind of go through the whole scene of that.

(Junior, Female)

The above participant grasps on to the images of sex trafficking in *Taken* to describe what they imagine occurs during human trafficking. These same scenes, or a selection of them, from *Taken* were repeated by the other participants when talking about human trafficking.

Participant 18: Like, the movie *Taken*, they take them somewhere and they drug them and then they brainwash them and then that is their life they have no chance of escaping.

(Junior, Female)

The use of these particular scenes to explain human trafficking also reinforces the idea that there is a specific narrative that goes along with victimization, and to be a victim you must fit into that specific narrative (Loseke 1992). Narratives about crime can be created by the media and sensationalized in ways that distort reality (Best 1999). The reality of human trafficking is that the majority of cases investigated and prosecuted at this time are in fact sex trafficking cases, but 17% of cases investigated between 2008-2010 were labor trafficking (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). It is also important to note that the actual experiences of victims of sex trafficking differ, but the overwhelming majority of sex trafficking cases do not occur in the way that is depicted in *Taken* (UNODC 2014).

The film *Taken* depicts trafficking people for sexual exploitation. While it is a fictionalized account, the fact that it depicts a real crime has caused it to influence participant's perceptions of what human trafficking means. *Taken* supports the perception that human trafficking is sex trafficking by showing only sex trafficking, and showing sex trafficking in a sensationalized way.

Human Trafficking Victims are Exclusively Women and Children

The myth that human trafficking victims are women and children is connected to the perception that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking. In the film *Taken* the characters that are trafficked are women or teen girls, and the traffickers are depicted as men. Participants understanding of human trafficking as sex trafficking influenced who they expected trafficking victims to be. Those who referenced *Taken* as influential in helping them visualize human trafficking identified girls and women as victims of human trafficking.

Researcher: Now I'm going to ask about human trafficking like what comes to your head. So when I say human trafficking what's your image? Describe it for me. What do you see?

Participant 4: The movie Taken.

Researcher: Describe it to me. What's going on in your head? What's going on in Taken?

Participant 4: Girls going over to Europe or something, meeting nice people or so it seems, and then they end up never being seen again.
(Sophomore, Male)

The reality of human trafficking is that the majority of victims of human trafficking are female (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). However there are male victims of trafficking and they have been invisibilized by policy makers, the media, and advocates (Jones 2010).

The male victims of human trafficking do not fit the sex trafficking narrative, and since sex trafficking is assumed to be human trafficking they do not fit the human trafficking narrative. Those victims who do not fit expected narratives, or who are confused about their own status as victims can be mislabeled as perpetrators and imprisoned (Stolz 2010).

The film *Taken* depicts the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation. While reality of human trafficking is that the majority of identified victims are women and girls, there are men who are victims of trafficking and they are obscured. *Taken* supports the perception that human trafficking victims are women and children because women and girls are the only victims depicted in the film.

Human Trafficking Victims and Race and Ethnicity

Beginning with *Traffic in Souls* in 1913 the fear of white slavery has been depicted in films for a century. *Traffic in Souls* follows the story of a young Swedish immigrant woman named Lorna, who is tricked and imprisoned by a man named Bill Bradshaw. Lorna's sister Mary, and Mary's sweetheart Larry begin a search for Lorna that uncovers a gang of white traffickers, and eventually ends with Bill Bradshaw being shot and killed and Lorna being rescued. *Taken* follows the story of a young American woman named Kim, who is tricked and imprisoned. Kim's father Bryan begins a search for Kim and uncover a gang trafficking western European and American woman. Bryan kills all the traffickers, and rescues Kim. The film *Taken* is a new reincarnation of the white slavery narrative.

The white slavery narrative is one that focuses on the protection of white girl's virginity from "non-white" or foreign men (Doezma 2000). The terminology "white slavery" may no longer be directly used to describe human trafficking, but the values and beliefs

associated with it are still prevalent. In *Taken* Bryan Mills is fighting to save his daughter's virginity. In the auction scene, she is identified as "the best" because she is certified pure. Protecting his daughter's virginity from the middle-eastern Sheik is the justification for all the dozens of people Bryan Mills kills, and the innocent people who he injures along the way.

The film *Taken* depicts the trafficking of white women and girls for sexual exploitation. *Taken* repeats a white slavery narrative that is over a century old. This is important, because 25% of the participant repeated the same white slavery narrative. It is also important because the majority of victims of human trafficking are people of color (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011).

Human Trafficking Victims are to Blame for Their Victimization

Victim blaming occurs across crimes, and can appear in the perceptions people have about human trafficking. Victim blame occurred in 45% of the participant's interviews, and while none of the participants directly connected their statements blaming victims to *Taken*, victim blame does appear prevalently in the film.

In *Taken*, Kim Mills is taken as a result of lying to her father about her intentions, and not following his instructions upon arrival in Paris. These are the "flaws" in Kim's character and behavior. The participants who victim blamed identified character flaws and behavioral flaws as the reason victims were trafficking. Amanda is kidnapped because of her assumed promiscuity. Amanda indicated that she planned to have sex with the man who ultimately led human traffickers to the two girls, and by making that intention clear she is subsequently found dead in a brothel. This is similar to the victim blame that is

experienced by rape survivors deemed too sexual are considered culpable in their victimization (Whatley 2005; Workman and Freeburg, 1999). However, in the case of Kim she is not overtly sexual and is identified several times as a virgin. These are her redeeming qualities that allow her to be rescued by her father. This is connected with the white slavery narrative, and the emphasis placed on virginity. While Kim may be partly responsible for her kidnapping, she is still virginal and innocent; therefore, she is worth saving. In contrast Amanda is partly responsible for her kidnapping but is not virginal, and not innocent; therefore she dies.

In *Taken* victim blame is used as part of the plot device that moves the story forward. Kim and Amanda's "flaws" are laid out, and then used to explain and justify the victimization they experience. Kim, who is a virgin, experiences being kidnapped, drugged and sold to the highest bidder, but ultimately comes home with her virginity and life intact. Amanda, who is no longer a virgin and claims the desire to have sex with a stranger, is kidnapped, drugged, and murdered in a brothel.

Is *Taken* an Accurate Depiction of Human Trafficking?

Taken is a sensationalized depiction of human trafficking, and does not reflect the reality of the majority of human trafficking cases occurring within the United States, or even occurring in France. The vast majority of victims of human trafficking in France come from Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Brazil, China, and the Philippines (GRETA 2012). France is also one of the 8 common European destinations for human trafficking victims from South America (UNODC, 2009). The majority of women

who experience sex trafficking in France are from Nigeria, Bulgaria and Romania while the majority of children trafficked for sex work are from Romania, North Africa and West Africa (US Department of State 2013).

Participants Reflection Media Representations

While participants used media as a source of information, and to help them build their perceptions and support their perceptions, many participants questioned the representations. There were three perspectives on media representations: those who believed they were accurate, those who believed they were partly accurate and those who believed they were inaccurate. There were 14 participants who answered questions about the accuracy of media representations, the remaining participants claimed they did not know whether the representations were accurate or not, or were not asked during the interview about the accuracy of representations in the media. Seven of those who did answer about media representations did believe they were partly accurate but questioned the overall accuracy of the representations.

Researcher: Do you think that TV shows are accurately portraying trafficking?

Participant 10: A little bit, but not a lot.

The participants who questioned the accuracy of the media depictions identified two main problems, the depiction of the process and the overall dramatization of the representations. Only one participant questioned the accuracy of one of the four perceptions of human trafficking by challenging the representations of human trafficking's focus on women and girls.

Researcher: What do you think is inaccurate?

Participant 10: That they're all like being sold and they're living in groups and things. I think it's one or two well probably it's not all women too. There's probably or young girls and boys and men too, well not necessarily men, but young men that get sold into it too. So I think it's kind of stereotypical that it's a female thing.

The remaining six participants who questioned the accuracy of media depictions were split evenly between those who focused on the media's depiction of the process of human trafficking, and the media's depiction of the over dramatization of human trafficking. Those who identified the depiction of the process as the problem questioned only the process and did not identify other aspects of media depictions of human trafficking as potentially inaccurate.

Researcher: Do you think that the movie Taken depicted trafficking accurately?

Participant 3: Maybe. The way they went into the house to get the girl I don't know if that would be real. I think it's more off the street that it would happen, but yeah I could see that being kind of a semi-real depiction of it.

The participants who questioned the accuracy of the depictions because of over dramatization questioned the narrative as a whole, but still thought there may be traces of reality within the narrative. Again, there was no direct questioning of other aspects of the depictions that may be inaccurate.

Participant 16: It portrayed it in a weird sense where it wasn't really about trafficking it just had to do with it I guess. So I know that it happens in that way whether it's that dramatic or.. Yeah, I guess I don't know if that was a good representation of what actually happens in every case or if that was a really extreme one. I think it depicts real situations, but to what extent I guess I'm not sure.

There were three participants who believed the media representations of human trafficking were accurate. These participants used the same representation of the human

trafficking process that the previous participants question, to support their belief that the depictions are accurate.

Participant 18: I would say it would be somewhat accurate, cause I mean the girls are traveling somewhere abroad, they're taken and they're taken somewhere where they don't know where they are at, they're drugged and who knows what's going to happen?

There were also four participants who believed the media representations of human trafficking were inaccurate. These participant's reasons for inaccuracy varied. Two identified over dramatization as the reason these depictions are inaccurate. This was similar to the use of over dramatization to question the depictions, but these two participants said the depictions were wrong because of it. One participant believed that the depictions of human trafficking were not big enough and that the media was sugar coating the problem. Finally, the one participant, when asked if media representations are accurate stated:

Participant 4: Probably not, but I don't know anything about it so that's just what I always picture.

Just over half of all participants identified problems in the representations of human trafficking in the media. Of these seven believed that there were still some accuracy to the depictions, whereas four believed that the depictions were inaccurate. This shows that while representations of human trafficking in the media does influence criminal justice student's perceptions of human trafficking, there is an awareness among these students that these depictions may be flawed. However, only one participant challenged a perception of human trafficking reinforced by media depictions. The other participants did

not challenge the accuracy of the perceptions of human trafficking, and did not mention the perceptions in relation to the questions about the accuracy of the media depictions.

Conclusion

In this section criminal justice students perceptions of human trafficking were investigated. It was discovered that criminal justice student's perceptions of human trafficking are based on media representations of human trafficking, and that four perceptions about human trafficking appear in media representations of human trafficking. The four perceptions of human trafficking are: human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking, human trafficking victims are women and children, human trafficking victims are certain races/ethnicities, and human trafficking victims are partly to blame for their victimization. The four perceptions of human trafficking are produced in the media, and then reproduced in participants perceptions of human trafficking. This is particularly true of the entertainment media. The film *Taken*, which was mentioned by 17 of the 20 participants at some point, reproduces all four perceptions of human trafficking. *Taken* is the story of young white women being sex trafficked. She is a victim of trafficking because of the choices she makes, but her redeeming quality is her virginity which allows for her to be saved.

The media's representation of human trafficking is problematic because reproduction of these perceptions ignores and invisibilizes those who do not fit within the narratives the perceptions create (Jones 2010). This can lead to victims of human trafficking being misclassified and identified as criminals as opposed to victims (Stolz

2010). The participants in this study are those who are interested in pursuing careers within the criminal justice system, however their understanding about who is a victim is based on a narrative that does not align with the legal definition of human trafficking and the available data. Human trafficking is a crime that affects all sexes, races and ethnicities (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). It is a crime that includes labor exploitation as well as sexual exploitation (TVPA 2000). Finally, it is a crime that the criminal justice system, and those who work in it, are not always prepared to identify because of misperceptions about who is a victim (Farrell et al 2010).

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Introduction

Human trafficking has increasingly been represented in the media (Gulati 2010; Marchionni 2012). The news media's representations of human trafficking are one-dimensional and flat (Cheng 2008), and focus on episodes of crime as opposed to survivor or advocates stories (Gulati 2010; Johnston et al 2014). The entertainment media presents human trafficking in a sensationalized and hyper-sexualized way (Small 2012), and creates a narrative of the innocent white virginal victim and the villainous non-white or foreign trafficker (Baker 2014; Szörényi and Eate 2014). In this study I argued that media representations influence criminal justice student's perceptions of human trafficking. I found that criminal justice students use the narratives from the entertainment media to understand human trafficking, and that these representations in the media help to create and reinforce the four perceptions that criminal justice students believe about human trafficking. In this final chapter, I will discuss the implications of the four perceptions of human trafficking, and provide suggestions for future research.

The first of the four perceptions is that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking. The perception that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking appeared in 17 of the 20 interviews conducted. The media was identified by 13 of the participants as influential in helping them shape their perceptions of human trafficking, with 12 specifically citing the medias depictions of human trafficking as sexual exploitation as influential in shaping their perceptions. Media depictions of human trafficking are primarily depictions of sexual exploitation (Marchionni 2012). Small (2014) and Baker

(2014) in their analysis' of human trafficking in entertainment media, including the film *Taken*, found that the depictions of human trafficking were sensationalized, portrayed instances that are very rare as normal, and were overly sexualized. Media representations of human trafficking help shape and perpetuate the perception that human trafficking is sex trafficking by focusing on sex trafficking, and excluding labor trafficking from the narratives they create.

The perpetuation of the myth that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking is problematic because, *The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (UNODC 2009) identified sexual exploitation as the most commonly reported form of human trafficking, but at the same time acknowledged that biases and other factors could be impacting the statistics, and that other forms of human trafficking are underreported. Farrell et al (2010) found that many law enforcement agencies are not yet prepared to identify victims of human trafficking, and that misperceptions about human trafficking can lead to misclassification of human trafficking victims as offenders. Because of the way media shapes perceptions of human trafficking, expansion of media representations of human trafficking, to include representations of labor trafficking might help to increase awareness about labor trafficking and perhaps increase reports of labor trafficking due to increased awareness. Broadening media representations will also impact criminal justice students, because they are consumers of media, however education for those in the criminal justice system about the legal definition of human trafficking would help to increase the understanding within the criminal justice system that human trafficking is not synonymous with sex trafficking.

The second perception is that human trafficking victims are exclusively women and children. The perception that human trafficking is synonymous with sex trafficking genders human trafficking in a way that supports the myth that women and children are the exclusive victims of human trafficking. Eight of the 20 participants specifically identified women and children as victims when asked about what they imagine when they hear human trafficking. Banks and Kyckelhahn (2011) found that 91% of the confirmed cases of human trafficking did include a victim that was female. However, it is likely that the number of male victims of human trafficking is underreported due to preconceived ideas about what it means to be a victims of trafficking (Surtees 2008). Jones (2010) points out that the media's representations of human trafficking as a crime experienced by women and perpetrated by men, leaves male victims of human trafficking voiceless. Again, an expansion of media representations to include diverse experiences of human trafficking could increase awareness about male victims of human trafficking. Increasing education about male victims of human trafficking for those within the criminal justice field, or those interested in going into it, could also help to increase the number of reported male victims. Currently it is estimated that the number of male victims is underestimated because male victims are underreported (US Department of State 2013).

The third perception surrounds human trafficking victims and race/ethnicity. Human trafficking is rooted in the white slavery fears of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fear of white virginal girls being sexually exploited led to international agreements and awareness campaigns that focused on protecting young white girls from traffickers. In the mid-twentieth century the 1949 *UN Convention for the*

Suppression of Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others moved away from the previous language of white slavery and towards the present day terminology of human trafficking. However, the white slavery narrative is still used in media representations of human trafficking, the most recent being *Taken* (2008).

Twenty-five percent of the participants identified white women and children as the race they think is most likely to be trafficked. Human trafficking crosses racial and ethnic boundaries, and all races and ethnicities are potential victims of human trafficking. While 20% of confirmed victims of human trafficking identify as white, 31% of human trafficking victims identify as black (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). Another 25% of the participants identified human trafficking victims as “foreign” “international” “immigrant” or “Mexican”. However, data from human trafficking cases between January 2008 and June 2010 shows that in 56% of those cases the victim was a U.S. Citizen/U.S. National, and if permanent U.S. residents are included the number goes up to 59% (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). These findings are problematic because 50% of the participants identified victim racial and ethnic characteristics that do not align with the data available. Again, media representations of victims of human trafficking was identified as helping to shape the perceptions of criminal justice students surrounding the race and ethnicity of human trafficking victims. Expansion of entertainment media beyond the white slavery narrative, and foreign victim narrative would raise awareness of human trafficking victims as a crime that impacts all races and ethnicities. Increasing education and awareness regarding human trafficking and race/ethnicity for those with an interest in going into the criminal justice field could be beneficial to ensuring human trafficking victims are properly identified.

The perception that human trafficking victims are to blame for their victimization is the fourth and final perception. This perception appeared in 45% of the participants interviews and was used to identify certain traits that human trafficking victims should have. The identification of certain behaviors as increasing the likelihood of human trafficking, is similar to the victim blame experienced by sexual assault victims (Schuller and Wall 1998; Whatley 2005; Workman and Freeburg 1999). The emphasis was placed on the victims of human trafficking, and few participants mentioned human traffickers without being prompted. This is similar to domestic violence, where the emphasis is placed on victims as opposed to the abuser, and this emphasis is reinforced by media representations (Berns 2009). This is particularly concerning that those with an interest in criminal justice may partake in victim blame. Increased education about victim blaming, and human trafficking may help to decrease the victim blame seen in these interviews.

The film *Taken* (2008) was mentioned by 17 of the 20 participants during the interview, or after the interview had concluded. *Taken* reproduces the four perceptions of human trafficking by focusing on the sex trafficking of white women, and creating a storyline that is ripe with victim blame. Small (2014), Baker (2014) and Szörényi and Eate (2014) in their analysis' of human trafficking films identify *Taken's* depiction of human trafficking as problematic because it does not reflect the vast majority of cases and sensationalizes human trafficking.

Situating Perceptions within the Legal System

The four perceptions of human trafficking are influential because of confusion about what legally constitutes human trafficking. In the United States the Trafficking Victims

Protection Act is the federal act that identifies trafficking in persons and related offenses as federal crimes and gives a definition of what constitutes human trafficking. The TVPA defines human trafficking as:

“(A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or

(B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery”(TVPA, 2000: Section 103, 8a and b)

Different states have their own laws to combat human trafficking, but most are based on the federal definition given by the TVPA. Human trafficking can be prosecuted on the state or federal level depending on the crimes committed, and location of the crimes. The Polaris Project, a NGO that combats human trafficking, rates states and the District of Columbia based on 10 legal categories and divides them into three tiers with Tier 1 being those states that have made the most advances towards combating human trafficking, and Tier 3 being those states that are lacking the most legal protections, provisions and services to combat human trafficking (Polaris 2014). There are 40 states that are Tier 1, which is up from 32 in 2013 (Polaris 2014) There are nine states that are Tier 2, and two states that are Tier 3 (Polaris 2014). This demonstrates the differences in state laws to combat human trafficking across the United States. Variations in laws, and lack of uniformity about what human trafficking is leads to confusion by those in the criminal justice system, and those

outside the criminal justice system (Gozdziak and Collett 2005). The term human trafficking is complex because it has many legal meanings associated with it, and these legal meanings vary across the United States. However, all states in the United States have laws prohibiting human trafficking, but what constitutes human trafficking may vary by state.

Feminism and Human Trafficking

Feminists in the late 19th century championed the fight against white slavery, which eventually became human trafficking (Doezema 2000). Today, there is variation in beliefs about human trafficking amongst feminist scholar's and activists. There are two main perspectives that I will address in this section. The first of these perspectives is the abolitionist perspective and is founded in the belief that all those they identify as victims of human trafficking are in need rescuing. The second of these perspectives is the belief that advocates need to focus on autonomy and agency as opposed to labeling people as victims.

The feminist abolitionist's perspective that all victims of human trafficking need rescuing is founded in a radical feminist perspective. The goal of these feminists is to save trafficking victims from sexual exploitation by saving them from sex work. These feminists identify sex work as a form of gendered oppression, and are quick to identify sex workers as victims of human trafficking. They believe the bodies of sex workers are a battleground that must be protected from sexual objectification (Szörényi 2014). This perspective is shared by Evangelical Christians, and both groups have worked to raise awareness about sex trafficking and fight to "save" those they identify as victims from working in the sex industry (Bernstein 2007).

There are feminists who challenge the abolitionist view of human trafficking, and believe that the victim narrative that abolitionists use is one-dimensional and removes agency and autonomy from the victims (Meyer 2014). Liberal feminism is the perspective that these feminists beliefs are founded in. These feminists believe that while human trafficking is an important problem, it is one that needs to be addressed in a way different than abolitionists are addressing it. These feminists have many different ideas about how to address human trafficking, but most argue that victims need to be given agency and support in their decisions whether to perform sex work or not.

Suggestions for Future Research

It is suggested that future research expand to study other geographical areas, institution size, and college majors, as these were limitations in this study. Additionally, investigation of the perceptions of those employed in the criminal justice system would allow for a comparison between perceptions of human trafficking prior to gaining employment in the criminal justice system and after gaining employment in the criminal justice system. It is also suggested that future researchers expand to investigating criminal justice student's perceptions of other crimes, and the way the media impacts criminal justice student's perceptions of other crimes.

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APPENDIX . DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Demographics of Participants	
Sex	
Male	7
Female	13
Race/Ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian	17
Hispanic	2
Black	1
Year	
Freshman	0
Sophomore	5
Junior	5
Senior	5