

THESIS

PROSTITUTE, VICTIM, SURVIVOR, WOMAN:
EXAMINING THE DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES SURROUNDING WOMEN IN
SEX TRAFFICKING SITUATIONS

Submitted by

Julie Lynn Taylor

Department of Communication Studies

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WE HEARBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JULIE LYNN TAYLOR ENTITLED PROSTITUTE, VICTIM, SURVIVOR, WOMAN: EXAMINING THE DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES SURROUNDING WOMEN IN SEX TRAFFICKING SITUATIONS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

Committee on Graduate Work

Cindy Griffin

Pamela Coke

Advisor: Kirsten Broadfoot

Department Chair: Sue Pendell

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

PROSTITUTE, VICTIM, SURVIVOR, WOMAN: EXAMINING THE DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES SURROUNDING WOMEN IN SEX TRAFFICKING SITUATIONS

Within the realm of sex trafficking, the discourse that describes women often floats between naming the women as victims or as agents. To be an agent assumes that women are complying prostitutes. To be a victim assumes that the women are being put in the situation against their will. Significantly, the perpetrator rarely is discussed. Moreover, in most descriptions, the woman is described as the lone actor in the rape and its aftermath. Interviews were conducted with four different organizations within Colorado that understand and describe sex trafficking situations in unique ways. Through the interview data, discursive connections and discrepancies were illuminated, allowing for the researcher to follow the flow of discourse among organizations. In this study, the consequences of these descriptions, and their impact on voice, agency and space of action, are examined.

Julie Lynn Taylor
Department of Communication Studies
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Summer 2010

DEDICATION

To all women

who are

(or have been)

sexually exploited...

Strength,

Hope,

&

God Bless

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This project would not have been possible without multiple conversations that helped make sense of and inspire the work within this project. Thank you to those who challenged me and exclaimed that sex trafficking was not an issue, because you only encouraged me to search harder for answers. I will do my best to thank those who come to mind; however, there are so many people who have assisted along the way.

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I will remember, that I “cannot change the world by dinner...but maybe by dessert.”

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CONFESSIONS: COUNTRY GIRL TURNED FEMINIST SCHOLAR

I grew up in a town that is dedicated to conservative commitments both politically and economically, and within gender roles. It was not until I went to college that I discovered the legitimacy of feminist scholarship. I learned that there was important work to do in this realm in order for women to achieve equality and respect. My sophomore year of undergraduate work for example, I was introduced to the book *Redeeming Love* by Francine Rivers. This book opened my eyes to the world of sex trafficking and provided a new perspective that I had never considered. During an undergraduate English class taught by Dr. Pamela Coke, I constructed a video on prostitution as I understood it within the United States. At conclusion of my video viewing in class, many students were brought to tears, and Dr. Coke exclaimed that the video was beautiful, powerful and important work. At the time, I did not realize that this capstone project was going to reenter my life and be my life's work.

During my summers I continued researching the issue of prostitution, thinking that this was the only problem that was prevalent within the United States. However, as I increased my research base, I quickly realized that this was not the case.

At the ripe age of 23, I decided that I wanted to change the world; I wanted to change the world in which the women who I was reading about lived. I quickly learned that I would not change the world; rather, I could raise awareness about these women's lives. When I attended a trafficking simulation put on by Not for Sale, CSU, I knew I was doing good work. I walked into the simulation activity confident in who I was,

unaware of the opportunities that I have been granted in my privileged life. As I entered the sex trafficking simulation, the research that I had been working on for essentially years, hit me like a brick. I was standing in a room that was supposed to simulate where I would be living and servicing my customers. All of the stories of the women that I had been reading about came into my mind. I thought about the girl that was thirteen and all alone, the fact that this is where these women would spend all of their days, while I was outside of this reality, struggling through trivial frustrations. Furthermore, in twenty minutes I would be able to escape this scenario, but for so many, this was their reality. It was at this moment that it became important that I raise awareness about the reality of women involved in sex trafficking.

Many women everyday are sold into slavery—by men they love and know—for money. It amazes me that money is more important than a human life. For those who do not know what sex trafficking is, or do not believe that it is a prevalent issue within society, this is for you. This study is designed to raise awareness about sex trafficking, encourage conversation and make a difference in the lives of the individuals who are involved.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“He said, she said. He said it was consensual sex: she said it was rape. How could we have such different views of the same event? If you were a stabbing victim, no one would ask you if you consented to being stabbed” (Hampton, 2007, p. 1).

Sex trafficking, ‘consensual’ rape, and prostitution. The existence of all three acts within the same situation is a serious issue that has plagued our world for centuries.

However, until recently we have not had reason to pay attention to how these three acts are related. Noticeably, the way that we, as Americans, talk about each situation appears to be dramatically different. Rape is often framed as a male physically abusing a female because she solicits herself and provokes the attack. Prostitution is viewed as a profession. Through this lens, women are viewed as agents, choosing to be actors within the sex industry. Sex trafficking, on the other hand, is commonly thought of and described as someone else’s problem, a ‘situation’ that only happens overseas. This common misconception can lead to ignorance.

Sex trafficking produces “about \$28 billion” (Not For Sale, 2009, p. 1) a year and “approximately 600,000-800,000 victims annually are trafficked across international borders worldwide, and between 14,500 and 17,500 of those victims are trafficked into the U.S.” (Department of Health and Human Services, 2008, p. 1). Staggering estimates, yet these individuals are often unaware of the fate in store for them. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (2008), “There are a number of common patterns for luring victims into situations of sex trafficking, including: a promise of a good job in another country, a false marriage proposal turned into a bondage situation,

being sold into the sex trade by parents, husbands, boyfriends, and being kidnapped by traffickers” (p. 1). Indeed, many parents sell their children to “shop owners” so that their children can potentially make money for the family to live, unaware of the life into which they have sold their child. In the book, *Beyond the Soiled Curtain*, authors Grant and Grant (2007) discuss the fate of a 10-year old Nepalese girl taken by her father to a woman who said that the girl would be working in a Bombay factory. The woman said that his daughter would be given a good life and extra money to send home to her family. Reluctantly, the daughter agreed because not only would she be helping her family, but her dad would see worth in her life. However, “unbeknownst to the girl – and even possibly to her father – an honorable job was not awaiting her. She was destined for Bombay, to be enslaved, brutalized, and repeatedly raped. And, most likely, to be infected with HIV. The deal her father cut was her death sentence” (Grant & Grant, 2007, p. 62).

Stories such as this plague the literature surrounding sex trafficking. So how can we most effectively discuss sex trafficking victims (i.e., is victim even the best description?) to raise awareness of their complex nature without reducing it to the acts of vulnerable individuals? It should be noted that most studies conducted around sex trafficking are from other disciplines such as women’s studies, psychology and law, which are related to but outside communication studies. This study contributes to this conversation from a purely communicative perspective on the organizing of sex trafficking and the individuals impacted by these practices.

Using a feminist-poststructuralist lens, this study examines the discourse in action used by both law enforcement and non-government organizations put in place to ‘rescue’

these women and uncover the consequences of the organizations' actions. Such a lens brings an awareness of the language that is being used to provide insights into new ways of speaking about, and to, impacted individuals that enable both awareness and agency. It should be noted that this study focuses exclusively on women who are drawn in and 'victimized' by involvement in the sex trafficking industry because they make up the majority of those affected. However, I do want to recognize that young men and children are also impacted in similar ways.

To shed light on discourse in action, this study is grounded in interviews with multiple organizations that are in some way connected to sex trafficking. Interviews with law enforcement officials and employees within an awareness-raising non-governmental organization and outreach organizations provide insights into the different dimensions of sex trafficking. These interviews identify the flows of discourse(s) through and between these organizations and how they enter into the communities in which they work.

By pragmatically working within the field, a grounded account of the discursive effects of sex trafficking can be produced, which enables new conversations and interest in this area. Are there communicative actions, or a lack of space available, that prohibit the raising of awareness about these women? How do the discursive descriptors used work and what would be appropriate discursive shifts to change the ways organizations work together?

Sex Trafficking: Defined and Explored

Such questions first require an understanding of the scope of the problem and its historical context. The Department of Health and Human Services (2008) defines sex trafficking as, "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a

person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years” (p. 1). Like the slave trade of the eighteenth century, contemporary human trafficking is big business, producing billions of dollars per year for those who perpetrate it (Polaris Project, 2008). Indeed, as Grant and Grant (2007) point out, sex trafficking preceded the slave trade that brought Africans to Europe and North America. They write, “Historically sex was a form of worship [in India]...a man would have sex every day as part of his daily worship. It was not unusual for a man to go to the local temple to have sex. Families gave a daughter to the temple, normally at the age of 12, as an offering to the gods. In doing so, they believed they would be blessed” (p.43). In actuality/contrast, however, Farley (2005), at the Prostitution Research and Education Organization, explains that sex trafficking was “a dominating transformation of a woman into a special commodity in which the man who buys her shapes her into his own physical and psychological masterbatory entity” (p. 1).

There are several economic reasons why sex trafficking becomes a dominating, malevolent force within certain countries. In many foreign countries, women and children are seen as less than human, and more as property and a way for men to make money for their families. According to Bales (2000), natural disasters, wars, and their economic consequences create a fear within women and children as they become prone to trafficking. Similarly, political upheaval causes fear within people and countries, making sex a way for men to try to regain authority and power. The forces of globalization also facilitate the transportation of humans across oceans and borders. Finally, with AIDS running rampant throughout the world, there is a heightened desire for younger, more

pure children to ‘cure’ those afflicted, specifically among “Africans and Asians, who believe that intercourse with a virgin will cure them of AIDS or prosper their businesses . . . The average age of victims is 14” (Grant & Grant, 2007, p. 65). Do issues of economic insecurity and political upheaval help explain why women would be trafficked into the United States? Or do these explanations just further exemplify the lack of scholarship and research surrounding the issues of sex trafficking?

While economic crises may fuel the demand of sex trafficking and the involuntary trafficking of women and children abroad, some researchers also contend that women ‘voluntarily’ (re)turn to sex trafficking because of the money that they can make (Simkhada, 2008). Women return to brothels because of the money and social stigma that they acquire after they leave. Such a return could be perceived as ‘voluntary.’ The women ‘choose’ to go back either because of the economic benefits of being a madam, or because, within different communities, they are shunned since they are no longer pure and have slept with multiple men.

Women also return to these brothels because of the physical, mental and emotional abuse that they incur each day, conditioned as they have been to accept their lives in the brothels, unable to see other options for life outside the brothels. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (2008), “Sex traffickers use a variety of such methods to ‘condition’ their victims including starvation, confinement, beatings, physical abuse, rape, gang rape, threats of violence to the victims and the victims’ families” (p. 1). These individuals often feel trapped by their “owners” and, even if they were given the chance to leave, they stay because of fear (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). Women and children who run away from the brothels or other confinements risk

starvation and being beaten by their pimps/madams, so, for most women, the sexual acts that they must perform on a daily basis are almost better than being beaten (NBC News, 2005). Could these also be the tactics that are at work within the organization of sex trafficking in the United States? Is this why women ‘choose’ to stay and not flee the country or the brothel?

Regardless of the situation, the importance of the community and acceptance of the women is paramount to their recovery (Samarasinghe and Burton, 2007). The way that these women are discussed directly affects their level of comfort and willingness to move away from the brothel life. Crawford and Kaufman (2008) describe the reintegration process for the sex trafficking survivors as, “a difficult task because of the extreme stigma attached to those who are even suspected of having engaged in commercial sex” (p. 908). These scholars found that the best long-term results were achieved when the women were openly accepted back into their families and communities and a stigma was not placed on them (Crawford & Kaufman, 2008). However, in order for there to not be a stigma, the people within the community need to understand that it is not the fault of the women; they are usually lured into sex trafficking as illustrated in the following experience of one individual:

I was taken to India by neighbours, a mother and daughter, whom I knew quite well. They told me they had to go to a market far away to pick up something and asked me to come along. . . . A woman called Asa told me the woman she came with had gone out and would be back later, but she never came back. After three nights, I pleaded with her to let me go. I was told, ‘No, you have been sold and have to work. All Nepali girls have to work.’ (Simkhada, 2008, p. 240)

How can this be achieved discursively and materially? Raising awareness and understanding that sex trafficking is not an occupation of choice, or even an occupation at all, is very important for the mental safety of these women. Sex trafficking is repeated,

forced rape. Understanding this discursive distinction from ‘choice’ to ‘option,’ that can often lead to a forced situation, offers an opportunity for a changed discursive frame and courses of action for those involved.

Currently, research on the subject of sex trafficking that specifically stems from the communication discipline is limited. Communication scholar Bettina Heiss studied the phenomenon of sex trafficking through the frame of Transnational Social Movement Networks (TSMO). Through her research she found that government and non-government agencies may be conducting research in an attempt to cease activity around sex trafficking; however, there is a disconnection from action after the research is completed. With all of the levels of security and law that are involved in the process of stopping sex trafficking, Heiss suggests that communication needs to increase so that all law enforcement officials know what is going on. Heiss concludes, “Even after the passage of federal legislation that criminalizes sex traffickers and grants immunity to their victims, a deep disjuncture between the cultures of federal and state law enforcement agencies prevents local police to enforce sex trafficking laws” (Heiss, 2007 p. 24).

There is also a frequent disconnection between what both law enforcement officials and related NGOs are trying to accomplish. While they should be working together for the same cause, Heiss (2006) found that often they exist in contradiction. The macro and micro levels that exist in relation to activity in sex trafficking, and legislation against it, respectively, operate at two contradictory paces (Heiss, 2006). Heiss (2006) discovered that this becomes especially problematic when scholars are conducting research, because they not only need to conduct research but learn how to

“negotiate the pace differences” (p. 1). Many NGOs or awareness raising organizations work to push for a change in legislation, when in reality, change cannot happen overnight.

Communication scholar Kirsten Isgro (2005) took a different angle and examined the discursive power struggles for women in sex trafficking from a global perspective. Isgro (2005) used Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies as theoretical framework and argues that, even though feminist programs in the United States, such as Concerned Women for America (CWA), are arguing for all women’s rights, they speak from a place of power and privilege. Isgro (2005) writes, “Transnational feminist cultural studies enables recognition that US women are located in a relationship—structured by power—to women around the world” (p. 6). In other words, even though many feminist groups are trying to ‘help’ other women, they need to be cautious in understanding their own positionality within the situation.

Both these studies approach sex trafficking from a transnational point of view, however, if we wish to understand how sex trafficking infiltrates communities, research needs to be done locally, in a contextualized fashion. This study aims to add to this conversation by tracking discourses in one locale (Colorado) and across organizations in that locale to uncover its effects on those impacted by sex trafficking. To try to alter the discursive structure around the women, it is important to first understand the current discursive and organizing systems in place and how those organizations talk about/to/of the women in these situations. Understanding what NGOs and law enforcement officers attempt to discuss, accomplish and the means they use will offer insight into the discourses that keep women victimized in sex trafficking situations. As Isgro’s work has

shown, it is important to be reflexive about studying discourse from a position of power and privilege, especially when interviewing the law enforcement officials to understand how they interact and perceive the women, and then how that either helps the women or just helps to reproduce the cycle in which they exist.

Raising awareness for the women in sex trafficking situations in our communities is important because many women are abused every day while ‘others’ go about living their lives. Men go on vacation, or take a long lunch, and use these women for however long they need. The women are silenced, forced to participate in their own demise. Sending these women money as often suggested by awareness raising NGOs (i.e., Project Rescue, Stop the Traffik, U Count) does not truly help their situation. It merely reproduces the cycle because money does not offer emotional help, support, or understanding. To understand how to release individuals and hopefully prevent others from becoming ‘victimized,’ we must understand sex trafficking as an organizing whole. To this end, Jana, Bandyopadhyay, Dutta and Saha (2002) comment on the effectiveness of shifting the linguistic paradigm for the women involved in sex trafficking and whether or not it was effective. Jana et al. (2002) discovered that “those who have been trafficked should not be perceived as passive victims of their circumstances, manipulated by others, but as human agents, who can – and often do – fight to gain control over their lives” (p. 69). Thus, using a feminist-poststructuralist approach to this series of interviews, I will gain a better understanding of the discourse(s) under which these women are being held captive.

A feminist lens as a governing theoretical frame provides a series of commitments towards gaining voice for women and others involved in sex trafficking.

Poststructuralism, with its focus on language and reality, provides an explanation for the relation between language, subjectivity, social organization, and power. Feminist poststructuralism helps us understand “the mechanisms whereby women and men adopt particular discursive positions as representative of their interests” (Weedon, 1997, p. 12). A feminist-poststructuralist lens will help to illuminate the discursive themes represented within the interviews conducted with four different organizations who each play a different and specific role within understanding sex trafficking. The following chapters will outline the case study and how discourse moves throughout each organization. Chapter two specifically addresses the literature surrounding the study as well as the methods used to conduct the study. Chapters three, four and five discuss the Denver Police Department, Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, and the two outreach organizations (Chrysalis and Prax(us)) respectively. These chapters address the discursive themes that are present within the discourse of each organization. Chapter six then examines the themes and trends in the discourse among all four organizations and looks at common discursive themes as a way of creating a common understanding in the future. Chapter seven combines the results and further discussion as a way of making sense of the data and providing a place to continue in research and thought.

CHAPTER 2: LANGUAGE AS CONSTRUCTED BY MALES

The situation of sex trafficking is a harsh reality for many women throughout the world. Due to the illegality of sex trafficking, a lot of what happens is underground and kept out of the public's eyes. Therefore, having a complete accurate understanding of the severity of the issue is difficult. The complexity of sex trafficking as an organization is astonishing; there are so many different layers and circumstances that must play out in order for the organization to continue as it has for centuries. Feminist-poststructuralism will be used as a way of understanding the complex nature of the organization as well as making sense of the flow of discourse.

This chapter outlines poststructuralist and feminist theories as a way creating a foundation and a lens to use when examining the discourse(s) surrounding sex trafficking. Discursive trends and consequences which have been presented in the literature are challenged and recognized. The research questions that drive this study are explained, as well as the methods used to conduct the interviews with the four different sex trafficking organizations.

Feminism and Poststructuralist Thought

The discourse that people use, the way in which they use it and how they are able to use language and the spaces available for them, directly communicates power. Because women in sex trafficking situations are silenced, they are not being empowered by their discursive situation, rather oppressed. Institutions help to identify and create a space for women in sex trafficking situations. Through the language that they use,

institutions help to reinforce the discursive structures that are in place, making it important to understand the reasons why language is used in the ways that it is.

Language is complex in nature and takes on different meanings within different contexts. Dale Spender (1980) discussed the problematic nature of language for feminist scholars and women in general, due to the origins of the English language. Spender argues that language comes from a patriarchal tradition. Therefore, when women try to participate within conversations they may draw from feminist commitments, but they have to use a patriarchal tool to explain their world. Spender explains that language is:

Constructed by males—has been to allow women to express themselves, but only in male terms. In this way, women remain ‘outsiders’, borrowers of the language...and male property rights to the language are reinforced rather than weakened by women’s use of language. (p. 12)

This is problematic when women either try to enter the dominant discourse and advocate for themselves, or when women advocate for women, other than themselves. Within the elements of language, women become the ‘other’ or the oppressed. Spivak (1985) labeled the oppressed, or ‘less fortunate,’ the ‘subaltern,’ and questioned whether or not they have a voice or a chance to speak and where. ‘Subaltern studies’ then focused on trying to find a space of action for the oppressed to speak and work within (Gandhi, 1998). It is pertinent that a space is created because as Sheila Rawbotham (1973) suggest, borrowing restricts women “by affirming their own dependence upon the words of the powerful” (p. 32).

As a researcher, granting a space to speak, or attempting to represent a group of individuals needs to be carefully considered and thought through (Spivak, 1985). The notion of representing another individual through a specific lens can become problematic if self-reflection of one’s own practices is not examined. Poststructural studies attempts

to understand the complexities of the language choices afforded to the 'subaltern' and seeks to uncover what space, if any, that they are granted within the dominant discourse. This theory also considers the consequences of what is not being said, who or what is being silenced, and through that silence, what is being communicated (i.e., defamiliarization). The considerations of this theory help researchers investigate whether the 'subaltern' can have agency, or access to agency, within the dominant discourse.

A feminist-poststructuralist lens is helpful here to uncover spaces of action for those impacted by sex trafficking. Feminist scholars are concerned with patriarchy, how it has permeated society, and the ways in which we can work to equalize the playing field for women. As Weedon (1997) states, "Feminist perspectives on patriarchy will involve assumptions about sex, gender, femininity, masculinity, lesbianism, identity, and change" (p. 4). Feminist critique, therefore, is most useful when there is tension between a patriarchal dominant discourse and a minority voice and when there is a need to bring about awareness of oppression occurs. When the feminist voice is silenced, people remain unheard and perspectives are lost within society. There needs to be a place for women in sex trafficking situations to speak and be able to take action in their situation.

Feminist-poststructuralism, which is also referred to as postmodernism, derives from a French philosophical background. Male scholars such as Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan demonstrated a concern for the importance for/and complexity of language. Aitchison (2000) explains poststructuralism as a lens that, "refute[s] the notion of one single theory or *grand narrative* capable of explaining a women's position throughout time and across space" (emphasis in original, p. 134). Poststructuralism attempts to deconstruct and make sense of the dominant discourse as a way of understanding what is

lacking in the ‘grand narrative.’ Understanding the micro level of discourse and language helps to complicate the notion of what is not being said through what is being said. Understanding what is being silenced and why helps in recognizing the larger (or macro) workings of discourse(s) in society.

A Feminist-Poststructuralist Approach to Discourse

Language and the way in which we use language is very important and can either empower or oppress the subjects of discussion. Through the discursive structures present surrounding the woman, different meanings can be constructed from the same phrase. With poststructuralist commitments, not everything can necessarily be fixed, because language and power are always in motion, “the plurality of language and the impossibility of fixing meaning once and for all are basic principles of poststructuralism” (Weedon, 1997, p. 82). To alter the language and discussion around sex trafficking, the discursive structure of power in the situation must alter. In the larger context of organizational communication, organizational scholar Murphy (2008) writes:

Discourse is an institutionalized way of speaking that can mark membership in a community. Discourse has already been identified as a common metaphor used by organizational communication scholars to understand how ongoing conversations constitute organizational membership and reinforce institutionalized organizational relationships and practices. (p. 2)

To do effective feminist-poststructuralist work, it is important to recognize and embrace the contrary nature of power relations between genders. Within feminism, the personal is political, and “feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society” (Weedon, 1997, p. 1). As a feminist scholar, much of what is said or done signifies either compliance or resistance toward the norm or standard of what it means to be and perform ‘woman.’

Feminist scholars of discourse juggle multiple constraints around being a feminist, and as such an outsider, and trying to gain access to a dominant voice. Yet, “discourse theory has been particularly productive because of its concern with theorizing power” (Mills, 2004, p. 70). Michel Foucault believes that power plays an active role in everything. We perform power in, around and through discourse. As Mills (2004) explains, “Foucault’s analysis of power has been very influential of feminist theorists, since it seems to be possible to develop a model of power relations which is fairly complex and which can deal with other variables such as race and class without having to prioritise one of them over the others” (p. 70). This plurality of language and multiplicity of positions becomes important when considering the concepts of ‘consent’ and voice.

‘Consent’ and Voice

Working in organizational communication, Deetz (1998) has argued that for organizing forms to prosper, there must be a relationship between both the employer and employee where the employee must think that he/she has a choice in their outcome and status within the company. However, this is only the perceived notion of ‘choice,’ because the employees must work within the confines of what is deemed appropriate by the employer. This is the organizing concept of consent. As Deetz (1998) writes, “Consent often appears in direct forms as members actively subordinate themselves to obtain money, security, meaning, or identity—things which should result from the work process itself without the necessity of subordination” (p. 159). Deetz (1998) continues, “Employees further reproduced this consent through strategically utilizing these produced selves to define systems and acquire rewards” (p. 160). By consenting, women in sex trafficking situations may assume that they have a voice; however, Deetz (1998) states:

From Foucault's conceptions, loyalty can be thought of as a kind of 'consent' to arbitrary institutional arrangements as if they were natural and incontestable. 'Consent' processes designate the variety of situations and activities where someone actively, though often unknowingly, accomplishes the interests of others in the faulty attempt to fulfil [*sic*] his or her own. (p. 159)

Individuals 'consent' when they are trying to obtain things such as money or security, because these are products of the work process itself, so consent is seen as a choice. In actuality, it is not consent if it is in association with subordination of oneself to the goals of the other (Deetz, 1998).

The opposite of consent is the notion of voice. For the purpose of this study, voice is defined as an opportunity to change your situation for yourself and empower yourself through your actions and the use of rhetoric. Deetz (1998) defines voice as "the presence of active resistance to consent processes" (p. 159). Further, "voice reclaims that which was marginalized putting it back into a competitive relation with the dominant interests" (Deetz, 1998, p. 159). By raising awareness of what is marginalizing, women in sex trafficking may gain voice in their situation, and be able to act as 'agents.' As an 'agent' a woman is assumed to have 'control' over her actions and life, 'agency' assumes that there is a 'choice' in the situation.

Discourse and Spaces of Action

To alter the discursive structure by raising awareness and giving individuals voice, a space of action within which to operate must exist. This requires an understanding of the identity and subjectivity of the individuals. As Holmer-Nadesan (1996) explains, "...every discourse interpellates individuals as subjects by locating them within particular subject positions" (p. 57). Subjects try to gain a sense of voice within what Daudi coined a space of action, "Space of action" is used to "express the

individual's 'striving for freedom, for autonomy and for personal interest'" (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996, p. 59). Even though a space of action can be created, Holmer-Nadesan (1996) warns that "freedom is not absolute because the space of action is always grounded existentially in a situation" (p. 59).

A Feminist-Poststructuralist Examination of Sex Trafficking

As a feminist-poststructuralist, Weedon (1997) talks about the discursive production of women's bodies, and the power that women have over their sexuality. Weedon (1997) writes, "sex has become a focal point in subjective identity" (p. 115). Within different discursive structures, women are either empowered or oppressed because of their sexuality. Consider the way that women are discussed within different 'occupations.' If a woman 'chooses' to go into prostitution then she is considered to be a strong woman that is owning her sexuality and using it to her advantage. Even though this may not be an accepted occupation by many, women in this situation are considered to be agents by people within society, having perceived choice over their bodies, and therefore empowered by the situation. On the other hand, women in sex trafficking situations are assumed to be from poverty stricken, developing countries. In this case, the woman is oppressed by her sexuality because she is forced to give consent and use sex to 'pay off' the debt that she has accrued according to her owner. The power struggle within the two described situations appears obviously oppressive, and stagnant in providing these women a definite sense of agency. However, if the discourses around sex trafficking are altered, individuals in sex trafficking may gain agency.

Using feminist-poststructuralism to understand the micro-level workings of discourse is important. Discourse at the personal, or micro, level helps to shape our

understanding of the world. Poststructuralists would argue that experiences and situations can be understood through our use and comprehension of the consequences of language. Gavey (1997) explains, “This does not mean that experience does not exist or that it is not important, but rather that the ways in which we understand and express it are never independent of language” (p. 51). Hence the discourse surrounding the women and used by the women is important to understand. One cannot truly understand the experiences of another without the use of language. Thus, describing the women involved in sex trafficking situations helps to shape the communities understanding of their situation. Certain words carry more weight and consequences than others (e.g., ‘victim’ versus ‘agent’).

Discursive Positioning of Women as ‘Victims’ or ‘Agents’

As stated earlier, individuals impacted by/involved in sex trafficking can be seen as either ‘agents’ or ‘victims’ depending upon the frame of the discursive structure. Philosophy professor Picart explains the difference between women being described as a ‘victim’ versus an ‘agent.’ As a ‘victim,’ a woman is incapable of defending herself from evil forces (Picart, 2008). However, the position of ‘agent’ assumes that the subject is part of the action in a compliant and willing way, while a ‘victim’ is being acted upon (Picart, 2003). Giving a female ‘victim’ agency/transforming a ‘victim’ into an ‘agent’ position and allowing her control within her situation is an effect of shifting the discursive structure. In the act of gaining agency, through an alternative discursive structure, an individual can alter the ‘discursive situation,’ enabling an opportunity for empowerment and productivity within their life, and allowing for change. As Weedon concludes, “A poststructuralist position on subjectivity and consciousness relativizes the

individual's sense of herself by making it an effect of discourse which is open to continuous redefinition" (p. 102). The more diverse discourses available in the situation, the more diverse subject positions available to those involved and the more spaces of action constructed. The dominant discourse, helps to either create or end the ability for the women to have a space to speak.

Diverse subject positions and spaces of action become important when considering the influential and consequential organizing of sex trafficking. As Simkhada (2008) noted in "Life Histories and Survival Strategies Amongst Sexually Trafficked Girls in Nepal," many women become involved in sex trafficking because of their economic status and "women who are already in the sex trade and have graduated to the level of brothel-keepers, managers or even owners travel through their own and neighbouring [*sic*] districts in search of young girls" (p. 241). Why would women who have been through the worst submit others to the same torture? Are the economic freedoms that great? As women who have been silenced and marginalized, why would they force that experience on others?

Perhaps a better question might be whether these women really have a choice in becoming madams. Since they have already been stigmatized from being in the brothels, is this all they think their 'choice' is? Yet as Simkhada (2008) asks, if a woman pays off her debt or is no longer attracting enough men for the madam she can try to transition back into her community? Simkhada (2008) writes:

These girls [sex trafficking victims] reported enormous problems in returning to community life, in particular reporting high levels of social stigma directed at trafficked girls. Frequently, not only society at large, but also parents condemn their daughters morally, and repudiate them. They are fully aware that society looks down on them and therefore offers no hope for a dignified life. (p. 243)

Could it be that a choice enables madams to think that they are in control of their situation, that they are now in control of what once oppressed them? Or do they consent, helping to (re)produce the organization, still participating as a puppet within the situation, not a director with a definite choice? Women may assume they are climbing the hierarchical ladder and that they are participating within dominant masculine discourse, but they may still be oppressed due their gender and view of ‘choice.’

Madams are not the only ones with ‘choices,’ however. Individuals in sex trafficking situations are all given ‘choices’ of different kinds. These choices range across sex with an older man, younger man, or getting beaten. But they are really non-choices, which silence them further and allow them to participate in what will ultimately be the end of them socially and emotionally. The brothel owners, as discussed earlier, or employers, try to make as much money as possible. The women try to earn as much money as they can so that they can pay off the debt that they owe. Both parties ‘consent’ to the organization of sex trafficking as a way of hopefully getting out someday. A reorganized sense of choice furthers their consent, also unknowingly further separates them from an opportunity of freedom. By baiting the women with the idea that they are close to paying off their debt, women then work harder thinking that it is their choice, so that they can get out sooner. However, as the story shows, more fees are acquired, and the women continue to perform and further a discursive formation which leaves them oppressed.

Moreover, the closer the women are to thinking that they are free, the harder they work for the opportunity. Aristotle has written, “The most effective way to motivate slaves is to offer them freedom as a prize sometime in the future” (as cited in Ciulla,

2000, p. 75). Similarly, in a study conducted at the AIMS Company, Deetz (2008) wrote, “AIMS’s financial gain is greatest the closer they can keep employees to the very brink of exit” (p. 159). Brothel owners make sure to keep freedom within sight, but conveniently unattainable. They understand that they must allow the women to think that they have a choice in their action, creating a false perception of agency. In this way women in sex trafficking may feel as if they are drifting in between the subjectivities of agent and victim; however, this is all a ploy to get the ‘ghost in the machine’ to work harder (Ciulla, 2000). When described as ‘victim,’ the women in sex trafficking are assumed to have less agency and control. These women, not choosing to have been in this situation, may receive action upon them, but action is forced and agency revoked (i.e. rape). Such a discursive structure continues to oppress and removes voice.

On the other hand, when described as an ‘agent,’ such as a ‘prostitute,’ it is assumed that women choose these actions; that the actions are voluntary. But this may be a false agency at work. Even though it may discursively appear that women, who have a choice, suffer less oppression or a greater voice, they are still constrained by forced material sexual acts. Professional call girl Nancy Chan discusses having the ‘freedom’ to choose her clients, yet still having the constraints of meeting a quota each week (Quan, 2001). She assumes agency in her life, but is still oppressed by the acts that she must perform each night, further silencing her voice.

To construct a space of action in a sex trafficking situation, participants have to have an active voice. However, women in sex trafficking are without access to dominant discourse and silenced through their victimage. Even madams are without a voice because they ‘consent’ to be a part of the organization, reducing their access to dominant

discourses. These women are seen as being outside mainstream society, but really, they are caught inside a patriarchal discourse which silences them and removes a space for action. Raising awareness about the organization of sex trafficking and the women's lives, can create different discursive structures and reorder, for women to use and a space of action for them constructed.

In summary, this study examines the ongoing discursive conversations around and about women in sex trafficking. Feminist-poststructuralism focuses on the discourses and consequences of the language specifically as it helps to frame and understand the situation for the women, in turn having an effect on or shaping the macro structure in which the women live. These theories help to understand the larger practices at work that keep the 'subaltern,' or women involved in sex trafficking situations, silenced. Having these theories in mind and trying to understand both the macro and micro workings of sex trafficking as an organization, the following research questions guide this study:

1. How do discourses of sex trafficking travel through law enforcement, awareness raising and outreach organizations and impact the organizations individual effectiveness and effectiveness within sex trafficking?
2. What discursive practices exist in the organizations that prohibit the raising of awareness about sex trafficking and those impacted by it?
3. What kinds of 'spaces of action' are created by the discourse(s) of sex trafficking in these organizations for women in sex trafficking situations?

Methods

Secondary sources, while helpful in research, examine issues through multiple lenses. Data has been collected, configured and then reproduced through the

understanding of an author. Realizing this, I comprised my study of primary research as a way of attempting to fully understand the raw discourse that is currently being used within sex trafficking organizations. I conducted interviews with four different organizations that are each a part of sex trafficking in a different capacity. Spending time with research and participants first-hand illuminated discursive themes that I may not have otherwise noticed or questioned. I critically examined each interview transcript, making sense of the data and then representing it in the complexity in which it lives.

Methodological Orientation

My research commitments derive from dialogic and critical perspectives (Deetz, 2001). Taylor and Trujillo (2001) describe a critical scholar to be one that is “generally concerned with revealing, interrupting, and transforming the oppressive dimensions” (p. 168) of functions, and in this case, discourse. Critical scholars tend to have a specific political agenda in mind when conducting research. My political agenda involves creating a space for these women, using a feminist perspective to understand the messiness of the language and attempt to redistribute the discursive power as a way of providing women agency. In order to do this within sex trafficking, I ask questions about the language that is used to describe the women as a way of organizing the discourse into functioning categories. By questioning the discursive system in place, I am able to make sense of its structures and how they are functioning.

More specifically, my work is grounded in feminist-dialogic commitments (while drawing on critical background). Similar to critical studies, dialogic studies are concerned with domination in an organization; however, dialogic studies are more concerned with “micropolitical processes and the joined nature of power and resistance”

(Deetz, 2001, p. 31). Through a dialogic lens, I use interviews to demonstrate the complexities within the discourse surrounding women involved in sex trafficking. Most scholars study organizations or sex trafficked women specifically, but this perspective allows an examination of how language communicates power relationships involving individuals. Dialogic studies are also heavily concerned with discourse analysis, providing a means to examine the micro-level discourses of sex trafficking through interviews and field notes from my participant observation. Using this approach allows me to see more than just a ‘victim’; it allows me to see a larger set of power relations at work.

Methodological Approach

In this study, I conducted interviews and initially intended to do participant observation by helping conduct and evaluate interviews within the Polaris Project, Colorado. Conducting interviews gave me the opportunity to talk with people who were working with different aspects of sex trafficking. The people I interviewed provided insight into their roles within organizations involved in sex trafficking and what they believe they are doing in order to reduce its prevalence. It is important that I used interviews as a way of tracking discourses because, interviews are the best way of getting an authentic feel of how the discourses flow throughout the organizations. Using this method was the most effective way of obtaining an understanding of the discourse(s) that are used pertaining to the women because, my interview questions were delivered in a conversational manner allowing for ‘real everyday talk.’

I also initially wanted to participate within the Polaris Project, an awareness raising NGO, to be able to see how they conduct community research about sex

trafficking. However, through the course of my research, the organization changed affiliations and they were in a transitional period trying to work on their own goals for their research. While the employees remained the same, this transitional time was not the right timing for me to go in and participate within the ‘new’ organization.

Description of Research Sites

Since working with actual women involved in sex trafficking is difficult due to issues of access to the individuals, I originally chose two different organizations that work with these women or data regarding the women—The Polaris Project, Colorado and the Denver Police Department. Both organizations are located in Denver, Colorado, where my research is focused. With a recent raid in Denver that arrested twenty-seven people for sex trafficking (Larson, 2009) people are starting to see that Colorado is a hot-spot for sex trafficking. Located on the I-25/I-70 intersection, Denver “serves as a crossroads for human trafficking and gateway for the Vegas circuit. Denver is also part of another circuit that includes Colorado Springs, Chicago and Seattle” (Metro Vice, 2007, p. 1).

After conducting my initial interviews, however, I realized that there was a discursive disconnection between the two organizations. As a result, I decided to do interviews with two outreach organizations, Prax(us) and Chrysalis as well. Both organizations talk directly with women who are involved in sex trafficking on a daily basis. This missing piece of the conversation helped to bridge the gap between the first two organizations. In the following pages I provide background information for the organizations before discussing actual methods used for the study.

The Denver Police Department. The Denver Police Department (DPD) was chosen for its location in Colorado and its connection with women involved in sex-trafficking. Usually the police department enforces laws surrounding sex trafficking and they are the first contacted in the case of reports on sex trafficking. The police department also sets up sting operations in the hope of reducing the number of people involved in sex trafficking (both pimps and women). I wanted a perspective from individuals who were more likely to talk with the women on a daily basis to gauge what processes are in place around sex trafficking in Colorado. The budget the DPD (2009) has is larger than other surrounding law enforcement agencies, and their web site states “Our department is the largest and most active in the state of Colorado” (p. 1). This becomes important later when understanding how funds are being allocated and how sex trafficking is being ‘moved’ outside of the city lines. In order to conduct interviews, I contacted Detective Mike Ryan who also works closely with the FBI and is in charge of cases such as sex trafficking within the Denver area.

Ryan is also a well recognized detective in Colorado. Detective Ryan “has investigated more than 1,000 sex crimes through the years, [and] estimates \$60 million changes hands every year via illicit massage parlors and escort services currently in the Denver metro area” (O’Connell, 2008, p. 1). Local journalist O’Connell, (2008) quoted Ryan in an interview saying, “When you start talking about prostitution, it’s easy to see the victimization that goes with it” (p. 1). Detective Ryan, and the Denver Police Department, works hard to ‘rescue’ girls from their pimps and provide them with “health care and psychological counseling” (O’Connell, 2008, p. 1).

The Polaris Project/Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking. The Polaris Project is an anti-human trafficking awareness organization based out of Washington, DC. They have local programs in Washington, DC, Colorado, New Jersey, and Tokyo, Japan. Polaris Project Colorado (PPC) first launched their chapter in February, 2005, and has since grown in their grassroots campaigning and community outreach programs. According to their mission statement, PPC (2009) is “committed to advancing the statewide citizen movement against human trafficking through public awareness, information gathering, policy advocacy, and partnerships with local organizations and institutions” (p. 1).

PPC conducts research through their Community Needs Assessment Program (CNA). This program helps to disseminate knowledge of human trafficking within the community, as well as issues of trafficking within the community. However, as of February 1, 2010, PPC transformed into a new organization called the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT). The two main employees are still the same within the organization; however, they are now more focused on Colorado—specific research. Instead of being affiliated with a national organization, LCHT hopes to focus more specifically on the issues that plague Colorado.

Chrysalis. Chrysalis is an outreach organization funded by the government and initially set up through the DPD and the judicial system. Chrysalis was brought to my attention through my interviews with the DPD. Understanding that this was an organization created ‘in the best interest’ of the women involved in sexual exploitation in Denver, I found a contact online through their website and contacted the organization to set up an interview.

Chrysalis is also part of a larger organization called the Empowerment Program. The Empowerment program is a holistic program that offers women drug and alcohol counseling, resources to find a job, and group therapy, among other things. Chrysalis specifically helps women who were arrested for soliciting sex, and offers a three phase course that tries to help give the women the tools that they need in order to go back into society.

Prax(us). Prax(us) is another non-profit, outreach organization, not affiliated with the DPD. Prax(us) has been working in Colorado for a couple of years and as of July, 2009 began their own community organizing program to raise awareness of the situations that women/people live. During the interview with LCHT, the interviewee recommended that if I wanted to understand what the situation was for these women every day, that I speak with Prax(us). As with Chrysalis, I looked on the online website and contacted an employee to schedule an interview.

Employees at Prax(us) serve as a constant in the lives of the women that they serve. The employees help them try to find jobs, housing and better their lives. Prax(us) is focused on allowing the women to be experts in their own lives and respecting that and the 'choices' that they have made. This organization tries to help the women see that their situation is unhealthy and that there can be other options. These employees help to support the women through life.

As previously mentioned, out of the four organizations interviewed, two were initially selected to be the only organizations for this study. The DPD was my first interview because of the role that they play within the nature of public discourse. I wanted to understand sex trafficking through their lens. After, and while still conducting

interviews with the DPD, I interviewed individuals at LCHT because at the time the organization was still connected to Polaris Project, one of the leading awareness raising organizations. Discursively, LCHT opposed many of the themes presented at the DPD. Recognizing the discursive disconnection and gap through the interviews, two other organizations were identified. I contacted each of the outreach organizations hoping to make sense of the discursive opposition that I had noticed with the first two organizations. In the interviews, each organization shed new light on the complexity of sex trafficking not only in nature but through the discourse used and available.

Data Collection

In this study, I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews. The interview groups consisted of workers within law enforcement as well as employees of non-governmental organizations (NGO), both awareness raising and outreach. Initially, I was going to do participant observation within the Polaris Project, by conducting interviews for the organization and helping them gather research/data for their Community Needs Assessment program. However, because my research interviews landed in the midst of their organizational transition, this initial plan was not carried out. I was able to gather my own data about their research goals, but not able to help conduct any interviews for them. However, I feel that without this component of my initial proposal, I was still able to understand the discourse(s) within the organization.

Participants. Using purposive (non-random) sampling, I interviewed NGO employees as well as law enforcement officials. I interviewed the two current employees at LCHT who were also the longest working employees at PPC. Each of the employees at LCHT work in administrative roles and help the organization raise awareness by:

organizing and conducting research, educating people at Metropolitan State University, holding local fundraisers that promote knowledge about sex trafficking in hopes of raising awareness and making money for further research efforts.

I conducted four interviews with two different law enforcement officials at the Denver Police Department in order to understand what, if any, regulations are in place when it comes to sex trafficking and how effective they are in reducing this problem. The two individuals interviewed work in the drug and vice unit of the DPD and have permanent roles working with women involved in sex trafficking and drug violations. The discourse used determines the regulations that are currently in place, in return helping me to attain further insight into the discursive organizing of sex trafficking. Then I interviewed one individual, and the sole employee who runs the Chrysalis section of the Empowerment Program. This interviewee organizes and works with women in sexually exploitative situations on a daily basis.

Finally, I conducted one interview with two different people at Prax(us) in order to understand the street-level function of sex trafficking organizations. Each of these employees are on the streets almost daily promoting healthy life-styles and handing out necessary survival items to women. They also work in a ‘counseling’ role to talk with women in these situations on a daily basis.

Procedures. I personally conducted the interviews on-site (all in Denver) for each organization over the course of two months. To accurately obtain records, I took notes during the interview process, as well as recorded the interviews, if agreed upon by the interviewee. If the interview was unable to be recorded, I relied on notes and then used member checking for the accuracy of my interview transcripts. I typed up each

interview transcript and asked the individuals to evaluate, change or add information to make sure that my facts were correct and that they were being represented correctly. In an effort to respect confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used for each of the participants.

Measuring Instruments. In-depth qualitative interviews were used to provide a broader understanding of the context surrounding sex trafficking within Colorado. The interviews were tailored to the individual participant; however, a standardized interview schedule was used with all participants to guide the interviews and ensure comparable data from each interview and organization. Overall, the interviews tried to first understand the perspective of each organization and then recognize the discourse that was being used within each respected organization.

Within the law enforcement, standard questions tried to understand the situation of sex trafficking within Denver, the role of the law enforcement official within sex trafficking, and then their view and understand of not of the women but the different situations that they are in (i.e., prostitution, sex trafficking, and escort services). The interview questions are available in Appendix A. Members of the NGOs (both awareness raising and outreach) were asked how they discuss the women in sex trafficking and about their role in helping the women involved. Standardized questions ranged from describing their individual perspective of sex trafficking, their organization's efforts to end sex trafficking and then how they view/understand the women and the situation in which they live. The interview questions can be found in Appendix B. The interview questions were different among the law enforcement and NGOs because the roles of the organizations are different within sex trafficking. As law enforcement, the DPD has to

abide by the laws that are in place, whereas, NGOs understand the laws and also recognize that there is a lot of gray area within sex trafficking situations. Since my initial study was going to focus on two organizations and participant observation, I was trying to understand the research that was being conducted through the Polaris Project and their Community Needs Assessment Program; the interview questions for the NGO reflect this.

Data Analysis

I conducted a critical discourse analysis of the language surrounding the description of the women to uncover and produce a productive discursive structure around sex trafficking. Eventually, I would like to help change the way in which people use ‘everyday talk’ to discuss the women involved. However, first, I examined the ways in which sex trafficking organizations are structuring their discourse surrounding the women and whether that is either effective or counterproductive.

To facilitate analysis, the information from my interviews and field notes was open-coded using the constant comparative techniques as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Significant themes in the discourse were identified and examined for patterns and purpose within sex trafficking. Using the open-coded system, I was able to compare the data from organizations using the same discursive themes. The codes were recorded first in a separate notepad then coded directly onto the interview or field notes under review. Each organization had a different set and number of themes illuminated within the discourse. DPD set the groundwork for understanding discursive themes with eleven themes, some of which were combined through discursive analysis. LCHT used six of the discursive themes set by the DPD, Chrysalis has ten themes that were similar to

the DPD, and Prax(us) has four themes. Each of the discursive themes were broken down into different categories to help further explain their function within each organization and to help follow the discourse more easily. The categories of discursive actions are: ‘causes/point of entry,’ ‘defining her,’ ‘other people,’ ‘organizational action,’ and ‘organizational purpose.’ Within each category the discursive themes that explain what the category means are represented. The discursive themes of ‘options,’ ‘perpetrator,’ ‘gathering information,’ ‘language/perspective,’ and ‘caring’ are each used by the organizations. Theoretical diagrams have been constructed, and will appear at the beginning of each analytical chapter, to illuminate the themes, their frequency, and how they related to one another.

Once the themes were diagrammed, I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to uncover the macro and micro levels of discourse and trends that are occurring around sex trafficking as represented by individuals in the organizations. In the chapters that follow I discuss each of the organizations in turn and then discursive configurations. The discursive structure emerges when we examine how discourses move thorough each of the organizations in diverse ways.

In the end there is language, and, as Burke (1966) would argue, language is a “reflection of reality” (p. 45). The language that surrounds individuals involved in sex trafficking everyday describes the reality in which they live. The following chapters will illuminate the discursive themes present within their discourse surrounding sex trafficking. Chapters three, four and five will discuss the DPD, LCHT and the outreach organizations, Chrysalis and Prax(us) respectively. Each organization will be discussed

individually as a way of understanding their individual discursive themes before the organizations are discussed in conjunction with one another.

CHAPTER 3: “PROSTITUTE SOUNDS BETTER THEN *[SIC]* WHORE”

The Denver Police Department

The Denver Police Department (DPD) is located at the heart of downtown Denver, Colorado. Within a sex trafficking situation, the DPD is usually the first on scene if a call or report is made. The duty of DPD is to uphold the law, and so the language and structure of this organization are very clear with regard to ‘breaking the law.’

Within the DPD, the specific unit that deals directly with all of the sex trafficking situations is the Drug and Vice Unit. There are two full-time detectives that are always on staff and six rotating vices within this unit (Participant B, personal communication, January 28, 2010). The criminalizing perspective and discourse of the DPD dominates the media at times of arrests and thus, the community’s understanding of sex trafficking. There is very little room for gray in such a criminalized black-and-white discursive frame of sex trafficking.

I interviewed two different individuals at the DPD. These individuals are identified as either Participant A or Participant B in the following sections to keep their identities confidential per their request. Participant A was interviewed three separate times, twice in person and once for a follow up email. Each interview lasted around two hours. The first interview was not recorded, but was later member checked and the second interview was recorded in its entirety. Participant A asked that the first interview not be recorded because he did not yet know me as a person or researcher. However,

after the first interview, he was able to get to know me, which is why the second interview was recorded. Participant B was interviewed one time for about an hour and fifteen minutes. The interview was not recorded, but was member checked and the proper changes and adjustments were made to the data. The interview schedule used in both interviews is in Appendix A.

Discursive Themes at the DPD

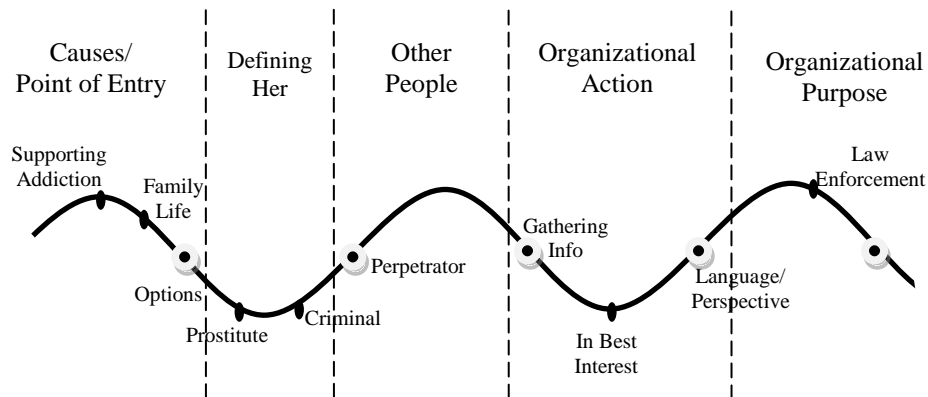


Figure 3.1: DPD Flow of Discourse

Throughout my interviews at the DPD, fourteen prominent discursive themes emerged. In my discussion of the discursive themes, I will present all fourteen discursive themes either individually or in connection with each other. These discursive themes are above in Figure 3.1. The themes are organized by discursive action. The actions are ‘causes/point of entry,’ ‘defining her,’ ‘other people,’ ‘organizational action,’ and ‘organizational purpose.’ Each discursive action helps to demonstrate the discursive themes at work in the DPD, and illuminates the focus and importance of the law as upheld by the DPD. In what follows, each discursive theme will be discussed within its codes, defined according to the context that it was in, and then illustrated with an example. Each section will close with a discussion of the importance and meaning of each discursive theme in the overall discourse of sex trafficking.

Causes/Point of Entry

The discursive action ‘causes/point of entry,’ describes the situation that the women were in before they were in the sexually exploitative situations. The discursive themes in this discursive action are ‘options/family life’ and ‘supporting an addiction.’ The DPD uses these discursive themes as a way of explaining why the women have entered the situation that they recognize as ‘prostitution.’ ‘Causes/point of entry’ helps the DPD to make sense of why the women are entering into the life, and what is causing the population within ‘prostitution’ to continue to grow.

‘Options’ or ‘choices’ that one is granted in life help to create the situations that they currently live in. Not everyone is given the same options, regardless, options lead to situations, which for the women in sex trafficking situations is usually the cause of their presence within the situation. The universal idea of ‘option’ as a white-middle class American idea, assumes more than likely the option of college, and at least a blue-collar job. When someone fails to choose this notion we assume that they have just not worked hard enough and that they need to ‘pick themselves up by their bootstraps.’ So a critical perspective considers the types of options that some people are given, and how those options may not equate to a corner office with a view to everyone.

During the interviews, the discursive theme of ‘option’ involved the codes: ‘option,’ ‘not-forced,’ ‘non-secure (you cannot force someone to do something),’ ‘always remember (these are people’s kids),’ and ‘right (‘correct’ way of living one’s life).’ Through interview data, the discursive theme of ‘options’ suggests that the only time that women in sex trafficking situations were assumed to not have options or make choices, were in the cases of some juveniles. However, not even all of the juveniles were

considered option-less. When asked about why women stay in the system or ‘consent’ to prostituting, Participant A explains, “They [women/juveniles] start off at the age of 15-16 making 150 grand a year, and how do you think they would like it if they went to making 20 grand a year?” As Deetz (1998) described, the process of ‘consent’ is a means-to-an-end. Employees will work harder if they feel that they can get to the end or benefit faster. Therefore, women in these prostitution situations appear to be ‘consenting’ as a way of making money.

Tied to the discursive theme of ‘option,’ the code of trying ‘to get themselves help’ was prevalent in discussions of the women and why they are in the situations they are. ‘Getting themselves help’ assumes that the women are in a place to advocate for themselves within the situation that they are in. If the women have ‘consented’ to the process that they are in, then Deetz (1998) would argue that they have an increase in voice within their situations. Taking this position, Participant A argues:

Everybody still has the right to do whatever the hell they want. And again, a girl can go through Chrysalis [DPD’s outreach organization], the day she gets out she can start doing drugs and prostituting again if that is what she wants to do....Not a girl hasn’t had the option to try to make her life better and some get some help; every single person gets that option.

A feminist lens understands that it is incorrect to assume that everyone comes from the same positionality in life and given the same opportunities in life. For example, if someone has been sex trafficked by a family member since they were young, a feminist-poststructuralist scholar would understand the power struggle in gender relations; understanding that the dominant men are demanding that the oppressed women to provide sex for money. As Murphy (2008) recognizes, discourse within an institution marks membership and a sense of belonging. Therefore, exposure to a certain discourse

marks a sense of normalcy for women within these ‘prostitution’ situations. The discourse and situations that these women are in becomes their life, so when they are offered ways of ‘getting themselves help’ they may not realize that the situation is different because this is all that they have known. Initially families help to create this sense of membership, or introduce us into the discourse that marks our ownership within the life that we will live.

Similar to ‘options’ the discursive theme of ‘family life’ as a cause discusses the women, their backgrounds, and in sex trafficking situations. The codes included in this discursive theme are ‘former link to the police department,’ ‘family life,’ and ‘homeless.’ As Grant and Grant (2007) explain, most of the individuals that end up in these situations are either sold into it by their family members or they are runaways and picked up by pimps, impacting the trajectory of the women and their perspective of how life happens. Participant B explains further, “Quality of family life is a huge issue, if they don’t have a good home, who do they turn to, who would they go home to? They may run away.”

When asked about a way to provide ‘options’ for women, these individuals and raise awareness about life on the streets, Participant B suggested that I create a class for individuals at the homeless shelters. The women in homeless shelters are especially considered high-risk because they do not have the ‘support’ of their families to go to since they have more than likely run away from said home. According to the interviews, trouble at home seems to become the initiating factor in determining the future trajectory for the women in sex trafficking situations.

If ‘options’ in the women’s lives do not elicit a good or secure ‘family life,’ then usually the individuals turn to substance abuse as a way of coping with their current

situation, as illustrated in the interview data. The discursive theme of ‘supporting an addiction’ is comprised of the codes ‘addicted to drugs,’ ‘drugs,’ ‘addiction’ and ‘a need to support.’ Each code suggests a lack of control with substance abuse, and a need to do whatever to support that addiction. Within the DPD, the drug and vice unit are in charge of all crimes related to sex trafficking, because they see sex trafficking and drugs are often interconnected. Participant B claims that often the women in sex trafficking situations are:

Working to support the habit, they only have sex so that they can buy drugs and the necessities of life—food and shelter. Also, they may do drugs to take the edge off of the reality of what they do. It is a hard business and they may not want to be lucid during their time.

Sex is a means to an end for an addicted woman. Participant A further explains:

They can’t stop themselves, they look at it in a cycle of, if I go give a blowjob to a guy I can get \$20 and I can take that \$20 and go buy a piece of crack and then when they get that piece of crack they can get high. When the high starts coming down again, they know that they can go give another blowjob and get another \$20, so it is just a big cycle.

The focus on addiction discursively justifies prostitution as a way to support an addiction.

Focusing on the cause of drug addiction almost alleviates the responsibility of control the pimp has over the woman’s life. Suggesting that women are addicted to drugs and drugs shift the focus of law enforcement into a realm of their activity creates woman’s action as a frame of lifestyle choice. In the eyes of the DPD, in order to support one illegal activity, they must perform another. Money and addiction become the driving motivations for women to perform sex acts. The technicality that women sell this ‘criminal’ enterprise enables the label of ‘prostitute,’ and criminalizes women for an ‘illegal’ activity. Feminist-poststructuralism understands that the DPD correlates one illegal action with another (i.e., doing drugs and exchanging sex for money), one action is

seen as the motivator behind another, creating the discursive production of women's bodies. Through the feminist-poststructuralist lens, sex becomes the focal point of the subjective identity. Because of the illegality of both actions, and how the two actions are discursively connected, the DPD defines 'her' as a 'criminal.'

Defining her

The discursive action 'defining her' refers to the discursive themes used by the DPD to describe the women involved in sex trafficking/'prostitution' situations. The discursive themes in 'defining her' are 'prostitute' and 'criminal.' The discursive themes in 'defining her' help the DPD to label the sex trafficked women. Through the interviews, 'prostitute' becomes not only a label but the identifiable situation that these women are involved in as understood by the DPD.

Labels help to define and create a common understanding of either a person's situation or occupation. The discursive theme of 'prostitute' is the most common descriptor used when law enforcement members talk about women who are being sex trafficked. In the 'prostitute' discursive theme, identifiers for the women are used interchangeably. Different codes that were used by individual participants to identify these women included: 'girls,' 'juveniles,' 'escorts,' 'women' and 'someone's kid.' However, such a wide range of labels used for these women, poststructuralism indicates the degree to which lines are blurred in language and within the system that criminalizes them.

Currently, within the system, there is no distinction between a woman who is a prostitute, or one who is being sex trafficked, unless they are under the age of eighteen (Participant B, personal communication, January 28, 2010). Because the law defines a

person over the age of eighteen as an adult, they are assumed, by law, to have a choice in what they are participating. While the two individuals that I spoke to at the DPD do not always believe that it is the woman's choice to be involved in sex work, they do what the law tells them to do and arrest them. Since there is no direct distinction between the two situations for women, all women in sex trafficking situations are treated the same and given the label of 'prostitute.'

Interestingly enough, it is the terms 'girls,' 'women' and 'prostitutes' that are most commonly used interchangeably. The label 'juvenile' is used when discussing an individual who is under the age of eighteen and someone that they want to try to help through the system. 'Escorts' are talked about as if their life is a chosen profession and a place that is safe for sex work to occur. Participant A described a typical scene in downtown Denver during a prostitution sting. He states "If you see a girl on a local track such as south Federal or obviously Colfax there are some other points in Denver, but it will be a girl that is obviously working as a prostitute." In this example, 'girl' and 'prostitute' are used interchangeably in order to identify the woman. Instead of connecting 'girl' and 'juvenile,' 'girl' and 'prostitute' are connected, lessening the agency of the woman who is being trafficked through their subjective positions. A feminist-poststructuralist lens complicates gender power here and argues that referring to 'her' as a 'girl' creates an image of a helpless individual that only further reduces any chance that she may have power over her situation in the eyes of the police department. The label of 'girl' reduces her chance at power in relation to her gender and age.

Furthermore, in the minds of the DPD, a hierarchy exists within the organization of sex trafficking. Escort services are framed by Participant A as an occupational choice

for women, he noted, “We track a number of escorts, and remember that escorts are professional, they are higher end stuff.” The duties for an escort are not considered as severe as sex trafficking, and are rarely talked about. As explained by Participant B, “In the escort realm, usually madams are women. This ensures usually a more caring atmosphere for the escorts (i.e., when menstruating, they get the time off rather than having to work through it).” Discursively, being an ‘escort’ is explained through a context of ‘agency’ and therefore seen as a choice, rather than a decision that one makes because of the circumstances that they have been given in life.

The term ‘victim’ was used, however rarely, in conjunction with her perpetrator. When ‘sex acts’ are described, they are rarely referred to as a ‘rape,’ usually just as ‘sex in exchange for money,’ implying a consent process rather than a forced act. When asked about the idea of these women being victims, Participant A claimed “those girls are victims, in a lot of ways they may be victimized by something else, or victimized by drugs. They are victims, they need help.” This statement may be an accurate description of what these women live through, drug addiction, family issues and many other things. However, as a feminist-poststructuralist, I would caution the feeling that sex is just another notch on the pole, or an experience that can be separated from the body. Prostitution or forced sex is rape, and sex trafficking is defined as repeated rape that hurts the women emotionally, physically and mentally. Sex becomes the focal point of the identity for the women in sexually exploitative situations. This repetitive nature of the activity does not seem to be addressed within the language of ‘victims’ for the DPD. The DPD understands their purpose to be upholding the law, and sometimes, language and perspectives contradict this action.

When questioned specifically about the language and labels that are used regarding the women involved in sex trafficking or prostitution situations (as labeled by the DPD), Participant A states:

From a law enforcement end, labels, semantics, and terminology don't mean much...it is just used for verbalization, documentation or communication....A prostitute is someone involved in prostitution, without a negative influence attached.... 'Prostitute' sounds better then [*sic*] 'whore.'

In an organization that requires labels be used to identify the credentials of the person who you are talking to, it is interesting to hear that 'language does not matter.' Yet even within this statement, Participant A realizes that language is used for important reasons and has important purposes (i.e., "verbalization, documentation or communication"). He is describing processes that facilitate actions within the legal system. Labels are used as a way of documenting who the women are and who they can be identified as. How the labels here facilitates the way language is used and perceived in the future surrounding the individual who was arrested and labeled. A woman labeled 'prostitute' is connected to that label and treated differently than if she were labeled a 'woman.' Through the plurality of language, labels and language help to depict how people will be judged/identified in the future. The women have been labeled 'prostitute' by the DPD; therefore, they are considered victims of themselves and need to be helped out of the situations that they have put themselves in. As a 'prostitute' the woman is breaking the law, and criminalized by the DPD.

An associated discursive theme of 'criminal,' describes how the DPD sees the actions and initial perceptions of the women involved in prostitution situations. The discursive theme of 'criminal' includes seven different codes that all relate to the idea of 'being arrested' or 'in the wrong' according to the law. These codes are: 'informant,'

‘arrested,’ ‘suspect,’ ‘criminal,’ ‘illegal,’ ‘prostitution,’ and ‘intelligence gathering.’ ‘Criminal’ is similar to ‘prostitute’ in the fact that when labeled a ‘prostitute’ a woman is criminalized for her actions and arrested. As Participant B states, “[a] prostitute is considered a criminal, so she starts off being a suspect in an investigation or arrest.” The woman is perceived to be committing an act that is against the law.

In the perception of law enforcement, the woman, or ‘prostitute,’ is considered to be a ‘criminal’ because she is breaking the law. The ‘criminal’ then becomes a ‘suspect’ as she is arrested for prostitution. If the DPD feels that they can use her for information they construct the women as an ‘informant,’ and use her for ‘intelligence gathering.’ ‘Intelligence gathering’ specifically in this case, is the use of the woman to gather more information on drug lords, or other people that she may know in the drug business. Frequently, the women are connected to the drug business as well, and so this is a way for the DPD to get dual purpose information. Participant B explains further:

The girl starts as a suspect and then becomes an informant for the police department; in return the detectives will try to help her out in court. They never intentionally send a prostitute back to her pimp; they don’t want her to be in danger. The best scenario is to use her information to make a case against the pimp, which then makes him the suspect and her, the victim.

As Deetz (1998) would argue, ‘consenting’ to the process often increases ones access to agency. Even though she can become a ‘victim,’ a woman is still usually tried in court, but let off a little easier because she complied with the DPD’s wishes. Through her access to knowledge desired by the DPD and use of language, the prostituted women creates a space of action, granting herself a voice and increased agency for her trial.

The discursive themes of ‘prostitute’ and ‘criminal’ tend to appear together in the interview data. Prostitution is an illegal activity. During the initial arrest, whether or not

‘consent’ is given to the sexual activity or belief that it is ones choice, is not taken into consideration. The duty of law enforcement is to uphold the law. Within an action that takes at least two people to complete, the perpetrators or ‘other people’ are often left silent. The prostituted women are defined as the ‘criminals,’ whereas, the men who purchase sex or sell the women are defined as ‘johns’ or ‘pimps,’ not linking them to an ‘illegal’ identifier.

Other People

The discursive action ‘other people’ refers to the discursive themes used by the DPD to discuss the perpetrators within the prostitution situation surrounding the sex trafficked women. The discursive themes in ‘other people’ are ‘perpetrator,’ ‘control of the pimp,’ and ‘brothel.’ The discursive themes in ‘other people’ help the DPD to identify the people who are creating a demand for the women or the people selling the sex trafficked women. This discursive action is also how the DPD describes the situation that the women live in once they are being sold for money.

Often, the ‘prostitute’ or ‘criminal’ is the only individual addressed when describing a sex trafficking situation. ‘Other people’ involved in the situation, are left silent and irresponsible for their roles in leading to possible ‘victim blaming.’ Spender (1980) understood language, which creates institutions, to be from a patriarchic tradition, so the women in these situations are dependent on the tools of language which oppress them. Man-made language has created the laws which are in place. In this discursive frame, the women are typically the only party responsible for the ‘crime’ committed and therefore, the only party stigmatized.

The discursive theme of ‘perpetrator’ includes anyone who is further oppressing or cycling the situation in which these women exist. This study defines ‘perpetrator’ as anyone who executes or carries out a crime or deception into action deliberately. For the purposes of this study, the codes for ‘perpetrators’ include ‘pimps,’ ‘madams’ or ‘johns.’ In many academic conversations, the perpetrators are often left out of the sex trafficking discussion when describing the situations women are in. Leaving the perpetrators out of the context merely reifies the notion of man-made language and subject positions, placing all of the blame and responsibility on the ‘victimized’ women who are forced to have sex for money.

Through the lens of the DPD, women are a gateway for getting information about their ‘pimp,’ a perpetrator. Closely related to and often in conjunction with the discursive theme of ‘perpetrator’ is ‘control of the pimp,’ which assumes that the woman is forced and kept in a prostitution situation beyond her control. This discursive theme is comprised of ‘control of the pimp,’ ‘pay off fees,’ ‘debt,’ and ‘issue of age.’ The concern about pimp control comes into play when age becomes a factor. Anyone who is under the age of eighteen is considered a minor and unable to consent to sex acts. Again, within law enforcement, the lines are very blurry among the differences between pimping and sex trafficking. Because of this, it is hard to distinguish between the two other than by age, or if illegal immigrants are involved (Participant A, personal communication, January 14, 2010). Participant A claims, that after a woman is arrested she is “interviewed, referenced to see if they have a pimp, if they know about any children that are involved, if they know about where any drugs are.” When asked about the prevalence

of 'pimp control,' Participant B noted that the pimp is just usually "who she works for." Once more, the discourse of 'choice' emerges at the DPD.

'Pimps' are usually referred to by the women as 'daddy.' Understanding the use of the term 'daddy,' a figure supposed to provide these women with love and support helps to discursively set up a parent-child relationship and a sense of dependence. He makes a connection and they 'fall in love,' and in return for being 'taken care of,' the women have a place to stay and food, and earn money for him. He pretends to be their boyfriend so that they will stay with him. In actuality, the pimp will also have sex with these women to keep them connected, while collecting money from their 'johns' (people who pay for sex). In some cases, a quota needs to be met, and women have to earn a certain amount of money per day. If this is not met, then the women will be beaten. This type of pimp is what the DPD refers to as a 'guerilla pimp,' but they claim that this type of pimp is not prevalent in Denver.

Other perpetrators, such as the men who are purchasing sex, or 'johns,' are rarely discussed in conjunction with the women who provide them with sex. Participant B claims that Denver used to have what was called *John's TV*, where pictures of men who had been arrested for soliciting sex would be scrolled throughout the day/night. This was initially meant as a form of public humiliation; however, funding ran out. Now anyone can view their photos online. When a 'john' is arrested, he is charged with a 'public nuisance,' a misdemeanor. His vehicle is towed if they own it. His face is placed on *John's TV* if it is his second offense, and he pay a minimal fine. When a woman is arrested, she is charged with a class one misdemeanor for public nuisance and then taken

to jail. The number of times she has been arrested will determine her trajectory from there.

When asked about the process of arresting the johns, Participant A discussed 'john's stings.' He states:

I mean a lot of famous people have been arrested for doing that, athletes, Denny Nagel was one in Lakewood, um but we do a lot of that enforcement as well, and again we interviewed those people and we debrief them every single time as well, we talk to them to find out if they are a pimp that was recruiting a girl, or what their situation is or um ya know if they know of any juveniles, we go through them as well, and almost not all of the time, but a lot of times they will sit there and say, they I can't control myself, I couldn't stop myself, Doctors, you got some 55 year old Doctor that's got beautiful kids and married to some socialite and driving his jaguar and the guys breaking down going I tried to stop and I can't, and so addiction drives people in horrible directions.

Interestingly, 'johns' are discursively framed as 'sex addicts' who just need to get in their fix. Yet, instead of being asked to enter rehab for their sex addiction, the male agency performs a powerful subjective identity, where he can continue to pay women for pleasure. When discussing this issue with both interviewees, it seemed more weight was placed on the severity of women's drug addiction over the 'john's' addiction to sex, reinforcing a gendered subjective identity. The language that was used to discuss the situations was even interesting, suggesting a 'choice' within a drug addiction and a lack of 'choice' in a sex addiction. Having a 'choice' over a substance assumes 'agency' within the situation, also placing the substance (drug) before addiction implies a more severe situation and addiction, the woman takes on the agency of a drug addict. Whereas, the john has an 'addiction to sex,' skewing the interpretation into a more medically related issue, something that he has no 'choice' or control over and is something he cannot help. A feminist lens recognizes the contradiction in the switch in power that a woman has only when it further oppresses her in her situation (i.e., she is an agent within

her addiction to drugs, whereas he is not). Viewing an addiction to sex as a medical issue switches the 'johns' subject position and alleviates him from responsibility, assuming that there is a chemical or physiological imbalance that he cannot control.

The final perpetrator is the 'brothel.' This discursive theme includes codes such as 'trafficking,' 'immigrants' and 'brothels.' As described above, trafficking is only considered to be an issue when age or status of citizenship is involved. While talking about the brothels and in Denver, Participant A described why women were not really kept track of. He said that usually the brothel owners keep such close watch on the brothels, that these women are never really noticed. He did state, however, that currently in Denver, Mexican brothels are becoming an issue. He explains:

In Denver, Mexican Brothels are a huge problem, but no one is really talking about them. They will hand out business cards that say "Pizza Delivery" on them. Usually only Mexicans are allowed to access the girls. They pay \$40 for 15 minutes with the girls. Each girl gets \$20. Some may service up to 30 men a day.

The DPD is trying to crack down on these brothels, but because they are so elusive and member entry is usually exclusive to ethnicity, it has been much harder than conducting 'prostitution stings.' The detective work involved in arresting people in a brothel is much more intensive, but usually more lucrative for the DPD. Any money that is collected on stings is put back into the department to help with future research and arrests (Participant B, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

Organizational Action

The discursive action 'organizational action' refers to the discursive themes used by the DPD to illuminate what they are doing in regards to the sex trafficked women. The discursive themes in 'organizational action' are 'in-best-interest,' 'gathering information,' and 'language/perspective.' The discursive themes in 'organizational

action' help the DPD to describe their perspective around the problem of sex trafficking and then discuss what they believe their role is in regards to the issue within Denver.

How organizations internally/externally communicate, helps to determine the actions they can take specifically related to the situation of sex trafficking. 'Language' is one of the broadest discursive themes and the codes within this discursive theme include: 'the movement of discourse (following the flow of where the language goes),' 'language' and 'the importance of discussion and communication,' 'oppression' or 'rescue language' and 'education and research.' One of the main functions of the study was to follow the discourse to see where and how it travels through organizations involved with sex trafficking. Even though I found meaning in the words that were used, questions about language were often greeted by the interviewees with a question and then a justification. Participant A concludes, "It shouldn't matter what term your [*sic*] using for someone as long as it's not used in a hateful context."

The interviewees had difficulty understanding why language was so important or why I was curious about their discussions. It is ironic that the study of language seems tedious to the DPD as it is here, that the labeling of women in sex trafficking begins. How the DPD identifies the women can determine how the general public is going to understand who they are and what they do, helping to create a common understanding, or perspective. 'Language' is a discursive theme within 'organizational action' because how the DPD talks about the situation of sex trafficking/prostitution determines the effort or time that they are going to put into a situation. If the DPD discursively describes these women as 'agents' within their situation, the action that they take would look very different than if the women were described as 'victims.' Poststructural theory helps to

illuminate the importance of words and their meanings in correlation with personal perspective.

The discursive theme of 'perspective' works two-fold within the DPD. There is the 'perspective' of the law enforcement officials and the assumptions it brings, as well as the 'perspective' of the women they are arresting. As the definition of 'perspective' suggests, one's perspective is what they understand or what they can view in the world. The codes associated with this discursive theme are as follows: 'perspective,' 'personal (experience),' 'pictures and stories,' 'stereotypes' and 'assumptions,' 'love (for pimp),' and 'complex issue.' Overall every code defines and understands a sex trafficking situation as personal rather than as one more case in a pattern.

When women in prostitution situations are arrested and booked and provided with a case number, the detective who does the educational meetings tries to remind law enforcement officials that these women have individual 'stories.' When talking about an individual situation and the love that one woman thinks that she has for her pimp,

Participant A explains:

You have to understand that it's the basic premise that everyone has the right to do what they want to do. So again, if you take someone that is trying to get away from the pimp and you don't lock them up, odds are they are going to be back with that pimp. Because that is what they know, that is what they have been trained to do, brainwashed, whatever you want to call it, it's not a rescue unless you can help rescue somebody, when you rescue a victim, you are trying to sit there and make sure that they are ok; you want to afford them the opportunity to be ok.

This excerpt explains the complexity of a prostitution situation. Participant A feels that you have to give the women the 'option' to have decisions in their own lives, while trying to explain to them that they are in an unhealthy situation. Deetz (1998) would argue that not only do these women begin with a perceived notion of 'choice,' but then the DPD

offers them an arbitrary 'choice.' Neither 'choice' gives them a chance at voice or agency within their prostituted situations. Weedon (1997) would argue that in order for the women to understand that it is not love that they feel for their pimp, rather manipulation, a shift in their mind needs to occur. However, this process cannot be forced, because gaining trust is a process, and more than likely the law enforcement officials have never been in the situation that the women are in. All they can do is listen and try to understand and explain the situation as it appears to them, from their perspective, hoping to alter the discursive situation/understanding for prostituted women.

Participant A also reminds other officials that these are 'someone's children' out on the streets. Every one of them has at one point, had a family, however, the harsh reality for officials is that they see a constant pattern of reentry into the situation day-after-day. Participant A further explains the complexity of the situation in this excerpt:

I have never in my life seen a prostitute that I have written a ticket for that went and checked herself into rehab the next day or decided that she was going to go get counseling the next day or whatever else, it doesn't happen. Street level prostitution there are [*sic*] a lot of things that are wrong with it, it is a horrible situation for them, at that point you are catching someone who is almost at the worst point in their lives. They are in a horrible situation, ya know all of those victims groups say you are making it worse by putting them in jail, no, ya know what we are not, and those cases, the actual ones that are recovered, or the ones who don't do it anymore, sit there are tell you that when they got to jail that is when their lives started getting better. That was the moment that it started turning around, because again, the ones that actually have the system did work, they got involved in like the Chrysalis project or whatever else, that's what enabled them to do it. They were forced into the situation where they were going to have to get some treatment and some help, ya know that's the only way that it's going to work.

Participant A's frustration lies in trying to help prostituted women who do not appear to want to help themselves. Through his subject position, he truly understands and believes that *from his perspective*, the women need an intervention such as jail, as a way of

shifting *their perspective* and understanding that they have hit rock-bottom in life.

Again, Deetz's (1998) question of whether or not it was their 'choice' to originally enter into this situation is not part of this discussion, rather how to help the women exit the situation that they are in an attempt to change their lives.

This idea of trying to 'changes one's life' is correlated with the discursive theme 'in-the-best-interest.' The 'in-the-best-interest' discursive theme is filled with many codes that illuminate the idea that these women need assistance, and assistance specifically from the police department. The codes include, 'control issues,' or in other words, the women cannot control themselves or their own lives, so they need an external force or third-party to step in and help out. The codes 'good for them,' 'beneficial,' and 'in best interest (of the victim)' refer to the idea that being arrested and put into jail is actually the best thing that could happen to them at this point in their lives. 'Receive help,' 'support items,' 'secure' and 'protection' codes often refer to more tangible items or moral support that is provided for these women while in the control of the DPD.

This discursive theme of 'in-best-interest' refers to the DPD's belief (and commitments to paternalistic discourse) that they are always doing things that are in the best interest of the women who are involved in sex trafficking. These women are believed to not be able to help themselves; therefore, claiming 'prostitutes' as 'victims' enables the DPD to 'help' in their situations. In the effort to protect or rescue these women from their lives, members of the DPD remove the space of action by inferring that these women are helpless in their own lives. 'Victimizing' prostituted women reduces their agency and does not allow them to speak for themselves.

This discursive theme often co-occurs with the discursive theme of ‘prostitute’ in DPD interview data. The DPD wants to make sure that they are doing what is best for the women involved. As Participant A states, the mantra of the DPD is the “best interest of the child.” The co-existence of the discursive themes, ‘prostitutes’ and ‘gathering information’ alongside ‘in-best-interest,’ within the text also communicates that while the practices of the DPD may appear a bit cold toward the women, they attempt to take a humane approach to the situation. However, Participant A later stated that “victims’ best interest should not be my job. My job is to enforce the law.” This only further exemplifies the tension between the reality of caring for the women and enforcing the law. Participant A further describes how he keeps up with the women and follows up on them weekly; even though, he says that his job is to only enforce the law. Participant A explains what ‘in-best-interest’ means within the DPD:

Best interest of the juvenile, best interest of the woman, anybody who is in that role is to get in front of a court because at that point in their lives, they don't have control of their lives anymore is probably a good way to look at it, if they are addicted to drugs, they don't have control of their lives. If they are out having sex with men for money out on the street, they don't have control of their lives, if they are out under pimp control, they don't have control of their lives. They need some assistance, and I think that I told you a long time ago, ya know what, everyone needs some now and then, everybody needs somebody sometime to sit there and say I am going to this for you and do that for you. The only way to protect these women or children is to get them in some kind of secure location some kind of secure facility some kind of secure environment, where they are not going to be a danger to themselves is what it comes down to.

This example demonstrates a paternalistic attitude of the police department in reference to the situation of sex trafficking. These women have ‘lost control of their lives and just need someone to help redirect them,’ and the DPD sees their role as a possible starting point for many of the women. In this passage, jail is referred to as a ‘secure location.’

Through what Spender (1980) calls man-made language, a masculine view of the purpose

of institutions such as jail emerges. Instead of jail being the downfall or negative consequences in the women's lives, it is understood as a starting point, a place that gives them help and keeps their 'best interest' at heart. In order to understand what would be the best for the women involved, a feminist adoption of discourse needs to occur so the detectives can try to first identify and comprehend the situation that the women are in.

The discursive theme 'gathering information' as described above emerges from the process Participant B described when arresting a 'prostitute' and bringing her in for questioning. Within this discursive theme of 'gathering information,' the codes include: 'victim,' 'force,' 'rape,' 'sex act,' 'abuse toward the victim,' 'break-a-girl-down,' 'debrief,' and 'use her.' The codes work together in order to explain the 'victimized' situation that makes up the discursive theme that describes the process of 'breaking-a-girl-down.' Each code shows how the woman is being 'used' and then actions are being forced upon her, 'victimizing' her situation and her life.

In questioning, the detectives learn about the situation of the woman in order to decipher what would be in her 'best interest.' Participant B says, "The detective talks to the girls when they are brought in. They attempt to 'break-a-girl-down' to get information out of her about her situation." She is once again used for something that only she can provide. Just as her pimp may use her to have sex for money, the detectives use her for information that they need. Moreover, the conditioning tactics that are initially used can be comparable to one another. The woman is repeatedly 'broken down' for the use of others.

The discursive codes are specifically interesting when placed in context. Through a poststructuralist lens, the plurality of language helps to explain how in one situation,

codes can be used to help the DPD, or simultaneously, they can be used to hurt the women. As stated above, each code helps exemplify how the women are being used for both sex and information at any given time. When questioned about the role of the detective in the woman's life during the initial interaction, Participant B responds: "The perception is that the detective, when arresting the girl, [he] is not her new 'daddy,' there is a strict professional relationship. They are nice and try to get to know her better, but it is viewed as a different relationship." But is not the relationship between the pimp and girl not a 'professional relationship' as well? Using their power and subject positions, pimps use conditioning tactics to lure in women and make them believe that they are loved so that the women will make them money (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). In the same way using language and power in motion, a feminist-poststructuralist lens argues that detectives try to gain trust so that women will provide them with information.

Organizational Purpose

The discursive action 'organizational purpose' refers to the discursive themes used by the DPD to establish what they view their role to be within the organization of sex trafficking. The discursive themes in 'organizational purpose' are 'law enforcement' and 'caring.' The discursive themes in 'organizational purpose' describes the DPD's discursive justifications for taking the actions that they do within the situation of sex trafficking. This discursive action also allows an examination of the contradiction between trying to uphold the law and 'caring' for the sex trafficked women in a more conventional way.

The discursive theme of 'law enforcement' refers specifically to what the law enforcement feels that their responsibility in sex trafficking/prostitution situations. The

codes within this discursive theme include: 'enforce the law,' 'law enforcement,' 'get them into the system,' 'tracked,' 'dismiss the case,' 'investigation,' and 'working the system.' As described earlier, the DPD understands situations where juveniles are involved to be situations of sex trafficking. However, as soon as a minor is of adult age, eighteen or older, it is assumed that the woman has consented to selling her body for sex and is now in a 'prostitution' situation. 'Prostitution' is understood as either being under the 'control of a pimp,' or 'on your own free will.' Regardless, 'prostituted' women are criminalized because they are performing an illegal activity.

As stated many times by both DPD participants, the responsibility of law enforcement is to enforce the law. This means that they will do whatever they need to do to get this job done. But because they understand that in situations of sex trafficking, the women do not have a choice, they also believe that getting these women 'into the system' is 'in their best interest.' It protects the women and gives them an opportunity to receive health care. As explained by Participant A:

If you don't do something with them, then they may never get the help. So now some people will sit there and say, well they need to be viewed differently and they should go into a shelter or they should go into a home, and ya know what, that is fine but when we put them in jail and they go in front of a judge they are given an opportunity because there are different programs out there that are made available to every single girl that comes through the system. Like the Chrysalis project, and essentially what it says is you are not going to have to go to jail and you are not going to have to be in custody as long as you uniformly and correctly do what you are supposed to. They will put you through counseling and drug counseling and health testing, all of that stuff is made available to them.

Through the lens of the police department, getting women 'into the system' helps protect them from their pimp, and provides them an opportunity to receive help if they do desire. Foucault argues that there is power in everything, and through a feminist lens understands that women must either comply or resist the norm. Man-made language argues that

getting them ‘into the system’ also makes the women visible to the DPD and allows the women to be tracked and accounted for in an attempt to help their material situation.

If the women are cooperative, and ‘consent’ to the judicial process, their case is usually dismissed. Participant A explained, that to him, he just wants to make sure that the women are taken care of and in as safe of a place where he can have them, even if for a short amount of time. He also explained that while the women are in jail, it is forced rehabilitation and it gives the women a chance to sober up, because they are not allowed to do drugs inside jail. Once again, a perceived notion of choice is placed on prostituted women, reducing their agency and forcing them to comply. Interestingly, while law enforcement officials are trying to uphold the law, they are also ‘working the system’ to help women who have no choice in being put into sex trafficking situations. Because of the gray area of ‘choice’ and lack of options and agency in the situation of sex trafficking, the DPD shows a caring side and tries to help the women by giving them a ‘choice’ in any way that they can to provide a space of action within the parameters of the law.

Closely connected to the discursive theme ‘in best interest (of victim),’ is the discursive theme of ‘caring.’ Although not as prevalent, these themes are closely related. The discursive theme of caring is concerned with the codes, ‘certain sense of sensitivity,’ ‘caring,’ a ‘humanistic approach to situations,’ ‘providing facilities for help’ and the idea of ‘rescuing.’

Within the DPD, there are two major areas where caring is important. When talking about the women, Participant A says that he is considered the “social worker” of the department:

I'll tell you on a personal note like when we grab a juvenile, as soon as the juvenile gets into a secure place, say they take her back to her parents place, every week I am going to call her, every single week I am going to call her and I am going to call her parents. Is that my job? NO. But I also know that one, if I am calling her, then what is going to happen is that we are going to develop a relationship and she is going to trust me a little more and she is going to want to talk to me, I am not trying to manipulate her and get information out of her, I am trying to keep her in line but I also know that if she is keeping in contact with me, she won't go back to what she was doing. Every juvenile that we grab, I end up calling if I can. I mean sometimes they will disappear, or they change their number, but it's a very high-maintenance proposition, but ya know what, it is almost necessary. When I do law enforcement training, it is one of the things that I try to teach all of the guys, I don't want to have to do it but I don't necessarily like it, but you have to do this. (Personal communication, January 26, 2010)

Participant A adds a 'personal' and 'caring' side to his work in order to help connect with the women. In order to continue this trend, and make sure that this is a priority, he offers similar advice to other law enforcement officials. Participant A attempts to give agency to the prostituted women by 'caring' about her through his actions after she is arrested. In giving her agency, a space of action is created for the prostituted woman so that she can attempt to create a voice for herself. A feminist lens would argue that because these women are working within the confines of man-made language, she still has little to no agency within her situation. Until she becomes a consistent presence within the discourse, man-made language will continue to define her.

The DPD also has the programs in place to provide an alternative option or a tangible space of action for these women instead of jail. The Chrysalis Project, which will be discussed in chapter five, was started by a federal grant and is a place where women can go to receive help in multiple ways. This project was an outcome of the caring done by the DPD.

Through the examination of the interview data and discursive themes present within the DPD, a feminist-poststructuralist view would argue that the DPD is attempting

to create a space of action for prostituted women, but within a paternalistic organization. As Murphy (2008) recognizes, discourse marks a membership within an institution. Because language is man-made, women have to construct compelling arguments in order to function within the masculine discourse. Figure 1 follows the flow of discourse through the DPD. Each discursive action holds discursive themes that help to describe the sex trafficking situation as understood by the DPD. In ‘organizational purpose’ the main contradiction within the masculine organization is illuminated. The discursive themes of ‘law enforcement’ and ‘caring’ attempt to coexist as the purpose of the DPD. Each discursive action and theme builds off of one another as a way of understanding the situation of sex trafficking/prostitution within Denver, Colorado. The following discussion section will highlight gaps that the theories illuminated within the data from the interviews.

Discussion

The main function of the DPD is to identify women in sex trafficking situations for the public. Other organizations reject the labels used by the DPD and have created their own identifiers, which will be discussed in the following chapters. The situation and problems with sex trafficking situations are identified through the DPD, but then they are talked about very differently within the organizations. The DPD shares information with select organizations as a well of helping women, but they also have to observe confidentiality for the women (Participant A, personal communication, January 14, 2010).

The DPD is dedicated to educating law enforcement agencies about the prevalence and protocol surrounding sex trafficking. Participant A stated, “A lot of these

trainings that I have done heighten public awareness and education...we are educating the public.” The DPD is doing their best to educate the public, and so it is of utmost importance that they consider the language that they are using while discussing the women in these situations. A poststructuralist would argue that how you label or identify a woman brings either a negative or positive connotation with the understanding. Awareness about language choice at this stage could help to shift the stigma and general understanding of what these women go through each day.

After conducting these interviews, it was apparent to me that law enforcement within the city of Denver provides the ground work for knowledge about sex trafficking within the city. Law enforcement, comprised of and abiding by the rules of man-made language, created a black-and-white system. It is important to understand and get a sense of how a black-and-white system attempts to operate within a very gray industry with so many different scenarios. I was very fortunate to be able to speak with two individuals were the most involved with what I have chosen to research.

While the organization is attempting to be very cut-and-dry, I think that it is apparent, even through the passages that I chose that the lines are not as direct as they would like them to be. The DPD, in the interest of ‘caring,’ attempts to create a space of action for women in sexually exploitative situations; however, their efforts are sometimes stifled because of their power positions within discourse. Because sex trafficking has become a new area of concern within Colorado within the past six years, and prostitution is often considered one of the world’s ‘oldest professions,’ it would only make sense that the laws surrounding the issue of sex trafficking relate to those of prostitution. Man-made language creates and reinforces the laws surrounding prostitution, making it almost

impossible for women to reject their subject positions within the sex trafficking situations.

Many numbers help us try to identify the severity of the problem of sex trafficking around the world and in the United States. While numbers are important to consider, they are also dangerous. People acknowledge numbers, because they are shocking and they tell a story. The problem with numbers regarding sex trafficking in the United States is that according to the detectives of the DPD, how the numbers were collected is in doubt.

Participant A does a majority of the work with sex trafficking in the western United States, and he claims that he has never been asked for any numbers that he has compiled. He specifies, “I told you that we don't track it, I track it. But the DPD doesn't track it, the stats are all skewed” (personal communication, January 26, 2010). In the same interview Participant A said that through his research and collecting of data, he estimates that sex work in Denver is about a \$60 million a year industry, as compared to larger cities such as Dallas and San Francisco which estimate about \$360 million dollars a year. Even though the earnings in Denver are not as significant as the aforementioned cities, it is still important to understand how the DPD enforces laws and criminalizes the actions within ‘sex work.’

The dominant discursive theme in the DPD is ‘law enforcement’ or more specific description of ‘criminalizing’ discourse. The DPD works within the constraints of the law in order to identify and understand the sex trafficking situation that the women are in. Identifying the women as ‘prostitutes,’ and therefore ‘criminals,’ allows for little compassion initially, which also helps to reproduce the negative social stigma through

their subjective identity. Criminalizing women for something that it not their ‘choice’ or that they did not ‘consent’ to only further oppresses and reifies their ‘lack of control’ in their lives. This reduces the agency that women in sex trafficking situations have as well as eliminating their space of action. Labeling the women as ‘criminal’ also leaves little to no room for sympathy or understanding about their situation within the black-and-white confines of the man-made law. Women have no voice within the label of ‘criminal’ because they are removed from any chance at agency within their situation.

Through my discussions with the two individuals, I believe that changes will begin to take place as a way of helping to define the different situations that the women are in, creating spaces of action. As the language throughout the interviews suggests, the discursive boundaries separating women who are being sex trafficked and women who are being prostituted are not distinct. They become nearly one and the same, as sex is the focal point of the subjects identity through both identifier. However, it is important to consider language choice, and the stigmas that come along with the language, because a situation of force affords more agency to the sex trafficked women. Also, as a feminist-poststructuralist critic, I recognize that as the language moves and travels through the next few organizations, a similar tension between voice and agency arises.

The DPD has set the foundation for how sex trafficking is discussed in the public realm, through their discursive choice of criminalization. Chapter four will now acknowledge the languages choices and struggles within an awareness raising organization called the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, formerly known as the Polaris Project, Colorado.

CHAPTER 4: “SHE SEES HER PIMP AS HER DADDY, OR BOYFRIEND, SOMEONE THAT *[SIC]* LOVES HER”

An Awareness Raising Organization

Like the consciousness raising of the feminist movement, awareness raising within sex trafficking attempts to bring knowledge to the masses about the situation that is plaguing our world. Within sex trafficking, awareness raising organizations do not necessarily have direct contact with any of the individuals who are affected by the cause which they are trying to raising awareness. These organizations are usually dedicated to research, education, and raising money for the cause instead.

Raising awareness happens in a multitude of ways for these organizations. As with any campaign, networking is a key to building relationships with communities as a way of reaching out to people and gaining a space to speak about the event. With the advent of the internet, it has become easier to get information regarding the issue out to the masses. Many organizations offer daily or weekly newsletters that visitors can sign-up to receive online. If people are donating money to a cause, they can also see their money at work through the news they receive.

The Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking

On February 1, 2010, the Polaris Project, Colorado, became the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT). The employees have remained the same; however, a reduction in funding has meant that once paid volunteers have since become full volunteers who help with the Community Needs Assessment program. These original

employees saw a need for a change and a peaceful separation from the corporate Polaris Project because they wanted to conduct more specific research related to Colorado and then figure out ways to facilitate the needs they discovered.

LCHT is committed to three areas of awareness raising. They are first interested in the training and education of both law enforcement officials and community members. Believing that knowledge can be one of their best allies, LCHT is committed to sharing the information that they gain with others. The second area of awareness raising lies in the way they gain their information. LCHT conducts community based research as a way of understanding what different communities need in regards to education about sex trafficking or resources to help individuals. Their final commitment is to leadership development. The leadership development program is a volunteer program and interns usually spend about one-hundred-fifty hours total working in the organization of ‘good work.’ This model introduces the interns to the idea of ethical and moral work, and self-determination. Initially interns go through a two day orientation program and then begin their hours of volunteering. LCHT is also associated with the UCAN Serve Americorps (not vista) organization, and so interns can get a stipend and earn college credit through their service (Interviewee #1, personal communication, January 25, 2010).

During my time interviewing individuals at LCHT, I interviewed two different employees of the organization. Interviewee #1 is in a leadership position and Interviewee #2 the agency organizer. Each employee’s name has been kept confidential per their request. Interviewee #1 was interviewed in person, and the interview was recorded. The interview lasted about two hours. Interviewee #2 was interviewed via email.

Discursive Themes at LCHT

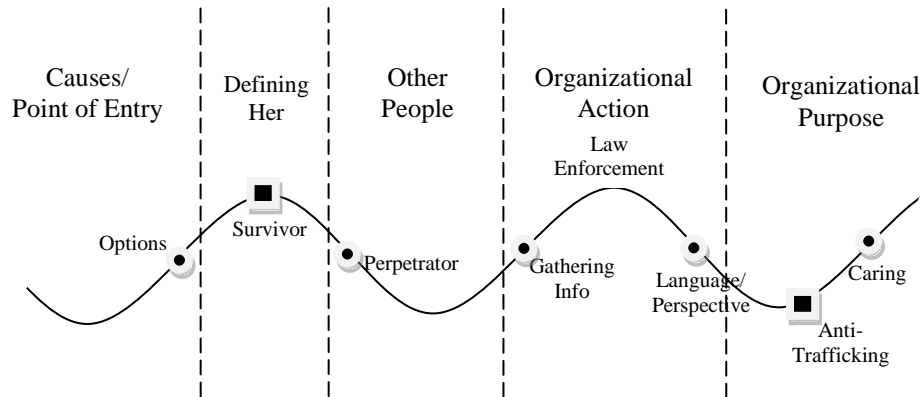


Figure 4.1: LCHT Flow of Discourse

At LCHT, while the discursive themes are the same as the DPD, their meanings and functions morph in this different organizational context. In the sections that follow, I will present all discursive themes either individually or in connection with another theme. These six discursive themes appear in Figure 4.1, in contrast to the fourteen that appear in Figure 3.1 for the DPD. The themes are also organized by the discursive actions, of ‘causes/point of entry,’ ‘defining her,’ ‘other people,’ ‘organizational action,’ and ‘organizational purpose.’ Each discursive action helps to identify how the discursive themes are working at LCHT, and illuminates their focus and importance. Main discursive themes are represented by a solid circle, squares signify codes that are specific to LCHT, but are not discussed as major discursive themes across all organizations.

Each discursive theme will be described with its codes and then an example will be provided, with each section ending with a discussion of the importance and meaning of each discursive theme to the overall discourse of sex trafficking. To accurately follow the flow of discourse among organizations, each discursive theme will begin with a brief reminder as to how it functioned within the DPD.

Causes/Point of Entry

The discursive action ‘causes/point of entry,’ describes the situation that the women were in before they were in the sexually exploitative situations. The discursive themes in this discursive action are ‘options/family life.’ The LCHT uses these discursive themes as a way of explaining why these women are being sex trafficked.

The discursive theme of ‘options’ in the discussion of the DPD describes how the women have opportunities to seek help and make their situations better. The DPD believes they have put good programs in place to ‘help’ these women. Its accompanying theme of ‘family life’ at the DPD refers specifically to the notion that most women in sex trafficking situations come from broken homes. ‘Family life’ is thus, a contributing factor to why the women are where they are.

Within LCHT the discursive themes of ‘option’ and ‘family life’ are connected because they function together and with each other. The codes for this combined discursive theme are: ‘family life,’ ‘option,’ and ‘not-forced.’ Yet, the idea that these women actually have legitimate options in life decreases in reality as situations are understood differently by LCHT. This organization addresses the idea of ‘options’ in one of two ways, either as a ‘lack of options’ or understanding from the beginning, or providing them with ‘options as a way of bettering their lives.’

When asked about the amount of choice that she believes that women have over the sex trafficking situation, Interviewee #2 was frustrated by the idea that people think women chose this life. She sternly acknowledges:

The abuse, psychological manipulation and terror that constantly surrounds victims and survivors of human trafficking is intensely traumatizing. To ask if they can change the situation implies some level of control that they may have, and they simply do not have it....When forced between doing what a trafficker

says and death or losing a family member or being gang raped, is it possible for choice to enter the picture?...Any one of us could be trafficked.

‘Choices’ assume privilege and power over your life and the situations. ‘Options’ refer to the limited decisions that someone has over their situations, or as Deetz (1998) would argue ‘consenting’ to a process. ‘Options’ are presented usually as an either/or decision, whereas, ‘choices’ are more plentiful and assume less oppression within situations. The ability to pick an ‘option’ assumes agency within one’s life and a certain amount of access to voice within a situation. Taking ownership over the situations one is in gives a person power and agency over their lives, for that moment. When faced with the idea of losing a family member, or doing what your perpetrator asks, most people would do anything for their family. Her argument states, until put in a situation like this, who is to say that you would not do the same?

Recognizing that a majority of the women in the world would not choose this path in life, Interviewee #1 talks about how the situation begins for most women. She addresses the fact that from a distance we can all say that we would not ever participate in the sex industry, but if we were forced, we may. Interviewee #1 continues:

That is a scenario that all of us, would like to think that we are not going to do that, I am not going to participate in the sex industry, it is my choice not to do that, but then when someone takes that choice from me, when they give you an option that is not your choice, that is ya know that’s the situation that I would say a lot of people find themselves in. And it's out of your control.

Personalizing the scenario makes third-parties realize that the situation is not far from being a reality for many. It is like the clichéd idea of a stripper putting herself through college. Instead of taking out a loan, a woman may ‘choose’ to be a professional dancer as a way of making money to pay tuition. However, Deetz (1998) and many others would argue that ‘choosing’ to strip is once again a perceived notion of choice for

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individuals. Women ‘consent’ to a subjective identity of a sexual object because evidence proves that sex sells. Whether or not most people would take this route is another story, but I am sure that the possibility of working a couple of nights a week for no debt sounds enticing to many.

The other view of ‘options,’ within the organization looks toward the future for women. Providing women with ways to grow as people and see a different life is a motivation for LCHT’s connection with Metro State in Denver. Interviewee #1 describes the empowerment of women’s decisions, “they have chosen to pursue higher education or return to college in some cases, so now they are returning to school and they have made that decision and they are self-empowered.” There is a multiplicity of positions that a woman can inhabit and making her own life decisions is a big step for these women, especially when they have been forced into actions every day. In the action of ‘choosing’ to go to school, women regain their ‘voice’ and in turn increase their ‘agency.’ The need to understand the women and their situation within sex trafficking has left sex trafficked women without a clear identifier within LCHT. Within LCHT focus is placed on raising awareness about sex trafficking situations, and little discussion has occurred around what label women in these situations will have.

Defining Her

As a result, unlike the DPD, there are no dominating discursive themes used to label the women in sex trafficking situations at LCHT. The DPD calls the women ‘prostitutes’ while LCHT tries to transition the labels into ‘victim’ or ‘survivor.’ The consequences of this transition are discussed later in the chapter. In an attempt to be

‘caring’ about the situation that the women are in, LCHT avoids mentioning the women specifically and only talks around their situation.

However, avoiding naming the women directly, or talking around these women by addressing the situation of sex trafficking they are in, ‘others’ these women, and creates a hierarchy. Foucault acknowledges that power is in everything, and through a lack of naming or acknowledging, LCHT holds discursive power over the women. This reduces their chance at ‘voice’ and ‘agency’ within sex trafficking situations. Murphy (2008) also notes that discourse marks membership within an institution, and so by addressing the issue of the situation only, women become outsiders in the situation that oppresses them, providing them no space of action. In contrast, the discursive theme of ‘other people’ attempts to specifically label the perpetrators that oppress these women, providing perpetrators with agency through identification, and a space of action.

Other People

The discursive action ‘other people,’ attempts to label the perpetrators who are (re)producing the industry of sex trafficking that is keeping these women in a cycle. The discursive themes in this discursive action are ‘control of pimp,’ ‘perpetrator’ and ‘brothel.’ LCHT uses these discursive themes as a way of identifying who is keeping these women under force in sex trafficking situations.

Discursive themes, ‘perpetrator,’ ‘control of pimp’ and ‘brothel’ are combined because they relate closely to the perspective LCHT has on the sex trafficking situation. ‘Perpetrators’ were discussed in brief by the DPD as ‘johns’ and ‘pimps’; however, the importance of their place in the situation was not really emphasized. In the eyes of the DPD, ‘control of the pimp’ was only prevalent when the individuals of concern were

juveniles. Because they were underage, they were considered to be held against their will.

Since LCHT believes that sex trafficking is not the ‘choice’ of the woman involved and that they are forced into the situation, control and power over the women is important to consider. Thus, the codes within these discursive themes that work together include: ‘control of pimp,’ ‘perpetrator,’ ‘daddy’ and ‘boyfriend.’

The woman is conditioned by the pimp to make believe that they are in a relationship; “she sees her pimp as her daddy or boyfriend, someone that [*sic*] loves her,” explains Interviewee #1. Acknowledging that there is a ‘relationship’ present is important when communicating with the women. If one dismisses the emotions that are present, then trust is lost between the two individuals. The woman may not acknowledge the pimp as her perpetrator, but more as her ‘boyfriend’ or ‘daddy,’ someone that she is in a ‘partnership’ with. However, the label ‘daddy’ assumes a hierarchical relationship, in which the ‘pimp’ has control over the woman, and she must listen to what he says. This process places discursive power back with the dominant or male perpetrator in this case. Thus, this is the more common discursive label used within sex trafficking situations, as recognized by LCHT and the DPD. She has sex for money, gives the money to him and then he, in return, provides her with a place to live, food and clothes. Within this relationship, the ‘pimp’ controls the sex trafficked woman’s ability to have a space of action or have a ‘voice’ within her sexually exploited situation. The ‘pimp’ conditions these women with arbitrary ‘choices’ and in turn they believe that they are ‘consenting’ to processes that will help them. These women think that they have ‘agency’ through their perceived notion of ‘choice,’ but in reality they may have none.

If by chance, the relationship turns ugly, the women usually view the reason for the abuse as their fault, because of the emotional conditioning that they incur, as explained by Interviewee #1. The rules are clear to the women; they make money by having sex with men. If they do not make enough money, then there are consequences to pay. Understanding the power dynamic, and struggle between an older man and a younger girl is also important. As Interviewee #1 describes:

If you are talking about a young girl with an older boyfriend and she keeps talking about this older boyfriend taking a little bit further into how much older, like how much of a power dynamic there really is in the situation. If he is 24 and she is 14 that is a pretty big age gap that is a deliberate decision on his part.

Discursively constructing the situation as a relationship gains the trust of the women no matter who the communicator is (i.e., pimp, LCHT, DPD, etc.). Discussing the situation as a relationship validates the lives and experiences of the women and gives them at least control over their stories, also reducing the need for opposition. The women perceive ‘agency’ in their situations, when, in reality, sex is the subjective identity. Traditionally, women enjoy the emotional aspect of the relationship; whereas, men more easily can have a physical relationship without emotions attached. The ‘relationship’ construction helps women to be viewed and used as sex objects. Any situation that constructs them as a sex object leaves them submissive to money and ‘perpetrators.’

‘Perpetrators’ for these women come in multiple different forms, taking on the identity of anyone/anything that carries out oppression toward them. Another ‘perpetrator’ is explained in the discursive theme ‘brothels’ under the discursive action of ‘other people.’ This theme is discussed in the discourse of DPD when participants discuss minors or people of illegal immigrant status. Law enforcement does not discursively or materially differentiate between sex trafficking and prostitution with a

pimp. However, understanding the trafficking of humans is a direct concern for LCHT; therefore, their language is much for explicitly sympathetic.

The codes specifically related to the discursive theme of ‘brothels’ are ‘trafficking,’ ‘immigrants,’ and ‘brothels.’ Each of these codes helps illustrate broader actors and actions within sex trafficking situations. Within the context of LCHT, these codes also make us aware that it is important to pay attention to not only what you see, but what you hear when people are discussing their situations. Trying to explain a sex trafficking situation, Interviewee #1 states:

Looking at that person closely, does this person look under the age of 18, if so call 911, that is a child, that is somebody who is ya know potentially being sexually exploited, so you in terms of listening how people frame what is happening in their neighborhoods, or listening for trafficking elements when somebody is talking about smuggling or ya know illegal migration.

Language used in the community surrounding the situation can be key to understanding what is really going on, because the person in the situation may not realize that they are being exploited or that the situation that they are in is harmful. A feminist-poststructural lens recognizes that language not only favors a patriarchic tradition, but also contains power in how it used. Language and power are always in motion (Weedon, 1997). Language, and access to discourse, communicates power within relationships. In a situation where there is a ‘perpetrator,’ typically he, controls the space of action for these women, leaving them submissive and with no ‘voice.’

Interestingly at the LCHT, both of the interviewees referred to the situation of sex trafficking as ‘human trafficking.’ They may have done this because, as an organization, they are devoted to raising awareness about all types of trafficking, not just sex trafficking in women. The description of ‘human trafficking’ also helps to encompass

and include all genders and ages. Feminist-poststructuralist thought would argue that this is a positive move as it alters the discursive situation and opens up the multiplicity of positions available for understanding. This discursive shift also opens up the population impacted and possibilities for membership within the human trafficking situation.

Within this discursive theme we see the presence of the ‘johns’ dropped from the conversation and focus placed on the controlling relationship between the ‘pimp’ and the ‘woman.’ Even though ‘johns’ were barely addressed in the DPD’s discourse, they were at least mentioned as a piece of the equation. Leaving ‘johns’ out of discussion is problematic, because it ignores the important ‘demand’ factor of the supply and demand capitalistic model; ‘johns’ demand sex, and while there is a demand, the women will be forced to supply. If this is recognized as a larger organizational issue, is LCHT doing anything to address the notion of the ‘disappearing perpetrator’ or what specific actions are they taking as an organization?

Organizational Action

The discursive action ‘organizational action’ refers to the discursive themes used by LCHT to illuminate what they are doing in regards to the sex trafficked women. The discursive themes in ‘organizational action’ are ‘gathering information,’ ‘language/perspective,’ and ‘law enforcement.’ The discursive themes in ‘organizational action’ help LCHT to describe their perspective around the problem of sex trafficking and then discuss what they believe their role is in regards to the issue within Denver.

The discursive theme of ‘gathering information’ in the discourse of the DPD was the process of getting knowledge out of a woman that was brought in for questioning. During this time, the woman was seen as a victim within a situation, and the DPD wanted

to know more about her situation. She was their informant that could lead to other cases. Within the context of LCHT, the concept of ‘gathering information’ shifts. The codes that are included in this discursive theme are ‘victim,’ ‘forced rape,’ and ‘abuse toward the victim.’ Within LCHT, the term ‘victim’ is a common identifier for the women and children involved in sex trafficking situations. This term is often paired with ‘survivor’ however, a term rarely seen in DPD discourse. These codes fit within the discursive theme of ‘gathering information’ because they help the LCHT to understand the situation that these sex trafficked women are in better, LCHT ‘gathers information’ in regards to women’s specific situations.

The term ‘victim’ appeared most frequently when interviewees were asked about the severity of the situations in which women found themselves. The most frequently used label in the DPD, ‘prostitute,’ is eliminated as discourse moves outside of that organization. The terms ‘survivor’ and ‘victims’ have replaced the label instead, as a way of attempting to give these women more agency and to structure a different situation and therefore organizational action. When women were perceived to need the assistance of others, the term ‘victim’ was used. As Interviewee #1 states, “We [LCHT] try to use both victim and survivor language because you don't need somebody treating a survivor of trafficking as a victim as that persons perceived idea of victim, you need my help, you must need such-and-such services.” Understanding the differences between the two terms/identifiers becomes important, because a ‘victim’ is someone who is assumed to need assistance from another person, while a ‘survivor’ is assumed to have already received help and no longer needs any. ‘Victim’ reduces these women’s access to agency and a voice within their situation because through this identifier they are rendered

helpless. 'Survivor' assumes more agency, however, 'survivor' always begs the question, 'survivor of what/whom?' Therefore, neither identifier provides an increase space of action for the women, just a different space within their sex trafficked situation.

'Abuse' toward the woman becomes a key component to identifying her as a 'victim,' and also for initiating organizational action. Words such as 'domestic violence' and 'sexual assault' were used by Interviewee #1 to describe the situations in which women experienced victimhood. However, the same interviewee cautions against always viewing the women as victims and not looking at the entire situation. She explains:

Until we can really have people understand what trafficking looks like in all its various forms and messiness then we will continue to have service providers, law enforcement and NGO's that are treating people's symptoms and not the full trafficking.

Attempting to understand the full situation is the focus of LCHT. Because of the importance of research and education within LCHT, language use emerges as a form of concern and care for the women.

In contrast, language use was not of major concern within the DPD. Labels were not considered to hold much weight and often were cast out of having meaning other than enabling another activity. The LCHT codes that comprise the discursive theme 'language' use include: 'movement of discourse' (directly stating how their language choices affect other decisions within and out of the organization), 'language,' the 'importance of discussion and communication,' 'oppression and rescue language' and 'education/research.' The most prevalent code within this discursive theme is 'education/research.' This code also helps and has influence over discourse within communities because of the research that is completed and then the language that is used

to describe the results of the research when LCHT raises awareness through different mediums.

In addressing the future of the organization and their research, Interviewee #1 explains:

There are very few long-term studies on survivorship. That is one of the areas of research that we would like to move into, especially to the institute and helping in campus protocols because so many people think about the immediate crisis of rescuing somebody and I don't know if you are looking at rescue language, but ya know looking at this rescue event, removing somebody from the situation, their trafficking situation.

'Rescue' language, like 'victim' language, describes a helpless situation for the women, and offers a reason or a need to a third party to jump in and assist the individuals initiating the organizational action. When one 'rescues' someone, there is an assumption that the person rescuing has more access to resources than the person in the situation. 'Agency' and an increased space of action is given to the individual who thinks that they should 'rescue.' Therefore, the individual being 'rescued' is defined as a 'victim' and 'agency' is reduced. In an effort to 'rescue' the individual in question is further marginalized.

In order to help understand and identify where their time would be best spent assisting women, LCHT has a program called Community Needs Assessment (CNA). CNA is comprised of volunteers that conduct hour long interviews with selected individuals and organizations within Colorado communities. The interview schedule is the same for each individual in order to ensure consistency. Interviewee #2 explains the remainder of the process:

Once the data are collected, information is compiled into a set of summary statistics and then put into a report that is shared with human trafficking task forces and service provider networks and outreach collaboratives. The data

provide a snapshot of community understanding, gaps and where human trafficking activities may be taking place.

Because each scenario and situation is different, there is no generic plan for what to do if information is gathered that points specifically to a situation of sex trafficking, so CNA is used to identify the community's knowledge base of sex trafficking.

In an attempt to understand whether or not the efforts were successful so far, I asked Interviewee #1 her perception of their progress. She began talking exclusively about the progress in regards to the DPD because of their close ties, and because she understands that law enforcement holds a majority of the power that she needs to make changes. Thus, even though it seems that the discursive themes these organizations use differ, LCHT still attempts to get the DPD on the same page to make a change within the situations for these women. As she explains further:

I think that some of my conversations with law enforcement are beginning to change...I have a lot of discrepancy with the language that they [DPD] use and their bottom-line is different from mine, but if I can recognize that, then I can work with them and make progress. I think that there's a lot of value in being able to better establish those relationships, we work very closely with DPD because you know if we're on their trusted list of community organizations then we can hope for more assistance.

LCHT understands the function and movement of discourse within sex trafficking and how it can serve multiple purposes. While LCHT does not shift their discourse to conform to that used by the DPD to talk about the women, LCHT is constantly trying to understand the laws and stay on the good side of the DPD. Having a positive relationship with the law, they hope, will help encourage and speed-up changes that will be positive for the women. LCHT is attempting to use the 'system' as a way of providing a space of action for the sex trafficked women. Working around the system that oppresses the women, LCHT argues for a 'voice' and 'agency' for the women within their situation.

'Perspective' or someone's 'personal history' is crucial when trying to understand and give credit to someone within the situation of their life. Within the DPD, law enforcement officers were asked to remember that each person that was arrested was 'someone's child' and that they each had a 'story' of their life. Not every person is given the same tools to use in order to deal with what life hands out each day. Yet, to truly understand and make use of 'perspective,' a scholar, or law enforcement officer, must first identify their biases and then how these may influence their perceptions of others and their life.

The discursive theme 'perspective' is comprised of the codes 'perspective,' 'personal,' 'pictures and stories,' 'assumptions/stereotypes,' 'love' and the 'complexity of the issue.' Each one of the codes alludes to the personal nature of the journey and situation for each of the women. No situation is the same, no story is the same, and no woman is the same in how she understands or deals with the situation. Thus, it is hard to pick one sole identifier to encompass all women, which is why LCHT has chosen to use both 'victim' and 'survivor' as terms. Interviewee #1 explains:

I think personally there is a level of victimization to where that I wouldn't yet call that person a survivor because I don't think that the person would self-identify as a survivor. So I think that is in respect to what we were talking about earlier when some victims are victims of trafficking by every sense of the definition but see the pimp as her boyfriend, or see the pimp as daddy and not necessarily her perpetrator. I think that's still a level of victimization, she is still surviving the abuse but I don't think that she would self identify as a survivor.

Self-identification is a huge step for the women in their process for understanding their situation. Understanding who they are and where they come from begins the process of acknowledgment, and recognizing their subject position. Recognition offers an opportunity to take power over an individual's perception of the situation they are in.

This process provides these women with a personal sense of ‘agency’ and ‘voice’ within their own lives, giving them power or confidence to attempt to advocate for a space of action.

Unfortunately, for some women, this is all that they have known in their life, and so being sold for sex becomes a ‘normal’ life. Interviewee #1 discusses a case like this:

Talk a lot about self-determination and work a lot of that model and I think when you are talking about people who have survived something that you consider so horrific, it may be normalized for them. I got a call last night about somebody who was pimped out at the age of 9 by her mom, how do you deal with that? So how do you come in, have a conversation and have a conversation with that person to tell them that what they have been living under all of those years has been a lie, and that we should adopt you. Well somebody did that to her and now she has had to deal with that for however many years.

The personal perspective of each woman is important to consider. Each person has an individual story or circumstance that has led them to where they are. Believing and communicating that each person is an expert within their own lives is vital to gaining their trust and speaking ethically about the situations in which these women exist. Self-determination affords these women ‘agency’ and a ‘space of action’ to begin to learn how to communicate in.

Another focus of perspective for LCHT is community understanding. They believe that it is important that the community understands the variety of components and severity of the issue of sex trafficking. Understanding that sex trafficking really does happen in the United States and within people’s communities is a huge component of what LCHT does in order to raise awareness. LCHT believes that the organization’s goal is:

Making certain people understand that sex trafficking doesn't just happen over there, like what you were saying. It is very much happening here, it is messy, it is not just a neat here is what human trafficking is, in a neat little box....It's I think

so much of why we try to focus of community because it's not something that you can just say this doesn't happen to people in my community, this doesn't happen to people in my Aspen community. If you don't think that it happens in your community, and you are not open to looking around, then you are going to have this constant distance between this issue and reality.

Creating a common understanding within communities, I argue, would help to reduce the stigma or uncertainty that many women face when revealing their stories. Helping people also understand that sex trafficking is not a profession but something that people are forced into is also critically important. Through the process of creating a common understanding around the situation that these women are in, a space of action is enabled so that women in sex trafficking situation have a 'voice' and 'agency' within their lives. However, regardless of how the community at large discusses sex trafficking, the law currently defines these women as 'prostitutes,' reducing the women of any 'agency' that they may have gained. Discursively, law enforcement recognizes these women as 'prostitutes' removing any previous discursive space of action that may have been created.

The discursive theme of 'law enforcement' within the DPD recognizes exclusively the role and job of the police department within sex trafficking. The DPD has a black-and-white view of what is wrong and right. Similarly, LCHT talks about their perception of the responsibilities of the DPD and what they see working and not working for the women. The codes that are used in this discursive theme, specific to LCHT are, 'working the system' and 'understanding the system.'

At the beginning of the interview, Interviewee #1 discusses the discrepancy in identifying women in sex trafficking situations. She states, "Cases that come through are recorded as pimping, or sexual exploitation, rather than sex trafficking, there is no

distinguishing between the two, they are lumped as one in the justice system.” There is no legal category for sex trafficking within the legal system (for women above the age of eighteen years). This makes it very hard to get numbers and statistics for what is happening within the two activity groups.

Furthermore, because of difference in perspective, law enforcement officials are trained to think that the women are in ‘prostituting’ situations rather than ‘sex trafficking’ situations. Interviewee #1 describes:

If law enforcement aren't trained to ask you the right questions, or they are not trained to understand what crime they are seeing from you, sort of that low-risk for traffickers, because they are operating in the sense that people are thinking that you are wanting to do this and people are thinking that you are on the loose.

When asked if she thinks that the law enforcement system could be revamped in order to better serve the women, Interviewee #1 claimed that organizations just need to learn to balance the work in and out of law enforcement. She said that it is nice to have the backing of the DPD because there are a lot of rules to get around and the DPD also has a lot of connections; however, it is important to also utilize other self-empowering resources for the women. Understanding the system and then understanding how to make it work for you is important when helping the women get the resources that they need.

It is also important to recognize that women within law enforcement struggle with the masculine nature of the organization. Interviewee #1 talked about the struggle that a female detective has with questioning the women right after they have been arrested. The female detective claimed that the women need time and space in order to trust law enforcement; whereas, the male detectives go straight in for the story. Is this a matter of training or a matter of gender at play within this scenario? Both individuals have been trained by the same organization, but one plays by the rules a little differently.

Feminist-poststructuralist thought recognizes the double-bind in which the female detective works. The female detective has to try to gain her own space of action to work within in order to create a space for the women in sex trafficking situations. There is power in relation to gender in the scenario, as well as in the way in which the male detective attempts to gain access to the ‘victims voice.’ Instead of getting to know the ‘criminalized’ woman, he asserts his authority and gets the information that he needs from her. This process reduces the ‘agency’ a sex trafficked woman has in the fact that once again she is being used for her information, making her an object of action. Because there is only one female detective currently in the DPD, it is hard to know which style of communication is more effective.

A critical lens argues that allowing these women time and space to give up information provides them with more ‘agency’ over their lives; whereas, forcing these women to give up information places them back into a subject identity of no power. Working within the confines of the law, how does a feminist organization like LCHT advocate for a space of action for these women, or is this even their organizational purpose?

Organizational Purpose

The discursive action ‘organizational purpose’ refers to the discursive themes used by LCHT to establish what they view their role to be within the organization of sex trafficking. The discursive theme in ‘organizational purpose’ is ‘caring,’ and this describes LCHT’s discursive justifications for responding to sex trafficking situations in the way that they do.

The two discursive themes of ‘caring’ and ‘in the best interest,’ at the DPD function similarly within the awareness raising organization; both show signs and actions of caring because the organizations want what is best for the woman. However, ‘in the best interest’ drops from the discourse in LCHT because of their desire to secure a place for these women. ‘In the best interest’ at the DPD referred to criminalizing women to provide them with a wake-up call and help them when they had reached rock-bottom (i.e. jail). The DPD understands ‘help’ in a different way than to LCHT. In the discursive analysis of the DPD, these two themes of ‘caring’ and ‘in the best interest’ were more disparate because the organizational actions, while similar, were different in discussion. ‘Caring’ was talked about on a more individualistic level, referring to the detective’s personal sensitivity to the women and the organization created to house and treat the women. This was not specifically an issue of concern for the DPD as an organizing whole.

‘Caring’ within LCHT and in contrast, appears to be at the forefront of the minds of the two individuals that I interviewed. The codes included are: ‘humanistic side,’ ‘caring,’ ‘facilities for help,’ and ‘sensitivity.’ Both interviewees addressed the services that are being provided specifically at Metropolitan State College of Denver, and how the women are being cared for there because employees are being educated on proper protocol. Phrases such as ‘wrap-around services,’ ‘sensitivities,’ ‘that is what you hope for,’ ‘empathy’ and ‘service providers’ littered the interview done with the first interviewee. This individual repeatedly discussed new ways and new ideas of how the organization could get involved and further their knowledge.

Interviewee #2 discussed the uniqueness of the caring within LCHT, stating:

Very few research efforts like ours have the statewide reach that we have in the five communities involved in our research; in this case, we are unique relative to efforts in other states. Our hope is to reach the four corners of the state, to provide services to services to rural areas.”

Raising awareness and spreading knowledge is one of the main dimensions of caring for LCHT. They believe that it is ‘in the best interest’ of the women to have knowledge about their situation in mainstream society so people understand the problem and severity of the issue. Giving these women power over their situation and access to the information gives them ‘agency’ because as individuals, they can choose to share or not share what they want. Weedon (1997) recognizes the plurality of language and the importance of understanding the weight that language has when describing situations. Altering the discursive situation through linguistic choices in favor of sex trafficked women offers increased access to ‘voice,’ ‘agency,’ and ‘space of action.’

Through the examination of the interview data and discursive themes present within the LCHT, a feminist-poststructuralist view would argue that the LCHT is attempting to create a space of action for sex trafficked women. LCHT is learning how to navigate masculine discourse in order to find a ‘voice’ for not only their organization within the law, but for the women as well. Figure 4.1 follows the flow of discourse through LCHT. Each discursive action holds discursive themes that help to describe the sex trafficking situation as understood by LCHT. In ‘organizational purpose’ the main discursive theme for the organization is illuminated. Each discursive action and theme builds off of one another as a way of understanding the situation of sex trafficking within Denver, Colorado. The following discussion section will highlight gaps that the theories clarify within the data from the interviews.

Discussion

In efforts to follow how the discourse around sex trafficking moves among organizations, it is important to highlight common trends that are seen and not seen between the DPD and LCHT. The most dominant discursive theme and constant of labels within the DPD was 'prostitute'; in the context of LCHT, this theme was absent. The word and any associations with the word 'prostitute' was eliminated and replaced with what LCHT would deem more appropriate labels of 'victim' and 'survivor.' This discursive shift occurred in an effort to provide the sex trafficked women with more 'agency.' For a feminist organization, the term 'prostitute' is demeaning and assumes that the women have a 'choice' or 'desire' to be in the situation that they are in. The terms 'victim' and 'survivor,' however, more adequately label the women as individuals who have at one point or another lost control of their lives and have been in situations that have drastically affected them. A critical poststructural lens recognizes that 'victim' and 'survivor' provides more 'agency' for women in sex trafficking situations than 'prostitute'; however, the space of action is still minimal for these women.

The code 'survivor' also never appeared within the interview data or discourse of the DPD. When I asked the DPD about the identifier 'survivor,' I was told that once the woman is no longer a 'victim' or a 'criminal,' the justice system no longer has anything to do with her (Participant B, personal communication, January 28, 2010). On the other hand, organizations like LCHT are trying to work with and understand how to get women to this more 'empowered' position of 'survivor.' LCHT recognizes that 'victim' is a helpless identifier and causes women who are identified as such to rely on someone else to provide them 'agency.' 'Survivor' through a feminist-poststructuralist lens

acknowledges more power within a situation; however, ‘survivor’ implies that at one point the individual was a ‘victim’ never allowing the individual to escape the situation they once lived. Therefore, on its own, ‘survivor’ appears empowering, but discursively reduces ‘agency’ when placed into a larger context.

The term ‘survivor’ also recognizes the fact that these women have been through a lot emotionally and physically and have, or are, working to overcome the situation that they lived. Survivor discourse is filled with stories and narratives of empowerment and triumph. The identifier ‘survivor,’ presumably increases the ‘agency’ and ‘voice’ that ‘victims’ of tragedies have, but is it really the case to go from one moment being a ‘victim’ to another minute being a ‘survivor?’ What are the implications emotionally for people that are being labeled as a ‘survivor,’ but are still dealing with the stress and trauma everyday that made them adopt the term?

Interviewee #1 identifies the struggle of attempting to label these women who are in sex trafficking situations. She states, “We try to be very conscious of using both victim and survivor language because I think to have both [victim and survivor labels] included—so for instance we work with service provider organizations to identify victims and survivors.” As apparent in this example, the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ appear together within the discussion of women who have been sex trafficked. This discursive co-existence may be attributed to the ways in which the organization wants to make sure they are labeling these women as they assume these women would identify themselves. Because the terms are together throughout the interview, a sense of balanced respect and importance appears to emerge as one label is not weighted more than the other. A critical lens would complicate this by recognizing the co-existence, but understanding the

weighted difference that each label has discursively. As previously explained, each identifier affords different levels of gaining ‘voice’ and ‘agency.’ I question whether or not a woman in a sex trafficking situation would really identify as a ‘victim’ or ‘survivor,’ or would she suggest that she is a ‘woman’ who was placed in this sexually exploitative situation?

While, within this organization, ‘survivor’ appears to be a term of empowerment and understanding, as the first interviewee states, you have to find a balance between “empathy and pity” when talking to and about these women. During the interview with the second interviewee, I asked what her role was within the organization and in regards to education and research. Without hesitation she claimed, “I am working with survivors at Metro State.” This statement seems to identify women only as ‘survivors.’ There is a perceived notion of ‘choice’ over one’s situation in this statement. Because an individual has ‘chosen’ to ‘take back her life’ and go to school, she is increasing her ‘agency’ within her life. Since women have made the decision to take control of their lives and have made the decision to reenter into higher education, they are now viewed as ‘survivors’ of sex trafficking. A space of action has been created within the academy. However, I question if this is the most prevalent transition from the streets to a world of scholarship?

Learning how to navigate challenges is a part of life. A challenging discursive theme that was prominent within the DPD was that of ‘addiction.’ The DPD talked about the women having drug addictions and so in order to ‘get their fix’ or ‘feed their high’ they needed to perform sexual acts as a way of earning money to do so. The need to get high for these women came at the cost of performing an illegal activity, often multiple times a day. Women can use the subject position of ‘sex worker,’ or their sexuality, as a

way of earning money in order to survive or get what they need for survival. Again, because the view of LCHT assumes that the women are forced into a situation against their will, the notion that they would do anything to keep themselves there is unheard of. LCHT ‘victimizes’ women within sex trafficking situations, and removes their ‘agency.’ Discursively, this not only gives these women no power over the ‘choices’ that they have in their lives, but also what happens to their lives. There may be an assumption that women are doing drugs as a way of numbing the pain of what they are forced to do each day, but they are not doing any of it by ‘choice.’ This was never explicitly discussed, however. This discursive theme was absent.

The final discursive theme missing at LCHT was that of ‘john.’ In the DPD ‘johns’ were talked about as the men who purchase sex, a form of perpetrator. ‘Johns,’ like ‘prostitutes,’ or their interactional counterparts, are arrested under a public nuisance misdemeanor and fined for their actions. Through the discursive lens of the DPD, the women, when arrested, are ‘criminals.’ They have agreed to perform a sex act in exchange for money and this, according to the law, is illegal. The codes associated with this discursive theme are ‘informant,’ ‘arrested,’ and ‘illegal.’ Unlike the DPD, this discursive theme is not present in the LCHT context. LCHT does not represent the women in this light because they do not believe that sex trafficking is a ‘choice’ or ever the sex trafficked women’s fault. LCHT understands sex trafficking to be an action by force and not by choice.

Moreover, within the DPD, ‘prostitutes’ seem to be of greatest concern as they are the people attempting to sell themselves for money. The ‘johns’ and ‘pimps’ become secondary source targets who only buy sex because it is being offered and they simply

cannot help themselves. In contrast in the LCHT, the ‘pimps’ are considered to be the ones who are furthering and forcing the ‘victims’ to be in these specific situations. The ‘johns’ were not discussed, which is peculiar. A feminist-poststructuralist standpoint would argue that this absence is due to patriarchy and its tradition. The power dynamic within language and gender alleviates most blame from men, because ‘boys will be boys.’ Whereas, masculine discourse tends to spotlight gender, and objectify women through their sexuality, creating a sexual identity that is used for the pleasure of the dominant, but then punished by the same commitments to discourse. Clearly, there is an issue of supply and demand within sex trafficking; there would be no supply, if there were no demand. More focus needs to be placed on why ‘johns’ are establishing a demand for sex and how this issue is going to be remedied.

Anti-trafficking is important to LCHT because of what the organization does. Anti-trafficking is a fairly recent movement that has been gaining momentum since attention has been drawn to the issue of human trafficking. Anti-trafficking is a human rights movement; it suggests that humans are not and should not be for sale. Discursively positioning themselves within the anti-trafficking movement, suggests that LCHT is attempting to give individuals ‘agency’ and a space of action. LCHT does this by informing the public about the circumstances under which people who have been human trafficked live, describing that the action is not a ‘choice.’

Recently linked to the anti-trafficking movement is the notion that human trafficking is modern day slavery (Interviewee #1, personal communication, January 25, 2010). There is currently a large debate around the use of the term ‘slavery,’ because of the historical understanding of slavery that a human did not actually account for a whole

person, prior to the three-fifths compromise, rather just three-fifths of a person. Slaves were also not granted any rights. People in the trafficking industry actually have human rights, but they are not being exercised because of the situations into which they are forced. So while the situations are similar in the conditions, they may be, by definition, different. Discursively, a shift away from 'slavery' provides these individuals with more 'voice' and 'agency' than they would have with the label. Increased 'agency' means that the individuals have more of a 'voice' and at least an opportunity or idea to advocate for different circumstances under which to work.

Finally, unlike the dominant discursive theme in DPD of 'criminalization,' LCHT's dominant discursive theme is 'caring.' Because of their feminist commitments, LCHT is very particular about the language they choose and how they use it, as a way of demonstrating care toward women who they serve. When questions or comments were framed in a specific way that they did not approve of, the interviewees were quick to correct the language of others as a way of educating them. However, I wonder if too much care is paid in labeling the women (i.e., survivor); if this only marginalizes the women further because there is no common ground or understanding for the new discourse. People want to belong, and as Murphy (2008) suggests, common discourse helps us belong and become a part of something. If there is only a small group of individuals identifying as 'survivors,' they will not have many people to connect/relate to, making the discursive shift counterproductive. Being a 'survivor' gives one no space of action, because there is no common understanding. In the effort to make people feel like they belong, what if the shift went from 'victim/survivor/prostitute' to 'people/women'?

However, how much of the language that LCHT uses is truly accurate? What would these women themselves use if they were not having much direct contact with the women in sex trafficking situations? As scholars, we often desire to ‘fix’ or ‘save’ the world, without actually becoming or living a part of the world that we research. Feminist scholarship recognizes positionality as a factor in our commitments and understandings of the world. From a middle-class perspective, the ‘problem’ may appear easy to fix; however, is it, or is ‘fixing’ it messing with people’s lives in an unhealthy way? If we impose a ‘fix’ onto others, then are we not reducing their ‘agency’ and ‘voice’ thus closing their space of action?

At the conclusion of conducting my interviews it was apparent that there was a struggle within LCHT over how to work cooperatively with the DPD. Both interviewees understood well the regulations and rules within law enforcement and what they can and cannot use to their advantage. As interviewee #1 stated, LCHT needs to keep close ties with the DPD. The process of networking organizations is important if there is ever going to be a massive reduction in the prevalence of sex trafficking in the area. Creating a common understanding or discourse around sex trafficking would help each organization get on the same page and work together for the common good of a whole, rather than for the individual organization. Continuing this conversation, chapter five will attempt to get at this issue of ‘fixing’ people through a middle-class lens, examining outreach organizations that have direct contact with the women everyday and have a more realistic view of not only how they view their situation, but how they talk about it.

CHAPTER 5: STAYING ALIVE

Sex Trafficking Outreach Organizations

Outreach organizations, specifically within the sex trafficking situations are designed to lay the groundwork for where individuals can talk, reach out and get help from others. The two outreach organizations I interviewed were Prax(us) and the Chrysalis Project. They were not initially in the organizational sample but it was made clear through interviews with LCHT and DPD that the two organizations played an important role in sex trafficking situations.

These outreach organizations were more closely related to law enforcement than I would have anticipated. The interviewees are out on the streets nearly every day talking and listening to women affected by sex trafficking and sexually exploitative situations. Of all three kinds of organizations researched, the outreach organizations have the most grounded relationships with, and recognition of, women's situations.

Prax(us) is an organization that is not directly linked to law enforcement, and tries to distance itself from the law while out on the streets. To gain acceptance and a good reputation with women in sex trafficking situations, they hand out necessary supplies such as condoms, toothbrushes and soap. Prax(us) stands for reflection plus action, which is apparent in their discourse.

Within this organization, I interviewed two individuals who work cooperatively to accomplish their work and reach as many individuals as possible. The interviews were conducted over the course of two hours. Each employee's name is kept confidential per

their request; however, in order to identify the different individuals who were interviewed, I will use the identifiers Interviewee #1 and Interviewee #2 to distinguish the information provided by each person during the interviews.

The Chrysalis Project is a component of a larger organization, the Empowerment Program, and is a twelve month program that operates in three phases. Denotatively, chrysalis is a pupa of a moth or butterfly that is enclosed in a hard or protective case, or in other words, this is a protected stage of development for the butterfly/moth. During these women's time at Chrysalis, it is a protected stage and a stage for these women to grow as individuals. The program is designed to provide women, specifically women involved in sexually exploitative situations, with resources to start a new lifestyle. Currently about two-hundred-fifty women have entered the program and of that, fifty have graduated from the program. Women enter the program and due to the dramatic change in daily requirements (e.g. curfew, no men, attending school, etc.) many women choose to leave. Once admitted, these women are allowed to come back; however, the change in everyday life is sometimes too hard for these women to get used to.

During my time interviewing at Chrysalis, I interviewed one employee involved in this sector of the organization. The employee's name will be kept confidential per their request; however, in order to identify this individual against those interviewed from Prax(us) they will be referred to as Chrysalis Interviewee #1. The interview with this individual was recorded and consisted of an hour of conversation and then thirty minutes of conversation while driving up East Colfax in order to get a better understanding of the material situation of sex trafficking in Denver.

Due to the background and commitments of these organizations, some of the discursive themes and codes present at DPD and LCHT are synonymous. In the sections that follow, I will present all discursive themes either individually or in connection with another theme. I will first explore the four shared discursive themes between each of the organizations. Then I will address the seven discursive themes that are specific to Chrysalis. Prax(us) had no unique discursive themes that appeared only within their interview data. These eleven discursive themes appear in Figures 5.1 (Chrysalis) and 5.2 (Prax(us)), in contrast to the fourteen that appear in Figure 3.1 for the DPD, and the six in Figure 4.1 for LCHT.

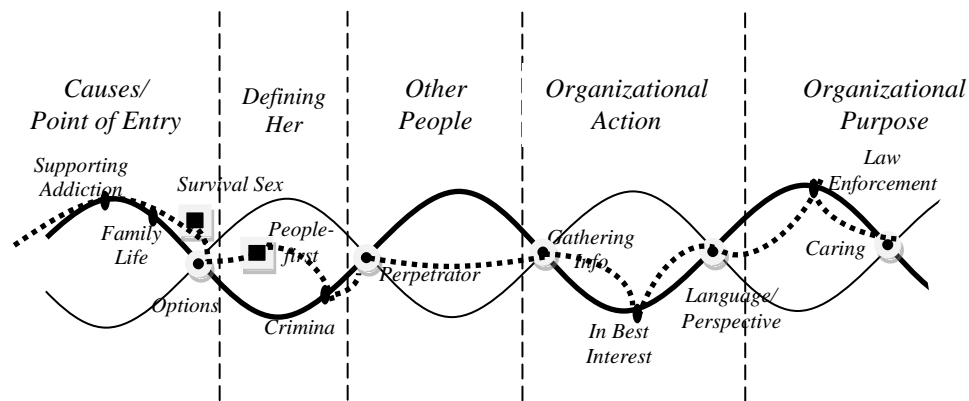


Figure 5.1: Chrysalis Discursive Flow (larger dotted line)

If the discursive themes appear together, then they will be discussed in the initial presentation of the themes. The themes are also organized by the discursive actions, of ‘causes/point of entry,’ ‘defining her,’ ‘other people,’ ‘organizational action,’ and ‘organizational purpose.’ Each discursive action helps to identify how the discursive themes are working each of the organizations, to illuminate their focus and importance. Each discursive theme will be described within its codes and context, and then an example will be provided, concluding with a theoretical discussion of the importance and

meaning of each discursive theme to the overall discourse of sex trafficking. Main discursive themes are represented by a solid circle. Squares signify codes that are specific to their respected organization, but are not discussed as major discursive themes across all organizations. In order to accurately follow the flow of discourse, among organizations each discursive theme will begin with a brief reminder as to how it functioned within the DPD and LCHT.

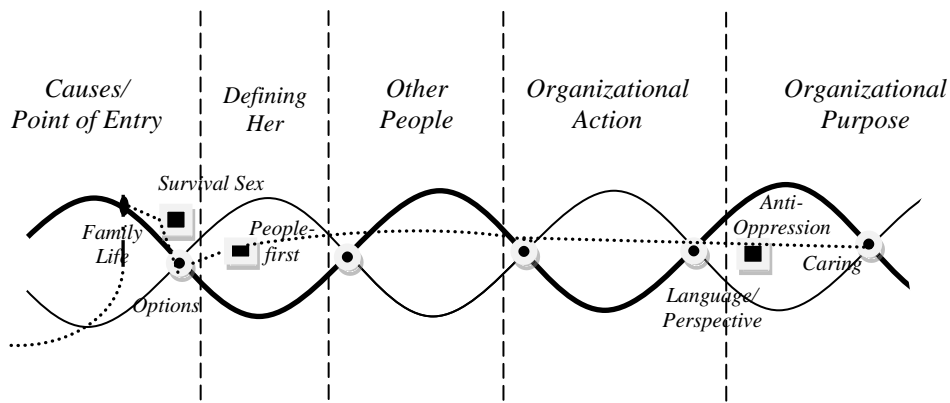


Figure 5.2: Prax(us) Discursive Flow (small dotted line)

Discussion of Combined Discursive Themes Across Chrysalis and Prax(us)

Causes/Point of Entry

The discursive action ‘causes/point of entry,’ describes the situation that the women were in before they were in the sexually exploitative situations. The discursive themes in this discursive action are ‘family life’ and ‘option.’ The outreach organizations use these discursive themes as a way of explaining why these women have entered or become a part of sexually exploitative situations. ‘Causes/point of entry’ helps the two outreach organizations to make sense of why the women are entering into the life, and what is causing the population within this sexually exploitative situations to continue to grow.

Within the contexts of both the DPD and LCHT, the discursive theme of ‘family life’ refers to women’s backgrounds, and acknowledging that each person does not have the same background and that difference can be the cause or reason for individuals becoming ‘homeless,’ which then can place them in various situations. The codes in this discursive theme include ‘street culture,’ ‘homeless ’and ‘family life’ for both organizations. ‘Homeless’ is a new code present in only these two organizations. Accepting the reality of how and where the women in sex trafficking situations live, ‘homeless’ becomes a key code in understanding a need for a ‘new family.’ Another code, ‘control of the pimp’ within both the DPD and LCHT refers to a ‘pimp,’ or person, who is controlling the money or person that they are forcing to have sex with ‘johns’ for money. At Prax(us) and Chrysalis ‘pimp’ is identified in a different light, either as a ‘boyfriend’ or nonexistent.

The discursive themes of ‘family life’ and ‘control of pimp’ work in cooperation with the code ‘homeless’ to explain background situations of the women. Interviewee #1 at Prax(us) claims that they focus on homeless youth because “they are at the highest risk for becoming under the influence of others.” Since the ‘homeless’ have no protection when they first enter the streets, they seek whoever they believe can offer them some component necessary to survive, creating a new ‘street family.’

According to Prax(us) Interviewee #1, there is a “difference between a white-middle-class American family life and then what they call ‘street families.’” Middle-class Americans live within the safety and confines of a home usually in suburbia or its equivalent. Someone who is homeless, lives on the streets and in an effort to survive, develops what are called ‘street families.’ ‘Street families’ help individuals to learn the

‘street culture,’ where they are taught techniques for survival from their new families. Connecting with a group of individuals and relying on them for safety and a place to help survive becomes the ‘street family.’

The code of ‘street families’ is important when considering the discursive theme of ‘control of pimp.’ In this case the ‘pimp’ is really the family’s ‘daddy.’ Because of the hierarchy defined by this label, individuals will do what they need to do in order to keep their ‘daddy’ happy and, in turn, them safe. On the streets, it is survival of the fittest. As Weedon (1997) would describe, the discursive production of women’s bodies becomes their way of making money. If a woman has to turn tricks everyday in order to earn money to stay alive, more than likely she will do it, because it is necessary. These women ‘consent’ to the process of selling themselves for sex because they need to provide for their ‘street families’ and stay alive.

Concern for ‘family life’ in the discourse of Chrysalis is grounded in the assumption that these women do not come from supportive backgrounds, but rather, they are from broken or unhealthy homes. In connection to the ‘control of the pimp,’ as discussed earlier, women may start out under the control of someone, but this is not always the case. ‘Survival’ is what women are most concerned about as seen through the discourse of Prax(us) and Chrysalis. The ‘options’ that are necessary to survive are basic in the sense that individuals need food and shelter to live day-to-day; however, the overall ‘options’ in life are limited.

The DPD views the discursive theme of ‘option’ as the notion that everyone is afforded nearly the same opportunities in life and people just need to seek out and accept those opportunities. LCHT however, acknowledges that ‘options’ among individuals are

not universal because everyone does not come from the same place or is granted the same tools to make it through life. For Chrysalis and Prax(us), the codes in the discursive theme of ‘options’ include: ‘option,’ ‘not-forced,’ ‘arbitrary options.’ Prax(us) specifically clarifies that within their organization, they focus on ‘options’ rather than ‘choices.’ Interviewee #2 explains that they “focus on options rather than choice, because people are afforded certain options in life and they have to decide what is more important at the time.”

Additionally, Prax(us) affirms that rather than ‘options’ in general, it is important to understand ‘arbitrary options’ given to these individuals. Essentially they end up choosing the lesser of the two evils within their lives. The discursive theme of ‘arbitrary options,’ transfers into the discourse within the Chrysalis Project. Women are believed to have the ‘option’ to choose to better their lives through the resources available to them within the Empowerment Program. Interviewee #1 also gives the women the ‘option’ of what they want to be called and referred to as: most women have chosen to identify themselves as ‘women.’

Defining Her

The discursive action ‘defining her’ refers to the discursive themes used by the outreach organizations to describe the women involved in sex trafficking/‘prostitution’ situations. The discursive theme that is shared within the organizations for ‘defining her’ is ‘prostitute.’ The discursive theme in ‘defining her’ helps both outreach organizations to label the sex trafficked women. Through the interview data, ‘prostitute’ becomes not a label but the identifiable situation that these women are involved in as understood by both organizations.

The discursive theme of ‘prostitute’ was prominently used within the context of the DPD, and then replaced by discourse of ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ in the context of LCHT. The codes in this discursive theme include, ‘prostitute,’ ‘women,’ ‘person,’ and ‘people.’ Within the context of the two outreach organizations, the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ are also often rejected and substituted with ‘women’ or ‘people first language.’ Thus, ‘women’ and ‘people’ are now discursive labels for the individuals in sex trafficking situations.

Prax(us) works outside of the confines of the law enforcement and deals with individuals who have not yet been arrested. When asked how they identify women, Interviewee #2 explained:

We like to say that they are people in situations. They are people first and then their situation is second, it is important to treat them as people first. They never define themselves as prostitutes, victims or survivors, so it is important to understand that. If given the choice, they would much rather identify as perpetrators, because perpetrators have more agency and power than a victim. Plus, if you think about it, with the options in their life, they were at once a perpetrator (i.e., stealing, robbing). When on the streets, identifying as a victim would give you less power, and so it is more important to survive. That is why we call them people in situations. Also may refer to them as exploitative situations.

Even though Prax(us) works with women who have not been currently arrested and Chrysalis’ contact comes after these women have been arrested, the ways in which they address the women and the ways each organization seems to understand the sex trafficking situation that the women are in, is similar. The most significant similarity is their use of ‘people-first’ language.

Chrysalis discursively constructs the individual as “woman involved in prostitution” (Interviewee #1, personal communication, February 18, 2010). Because Chrysalis usually encounters women who have been involved in prostitution situations,

this is the only frame of reference possible. Chrysalis is connected to law enforcement agencies; they work under similar definitions, or lack of definitions, in reference to sex trafficking versus prostitution.

Yet, Interviewee #1 from Chrysalis commented on her distaste for the way law enforcement officials label women as ‘prostitutes.’ She explained a situation when she was at a conference in Dallas, Texas, and the lady “kept on saying these women are prostitutes. As soon as she labeled them, the entire room of 200 people stated judging that.” Keeping the language as ‘people first’ attempts to reduce judgments on these women. Interviewee #1 is specifically addressing Weedon’s (1997) notion of altering the discursive situation as redefinition and offering new possibilities for these women. Through ‘people-first language,’ a woman is identified as a ‘person’ increasing their chance at ‘agency’ and ‘voice’ by opening up the population and decreasing the traditional ‘boxing-in’ that comes with labeling. A feminist lens argues that ‘people/women’ opens up the multiple positions that one may be able to enact, helping to increase the population size. By expanding the label past ‘prostitute/victim/survivor/’ these women are no longer boxed into on single identity, making room for others to connect and relate.

During the same conversation, Chrysalis Interviewee #1 was frustrated when explaining other chosen labels that the DPD has used in her presence. She was asked to go on a prostitution sting and ride along with a detective. During this experience, she claimed that the detective kept referring to their outing as a ‘whore sting’ and that they were going to get some ‘whores.’ Unsure of how to make sense of the language, she concluded “I know these girls are victims but you are perpetuating something very

negative by calling them whores” (personal communication, February 18, 2010).

Understanding that these are women/people first and referring to them in that way is an important factor in reducing the stigma that surrounds them. In using the term ‘whore,’ these women are reduced to sex as their subjective identity. Who these women are discursively described as, alters their discursive situation and essentially access to ‘voice’ and ‘agency.’ A ‘whore’ is assumed to have little to no control of their lives, reducing their access to ‘agency’ within their lives. No space of agency is available to women who are identified with these labels. Understanding the consequences of language, each of the feminist outreach organizations redefines their discourse as a way of taking action.

Organizational Action

The discursive action ‘organizational action’ refers to the discursive theme used by the outreach organizations to illuminate what they are doing in regards to the sex trafficked women. The discursive theme shared in both organizations is ‘language.’ The discursive theme in ‘organizational action’ helps the outreach organizations to describe their perspective around the problem of sex trafficking and then discuss what they believe their role is in regards to the issue within Denver.

A concern for ‘language’ was not as important to the DPD and labels were viewed as an identifier used when completing paper work. LCHT weigh language a lot more heavily than the DPD, because they believe that language shapes the way the world is viewed and understood. The codes derived from Chrysalis and Prax(us)’s interview data are, ‘language,’ ‘perspective,’ ‘love,’ ‘complex issue,’ ‘movement of discourse,’ and ‘oppression.’ Chrysalis and Prax(us) view language similarly to LCHT. They believe that the words that you use come with either positive or negative consequences.

Prax(us) chooses to use ‘mirror-language.’ Interviewee #2 defined it as trying “to speak and talk about their situation like they do as a way of trying to relate and understand; a way of trying to gain respect.” Trying to relate to the women provides a space for common ground.

Once again, since Chrysalis is closely connected to the law enforcement, they are most concerned with the initial discourse that is used toward the women while they are being arrested. Chrysalis Interviewee #1 thinks that better attention needs to be paid to the actual discourse that is used, because the language that they use shifts their understanding of the situation and is connected to how the women are treated. A shift in discourse can alter the perspective that people have on women involved in sex trafficking situations.

Whether or not correctly practiced and exercised, both the DPD and LCHT describe the discursive theme of ‘perspective’ as the fact that each person comes from their own separate background. Each person has a personal history that explains why they are in the situations that they are in. The outreach organizations adopt this view, and then they take it one step further by trying to understand and communicate within the perspective in which the women come.

Prax(us) Interviewee #2 states they “understand that not everyone has the same options, so we are respectful of this and just are here to listen.” Using ‘mirror language’ they attempt to gain and understand the same perspective that women hold. A key part of understanding the lives that women live comes in understanding the relationship that they have with their ‘pimps.’ Both subjects at Prax(us) confirmed that they try not to discuss the pimp specifically. To the women, he is either a member of their family or their

boyfriend/lover. Therefore, speaking poorly about their 'boyfriend' only further separates women from reality outside of their 'relationship.' When speaking about their 'pimp' they try to discuss only his actions, and not the specific person, a way of reducing the severity of the attack in the minds of the women. Focusing on the actions and not the person redefines the situation through the plurality of language. Allowing these women a 'choice' in seeing the actions as ill-intentions toward them, shift their view causing a more universal view of the situations in which they find themselves. This process grants women more 'agency' because they are attempting to take control of their minds/bodies through an understanding of the situation that they live.

Furthermore they understand that the pimp comes from a place where he may not have been given the best options in life either. Interviewee #1 from Prax (us) claims:

You have to understand that to most of these people, they love their pimp, even though he is usually viewed as a bad guy, he was given options in life that brought him here. What he is doing is not right, but we don't always have the best options in life. We try to talk about the actions that are bad rather than the person who is bad. We play more of a supporting and counseling role in their life, we try to help them.

Involved in an 'anti-oppression' organization, the two interviewees try to acknowledge certain circumstances in the lives of both the 'pimp' and the 'woman' which have brought them to the place in which they exist. They do not condone the behavior of either individual involved; rather they try to help the women see the situation as a third-party would, while still supporting and respecting each person. Again, by allowing women access to a 'choice' over how they view the situation that they live discursively, grants them more 'agency' within their lives. Thus, not only providing the women a space of action but helping the women to understand that they deserve a space of action and to fight for that within their lives.

Chrysalis discursively represents the idea of ‘perspective’ as law enforcement did. They believe that women involved need to want to change instead of being forced into any situation that requires change. In order to be accepted into the program, Interviewee #1 talks about the fact that the women

Meet certain motivation requirements, I use the EUREKA which is a motivational scale, so you have pre-contemplation, contemplation, that whole thing, you have to be at least in contemplation thinking yeah I might want to change. If I go and interview someone in jail and they are like, I don't have a problem, then they are not going to be able to come here and most people are ready to get some help and it's kind of the first three days are when they are going to stay or leave because it is really hard to change a lifetime of living on the streets, smoking crack and then coming in here they have 5 o'clock curfew for the first week, and coming to class everyday and being around 15 other women in a group, it is terrifying.

In order to change the situation that these women are in, they must first be willing to accept help and consider changing or removing themselves from the lives that they are currently in. Usually, women do not want to leave their current situation because of the financial security that they have with their ‘pimps’; however, the Chrysalis Project understands this and offers the women financial security with a place to live. In return, they just need to be willing to change how they have been living their life, or their aspect of existence. As Foucault would argue, there is power dynamic in every interaction. Unknowingly perhaps, Chrysalis discursively performs the role of the ‘pimp/perpetrator’ in this new situation for these women. The intentionality is not the same after the first interaction for each organization; however, both situations start off offering these women a perceived notion of ‘choice.’ ‘Choice’ gives the prostituted women a chance at ‘voice’ and space of action. In the end, the ‘organizational purpose’ of Chrysalis is to foster a better life for these women, but the introduction to the system looks very similar to that of their first encounter with their ‘pimp,’ making it an interactional contradiction.

Organizational Purpose

The discursive action ‘organizational purpose’ refers to the discursive themes used by each outreach organization to establish what they view their role to be within the organization of sex trafficking. The shared discursive theme in ‘organizational purpose’ is ‘caring.’ The shared discursive theme in ‘organizational purpose’ describes the outreach organizations discursive justifications for taking the actions that they do within the situation of sex trafficking.

While, the DPD does not have a general organizational consensus on how they act or treat each of the individual women, and the discursive theme of ‘caring’ comes from individual feelings from the officers. Being a feminist organization, LCHT uses ‘caring’ ideas and discourse at the forefront of every discussion. Concern is always being paid to how the women are treated and talked about. Comparable to LCHT, Prax(us) and Chrysalis use the discursive theme of ‘caring’ as a way of relating and one of the most important aspects of their job in communicating with the women. The codes in caring include ‘caring,’ ‘sensitivity ’and ‘facilities for help.’

Prax(us) uses the ‘harm reduction’ method as one way of ‘connecting with’ and ‘caring for’ the women that they speak to. The harm reduction method was described by Interviewee #1 as

Harm reduction is basically no matter what you are doing, or the situation that you are in we will support you in being as safe and as cared for as possible. All of the questions to see if they are being as safe as possible and it is not that you aren't encouraging people to quit, that is fine, then of course you will encourage if they want to quit. But you are respecting people's abilities to make choices for themselves so you are encouraging them to do things that will make them safer and cared for but respecting them to make decisions for themselves. And it really breaks down this divide.

For Prax(us) ‘caring’ is understanding, and any way to show that they care is good. The women are never forced to go or talk to the employees at Prax(us), and they return at their own volition, keeping open and supportive communication between the parties important. Prax(us) never wants the women to feel like they are being judged; only supported and nurtured. This process allows these women to feel like ‘agents’ in their lives and creates a space of action for them to operate in. Giving these women a ‘choice’ to come and go, allows them to have a strong ‘voice’ in their lives. Allowing them a ‘voice’ gives these women not only an emotional space of action within Prax(us). Chrysalis furthers this space by supporting this notion and additionally, physically creating a space for these women through ‘facilities for help.’

Chrysalis uses the code of ‘facilities for help’ as their model for caring.

Chrysalis Interviewee #1 describes that the Chrysalis Project specifically provides the women with a:

House, so then we would go and pick them up from jail, and then we would provide housing for them, clothes and hygiene, and basically provide for all of their basic needs. And then they come into drug and alcohol treatment here and what that involves is that they go to relapse prevention, a life-skills class, um seeking safety which is trauma and substance abuse curriculum and they go to behavior education, drug and alcohol education, and they Chrysalis, which is a prostitution education and support.

The Chrysalis Project is housed within the larger organization of the Empowerment Program. Within these walls women have ‘options’ to earn a GED, get help finding a job, get funding help, provided with a place to live, and a place for young mothers to receive help. Chrysalis attempts to provide these women with all the necessities in life so that they have no reason to return to their ‘pimps’ or to the streets.

In summary, the discursive themes within Prax(us) and Chrysalis allow the organizations to attempt to ‘work within the system’ from a feminist standpoint. Each organization understands that they have to ‘work the system’ in order to provide the best situation for prostituted women. ‘Language’ is a very important discursive theme in order to help each organization discuss these women while allowing them to have the most amount of ‘agency’ and in turn, space of action. Being connected to the DPD both fiscally and through a common understanding of the situation of sex trafficking within Colorado, Chrysalis has discursive themes that more closely connect to the DPD than Prax(us). In the following pages, I will discuss the unique discursive themes that appear in the interview data in Chrysalis (not Prax(us)).

Discursive Themes Specific to Chrysalis

Causes/Point of Entry

The discursive action ‘causes/point of entry’ with Chrysalis, specifically, describes the situation that they believe causes the women to keep (re)producing the situation that they live. The discursive theme in this discursive action is ‘supporting addiction.’ Chrysalis uses this discursive theme as a way of explaining what they discursively argue drives recidivism for these women into their ‘prostitution’ situations.

The discursive theme of ‘supporting addiction’ was nonexistent at LCHT, but present in the discourse of DPD. LCHT understands sex trafficking to be an act of force; they do not believe that a drug addiction is so strong it could keep these women in the situation (Interviewee #1-LCHT, personal communication, January 25, 2010). On the other hand, the DPD believes that a need to support the drug addiction is what keeps women agreeing and wanting to perform sex acts for money (Participant A, personal

communication, January 14, 2010). The Chrysalis codes in this discursive theme include ‘addicted to drugs,’ ‘drugs,’ ‘addiction,’ and ‘need to support.’

Chrysalis addresses the issue of drugs differently again. One of the criteria for being accepted into the program is that the women must have an issue with drugs and alcohol. Interviewee #1 explains, “Which most [women] involved in street level prostitution have a drug and alcohol issue, so that wasn’t a big barrier.” The Chrysalis Project understands and accepts that these women have drug issues, and instead of condemning them for their decisions, offers them a chance at rehab. Offering these women a ‘choice’ in their situation gives them increased ‘agency’ within a situation that has, up until this point, oppressed them through their sexual (subjective) identity. Furthermore, Chrysalis requires that the women take daily to weekly drug tests depending on their status within the program as a way of staying in the program. Chrysalis holds these women accountable for their actions. Chrysalis allows these women a space of action through offering them ‘choices’ in their situations. Holding these women accountable for their ‘choices’ and actions increases their ‘agency’ because it gives these women ownership over their lives. Chrysalis takes the middle road in action and understanding between DPD and LCHT. Understanding where these women have come from helps Chrysalis to identify how they ‘define her.’

Defining Her

The discursive action ‘defining her’ refers to the discursive themes used by Chrysalis to describe the women involved in sex trafficking/‘prostitution’ situations. For Chrysalis, the discursive theme in ‘defining her’ is ‘criminal,’ and this helps Chrysalis to discursively categorize the ‘prostituted’ women and conform to the identification started

at the DPD. The codes included in this discursive theme are ‘criminal,’ ‘arrested,’ ‘illegal,’ and ‘prostitution.’

Chrysalis uses the discursive theme ‘criminal’ to describe the situation that the women are in with regards to law enforcement. The two codes used within the context of Chrysalis are ‘arrested’ and ‘prostitution.’ At the very beginning of the interview, Interviewee #1 described the process of entering Chrysalis, which is located in the larger context of the Empowerment Program:

So women get arrested for prostitution and then they have to meet a certain criteria so it had to be three or more arrests and it had to be they have to have a drug and alcohol issue, which most involved in street level prostitution have a drug and alcohol issue, so that wasn't a big barrier. Um so they have like a court liaison so there is a woman in court that would, when a woman got arrested for prostitution, we would go and interview them and say hey is this something that you want, so instead of going to jail, they could come here to empowerment.

Instead of describing these women as being ‘criminals within the system,’ Interviewee #1 discusses how the system criminalizes these women and how Chrysalis ‘works within that system.’ As a way of offering these women a space of action, Chrysalis rejects the label of ‘criminal’ and tries to help those who have been ‘criminalized’ by offering them a place to ‘serve their time’ and ‘get better’ outside the confines of a jail cell. This new space allows these women a place to exercise their ‘voice’ and new found ‘agency’ within their lives. Chrysalis offers a chance for these women to receive full-service rehab, not only working on addictions but also these women as individuals. Chrysalis wants these women to make the ‘choice’ to feel and be more empowered. The ‘choices’ become about the women and not about the ‘other people’ who have been ‘perpetrators’ in these women’s lives.

Other People

The discursive action ‘other people’ refers to the discursive theme used by Chrysalis to discuss the ‘perpetrators’ within the prostitution situation surrounding the ‘prostituted’ women. The discursive theme in ‘other people’ is ‘perpetrator,’ and this helps Chrysalis to identify the people who are creating a demand for the women or the people selling these women in ‘prostitution’ situations.

‘Perpetrators’ as discussed earlier are anyone who perpetuates the cycle that the women are in. Or essentially anyone/thing who oppresses these women as individuals within the eyes of society and even themselves, reducing them often to merely a sex object, according to the discursive themes in the data from DPD, LCHT and Chrysalis. According to the discourse of the DPD, the ‘perpetrators’ for the women are ‘pimps’ if the women are minors; and ‘johns,’ who allow for there to continually be a space for these women to sell themselves because the men continually buy sex. In LCHT, the discussion of ‘johns’ was absent and focus stayed on the ‘pimps’ who were controlling the women.

At Chrysalis, not every situation that a woman is in involves the controlling of a ‘pimp.’ The codes in this discursive theme, in regards to Chrysalis, include ‘perpetrator,’ ‘pimp,’ and ‘john.’ Interviewee #1 describes the difference between sex trafficking situations and prostitution scenarios in regards to the role of a pimp:

I think that once you step into human trafficking you are dealing with pimps, and that is scary and that if someone is in a situation and when someone is a juvenile, there will be a pimp involved. So what are you doing to do to keep them safe, what are you doing to do to keep them away, to keep them out of touch with them. Yeah, and a majority of street level prostitution there is not so often a pimp, they are just out on their own. They maybe started off with a pimp, and then but if you are under control of a pimp, he is not going to want you to smoke crack every day, and most people involved in street-level prostitution are smoking

crack everyday so when you have a pimp, he is going to control that part of you. So they are sick of being told what to do, and so they are going to do what they want. I would say that it is probably a 50/50 chance, where they think that they have a boyfriend, but he is really their pimp, but that doesn't mean that he is taking their money, just in some way that he is controlling them.

Here the focus on the pimp is getting away from him because the interviewee describes him as only being present during the initial stages of 'prostitution' and then only if the individual is involved in sex trafficking. This view differs from those of the other organizations where being forced into the lifestyle was the only way that a sex trafficking situation was understood. However, this scenario above also describes the relationship between the woman and drugs, and how she may become addicted. Also, if she does not have a pimp, selling herself may become the only way for her to pay for the addiction.

When it comes to the discussion of 'johns,' the discourse is very different again. Because Interviewee #1 works with women who are affected by the men who purchase sex, she is very concerned with the contradiction in punishment between the two parties involved in the situation. She says:

When anyone gets arrested in Denver they get an area-restriction, it is like your first, that is interesting to, I don't know if johns get one when they get arrested. Amend- they offer the one-day johns class...People just don't know [about the sex trafficking situation], they don't know how violent it is and so hopefully they talk about it in this class, they [johns] go to a one-day class. So a woman gets arrested and say it is her third time, she is going to get anywhere from 180 days to a year in jail, if she gets out and comes here but she is here for a year. If a guy gets arrested, he gets his car towed, and he has to get a health order and then go to a one-day class...when I did the sting, they do anywhere from 3 stings a month where they are going out and looking for street level prostitutes, and they only do one every 3 months for johns and the guys said because it takes so much more time and energy... it is so much more of an issue to look for the johns, well they are the issue they are the ones who are perpetuating the cycle. So that was interesting to hear that it was more of a hassle to get a woman to get an undercover and do a john sting.

This conflict frustrates the interviewee at Chrysalis. Day-in and day-out they listen to stories from these women and how living on the streets or with a ‘pimp’ is a hard life. Then Chrysalis hears from the police department that the DPD is not ‘cracking down’ as hard on the ‘johns’ because it ‘takes more energy.’ One would think that if the law enforcement organization was truly interested in stopping the cycle, they would focus on eliminating who is perpetuating it. However, again organizationally, the discursive focus within Chrysalis seems to depend solely on assisting the women and not looking at the reason women are in the situations they are in. Spender (1980) recognizes that language is man-made and thus as Murphy (2008) adds, having a man-made language marks membership in a community.

Law enforcement operates off of a patriarchal discursive structure, that allows for the ‘other,’ or women, to be powerless. Poststructural scholars recognize power in relation to gender. When the DPD does not exert the same amount of energy in ‘criminalizing’ the ‘perpetrators’ as they do these women, this communicates a gendered preference and hierarchy. Since the ‘supply’ or women seem to be the focus of discussion in sex trafficking situations, it is important that organizations look into ways in which they can keep these women safe. These women are ‘victimized’ through discourse, and left without ‘agency’ when they are seen as not only the ‘victim’ in a situation but then a ‘perpetrator’ in society. When women are the only gender discussed in regards to sex trafficking or prostitution situations, they become the only recognized gender thus, being the ‘perpetrators’ in society. Because Chrysalis, like the DPD, recognizes these women as ‘prostitutes,’ ‘brothels’ are not addressed as ‘perpetrators’ in

their situation. Since the DPD and Chrysalis view 'prostitution' situations in the same regard, their 'organizational action' is similar in their reasons for doing what they do.

Organizational Action

The discursive action 'organizational action' refers to the discursive themes used by Chrysalis to illuminate their discursive actions in regards to prostituted women. The discursive themes in 'organizational action' are 'in-best-interest,' and 'gathering information.' The discursive themes in 'organizational action' help Chrysalis to describe their perspective and understanding of the problem of prostitution in Denver.

The discursive theme, 'in best interest' is one of the most prominent discursive themes within law enforcement. Since the Chrysalis Project is an organization created by the law, it would only make sense that they would adopt and legally have to abide by certain rules and regulations that are put into place by the law. Within the discourse of the DPD, 'in best interest' refers to the idea that the women involved in sex trafficking have reached rock-bottom in their lives and that they need a wake-up call and assistance to better their lives.

Chrysalis operates off of the same idea that the women need assistance in life because they have been sexually exploited. Unlike the DPD, Chrysalis believes that women are able to make decisions for themselves but they just may need a little guidance in life every once in a while. Codes included in this discursive theme are: 'good for them,' 'beneficial,' 'control issues,' 'protection,' 'receive help' and 'support items.' Interviewee #1 states, "Most people I think that they would say that it was a blessing that they got arrested that they are ready to get help." Once an individual gets the opportunity to be a part of Chrysalis, they can leave the facility whenever they want. Chrysalis

provides what Deetz (1998) would call a perceived notion of ‘choice.’ This means, that these women have a ‘choice’ to stay, but if they choose to leave however, they run the risk of being arrested again for continuing the same actions. At Chrysalis, they provide what LCHT referred to as ‘wrap-around services,’ housing, classes, education and the basic needs for the women.

Even though Chrysalis operates off of the rules and regulations put into place by the DPD, they also work from some of the basic principles and ideas associated with LCHT. Within LCHT, the discursive theme of ‘in best interest’ functioned as a subtheme to the more prominent discursive theme of ‘caring.’ LCHT’s dominant discourse of ‘caring’ took the form of services and feelings, rather than a forced wake-up call. Chrysalis also works from with this perspective, but they believe that the ‘best interest’ and best way ‘to care’ for these women who are involved in sexually exploitative situations is to first give them a wake-up call and then provide them with services and communication as to why they should attempt to change. Communication and connection is a key component of keeping the ‘best interest’ of an individual foregrounded, and a component of building stable and healthy relationships.

Chrysalis understands the lives that these women have been living are skewed versions of what it is to have healthy interpersonal relationships. They move to gain trust and build relationships up so that the women can view themselves in a new light. Interviewee #1 discussed a situation where a woman felt that one of her repeat johns was her boyfriend. In an attempt to help the woman think differently, she said, “now, what if I was to walk in saying that he, the man with no job, and long beard was my boyfriend?” The girl responded that she would not believe it because the employee deserved to be

with a better guy. The interviewee explained that this is a hard realization. Here, this woman discussed her lack of ‘agency’ through her understanding of what she deserved in a relationship. For however long, this woman’s subjective identity has focused around sex, or a sex object used to make money in exchange for this act. She did not ‘choose’ to feel this way, but as Murphy (2008) explained, our discourse marks membership. This woman’s membership is marked by her ability to have sex with random men, and the ‘perpetrators’ have convinced her that she is good for nothing else. The women usually do not believe that they deserve any better than the men who pay to have sex with them because of the physical, emotional, and mental conditioning that they have incurred. Having these conversations helps to bring their situations to light and creates awareness about the use and abuse that these women experience daily. Even when these women are arrested they are used for ‘information gathering.’

In the discursive theme, ‘gathering information,’ the DPD talks about the process of ‘breaking-a-girl-down’ when they are interviewing the women after they are initially arrested to ‘gather information.’ Officers attempt to use the women as informants. In LCHT, the discursive theme refers to one of the two labels that they give the women that they talk about. They talk about the women as ‘victims’ when LCHT believes that the women need assistance in their situations, and ‘survivors’ when they feel that the women have overcome and recognized that they were at one point a ‘victim’ of sex trafficking. At Chrysalis, the codes that are most important within this discursive theme are ‘victim’ and ‘abuse toward a victim.’

When wrestling with the descriptor of what to call women who have been in sexually exploitative situations, Chrysalis Interviewee #1 states, “We would say they are

victims of domestic violence and violence, and they are almost always survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and so they have many labels.” She rested on the decision to call them ‘women,’ which will be discussed more in detail later in this chapter.

Understanding these women as ‘women within a situation’ provides them ‘agency’ within their lives. Referring to them as ‘women’ opens up the population and reduces the negative stigma that usually comes with ‘prostitute,’ ‘victim,’ or ‘survivor.’ The identifier ‘woman’ increases the membership for these women as a whole and allows them access to membership of a larger group, rather than just the sub-culture of sexually exploited women. As Interviewee #1 confirmed, “She is a victim of a lot, so to label her like that, language is a huge thing.”

Yet within an organization that works with the women every day, a shift away from the discourse ‘victim’ also occurs. Here, the organization is discursively acting as a way of making sense of sex trafficked women. Understanding that these women are in unfortunate situations that should be made better, does not give adequate reason to assume that they are merely ‘victims’ and nothing else. To define them as only ‘victims,’ reduces their ‘agency’ and could give them no reason to fight for themselves or a new situation in their life. Changing resources like law enforcement or altering how they are discursively functioning is a component to learning how to ‘work within the system.’ Changing the discourse around these women would offer a space of action for them to work within and automatically provide them a sense of increased ‘agency’ within their lives. As an organization, Chrysalis is connected to the DPD, thus causing their ‘organizational purposes’ to be similar within the confines of the law.

Organizational Purpose

The discursive action ‘organizational purpose’ refers to the discursive theme used by Chrysalis, through the influence of the DPD, to establish what they view their role to be within the organization of sex trafficking. The discursive theme that is specific to Chrysalis in ‘organizational purpose’ is ‘law enforcement.’ The discursive theme in ‘organizational purpose’ describes the justifications for taking the actions that Chrysalis does within the situation of sex trafficking.

The discursive theme of ‘law enforcement’ refers to codes such as: ‘enforcing the law,’ ‘tracking the women,’ ‘getting them into the system’ and ‘working the system.’ This discursive theme within the DPD refers to their specific roles in the law, or at least what they think their job is in order to make sure that the law is upheld. The discourse of LCHT recognizes the role of ‘law enforcement’ also, but addresses discrepancies between what the organization feels should be done and what the DPD is doing and how they work specifically with these contradictions. At Chrysalis, the role of ‘law enforcement’ is understood as well and they possess a specific interest in how the ‘system works’ to arrest the women on prostitution charges. Moreover, because they are connected to ‘law enforcement,’ they have more knowledge of how the court system works and what ways they can work within that system.

Yet, while Chrysalis is connected to ‘law enforcement,’ its employees try to make it appear like another system. Interviewee #1 explained that in the eyes of the women, the DPD are bad and a system to rebel against. The women do not initially view the DPD as a place that is trying to help them, rather they are arresting them for trying to make a

living. With this in mind, Chrysalis tries to stay neutral in the eyes of the women to whom they are providing assistance.

Because Interviewee #1 sees the tension between the women and the DPD, she offers suggestions to improve the work of the DPD. Addressing the double standard apparent in the arresting of the women versus the ‘johns,’ she explains:

Most of the street prostitution in Dallas is at truck stops, and so they will just put the word out and women can just walk up to a truck and say I want help. Because people on the streets know about empowerment [Chrysalis], and they know that they can just walk in here, but they [DPD] will go on a sting and bring them in. Texas has a 3 strike rule, where if you do anything for three times it puts you at the felony level. If the woman gets arrested and goes to this mobile unit that they have, there is a court room right there, there is a HIV medical testing, they can go right there into treatment, and they will drop their charges, if they complete it, they will drop their charges, which is huge. So that is really cool and where things need to go. And they do it on the 3rd Tuesday of every month, so if you want to come without any repercussions, you can come and get help... That is cool that they go right from being arrested to treatment, there is detox if they need to detox, it was really interesting and cool. Here it is more of a process to get them in.

In this excerpt, Interviewee #1 offers a suggestion on how to bridge the two organizations so that the women who are being arrested understand that the DPD is only trying to help these women better their situations. If these women were to see that the DPD was providing programs and outlets because they understood that these women did not necessarily have a ‘choice’ in the situation that they are in, these women may more readily trust the actions taken by the DPD. Showing that they are trying to help through programs, the DPD, creates a visible space of action for these women to gain ‘agency’ and a ‘voice’ in, because an outward gesture assumes that these women have been wronged by ‘perpetrators’ in their lives.

Through the examination of the interview data and discursive themes present within Chrysalis and Prax(us), a feminist-poststructuralist view would argue that these

organizations are attempting to create a space of action for sex trafficked women by respecting these women's personal lives. Chrysalis operates off of the man-made and constructed laws that govern the operation of the organization and situations that these prostituted women find themselves. Figure 5.1 follows the flow of discourse through Chrysalis, while Figure 5.2 follows the flow of discourse in Prax(us). Each discursive action holds discursive themes that help to describe the sex trafficking situation as understood by both of the organizations. In 'organizational purpose' the main discursive theme for the organization is illuminated. Each discursive action and theme builds off of one another as a way of understanding the situation of sex trafficking within Denver, Colorado. The following discussion section will highlight gaps that the theories clarify within the data from the interviews.

Discussion

In efforts to follow how the discourse around sex trafficking moves among organizations, it is important to highlight common trends. The most dominant discursive theme and constant of labels within the DPD was 'prostitute'; in the context of LCHT, that theme was absent, replaced by the identifiers, 'victim' and 'survivor.' In effort to provide the sex trafficked women with more 'agency' this discursive shift occurred. However, Chrysalis and Prax(us) rejected all of these identifiers and chose to use 'women' or 'people' to identify these individuals in prostitution situations. 'Women' opens up the population of individuals and a critical poststructural lens recognizes that 'women' provides more 'agency' by increasing the space of action.

Similar to the discursive theme of 'anti-trafficking' at LCHT, Prax(us) focuses on the cause of the situation and refers to their organization as an 'anti-oppression

organization.’ Prax(us) attempts to look at the root-cause of trafficking and the reason it exists rather than just examining the problem itself. They believe that by understanding the base of the problem, they will have a better understanding and ability to reduce the prevalence of the issue within communities. Through recognizing that these women do not bring ‘prostitution’ or sex trafficking upon themselves, their ‘agency’ is increased. Reducing blame allows these women to explain and have a ‘voice’ within the situation that they have been forced into, thus expanding their space of action and feeling of power of their own lives.

As a way of explaining the situation, Prax(us) Interviewee #1 claims that anti-oppression organizations “focus on intersections of oppression as the root-cause for what these individuals are going through. Everything is gray and nothing is black-and-white because each situation is different.” Looking at issues such as capitalism and immigration, or practices that keep people oppressed, Prax(us) believes that understanding these practices will give a better insight into how to address the problem than from looking at it top-down. Understanding that there are more issues at work than just the desire for power and sex allows the scope of the problem to open up, and attempts to place less blame on the individual people involved. They believe that people are placed in certain situations beyond their control, and that each person is trying to figure out how to survive in the places in which they exist. As a feminist organization, Prax(us) recognizes the multiplicity of positions that are held by people every day. Allowing people to have their own positions and perspectives increases their ‘agency’ in many circumstances, allowing these women the tools for discourse to occur in many

places. Trafficking occurs because of the different realities of oppression (i.e., lack of spaces of action) within the world (i.e., capitalism).

In the discourse of the outreach organizations, new codes emerge as others are removed. For example, the discursive theme 'brothel' is absent from discourse within the outreach organizations. Women who were discussed here were simply surviving through having sex for money as a way of making it through each day. This phenomenon is seen in the code 'survival sex' as it emerges uniquely in the context of the outreach organizations. Understanding that the choice and background of women is not their option, and that sometimes women do what they have to do in order to survive, 'survival sex' as defined by Interviewee #1 at Prax(us) is when an individual has sex as a way of making money to survive on the streets. They have sex to either pay for a place to stay for the night, food to eat or they exchange that money they make for security on the streets. On the streets, having sex for money can become the only way for some women to make enough money to survive for the day.

On a drive through East Colfax with Interviewee #1 from Chrysalis, she was explaining to me that most of the women can have sex with one man as a way of earning her stay for the night in a local motel. If she wants to eat, then she needs to turn another trick. Interviewee #1 also explained that a majority of the tricks that are turned in the Denver area are usually blowjobs for \$20 a trick. If the 'john' requests full-sex then he usually pays around \$40 and is taken to the local motel room with the woman, this act usually lasts around fifteen minutes (personal communication, February 18, 2010). What appears to be 'agency' within a situation is actually women falling 'victim' to a capitalistic notion of a means-to-an-end in the supply and demand chain. In the act of

surviving, this is how a majority of women get by and what they have to do to earn money. In forced situations of sexual exploitation, survival sex could be explained as having sex so that you and or the members in your family are not killed. 'Agency' is actually revoked from these women, because they have no 'choice' but to turn tricks in order to survive on the streets. These women are required to 'consent' to having sex for money, thus reducing their space of action. The code 'survivor sex' implies a certain sense of perceived 'agency' because instead of dying on the streets, these women are doing what they can to stay alive. These women are not 'victims' or 'survivors' of their situation; they are people who are 'perpetrating' the capitalistic system as a way of staying alive.

Moreover, the most initially surprising discursive absence between LCHT, DPD and both outreach organizations was seen in the terms, 'victim' and 'survivor.' These terms have been placed in literature as a way of identifying women in these situations; however, because women do not accept these labels, they are erased from conversation within these organizations. Similar to the outlook taken at Prax(us) and Chrysalis, it is important to respect the lives and perspectives of the women, so I have chosen to use the 'women/people first' language since the women do not identify as the other suggested labels. This discursive switch may provide 'agency' within these women's lives and allow them a 'voice' in a situation where they may not have had one before. Furthermore, using 'people first' language assumingly increases the population by reducing the 'othering' factor. The identifiers, 'people' or 'women' require that people examine not only themselves but reduce the use of the 'us' verses 'them' dichotomy. 'Women' reminds us that anyone, or any woman, can be forced into a sexually

exploitative situation. Our moms, sisters, and other close females are all ‘women;’ people who we would not want to be in prostitution or sex trafficking situations. We would fight for the safety of these women. Furthermore, using ‘people’ opens up the scope of people that could be affected and reminds people that being sex trafficked can happen to anyone.

At the conclusion of examining my interview data, it was apparent that there was a struggle within an overarching understanding between the DPD, LCHT, Chrysalis, and Prax(us) as to the best discursive options. The DPD uses ‘criminalizing’ discourse as a way of ensuring consistency within the black-and-white views of the law. LCHT rejects the notion that sex trafficked women are ‘criminals’ and instead refers to them as ‘victims’ or ‘survivors’ to help accomplish what they believe ‘empowers’ these women’s situation. Chrysalis uses a mixed approach. Chrysalis, identifies the women as ‘women’ affording them a larger space of action and rejecting the idea that these women would have ‘chosen’ a prostitution situation for themselves. Prax(us) discursively understands that individuals are in the situations that they are in because of larger workings within society. As an anti-oppression organization, Prax(us) views prostitution as a ‘option’ because of external problems within the world. Each organization discursively understands the situation of sex trafficking in a different way. For progress to ensure a better life or ‘options’ for the women involved, a more common understanding needs to occur across all four organizations, and eventually beyond.

Prax(us) and Chrysalis deal with the reality of women’s lives on a daily basis. Yet, what I assumed was going to be a drastically different discourse and function of discourse from the DPD was actually not. Chapter six will provide a more detailed

discussion of the flow of the discourse as well as trends and movements between organizations.

CHAPTER 6: SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Following the discourse of sex trafficking through each organization allows us to not only understand each context specifically but also as a cohesive group. In this chapter I will identify the important discursive transitions that occur and place this study in conversation to the current literature, concluding with concepts and ideas that have emerged from the study.

Discourse in Action within the Organizations

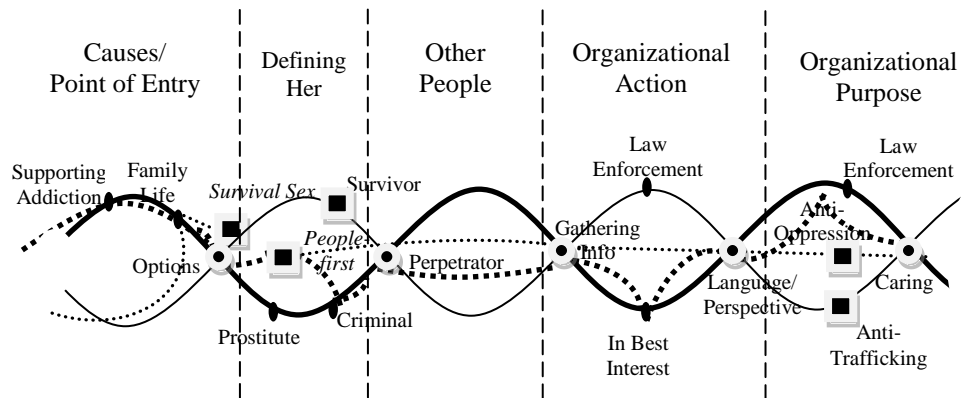


Figure 6.1: Discursive Flow across All Organizations

(Thick Solid- DPD; Thin Solid- LCHT; Large Dotted- Chrysalis; Small Dotted- Prax(us))

To understand how discourse regarding sex trafficking in Denver moves and is understood, it is important to be aware of where the discourse starts. The function of law enforcement is central. The government sets a standard for the overall discursive construction and basic language/dialogue that is used in order to communicate about sex trafficking situations. A simple example of how this discourse function plays out in everyday life can be seen when I have had conversations with people about sex

trafficking in Denver. People usually respond, ‘oh, don’t you mean prostitution, sex trafficking doesn’t happen here.’ A lack of definition, description, and understanding of sex trafficking within law enforcement, leads to a lack of public understanding.

Law enforcement, and in this case the DPD, sets the discursive framework and understanding for organizations, surrounding them and their initial understandings and investigations of sex trafficking. The DPD’s discourse appears very black-and-white, with clear and separate hierarchical elements. Some discursive themes appear to work and coexist together, but in the moment of deciphering the law, the lines between them become very clear. I originally thought that the two other types of organizations that I chose, awareness raising and outreach, would be connected to each other, and following after each other in the process of handling sex trafficking situations. However, this was not the case. Each organization branches off the actions of the DPD. They may attempt to use similar language, but are almost unaware of the practices that exist within the other organizations.

LCHT, Chrysalis and Prax(us) each seem to understand what practices, rules and regulations of the DPD. Each organization asserts that they have learned how to discursively ‘work within the system’ as a way of helping the women they serve. Yet, the organizations use their discursive connections with the DPD very differently. Within the awareness organization (LCHT), the DPD is a partner to help with networking. LCHT rejects the labels and most of the DPD discourse by using the identifiers ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ instead of ‘prostitute,’ but still makes use of the connections that the DPD has within the community. Prax(us) and Chrysalis, while discursively trying to physically distance themselves from the DPD, work with law enforcement more behind

the scenes. They do this by receiving help through organizations that the DPD knows and for economic support in order to keep their organizations, more specifically Chrysalis, operating. These two organizations believe that visibly distancing from the DPD makes them appear more credible to the women and the women will be more likely to trust the services that these organizations provide.

The largest influence the DPD has in determining the discourse around sex trafficking lies in the lack of distinction between the actions of prostitution and sex trafficking. Because the law defines any action that is an exchange of money for sex as prostitution, most people understand every action of this kind as a 'choice.' Prostitution is usually seen as sex work, or a choice to continue turning tricks because of the money women can make. With the inclusion of pimps, madams and drugs, this philosophy of 'choice' can be turned on its head and negated in reality, but not within the law. From the outside looking in, understanding prostitution as a 'choice' affords women 'agency.' On the other hand, when examining how prostitution works, women are forced into participating and they are removed from an opportunity at 'voice' and a space of action is reduced. Because the 'system' considers sex trafficking and prostitution one in the same, the discourse mirrors this idea and enables particular actions by individuals and organizations. The DPD tries to increase 'agency' within these women's lives by referring to their action as a 'choice'; however, in reality, perceived 'choice' reduces their 'agency' and space of action because of the assumed power over one's life. Feminist organizations attempt to create a space of action for these women by understanding the external circumstances that has caused each woman to be in the prostitution/sex trafficking situation that they live.

Furthermore, the lack of discursive distinction separates the operations of LCHT and Prax(us)/Chrysalis. LCHT operates from within academia, with scholarly research as a way of constructing and understanding a foundational understanding as an organization. This being said, a discursive differences between prostitution and sex trafficking exists. In these organizations, women are perceived to not have a choice, and are oppressed by men who force them to have sex for money. In the LCHT interview data, prostitution is never seen as a 'choice,' it is, again, man's way of oppressing women. Likewise, addiction is not discussed as an issue, because the first priority is to care for these women and raise awareness about their situation in hopes of stopping it.

Yet, the outreach organizations, like law enforcement, see the situations that these women are in as prostitution related. While they do not state that the women have chosen to be in the situations, they do state that the women have chosen options in life to lead them to the place that they are. Similar to Deetz's (1998) argument, the notion of 'choice' turns into perceived 'options.' Understanding that not everyone is afforded the same options, these organizations treat these women as people and do not stigmatize them. They offer their organizations as the first-step in attempting to get 'out of the life.' Offering more options, allows for these women to have an increased voice to advocate for themselves and a space of action to increase the agency within their lives.

Constructing discourse differently creates diverse and divergent understandings of the phenomena. I went into the DPD interviews trying to understand the effects and severity of sex trafficking within Denver, and when I left, I felt that I only understood prostitution within Denver. However, after a couple of interviews I realized that since there is a lack of language distinction between the two acts, they are not talked about

separately. Murphy (2008) suggests that discourse marks membership in an institution. This is challenging for women in sex trafficking situations because there is no discourse to define or protect their situation, only the definition of a prostitution situation. Therefore, these women are incorrectly labeled by a man-made language and laws that currently does not recognize a distinction between the two acts. The only time that sex trafficking was mentioned was when juveniles were involved. But, as soon as the women turn eighteen, they are assumed to be adults and ‘consenting’ to the actions for money.

Criminalization is very problematic because these women’s situations may not have changed and they are now being arrested for what they have been forced to do in life. What appears to be a lack of knowledge within the DPD is actually a lack of distinction. An important move now for the DPD would be for them to create a discursive difference within the law. Taking what Spender (1980) calls man-made language (i.e., laws), and reconstructing them to be inclusive of woman’s rights could prove effective toward helping prostituted/sex trafficked women gain a ‘voice.’

A discursive emphasis on the ‘type’ of situation that the women are involved in helps when trying to navigate the ways the different discursive themes/codes move and what they enable to happen. In the DPD, in an attempt to search for answers and reasons, they identify a ‘drug addiction’ as the main motivator for money for these women. Yet, at LCHT, the discursive theme ‘support addiction’ drops away only to resurface as something to consider in the outreach organizations. Prax(us) and Chrysalis (re)introduce the concept of a ‘drug addiction’ as a motivator/problem within life on the streets for women.

We see this shift for two reasons. First, both the DPD and outreach organizations have direct contact with the women, whereas, LCHT typically does not. Because the two organizations see and speak with the women on a daily basis, they are more ‘in tune’ with what is really happening in their lives. These women more often than not talk about the drugs, the men and the sex. This is their life, and so they usually divulge details with people they trust.

Second, the awareness raising organization’s role is to raise awareness and money to help support the women who are sex trafficked. This said, they try very hard to keep negative attention down, because once people hear negative aspects about the women themselves they may be less likely to give their time and money. If the ‘reason’ for having sex became that they had to pay for their drug addiction, this negative connotation would follow the women and remove their ability to fundraise, and reconstructing the term less as ‘victim,’ and more as ‘perpetrator’ in their own lives. Working off the common understanding that drugs do harm to one’s body, doing drugs is a ‘choice’ to harm the body. Therefore, women are ‘choosing’ to inflict pain on them, becoming a ‘perpetrator’ to themselves. Identifying as a ‘perpetrator’ in this situation affords women ‘agency’ over their lives; however, this ‘agency’ also assumes that these women have chosen to be in the situations they currently find themselves. Faulting these women for a ‘drug addiction’ reduces their space of action, because they are considered ‘out of control’ in a life that they should be able to control.

Furthermore, it is hard for an organization, such as LCHT to fully understand what the women do and who they really are when they have little to no contact with them. As claimed by one of the outreach organizations that asked not to be named,

LCHT speaks from the “ivory towers of academia and they are out of touch with their own place of privilege.” This criticism refers to the idea that LCHT does research about the women but, because they do not talk to the women, they are out of touch with the reality that the women live in. The outreach organization feels that LCHT is often incorrect in some of their claims as a result of a lack of material experienced. Because of the disconnection from these women understanding the perspective of the sex trafficking women becomes challenging.

Understanding ‘Her’ Perspective(s)

Speaking from a place of privilege in a sense automatically ‘others’ the women and never allows the author/scholar to fully understand the situation because they are on two different levels. Understanding and wrestling with this tension, the outreach organizations attempt to remedy this problem by mirroring the language and perspectives that the women have about their own lives. These organizations try to communicate on the same level as the women that they help and choose to use the same discourse the women do.

Mirror-Language

‘Mirror-language’ is used as a tool to relate to people so, instead of referring to the women as ‘prostitutes,’ ‘victims,’ or ‘survivors,’ these organizations call them ‘women’ or ‘people’ because this is what the women call themselves. They are people-first and that is how these women identify. The outreach organizations understand the negative connotations with all of the linguistic choices and choose to refer to them as ‘women/people’ in situations. A ‘prostitute’ is a person, typically a woman, who sells her body for sex; whereas, a ‘woman’ is another human. ‘Prostitute’ carries a negative

connotation, forcing women to constantly defend themselves against stigmas. 'Prostitutes' are also assumed to live on the street, creating a new sense of identity and need for survival. Yet, in identifying her as 'woman' her experiences in life are not recognized. A situation such as prostitution will have enabled multiple feelings that will become a piece of who this woman becomes emotionally and communicatively. While 'prostitute' carries a negative connotation, it more adequately describes the lived experiences; whereas, 'woman' reduces the stigma, opening up a space of action and 'agency' but not recognizing the specific lived experiences. Each description provides a different level of 'agency' and 'voice' within different contexts.

Survival Sex on the Street

Similarly, the two discursive themes of 'survival sex' and 'street culture' illustrate the height of change and difference in discursive distinctions between the organizations. Each organization (DPD, LCHT, Prax(us), and Chrysalis) alludes to this notion of 'just doing what you have to do to survive,' but the outreach organizations identify and define the discursive themes more carefully. The DPD discusses turning tricks in order to make enough money to afford a 'drug addiction.' As someone described as a 'drug addict,' this person is assumed to have lost control over their lives, reducing this person's 'agency' through an attached stigma. Reducing 'agency' in this situation reduces access to space of action. Participant A at the DPD also claimed that the women involved live in and "have their own little world," assuming 'agency' in at least a piece of these women's lives. This refers to 'street culture' and how the reality and perspective of life is different for them than it is for him.

LCHT talks about the women having no option and that they *have* to have sex for money in order to live. The concept of surviving is different in this case, because these women are not earning money to live on, rather, these women are having sex to meet a quota, so that their pimp/madam does not beat them or kill them. Within a discursive frame where women are viewed as ‘victims,’ within their lives, their access to ‘voice’ is reduced. ‘Agency’ is revoked because these women are assumed to be ‘victims’ and have no control over what happens within their lives; thus, reducing access to a space of action within the dominant discourse. Also, because the women’s families are usually somehow connected, the women need to oblige their pimp/madam so that their families are not harmed in any way. The code ‘survival sex’ here functions as an action for the safety, of not only the women, but their families as well. Here, death is a fear and concern every day. Women are living in a constant state of fear and feeling ‘victim’ to their lives.

The outreach organizations, who coined ‘street culture’ and ‘survival sex’ discursive themes, discuss how ‘street culture’ is very different from everyday middle-class American life. ‘Street culture’ feeds the concept of ‘survival sex’ as women are forced by their ‘options’ in life to have sex for money. Giving a blowjob for twenty dollars is a lot easier and faster in most cases than spending the time searching for a job and having to face the realities of not having a home address or phone for an employer to call them back. Turning a couple of tricks a day gives them the money needed and necessary for survival. Understanding the prostitution situation from a more holistic lens affords these women a larger space of action and sense of ‘agency.’ Recognizing that many people would not have made the ‘choice’ to prostitute themselves provides

‘agency’ because these women have not lost control of their lives by ‘choice.’ Through the lens of Prax(us) and Chrysalis, these women are allowed to share their ‘voice’ as a way of explaining their experiences and perspectives, acknowledging self-determination.

Discussion of Numbers

The associations and disconnections between the discourse(s) of the organizations also have to do with the level of understanding of the problem. The ways that organizations define the problem shifts their awareness of what is going on within sex trafficking, directly effecting what the DPD would consider a statistic of sex trafficking. The DPD discursively frames sex trafficking as illegal prostitution and uses the power of law enforcement to manage this reality. LCHT and the outreach organizations realize the power that law enforcement has, and try to mold its discourse and rules to help the women that they serve. Initially this process may appear different within each organization, however, as explained in Chapters three through five each organization ‘works the system.’ Each organization understands the paternalistic language and practices within the DPD that favor masculine ideals and discourse. Recognizing the traditions and commitments that the DPD’s discourse devices from allows the more feminist organizations (LCHT, Prax(us), and Chrysalis) a space of action to work within. However, Rowbotham (1973) would argue that using the man-made language to create your own space only further illustrates a dependence on men. Each organization attempts to manipulate ‘the system’ as a way of acting ‘in the best interest’ of the women. However, how many women are specifically wrapped up in these sex trafficking situations is unclear.

For example, one of the first issues that arises in the literature around sex trafficking is the discussion of numbers and statistics, not only within the world but also within the United States. The numbers that are circulating are astonishing, yet no one (at least within Colorado) seems to know how the numbers are compiled. As stated in Chapter three in the DPD analysis, there is doubt as to the accuracy of the numbers in the sex trafficking literature. Participant A has been gathering specific data for a few years and has never been asked for his numbers for any study. The numbers are estimates; they are not completely accurate. I have chosen to keep the statistics that I found within this study because I think that it is important to highlight the information that is currently circulating to the public.

Furthermore, each organization can use the numbers to work in ‘their best interest.’ The DPD, because of a lack of discursive distinction between sex trafficking and prostitution can argue that the numbers are inaccurate since most of the sexually exploitative situations revolve around prostitution. LCHT, Prax(us) and Chrysalis can use certain numbers to raise money and sympathy by saying there are thousands of women being sold each day, suggesting that law enforcement is not stepping in to take action. All four organizations can choose to use and illuminate whatever information they believe will help their organization gain ‘agency’ and a space of action within the community. Instead of working within different facets of sex trafficking and trying to achieve the same goal, each organization attempts to work individually while only rarely calling upon other organizations for assistance. Instead of furthering awareness of the situation of sex trafficking, working as a single organization only minimizes the effect that each organization has on such a large issue.

Furthering the Literature

With regards to the ways in which DPD and other organizations work on sex trafficking, just as Heiss (2007) found in the research on Transnational Social Movement Networks, this research finds a discursive disconnection in purposes of the NGOs and law enforcement. These disconnections could be explained in terms of the different tasks the organizations are trying to accomplish and the discursive methods they use. We can see how the language they use is functionally unique to the organizations' purpose, as visually represented in Figure 6.1.

This research echoes Heiss' (2007) findings but challenges them in that the actual discourses of the respective organizations differs while their overall intent remains similar. Even though each organization referred to the idea that they were doing things 'in the best interest' of the women, each organization understood sex trafficking from a different perspective and so defined their ideas of 'best interest' differently. Keeping women safe and trying to get them out of the life or in a better situation through improving their perspective appears to be the overall goal. I would agree with Heiss, that common language needs to be acquired in order for change to occur or for the organizations to really effectively communicate and work together. As demonstrated in Figure 4, each organization has discursive themes that work together in order to describe different components of a sex trafficking situation.

Another communication scholar, Isgro (2005) examined the power struggle involved in researching women in sex trafficking situations and how, as scholars, it is important to consider other perspectives. These findings were also confirmed in this study. Standpoint theory recognizes the more I researched, the more it became apparent

that each organization came with their own perspective about how they viewed sex trafficking. It was also important for me to consider my own perspectives about the 'right' way to live life. Understanding that not everyone grew up in the same house that I did, helped me to recognize that different life experiences, leads to different lives.

Adding to Isgro's notion of perspective is the personal understanding of women involved in sex trafficking. During this research, it was very apparent that women do not necessarily consider themselves to be victims because the life that they live is life. It is important not to apply our understandings of life onto their life in a way of victimizing the women. Keeping in mind self-determination, and that every person is an expert in their own lives is imperative in order to not other and respect the women and where they come from.

Jana, et al. (2002) speaks to the notion of victimizing women, and I would argue that this study closely aligns with their findings. Jana, et al. found that women assumed to be 'victims' were rendered powerless by their label and not given 'agency' to get out of that label. Spivak (1985) recognizes that the 'subaltern,' or less fortunate, need to advocate for a space of action or a place to advocate for themselves. This was confirmed when Prax(us) claimed that the women would much rather be considered 'perpetrators' than 'victims,' because 'victim' gives them no agency or power (Interviewee #2, February 18, 2010). In order to shift their role of 'subaltern,' these women attempt to take on the identity of the dominant discourse. Helping discursively redefine the perspective of women will help women achieve 'agency' and power within their situation; recognizing their 'options' in life rather than their oppression through their access and use of particular forms of discourse.

Relying on the commitments of feminist-poststructuralism, it is apparent that language structures our understanding of sex trafficking. The way that we talk about sex trafficking situations helps to construct our feelings and how we react to them. This is why it is important that labels are examined when it comes to women in sex trafficking situations. Certain identifiers within different contexts provide more ‘agency’ and space of action than others. The discursive themes across organizations may be the same, but the meaning and the way that the discursive theme works as well as what it enables and disables differs within each organization.

Through a feminist lens, recognizing that the base-work of language stems from a masculine history helps identify tensions within organizations. Language, being traditionally masculine, helps to reify patriarchy as seen within the rules and practices of law enforcement. Spender (1980) who identified language as being man-made recognizes the problematic nature of trying to describe a situation for women through a masculine lens. The language that describes the situations of women is very black-and-white leaving little to no room for flexibility in action. The women are left to try to unpack their situation in discourse that is not intended to help them; thus, reducing their chance at ‘agency’ within patriarchal discourse. Allowing more room for flexibility and education the law enforcement about language choices and the implications of those choices would be helpful for the women. Shifting the nature or discursive structure would help sex trafficked women gain a ‘voice’ and space of action in order to advocate for themselves and others in similar situations.

Furthermore, Weedon (1997) discusses the power that women have over their bodies and the discursive production that is formed through the use of their bodies.

Women in sex trafficking are forced to negotiate the power of their bodies. In one sense, their body is the object that oppresses and objectifies them in the eyes of men reducing their 'agency.' On the other hand, the women's body is what helps them to make money and to survive in the culture that they live in, increasing 'agency' when viewed as a 'perpetrator' in society. The body is a source of survival for most sex trafficked women, these women learn how to turn tricks for a profit and stay alive on the streets. Neither description assumes 'consent' in selling their bodies, but one assumes more 'agency' over another. In order to have 'agency' over one's body, one must recognize the discursive production of their body and then truly 'consent' to sex or any use of their body. When 'consent' does not happen, objectification occurs, only to further oppress women because of their link to a sexual identity.

Simkhada's (2008) study, discussed the cycle and reproduction of women going back into sex trafficking as madams and as a way of making more money and escaping the social stigma that they faced each day. Using their bodies has become a way of making a lot of money for many women. Law enforcement and outreach organizations both discussed the need for money, to either live on or support the lifestyle that women were living is discussed. This economic base of keeping the sex trafficking cycle alive is reproduced in this research. In a capitalistic society, economic status automatically offers individuals an opportunity to have 'voice' and a space of action. Money talks, meaning that without money, women are further oppressed because they have no bargaining power or tools for survival. Even though the organizations did not necessarily address the social stigma that is associated with being sex trafficked, until there is a linguistic shift that changes the minds of the community, the women will have to navigate a negative

position in society. Not only are women the 'subaltern' but they are more fiscally dependent upon men, because they have less earning power. Therefore, the 'agency' and power is placed back into the hands of the dominant and especially when women are working for money to give to their 'pimps.' In addition, not only are these women giving their money to their 'pimp' but they must literally give themselves over to men in order to make money (i.e., soliciting 'johns').

Furthermore, the necessity to make money drives people to act in desperate ways or to do things that they may not normally do. Deetz (1998) discusses how employees 'consent' to processes in order to achieve rewards such as money or security. When I first began this research, I assumed that the consenting process would have been between the woman and her pimp; however, understanding the situation as a much larger issue, I understand that capitalism is the employer, and both the 'women' and 'pimps/madams' have to 'consent;' illustrating the discourse of the market, or supply and demand and also this ability to 'purchase' and 'consume' women. Because of the need for money in order to survive in our economy, capitalism is the overarching employer that is driving greed and the need for more work and more money. Capitalism and patriarchy work in cooperation with one another to (re)produce the supply and demand model. Capitalism requires money in order to function on a daily basis. Traditionally, men have more earning power than women assuming power over the capitalistic society. Therefore, capitalism becomes an additional 'perpetrator' in the lives of these women.

In a capitalistic process, the 'pimp' consents when understanding that they cannot accomplish or earn as much on their own, they get women to use their bodies to earn a larger income. The women consent usually or coerced by love or force and use their

bodies to turn a profit, only furthering the capitalistic enterprises. A need for money, a driving motivator for capitalism, lies behind sex trafficking. For there to be a necessary and radical change in sex trafficking, a shift in the larger scope of how we view, spend and rely on money needs to happen as well as a de-commodification of the body.

Negotiation of the Self: Following Discourse

The women within a sex trafficking situation are constantly trying to negotiate and renegotiate their identity, voice and agency within their lives. Identities are often, perhaps always, socially constructed ideas that are placed upon a person. People can take on different social identities, and people will prescribe a meaning to actions. Alcoff (2006) argues that identities can be, and are frequently, forced on people from outside perceptions and understandings of what people should be and act like. Some aspects of identity are portrayed as an outward appearance, becoming a social identity that is open for judgment and subjectification.

Furthermore, your social identity, or your public image is constructed. Others construct meaning about who you are according to how you hold or display yourself at any given moment in public. Identity may be an idea that you subscribe to; however, it is more common than not something that other people attribute to who you are, what they think about you, or how they describe you. This explains why it is important to consider language when identifying an individual. Each label that has been given to women in sex trafficking situations—‘prostitute,’ ‘victim,’ ‘survivor,’ women/people’ contains certain degrees of access to voice and agency.

My understanding and definitions of voice and agency work in cooperation with one another; therefore, I argue that in order to have one you must have at least access to

the other. For the purpose of this study, agency is defined as an opportunity to change your situation for yourself and empower yourself through your actions and the use of rhetoric. Deetz (1998) defines voice as “the presence of active resistance to consent processes” (p. 159).

It can be argued that to a certain extent, everyone has a voice; however, the position or power that they have with that voice varies. The “relationship between subjectivity and writing, speaking, and reading lies at the heart of this collection where the question “Who can speak?” acknowledges that the condition of oppression limits the agency of the subject” (Roof & Weigman, 1995, p. 38). The dominant voice, or people who have privilege, is the ability to speak when and how and individuals outside of dominant discourse do not have the same ability to participate within the conversation unless they are provided a space of action in which to do so. Therefore, for the most part, when people do not have a voice, others attempt to speak on their behalf, but if someone is speaking for another, are they really helping them grant a voice or are they further reproducing the reality of the oppressed condition? If the privileged speak for the oppressed as a way of granting them a space to speak, and then back away, does this then give the oppressed a voice and a chance to gain agency within their situation?

‘Agency’ is the ability to speak for yourself or to advocate for your position. In order to have a ‘voice,’ a person must have ‘agency’ within their situation; “rhetorical agency refers to the capacity to act, that is, to have the competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one’s community” (Cambell, 2005, p. 3). Spivak (1985) questions whether or not the ‘subaltern’ can speak within dominant discourse. Whereas Roof and Wiegman (1995) question what the implication are of

another trying to speak for the oppressed. If you have to speak for another, 'agency' for the silenced is limited because they are not able to campaign for themselves. To assume yourself or another to be an agent is to assume that you have control or power over the context in which you exist. By raising awareness of what is marginalizing, victims of sex trafficking may gain voice in their situation, and be able to act as agents.

Defining Her Voice and Agency: 'Prostitute'

'Prostitute' as labeled by the DPD, gives women little to no agency within law enforcement. 'Prostitutes' have 'perceived agency' over their bodies when sexual exploitation is described as a 'choice.' However, after that point, these women have no agency because they are stigmatized in society. 'Prostitutes' are assumed to have little to no respect for their bodies, and in return discourses surrounding them contain the same lack of respect.

Moreover, 'prostitutes' are silenced. Because of the lack of agency and stigma that surrounds the label, 'prostitutes' are not considered to be genuine or important contributors to society. The only time where 'prostitutes' may have a perceived chance of a voice is when the DPD is using them as an 'informant.' However, because they are once again being used because of their 'prostitute' label, these women are silenced through the process of being used and then discarded until they need to be used again.

Defining Her Voice and Agency: 'Victim'

As a 'victim,' most of the agency is also revoked from the individual. 'Victims' are perceived as weak individuals, at the mercy of the powerful people around them. In this discursive frame 'victim' is a passive character within their own life. They have no say in what has happened to them. The term 'victim' implies a lack of 'agency' and

‘voice’ within their life, constraining them to appear weak, and hopeless and in need of another’s support or power to speak for them.

Furthermore, because ‘victims’ are conceptualized as powerless and passive individuals they are more available to be revictimized. A woman begins by being kidnapped or taken by her ‘perpetrator,’ rendering her helpless within her new situation. As an initial conditioning technique, the ‘pimp’ will often rape the ‘victim,’ further solidifying her helpless ‘victim’ role (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Because of the physical acts that occur while being trafficked, women are automatically and consistently victimized, made to lay motionless and receive penetration without objecting. Therefore, when the act of penetration produces women as victims, and then through public discourse the descriptor that is used is ‘victim,’ women are never able to escape their identifier or the identification process. In many cases of sexual abuse, women try to resist the descriptor of ‘victim’ because they feel a sense of blame and responsibility. Psychology scholars Wood and Rennie (1994) explain, “In general, it appears that the status of victim is undesirable—to be a victim represents a loss of control, a loss of self-esteem; it involves categorizing oneself with other stigmatized individuals” (p. 127). When categorized as a ‘victim,’ it becomes hard to change the situation that one is in and encourages pity and sympathy from other individuals that may not be desired. In a world that values power, independence and control in life, this is a very hard idea to acknowledge and identify her with ‘agency.’

Defining Her Voice and Agency: ‘Survivor’

Because individuals who have been rescued have lived through the experience of being sex trafficked, ‘survivor’ seems to be the best descriptor. The term ‘survivor’

recognizes the fact that the women have been through a lot emotionally and physically and have, or are working to, overcome the tragedy. Survivor discourse is filled with stories and narratives of empowerment and triumph. The identifier ‘survivor,’ presumably increases the agency and voice that victims of tragedies have, but is it really the case to go from one moment being a victim to another minute being a survivor? What are the implications emotionally for people that are being labeled as a survivor, but are still dealing with the stress and trauma everyday that made them adopt the term?

Currently the term ‘survivor’ is engulfed in literature surrounding individuals who have been raped or battled cancer. In many scenarios, the term is used as a way of helping to give voice and agency to those who have felt oppressed by either a person or a disease. Public Health scholar King (2004) claims, “Survivors...stood as symbols of hope for the future, rather than of urgency in the present” (p. 487). ‘Survivor’ attempts to forget the past and its antecedents by focusing solely on the future, and forward progression for the individual being defined. In addition, using the term ‘survivor’ gives the community a way of making sense of and rising above the ‘bad’ or unacceptable behavior. Or in other words, if a woman has been raped by her perpetrator, then a third-party may give that woman the identifier of ‘survivor.’ This helps not only the victim cope with the actions taken upon them, but also gives members of the community a more positive descriptor to make sense of the situation and forget the initial action. ‘Survivors’ serve as a coping mechanism that demonstrates people can come out of bad situations and still be ‘normal.’ However, this discursive switch becomes problematic if the woman does not realize her initial victimization by her perpetrator. Conditioned to love her

perpetrator/pimp, this mental shift for the woman may take a while to materialize. Once she realizes that she was once a victim, the term ‘survivor’ may be adopted.

In addition, the “subjectivity of survivor holds the promise of a productive life” (Dubriwny, 2009, p. 105). The term is meant to empower; therefore, identifying as a survivor, might increase the agency and ability to speak for yourself in situations where someone has experienced hardship. This, however, is tricky. To identify as a ‘survivor,’ one has to cast-out their past experiences. The term ‘survivor’ comes with a community assumption that a person has moved past the trauma that they experienced. Survivor indicates that the past is behind you and there are only positive things to look forward to. Feminist scholar Armstrong (1994) argues that the struggle for survivors is to not only have “the courage to think and to speak in one’s own language” but “to make that language heard in the larger world” (p. 273).

While the term ‘survivor’ seems to be momentarily useful for members in a community to use as labels, the identifier is counterproductive to what I argue survivors of sex trafficking need. Through this label, people who have been trafficked are asked to leave their experience in the past. They are asked to use the situation that rendered them helpless, weak and without a voice to now empower them. It seems difficult to ask someone who has been through a life altering experience to disregard their experiences and move on. The term ‘survivor’ is a label that helps the community surrounding the person cope with the tragedy of the situation instead of acknowledging what is still happening to other victims. ‘Survivor’ appears to be a discursive shift in the right direction, but it only null-and-voids the emotional and physical experience that women have been through.

Defining Her Voice and Agency: ‘Women’ or ‘People’

Using the terms ‘women’ or ‘people’ opens up the possibility of resources for women involved in sex trafficking situations. Being defined as a ‘woman’ or a ‘person’ does not box other individuals in or out, rather it helps to function as a more inclusive label. These terms help to increase the population through lack of specific identifier other than possibly gender. Therefore, both ‘women’ and ‘people’ as identifiers create an increased notion of agency and voice because the labels are so general.

Holmer-Nadesan (1996) describes how to create a space of action for people to act in if there is not a space for them. However, in order to create a space of action, a lack of space must first be identified. Within this situation and from this research, a space of action needs to be created for women in law enforcement. There needs to be a linguistic and black-and-white distinction between the women who are being sex trafficked and those who are not. Creating this space will help law enforcement officials see that there is a difference in how the women need to be addressed and that they cannot all be called ‘prostitutes.’ With a discursive shift within laws surrounding the difference between sex trafficking and prostitution situations, organizations will be able to more effectively assist women. In addition, if there is a discursive difference, the organizations will be more prepared to comprehend and ‘work within the systems’ that have defined these women’s lives. Clarity between sexually exploitative situations may help organizations create different spaces of action for women. Creating spaces of action increases ‘agency’ within the lives of women, giving them a greater ‘voice’ within society. If organizations allow women to speak, Deetz’s (1998) perceived notion of ‘choice’ will emerge causing a greater community understanding for the lack of ‘choice’

that has been present within these women's lives. A discursive shift is a starting point for adjustments that would be beneficial. In the following pages, I will discuss additional points to consider and their implications within sex trafficking.

Emerging Points of Discussion

The 'Ideal' Victim

The concept of the ideal victim was never directly stated; however, it was alluded to through in interviews with the DPD. Law scholar Randall (2010) explains that "'ideal victims' of sexual assault are recognized as those who are authentic and credible, and therefore as deserving of the help, assistance, and resources of the criminal justice system" (p. 10). 'Ideal' victims are otherwise known as 'good' victims, or victims who, in the public's eye are undeserving of any crime.

During the interviews with the police department, there was an undertone of choice in the situation that was described for these women. Their situation was often talked about as consequences of the former decisions that the women had made. In her study, Randall explains that there are "negative cultural attitudes" toward "prostitutes" (p. 12) and that because of this, these women are considered to be 'bad' victims, or victims whose "lives, backgrounds, and characteristics depart from the narrow confines of 'ideal victims'" (p. 11). Randall continues to describe the bind that women who are involved in sex work are negotiating. She talks about a lack of 'respectability' that the women have for themselves and that because of their 'occupation' they, in the eyes of the law and others, are deemed 'unrapeable.' Because these women are accessible to men for pleasure, how could they either not like what they do or not want to do it, because this is what they do in life?

Eliminating the use of not only ‘victim,’ but the notion of there being an ‘ideal or perfect victim’ that cannot be identified by any other negative actions, may help to eliminate the attitude that is currently present within the system. Recognizing that no person should have the ability to judge or condemn another human would reduce the stigma on people. Understanding that each person is just that, a person, not better or worse because of what they do, just acting how they have to in order to survive, could help how society views the situation.

Rescue Language

The DPD used language that suggested that they wanted to ‘save’ the women from the situations that they are in. While this action is noble, the reasoning and motivation behind the actions must be addressed and considered. ‘Rescue language’ assumes that one person knows what is better for another, reducing the ‘agency’ of the individual who is being ‘rescued.’ This view point also assumes that the person who is living their life does not know what is best for them. Keeping in mind self-determination and personal perspectives is important in situations of ‘rescuing.’ Ultimately, the notion of ‘rescuing’ eliminates a space of action for the individual being rescued because they no longer have a ‘choice’ in their lives. Without a space of action, ‘voice’ and ‘agency’ are removed, reducing the ‘rescued’ individual to a ‘victim’ of themselves. Many people would recognize an addict as someone who needs to be rescued; their ‘agency’ is reduced through a common belief that these individuals are ‘victims’ to an addiction.

Addiction

As stated in chapter three, the framing of the gendered difference in addictions is important. Sex addiction is considered a medical condition, one that warrants sympathy

and the aid of a professional. A drug addiction is a personal problem and something that the person themselves need to get control over. Addiction scholar Peele (2004) discusses addictions as cravings and not diseases. He claims that the person receives some sort of pleasure from the action and that desire for pleasure is what drives the need. As far as Peele is concerned, all addiction needs to be treated the same, from the inside out. People need to examine why they are addicted to something (a substance or action) and then look at how society is helping to feed the addiction.

Understanding that each addiction begins with the individual and is then influenced by society is important so that each addiction is treated equally. Having an addiction to sex is doing the same harm to society as having an addiction to drugs. An addiction to drugs helps facilitate and entertain an addiction to sex because the person on drugs either needs money or can black out during the action. No problem is being solved while each person is getting what they are addicted to; the problem is just being fed.

People need to face their addictions in an attempt to get rid of them. Authors Khantzian, Halliday, and McAuliffe (1990) discuss the importance and productivity of having a group to talk with. Group therapy helps people understand that they can all work together to get better and that they are not alone. DPD has attempted to create a group class for the johns that are arrested. The class is a one day session called Amend. Amend is supposed to inform the johns about what their crime is and why it is bad. I think that a more effective use of time would be group therapy sessions around the issue of sex addiction. For the women, Chrysalis has group sessions for the women where they come in and talk about their lives on the streets and what it was like. I believe that this is

a step in the right direction for the women to overcome any addictions that they have.

Addictions also represent themselves in the form of being addicted to people or feelings.

Attachments

An addiction to people or feelings that you have with people represents itself and the relationships that women have with their ‘pimp.’ This attachment is important to understand as a major component of the reproduction of sex trafficking. The severity and reason for attachment can be explained through the Stockholm Survivor Syndrome which attempts to answer the question about why would the women stay if they are being abused by their pimp, or why would they continue to sell themselves. Besides the fact that most women are not even given an opportunity or option to leave, some women have, in their minds, fallen in love with their pimps. Stockholm Survivor Syndrome says that a victim bonds to their perpetrator as a way of surviving the situation, as a coping mechanism (Graham & Rawlings, 1991).

Stockholm Syndrome is sometimes paired with trauma bonding, a strong emotional attachment to one’s perpetrator. The constant switch from hot to cold emotions from the perpetrator confuses the victim and causes them to question their own actions (Graham & Rawlings, 1991). After being beaten, and then apologized to, the victim assumes that the episode from the perpetrator was her fault and that she is to blame for the rage. In an attempt to please, and in a fight for peace in her life, the victim clings onto the nice perpetrator and believes that they have her best interest at heart.

Never wanting to upset the perpetrator again, the victim complies with all of their demands. This causes an even deeper emotional connection and the victim has more than likely fallen in love with her pimp. In this time he is her ‘daddy’ and they are in a

‘relationship.’ As long as she continues to do what he wants, things will stay peaceful. If she is beaten, it is assumed to be her fault and the victim tries to realign her behavior.

This relationship becomes problematic when individuals from the outside try to come in and help the situation. If law enforcement tries to get information about her pimp, the victim will be reluctant to turn him in. Also, the woman will be reluctant to want to ‘break-up’ with her boyfriend, because she believes they are in love. In the end, it makes it hard for the woman to realize that her pimp is actually abusing her rather than loving her, causing a skewed version of a relationship.

Women as Perpetrators

As previously stated in chapter five, a lot of times the women would rather identify as the perpetrator because ‘perpetrators’ have more power than ‘victims.’ At first this seems a little contradictory, however, considering the woman a perpetrator could appear to be in the best interest of the women involved. When women are first arrested by the law enforcement, they are criminals/suspects, therefore, considered perpetrators of the system.

When a woman is perceived as a ‘perpetrator,’ she is automatically assumed to have more power than a ‘victim.’ The level of respect that the woman receives is higher than if she were just a helpless victim. Because these women are considered to have chosen ‘options’ in life, law enforcement and Chrysalis view these women as perpetrators and able to make new options in life. Increasing their ‘agency’ this gives women initial ownership over their lives, and causes them to have to think about what decisions they are going to make in the future about their situations. What I at first considered a bad idea, I now realize may help women become independent. Begin identified as a

‘perpetrator, especially while on the streets affords prostituted women more ‘agency’ and power in their lives. ‘Agency’ increases an opportunity at ‘voice’ and space of action in these women’s lives. Viewing women as ‘perpetrators’ is congruent to the tool of defamiliarization for many feminist organizations, or trying to understand a situation through its opposite.

Defamiliarizing Sex Trafficking

In order to alter the views of the dominant discourse, the tool of defamiliarization is helpful. Essentially, to defamiliarize something is to make it strange, or to look at the situation from another perspective. If people were asked to look at sex trafficking from the victim’s perspective with no attempt at voice and only a faux vision of choice, they may choose to alter their perception and discussion around the tragedy. This would help to raise awareness in a more sympathetic way and provide an alternative view from which to view the perspectives of sex traffickers.

Furthermore, the tool of defamiliarization is helpful in understanding what is not being said. When someone chooses to identify a person in a certain way, they are consciously making the decision to not call them something else. For example: when the DPD identifies the women as ‘prostitutes’ they are consciously not referring to them as women, rather as a label with a negative connotation. In using this label, does it help them to separate emotionally from any attachment and keep the law black-and-white? I will use this tool of defamiliarization in the next couple of sections to identify what is being said, and why and then its opposite and the implications.

Disappearing Perpetrators

In most cases when people who have been trafficked are discussed, they are the only ones who are being named. Women are identified as sex trafficking victims. Because they are victimized, the focus is put on the label ‘victim’ and not on the person who has put them into this situation. The pimp and the john are rarely identified or talked about. Women are trafficked and then if they are ‘lucky’ enough to escape imprisonment, they are sent out to deal with their feelings only to place blame on themselves. When a pimp or john is never identified, it makes it seem as if the woman is to blame for the situation that she was forced into. It appears ok to identify the victim/survivor by her name and story, but it is not ok to do that for the pimp/john. Or if a pimp/john is identified, they use ways of rationalizing the choices that they have made, either they need money, or they just are not getting sex from their wife (Raymond & Hughes, 2001; Wood & Rennie, 1994). There is no amount of rationalization that should be acceptable to allow them to escape from what they have put many women through.

When stories are told about the victims/survivors that leave out the men who were holding them captive, these stories strip women of agency and voice. They become the only actors within the stories, placing them into a helpless discursive theme. This is the perspective which scholar Berns identifies as patriarchal resistance. Berns (2001) writes, “They [media, people addressing the issue] reframe domestic violence in a way that obscures men’s violence while placing the burden of responsibility on women” (p. 262). Because victims have little no agency within their situation, when the burden of responsibility is placed on them, they are asked to participate within a complex situation in which they have no voice. Or in other words, they are discursively required to have a

voice in a situation where they have no agency. If the discursive structure is not reframed, the perpetrators will continue to have agency because of their lack of requirement to participate, while the women, who are being abused, are continually denied voice and agency, remaining passive victims. If the perpetrators are identified then they will be forced to participate in the situation that they have created, ultimately giving victim/survivors agency because the perpetrator will be identified as the criminal within the situation.

When a certain discourse is used and it becomes prevalent in society, the discourse gains power and authority over people because of the weight that language holds. In an article about discourse, Berman (2003) argues, “Regularities have constructive effects, creating identities and practices and disciplining bodies and behaviors through articulation and repetition” (p. 47). By reframing the discursive structure/situation and then reproducing that new frame, perpetrators would be held accountable for their actions.

Focus needs to be taken off of the victims and placed onto the perpetrators. The women who are forced into sex trafficking do not choose this profession; they are innocent bystanders to what their life became. If the pimps/johns are held responsible for their actions, the associated guilt that women, who have been trafficked feel, will be alleviated. If these women understand that through this discursive shift, society does not believe that they are ones to blame, the women will have a better hope for the future. Also, if pimps/johns are identified and prosecuted, the probability of reproducing the same trafficking techniques that are in place now will lessen, slowly reducing the number of women and children who are trafficked each day. Focusing more specifically on the

oppressive agents (i.e., pimps, john, capitalism, and patriarchy), rather than the oppressed individuals, will encourage a discursive shift and understanding will help to change the situation for these women.

As a society, we need to reprioritize what is important to label and what is important to talk about. Instead of addressing women in sex trafficking as victims or survivors, but as people, we get to understand who they are first, and not what their perceived identities are. This is not to say that I think we should attempt to minimize what these women and children have been through, it is only to suggest that we should get to know people before essentializing them. As Cambell (2005) would argue, “Agency is the power to do evil, to demean and belittle” (p. 7). The power to control voice and agency needs to be taken out of the hands of the perpetrator and given to the sex trafficked women. Giving these women power over their lives can give them a sense of agency and voice because only they know their life and their life situation. No one but them can describe what happened. I also think that it is important for women to talk about their perpetrators when telling their story. It is pertinent that the blame is not placed on the women, but on the men who extort them.

I understand that this process does not happen overnight and that women would need to seek counseling as a way of helping them cope with what has happened in their life. If all women were to seek help they would understand that they were innocent in this section of their lives, and that they are not to blame. In order to reconfigure the space that these women speak in, “we need to transform arrangements of speaking to create spaces where survivors are authorized to be both witnesses and experts, both reporters of experience and theorists of experience” (Alcoff & Gray, 1993, p. 282). At this point the

term 'survivor' would be appropriate because the women would truly feel empowered. From this, women could then be able to speak about their experiences further promoting awareness to the world in hopes of saving the lives of other possible victims. These women would attempt to embody what Roof and Wiegman (1995) call desubjectification, or "the moment you start playing in your doubleness and realize not who you are but what you represent" (p. 40). At the end of the journey, these women now embody strength, hope, and perseverance. Each organization attempts to provide sex trafficked women with 'agency' and a space of action within the confines of how the individual organizations function. The organizations afford different levels of agency within different contexts and understandings of the sex trafficking situation. Through the use of the label 'women,' sex trafficked women are provided more 'agency' than when identified as 'prostitute,' 'victim,' or 'survivor.' Chapter seven will discuss where further research can go and should attempt to go in the future.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study examines the flows and processes of the discourse of sex trafficking across four organizations involved with women in sex trafficking situations in Colorado. Using the theoretical lens of feminist poststructuralism and interviews, I examined discursive forms of language and the power of their practices within a patriarchal society. I asked the following research questions: how discourses of sex trafficking travel through law enforcement? Awareness raising and outreach organizations and impact the organizations individual effectiveness and effectiveness within sex trafficking; what discursive practices exist in the organizations that prohibit the raising of awareness about sex trafficking and those impacted by it? What kinds of space of action are created by the discourse(s) of sex trafficking in these organizations for women in sex trafficking situations?

Each form of organization (law enforcement, awareness raising, and outreach organizations) was chosen for its connection and relation to women in sex trafficking situations. I intended to interview only DPD and LCHT personnel because of their involvement in communicating to the public about sex trafficking in Colorado; however, after conducting my interviews with these organizations, I realized I was missing a large piece of the conversation; the organizations that communicate with the women daily.

I contacted two outreach organizations, one connected to law enforcement and the other independent. Overall, four interviews were conducted with the DPD, two interviews with LCHT, one interview with Chrysalis and then a joint-interview with

Prax(us). Each interview was conducted onsite for the organization or at a location selected by the interviewee. Each person was asked if they could be taped during the interview process. If they preferred not to be taped, I transcribed the notes from the interview, and then asked each respected interviewee to member check the notes, as a way of insuring accuracy and that the person was represented and quoted correctly. Each interview was then coded for language, and the codes were fit into discursive themes in order to make sense of the data. The categories were then arranged in order of importance and appearance with respect to each organization so that I could see the flow and trends in the language, among five distinct but related discursive actions: ‘causes/point of entry,’ ‘defining her,’ ‘other people,’ ‘organizational action,’ and ‘organizational purpose.’

The discourse and laws of the DPD set the stage for what the public and what other organizations understand as the base work of sex trafficking and language to describe the situation. In the discursive action ‘causes/point of entry,’ the DPD describes a ‘drug addiction’ to be a motivator for women to be involved in prostitution situations. The DPD describes women as either ‘prostitutes,’ ‘criminals,’ or ‘informants,’ in the discursive action, ‘defining her.’ They also understand sex trafficking to be, by law, the same situational action as prostitution, in a criminalizing discursive frame. Therefore, a woman arrested for either act will be charged the same. There is little to no room for any gray area, situations are cut-and-dry, providing an unclear space of action. The women are either breaking the law or they are not. If they are not breaking the law, then the law enforcement has nothing to do with them. The discursive action, ‘other people’ explains that the DPD acknowledges different ‘perpetrators’ in these women’s lives. In the end,

the discursive actions ‘organizational action’ and ‘organizational purpose’ suggest that prostituted women become ‘informants’ for the DPD as a way of distributing information so that the DPD can enforce the law.

LCHT, the awareness raising organization rejects the notion that women are criminals or prostitutes and understands that prostitution is separate from sex trafficking. While, they understand that neither situation elicits a woman having a ‘choice,’ they recognize, through the discursive action ‘causes/point of entry,’ that women in sex trafficking are selling sex by force. LCHT uses the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ as a way of identifying the women, or ‘defining her.’ They also discard any suggestion that the women would choose to be in the situations in which they exist, because there are ‘other people’ who are keeping her in this situation (i.e., perpetrators). Tension here occurs in these women’s access to ‘voice’ and ‘agency’ because they are understood to be forced into a situation, but then victimized by that situation that they live. As an ‘organizational purpose’ LCHT is dedicated to raising awareness in order to provide a better and more understanding environment in which these women exist. They do this through the ‘organizational action’ of trying to understand the ‘perspective’ and lives in which the women derive from.

The two outreach organizations, Chrysalis and Prax(us) work with women who are directly affected each day by sex trafficking situations. These two organizations try to relate to sex trafficked women as a way of not only understanding their perspective but also as a way to help these women change theirs. No force (via verbal contract or other) is used with the women from these organizations. Each organization offers the suggestion that the ‘causes/point of entry’ is because of ‘options’ that these women have

been given in life. Additionally, Chrysalis and Prax(us) both use ‘people-first’ language in order to ‘define her.’ Those impacted are people or women first and their situation comes second. The situation should never define the woman. This helps to open up the space of action by increasing ‘agency’ for women through the action of being more inclusive. These two organizations have the most direct and real contact with the women on a day-to-day basis, allowing for the organizations to really understand who the women are and what further services Prax(us) and Chrysalis can provide. The discursive action of ‘organizational action’ helps to describe the process of getting to know the individual women’s perspectives. As an ‘organizational purpose’ each organization embodies the discursive theme ‘caring’ as a way of providing these women ‘agency’ and a space of action.

Like the women in sex trafficking, each organization has its own perspective on what they understand the problem of sex trafficking to be. Organizations approach this situation differently. Using people-first language allows the women to be treated as humans, rather than a statistic. ‘People-first’ language increases ‘agency’ for these women and opens up a space of action for sex trafficked women. Also, because language helps us understand the world, if we understood everyone as people, the initial stigma that women who are arrested for ‘prostitution’ would decrease, helping to increase ‘agency’ within these women’s lives. If the law enforcement would implement to use of ‘people-first’ language, maybe the respect and level of communication between law enforcement and women would increase. It is vital that there is a linguistic shift in this situation so that the women are treated with more respect, especially in a situation where they have not chosen to be there.

Overall, theoretically, I contributed a feminist-poststructuralist lens with a concentration on the implications on voice, agency and space of action to the identities of sex trafficked women. In future studies, or to understand a more holistic view, I would use postcolonial theory as a macro theory to help explain the globalization of sex trafficking. After working through this study, I understand that sex trafficking is a global issue, while it is now better understood domestically, a discursive shift needs to occur globally. Postcolonial theory would also help to examine the macro-perpetrators being capitalism and patriarchy, providing a more holistic approach.

Methodologically speaking, I used interviews as a way of collecting data in order to understand the situation of sex trafficking in Denver. In order to have a more complete project, interviewing women who have been affected by sex trafficking would have brought the interview data full circle. Also, if I would have been able to complete the participant observation or been able to conduct more interviews, my data could have proven more conclusive.

At the beginning of this study, communication studies was lacking in research in connection to sex trafficking. This study not only adds to the field of communication studies, but it also adds to overall sex trafficking research from a domestic perspective. Using a very specific lens, this study examines sex trafficking discourse within Denver. Hopefully this study will encourage not only a discursive shift, but additional domestic research within the field. In the following pages, I will explore different areas where research could continue in regards to sex trafficking.

Where to go Now

In the cases of sex trafficking or ‘consensual’ rape, the law does not define how to treat women who have broken the law but under coercive circumstances. In order to combat sex trafficking currently, the DPD re-constructs these women as ‘informants’ when they are brought in for questioning so that the women share information and the judge is more lenient on their case. Yet, women are forced to commit an act and then charged for it. Even in the case of prostitution where the woman has no pimp, she is forced by extenuating circumstances (i.e., capitalism) to sell herself in order to survive, yet another disappearing perpetrator. Within the situation of sex trafficking, there are multiple disappearing perpetrators. The ‘every day’ perpetrators consist of ‘pimps,’ and ‘johns’ who are constantly exploiting these women. Capitalism functions as a ‘macro-perpetrator,’ feeding into the ‘global perpetrator,’ globalization. Understanding the multiple levels in which these women are perpetrated against, helps to illuminate the scope of the issues that will need to be examined for any change to be made within sex trafficking as an intuition.

I used to think that numbers, as a way of defining a problem, had shock value and would almost scare people into caring about an issue. However, after realizing that the numbers surrounding sex trafficking are misleading I try not to refer to them as support. I think the bigger issue is that we cannot say that there is just one woman living this life, and have people respond. This is a human rights issue, an issue that essentially affects everyone, but if it is not directly affecting one person at one time, they turn away from the issue. If only one person is affected, it appears to affect their chance at a voice within a situation because no one can relate to the situation that this one person is in. Sex

trafficking is not a situation that is just going to go away. Being one of the oldest 'professions,' pimps have been selling women for centuries. In order to provide women with an increased sense of 'agency' and space of action, discourse around their situation needs to reflect an appreciation for human rights. Being that they are human, these women will increase their 'voice' power.

Numbers, discourse and the sex trafficking situations that the women are involved in are important to discuss, because without correct knowledge of situations many people never stop to acknowledge the severity of harm being done to people every day. Women currently are being forced into sex trafficking situations against their will, but then defined by the law enforcement as a situation of choice through the label 'prostitute,' leaving these women with no 'voice' and little 'agency' within their lives. Ignorance in discursive distinction is problematic. The first time that I attempted to get in touch with the DPD, I was told by an officer, that Colorado does not have a problem with sex trafficking. At first I was shocked, because I knew that there was an issue. However, after having my conversations with officers at the DPD, I now realize that he was not being negligent, rather he was communicating within the discourse that he had been provided and trained. The man-made laws created had helped this officer to view sex trafficking as a problem of prostitution. A common understanding of discourse and discursive themes needs to be adapted in order for there to be progress within the discourse surrounding the sex trafficking industry if the women are going to be provided a space of action. Furthermore, discourse and understanding needs to expand past just the women who are being sold, and focus on the 'demand' of the marketing scheme. Feminist scholarship recognizes that there is power in everything, and by avoiding a

discussion of the ‘perpetrators’ within sex trafficking situations, continues to give them the men power and oppress these women.

Every day there are ‘johns’ who are out on the streets, purchasing sex from the women who are forced to sell their bodies for money and survival. Our focus needs to shift to understand why the perpetrator is doing what ‘he’ is doing. If there was a man who kept stealing from a store, the law would not allow him to continue to steal from the store every day? No! The man would soon be arrested and put in jail with the option to receive rehabilitation. Spender’s (1980) man-made discourse assumes that men are always ‘agents’ within their lives, because they *are* the dominant discourse. Every day, men steal dignity, trust, and respect from these women as they ask them with money, to turn just one more trick. This man steals, yet receives minimal punishment compared to the pain he inflicts on a woman. Men push their power on women as a way of (re)defining their status within society. Night-after-night this scenario plays out. The man may be arrested if he is in the wrong place at the wrong time, but otherwise, he continues to steal from women, further oppressing her and reminding her of her ‘subaltern’ status.

Looking at the bigger picture and examining what in society allows men to purchase sex from women, and what is forcing women to sell their bodies for a ‘safe’ place to sleep is imperative. Understanding the larger issue (i.e., macro-perpetrators) of what is oppressing the women and men who are involved would help to slow down the amount of people who are being sex trafficked. For example, why are ‘johns’ not being held responsible for their actions? Because the ‘john’ is causing harm to not only the women but society as well mean that they should have to pay a harsher punishment,

rather than being punished with a one day class by the state? Recognizing that in there would be no ‘supply’ of women without the ‘demand’ from the johns is imperative to start inserting into discussions of sex trafficking. Unequal treatment of ‘players’ within sex trafficking situations communicates an increased appreciation for men over women. It also confirms a poststructuralist notion of sex as a focal point for a woman’s subjective identity. Unequal treatment, reifies a patriarchal commitment to language and men within society.

For a change to occur, we must first recognize people as humans first. As a society, we need to stop recognizing the crime as an identifier and see the people in order to communicate with them better. Communication will lead to a better overall understanding of why they are oppressed or what they need in order to change their situation. Having negative thoughts toward a woman on the street only helps to further oppress her. A woman’s body was not meant to be used as a sex object by force. ‘People-first’ discourse helps to communicate that every person’s body is meant to be cherished.

If ‘people-first’ discourse was employed by each organization, there would be both positive and negative consequences. The DPD, being a paternal organization would have more gray areas if they used people-first language. ‘Defining her’ as a ‘prostitute’ allows the DPD to make a clear distinction between what is breaking the law, and what is not. I think that human rights should be considered when creating new laws and when considering situations that these women are in; however, I regret to say that ‘people-first’ language leaves too much room for lack of clarity. ‘People-first’ language, however, works for the other three organizations because it allows employees to view these women

as 'agents' within their lives. 'People-first' opens up the discursive space providing a larger space of action for sex trafficked women to operate.

Additionally, who should control a woman's body? As a society we need to start communicating to young girls that their bodies are for them and them only. No one can own or purchase their body. Education in this area needs to be increased as a way of making sure that women do not feel that their only self worth is through their sexuality. Sex should not be their subjective identity. This is not to say that women cannot feel empowered because of their sexuality, because this is also important for women. It is to understand that selling one's body or being forced to sell themselves for sex strips the woman of agency and reduces her to a sex object. While it could be argued that certain women feel empowered through their ability to sell their body for money, these arguments are not the majority.

Because of the dehumanizing notion behind the label 'sex object,' women who are involved in sex trafficking have been stigmatized through the terms used to identify them. These definitions of women are also usually comingled with prostitutes only further stripping them of their agency to be taken seriously. Sex trafficked women are coerced into the trade against their will and then physically and emotionally abused while they are within the organization. The sex trafficking situations seems to 'victimize' women because of the lack of 'agency' that they are being given in their space of action.

While, 'victim' is the most commonly used identifier for these women, I believe it leaves women feeling helpless and weak. These women, because they are conditioned to love their perpetrators do not often identify as a 'victim,' making it hard for them to want to reach out for help. Their voice and agency is wound within their relationship with

their pimp. The pimp relationally controls their definition of self-identity, and access to voice and agency. He tells them what they are and how they are nothing without him because he is the only one who really knows how to love them. In order to attain a sense of voice and agency, these women must first perceive themselves as victims and then process an identification will help move these women to ‘survive’ the situation.

Changing the discursive structure around these women and then referring to them as survivors communicates a different understanding of ‘strong women.’ Shifting also to the label of ‘woman’ increases the understanding of the general population, reminding people that they or someone that they love could also be sex trafficked because of these ‘macro-perpetrators.’

Finally, a discursive shift needs to happen within the community. Community members need to understand and acknowledge that these women are forced into a life they did not choose; a life that everyday oppresses them. The most efficient way of beginning this shift is through raising awareness about the implications that different discursive situations provoke. Without a shift in thinking from the community, these women will continually be treated as powerless victims within society. Survivors need a way of understanding that they were wronged, and that it was not their fault.

Empowering women, and giving them an opportunity and a space to speak about what they have been through will help others to understand and hopefully make the pimps/johns who have harmed them understand what they have done. Without a change in language and an understanding of discursive consequences, these women will continually be abused and trafficked, only ‘lucky’ to make it out alive.

In conclusion, we need to continue to ask questions of why and be diligent in seeking answers as to how sex trafficking is allowed to prosper around the world. The implications of our language choices are astronomical to the stigma that sex trafficked women have to live within each day. Focusing on '(de)labeling' a 'victim' of a situation will enable a more positive space of action for them to live. My hope is that through this study, 'perpetrators' on all levels will begin to be examined. Women's rights and more largely, human rights, is not something that we can any longer ignore. People are not a commodity to be bought and sold, human life is precious. As Martin Luther King, Jr. eloquently stated, "Commit yourself to the noble struggle for human rights. You will make a greater person of yourself...and a finer world to live in."

CONFESSIONS: 'VICTIM' TURNED 'WOMAN'

When I began this project, I could not have imagined where it was going to go. I thought that I was going to walk into the Denver Police Department, hear what they had to say about sex trafficking, and then together we were going to save the world. Boy was I wrong. My first glance of how things were going to turn out was trying to schedule interviews. At first I was told that sex trafficking was not an issue within Denver, which nearly crushed my dreams of a complete thesis, then Dr. Broadfoot reminded me that everything is data. She was right, everything became data.

Once I made connections within each of the organizations, I was in. However, I did not imagine the number of hats that I was going to have to wear during the interview processes. When I went into the DPD, I was a conservative female, who semi-ascribed to feminist scholarship. In LCHT, Prax(us), and Chrysalis I was a full-fledged feminist scholar who was dedicated to women's rights. I was not trying to be fake or misrepresent myself; rather I was attempting to blend in as a way of understanding and gathering raw data.

In the midst of gathering data, I was encouraged to journal about my experiences as a way of both venting and processing this challenging information. At first, I decided that I was too tough and did not need to journal as a way of processing. However, I soon discovered that I was not able to sit within this heavy information and not try and get it out. At the conclusion of my first journal entry I was full of angst and questions. I

questioned why these women were in the situations that they were in, and why society allows sex trafficking to continue.

Initially without understanding why, I became angry at the men in the world who were acting as perpetrators within the lives of these women. I could not understand what would prompt men to purchase sex from women on the streets. Would they want people paying their moms, sisters or wives for sex? Furthermore, I was disturbed by the lack of agency that these women had in their lives. Why were these women being used and abused and why was no one searching for their stories?

After close examination, this question hit closer to home than I ever would have anticipated. When I was younger, I experienced a situation that was a violation of who I was, and I attempted to speak out about what was going on. What happened next truly changed my life and view on sexual assault ‘victims’ forever. When I attempted to speak out about the unfair actions taken upon my elementary aged body, I was silenced. I was silenced by those whom I had trusted. I was told that I did not understand what was happening and that I must be incorrect in my accusations. So from here on out, I was silenced. Instead of speaking out about the injustice that I felt during that time, I became the happy girl. No one ever asked if things were wrong if you were happy, and so in an effort to never be silenced again, I became the happy girl.

Now, I do not write this as a way of gaining sympathy or for the typical ‘I am sorry.’ I write this, because without this event in my life, I would not be the woman who I am today, or understand the implications of not truly understanding the term ‘victim.’ I NEVER felt like a victim, because I was still living every day. To me, ‘victims’ were helpless, and I was anything but. I had graduated high school the top of my class,

graduated with a five year degree in four years from my undergraduate and earned a assistantship in a well recognized master's program. This, to me, was not the image of a victim. On the other hand, I was not a survivor either. Had I survived? Yes! But to me, nothing more than any other girl my age, I dealt with life.

However, the more I examined the lives and labels of these women who I was researching, the more I realized that I needed to raise awareness about their situation. I needed to speak from a position of understanding and compassion to help create a space of action. I feel so fortunate that my experience was not in the context of a pimp relationship. I was 'lucky.'

How to conclude, I am not sure. I do not feel like my chapter or research has closed on this topic, there is so much more work to do and progress to be made. I feel honored to have been able to examine the sex trafficking situations as described by the organizations that I interviewed. My heart goes out to all of the women who have been sexually exploited, this is for you. There is no power in silence; there is no agency in becoming a recluse. Thanks to being a woman who has been in a situation, I am able to better understand and make a difference in the world.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions- Law Enforcement Officials

1. Tell me what you know about sex trafficking with the Denver area?
2. What do you consider your role to be, if any, within this problem?
3. How long have you been working at this organization?
4. Once a sex trafficking victim is identified, what is the protocol?
5. How do you address the women?
6. How do you describe these women to other coworkers?
7. Do you think that they have a choice about the situation that they are in?
8. If you were to change one thing about the language surrounding the women, what would it be and why?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experiences?

Appendix B
Interview Questions- NGO Workers

1. Can you describe the nature of sex trafficking in Colorado?
2. How long have you been working at this organization?
3. What is your reason for working here?
4. What do you believe is the reason for conducting the studies on local organizations? Do you believe this is effective?
5. Once the data is collected, where does that data go?
6. How do you address the women?
7. In one word, how would you describe these women?
8. How do you describe these women to other coworkers?
9. Do you talk about these women outside of work, and if so, how do you talk about them?
10. Do you think that they have a choice about the situation that they are in?
11. If you were to change one thing about the language surrounding the women, what would it be and why?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experiences?