

THESIS

THE RHETORICAL POSSIBILITIES OF REPRESENTATION: HOW SURVIVOR
NARRATIVES FRAME SEX TRAFFICKING

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ABSTRACT

THE RHETORICAL POSSIBILITIES OF REPRESENTATION: HOW SURVIVOR NARRATIVES FRAME SEX TRAFFICKING

Many scholars across disciplines have highlighted and critiqued the existing dominant narratives of sex trafficking circulating in popular representations. These dominant narratives are also referred to as the neoabolitionist framework, which tends to tell a story of clear-cut criminals and victims. Recently, academics have advocated for the human rights framework, which aims to empower victims and examines the problem of human trafficking as part of complex systems rather than a phenomenon among deviant individuals. However, there is a gap in these scholarly conversations when thinking about how these frameworks apply to self-representations of survivors. This thesis looks at ten sex trafficking survivor narratives to examine the ways these narratives align with other representations. First, I use Kenneth Burke's notion of terministic screens to examine how the author's context and publication platform affect the ways in which these women can represent themselves, in order to complicate ideas about the rhetorical possibilities of self-representation. Next, using Burke's theories on tragic and comic framing, I argue that the neoabolitionist framework tends to frame the issue tragically, while the human rights framework tends to frame the issue comically, and I examine the ways in which the women's narratives subscribe to either framework and/or how they blend them. While the neoabolitionist framework and human rights framework of sex trafficking are set up as binaries in the scholarly literature, my findings reveal that survivors combine these frameworks when telling their own story. This blending of frameworks suggests an alternative perspective, or in Burke's words, perspective by incongruity. The conclusion of this thesis suggests how the

findings from survivors can help inform and reshape the ways in which activists, scholars, government officials, media, and law enforcement represent sex trafficking survivors to more accurately reflect their lived experience.

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dance parties and for being ok with my insistence that Taylor Swift's "Shake it Off" be my theme song for the year. Your friendship, support, and laughter have meant the world.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the women brave enough to tell their story, their own way. I admire
your courage.

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INTRODUCTION

Nicki was *my* new friend, I thought. I bonded with her easily and immediately; and it felt like an instant slumber party. She had all kinds of lotions and shampoos, eyeliner pencils and mascara bottles strewn over the bathroom vanity. I sucked in my cheeks as she applied blush and blue eye shadow, and I puckered my lips for the red lipstick. I felt like I was getting a makeover. I wasn't sure why Nicki and I were getting ready; maybe I still thought we were going to a club. I didn't question her, though; I trusted her completely. She was like a big sister.

"Go rinse your hair out, shooga," Nicki said.

I knelt over the bathtub and held my hair under the faucet as I had done a million times at home. Getting ready to go skating in seventh grade was serious business. If I couldn't get my bangs to flip just right, I would wash the hairspray out and start over again. Such a process could

I remember the moment when I was introduced to modern day slavery. It was 2007 and I was sitting in the pews of the First Presbyterian Church in Boulder, Colorado, watching a video play on the large screens hanging from the ceiling at the front of the sanctuary. The videos were of men and women rescuing children from sweatshops and brothels in Cambodia, India, and Uganda, arguing with corrupt police officers, and advocating for better laws to protect these children. The videos were part of a presentation by International Justice Mission, a faith-based organization, whose mission on their homepage says "Rescue thousands. Protect millions. Prove that justice for the poor is possible." The president and founder of the organization, Gary Haugen, is a human rights lawyer, who "has been recognized by the U.S. State Department as a Trafficking in Persons Hero" ("Gary Haugen"). Haugen's law background explains the

frustrate me to tears. Nicki blow-dried my hair, and I stared into the mirror. My hair looked unnaturally dry and yellow; and my eyebrows looked dark. It was a shocking change from the dirty blond I'd been an hour or so earlier. I looked at Nicki.

"Aww, you'll get used to it," she said. "Try my dress on."

I pulled Nicki's red dress up and looked in the mirror. I felt flat-chested and pale as I usually did in dresses. Nicki gave me the high heels to wear, and my bare feet slipped around inside. I had to half-drag them with me to walk since they were two sizes too big. Greg emerged from the bedroom and sat me down to go over what he called *The Rules*.

"Don't talk to *any* black guys," Greg said. "Don't talk to 'em, don't look at 'em. Most of 'em are pimps."

"OK," I said, while trying to decode what Greg had just said, especially because he was a black guy.

"Don't smoke crack," he pointed his

group's focus on convicting criminals and changing legislation. I distinctly remember being very moved by these videos. I was angered at the injustice and given hope by the work of the organization. Although I was college bound for a degree in music, in the moment I considered changing trajectories and going into law. I wanted to fight these bad guys enslaving children in other countries. I wanted to get involved and make a difference.

I didn't become a lawyer—that thought dwindled after about two days—but human trafficking and slavery remained on my social justice radar. I continued to be moved by the stories reported, though as someone in the arts, I wasn't sure how I could use my talents to make a difference.

In 2012, I found an organization that helped fit my talents to my social justice passions. I volunteered with the NO Project Greece, a campaign that "focuses on the demand for human trafficking and specifically targets youth awareness

finger at me, “I won’t deal with any fuckin’ girl on crack.”

I thought about the frying pan commercial: *this is your brain on drugs*. I had never tried drugs except for the two hits of pot that year. Even Alice Cooper said drugs were stupid.

“Call me,” Greg said, “As soon as you have five hundred dollars. If a cop stops you, tell’m your name is Stacey Combas. Tell’m you were born June 10, 1974, and that yer eighteen. Tell’m you live at 201 White Horse Pike.”

Greg told me to repeat these details back to him, and I struggled to remember everything.

“If the cops give you shit,” he said, “act up! Tell’m to stop botherin’ you when there’s plenty other hoes walkin’ around”

Nicki chimed in. “Jus’ give ‘em attitude, girl,” she said, “Give ‘em lip for fuckin’ wick you and they’ll back awff.”

I worried about breaking one of the rules, of messing up, of letting them both

through music, art, film, animation, dance, sport, creative writing, journalism, education and social media” (“About the NO Project”). Here was an organization where I could get involved and use my passions to help others.

My focus had switched from a desire to rescue victims by becoming a lawyer to raising awareness. I shed light on the issue for some students at an event I hosted at the high school I taught at in Greece. I told my roommates about the issue and urged them to get involved. I did raise awareness, but I now wonder, awareness to what end? How did I ask my audience to act? How could the average person stop slavery? These are questions I did not grapple with until I went to graduate school and took a course titled Communication and Anti-Human Trafficking.

In this class I learned how limited my understanding of the issue really was. The solutions are more involved than the two-step process of rescuing victims and

down. I didn't want them to think I was too immature to handle what they both seemed to think I could manage.

"Whatever you do," Greg lowered his voice, "don't tell'm 'bout me. I will *never* go back to jail again." He slammed his fist into his open palm, and then he pointed his finger at my face.

"Never," he said. "Understand?"

I understood.

Nobody said the word *prostitution*. It just hung in the air like a slab of meat. Everything was moving so quickly. Nobody asked me any questions. Nobody asked me if I was OK with this, or if this was what I had signed up for, or if I wanted some time to think about it. Nicki called for a taxi, and the two of us were on our way to Atlantic City (9-10).

--Excerpt from *Walking Prey* by Holly Austin Smith

convicting perpetrators. There is more the average person can do than raise awareness. I started learning names for the rhetoric that initially interpellated me into this social movement. The story told by International Justice Mission is just one way to frame the issue, their solution just one of a myriad of proposed solutions. I will not deny that I believe this rhetoric was effective. It made me feel. It made me want to get involved and stop the cruelty I witnessed. I believe this was the organization's goal. It did not, however, give me a lot of ideas of how to get involved. Though I felt riled up about the injustice, I also was paralyzed by the enormity of it. Though initially overwhelmed, I began to read stories of survivors, ask questions, and educate myself.

Holly's words haunt me. "Nobody asked me if I was OK with this, or if this was what I had signed up for, or if I wanted some time to think about it." She learned about human

trafficking by living it. She didn't know what was going on, that she was being manipulated and exploited, until it was too late. Only now, after reading multiple survivor narratives for my research, am I aware of the privileged position I had to learn about human trafficking in the safety of a church and school setting. The above excerpt is from one of the survivors in the sample set of this thesis. While I believe the introduction is an important place to introduce the researcher, their position, and the experiences they have that led them to conduct the research, in a thesis that strives to be inclusive of survivor voices it made sense to include these voices from the beginning. Holly's words give a first hand perspective to sex trafficking that I cannot provide. The contrast between our two stories highlights our different contexts and experiences.

The Communication and Anti-Human Trafficking course I took asked me to question the rhetoric of the anti-human trafficking campaigns that I had encountered. We also examined the rhetoric of abolition from the nineteenth century, making connections as to how the communication strategies of these abolitionists could inform the current anti-slavery movement. In many ways there are parallels between today's anti-human trafficking movement and the abolition movement of the nineteenth century. For many in America, human trafficking is an invisible crime. Past abolitionists struggled with how to represent slavery to an audience of white Northerners, who may have heard about the "peculiar institution," but had never witnessed it. According to communication scholar Stephen Browne, Theodore Weld's *American Slavery As It Is* (1839) attempted to "represent sufficiently the realities of slavery" and to "make slavery meaningful" for a wide audience (277). It did this by providing vivid descriptions of the cruelties of slavery, descriptions of torture, rape, whipping, and lynching. Browne calls this rhetorical style sentimental, as its primary goal is to make the audience feel pity or sadness. The problem with this style, he argues, is that it does not have any impact beyond getting the

audience to feel; “Sentimentalism extends no further than its own exhaustion. This exhaustion, indeed, defines precisely sentimentalism’s dangerous pleasures: once consummated, it dies” (278). The audience already believes they have acted on behalf of the cause because they have been made to feel so much for it. I read this article during my time in this course and it made me recognize the sentimentalism utilized in many contemporary campaigns and made me wonder more about the representational strategies of these organizations.

Browne’s article “‘Like Gory Spectres.’ Representing Evil in Theodore Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is*” did more than introduce me to the rhetorical style of sentimentalism; it also highlighted another aspect of Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is* that disturbed me greatly. Browne says that the slave’s voice is almost nonexistent in the text, which seems paradoxical given the book’s title. Weld focused on images of horror, sacrificing the slave’s individual stories in order to get the desired response. In doing so Weld “discovered a means to represent slavery to maximum effect even as he virtually silenced its victims” (286). This particular article and its ideas troubled me, even after the course had finished. I wondered: Why is emotion such a big piece in humanitarian rhetoric? Can representations be harmful even if they achieve the intended effect? Why did Weld believe that the best representation of the oppressed would be a representation that barely included their perspectives and interpretations? When reading stories like Holly’s, I could not help but think that her first person perspective was extremely valuable to my understanding of sex trafficking. Browne’s article helped me start to recognize the rhetoric of sentimentality in trafficking campaigns, but it also initiated a different inquiry. Where are the victims and survivors in these campaigns? Are their voices being silenced? How much are their stories being filtered through different organizational ideologies and lenses? How might these lenses serve the organizations rather than the represented?

As of March 16, 2015, the front page of the International Justice Mission website highlights a girl named Charina. The audience is invited to “Meet Charina” by clicking a button that redirects them to another page with an in-depth story. It is titled “Charina’s Rescue:”

Charina walked silently along a dim street in the Philippines, a routine she knew all too well. Pimps had controlled her for two years, and they had just arranged another “customer.” They sent her with four other girls to a dingy hotel nearby.

At 15 years old, Charina felt completely alone—yet IJM and local police already knew her name and her story. **And on this night, they were on the way to rescue her.**

Charina arrived at the hotel room, but the “customer” was actually an undercover police officer working with IJM. Once the “sale” was completed, police moved in immediately to arrest the pimps and rescue the girls. At last, Charina was free.

These urgent rescues are only possible with gifts from our supporters and friends. A tax-deductible gift today can send IJM to find a girl like Charina still waiting for rescue.

Our social workers stayed by Charina’s side that night as she shared her story with the police, and we found her a safe place to sleep on her first night in freedom. We made the commitment Charina desperately wanted to hear: **You will never have to feel alone again.**

On the night she was rescued from sex trafficking, Charina was 15 years old, addicted to drugs and unable to trust anyone. She even threatened to run away from her aftercare home.

Charina needed help—urgently—but she resisted it at every turn. One IJM social worker remembers: **“We knew we did not want to give up.”**

We promised to support Charina in any way she needed, from overcoming addiction to completing trauma-focused counseling. IJM supporters make this kind of individual, healing care possible, and we’re grateful for any help in this crucial mission.

Over several years, Charina regained self-respect and started making plans for her future. She joined an aftercare group for trafficking survivors started by IJM and our government partners. She also courageously chose to testify against the pimps so that other children would be protected. The men were convicted in June 2014.

Although the audience is asked to meet Charina, we do not learn much about her. We learn more about IJM, their mission and goals than we do about Charina. Contrast this representation of a sex-trafficking victim, with the representation of another victim. One difference is that another survivor of sex trafficking is representing this victim.

She likes swimming, SpongeBob, Mexican food, writing poetry, getting her nails painted (light pink is her favorite color), and Harry Potter books (plus she thinks Daniel Radcliffe is “fine”). This Christmas, she really wants an iPod but would settle for some sweat suits,

preferably pink. Sometimes she's petulant—pouting and sullen—but mostly she's open and eager to be loved. When she smiles, huge dimples crease her chubby face and are still capable, as she moves into awkward adolescence of melting hearts. She's much like any other eleven-year-old girl in America, except for one critical difference. Over the last year of her life, she's been trafficked up and down the East Coast by a twenty-nine year-old pimp and sold nightly on Craigslist to adult men who ignore her dimples and baby fat and purchase her for sex. (Lloyd 1)

This excerpt, from *Girls Like Us*, aims to humanize the victim, and shows who she is outside of her victim identity. She feels like a real person, one we may know. The representation of Charina is different; all we know is her victim identity. Now, contrast this second-hand representation with a first-hand account from a survivor named Christine:

I wanted to not be sold. I wanted to not be bought. I wanted to not be raped and filmed and forced to smile and beg and plead for mercy. I wanted them to stop telling me who and what I was. I wanted to decide how I felt, what I thought, what I believed, and who I loved. I wanted to eat the foods that I wanted to eat, run the way I wanted, be silly or thoughtful or serious. Quite simply, I wanted a life of autonomy and agency. (Bales and Trodd 101-102)

Through first-hand representations such as Christine's, we begin to see a glimpse into what the survivor felt and wanted in that situation. Declarations about the survivor's wants and feelings are often missing in second-hand representations. Certainly, a statement about the victim's desire for autonomy and agency is rare. However, in first-hand accounts these are present and the women are humanized through vivid details and storytelling. The story changes depending on who is telling it.

I became increasingly interested in what survivors have to say about the issue and how their stories differed from other popular representations. In order to understand the place and role of survivors in anti-human trafficking discourse, I scaffold this thesis around the following questions:

- Which representational and conceptual frameworks do survivors of sex trafficking use to exemplify their experiences?
- What role might publication platform play in the way survivors represent themselves?
- What relationship might there be between an author's context and her choices about representation?
- How can survivor narratives best be used to inform future framing of and response to human trafficking?

The field of Rhetoric and Composition is optimally situated to engage with these research questions and offer analysis of human trafficking survivor narratives. We have the theoretical frameworks to analyze the language of these narratives and can use these theories to highlight how these narratives are rhetorically situated. This can expand and extend the work being done in other disciplines such as sociology, gender and women's studies, and international studies. Answering the last research question supports the social justice commitment of the field.

In "Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research," composition scholars Gesa E. Kirsch and Joy S. Ritchie explain how feminist researchers are committed to weave personal into scholarly discourse, especially by locating themselves in relationship to their research. They ask that researchers "notice the multiple and contradictory positions" they occupy and investigate the politics of researcher location in every part of the research process (143). They urge researchers to ask: "How are our conflicting positions, histories, and desires for power implicated in our research questions, methodologies, and conclusions?" (142). As a graduate student who identifies as a feminist compositionist, I align myself with Kirsch and Ritchie's belief in "the importance of rigorous self-reflection" and the need to illuminate my "own motives, desires, and interests" (154). My experience with human

trafficking is included in this introduction to illuminate my own complex relationship with my research subject. I also want to acknowledge the limitations of my perspective in that I grew up without any personal contact with human trafficking and learned about the issue through the safety of church and school exposure.

It also seems appropriate in a thesis examining the personal narrative of others, to examine my own personal narrative, especially in how it relates to the women I am researching. My introduction to human trafficking illustrates my past experience with different representations and how I have been persuaded by many of them. I can see the value and the motivations behind different ways of representing, and I do not want to belittle the heart behind various organizations that have joined the fight against the terror that is human trafficking and modern-day slavery. However, through the process of research, I increasingly began to interrogate the assumptions and beliefs behind different representations, and have aligned myself more fully with representations that give agency and voice to those who have lived through it. There is no way for me to hide this in the process of my research or to hide my identification with the aims of feminist researchers who “not only set out to study and describe women’s lives and experiences, but actively seek to understand and change the conditions of women’s social and political realities” (Kirsch and Ritchie 151). I am deeply invested in this issue and want my research to help support the abolition of slavery. Researchers estimate that over twenty-seven million people are enslaved, which is more people than any other time in history (Bales and Soodalter 3). While it is illegal and difficult to see, the reach of slavery is expansive and it is a very lucrative criminal business.

I also believe in the importance of giving voice to the marginalized, helping them move from margin to center. These parts of me directly influence this project and my research

questions. I feel conflicted because while I am dedicated to including voices of survivors, my analysis will be filtered through my own interpretation of survivor's words. Rhetorician Kenneth Burke describes this filter as a "terministic screen," an act of interpretation that colors facts, highlighting certain nuances in accordance to the author's screen (Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 1341). One cannot entirely cast off their terministic screen. There is always the potential to misappropriate or manipulate information, and Kirsch and Ritchie would agree with Burke and argue that no researcher can truly remove themselves from where they are socially and ideologically located. The best I can do is candidly express my own positioning and to question my own assumptions and interpretations throughout the research process, to continually self-reflect on my own role as the researcher and how to ethically and accurately represent and examine my data.

The words of the women included in this study exhibit bravery and strength. I have experience with creative nonfiction and enjoy writing personal narrative, usually in the form of a personal essay. There are essays I have written of my own struggles and trauma, stories that could have an important impact on readers if they identify with the piece. I am hesitant to publish these essays; I'm afraid of how these stories may implicate those around me and I fear their subsequent reactions to the text. It is amazing that even within my own privileged social context I am timid to speak out. I can only imagine how this fear would be exponentially increased if the trauma one experienced was related to a syndicate of organized crime. The physical and emotional risk of sex trafficking survivors telling their stories is substantial in ways I cannot even pretend to comprehend. And yet, there are those who do write their stories and publish it beyond the pages of their personal journals. Having survivors tell their stories helps to demystify the issue, making it more visible. I realize that people perform and construct identity

through the stories they tell and truth can be relative or more subjective in personal narrative accounts. Their stories are shaped by who they are as an author, their purpose for telling the story, and their own social context. This means that these texts must be examined critically just like any other text on the topic. However, I still believe that these particular accounts must be emotionally difficult to relive and retell, that these stories add a significant perspective to the conversation, and recognize that adding their voices to this conversation takes a courageous effort from these women.

Elisabeth, a woman from my sample set, reminds her readers that sharing her story and writing her blog, while healing, certainly comes with its own set of dangers. She writes, “I am not afraid of death itself. If I was, I would not be speaking out. There are too many death threats that I am defying by telling my story” (Corey Feb. 16, 2014). For her, it was important to “come out” as a trafficking survivor. Both she and Rebecca, another woman from my sample set, have blog posts titled “Coming Out.” Elisabeth believes that not coming out, and not sharing her story, ultimately is more harmful for her life: “If I continue to live a life of invisibility, I might as well not live. If I live that way, I am still a victim. They are still controlling me. They are still running my life” (Corey May 24, 2013). The courage of the women in this study prompts me to take risks in my own writing and research, to not only seek to help others tell their story in their own way, to highlight their voices and agency, but to also recognize my own voice and use it in chorus with these other voices.

CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Scholarly conversations about the use of language in human trafficking discourse and the types of representations of human trafficking in circulation significantly informed the foundational questions of this study. The language used defines the issue and the identity of victims, which in turn affects how they are represented. In order to understand sex trafficking representation, I researched the larger discussion about the ethics of representation in scholarship and issues of representation in contemporary human rights campaigns.

Relevant to conversations about representation is the role of self-representation in human rights discourse. One way survivors of human trafficking can self-represent their experience is through the genre of the personal narrative. Personal narratives are a way survivors can claim control over their represented bodies, stories, and realities and counter other circulating narratives. Because of the rich possibilities that personal narratives of survivors hold, they are a site ripe for research. Before elaborating on these conversations, I now reiterate my research questions to situate my work within larger scholarly contexts:

- *Which representational and conceptual frameworks do survivors of sex trafficking use to exemplify their experiences?* Scholarly conversations point to the role that dominant narratives and representations play in sex trafficking. They also discuss the role of language and how language can change meaning and perception. The aim of my research is to see how these dominant frameworks are included or excluded in survivor representations.
- *What role might publication platform play in the way survivors represent themselves?*

When thinking about self-representation through the form of published narrative, one

must examine the ways in which the texts are shaped by the institutions that publish them for the audience who reads this type of publication.

- *What relationship might there be between an author's context and her choices about representation?* Scholars note the ways in which self-representation is affected by the author's perspective, that personal stories are constructed according to the author's truth.
- *How can survivor narratives best be used to inform future framing of and response to human trafficking?* Many scholars have discussed the ethics of representation, the underlying agendas in human rights representation, the way representation affects reality, and the important role testimonies and personal narratives play in shaping reality. My work aims to extend these conversations and give suggestions about representation according to survivors. Changing the way that sex trafficking is represented and talked about can lead to material change.

The goal of this chapter is to provide the relevant scholarly conversations that inform this study.

In order to achieve this goal, this literature review examines the following conversations:

- The role of language in human trafficking discourse
- The ethics of representation
- The role of representation in both human rights and sex trafficking campaigns and its effects on materiality
- The personal narrative and its use to detail human rights abuses and sex trafficking exploitation

Problems with Definitions and Naming in Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is conceptualized as a complex, horrific crime against human rights. While most can agree on this general conception of trafficking, many cannot agree on a definition. The 2000 United Nations Trafficking Protocol defined trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfers, harboring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion” (Kara 4). Categorizing what falls under the label of trafficking can be difficult because there are competing understandings of what specific terms mean (Bernstein 2007; Lee 2011; Peters 2013). The word trafficking implies movement, that victims are moved across national borders. There are many victims, however, who experience extreme exploitation but never move from their hometowns. Since trafficking implies movement those who are in exploitative conditions but are trafficked domestically or who moved voluntarily from home in search of work are not consistently seen as trafficking victims (Choi-Fitzpatrick, “Rethinking Trafficking: Contemporary Slavery” 23).

Invoking Slavery

Some scholars argue for a more correct way to talk about all the different types of exploitation that are conceptualized as trafficking; they advocate for the use of the word slavery (Kara 2009; Bales and Soodalter 2009; Choi-Fitzpatrick 2012; 2015; Murphy “Introduction” 2014). Contemporary slavery expert Siddharth Kara believes that this reframing is crucial as the current terminology can place more emphasis on stopping the movement rather than the exploitation (5). Scholars believe that instead of using the umbrella term of trafficking, it makes more sense to use the umbrella term of slavery of which trafficking is a part. Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick defines slavery as “the control of one person by another, through violence or threats of violence, for the purpose of economic exploitation” (“Rethinking” 17). In this definition it is

not only those who are tricked or abducted or transferred who are recognized as victims. It encompasses all those who are economically exploited through threats or violence. English professor Laura T. Murphy believes that slavery is the rightful name of this violation of human dignity and that it is the most appropriate term to use to illustrate the severity of the problem (“Introduction” 15). Popular figures associated with anti-human trafficking have also picked up on the confusion among terms and have proposed terms that align with those of researchers. In *Half the Sky* Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn write “The horror of sex trafficking can more properly be labeled slavery” (9).

In these discussions there is also a need for the distinction between the idea of antebellum slavery and contemporary slavery. Modern-day slavery and contemporary slavery are the two most popular terms for slavery happening today. Scholars and advocacy groups both recognize that slavery was never fully abolished, that it never went away completely during the course of the twentieth century. However, the main difference between the two is “antebellum slavery was a legal institution while human trafficking is an international crime” (Esarey). Scholars also point to globalization and the spread of capitalism as the cause of this form of networked and underground exploitation rather than the colonization that enabled the transatlantic slave trade. (Kara 2009; Hua 2014). It is not as visible as it once was, but there are more slaves today than there were when slavery was legal (Murphy, “Introduction” 2).

Though some scholars want to reframe the issue in terms of slavery, others are unsure if it will be a positive change. David Esarey, Human Trafficking Projects Manager for the Human Trafficking Center, worries that the term slave cannot be separated from the image of chained African American slaves, an image that isn’t representative of many who experience sexual and labor exploitation. In “Labeling the Victims of Sex Trafficking” authors Hoyle, Bosworth and

Dempsey express a similar concern (314). Esarey also worries that the term slavery may not be appealing to those who experience this kind of exploitation. He writes,

The word is not a label many victims would choose for themselves. While they may see themselves as victims, to self-identify as a slave suggests a total loss of agency and can carry significant psychological implications. Referring to a person as a slave runs the risk of defining the individual by their experience. Although person in slavery may be somewhat less catchy than slave, it can also be less stigmatizing. (Esarey)

It is clear that those interested in this issue want it to be expressed as accurately and as clearly as possible for the treatment of the victims and the understanding of the general population. Esarey's organization, the Human Trafficking Center, is housed within the Josef Korbel school of International Studies and has conducted extensive research and advocacy on behalf of human trafficking. To help with the various definitions of trafficking, they have created the taxonomy project, which provides definitions for twenty-five trafficking terms. It is important to note, however, that as Maggy Lee writes in her chapter "Contested Definitions of Human Trafficking," "Definitional struggles about human trafficking tend to be dominated by state officials and other powerful groups, generally with very little input from trafficked victims themselves" (16). Those who claim to be victim-centered should allow victims to participate in the process of creating definitions and naming themselves. My research aims to see how these women name themselves and define their experience.

Defining Sex Trafficking

There is also disagreement among groups as to who falls under trafficking. This disagreement is particularly heated with sex trafficking. Who counts as a sex trafficking victim? Only those who are coerced? Or those who agreed to the work, but not to the conditions? Can we lump every prostitute into the category of a trafficking victim? Would they want this? What terms are the most appropriate to identify those who have experienced this phenomenon? Are

they victims? Slaves? Prostitutes? Sex Workers? Illegal Immigrants? Criminals? There are many who believe that all forms of prostitution are exploitative and others who strongly argue that sex workers need to be seen as agents capable of choosing this career. Because sex slaves can be exploited in the same place where prostitutes work, the line can be blurry. Bales and Soodalter explain prostitution as a battleground: “Of all the types of contemporary slavery, only forced prostitution engenders such radically divisive opinions” (107). In his book *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Day Slavery*, Siddarth Kara offers a comprehensive definition and explanation of sex trafficking. He explains that there are three steps in the process of sex trafficking: acquisition, movement (in some cases the movement is minimal), and exploitation. He argues that “acquisition of sex slaves primarily occurs in one of five ways: deceit, sale by family, abduction, seduction or romance, or recruitment by former slaves” (6). Movement can be a big part of sex trafficking, depending upon where the acquisition and exploitation take place. For example, women in Eastern Europe are truly trafficked, moving from poor Eastern European countries to more wealthy Western European countries (11). Not knowing the language or fear of incarceration for lack of documentation make it so these slaves are less likely to escape (14). From his research, Kara describes that sex slaves are exploited in six primary venues: “Brothels, clubs, massage parlors, apartments, hotels, and streets” (12). Kara explains how the vast inequality of economic opportunity for women worldwide makes them vulnerable to slavery and especially forms of slavery that are known for specifically exploiting women (31).

There has been both an international and national focus on trafficking framed as sexual exploitation (Lee 2011; Brysk and Choi-Fitzpatrick 2012; Peters 2013). In its original form, the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act described trafficking as when “a commercial sex act is

induced by force, fraud or coercion.” Alison Brysk and Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick point out that “under the Bush administration, the United States ignored the broader UN definition, which encompasses sexual exploitation of voluntary migrants and other forms of nonsexual contemporary slavery” (Brysk and Choi-Fitzpatrick 2). Because of the strong focus on sex trafficking in the States over other types of trafficking, most public portrayal of victims of trafficking are female. These females have been represented in a variety of ways, their images and stories appropriated to write laws and front campaigns. The various and perhaps questionable ways human trafficking victims or slaves have been represented coincide with scholarly discussions about the ethics and politics of representation. The role language plays in anti-human trafficking efforts is largely unexamined in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Examining how language is used to name the phenomenon and project identities for specific purposes and audiences is highly relevant to the interests of the field. My work aims to join Rhetoric and Composition in these conversations.

The Ethics of Representation

The ethics of speaking for others has been prominently circulating in scholarly debates for the last two decades. Scholars are concerned with the questions “Does anyone have the right to speak for others?” and “Can academics ethically represent those they are researching?” (Spivak 1988; Alcoff 1991; Moussa and Scapp 1996; Sullivan 1996; Kirsch and Ritchie 2003; Ede 2004; Lyon 2005). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s seminal work “Can the Subaltern Speak?” invigorated this conversation. Spivak warns that through representation, feminists and scholars can actually be re-presenting their own voice and ideas and not be truthfully representing the subaltern (though the notion of one true representation is also debatable). This is one of the main

critiques Spivak has of academics, that they believe that they are best positioned to speak for the subaltern as objective, transparent reporters when in reality their representation is not transparent and is imbued with the ideological lenses of their own disciplinary positioning (34). She wants her audience of scholars to understand that “all speaking; even seemingly the most immediate, entails a distanced decipherment by another, which is, at best, an interception. That is what speaking is” (64).

Philosopher Linda Alcoff agrees with Spivak and believes that when possible scholars should speak with and to others rather than for them. Alcoff does not deny that speaking with or to is not always possible in some situations. To retreat from every opportunity of speaking for others could also be considered unethical because sometimes speaking for others can have a direct positive impact on these others because of the privileged location of the speaker. If one must speak for others, Alcoff believes that it is important to look at the effect of the language on those being represented (26). Compositionist Patricia A. Sullivan takes this one step further, saying that effect must be examined before any speaking has occurred, “from the moment of inquiry” (112). When we are speaking for others we must consider the effect it will have on those we are speaking for (112).

Because of the potential problem of silencing those being spoken for, as well as the potential of portraying them as victims and objects, it is important for those speaking for others to somehow give agency and voice to those being spoken for.

The Role of Representation in Human Rights Discourse

Human rights discourse has grown steadily after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948 (Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics* 33). Particularly prominent in this discourse is the international conversation about women’s

rights and the prolific examples of violence against women across the globe (Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics* 130). While this discourse appears to be about helping advance the wellbeing of women worldwide, many scholars have noted the ways in which this discourse and representations of women's rights are charged with underlying agendas and can be coopted for other purposes (Schaffer and Smith 2004; Smith 2005; Lyon 2005; Hesford and Kozol 2005; Andrijasevic 2007; Lyon and Olson 2011; Hesford 2011; Murphy "Narrating White Slavery" and "New Slave Narrative" 2014). These agendas, at times, are to serve the individual organizations doing the representing. However, multiple scholars have also established the various means in which the discourse around women's rights have been co-opted for nationalist purposes (Lyon 2005; Hesford and Kozol 2005; Hesford 2011; Murphy "New Slave Narrative" 2014). Rhetoric and Composition scholar Wendy Hesford writes, "The United States has used the language of gendered victimization to bolster support for post-9/11 military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics* 5). Hesford and Wendy Kozol explain how women's human rights have gained significance "historically in a vexed relationship with national and international security agendas" and note the "textual and visual strategies that the state and the media use to promote fear of violence from some outside force and a promise of protection by the state" (Hesford and Kozol 4). In relation to human trafficking it has been said that there is more concern about immigration and national security than actually protecting and granting human rights to those who are trafficked (Murphy, "Narrating White Slavery" 134). Hesford notes that governments are not the only ones to blame for alternative agendas; anyone involved in human rights tends to frame the stories for Western, American audiences and use these stories to mobilize their audience for a variety of "cultural, national, and political agendas" (Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics* 203).

Rhetoricians are particularly interested in analyzing human rights discourse through the “politics of representation” and the “hierarchical significance of words, definitions, re-definitions” (Lyon and Olson 2005). Though there are many critiques of human rights representations, Arabella Lyon and Lester C. Olson claim that “both language and symbolism are a necessary means for asserting and advancing specific rights,” which means that human rights discourse is the perfect place for rhetorical study (207).

Sex Trafficking Representations

Dominant scripts about women and violence are culturally pervasive. For example, a prevalent dominant script of rape explains how female attractiveness asks for rape (Hesford, “Reading Rape” 214). Many scholars have written about the dominant cultural narratives used to tell the story of sex trafficking. These narratives include a helpless female victim, an evil male trafficker, and an outside hero who comes to the victim’s rescue (Soderland 2005; Hesford 2005; 2011; Hua and Nigorizawa 2010; Hua 2011; Galusca 2012; Kamler 2013; Peters 2013; Friedman and Johnston 2013; Murphy, “Narrating White Slavery” 2014). Many scholars have also noted the role of the outside rescuer that is often portrayed as masculine heroes (Bernstein 2007; Hua 2011; Hesford 2011; Galusca 2012; Kamler 2013). These “paternalistic rescue narratives” are commonly written by investigative journalists who do an undercover expose of victimized women and then work tirelessly to free them, though NGOs and law enforcement are also positioned in the rescuer role (Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics* 125). Many times the victims are portrayed as foreigners needing U.S. protection and aid (Hua 2011). These dominant narratives of trafficking are readily consumed by an audience who likes the “inherent human drama and seemingly clear-cut moral characters-victims and criminals” (Hua, *Trafficking Women’s Human Rights* 54). Also, the rescue narratives of women in third world countries play

into a “grand modernist narrative of nation, progress, and enlightenment” (Schaffer and Smith 27).

While the intentions behind those who spread this dominant narrative of sex trafficking may be well meaning, scholars have pointed out the ways in which this dominant narrative can be harmful for those whom the stories are about. Several scholars believe that this dominant narrative and the ways it is both visually and textually represented can place the women on display, making them a spectacle of victimization (Hesford 1999; 2005; 2011; Smith 2005; Andrijasevic 2007). One problem with this is that it can lead the reader to partake in voyeurism (Lyon 2005; Andrijasevic 2007; Hesford 2011; Murphy “New Slave Narratives” 2014). This voyeurism allows the readers to distance themselves from helping the subject they see; they remain a spectator rather than an actor (Lyon 184). Feminist media scholar Carrie Rentschler writes, “Witnesses can act complicitously in others’ suffering by watching it without seeking to alleviate it, and they can empathize, or ‘feel with,’ others who suffer –an imagined form of affective participation” (Rentschler 298). Voyeurism can ascribe certain identities to the women that objectify and exoticize them and perpetuate stereotypes about race, class, and gender. These women can also be decontextualized, dehumanized and reduced to pieces of evidence. Hesford writes, “antitrafficking campaigns often isolate women and children as objects to be seen and then rescued. Women and girls in the sex industry not only become instruments of pathos but evidence –proof–of the need for antitrafficking agencies and policies” (*Spectacular Rhetorics* 130).

Because dominant narratives are firmly rooted in the public’s imagination, survivors can be expected to tell stories that fit this narrative. In her article, “Belated Narrating: ‘Grandmothers’ Telling Stories of Forced Sexual Servitude during World War II,” Sidonie Smith

explains how elderly Korean women, who are just now explaining their forced sex slavery in Japanese brothels during WWII, are not exempt from this narrative. Rights activists expect a certain story of victimization and are resistant to accounts that fall outside of it (131). Smith describes these women as being “held hostage” to rights discourse, in that they feel compelled to tell a familiar story (130-131). Having a dominant narrative excludes those who have experienced victimization that does not fit the mold. Their stories do not have a popular platform. The current framework of a dominant narrative makes it so that there are stereotypical victims and perpetrators (Hesford 2005; Andrijasevic 2007; Hua 2014). The youth, innocence and naiveté of these female victims fit into our Western beliefs about deserving victims. The victims portrayed in these dominant narratives deserve help, though Hesford believes that these dominant representations “may revictimize the subjects represented” (Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics* 127). These stories are laced with affect, soliciting pity from audience members, which in turn can transform these subjects into pathetic caricatures (Lyon 175). When the women represented no longer appear real, the rhetoric of sentimentality is not serving the represented.

In “Beautiful Dead Bodies: Gender, Migration and Representation in Anti-Trafficking Campaigns,” women’s studies scholar Rutvica Andrijasevic explains how the International Organization for Migration tried to empower women to make smart decisions about their lives by using images of real trafficked women and their personal narrative to warn about potential dangers of accepting jobs abroad. However, the intent of empowerment behind these campaigns is different than the actual effect. The message portrayed is that any form of migration for women will result in forced prostitution and that it is best for women to stay at home. This reinforces traditional roles of femininity, which allocate women to the domestic, private sphere (31). These IOM campaigns construct “an extremely simplistic dualism that sets apart young

and innocent victims from malevolent traffickers who lure them into migrating abroad” (32). This simplistic dualism perpetuated by IOM feeds into the dominant trafficking narrative. The traffickers in these posters are always men, the victims always women. These ads further misrepresent women by portraying them as dolls, puppets, and sometimes just body parts; they reduce women from their experience to a visual, put on display. These bodily displays of victims align with cultural attitudes about passive female victims who are meant to be looked at. Instead of empowering females, these campaigns “re-install the stereotypical rendering of feminine bodies in terms of passive objects of violence” (42). Instead of giving women options, these ads ask women to stay put, to stay at home, and not look for economic betterment and opportunity elsewhere. As Alcoff states, when speaking for or representing others, it is imperative to examine the effect of the representation. In this case, although the author makes it sound like IOM had reasonably good intentions, the stereotypes produced through their visual rhetoric are actually harmful to the group being represented.

While dominant narratives of sex trafficking can be detrimental to those who are represented, they may also be damaging to those who are not represented. The dominant narrative usually tells the story of third world backwardness. In speaking of the United States, Julietta Hua and Holly Nigorizawa describe the

Numerous judicial, legislative and executive documents...that circumscribe sex trafficking as a human rights violation located primarily in ‘other’ parts of the world victimizing ‘other’ women and children...The framing of human rights narratives through the trope of US-led rescue posits the United States as an exceptional space where women’s human rights thrive (411).

Unfortunately, what this does is deny legitimacy to trafficking victims who are U.S. citizens. This also shows the ways in which this dominant narrative serves the agenda of positing the United States as exceptional, as the leader in protecting human rights and fighting the war on trafficking. Hesford also notes how the U.S. and other Western democratic nations “deflect attention from

their own human rights violations by turning other nations into spectacles of violence” (*Spectacular Rhetorics* 7). This can place the “U.S. citizen on the safe ground of moral indignation” (Lyon 182).

When looking at human trafficking representations one must ask about the effect of these representations. What is the effect of representing female bodies or their stories in this way? What is the effect of telling this kind of narrative? One must also ask who is doing the representing and what purpose or agenda do they serve? As scholars have demonstrated, human rights discourse is anything but neutral and this is especially true in the case of sex trafficking. In her article “Slave Hunters, Brothel Busters, and Feminist Interventions,” Media Studies scholar Roxana Galusca demonstrates how

Anti-trafficking discourses and practices are not simply humanitarian and thus outside formal politics and power, as we are usually made to believe; instead, when scrutinized, anti-trafficking discourses appear to always be already imbricated with institutional and noninstitutional forms of power. (Galusca 16)

Many scholars have examined the existence of dominant narratives in trafficking discourse and the psychological and cultural effects these representations have on their subjects; however, these narratives also influence the material reality of their subjects.

Materiality of Storytelling

The dominant and cultural narratives about sex trafficking have a psychological impact on subjects and audience members, reinforce stereotypes, support political and national agendas, and define who constitutes victims and perpetrators. However, another aspect of representation is how these stories have a material impact on victims. The ways in which these narratives affect the material realities of victims and influence public policy has been noted by several scholars (Ott and Aoki 2002; Hua and Nigorizawa 2010; Hua 2011; 2014; Kamler 2013; Peters 2013; Johnston, Friedman, Sobel 2015). Julietta Hua, in her article, “Telling Stories of Trafficking:

The Politics of Legibility” explains how the common stories that circulate are the situations that people recognize as trafficking. The way stories are told instills a certain knowledge on the topic. “How we come to understand some situations and not others as potentially hiding trafficking has everything to do with the cultural narratives that circulate through the media, courts, and legal system, human-rights organizations, and state discourses” (204). Hua and Nigorizawa elaborate that “particular kinds of narratives are privileged in the federal project to identify trafficking victims” (409). Criminologists Carolyn Hoyle, Mary Bosworth, and Michelle Dempsey explain how “a victim’s failure to experience or frame her experience in terms of a typical trafficking narrative may deny her the status of an ‘ideal victim’ and the credibility that attaches to it”(322). There is “currency in the victim label” (Hoyle, Bosworth, and Dempsey 326). Being identified as a trafficking victim has real benefits, including receiving a T-Visa, which leads to legal residency and other recovery assistance (Hua and Nigorizawa 408). Those who are not identified as victims of trafficking face risk of deportation. Hua and Nigorizawa explain the difficulty of obtaining a T-Visa and how “trafficking subjects hoping to naturalize find themselves twisting their lives into a narrative of ‘worthy victims’ while government authorities encourage these victim narratives to ensure the success of the prosecution” (408). In their article “What Happened When You Came to Sweden?” youth specialists Lindholm, Borjesson, and Cederborg highlight the ways in which “law enforcement authorities tend to request that alleged victims report very particular types of narratives to qualify as VoT (victims of trafficking)” (183). Hoyle, Bosworth, and Dempsey argue “that trafficking occurs along a continuum” (326). This can be problematic for the police and others who desire an unambiguous, clearly defined victim (Lindholm, Borjesson, and Cederborg 190).

Because of the ways in which these dominant representations can be harmful, scholars

suggest alternative ways of storytelling, looking at ways to move beyond the dominant narrative. Hesford suggests that we need to avoid “sentimental or colonial narratives of moral salvation and mastery, which rob children of their agency and erase the ambiguity of moral responsibility and political action” (*Spectacular Rhetorics* 186). Also, representation can feel voyeuristic and problematic when it is second hand images of female bodies or reformatted and retold versions of their stories. Arabella Lyon suggests that “Rather than representations of bodies (exteriors), audiences should hear the discourses of and from these women, what we might shorthand as their interiority, their personhood” (184). Lyon’s recommendation indicates the power of first-hand representation, which can be done in several ways, including the personal narrative. My research aims to examine personal narratives of sex trafficking survivors as a possible site for alternative narratives to the dominant narrative of sex trafficking.

Personal Narrative as Counter-Discourse

Rhetoric and Composition scholars have hotly debated the genre of the personal narrative and the role it plays in the composition classroom and in composition scholarship (Robillard 77). While the personal narrative has been criticized as a mode for students, there has been a call for more personal writing in scholarship, especially a personal section that situates the researcher. Composition scholars have questioned the politics of providing personal details in professional venues (Brandt et al 42). There are many composition instructors who argue for personal narrative in the classroom and Amy Robillard claims that narrative can incorporate both the more privileged academic forms of argument and analysis and these different modes of writing can interact as a dialectic (82).

Though the personal narrative is a site of contention in composition scholarship, composition scholars can agree that the personal narrative does not portray one true reality, but is constructed according to the author's perspective (Bloom 2003; Robillard 2003). For example, "the storyteller attributes motives to himself or herself and other characters, selects the events and details to emphasize or subdue, and interprets the context and the events" (Bloom 285). Other scholars interested in narrative also mention this point, stating that narrative "is not simply a matter of stringing facts together, rather the facts are constituted *through* the storytelling. As such narrative can be seen as the social construction of reality" (Lindholm, Borjesson and Cederborg 186). Compositionists also acknowledge the impact of audience involvement in the personal narrative process (Brandt et al 2001; Robillard 2003). The author may shape their narrative according to their conception of audience. Amy Robillard reminds us that "A narrative never works alone" (84). These concepts relate to points made by other scholars doing work in narrative theory. Mary M. Gergen and Kenneth J. Gergen claim that storytelling is a particularly effective form to reach audiences as personal stories can position the listener into a "maximum posture of receptivity" (117). This receptivity can establish a "reciprocal relationship between writer and reader in which each is affected by the other" (Young 67). My work will take these ideas into consideration by examining the contextual factors that may affect representation and observing audience reception to particular survivor narratives.

The Role of Personal Narrative in Human Rights Arenas

Testimonies and other truth-telling discourses have held a powerful place in human rights discourse, as they can give true, personal evidence of abuses. Although Spivak wonders if marginalized voices can be truly understood and heard, many scholars have pointed to the power of self-representation in human rights discourse (Hesford 1999; Schaffer and Smith 2004;

Hesford and Kozol 2005; Lyon and Olson 2011). They believe personal narrative, which is also called testimony and life writing in scholarship, has an incredible potential for change. Survivor narratives can “expose oppressive material conditions...give voice to silent histories...and thus alter history’s narrative” (Hesford, “Reading Rape” 195). They can also “have a particular place in speaking back to power, in creating counter-discourses, which denormalize dominant discourses and offer alternative worldviews” (Lyons and Olson 209). Foucault has noted that “when those usually spoken for and about by others begin to speak for themselves, they produce a ‘counter-discourse’” (Moussa and Scapp 89). Mario Moussa and Ron Scapp argue that the theories of Foucault clear a space for the voiceless to counter prevailing discourses (88). Foucault believed that “repression works *through* language and that the struggle to overturn repression includes speaking out against it” (93). This speaking out is what bell hooks calls “talking back” (90). Narrative and memoir are forums for marginalized peoples to talk back. This talking back can challenge and resist dominant stories, offering new narratives that have the potential to undermine and change popular representations (Young 64). In Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith’s seminal work, *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*, they explain how “life narrative becomes essential to affect recourse, mobilize action, forge communities of interest and enable social change” (3). They do this when they can “trouble established interpretations of rights violations, shift definitions and framings of human rights, and test modes of advocacy” (229). These scholars all assert the ways in which self-representation in human rights discourse can be productive. I would like to see how survivor’s personal narratives can speak to and perhaps change the dominant cultural narratives surrounding sex trafficking.

In “ ‘Telling the Story Her Own Way:’ The Role of Feminist Standpoint Theory in Rhetorical Studies,” Glen McClish and Jacqueline Bacon extend the work of other scholars by asserting that “marginalized voices have revelatory qualities that can effect significant social change,” using standpoint theory to backup this assertion (31). Standpoint theory claims that the standpoint of marginalized groups is preferred to the viewpoint of those in power. This is because oppressed groups experience what Nancy Hartsock coined as a “duality of levels of reality” (28). They know their own perspective, but they also have to understand the perspective of those in control in order to survive. They have a standpoint that both understands the dominant discourse and at the same time they are at the right vantage point in which they can critique it. The authors then use Harriet Jacob’s *Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl* to illustrate their point, calling her work a “potentially corrective force in antebellum rhetoric, recasting arguments about slavery made by others who have not experienced this form of oppression” (42). The experience of the speaker can also help build their ethos and impact audience reception positively as these authors believe that Jacobs is able to “foreground her agency in telling her story her own way” (49). Jacob’s narrative talked back to those representing antebellum slavery; contemporary slave narratives perform a similar function.

Current Research: Examining the Role of Personal Narrative in Sex Trafficking

Scholars have only recently begun to look at personal narratives in the context of human trafficking. Laura T. Murphy has called these personal narratives the new slave narrative, and explains the connections between contemporary personal narratives of human trafficking and antebellum slave narratives. Like McClish and Bacon, she sees the ways in which personal narrative can help foreground the agency of the author. For example, Murphy’s observations have noted how these authors may resist giving detailed descriptions of the violent abuses their

bodies experienced during slavery. Murphy argues that by withholding bodily detail, “the genre of the new slave narrative revises and interrogates our spectacular expectations of a humanitarian sentimental education so often promoted by human rights projects” (“New Slave Narrative” 3). Personal narrative is a genre that can counter, resist, and challenge outside representations.

As noted in this chapter, many scholars have written about the ways in which testimony, life writing or personal narrative can have a positive cultural effect by countering dominant discourse. Many scholars have also highlighted the existing dominant narratives circulating in popular representations of sex trafficking and have critiqued various NGO representations and the ways in which legal documents reinforce these dominant narratives. However, there is a gap in the research when thinking about how these narratives and representations apply to self-representations of survivors. My research will look at personal narratives of sex trafficking survivors to see which narratives and frameworks exist in self-representation in order to discover how these personal narratives can influence future representations of and responses to trafficking.

In this chapter I have highlighted relevant scholarly conversations that ground this study. Julietta Hua says that the work to be done by scholars is “looking beyond stated and documented facts to seeing the processes, assumptions, and frameworks at work in rendering facts” (Hua, *Trafficking Women’s Human Rights* 121). While this chapter has discussed the dominant narratives that are told through representations of sex trafficking, the following chapter will provide an even closer examination of the processes, assumptions and frameworks behind these representations, specifically examining the neoabolitionist and human rights frameworks. Chapter 2 will also provide the methodological approach for this research study, which relies heavily on Kenneth Burke’s rhetorical theories. Chapter 3 highlights three survivor narratives

and explores the relationship between authorial context and purpose as well as the ways publication platform might affect representation and audience reception. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive read of the data collected, noting the ways in which survivors reflect or reject popular representational frameworks of sex trafficking. Chapter 5 suggests how the findings from this study can be used to influence stakeholders in the anti-human trafficking movement.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY: ANALYZING FRAMEWORKS THROUGH BURKE

Language is a powerful tool for influencing reality. To name, define, explain or express an opinion on a topic, one must use language as a way to communicate these thoughts. By naming and defining an idea, event, or phenomenon, an individual, group or organization is providing their own framing of what has happened or what is currently happening. The framing of an event or issue inevitably will include some aspects and exclude others and of those aspects that are included, some will be highlighted and some will be downplayed. Communication scholars Brian Ott and Eric Aoki call this selectivity and partiality (485). The framing of a social concern like human trafficking is crucial in the way citizens understand, interpret, and respond to the issue. Various conflicting and overlapping approaches to the phenomenon of human trafficking exist, and they differ in how they explain the issue and solutions as well as in how they represent perpetrators and victims. Scholars have identified six main approaches:

- human trafficking as a migration problem
- human trafficking as a result of globalization
- **human trafficking as prostitution**
- **human trafficking as a criminal justice issue**
- **human trafficking as a violation of human rights**
- **human trafficking as slavery** [my emphasis] (Lee 2011; Choi-Fitzpatrick 2015.)

Though it is not the most common form of trafficking, sex trafficking is the most represented form of trafficking in the U.S. When looking specifically at anti-sex-trafficking activism, two main, competing frameworks have gained scholarly attention: the neoabolitionist framework and the human rights framework. The neoabolitionist framework combines the prostitution approach and the criminal justice approach. The human rights framework combines

the human rights approach and the slavery approach. The neoabolitionist framework for trafficking first emerged in the mid-1990s and was formed by a coalition of evangelical Christians and second wave feminists. They gained widespread recognition and their efforts influenced government policy, the actions and advocacy of NGOs, and media representations (Hesford 2005; Soderland 2005; Bernstein 2007; 2010; Peters 2013; Choi-Fitzpatrick 2014).

While this alliance may seem unusual and has been called a “coalition of strange bedfellows” by women’s studies professor and sociologist Elizabeth Bernstein, there are historical moments and cultural values that these two groups share (“Militarized Humanitarianism”47). At the beginning of the twentieth century these two groups united to fight white slavery, a phenomenon in which females traveling to find work in big cities were deceived and forced into prostitution by immigrant men (“Sexual Politics” 132). A similar coalition was also formed to fight against pornography during the Reagan administration (“Sexual Politics” 133). Though there is some discrepancy about the name of this framework among scholars, the description of the framework is consistent. Many scholars call this framework the neoabolitionist framework, as it draws upon and extends some of the beliefs and strategies of the nineteenth-century abolitionists. In her article “Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition,” Gretchen Soderland claims that “21st century anti-trafficking movements draw on the rhetoric of abolition to underscore the urgency of their cause” (65). The neoabolitionist movement sees trafficking as a problem mainly of sex trafficking and is focused on the victimization of women. This framework argues that no sex work is voluntary and that all forms of prostitution are oppressive and can fall under the umbrella of trafficking (Bales and Soodalter 2009; Bernstein 2010; Peters 2013). Their solution to the problem often follows a salvation narrative, with law enforcement playing the role of heroic rescuer. These rescues focus

on individual level intervention and the imprisonment of perpetrators (Choi-Fitzpatrick, “To Seek” 121). Elizabeth Bernstein argues that this “carceral loyalty” is the driving force behind the framework and the reason it has gained government support (“Militarized Humanitarianism” 51). A merit of this framework is that the two founding groups of evangelicals and feminists have empathy for the victims and want to immediately end their suffering. They genuinely want to end the problem and see the quick arrest of perpetrators as the fastest and most efficient means of achieving those goals.

Some critics believe that the neoabolitionist framework is a recycling of stories from previous campaigns, such as white slavery and the fight against pornography, using the same tropes of innocence and victimization. These abolitionist feminists and evangelicals are mainly concerned with sexual violence towards women and have shifted away from “engagement with gender politics of the family and toward a focus on gender and sexual violence in the public sphere” (“Militarized Humanitarianism” 66). There is a shift in focus on violence within the home, such as the feminist focus on domestic violence to violence outside of it. Evangelicals, especially those of the younger generation, are moving away from the polarizing issues of abortion and promiscuous women, to less polarizing issues of trafficking and a focus on the sexual deviance of men (“Militarized Humanitarianism” 66). Because this framework wants complete abolition of all forms of prostitution, considering all types of prostitution sex slavery, those who advocate for the rights of sex workers have never been comfortable with the language and agenda of this framework as it places an emphasis on victimization and portrays those in the commercial sex industry as individuals without autonomy (Soderland 72). Increasingly, experts and academics have become wary of this framework and have challenged its motivations and its simplicity. The neoabolitionist solution of raid and rescue has been described as colonial and

criticized for ignoring class and race implications as well as for protecting dominant institutions.

Elizabeth Bernstein sums up this critique in saying that the

Masculinist institutions of big business, the state, and the police are reconfigured as allies and saviors, rather than enemies, of unskilled migrant workers, and the responsibility for slavery is shifted from structural factors and dominant institutions onto individual, deviant men: foreign brown men or even more remarkably, African American men living in the inner city. (“Sexual Politics” 144)

She believes it is important to note that those who are out there fighting sex trafficking are predominantly white, middle-class to upper-middle-class women. The work of these women directly conflicts with another abolition movement, that of the feminist prison-abolition movement, which believes that incarceration is equal to slavery, yet that is precisely the means for justice that the neoabolitionists advocate (“Sexual Politics” 143). The potential problem with “carceral loyalty,” a solution entirely dependent on law enforcement, is that evidence shows that currently campaigns against trafficking have been “more successful at criminalizing marginalized populations” and “enforcing border control” than they have been at providing benefits and empowerment to victims (“Militarized Humanitarianism” 57). For example, in order to receive resources and be seen as a trafficking victim, victims are required to testify against their traffickers (Lee 73). Victims should be able to receive benefits regardless of whether or not they help give evidence to build a case against traffickers. There are many reasons why victims may not want to testify and forcing them to do so is not empowering.

The literature suggests that most academics and third wave feminists are highly critical of the rhetoric and practices of neoabolition. However, its ideology is embedded into existing laws. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 separated forced prostitution as a special case of trafficking, which places an emphasis on the type of work being done. This special category was a legislative victory for the neoabolitionist movement and the law has “created the conditions for those implementing the TVPA to conceptualize trafficking for forced commercial sex as

different, special, and uniquely harmful” (Peters 248). Many NGOs operate from this framework and when most Americans think of human trafficking, they generally think of the issue framed from the neoabolitionist perspective. One example of an organization that approaches the issue from a neoabolitionist perspective is Not For Sale, founded by business professor David Batstone. In his book, *Not For Sale: the Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It*, Batstone highlights individual stories of victims and individual stories of abolitionists. He portrays the abolitionists as lonely brave souls, doing small scale, but important work in their community. In his closing chapter, he writes, “I believe in the power of individuals to save the world...When you tell yourself that there is nothing you can do to arrest the global slave trade, you underestimate your own potential and abandon hope for those trapped in captivity” (255). As seen in this quote, Batstone places the fate and hope of those who are trafficked on outside actors and outside intervention. Another organization that operates from this framework is the organization that was my initial contact with human trafficking, the International Justice Mission. They are widely known for their “rescue and restore model of activism,” where male workers investigate brothels by posing as clients and then with the aid of police officers conduct raids and rescue victims, placing them in rehabilitation homes (“Sexual Politics” 139). Aligning with the goals and solutions advocated for by this framework, Gary Haugen, president of IJM, has said that “trafficking is not a poverty issue, it’s a law enforcement issue” (Soderland 81). This statement shows an emphasis on a more individual approach to trafficking, an approach that is decontextualized from the systems in which both victims and traffickers are participants.

The second notable sex trafficking framework is the human rights framework and it highly contrasts the neoabolitionist framework in its belief that structural inequalities such as poverty are to blame for trafficking and argues that a more complex, comprehensive framework

needs to be adopted for real, lasting change. In the last four years human trafficking scholars across the disciplines of political sociology, political science, women and gender studies, and contemporary slavery studies, such as Allison Brysk, Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick, Maggy Lee, Julietta Hua, and Kevin Bales, have moved the conversation away from simply critiquing the neoabolitionist framework to advocating for the newer human rights framework, which centers on the rights of the victim. Choi-Fitzpatrick sums up this approach as one that recognizes

The complex social relations, cultural conditions and political context that both perpetrators and enslaved persons are embedded in... With the individual survivors' needs and human rights principles at the center of analysis, focus can shift to a broader range of perpetrators (not only criminal networks, but also governments, corporations, and civil society) and solutions (not only rescue, but also community mobilization, unionization and political representation). ("Human Rights Approach" 13)

This framework focuses on the structural causes of trafficking, which looks at the problem more holistically. Everyone is implicated in investigating the societal factors that create an environment that produces exploitation. The human rights framework is more expansive than the neoabolitionist framework, not focusing on just criminal networks as the problem or rescue as the solution, but something larger. The neoabolitionist framework has been critiqued as having too narrow of a focus and the human rights framework tries to build from and correct the weaknesses seen in this more popular conceptualization of trafficking. Besides an emphasis on larger societal structures, the human rights framework also claims to be more focused on survivors, with protecting their rights and empowering them being the primary goal of this framework. Choi-Fitzpatrick believes that "it is not enough to pass laws, patrol borders, and prosecute perpetrators," that the social systems need to be addressed to prevent the re-exploitation of ex-slaves ("Human Rights Approach" 12). He also argues that in order to truly implement a human rights based approach towards human trafficking, the government needs to "prioritize the individual rights of the survivor over a host of other factors, including national

security, immigration regimes, exploitative cultural and gender norms, criminal codes, and economic prerogatives” (“Human Rights Approach” 12). Clearly, this approach centers on survivors’ needs.

While academics are making some headway in circulating the ideas central to the human rights perspective, many activists, especially evangelical activists, still hold tightly to the neoabolitionist framework. At the moment many government officials, law enforcement, press, and American citizens also understand the issue from a neoabolitionist framework (Hua and Nigorizawa 402; Hua, *Trafficking Women’s Human Rights* 60). The one crucial population that seems to be missing in these discussions of frameworks to trafficking is the survivors themselves. Although the human rights framework claims to be survivor centered, there is no evidence provided in these discussions from a survivor’s perspective that the human rights framework is preferable to other frameworks. Academics harshly critique the underlying assumptions of the neoabolitionist framework, but little attention is given to whether survivors also critique these assumptions or whether they ascribe to the ideology of this framework. The noticeable absence of survivor voices in talking about the academic framing of human trafficking made me both uncomfortable and curious. This curiosity led me to formulate the research questions for this study, which are:

- Which representational and conceptual frameworks do survivors of sex trafficking use to exemplify their experiences?
- What role might publication platform play in the way survivors represent themselves?
- What relationship might there be between an author’s context and her choices about representation?

- How can survivor narratives best be used to inform future framing of and response to human trafficking?

These questions are especially salient to rhetoricians, who believe that language matters, that the language used to frame human trafficking has material effects that can impact survivor populations both negatively and positively. Rhetoricians believe that communication has the power to produce social change and answering these questions can help build on this belief. Pursuing these questions is also crucial for activists as survivor perspectives should be at the heart of responses to human trafficking.

Burkean Frame Analysis

In order to enrich this study and ground it firmly in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, I conducted a Burkean frame analysis of survivor narratives, using template analysis to gather and interpret data in relationship to the two main frameworks of sex trafficking as detailed in the human trafficking literature listed above. The theories of rhetoric, particularly Kenneth Burke's theories on terministic screens and the comic and tragic frame, have significant relevance to the contemporary frameworks of human trafficking.

Kenneth Burke was a prolific rhetorical theorist and philosopher of language. Rhetoric and Composition scholars most frequently use his theory of rhetoric as identification as outlined in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, though another popular theory is Burke's theory of terministic screens. In *Language as Symbolic Action*, Burke introduces his theory of terministic screens, explaining that "any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality" (1341). In other words, one must realize that any representation of reality is a selection of some parts of

that reality and a deflection of other parts. Not all of that reality is represented. A terministic screen “directs the attention into some channels rather than others” (1341). In answering my research questions about the author’s context and genre, I will use Burke’s theory of terministic screens as an analytic tool to explain the ways in which the realities of the presented narratives are influenced by the author’s background, purpose, and place of publication. Using the concept of terministic screens will aid the discussion of how these authors select and deflect the truths of their self-representation. Burke’s concepts of the tragic and comic frame provide another useful tool for understanding how survivor narratives portray characters, causes, and events.

Though some of Burke’s theories are more renowned than others, many of the ideas he outlined over his long career as a critic are worthy of scholarly attention. He believed that literature is meant to be instructive for real life, that the themes and symbols could be “equipment for living.” Therefore, literature should not be considered solely as a separate aesthetic category, but also as a sociological category, as it provides strategies for coping with social circumstances. (“Literature as Equipment for Living” 595). For example, Burke saw literature as a useful place to find strategies for “selecting enemies and allies,” or knowing how to deal with “consolation and vengeance” (“Literature as Equipment for Living” 598). He stressed that different art forms would provide different strategies or attitudes toward a topic, as he writes, “Art forms like ‘tragedy’ or ‘comedy’ or ‘satire’ would be treated as *equipments for living*, that size up situations in various ways” (“Literature as Equipment for Living” 598). Because different forms of literature would provide a different lens or different attitude for how to approach a particular social situation, Burke emphasized the need to compare the values presented in each form and only come to an “overall strategy” for the situation after examining and comparing the different forms (“Literature as Equipment for Living” 598). Since “each of

the great poetic forms stresses its own peculiar way of building the mental equipment (meanings, attitudes, character) by which one handles the significant factors of his time,” Burke undertakes an analysis of each poetic form in *Attitudes Towards History* in order to highlight the types of strategies each literary poetic form suggests (*Attitudes* 34).

Attitudes Towards History, written in 1937, is the foundational work in Burke’s repertoire and, according to the late English professor and Burkean scholar William H. Rueckert, “the first true flowering of Burke’s genius as a critic” (112). Before his discussion of the different poetic forms of epic, tragedy, comedy, elegy, satire, burlesque, the grotesque and didactic literature, Burke explains how these different poetic forms can be grouped into two larger categories, which are acceptance frames and rejection frames. These frames are the response to the problem of evil, how one responds to the ills of society. Acceptance frames are not passive, but they first accept the situational reality and then plan how to respond accordingly. Frames of rejection reject the social reality. The epic, tragedy, and comedy are labeled as frames of acceptance whereas the elegy, satire, and the burlesque are positioned as frames of rejection. At the end of his examination of the different poetic forms, Burke is quick to say that “none of these poetic categories can be isolated in its chemical purity. They overlap one another” (*Attitudes* 57). For example, a personal narrative can utilize more than one poetic form by switching between two or more forms or by blurring the boundaries of different forms, creating moments of intersection. The usefulness of understanding the overlaps and tensions between the poetic forms (or frames, as they are more commonly called in scholarship) is in how these frames can be applied to our surrounding and help us formulate effective attitudes, not only towards history, but toward the present.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will be narrowing in on comic and tragic frames. While both are placed in the category of acceptance frames, they are set up as binaries, as the way they accept the social reality differs greatly among the frames. The tragic frame places an emphasis on the role of villains and their crime (*Attitudes* 41). Tragic plays are fatalistic, with a doomed sense of powerlessness felt for the characters on behalf of the audience (42). This form is perhaps only seen as an acceptance frame because there is this idea that tragic endings are the way that they are because there is an acceptance that the plot played out according to fate, according to the will of the gods. Tragedies also implement the trope of the scapegoat, in which a common enemy is criminalized, victimized, humiliated and sacrificed for the purification of the audience members (344).

Comedies in contrast make the shift “from crime to stupidity” and while tragedies depend on villains, comedies require fools (41). Burke writes that

The progress of humane enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*. When you add that people are necessarily mistaken, that *all* people are exposed to situations in which they must act as fools, that *every* insight contains its own special kind of blindness, you complete the comic circle. (41)

According to Burke, picturing people as mistaken rather than villains allows for more effective social change. Burke critiqued other frames as too simplistic or too absolute, but praised the comic frame for its ambivalence and well-roundedness. Burke offers the comic perspective as the example against these other frameworks, as it allows for more complexity (Rueckert 119). It resists dichotomies and absolutes. The comic frame allows for ambiguity in that “villains are not always as they seem, and, neither for that matter are heroes” (Biebel).

It is important to historically contextualize the time in which Burke constructed his theories on frames because it reveals why Burke so strongly preferred the comic frame above the others. Burke lived through the First World War and wrote about comic and tragic frames

around the eve of the Second World War. He lived in a time of absolutes, of heroes and villains. He saw the complete tragedy of Germany's decision to scapegoat and sacrifice the Jews (Rueckert 122). He hoped that people would adopt a comic outlook of the war. Not in viewing the war as humorous, but with the dialogic irony that pervades the comic frame he "hoped to turn the tragic absolute of war into the comic potentiality of alternate perspectives" (Weiser 110). The language of war has also been used in reference to human trafficking. The United Nations even has an association titled, WOHT, which stands for War On Human Trafficking. The absolute viewpoints that can pervade a society at war also have their place in conversations surrounding human trafficking.

Though Burkean frames were formulated over seventy years ago, they are still exigent, and many scholars have taken up Burke's request to take the elements of these dramatic forms and use them as a critical way of looking at human relationships. Brett Biebel looked at how the comic frame applies to the television show *The Office*, Brian T. Kaylor analyzed how Judge Roy Moore was viewed through the epic, comic, and burlesque frames simultaneously, and Brian Ott and Eric Aoki examine the way the media used a tragic frame to describe the murder of Matthew Shepard. Compositionist Elizabeth Weiser analyzed how the comic corrective (another name for the comic frame or comic criticism) could be used to enhance personal narrative in the writing classroom. Kaylor calls for more studies to analyze the existence of multiple frames and to examine the impact several simultaneously existing frames have on one another and the text they frame.

There are significant similarities and overlap of the tragic frame in how it relates to the neoabolitionist framework and the ways in which the human rights framework correlate with the comic frame. Because of the correlations between Burke's theories on literary frames and the

contemporary framing of human trafficking, the concepts highlighted here serve as the theoretical lens through which my data is interpreted. Analyzing survivor narratives and their representations of self, situation, and other in light of Burke's discussion of frames and his theory of terministic screens places an emphasis on the role of language and rhetoric in constructing this phenomenon and the responses to it. Applying Burke's theories to sex trafficking survivor narratives and the existing frameworks of human trafficking can extend scholarship in new directions.

Template Analysis Method: Research Design and Rationale

Although Burke provides a useful interpretative lens for my data, before I examined how features of the narratives function through Burkean frames, I located and categorized the features of the existing human trafficking frameworks in my sample texts. In order to best answer my research questions and to tell a coherent, analytic narrative, I used thematic analysis in the form of the template analysis technique to code the data set of sex-trafficking survivors' personal narratives. Coding is an important and commonly used method in Composition studies as it "organizes data, allowing researchers to abstract patterns by comparing the relative placement and frequency of categories" (Grant-Davie 272). Thematic analysis is a "method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 79). Thematic analysis can be performed in two main ways, "in an inductive or 'bottom up' way or in a theoretical or deductive or 'top down' way" (Braun and Clark 83). Nigel King's qualitative method of template analysis is a technique for performing thematic analysis in this latter "top down way." The crucial part of this technique is "the development of a coding template" (King, "Doing" 426). Template analysis allows researchers to start with a "few defined codes," which

creates their template (King, “Template” 118). The act of creating a template is beneficial in that it “forces the researcher to take a systematic and well-structured approach to handling the data” (King, “Doing” 447,). Not only does template analysis provide a “high degree of structure in the process of analyzing textual data,” but it is also flexible in that it can be easily adapted and used in a wide range of studies (King, “Doing” 426). While template analysis was developed in the discipline of psychology, its approach is commonly used under another name, such as thematic coding. Qualitative research methods expert John Creswell calls this using “preexisting or a priori codes” to guide the work of coding (185). Coding data can range from “ ‘prefigured categories’ to ‘emergent’ categories” (185). Template analysis lies somewhat afield of grounded theory or emergent design, which is common among qualitative researchers; grounded approach themes are allowed to percolate up and emerge from the data. However, my interest is in how commonly used frameworks “fit” survivor accounts and how the level of mediation may change how well a story matches up with a particular framework. Therefore, instead of allowing for themes to bubble up, I looked for features associated with these frameworks. In “Brits Behaving Badly: Template Analysis of Newspaper Content,” Konstantinos Andriotis defined themes for his template analysis “based on the key issues deduced from the literature” (21). In creating the template for this study I concentrated on the features that seemed relevant to research based on the literature on the topic from both the neoabolitionist framework and the human rights framework to sex trafficking. These features were incorporated into prefigured categories that made up my research template, which I then applied to my texts. The danger of this method, of course, is that it may limit the data collection only to those codes. However, both King and Creswell emphasize the need to adjust the template if another significant category appears in the process of data collection, and Creswell encourages “researchers to be open to additional codes

emerging during the analysis” (185). By implementing a template with clear definitions I hope to make my coding system more transparent and therefore more reliable. Although the application of a template takes a more top down approach and may appear like a way of imposing my goals as a researcher over the goals of the survivors, the creation of the template categories did arise from a more bottom up approach of seeing what features seemed particularly relevant after reading a body of literature. I also noted other themes that were repeatedly mentioned by the women during my data collection and wove these themes into my discussion. While these themes were not added to the template, they were folded into a discussion of the survivor’s context and purpose for writing.

Drawing heavily upon several works by Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick (2012, 2014, 2015), as well as Gretchen Soderland (2005), Wendy Hesford (2005), Elizabeth Bernstein (2007, 2010) and Alice Peters (2013)¹, I created a template of the categories that are significant to both the human rights framework and the neoabolitionist framework and defined how a piece of text could be interpreted as one framework, the other framework, or neither framework. The categories included in the research template are how the survivors represent explanations for sex trafficking, solutions for sex trafficking, the identity of the perpetrator, and the identity of

¹ The definitions in this template are comprised heavily of works authored by Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick, including “To Seek and Save the Lost: Human Trafficking and Salvation Schemas among American Evangelicals,” “From Rescue to Representation: A Human Rights Approach to the Contemporary Anti-Slavery Movement” “Rethinking Trafficking: Contemporary Slavery,” and “Introduction: Rethinking Trafficking,” a chapter coauthored with Allison Brysk. Other important articles that informed the template include “Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns” and “The Sexual Politics of the ‘New Abolitionism’” by Elizabeth Bernstein, “‘Things that Involve Sex are Just Different’: US Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy on the Books, in Their Minds, and in Action” by Alicia W. Peters, and “Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition” by Gretchen Soderlund.

victims. By examining the existing literature, I identified the language and phrases each framework uses to explain and describe these four template categories.

Table 1 The Template: Visualizing the Two Frameworks and Their Definitions

	Neoabolitionist Approach	Human Rights Approach
Explanation of Phenomenon of Trafficking	<p>The explanation is at the individual level.</p> <p>There are moral/religious qualities to the explanation, mentions evil or needing to save those in captivity.</p> <p>All forms of prostitution are violence towards women. Any sex work is exploitative and considered trafficking.</p>	<p>The explanation is at the structural level.</p> <p>There are complicated social and cultural systems that both perpetrators and enslaved are participants in. These systems are an important part of the explanation of the issue.</p> <p>The phenomenon is not a result of character traits of perpetrators or victims but about larger systemic inequalities and failures.</p>
Explanation of Solutions	<p>Intervention is performed at the individual level.</p> <p>Solutions can function under a “salvation schema” where there is a call to action to rescue and save individual, “lost” victims.</p> <p>The best solutions place an emphasis on the role of law enforcement. Police should conduct raids, rescue victims, and imprison the “bad guys.”</p> <p>There is a focus on the need for immediate action or rescue.</p> <p>There is a focus on the agency of those outside of the situation and how they can intervene.</p> <p>People can become an abolitionist and be a part of the solution simply by donating money.</p>	<p>Collaboration and transnational effort are needed for a solution.</p> <p>The solution is rights-based. Protection of human rights should be extended to everyone despite their citizenship, the type of labor they engaged in, or their legal status. The government should value the individual rights of survivors above all else.</p> <p>Empowerment is more effective than rescue. Empowerment of enslaved persons needs to happen in a holistic way that addresses the economic, political, and social structures that enable enslavement in the first place.</p> <p>The solution is not immediate. Real, lasting social change takes time.</p>
Identity of the Perpetrator	<p>Perpetrators are thugs who use coercive, interpersonal, physical force. They are evil, corrupt individuals.</p>	<p>Traffickers are not necessarily evil criminals who can be thwarted by law enforcement. They are players in corrupt systems and that is why these systems need to be addressed.</p> <p>The range of perpetrators is larger than that of the individual trafficker or of criminal networks. Governments, businesses, law and culture are implicated as well.</p>
Identity of the Victim	<p>Victims are individuals who need rescuing from corruption.</p> <p>Victims lack autonomy and need the protection of intervening actors, many of whom are male.</p> <p>They are usually described as innocent, helpless, disempowered, naïve, deceived females. From beginning to end their story is one of victimization.</p>	<p>The survivor can self-identify as they choose, which can mean that they identify as something other than a human trafficking victim.</p> <p>The role/identity of the victim is more complex than the innocent, deceived female victim narrative. They may knowingly choose the job, but not the exploitative working conditions.</p>

Selection of Data

Unfortunately, human trafficking affects a sizeable portion of the world's population. Although exact numbers are difficult to come by, it is estimated that there are 27 million slaves in the world today (Bales and Soodalter 3). These slaves experience a wide range of exploitation including domestic servitude, bonded labor, forced labor, child soldiers, and sex trafficking. In order to obtain a manageable and rich sample set, I put clear parameters around the selection of my data.

Sex Trafficking as a Subset of Human Trafficking

The survivor narratives selected for this study are those written by females who have specifically experienced sexual exploitation. I realize that males also experience sexual exploitation and I also recognize that there are many other types of trafficking and slavery that are not sexual but still exploitative and harmful for victims. Some scholars would critique my focus, as they believe that on the whole, those who represent human trafficking represent it largely as a narrative of female sexual exploitation. While I agree that it is important to recognize that exploitation and slavery are multifaceted, I also believe that sexual exploitation is significant to focus on. It is a highly gendered form of exploitation, as "98 percent of forced sex workers are women" (Murphy, "Introduction" 5). It is also very degrading and shameful for those experiencing sexual slavery, as there is a moral stigma attached and survivors can be rejected from their own communities because of the sexual nature of the exploitation. There is not the same stigma attached to agricultural or factory exploitation, for example, and sex trafficking is more dangerous than other forms of trafficking because of the high likelihood of catching STIs like AIDS. In their book, *Half the Sky*, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn write:

Being sold to a brothel was always a hideous fate, but not usually a death sentence. Now it often is... These factors explain our emphasis on sex slaves as opposed to other kinds of forced labor. Anybody who has spent time in Indian brothels and also, say, at Indian brick kilns knows that it is better to be enslaved working a kiln. Kiln workers most likely live together with their families, and their work does not expose them to the risk of AIDS, so there's always hope of escape down the road. (12)

Sex trafficking is also the most highly represented form of trafficking and scholars argue the most misrepresented. Journalists and NGOs have shared countless stories, filtering these women's voices second hand. Because the exploitation is so stigmatized and shameful, the effects of speaking out and voicing experiences of sexual slavery versus labor slavery appear to be different, with there being arguably worse consequences for those who have experienced the former. Survivor voices need to be heard, represented, and analyzed from primary sources.

To define sex trafficking, I went by the definition laid out in the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act, created in 2000, which states that "Anyone under age eighteen who is induced to perform a commercial sex act is considered a victim of sex trafficking, with or without force, fraud, or coercion" (H. Smith 15). The women from my sample set unanimously agree with this definition and nine of the ten women were commercially sexually exploited before the age of eighteen. Shamere, who is the exception to this age limit, fits the trafficking definition of "force, fraud, and coercion" as she was clearly forced and deceived into trafficking.

Native English Speakers and Developed Nations focus

I am limiting my sources to native speakers of English. In this way I know that the way survivors are framing their stories is not lost in translation. I am also only looking at representative women who have experienced sexual exploitation in developed countries. The rationale for examining narratives that take place in developed nations is because sexual slavery is still largely understood as happening to exotic women in third world countries. There is a colonial and imperial nature to this understanding that ignores and undermines the stories of

exploitation in countries like the United States. It is precisely because these stories lie outside of the dominant narrative around sex trafficking that they should be studied. Last spring I told one of the graduate students in my program that I really enjoyed the communication course I was taking that centered on the issue of human trafficking. She asked, “So what do you do in that class? Just talk about all the problems in other countries?” I was surprised that this was the response of someone I consider to be highly educated. Book titles such as *The Slave Across the Street* or *The Slave Next Door* have tried to emphasize the proximity and reach of the issue, but affluent countries like the United States and England are not as commonly associated with sex trafficking as developing nations like Thailand, Cambodia, and India. Because of misconceptions like this, I believe it is particularly meaningful to highlight voices of those who are dismissed because they do not fit the common narrative. The location in which they experienced the exploitation should not discredit the experience. The survivors in my sample set are American, British, and Irish, and victims of domestic sex trafficking, which means they were not trafficked internationally, but in their own communities. According to Rachel L., one of the survivors from my sample set, “the majority of sexual exploitation occurs within a country’s own borders and involves native children and women with native men” (Lloyd 10).

Varied Publication Venues

Although I narrowed my data set by gender of the survivor, type of trafficking, location of trafficking, and the native language of the survivor, I tried to diversify my data set by looking at various types of publications and examining texts of varying lengths. It is important to look at stories published in different venues because place of publishing alters self-representation. There is less mediation on self-published spaces of blogs versus books published by more popular presses such as Penguin, which see multiple drafts and revisions and have multiple eyes

reading, editing, and writing the story. Therefore, I included texts in my sample set from mediated publishing spaces and unmediated publishing spaces. Though all the texts can be considered primary accounts from the authors, some of the texts are published in popular and academic press. The publication process for these presses are mediated, meaning there are editors who help shape what the final piece looks like. Stories in these mediated spaces are not solely the unadulterated voice of the author and this was taken into account. Unmediated spaces are publishing venues in which the author receives little to no mediation; they alone are both the author and editor. Looking at samples across the spectrum allowed for a broader range of voices and a more comprehensive idea of what survivor narratives look like and how they are framed. The varied sample set also served to address my concern with the relationship between representation and publication platform.

During the research process I searched for publications beyond traditional print books. Zines are an alternative form of self-publication, and therefore could be considered for the unmediated text category, but there was not a rich sample set to draw from to include these in this study. Because I wanted to draw from a larger sample set and because many of the blogs are more recently created, I focused my study of unmediated texts on blogs. I identified a total of nine blogs written by survivors of sex trafficking, and three will be highlighted in this study. The three blogs were selected because of the currency of the posts and the frequency of the posting.

The corpus of works that qualified under the mediated category is relatively small. The majority of books written on human trafficking are written by religious leaders, NGO founders, academics, and journalists. In the mediated category I differentiated between popular and academic press. In my research I found a total of six book-length works that fit the criteria of

this study. Three will be analyzed through template analysis and were chosen based upon their publisher being an academic and/or popular press and for the authors being popular survivor advocates. In a study looking at survivor framing of the issue, it seemed imperative to include more popular and well-known voices as well as those who have not received media attention. Finally, besides blogs and book-length narratives, I include two edited academic collections.

Sample Selection

Mediated Category Popular Press

Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls are Not For Sale by Rachel Lloyd and published by Harper Collins

Runaway Girl: Escaping Life on the Streets by Carissa Phelps with Larkin Warren and published by Penguin

Mediated Category Academic Press

Walking Prey: How America's Youth Are Vulnerable to Sex Slavery by Holly Austin Smith and published by Palgrave MacMillan

One personal narrative entry from *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives* edited by Laura T. Murphy and published by Columbia University Press

Three personal narrative entries from *To Plead Our Own Cause: Personal Stories by Today's Slaves* edited by Kevin Bales and Zoe Trodd and published by Cornell University Press

Unmediated Category Blogs

Beating Trauma by Elisabeth Corey

Exited Woman's Exploration by Rebecca Mott

The Prostitution Experience by Rachel Moran

Coding and Analysis Procedures

Collection of data happened through applying the template to each text and coding for template categories. In my collection of research I did not add additional codes to my template, though I did note other themes including the importance of education for the women and the presence of God. While these codes do not appear in the comprehensive data analysis of Chapter 4, they are mentioned in Chapter 3. Once the texts were coded, I categorized the data by author and their specific text in what Creswell calls “within-case analysis” (101). This within-case analysis allowed me to understand more about each individual survivor. Next, I conducted a “cross-case analysis,” comparing the different texts to one another, looking at how the coded categories related to each other across the authors. This cross-case analysis revealed the broader trends throughout the entire sample set. In order to help differentiate survivor voices from scholarly voices in my discussion, I use the first names of survivors and the full names or last names of scholars. The exception for this is for the two survivors who have the same first name. In this case I use the first name and last initial. I use the published names of the survivors, which, for all of the women in this sample set, are their real names.

It feels important to note the difference between the words survivor and victim. These women will refer to themselves as a survivor and a victim, sometimes interchangeably, but usually with a notable difference. When they use the word survivor, they are referring to themselves in the present, as they have survived and escaped their exploitation. When using the word victim, they are usually describing past abuse. They see their victim identity as an identity, but one that applies only to the past. Throughout this thesis I try to remain cognizant of this difference and as I refer to the women in the present tense I call them survivors.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research study. The first is that I am limiting my work to published texts. Without interviewing the authors of these published texts, there is the possibility that I could misinterpret the themes I recognize in their stories. As Keith Grant-Davie points out in “Coding Data: Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Interpretation” “coding is interpretive, and no interpretation can be considered absolutely correct or valid” (281). By implementing a template with clear definitions I hope to make my coding system more transparent and therefore more reliable. While I am looking at a substantial, representative slice of the existing print-based narratives of survivors of sex trafficking who are native speakers of English, each parameter that I put around my sample selection can also serve as a limitation. Limiting the geography and native language of the speakers does exclude a large portion of voices on this topic. Though I do not analyze stories of survivors in third world countries, this is an avenue for future research. I also am limiting my study to alphabetic text-based narratives. While videos and other visual representations of survivors’ experiences are worthy of scholarly attention, they are beyond the scope and focus of this study and should be pursued by visual rhetoric scholars in the future.² Finally, these texts, including the blogs, are publicly accessible. I did not research blogs that were private and password protected. The reasoning for this is that I recognize the sensitive nature of the topic and believe that these blogs are private for a reason. I did not want to intrude on these private spaces, especially as an outside researcher who had no previous connection or

² For scholarly discussions of visual representations of sex trafficking victims, see Wendy Hesford’s chapter titled “Global Sex work, Victim Identities, and Cybersexualities” in her book *Spectacular Rhetorics*.

relationship with the writer. I do recognize that by making this choice, I am studying sex trafficking survivors who had the desire to go public with their narrative.

Significance for Future Study

This research can help to enlighten scholars and activists about the perspective of those who have the knowledge of lived experience and be incorporated into various second-hand representations. It can help those who do not have direct experience, but are deeply involved in combating the issue in order to have a deeper understanding of the people they claim to help.

This research is especially salient to those who assert that they work from a victim-centered approach. It is also relevant to the field of Rhetoric and Composition, which in light of its public and transnational turn, is increasingly engaging with critical social issues beyond the composition classroom.

CHAPTER 3: THE REALITIES THAT INFLUENCE REPRESENTATION

At least three actors contribute to personal writing—the one who tells the story, the person or institution that elicits the account, and the reader or consumer of it (Brandt et al 58)

There is no question about whose truth gets told in creative nonfiction—it has to be the author's with all other truths filtered through authorial rendering (Bloom 286).

In explaining his theory of terministic screens, Kenneth Burke states that any given terminology is a *reflection, selection, and deflection* of reality (*Language as Symbolic Action* 1341). Any presentation of reality is shaped by the set of terms one is operating from. This set of terms selects some aspects of reality and deflects others, since all of reality can never be represented in full. It also means that perceptions of reality and what is important to highlight and present to others will shift when the given terminology shifts. Therefore, perceptions of reality can vary from person to person. Burke's extended and useful analogy of terministic screens is as follows:

When I speak of 'terministic screens,' I have particularly in mind some photographs I once saw. They were *different* photographs of the *same* objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here something so 'factual' as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded. (1341)

Terministic screens are the screens each of us has that are created in accordance to our context and experience. Our observations about the world are filtered through our terministic screens, which depend upon the beliefs and ideologies we subscribe to. These screens shape our view of reality; as Burke writes, "much that we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms" (1341). Burke argues that using terministic screens is inevitable, as it is impossible to function in the world without terms, and whatever set of terms we use a matching screen will also be used to select and deflect things

from our attention. All terminologies force us to make choices about what is emphasized and what is not (1344). And it is a person's "peculiar combinations of insights associated with his peculiar combination of experiences" that determines their terministic screen (1345).

However, terministic screens can be applied beyond the idea of filters as they do more than color our worldview. They act as a framing device, putting perimeters around ideas, which makes it almost impossible to see the world in certain ways. The notion of terministic screens is linked to Burke's discussion of trained incapacity, in which "one's very abilities can function as blindnesses" (Burke, *Permanence and Change* 7). Since terministic screens "constrain our observational possibilities," "we see new experiences in the terms provided by our past training. If conditions have radically changed since our terministic screen was developed, our training becomes an incapacity;" in this way, our terministic screen "disables us from seeing new alternatives for dealing with situations" (Peterson and Peterson 76-77). These ways of seeing do not only affect thoughts, but actions and behaviors. This may seem discouraging, as terministic screens have been described by scholars as constraining or limiting. However, they can be changed by changing the language or terms that influence that frame. In order to enact material change, one must begin with linguistic change. One has to change the set of terms they are working from, the words and symbolic systems that provide interpretative frameworks before they can start to change their actions.

In answering my research questions of *What is the relationship between an author's context and her choices about representation? And, how does the publication platform change the way survivors represent themselves?* I use Burke's concept of terministic screens to analyze the author's context, the ways in which publication platform selects and deflects reality, how these screens shape the author's purpose and how terministic screens relate to audience

reception. In the case of these survivor narratives, the stories must be considered in light of the genre of publication and the context of the author. For those, like myself, who are interested to see which human trafficking frameworks are represented in these narratives, it is important to consider how context affects the way these narratives are written. Laura T. Murphy, the editor of *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives*, writes in the introduction of this edited collection that “Each narrative individually has its own limitations, impulses, and politics associated with it” (Murphy 7). In referencing Sidonie Smith and Kay Schaffer’s arguments in their work *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition* Murphy asks readers to “question what power relations were involved in the production of the narratives, what political or cultural circumstances might have been involved, what audiences were intended to hear the stories, and what expectations the narrators had for the stories they tell” (Murphy 8). Although the current study does not draw upon interview data, it does explore the conventions of publication platforms that enable certain rhetorical possibilities. I argue that the author’s context and publication affect representation, in order to present a more complicated and nuanced understanding of self-representation. This understanding makes visible the rhetorical boundaries created by context and publication platform and how these influence the purpose and audience of the text. In this chapter I will highlight a few voices from the sample set, giving portraits of three survivors whose narratives appear in different genres of publication. In chapter four, I give a more comprehensive analysis of the stories told by the ten women in this sample and analyze their words in relation to the neoabolitionist and human rights frameworks. Burke’s notion of terministic screens is also useful when thinking of these frameworks, as each framework relies on a set of terms that frames their understanding of the issue.

The survivors in these narratives come from a variety of contexts and publish their stories in three different venues. These women are of different nationalities, races, and socioeconomic classes. Six of the women are white, one is black, one is half Hispanic, and two of the women's racial identities are unknown. They come from a mix of working class and middle class backgrounds, and have different relationships with their traffickers. Two of the women were trafficked by their family. Several of the women were trafficked by their boyfriend, and others chose to make money selling sex as a means of survival, though they did not understand what those conditions would entail. Some women had the opportunity to publish a book-length memoir in a popular press, an opportunity that also makes their identity very public. Other women agreed to have a shorter version of their story appear as part of an edited collection. Three of the women chose to share their experiences online through the medium of a blog. To help guide this discussion, the following table illustrates the different women's identities and the work they produced.

Table 2 Survivors in the Sample Set

Name	Nationality	Age When Trafficked	Name of Publication	Type of Publication
Carissa	U.S. American	12	<i>Runaway Girl: Escaping Life on the Streets</i>	Full length book
Christine	U.S. American	birth	Excerpt in <i>To Plead Our Own Cause</i>	Edited Collection
Elisabeth	U.S. American	Before age 9	<i>Beating Trauma</i>	Blog
Holly	U.S. American	14	<i>Walking Prey: How America's Youth Are Vulnerable to Sex Slavery</i>	Full length book
Jill	U.S. American	14	Excerpt in <i>To Plead Our Own Cause</i>	Edited Collection
Rachel L.	British	17	<i>Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale: A Memoir</i>	Full length book
Rachel M.	Irish	15	<i>The Prostitution Experience</i>	Blog
Rebecca	British	14	<i>Exited Woman's Exploration</i>	Blog
Shamere	Jamaican (Trafficked in the states)	Unclear, trying to save money to go back to school	Excerpt from <i>Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives</i>	Edited Collection
Tina	U.S. American	14	Excerpt from <i>To Plead Our Own Cause</i>	Edited Collection

In order to achieve a thorough analysis of author context and place of publication, I highlight three of the women from this sample set in this chapter. I chose to highlight Carissa, Shamere, and Elisabeth because their individual contexts vary considerably, and they each publish their story through a different platform. To discuss the rhetorical possibilities of publication platform, I need to compare and contrast the differences between a full-length

memoir, a short story in an edited collection, and a blog. While highlighting three women does narrow the sample set considerably, these three women represent a mix of race, socioeconomic class, the age they were trafficked, and different relationships with their trafficker, which provides for a range of authorial context within these three narratives.

Carissa

Survivor Context

Carissa is the coauthor of *Runaway Girl: Escaping Life on the Streets*. This is a full-length memoir, telling the story of her childhood, her exploitation and what happened to her after being trafficked. Her context as an author includes a difficult childhood, growing up in a poor family with eleven children. Her stepfather was angry and at times, physically abusive, while her mother was emotionally distant and overwhelmed by mothering so many children. Part one of the memoir is titled “Belonging to Somebody” and the epigraph of the first chapter reads, “But for many, love is their primary unmet need.” She demonstrates that her unstable familial context led her to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Carissa ran away from home, multiple times, her own mother sent her to juvenile detention, she ran away from group homes, found herself on the street and then under the control of a pimp. This all happened by the time she was twelve. She escaped her pimp Icey when he was arrested and she was sent to juvie, again. At a rehabilitation center, Carissa met several influential mentors. She continued to have invaluable mentors through each step of her recovery process, as she graduated from high school, college, and then a joint JD/MBA program. Currently, she is the CEO of Runaway Girl, an organization that aids former runaways and survivors of trafficking in finding resources and employment opportunities.

Carissa's context of growing up working class, attending church, and then pursuing education shape the way she narrates her story. These experiences serve as her terministic screen, as her personal experience shapes how she emphasizes certain parts of her story. Poverty, religion, and the value of education are themes that run throughout the narrative. Her desire to belong to somebody is revealed again and again through her highly detailed portrayals of individual mentors who believed in her and pushed her to excel in school. The first published version of this memoir had the tagline: *Escaping Life on the Streets One Helping Hand at a Time*. She explains the power of individual intervention, which is a solution advocated in the neoabolitionist framework. What may seem surprising is that only a small portion of the memoir devotes itself to explaining her sexual exploitation. It is only discussed in detail in one of the thirteen chapters of this book. There is much more devoted to showing the recursive process of recovery and overcoming her trauma through education. In describing terministic screens, Rhetoric and Composition scholar Lisa Ede notes, "That which allows us to see and understand one thing simultaneously distorts, marginalizes, or disappears another" (172). By emphasizing education other aspects of Carissa's reality is marginalized. For example, near the end of the memoir she writes, "Even at thirty, with degrees and accomplishments and honors. I was not okay. I burned through friendships, drank myself silly, and dated recklessly" (Phelps 284). These events are not dramatized and it would be easy to skip over this three-sentence admission about the failures in her personal life she experienced even as she was in school. This admission is almost difficult to believe because it falls outside of what is focused on in this section of the book.

According to Laura T. Murphy, the fact that Carissa does not dwell on or expand her description of the time she was trafficked is a common generic convention of slave narratives:

“though it may seem counterintuitive, the exploration of the actual *work* performed as a slave is often kept short, perhaps because of the difficulty narrators have in expressing and reliving the pain of that time in their lives” (Murphy, “Introduction” 11). In her article, “The New Slave Narrative and the Illegibility of Modern Slavery,” Murphy also analyzes the memoir of the survivor I refer to as Rachel L., explaining how slave narratives resist giving in-depth sexual or violent detail, as this could feel exposing or exploitative. When these narrators have experienced such loss of control, they write in a way that gives them power over the details. In speaking of Rachel L., Murphy writes, “Lloyd repeatedly shifts mid-scene like this throughout the narrative—just as events become violent or physical, she maintains control over the way her own pain is depicted and creates a distance from the spectacle of her own suffering” (14). Murphy reminds her readers of the “voyeuristic impulses of human rights discourse,” something Wendy Hesford refers to as “spectacular rhetorics,” and Murphy argues that by denying the explicit details of the abuse, the narrators reinstruct readers on what to expect from reading about the suffering of slaves (17). While Carissa does give some horrifying details, she does not make them the focus of her memoir, avoiding the commonly used rhetorical device of sentimentality.

Carissa’s narrative not only resembles conventions of a traditional slave narrative, but also resembles a progress narrative. The last part of the memoir is titled True Self, and it is here where she describes her experiences earning a law degree and an MBA and how those degrees led her towards her dreams. In promoting Carissa’s book, NPR gives her life story the tagline “From Juvie to J.D.” She went through hell, but was able to come out on top. This tagline resembles the title of a memoir by another sexually exploited woman, Elaine Richardson. Elaine is currently a Rhetoric and Composition scholar and her book is titled PHD to Ph. D: How Education Saved My Life. Her story resembles Carissa’s in many ways: she grew up poor,

points to the role of religion, and describes education as her saving grace. For Elaine, she says, “I focused on my academic life. I hoped that my achievements in this new world would erase the pain of my old world” (Richardson 244). She also says that “Getting my degree was the only way I could tell the world to kiss where the sun don’t shine” (Richardson 216). For her, education was about overcoming, autonomy, and power. The last chapter of her book is titled The Ph. D. While some could argue that this is a chronological narrative, I believe that ending the book here, at obtaining the Ph.D. sets education up as a salvation mechanism, as part of the solution. Scholar Wendy Hesford calls this the “education-as-rescue” narrative, which is also a common trope for narratives discussing women’s human rights (Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics* 159).

However, neither woman ends on education. They shift from the merits of education to the merits of spirituality. Carissa ends the last chapter of her book on a discussion of how she finally learned to forgive her mother for her neglect. In the epilogue she inserts a Bible verse, Romans 8:28, which states, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” and ends with a thankful tribute to one of her mentors who taught her “that only good comes to those who dare to love perfectly,” which could be interpreted as a reference to 1John 4:8 (Phelps 291-292). Elaine also shifts her narrative to the spiritual realm. On the last page of her book, she says,

I am still healing after all these years. I am learning to love and accept myself and to keep growing. I am figuring out how to put all of the pieces of me together and use them in my teaching, research, community work and in my music. I use my life to mentor, mother, and sister others. God saved me for this. We can’t give up. We have to keep fighting for our voices to be heard, to save ourselves and our children, from miseducation, and spiritual death. (Richardson 251)

Clearly the authors’ terministic screens impact how their experience is filtered and how their story is represented. Themes are emphasized according to the author’s values and entire scenes

are dramatized and placed intentionally within these narratives to highlight certain messages and values of the author. Laura T. Murphy advances her argument that these modern-day slave narratives are in many ways a reemergence of the genre of the slave narrative tradition by explaining that “a common foundational concern of the new slave narratives” is “the liberatory potential of literacy, education and religion, all denied the enslaved while in captivity” (“New Slave Narrative” 4). As I coded my data, the themes of religion and education were so prominent, that it felt unethical to not mention them in my discussion of the data. Murphy helps connect the dots as to why these might be prominent themes. Slavery denies people the freedom to attend school or church, to participate in activities that help support their mind, body, and soul. Being deprived of the option to attend school or church makes the freedom to participate in these communities all the more fulfilling.

Purpose for Publication

This spiritual undertone and context of the author is also seen as the purpose Carissa gives for writing her book. In this way, her terministic screen as an author directly impacts her purpose for writing. Her spiritual terministic screen motivated her action to write. In her acknowledgement section she says, “This is not a book, but a calling. It is my hope that in answering this calling, God will find a way to reach runaway children at any moment wherever they are on their journey” (Phelps 294). She then speaks directly to all the other “Runaway Girls” and tells them:

You each have the potential to change someone else’s world! When we make our peace, close chapters, forgive, let go, and find our paths, we light the way for others. It doesn’t take much to make a difference for someone else...Each one of you, on your own separate journeys, connects ideas, connects communities, and connects deeply with the spiritual side of life. (Phelps 294)

Carissa sees writing this book as a calling from God, which may also explain the explicit religious references near the end of the book. In this excerpt from her acknowledgments page

she claims that the purpose in writing this book is to help other runaway children, to help encourage them that there is hope and that they can make a change. She aims the memoir towards girls like her. This might also be a reason why she does not dwell too much on the trafficking and exploitation. Girls like her would understand and would not need all the details, what they would need to hear is how she escaped. Her purpose in specifically reaching her intended audience of girls like her shapes how her story is represented. Parallels can be seen in the acknowledgements page of the other memoir published by a popular press in this sample set. The very last sentence of the acknowledgement page of *Girls Like Us* by Rachel L. is “This is for you.” The author is referencing the other women whom she has worked with and served who have been sexually exploited. Rachel L.’s book is dedicated to “all the girls like us.” In an interview with The Rumpus, Rachel L. mentions a conversation with her editor,

Yeah, there was a point where I was writing and my editor said, ‘You have to remember, you’re not writing for your girls [at GEMS.] You’re writing for a general audience.’ And I said, ‘That’s the thing: I’m writing for an audience predominantly of women one in three of who will have experienced sexual abuse or domestic violence. And if they haven’t, they know someone who has. So I actually think this is going to translate in a way that maybe you don’t think it will right now.’ (Greicius)

She decided to make her story more specific, hoping that her visualized audience could still identify with the story. Rachel L.’s experiences and beliefs helped to frame her narrative in a specific way that she believed would be impactful for her audience. This one quote is illustrative of the representational tensions that may happen in the publishing process, the ways in which the editor’s hopes for the project may differ from the author’s and how the finished product is not entirely the result of the author’s creation, but rather a negotiated result of collaboration. Carissa’s work is coauthored, and one could also reasonably conclude the negotiated result of collaboration.

Publication Platform

While the concept of terministic screens has been applied to understand an author's context and the ways in which each individual filters, interprets, and records reality through these screens, I also argue that publication platforms can serve as a terministic screen in the way certain genres select and deflect aspects of reality. By choosing to publish in a particular genre or through a particular publication press, whether it is popular or academic, the author, as Burke says, "must implicitly embody choices" about where attention will be drawn, what will be privileged, what is told and what may be silenced (*Language as Symbolic Action* 1344). The genre of Carissa's narrative is a book-length memoir and its publication venue is in Viking Penguin, a member of Penguin Group. Even though it is a narrative by a survivor, other people's perspectives are also present through the collaborative process of publication in a popular press. Carissa mentions two editors and a writing partner on her acknowledgements page. This writing partner is also mentioned on the front cover. On the back cover, Penguin categorizes this as "A Penguin Book Memoir." There are certain conventions of publishing within this genre that may reveal how or why the writing appears as it does. For one thing, it is chronological, with a lot of space to explore her childhood and her time after her exploitation. The amount of space Carissa had to develop her story allows her to highlight different parts. She is able to examine her childhood and not only say that she escaped life on the streets but also explain how and why. By publishing under the category of memoir, Carissa gives the details of her life from her childhood to the present. By choosing to publish in this genre, Carissa is able to explain the vulnerabilities she faced that led to her trafficking and all the steps she took over many years towards recovery. In her chapter, "Belated Narrating: 'Grandmothers' Telling Stories of Forced Sexual Servitude during World War II," Sidonie Smith highlights the ways in which "the venue of extended life

narrative provides the opportunity for Henson to write beyond the script of former sex prisoner...life begins before her abduction and continues after her survival of the horrors of the war” (S. Smith 136). The genre of the memoir allows the author to write about their life before, during, and after slavery.

Carissa’s narrative arc could be labeled a success or redemption narrative. The story starts with a striking image of her stepfather’s anger and physical abuse. The story ends with a highly educated protagonist who has learned the meaning of forgiveness and love. These success/redemption narratives are common for a book-length memoir and Carissa may have been encouraged to shape her story in this way by her collaborators. For example, in bold print on the back cover it reads, “An astonishing story of triumph and a fierce determination to give back.” According to Schaffer and Smith, this progress narrative speaks to American values (26). One must wonder what is lost in shaping the story this way, what is distorted, and what disappears? While Carissa says she wrote this book to reach runaway children, it seems like, because of her publisher, the actual audience is a much more general audience. Her heavy emphasis of the role of mentors in her life, appears to ask her audience to recognize runaway kids like her, and because of her success, she shows that investing in kids like this can make a difference.

Audience Reception

The terministic screens of the author filter and affect the purpose of their writing. In many cases, the purpose may be persuasion through audience identification; however, the terministic screens of the audience members can impact reception both positively and negatively. Because an individual’s experience frames their own worldview, there is the potential for the audience to misinterpret or misunderstand an author’s purpose. They may not be able to see the world from a similar perspective. The author’s understanding and experience may lie beyond the

scope of an audience member's ideological framework, making it almost impossible to identify with the author. According to Amazon and Good Reads reviews, Carissa's book was well received. Kirkus reviews calls it "A genuinely important book that casts the problem of sex trafficking in America into stunning, heartbreaking relief." On Good Reads the title had 374 ratings and the book's average rating is a 3.85. 76% of raters rated it 3 stars or higher. On Amazon, out of 66 customer reviews, 64 gave the book 4 stars or higher. Unfortunately, the lower star reviews had to do more with the readers not liking the difficult subject matter of the book or judging the author's life choices. For example, on Goodreads, Donna gives the book one star and says, "Had trouble believing that the book is a real life experience." This is an example of how an audience member's terministic screen could serve as an incapacity, as an obstacle in being able to understand the author's reality. On Amazon, the lowest review believed what was said, which, for her, was precisely the problem. Caite says,

This book was so hard for me to read. Knowing that it was a memoir and that someone lives this way was too much for me. I like happy books and this was about feeling hopeless and helpless. With the family unit being destroyed in this country, I just could not feel comfortable reading this. Very sad.

According to Schaffer and Smith, there is always the possibility of negative reception.

Storytellers take risks. They hope for an audience willing to acknowledge the truthfulness of the story and to accept an ethical responsibility to both story and teller. There is always the possibility, however, that their stories will not find audiences willing to listen or that audiences will ignore or interpret their stories unsympathetically (Schaffer and Smith 6).

While the author's context must be considered when thinking about a narrative and representation, an audience's context must be considered when thinking about reception. Because of their own terministic screens these two audience members had difficulty identifying with Carissa's purpose or accepting her version of reality; however the number of positive reviews show that overall, audience reception was positive for this memoir.

By analyzing Carissa's narrative, I have tried to illuminate the ways in which the author's personal experiences and framework affects the content and purpose of the narrative. For Carissa, education was a major component of the book, used as a salvation mechanism for progress and success. The genre of a full-length memoir allows Carissa the space to elaborate on education and show the trajectory of her progress. Her story is triumphant, although it deals with difficult subject matter. However, as the reviews show, readers may project their own experiences and views on the text, which can distance themselves from the original purpose of the author.

Shamere

Survivor Context

Shamere's personal account appears in the edited collection *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives*. She agreed to dance to help pay for her college tuition, which turned into forced sex trafficking. After much physical and emotional abuse, she managed to escape her trafficker with the help of a kind stranger. Her recovery was uncertain until she met Kevin Bales, a prominent scholar activist, who introduced her to other survivor advocates and encouraged her to pursue public speaking. Her story is portrayed as another kind of progress narrative, though she does not focus on education as rescue, but rather God and public speaking as rescue. The context section before Shamere's narrative reads, "(Shamere) McKenzie wrote this piece specifically for the collection, to which she was invited to contribute, but reflections of her experience as a public speaker are evident throughout" (47). In this way, the editor of the collection, Laura T. Murphy, explicitly acknowledges how the author's context shapes the narrative. Shamere's public speaking experience is particularly noticeable at the end when she tells of her speaking and activist efforts. However, as Murphy notes, there are public speaking

strategies that are evident throughout the piece. For example, Shamere begins with an ominous hook to draw the reader in: “I will never forget the day I met my trafficker. It was a cold but sunny afternoon in January 2005.” She then gives many details and visual images that absorb the reader. There is little reflection about her life before trafficking or examination of larger structural factors. She sticks to the story. She also leaves the reader with a hopeful message at the end. Shamere’s identity as a public speaker creates a terministic screen that shaped the way she tells her story when she translated it into written form. Her experience serves as a framing device, as she includes a lot of pathos and a call to action at the end. Her knowledge of what engages an audience, what details to include and how to end a story in a way that encourages action seem to have influenced the writing of this narrative.

Publication Platform

Because of Shamere’s background and working relationship with the editor, she was invited to contribute to the collection. The genre of an edited collection is interesting because the editor takes on a more visible role. The editor has specific purposes in creating the edited collection and usually states those purposes in an introduction. Murphy had specific hopes of what inviting Shamere to share her story could do. By inviting Shamere to contribute she may have believed that Shamere’s purposes aligned with the purpose of the edited collection.

The stories from the edited collections differed from the other texts in the sample set in that they were shorter. For me, as the reader, some of the stories felt a bit more sentimental and sensational as the gruesome details were compacted into a few short pages, versus being spread across hundreds of pages or blog posts. The stories in the two edited collections I examined also tended to exhibit more characteristics from the neoabolitionist framework. Even though both these edited collections are published in academic press, and the editors are academics, and

academics are more known for affiliating with the human rights framework, the human rights framework was not strongly represented in these stories. One reason may be that the authors may have understood and written their narratives in the style of traditional slave narratives. The editor of the collection, Laura T. Murphy, is an expert on slave narratives and says that the genre often has four sections: the origins or time before slavery, the time during slavery, the escape from slavery and freedom after slavery (Murphy, "Introduction" 10-12). She also says that, "Modern-day slave narrators, like nineteenth-century narrators, also describe in unsurprising detail the cruel people who played integral roles in the perpetuation of their enslavement" (Murphy 11). Detailed descriptions of cruel slave owners resemble the neoabolitionist representations of perpetrators. I believe that in this case, genre does affect representation as in a few pages it is difficult to tell the structure of the slave narrative, including the four major components and also incorporate critical reflection about the vulnerabilities and contributing systems. While we cannot know for sure, I do wonder how these stories may change if the authors had more space to tell their stories. Space, as it pertains to genre, serves as a framing device. When space is limited only the most essential and impactful details are included.

However, one critical way in which these stories in the edited collections differed from the neoabolitionist narrative was the emphasis on resistance, the ways these slaves tried to escape. Even though these women were victims of the most horrible kinds of abuse, in their narratives they fought to complicate the helpless, disempowered sex trafficking victim identity. Each woman illustrated the ways in which they actively fought for freedom, showing that they did not passively accept their fate. They want their readers to know that they are more than simply victims, that they fought and resisted as much as possible. For example, Christine, a woman whose story appears in *To Plead Their Own Cause* says, "I escaped the pimps. It took

me more than twenty years to do it but I did it...I have been outsmarting them, outfighting them, and speaking out to help other women and girls” (Bales and Trodd 102). These stories resist the disempowered victim identity, presenting an understanding of trafficked women that differs from popular representations.

Purpose for Publication

In the introduction to *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives*, Laura T. Murphy is overt in stating the purpose of the collection. She wanted to “find an audience for the courageous survivors who have chosen to testify to their experiences of enslavement and provide an impetus for activists, scholars, students, and citizens to work to eradicate these contemporary forms of bondage.” She also wants to “engage the narratives from a scholarly perspective” situating them within the field of slave narratives (Murphy, “Introduction” 2). Kevin Bales and Zoe Trodd, the authors of the other edited collection in this sample set, *To Plead Our Own Cause*, also see the stories they share as continuing the slave narrative tradition. They relate those who are represented in the collection to “the many former slavers who used narrative as a tool for abolition” (Bales and Trodd 2). Murphy also says that

The goal of this collection is to present as faithfully as possible the unembellished reflections of people who have experienced slavery firsthand....In order to get as close to the narrators’ voices as possible, they remain unaltered except for some changes in punctuation when necessary for understanding. (Murphy 6)

Both works have similar aims to represent slaves voices just as they are. In the introduction to their edited collection, Bales and Trodd write,

Targeting oppression and silence, the modern slave narrative has emancipatory power as a linguistic weapon of the violated. Respecting, then, *how* the experience of slavery is narrated, as well as *what* the experience is, we are publishing the narratives both written and oral as they were told. We have made no additions or rearrangements to create

happy endings or dramatic climaxes, no attempts to clean up oddities of phrasing. (Bales and Trodd 3)

The purposes expressed by the editors of both edited collections in my sample set are similar and they try to remain ethical in their representations of others.

In the introduction to *Survivors of Slavery*, Murphy also makes the argument that the narratives in her collection resemble the “original” slave narrative in both structure and purpose. She believes that these new slave narratives “perform the same activist ambitions” as the slave narratives of the nineteenth century and claims that “the narratives collected here are a call to action” (Murphy, “Introduction” 12). Shamere’s closing statements of her narrative reaffirm this call to action, which aligns her story with the editor’s overall goals to reveal the similarities between old and new slave narratives. Shamere asks the audience what they are doing with their own life, what they are doing with their story to make a difference. She says, “We all have a story. What are you doing about yours? I am determined to use my story to make a difference in the life of someone else, leaving a legacy in this world” (Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery* 53). Her question and her own answer to this question give the audience an example of what they should do with their own story. By ending her narrative this way, Shamere hopes to make her audience not only feel, but also to make a difference.

The purposes of these academic editors are implicit in the titles of their collections. *To Plead Our Own Cause: Personal Stories by Today’s Slaves* and *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives*. They name the people who contribute to these collections as slaves. In some way, the contributors to this collection must acknowledge this identity by agreeing to be part of the collection. Shamere calls her experience enslavement as well as trafficking. She uses the language of slavery in lines like “I have had several wonderful opportunities because of being enslaved” (Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery* 53) and “He took a belt and whipped her like a

slave” (Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery* 50). Christine begins her story with the language of slavery right away, her first sentence reads, “I was born a slave” (Bales and Trodd 99). Jill also refers to herself as a slave: “I was no longer a human being but, rather, a slave” (Bales and Trodd 177). Tina gives the definition of slavery and asks her readers if her story matches with the definition (Bales and Trodd 243). The fact that the four women from these collections mention slavery is interesting as not every survivor in this sample set uses the terminology of slavery. It is clear, however that the terministic screens of the editors reveal a strong inclination to equate stories of sex trafficking with slavery. The women mirror this inclination by providing references to slave terminology. What remains unclear is if these women knew this about the collection and shaped their story accordingly, or if they were included in the collection because of their viewpoint. It again does leave one to wonder how stories may have been changed to fit this view or how other stories may have been excluded because the authors did not define their experience as slavery.

Like Elaine Richardson, Shamere’s spirituality also shines through when she explains not the purpose of writing, but the purpose for why she experienced what she experienced. She writes,

I now realize that I went through the trauma not for myself, but for someone else. I have had several wonderful opportunities because of being enslaved, some of which are mind blowing. It is still a struggle, but God has given me the strength to fight this battle, and as I continue to put my faith in him, I know he will never disappoint me. I just keep Jeremiah 29:11 on my heart each day. (Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery* 53)

Here Shamere seems to believe that she went through this trauma so that she could be a voice to help others. By sharing her story she is fulfilling this purpose and providing a call to action.

Like Carissa, her spiritual framework motivates her to act through writing. Rachel L. shares a similar sentiment in her book-length memoir. She writes,

I gotta tell y'all---I wouldn't change a single thing, not a moment, wouldn't take away one bit of my life of being in the life, cos I wouldn't have ended up here with y'all...And you, all of you make every single thing worth it. It was all worth it, to know you and to be lucky enough to be part of your lives. (Lloyd 266)

These women reference feeling thankful for their exploitation because it has led them to where they are, that it has given their life purpose, and one such purpose is to share their story with others. While they used to feel powerless, they now have the power to help others overcome their own powerlessness. These women have adopted the role of survivor advocate, which “unites the slave and the liberator, the victim and the humanitarian, in one identity” (Murphy, “New Slave Narrative” 19). This is a role that is increasingly gaining value among those who work in anti-human trafficking efforts. This identity blurs the lines between the neoabolitionist framework and the human rights framework. These women acknowledge their victimhood, but also acknowledge their strength in becoming a survivor. By moving into the role of advocate these women are becoming agents for change.

Audience Reception

Shamere engages her audience with a question, encouraging them to act by asking what they will do with their own story (Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery* 53). However, at the moment, it is difficult to know if the book is achieving its overall intended purpose with its audience.

Reviews for this book are scarce, with only two being present on Amazon. However, the lowest review, which is 3 stars, again, comments more on the difficult subject matter rather than the way this collection was put together or how the stories were written. Sue writes, “A sad book because it’s true happening now.” It is hard to know whether or not the book received a 3 star review because it is a sad book, or for some other reason. Publisher’s Weekly also notes the book’s difficult content, but acknowledges that the content is being used for a larger purpose.

Their review reads, “It is not an easy read, but Murphy never sensationalizes, and by making the

stories seem almost ordinary, paradoxically succeeds in underscoring the breadth and perniciousness of slavery's evils." The Library Journal's verdict for the book is that it is "Riveting and necessary. Anyone interested in antitrafficking from either an activist or scholarly perspective will find this collection essential" (Bridgewater). This review identifies the audience as activists and scholars, claiming that anyone who fits these identity markers will be persuaded by the purpose of this book. This review mirrors Murphy's hopes for who this collection will reach.

I have attempted to highlight the roles that editors play in the writing process by specifically looking at the introduction provided by the editor of *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives*. The editor's purposes reveal what kinds of stories are included in their collection. Shamere's story is short, provides some memorable, horrific details and a call to action. Shamere's background and the type of publication can be offered as explanations for why Shamere structured her narrative in this way. Both the space that Shamere had and what she believes makes a compelling story influenced what was selected and deflected from the reality of her experience.

Elisabeth

Survivor Context

Elisabeth's context is that she was trafficked by her family. She was first a victim of incest and then sold by her father. They lived in Stafford Virginia, were middle class, and lived in a four-bedroom house. Her parents worked and she went to school. She said that she actually made a conscious decision when she was nine to forget her trauma, which is a common defense mechanism to extreme trauma. When she gave birth to twins and was constantly around children, the triggers and flashbacks to her own childhood began. She is currently a single parent

to twins and also has a Masters in Social Work. Her identity as a parent and as a social worker serves as two main terministic screens that shape the content of her blogs. For example, there are blog titles like “My brain on Trauma,” “Packing Up the Trauma” and “The Pain of Shame,” which relate to issues that are of interest to social workers. She also explores how she believes her trauma affects her parenting. In her blog post, “All Kids Act That Way?” she reveals her insecurities about parenting and how she sometimes blames her children’s bad behavior on the fact that she was trafficked. She also has three blog posts in a series called “Have Trauma, Will Hover” in which she explores how her own trauma makes her an overprotective parent.

While Elisabeth does post about her childhood, being trafficked, and gives some description of those experiences and the toxic environment of her birth family, Elisabeth’s posts are more concerned about where she is now, which is the recovery process. Under her “Bio” section, she describes the writing on her blog as exploring the “biological, psychological, social and spiritual aspects of recovery from complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) and dissociation...” and she

Intimately discusses issues that affect the daily lives of survivors, including breaking the cycle of abuse through conscious parenting, navigating intimate relationships as a survivor, balancing the memory recovery process with daily life, coping with self-doubt and overcoming the physical symptoms of a traumatic childhood. (Corey, “Bio”)

The title of the blog itself is suggestive of the content. It is called *Beating Trauma* and that is the real work that is Elisabeth is trying to do. Her background clearly influences the content of the blog, what she chooses to blog about and how she frames her story. She is constantly framing her story in terms of trauma and reflecting on the ways her childhood now affects her parenting. It is interesting how this framing marginalizes and silences other realities. For example, Elisabeth mentions having a sister once. However, nothing is revealed about the sister; we do

not know if she was also trafficked. Reflections about her sister seem to fall outside of Elisabeth's purpose of beating trauma, so they are not included.

Purpose for Publication

Using writing as a way to beat her own trauma is one purpose Elisabeth has for writing this blog, though there are other purposes that can be identified in her writing. She wants to tell her story. She says so explicitly throughout blog posts and under the "My Story" section on her blog. She writes,

I tell my story because there is nobody stopping me anymore. I tell my story so I can heal. I tell my story so other survivors can heal. I tell my story so everyone can understand that child sex trafficking is real. I tell my story so children will be heard...so that someone will believe them. I tell my story so that children can have hope. I tell my story because enough is enough. (Corey, "My Story")

According to this quote, she has the purpose of allowing herself to heal, providing healing for survivors who read her blog, and raising awareness of child sex trafficking so that children in these situations will be believed and helped. She claims that sharing her story is healing for her and this idea is explored more deeply in her blog post, "The Healing Power of Sharing." She also states that she believes writing and sharing her story is a way to fight against perpetrators by revealing their crimes: "I have learned of another, much more powerful weapon in the fight against the oppressor...the truth. Nobody can stop me from speaking the truth...not even my father" (Corey Oct. 18, 2013). Elisabeth sees her writing as enacting change and providing solutions for survivors. Other survivors in this sample set expressed similar purposes for the writing, seeing their story as part of a solution. Like Elisabeth, Jill believes that writing is healing and can help warn others of the pain she experienced

An integral part of recovery is speaking out about what happened to me, what I faced as a runaway teen, and what I face even to this day trying to live with the memory of what I survived. I write this story so that maybe someone who hears it will be able to avoid the pain that was forced on me. (Bales and Trodd 180)

Rebecca hopes her writing will move people to action: “I write in the hope that my strength will build to more practical action. But others read my words and are spurred to act—then I feel the huge effort I put here is worthwhile” (Mott July 31, 2008). As each of these women fall into the description of survivor advocate, their common belief in the power of sharing their story makes sense. Their terministic screen calls them to advocate for survivors and a main way to do this is by sharing their story.

Another theme throughout Elisabeth’s work is debunking the stereotypes of who fits into the category of sex trafficking survivor. She continually emphasizes that she is white, middle class, and born to a two-parent family in multiple places on her blog. She writes,

The crime of trafficking builds fear in the general public. It is very scary to think that a human trafficking victim might look like everyone else. There seems to be an effort to create some kind of separation between a trafficking victim and the rest of the population... Personally, I was trafficked while living with two college-educated parents, in a middle-class suburban community. We were white. We were not poor. We were socially engaged in our community. I attended a regular public school. It is difficult for the average American to separate themselves from my circumstances. And that’s scary. (Corey Aug. 2, 2013)

This particular purpose relates to the purpose of the other bloggers in this sample set. While they have different terministic screens and highlight different things, they, too, want people to understand more about victims. A main purpose of both Rebecca and Rachel M. is to argue that all forms of prostitution are exploitative, whether the victim is legally a child or an adult. Both women entered the sex industry underage, but stayed in it until they were in their twenties; they wonder why one age of women garners sympathy and the other garners disgust or an assumption of choice. They both rail on the language of sex work over and over and try to explain that the “happy hooker is a myth.” While Rebecca and Rachel M. focus on different aspects of the sex trade than Elisabeth, these women are also asking their readers to reconsider who they think of when they think of victims and to see the violence and degradation that is part of prostitution.

Their experience is deeply connected to how they represent the issue. Their context helps to serve as their terministic screen, which emphasizes aspects of their own reality and helps shape their purpose. Because these women's identities fall outside of the normative concept of victim, their purpose in sharing their story is to influence public perception, expanding the view of victims to be more inclusive. These goals in expanding the definition of victim are related to the goals of the human rights framework.

Publication Platform

Elisabeth published her narrative through the genre of a blog. With the genre of a blog there are many conventions that allow for different types of representation. For example, blog posts do not have to present a clear or chronological narrative that fits a success story or the genre of a slave narrative. Each day can be a new thought. One thing I noticed that happened in the blogs I examined, in Elisabeth's and especially in Rebecca's, was the repetition of topics. Elisabeth repeatedly blogged about the role of memory in trauma. Rebecca repeatedly mentioned porn as a cause of the violence of johns and criticized the language of sex work. Reading these blog posts straight through in one sitting can get repetitive. However, blogs are meant to be read over time, which can allow for a recurrence of similar topics. Generally, the genre of a blog is less collaborative than other publishing venues and this lack of editors allows for the author to blog about what they want, when they want, which in turn affects representation. The repetitive content of posts would most likely be condensed in a different genre. The authors are also able to say things that may be controversial or divisive, as they are not as concerned about selling and they are in control of the final cut. For example, in Rebecca's blog she writes, "If I hear sex worker again, I may buy an AKA and kill some so-called supporters" (Mott Oct. 13, 2014). The anger here is tangible, and unfiltered. It also clearly

reveals her terministic screen and the ways that it could be limiting. Phrases like this suggest that it may be impossible for Rebecca to see outside of her own framework; a framework that she believes so strongly in, she imagines hurting those who fall outside of it.

Rebecca also writes, “I feel the abolition movement pushes away the multiple voices of survivors of the sex trade, coz they appeared too messy, too stringent, too full of pain/anger” (Mott Oct. 13, 2014). As the researcher, I realized that this was exactly how I felt about Rebecca’s blog. The anger expressed made me feel uncomfortable. It was not the usual success story, but this is not the story Rebecca wants to tell. She wants to express her anger and this blog gives her the platform to do so. While other platforms may select and deflect realities that are more palatable for a general audience for economic reasons, bloggers usually do not have the purpose of making a profit through this form of publishing. Therefore, they have more control in what gets said and how it gets said. Even though Rebecca is known for her strong opinions and language, she still has a wide circulation. In 2014 her blog was viewed 35,000 times (Mott Jan. 20, 2015). Laura T. Murphy mentions that blogs are ways that survivors can “take control of their narratives and their public lives, as well as connect to one another” (“New Slave Narrative” 9). This idea of autonomy and control may suggest that the genre of a blog is optimal for those who want to tell their story their own way. In popular press memoirs and edited collections, the desires of the editors are contributing factors in the representation of the text. In blogs, where the writer is also the editor, their authorial truth gets told. However, the immediacy of audience in this genre may still contribute to how the author frames their story.

Audience Reception

While the genre of a blog is useful in that it can let survivors say what they want to say in the ways they need to say it, audience perception and interaction is different on a blog. During

the research process several blogs I looked at went from public to private. I remember looking through one survivor's blogs and reading her writing about the types of comments she got on blogs. I scrolled through the comments and was surprised by the insensitive nature of the comments to such sensitive subject matter. Two weeks later this blog was private. Another survivor blog, one who is not examined fully in this sample set, also talks about the terrible posts she receives on her blogs. This woman's name is Angel K. and her blog is *Surviving Prostitution and Addiction*. On August 8, 2014, she blogged a post titled, "On Not Shutting the Fuck Up."

There are people out there who would love me to shut the fuck up, to roll over and die, metaphorically or literally. The men who used me. The people who leave shitty comments on my blog telling me I'm mistaken about what happened to me. ***I'm not***. And what they'd like to happen to me. Such narrow imaginations! And bad spelling.

In response to this blog post, one audience member writes,

Hi Angel, I'm a guy and I can relate to your feelings in a way. My thing is I'm religious and am waiting for marriage, but am not yet ready for it, anyways one stupid night, by chance, what happened was a woman gave me a blowjob in her car for \$50. I'm feeling so shit about it, like shameful, and the feelings are worse now which is 6 months later. I've learnt that sex before marriage is not for me, and it is a no go zone for me. Luckily I haven't yet had vaginal sex.

While this audience member is not necessarily being downright insulting, he is projecting his own feelings on the situation. In the same post Angel K. writes "always the threat of violence, worse violence, no safe place to stay." Why would a reader tell the author who has been forced to have sex under threat of violence that luckily he's still technically a virgin? What is this adding to the conversation? Inferring from Angel's post about "shitty comments," this is something she is used to. There is always the possibility of having one's story reach audience members who possess terministic screens that make it very difficult for them to see and interpret the world in the way the narrator hopes for.

On February 16, 2015, Rebecca posted a blog titled "Name Calling," unfortunately, a

responder, who begged Rebecca to keep her/him anonymous, did a lot of name calling to Rebecca in his/her response. Rebecca responded to this blogger, as did many of her readers. A blog provides an immediate interaction with your audience, but unfortunately, one can also get immediate negative feedback, feedback that is venomous partially because of its anonymity. Rachel M. put her blog on private because of audience reaction. She says, “I have come to realize that I did so purely out of fear—fear of exposure, fear of bullying, fear of having no control over who would contact me and what they would say when they did. That, in short, is cowardice, and I am more than a bit ashamed of caving in to it” (Moran April 29 2012). This is part of the genre of a blog; there can always be immediate negative feedback to writing, which leads to real implications for the writers. Some bloggers may just delete negative comments, as Rachel M. admits to doing in her blog post titled “Hate Mail and Other Ignorant Nonsense” (Moran June 25, 2012). Others may make their blog private, which affects how they can share their story. Still others may also dial down their content for fear of trolls. From my observations the women still blogged what they wanted, but were hurt by negative comments, which could affect the frequency of their posting.

It is hard to know if Elisabeth has a friendlier readership (Partially because she spends less time analyzing the highly political and polarizing debate around prostitution) or if she deletes negative comments. What is unique about Elisabeth’s blog is that she takes the time to respond to every single comment left. Sometimes it is simply a smiley face emoticon. However, many times the blog comment is from a woman who can relate to Elisabeth’s blog post and shares part of her own story. Elisabeth will then respond to that comment in an encouraging way. It can be inferred that she tries hard to create a welcoming and encouraging community among her readers. In her blog post “The Healing Power of Sharing,” she voices her terror about

starting a blog, but she believes it has been the best thing for her as she tries to personally beat trauma. She writes, “ I have healed so much from writing this blog. Although there has been healing from voicing my story, the real healing has come from the love and support of the readers and other survivors. I am so grateful for this community” (Corey, Mar. 20, 2014).

Wendy Hesford notes how “rhetorical acts create contexts, project imagined publics and establish communities” (*Spectacular Rhetorics* 10). In the genre of a blog the community of readers and author, while online, seem to be more immediate and accessible to engage in conversation about a text than traditional print-based media. A blog has different rhetorical possibilities than other media. The immediacy of the audience can affect representation, and as one builds a community of followers, they may shape their posts more and more for their particular audience.

By looking at the genre of the blog, one can see the ways in which this genre allows the author more freedom, but also more of an awareness of audience. This has been healing for Elisabeth, but for other survivors who explicitly state how they’ve been targeted by trolls, it makes the act of writing one’s story even more difficult. Yet, Elisabeth believes that writing provides multiple benefits for herself and other survivors, a belief that gives her the strength to write through the difficulty.

Terministic screens act as a framing device, putting boundaries around realities, excluding and silencing aspects of reality by cropping them out of the picture. This chapter has served to highlight the ways in which the author’s context and background is a terministic screen, though these are not the only factors that shape and frame a narrative. The publication platform is highly relevant when discussing representation because of the level of mediation there may be

between editors and author and the length the publication platform provides. The purposes of certain genres can shape a narrative to reflect those purposes. The role of audience must also be considered, as writing for a scholarly audience, an audience of survivors, or general audience differs greatly and would affect the content included. By examining the context, purpose, publication platform, and audience reception for three survivor narratives I have aimed to highlight the complexity of self-representation. Even though the reality presented is the survivor's reality and comes from a primary source that could be deemed more accurate than second-hand accounts, this reality is affected by the components discussed in this chapter. Aspects of the survivor's story are highlighted and marginalized according to the author and editor's purposes. These ways of framing have more consequence than just the way the story is told. They impact an audience and how they may respond to a text. The framing of a survivor narrative has the ability to not only affect the thoughts of audience members, but also to influence action.

CHAPTER 4: FRAMING SURVIVOR NARRATIVES

The progress of humane enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*. When you add that people are necessarily mistaken, that *all* people are exposed to situations in which they must act as fools, that *every* insight contains its own special kind of blindness, you complete the comic circle –Kenneth Burke (*Attitudes* 41).

Viewing pimps as one-dimensional monsters isn't that helpful in terms of understanding the girls' experiences. While the acts that pimps have committed are heinous and deserving of full punishment under the law, overlooking the humanness that the girls surely see only makes it harder to understand why they stay or, especially, why they go back –Rachel L. (Lloyd 188).

The way survivor narratives are framed are significant in how they can motivate action among readers, leading to change. In this chapter I will conduct a reading of the neoabolitionist framework and human rights framework to trafficking through Kenneth Burke's tragic and comic frames. The primary ways in which the neoabolitionist and human right framework differ are in their discussion of perpetrators, victims, causes, and solutions. Each framework is concerned with answering the questions of who is involved, how is this caused, and what can be done to change this phenomenon. This chapter will analyze the results of the template analysis by observing how ten women frame their own experiences. By examining how survivors represent the issue and if it fits into one of the main frameworks to sex trafficking, I aim to highlight how these stories are framed and examine the implications of this type of framing. The social consequence of how this issue is framed is substantial; it leads to an understanding of who is assigned blame and how society plays a role.

As Burke suggests in *Attitudes Toward History*, completing the comic circle is the progress of human enlightenment. To do this, one must understand the ways in which people are mistaken, the ways they are blind to certain insights, which makes them act as fools rather than

villains. Terministic screens make people blind, functioning as blinders that deflect aspects of reality. Instead of being blamed for their limited perspective, people should be corrected. Seeing people as fools with mistaken actions is the primary method of Burke's comic frame. Tragedy, by contrast, relies on villains and criminals who commit malicious deeds. These characters are not mistaken, but intentionally vicious. Many times tragedy also utilizes the mechanism of scapegoating for these criminal characters. A recent example is the video of a racist chant sung by members of SAE at the University of Oklahoma. While more than two men were on the bus, participating or watching, and while others have come forward to say that the views in the song have circulated among the fraternity for some time and the song has traditionally been passed on, two men, Parker Rice and Levi Pettit, were blamed for leading the chant and expelled for their actions (Fernandez and Perez-Pena). These two individuals served as the scapegoats in this particular drama. In Burke's writings, both comedy and tragedy fall under the category of frames of acceptance as they

Equip persons to 'come to terms' with an event and their place in the world. Precisely *how* they 'come to terms' with an event varies according to the 'symbolic form (that is epic, tragedy, comedy, and so forth) at work, and influences, in turn, where they and the world can go with those terms. (Ott and Aoki 496)

The tragic frame tends towards a one-dimensional understanding of situations and people that can lack imagination about these people's situated contexts, providing a more narrow explanation. Burke explains the comic frame as one that provides a wider explanation and a broader, more nuanced understanding of characters and their circumstances.

Burke's theories on frames can be applied to various social situations, highlighting the ways in which these situations portray a simple or more complex representation of an issue. Sex trafficking is a social issue that is represented and explained by a variety of stakeholders, including, "Students, governmental officials and civil servants, nongovernmental organizations,

social movement organizations, businesses, consumers, armed rebel groups, everyday people, and scholars” (Choi-Fitzpatrick, “Rethinking Trafficking” 15). In order to understand these various representations, it is important to examine the rhetorical tools and framing that these various stakeholders use. Two main frameworks to understanding the issue of sex trafficking include the neoabolitionist framework and the human rights framework. The neoabolitionist framework gives more individualized representations and explanations of the causes, solutions, and perpetrators of this crime. It also assigns a victim identity to those who have experienced this crime. The human rights framework gives a structural explanation of the causes and solutions for trafficking as well as situates perpetrators and victims within larger contexts and systems. There are noticeable similarities between these two approaches to human trafficking and Burke’s tragic and comic frames. I believe that the neoabolitionist framework to sex trafficking tends to frame the issue tragically, whereas the human rights framework leans more towards the comic frame. The value of examining how these frameworks can be usefully read as tragic and comic can highlight the larger implications of the representations perpetuated by these two human trafficking frameworks. In “The Politics of Negotiating Public Tragedy: Media Framing of the Matthew Shepard Murder,” Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki claim that because

Tragic frames ultimately alleviate the social guilt associated with a disaster through victimage, they tend to bring both closure and resolution to the larger social issues they raise. As such, tragic frames do not serve the public well as a basis for social and political action. (Ott and Aoki 496)

When society can blame villains, it can dissociate itself with the actions of the villains and is less motivated to make widespread changes that would have a long-lasting effect. For example, now that the two individuals leading the racist chants have been expelled from their university and justice has been served, society can move on, without stopping to truly examine how this story is

about more than two racist individuals. Therefore, when issues are framed tragically, the larger implication is that this way of framing is ineffective for real social change.

The following table is a visual representation of the results of my coding and data collection for the three coded categories discussed in this chapter. As one can see, the women combined the two frameworks in their narratives. This table must be read in terms of what is left out, which is represented in the not applicable diagonal stripes. If there is no mention of social responsibility and cultural influence, the narrative leans towards a neoabolitionist framework by way of omitting crucial tenets of the human rights framework. The individual vulnerabilities category is also consistently categorized under the neoabolitionist framework, as this framework is known for individual explanations of causes. There are also some intriguing patterns of the existing frameworks represented in the perception of perpetrator and victim identity categories.

Table 3 Fitting the Frameworks

Survivor	Perceptions of Perpetrator			Victim Identity			Causes		
	Pimps Traffickers	Johns	Society	Choice	Ideal Victim	Definitions of Victimhood	Individual Vulnerability	Social Responsibility	Cultural Influence
Carissa									
Christine									
Elizabeth									
Holly									
Jill									
Rachel L.									
Rachel M.									
Rebecca									
Shamere									
Tina									

Legend			
	Human Rights Framework		Blend of Frameworks
	Neoabolitionist Framework		Not Applicable

Survivor's Perspectives: Understanding Perpetrators

Frameworks of trafficking are concerned with the question: Who is involved in this phenomenon? These frameworks want to know more about not only who is being exploited, but also who is doing the exploitation. The neoabolitionist framework identifies perpetrators as deviant individuals who use interpersonal violence to control their victims. However, the human rights framework argues that positioning perpetrators as individuals ignores larger questions about the role of power in a social problem like human trafficking. Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick argues that we need to not only understand “individual power *over* the enslaved,” but the “structural power *through* culture and institutions” (Choi-Fitzpatrick, “Rethinking Trafficking” 15). Barbara Friedman and Anne Johnston claim that when blame is individualized then the “cultural and societal conditions that foster a demand for prostitutes, excuse violence against women, and glorify resourceful and entrepreneurial criminals remain blameless” (189). Many of the women in this sample set devote a lot of space for explicit description of those who forced them into sex trafficking and made them victims of this crime. The amount of space and the extent of description reveal a desire by these women to develop and explain their perpetrator. These perpetrators fall into the categories of pimps and traffickers, johns, and society.

Pimps and Traffickers

The neoabolitionist framework to trafficking explains perpetrators as evil, corrupt individuals, which corresponds to the tragic frame's principal character of the villain. No survivor from the sample set framed their description of their pimp/trafficker in an entirely comic way. Instead, the characterization was consistently tragic. Both Rachel L. and Tina describe pimps as predators. Rachel L. says, “In my world, pimps are not managers, protectors, or ‘market facilitators,’ as one research study euphemistically called them, but leeches sucking the

souls from beautiful, bright young girls, predators who scour the streets, the group homes, and junior high schools stalking their prey” (Lloyd 90). Tina similarly describes them as those who “prey on young women and girls by finding their weakness and then exploiting it” (Bales and Trodd 242).

Christine says,

These men are masters of torture and terror who are highly trained in torture techniques. Sometimes these pimp masters are doctors and dentists in the outside world. They rape girls as young as one and two years old....These men gang rape us. They rape us with dogs. They rape us with knives and guns and beer bottles...They rape us in the name of Satan and Hitler and De Sade (Bales and Trodd 100).

Shamere also describes the cruel violence she experienced from her trafficker: “He began punching me in the face, kicking me with his Timberland boots, and choking the life out of me, telling me if I leave he would kill me and my family” (Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery* 49).

Besides extreme physical and emotional abuse, Shamere’s trafficker, like Christine’s, violently sexually abused her: “Blood began running down my legs, and I thought I was going to bleed to death. That did not stop him. He continued anyway, as I screamed and begged him to stop.

When he was done, he laughed and said, ‘Bet you will never leave me again’” (Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery* 49). Traffickers use verbal abuse too. Carissa’s trafficker said, “‘You’re a fucking bitch. Do you understand that? You belong to me. You came from my rib, the Bible says that. I own you, just like all men own women, and I can do whatever I want with you.’” (Phelps 77). The examples of physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal abuse these women experienced at the hands of their trafficker are prominently highlighted in eight of the narratives.

The traffickers in these stories have committed horrendous crimes, egregious human rights abuses. With the exception of Rachel L. and Elisabeth, this is as far as the characterization goes. There is no examination of context or motives, only the details of the terrible acts of these perpetrators. In this way, the perpetrators appear to be evil criminals, criminals that, once

identified, can be punished for the good of society. Because they were characterized as criminals without much reflection as to how their social context may have played a part in their crime, these perpetrators are framed tragically. According to Burke, criminals are a perfect scapegoat in “a society that ‘purifies itself’ by ‘moral indignation’ in condemning them” (*Grammar of Motives* 406). The moral indignation against traffickers is not unjustified; these perpetrators have violated every understanding of how human beings should treat one another. Burke writes that scapegoats need to be seen as worthy and deserving of this role (*On Symbols and Society* 294). The horrifying behaviors of the traffickers portrayed in these stories make them a worthy scapegoat. For example, Christine’s description of how her pimps raped girls as young as one and two years old is clearly a behavior that society needs to reject. However, what troubled Burke about tragic framing is that pinning the blame on a single group of people does not usually lead to critical reflection of the larger issue at hand. Society likes to assign blame to those who appear deviant, those on the margins, because it is easier to blame and battle an outside enemy, than an enemy that is within (*On Symbols and Society* 219). It is a strategy of “othering.” In this case, society can separate themselves from these men, without looking closely at what would cause their physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse and examine how these traits may be representative of larger cultural norms. Framing the perpetrators tragically also narrows down the efforts and possibilities for solutions and change. The focus shifts to law enforcement and punishing men like this, which may be part of the solution, but as survivors describe later in this thesis, working for change needs to incorporate more than expunging evil.

The few survivors that displayed comic qualities in their descriptions of perpetrators coupled those comic framings with tragic terms, overlapping the frames. The reason for this may be that many survivors do see their traffickers as vicious and evil. Leaving out the

malicious acts of traffickers would not only completely change the narrative, but it would be inauthentic to the women's experiences.

Scholars have wondered about the dichotomy of vicious and mistaken as characterized in the two frames. Herbert Simons, in his article "Burke's Comic Frame and the Problem of Warrantable Outrage," argues that "'vicious' and mistaken' are not antinomies," that a person can be both at the same time (n.p.). Burke even illustrates this in his rhetorical analysis of Hitler's "Battle." Hitler is analyzed as both blind to the error of his ways and extremely vicious. Simons critiques the comic frame, saying it is not accurate to view all men as merely mistaken, nor is it helpful. Sometimes situations are more than a mistake, and those involved know exactly what they are doing. William Rueckert also questions if it is right to represent all men as mistaken, arguing that Hitler and the Nazis were not mistaken: "they knew exactly what they were doing." (Rueckert 124). Simons claims that one can express outrage in these instances and that these expressions of "warrantable outrage" do not lead to Burke's fear of victimage, scapegoating, and killing. Burke however, would counter that whether or not the perpetrator is mistaken or vicious, it is better for society to treat him as mistaken. Burke writes that the "comic frame is charitable, but at the same time it is not gullible" (*Attitudes* 107). It chooses to see people in a certain light. The reason for this is that "For Burke, the assumption of vicious motivation serves no good purpose even if there is a warrant for such in the evidence...Assuming the attitude of the comic frame as a strategy works to apply a brake to the destructive cycle of emotions that fuel scapegoating victimage" (Desilet and Appel 359). Burke would argue that "tendencies toward excessive outrage and collateral violence can be restrained through the attitude of comic framing and its constant reminder of the human even in the inhumane" (Desilet and Appel 360).

Rachel L. and Elisabeth view their traffickers in a more charitable light, though both admit that it is hard to do. This aligns with the human rights framework to trafficking, which rather than seeing traffickers as evil criminals, chooses to see traffickers as players in corrupt systems. In his article outlining the human rights framework, Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick argues that the “focus can shift to a broader range of perpetrators (not only criminal networks, but also governments, corporations, and civil society)” (“Human Rights Approach” 13). It is these larger systems that should be implicated for the ways they perpetuate trafficking. Rachel L. is one of the survivors who describes pimps as leeches and predators. At the same time, Rachel L. shows her conflicted feelings by saying, “As an advocate and service provider, and as a survivor, I have many emotions about pimps, ranging from murderous thoughts to an understanding of the social conditions that can create this subculture” (Lloyd 99). In fact, she can recognize that many pimps come from traumatized backgrounds, that in their childhoods they were victims of violence, neglect, and abuse. Rachel L. explains her conversation with one pimp: “His experiences of growing up in violence, poverty, and neglect could be the story of one of the girls—except that he has become the perpetrator, not the victim. He talks about wanting to quit the game, about being addicted to it, about not knowing what else he would do” (Lloyd 98). Elisabeth also shows conflicted feelings towards her family of traffickers. On the one hand she recognizes their cruel actions, calling them a “Horrific, co-dependent, evil, ridiculous excuse for a family” (Corey July 31, 2014). However, she can also see beyond her individual pain and understand how her mother’s complicit role was a result of her own abuse as a child.

But for my mother, this oppression was a way of life. It was all she ever knew. She never had the innocent childhood we expect our children to live...She was not able to escape her abuser. She lived the same childhood that I did. She formed her own ways of coping. Her coping mechanisms were coming from her child’s mind because she never had a chance to develop adult coping mechanisms. (Corey Feb. 28, 2014)

Elisabeth portrays her mother as misguided, as someone who cannot see things from a mature, adult perspective because she is haunted by her own trauma. For Elisabeth it seems more helpful for her to understand her mother within this framework rather than a tragic framing, because it can feel less personal, that her actions were not necessarily a lack of love, or a desire to victimize, but had to do with her complex history. Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter, in their book *The Slave Next Door*, highlight the tendency to view all slaveholders, pimps, and traffickers as evil criminals. However they call this an easy answer, as “simply saying someone is ‘evil’ does not explain his or her actions” (Bales and Soodalter 26). Writing them off as evil does not help us understand more about their mindset. Bales and Soodalter also note that, historically, this simple label of evil could not accurately explain the phenomenon. In America, there used to be millions of slaveholders who were able to justify the use of slaves and who did not see themselves as evil. They encourage those looking at modern-day slavery to move beyond the problem of evil, wickedness, and immorality “to learn what we can about the motivations and mind-set of slaveholders today” (Bales and Soodalter 31).

Johns

In their narratives, the women express a concern about the disproportionate amount of attention paid to the supply side of sex trafficking. Conversations circle around traffickers and how to stop them rather than thinking about how to curb the behaviors and realities that make sex trafficking a profitable business. These survivor narratives spend just as much time speaking out about the abuses of johns as they do their traffickers. Bloggers Rachel M. and Rebecca spend much more time discussing the harm done by johns. Rebecca despises johns and reveals no sympathy for them in her blog posts. “Each man that pays money is paying into the sex trade that makes it ok to rape, torture and even murder their product. So I do hate all men that pay for

sex” (Mott July 30, 2008). She describes them as hateful, controlling, angry, perverted criminals. “No, you are not a man, not fully human if you make the choice to buy any type of prostitute” (Mott Aug. 11, 2014). Through her blog, she relives the sadistic sex acts that these men forced on her such as tying her up, cutting her, and holding her head under water. Jill also experienced extreme torture and violence at the hands of johns: “They paid Bruce to rent my body to rape in as many ways as they could devise without killing me. I was held underwater in toilets or bathtubs, whipped, hung, shocked with electrical current, and paid to have me tell them how much I was enjoying it” (Bales and Trodd 177). As these examples illustrate, the johns are described as villains, which connects them to tragedy.

The women show more sympathy to their traffickers or pimps because they knew them intimately. At least two of the women could imagine the ways that larger systems and their trafficker’s personal history lead to them to exploit others. It is different with johns because the women do not know their background and emphasize that there is no one stereotype for the john. Rachel L. says,

Johns represent every walk of life, every age, every ethnicity, and every socioeconomic class. Judges, mailmen, truck drivers, firemen, janitors, artists, clergy, cops, drug dealers, teachers. Handsome and rich, poor and unattractive, married, single, and widowed. Fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, uncles, neighbors. (Lloyd 107)

It is hard to say who exactly johns are. Elisabeth describes how society tries to stereotype men who abuse children

As a society we love to profile the pedophile. It gives us all a collective sigh of relief if we can say, without any doubt, this is what a pedophile looks like. I have some unfortunate news for society. I was raped by a banker, a Colonel in the Air Force, a car salesperson, a housing contractor, and many other people who purchased me with their middle-class, college-level incomes...They are everywhere. They are talented artists. They are successful business people. They are military personnel. Stop putting your comfort level above the truth. The truth is never comfortable. (Corey Feb. 2, 2014)

In this blog post Elisabeth is warning against the scapegoat mechanism, which is a prominent device in Burke's tragic frame. Scapegoating lies in the area of tragedy because it utilizes victimage and blame as a way of purifying society through the expense of others. Profiling the pedophile or johns can help unify society by trying to alienate "others" who act this way. Burke would say that this unity, through the scapegoat mechanism, is "attained on a deceptive basis" that "shift our criticism from the accurate locus of our trouble" (Burke, *On Symbols and Society* 230). Elisabeth is arguing that there is no one profile for the john and that trying to profile moves attention away from the fact that johns are from respectable families and hold respectable jobs, which is difficult for society to accept. She urges society to not perpetuate inaccurate stereotypes, as this hides the complexity of the issue.

In describing johns, the women do little to describe them as mistaken or show the larger structural systems they may be a part of, which aligns their descriptions with the neoabolitionist framework. Rebecca mentions that she hates the entire crowd. While the survivors may tragically frame johns as villains, Elisabeth and Rachel L. ask their audience to resist an integral part of tragic framing, by explaining how men who purchase sex cannot be easily defined or scapegoated. Here they widen up the circles of who is involved, implicating men from all layers of society. By deconstructing stereotypes and widening the circle of perpetrators, these women lead their audience toward a "maximum consciousness" that is a descriptor for the comic frame (*Attitudes* 171). Rachel L. also urges her readers to not play into the racial stereotypes associated with pimping. She says that American culture has "increasingly conflated pimps with black men," but calling a man a trafficker "tends to bring to mind a broad range of ethnicities and roles" (Lloyd 94). These perpetrators cannot be easily placed into a box. Rachel L. is also pointing to the power of language. Using the word pimp brings to mind connotations and

stereotypes that the word trafficker does not. Using the word trafficker does a better job of avoiding vilifying poor, black men. Rachel L. also warns about the power of language when discussing johns. The word John, a common name for men in American culture, connotes the everyday American Man, which in itself is a stereotype, with understandings that most likely differ based on social position. For some, the word can elicit friendliness. Yet, the friendliness of the term masks what the term actually means, especially for women like Rebecca and Jill. Rachel L. suggests that a more accurate term to describe their behavior would be statutory rapists (Lloyd 107). As noted by these survivors, discussions of johns are rare in the representations of sex trafficking. These narratives end this silence on the subject by explicitly detailing their harm. By analyzing the way these survivors frame johns, we can begin to see the ways in which these harmful behaviors are expressed by men who come from a variety of contexts. This may imply that the abusive, controlling, objectifying behavior exhibited by johns is a pervasive cultural attitude that cannot be attributed to identity markers such as education level, class, or race.

Society:

Most of the survivor accounts from this sample set frame their perpetrators as individuals, with a focus on their cruel actions. While the human rights perspective strives to define perpetrators more broadly, to implicate corrupt systems, only a few survivors do this and it is not dwelled on. Some of the women saw systems as causes of trafficking, but did not describe them as perpetrators. However, Holly targets society's cultural values as part of the perpetrators: "These *prostitutes* are children, and they have been raised in the world that we have created for them. An oversexualized, consumer-driven society will create oversexualized, consumer-driven children who are vulnerable to the likes of sex traffickers" (H. Smith 185). Our society's cultural

values influence the thought patterns and behaviors of all who are involved in sex trafficking; therefore, these cultural values should be held at least partially responsible. Rebecca says that anyone who ignores the exploitation and violence of the sex trade is “part of the problem” (Mott Sept. 29, 2014). This falls along the common argument that bystanders who witness a crime, but do not intervene are also at fault.

Rebecca and Rachel M. particularly have a problem with any feminist or academic that they believe misrepresent the issue. They speak against those who try to shape survivor’s stories to meet their own ideological belief system and claim that in doing so, feminists and academics also exploit these women. Rebecca says, “You are keeping us sub-human, as you only allow survivors to speak out under your agenda. If we dare speak beyond a feminist or leftist agenda, we are put back into a box, and the lid is shut until it felt our language has become your language” (Mott Oct. 13, 2014). In speaking to feminists, Rachel M. has a similar message: “When you warp and distort the reality of our lived experiences you abuse us as thoroughly as the punters ever did...I am ashamed your brand of ‘feminism’ even exists” (Moran Feb. 7, 2012). What frustrates these women the most is the term “sex work” and how it is portrayed as empowering by women who would never chose that line of work for themselves. They believe the term is misleading because it implies choice and silences the realities of the women involved. Women are blamed for being involved with a violent manager and for putting themselves in unsafe situations. When the prostitute is hurt, they are blamed for making unwise choices. It is assumed that they could simply choose safer managers or work with clients who treat them well. Rebecca says, “In the framing of prostitution as labor, the prostitute becomes the convenient scapegoat to make all punters and sex trade profiteers violence vanish” (Mott Apr. 23, 2014). According to these survivors, explaining prostitution as sex work rids society of any guilt they

may experience about the murders and abuse these “workers” face. If the language of sex work scapegoats prostitutes, Burke, like these women, would advocate for a shift in language and perception, as these women argue that this language is harmful.

As rhetoricians we must ask what there is to gain or lose in choosing the language that frames the perpetrators. Framing perpetrators as a matter of corrupt systems shows the ways in which members of society are not removed from the issue and may perpetuate it, which is important for social change. Burkean scholar Elizabeth Weiser writes, “Burke spent much of his career working out the consequences of his understanding that language shapes humanity’s ability to see the world as finished or unfinished” (Weiser, Horak, Monroe 584). The authors of “Beyond Shame: The Dialogic Narrative and Comic Cognition” connect Burke’s philosophy to Rhetoric and Composition scholar Dale Jacobs by elaborating on Jacob’s pedagogy of critical hope. They write, “If ‘we see the world as unfinished and open to revision,’ then we are better equipped to work for change” (Weiser, Horak, Monroe 584). Framing perpetrators as evil individuals closes the matter into an unconquerable battle between good and evil. However, in order to remain true to the survivor’s experience, the violence and exploitation experienced must be demonstrated. These survivors want others to know the severity of what they survived, to know and understand what it means to be a survivor of sex trafficking. They are victims of atrocious crimes. Although the perpetrators are portrayed as vicious, the women resist supplying categories of the types of men that should be punished. In other words, they resist clear categories of victimage and scapegoating. This may be precisely because between traffickers, johns, the hyper-sexualized media and those who ignore the violence of the sex trade, many individuals are to blame.

Survivor Perspectives: Understanding the Victim Identity

In her article, “Kairos and the Geopolitical Rhetorics of Global Sex Work and Video Advocacy,” Rhetoric and Composition scholar Wendy S. Hesford says, “The identification of women as passive and naïve victims lured and tricked into sex work and therefore in need of rescue is a prominent narrative” (Hesford, “Kairos” 147). Gretchen Soderland calls this a “victimization framework,” which can “wrest autonomy from women and places it in the hands of state configured as masculine protectors” (Soderland 72). This prominent victimization narrative is the narrative told by the neoabolitionist framework. While aspects of this narrative are true, for example sex trafficking victims can be deceived and in need of rescue, the potential danger in this narrative is that it “ultimately casts women as victims in need of protection from harm rather than as subjects deserving of positive rights” (Soderland 82). The neoabolitionist identity of the sex trafficking victim is usually depicted as innocent, helpless, disempowered, naïve, and deceived. There was not a single survivor from the sample set that described themselves in a way that exclusively aligned with the neoabolitionist definition of victims. While these victims may have been deceived and needed outside help, they still describe themselves as fierce, as finding ways to fight back and regain autonomy. While they may have been victims, they actively struggled to write a narrative that differed from one of victimization. The women in this sample set had many references reflecting on their identity as a sex trafficking victim, resisting neat boxes and categories and challenging the notion of an “ideal” victim.

Understanding the Complex Nature of Choice

Some of the women had no choice in their victimization. Christine and Elisabeth were born into families of traffickers. Others fall into the deceived victims category, as their boyfriend turned out to be a trafficker or they are deceived about the type of work they will be

doing. This happened to Tina, Shamere, and Holly. Holly ran away with a man who told her he would take her to Hollywood and meet famous people. She had no clue that he was a trafficker. These women, according to the neoabolitionist framework, would fall under what constitutes a victim, what Hesford characterizes as the “naïve victim who was lured and tricked” (Hesford, “Kairos” 147). The deception, or the lack of options for young children like Christine and Elisabeth, clearly make these women victims and they self-identify as such.

However, five of the women’s stories do not fit this narrative and they explain that exploitation and the role of the victim is more complicated than the idea of “force, fraud, or coercion.” According to the human rights framework, victims can knowingly choose the job, but usually do not know the exploitative working conditions. The identity of the victim is more complex than the innocent, deceived narrative. If they experience extreme violence and slave-like conditions as a result of their “choice” to enter into these situations, they believe they should still be helped. Historically, women who chose to be in prostitution were seen as criminals because prostitution is illegal. These survivors argue instead that we need to reexamine the idea of choice and who constitutes a victim. This argument pushes against many social beliefs about women in the sex industry choosing that lifestyle. Rachel L. explains entrance into the sex industry as a lack of choices. She says that these lack of choices can be blamed on individual, environmental, and social factors that leave women in desperate circumstances. Women in these situations will make choices “with the hopes of securing a better future, someone to love them, food and clothing, a sense of family, or a chance to escape their current abuse,” but this does not mean that they “deserve, want, or choose the life that awaits them” (Lloyd 81). Both Jill and Rachel M. echo Rachel L.’s argument about lack of options and how framing this matter as a set of real choices is misleading. Rachel M. says,

Choice does not always present as balanced; it does not always offer a distant but equal alternative. When I think of my choices there were simply these: have men on and inside you, or continue to suffer homelessness and hunger. Take your pick. Make your 'choice.' (Moran Feb 8 2012)

Jill says,

When I questioned whether or not this 'work' was prostitution, he retracted the offer and began to walk away. Desperate, I ran after him, pleading with him to give me another chance...I put my fear aside and agreed to being blindfolded because I needed what he was offering. (Bales and Trodd 176)

Jill's trafficker specialized in extreme torture/bondage fantasies. Jill thought she would exchange sex for food and a roof over her head. She had no idea she would experience so much physical damage from hangings, stranglings, and beatings. The women ask to not be framed tragically; they ask their reader to avoid condemning them for their choices. Tragic framing in the public sphere characterizes people as deviant "others" that can lead to condemnation. This disapproval can deter attention away from larger contributing factors. As Hesford notes,

Stereotypes of prostitutes as social deviants or as helpless victims maintain their rhetorical appeal because they keep the focus on the 'other,' and thereby deflect attention from the national and international policies, economic and sociopolitical forces, and cultural traditions that contribute to the material conditions that drive many women to work in the sex industry ("Kairos" 152).

It is easier to cast blame on these women, seeing it as an individual problem, but throughout the narratives the women ask to be seen in a more charitable light, one that sees how these women were mistaken and influenced by economic circumstance. They misunderstood their future reality and could not foresee the extreme exploitation they entered into.

The Ideal Victim

These women also highlight the idea of being the "good trafficking victim." A good trafficking victim is innocent and completely unwilling in their abuse, which will garner the most public sympathy for their situation. In her chapter "Constructing and Denying Victimhood in

Trafficking,” Maggy Lee explains the traits that make someone the ideal victim: “The victim is weak and vulnerable; the victim is carrying out a respectable project; the victim is in a place where she could not be blamed for being; the offender is physically dominant and dangerous; the offender is unknown to the victim” (Lee 65). These women express the struggles they’ve faced at having others understand the exploitation they experienced when they didn’t fit into the identity of the good victim. Holly writes,

Many of the posters I see associated with anti-trafficking depict not just violence but also young children. I often see pictures of little girls crying, some in pigtails and some holding teddy bears with slogans overhead touting lost innocence. *This* was not me. By eighth grade middle school, I was angry, undisciplined, and sexually active. Did this make me less of a victim? (H. Smith 36).

Here Holly is describing a neoabolitionist way of depicting victimhood. It exacerbates the issue because victims who come from troubled pasts or have behavioral problems are not identified as victims. Lee explains, “Victims who do not fit an idealized notion of vulnerability tend to be rendered invisible on the victimological agenda or else regarded as precipitous or blameworthy in popular and criminal justice discourses” (Lee 65). This creates what Lee calls a “hierarchy of trafficking victimhood” (Lee 67). This hierarchy of victimhood and the need for victims to fit an ideal stereotype has been referenced by several scholars (Hoyle et al 2011; Lindholm et al 2014).

The media also frames victims differently depending on their race and class. Rachel L. gives examples of how the media will highlight cases of missing girls when they are white and middle class, but those who are poor and black will not get media space or will be blamed for their disappearance. Rachel L. says,

Throw in a lower-class background, a history with foster care or a single-parent home, and add to that being a girl of color, especially black, and you’ve hit a trifecta of sexuality, class, and race that will ensure that your credibility is doubted, that your victimization is disbelieved, and that you will be marked an unacceptable victim. In fact, it’s much easier to see you as a criminal. (Lloyd 142)

In *PHD to Ph.D.: How Education Saved My Life*, Elaine Richardson echoes the stories of these women. Her own time of entry was at age 14. She entered through the insistence of her pimp, whom she thought was her boyfriend. He was physically abusive, and stated that if she loved him, she would make him money. Elaine Richardson says

Human trafficking is human trafficking. People write poor folks off, especially poor Black street girls. We get dogged out, like we were born to be hoes and we love it, after all we chose to be with pimps. But did we really? Did we really choose trauma? We make what I call trauma-induced choices. (Richardson 212)

Here Richardson makes the claim that these poor, black, prostitutes were trafficked, even if they chose to be with their pimps. She points to race and the issue of choice. These women are not criminals; their trauma leads them to make foolish choices and these foolish choices should in no way mean that these women deserve the abuse and exploitation they suffered. These girls are more likely to become victims because of their lack of choices, but are less likely to get resources or to receive help because they do not fit the definition of a good victim.

To be a good victim one also has to be young. The three women who wrote blogs touched on this most. Rebecca notes that there is a disproportionate amount of attention paid to those in the sex industry who are underage vs. overage. While many of those who are over eighteen did enter before that age, these women are also extremely traumatized and in need of help. If these women are not rescued before the age of eighteen, suddenly, this age, this idea that they are a legal adult, signifies that they are choosing this line of work. Elisabeth says that drawing these distinctions between children and adults perpetuates a culture of victim blaming, which again reinforces a hierarchy of victimhood. Rachel M. says this victim blaming is even maintained by groups that want to help:

By drawing distinctions between trafficking and prostitution, between under and over eighteen, some well-intentioned anti trafficking organizations acquiesce to the perpetuation of a system known to be extremely violent and damaging while continuing to stigmatize and blame most of its victims. This stigmatization maintains the

disempowerment and marginalization of the same population these groups want to help.
(Moran Aug. 22, 2012)

Over and over the women in this sample set explain that the trafficking victim is not easily defined by age or circumstances. Some are poor, some are middle class, some are deceived, some are young and innocent, others are what society would call delinquents. Society likes easily identifiable markers to name who is a victim and who is not, but these women claim that it is not that simple. They want the definitions and concept of sex trafficking victims to be widened, which lends itself to the comic frame. William Rueckert says, “the comic perspective must acknowledge that life—reality—is not static but is always in process and that we must adopt a frame that accounts for the true complexity of the human situation and resists the mind’s compulsion to reduce this complexity to an oversimplified, orderly set of terms” (Rueckert 119). Trying to fit victims into an oversimplified narrative of deception and helplessness is harmful because it does not reflect the lived reality of *all* who self-identify as victims. These survivors describe their own experiences through a comic perspective to highlight the complex nature of a sex trafficking victim identity. Any stakeholder in the issue must pay careful attention to these narratives. Because these women do not play into the disempowered victim trope, second-hand representations should avoid doing so as well.

Unfortunately, because of these narrow definitions of victims, those who did experience exploitation did not necessarily see themselves as victims at the time of their exploitation. They blamed themselves and the choices that they made that led to their exploitation. As Laura T. Murphy writes, “enslaved people can become, in effect, illegible even to themselves” (“New Slave Narrative” 11). This is dangerous because the problem of self-blame is exactly what the exploiters hope for. Carissa says “I didn’t blame Icey or anyone else for what had happened to me...At twelve, my life might have been out of control, but I still knew how things added up—

my bad decisions were my fault. The selling of my body, the belt around my neck, being forced to do crack and raped at gunpoint, it was all on me” (Phelps 84). Because the neoabolitionist definition of a victim is limited and one-dimensional, and because the neoabolitionist definition has long-standing popularity with the media and law enforcement, many girls do not understand that they are being exploited and manipulated. Holly, Carissa, and Rachel L. explain how they are treated scornfully by law enforcement, and talked to as criminals. These narrow definitions are harmful in that they may prevent women from seeking help. Rachel L. says that it was only when she understood the larger systems that she was able to shift the blame.

If I can begin to understand all the factors that made me vulnerable---the impact of race, class, and gender; the role played by my dysfunctional family; the power of the billion-dollar sex industry; the recruitment tactics of my pimp; my limited options as a teenager—then I can begin to shift the blame to the perpetrators instead of carrying it myself. (Lloyd 193-194)

It is only when Rachel L. had a broader understanding of the causes of trafficking that she could understand more fully her identity as a victim. The women in this sample set resist neoabolitionist definitions and the oversimplified black and white understandings that the tragic frame depends upon. By complicating the identity of victims, these women frame themselves comically, as comedy strives to see things in less absolute terms. The stories of these women encourage people to broaden their definition of who constitutes a victim and how and where to assign blame. By opening up the definition of victim, these women also open up the ranges of causes and solutions. By looking at larger pools of victims, society needs to assess what exactly leads to these women’s exploitation. This opening up of causes suggests the need for social responsibility. Even if the harm or cause is indirect, society needs to reflect on the ways they contribute to the cause of trafficking.

Survivor's Perspectives: Causes of Sex Trafficking

The two frameworks of sex trafficking are concerned with who is involved. They seek answers to the questions: who are the perpetrators? Who are the victims? They also ask: What are the causes? The neoabolitionist framework of trafficking tends to frame causes of trafficking at an individual level, looking closely at the individual stories of traffickers and victims. They also explain all forms of prostitution as exploitation. The human rights framework shifts the focus away from the character traits of perpetrators as a cause and looks at how social and cultural factors contribute to this phenomenon. Nine of the women acknowledge individual vulnerabilities as a cause of trafficking. Of these nine women, five connect their individual description of causes with larger cultural explanations for causes.

Individual Vulnerabilities

An important feature of each of the narratives is the ways in which the women clearly articulated the vulnerabilities that predisposed them to the risk for sex trafficking. Seven survivors mentioned prior sexual abuse before trafficking as a significant factor in the explanation of why they were susceptible to this type of exploitation. Rachel L., Christine, Jill, Carissa, Holly, Elisabeth, and Rebecca all detail their own sexual abuse in their narratives. In her memoir, Rachel L. points out that in the United States “90 percent of trafficked and exploited youth have experienced some form of abuse and neglect and that the majority are runaways or homeless” (Lloyd 33). Many times the sexual abuse is what causes the teen to run away into the arms of a trafficker. Carissa, author of *Runaway Girl*, writes, “One in seven American children will run away from home, and within forty-eight hours of running, one out of every three will be

asked, as I was, to ‘take care’ of someone in exchange for food, money, clothes and at times just affection” (Phelps 288). Jill is another example of a runaway, running from physical and sexual abuse. She explains how once on the streets she was desperate, stealing food and scavenging through garbage to survive. When a man offered her a place to stay, she leapt at the opportunity (Bales and Trodd 176). Abuse in the home is the explanation for many runaways and being a runaway puts one at high risk for trafficking. The extreme sexual abuse Rebecca experienced from her stepfather caused her to leave home and join the sex industry. Her “friend” convinced her to do it, and collected the money Rebecca should have earned. At the time Rebecca thought she was entering willingly; however, reflecting back on this she writes, “When I look at reasons many girls and women enter the sex trade, I cannot see it as a choice. Girls that lived with constant sexual abuse may think of prostitution as the next logical step. They might as well get money, for many believe all they are is sex objects” (Mott June 20, 2008). Repeatedly throughout the narratives, the authors emphasized the devastating effects of childhood sexual abuse and how this abuse changed their perceptions of themselves, their value, and their bodies. The prevalence of sexual abuse in these narratives is highly disturbing. Rachel L. says, “Over and over it is clear for all of us that our backgrounds had prepared us for this...we’d been primed for predatory men, for an industry that would use us up and spit us out” (Lloyd 27). While it is clear that sexual abuse is used as an explanation of one of the main vulnerabilities for how girls are trafficked, there is less reflection on the causes of sexual abuse and ways to prevent it. Because there is no reflection, the audience may assume that this is just the result of individual pathologies, that predatory men are to blame.

To help explain the severity of her sexual abuse, blogger Elisabeth explains her parents, who were her traffickers, as mentally ill. She writes, “I was raised by narcissists. I am not

talking about the general selfishness that plagues the human race. I am referring to sociopathic narcissism in which their only concern is reducing their own pain. There is no interest in the feelings or pain of the other...ever” (Corey Jan. 24, 2014). Rachel M. also uses her parent’s mental illness as part of the explanation of how she ended up where she did as her father was manic depressive and her mother was schizophrenic; this “left us in state care, one after the other. And as a young teenager it left me homeless, hungry, and prostituted, in that order” (Moran Feb. 8, 2012). Holly and Carissa point to neglectful parents as part of the explanation for their exploitation. They were vulnerable in the way that they were looking for someone to pay attention to them and show them they belonged. Upon meeting her trafficker at twelve, Carissa writes, “I didn’t know where she and Icey would take me, but I’d spent so much time in places where I wasn’t wanted, how could hanging out with them be any worse?” (Phelps 67). Her desire to belong and feel loved as well as her young age, led Carissa to trust her exploiters. Dysfunctional home environments can lead children to search for solutions away from the home, while at the same time these environments ill equip children to know what healthy boundaries and relationships look like.

Mentioning the prevalence of abuse, mental illness, and neglect is important as these authors clearly explain the link between these vulnerabilities and sex trafficking. However, looking at these girls as victims of sexual abuse, or victims of mentally ill parents places the blame on individuals. In “The Politics of Negotiating Public tragedy: Media Framing of the Matthew Shepard Murder,” Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki describe “In the Matthew Shepard story, hatred and homophobia...would come to be framed primarily as character flaws of the chief antagonists, rather than as wide-scale social prejudices that routinely result in violence toward gays and lesbians” (Ott and Aoki 488). They argue that Aaron McKinney and Russell

Henderson were framed as villains and criminals, with deviant traits, which allowed others to disassociate from their behaviors. Neglect, mental illness, and sexual abuse are all contributory factors to the problem of sex trafficking. However, explaining the cause of sex trafficking through individual vulnerabilities is framing the issue tragically. People who are not neglectful or abusive parents can externalize the cause to those “pedophiles” or “unfit” parents. Framing the causes as only individual allows for what Burke calls the projection device, which is

The ‘curative’ process that comes with the ability to hand over one’s ills to a scapegoat, thereby getting purification by dissociation...Hence if one can hand over his infirmities to a vessel, or ‘cause,’ outside the self, one can battle an external enemy instead of battling an enemy within. (Burke, *On Symbols and Society* 219)

To avoid participating in projection, we must look at causes beyond the home. While dysfunctional and incestuous familial relationships are damaging and contributory, they do not complete the list of causes for sex trafficking. Although the majority of the survivors mentioned individual vulnerabilities as a causal factor, five of the survivors couple individual vulnerabilities with systemic vulnerabilities, helping the reader understand that there is more that causes sex trafficking than predatory men.

Social Responsibility

According to the human rights approach, one must look past the individual causes and also examine how society contributes. A human rights approach gives structural and systemic explanations to the issue of trafficking. Of the sample set, Rachel L.’s narrative most clearly aligned with the human rights approach. She writes,

To view this issue as simply one of individual risk, of dysfunctional families, of childhoods littered with abuse and neglect, ignores some larger socioeconomic causes...When we think about children who are sexually exploited in other countries, we acknowledge the socioeconomic dynamics that contribute to their exploitation—the

impact of poverty, of war, of a sex industry. Yet in our own country, the focus on individual pathologies fails to frame the issue appropriately. (Lloyd 34)

She says that when the issue is framed as problems within individual families, we ask the wrong questions, questions that will never lead us to the root of the problem, the real explanation.

Rachel L. believes the questions we should be asking are “ ‘What is the impact of poverty on these children?’ ‘How do race and class factor into the equation?’ ‘Beyond their family backgrounds, what is the story of their neighborhoods, their communities, their cities?’ ” (Lloyd 34). Rachel L. comes from a working class background and as the executive director of GEMS in New York City, she sees how race and class play a profound role for many of those who are trafficked. Because of her socioeconomic background, she provides class as part of the explanation. Carissa also highlights how her family’s poverty was part of the reason she ran away.

Rachel L. is broadening the circles of those involved; her questions implicate not only individual families, but also communities, cities, and their government. In this way, Rachel L. is not only aligning with the human rights approach, but also using Burke’s comic frame. Burkean scholar William Rueckert explains that “many of the modifiers for *comic* are terms that stress the need for a *wider* frame, a need to broaden one’s terminology, a need for a *well-rounded* frame, one that is an *amplifying* device rather than a diminishing or reductive one” (Rueckert 121). Understanding the causes from a well-rounded comic perspective shifts the gaze from examining individual character traits of traffickers and victims to understanding the larger social and cultural systems they participate in. By understanding these larger systems we can imagine wider, more well-rounded solutions that aim to resolve the layered complexity of the issue. We can also know more about those involved, the realities of choice as mentioned by survivors that can help redefine the identities of victims.

The Role of Media and Culture in Social Responsibility

Although Holly and Elisabeth come from middle class backgrounds, they also point to larger structural systems. Holly mentions poverty as one of the explanations as well as a host of other risk factors. However, these women go beyond socioeconomic explanations to discuss the role of culture. The outside contributing factor Holly describes in depth, because of its influence on her, is the media and its sexual objectification of women. Because her parents rarely supervised her, Holly describes an overexposure to all types of media. She fell short of the ideal female beauty standards the media fed to her, which caused low self-esteem. Her trafficker was able to appeal to her by using the line *'You're pretty enough to be a model'* (H. Smith 65). Pimps are known to regularly play off girls' insecurities to lure them in. Holly believes that a main reason for these insecurities is the media.

The media in this sense is a perpetrator, and Holly's discussion of it aligns with the human rights framework because of the way media impacts culture and how culture impacts values and how values influence behavior. On some level Holly wonders if we can really blame anyone for buying into the hypersexualized and degrading messages portrayed by the media, "If we as a society accept widespread images of women and children being treated as commercial and as sexual objects, why would a middle school girl, a high school boy, a grown man, or a trafficker feel any differently?" (H. Smith 88). Both perpetrators and victims are part of a culture that objectifies women sexually. In this excerpt Holly wonders if we should blame men for internalizing and acting upon those messages or blame girls for believing them. The media is a powerful cultural force that both perpetrators and the enslaved are exposed to. Seeing both perpetrators and victims as enmeshed in complicated cultural webs is part of the human rights

framework. It is also a part of comic framing, in which it envisions perpetrators not as vicious, but rather as misguided.

Elisabeth blames military culture as a cause for the demand of sex trafficking. She says that PTSD is very common and that men are encouraged to deal with the after-effects of war in whatever means they deem necessary. Purchasing sex is acceptable in military culture. What is even more disturbing to her, though, is that purchasing sex from minors is also acceptable. She writes

When my father sold me to the brothel, it was located right down the street from Quantico. Almost all of my customers were military. Many were still in uniform. I was nine years old. Every service member knew I was not eighteen years old. I am absolutely convinced that the military leadership was aware of that brothel. I am also sure there was no discouragement. This is a cultural issue. This must be stopped. (Corey May 27, 2013)

Because of her personal experience, Elisabeth is the only survivor in this sample set to point a finger at the military as an explanation for the demand, but she is not the only one who points a finger at institutions and culture. Her nod to the military is a nod to a historically sexist institution. The sexist and even dangerous attitudes towards women are highlighted in the documentary *The Invisible War*. This film investigates the epidemic of rape within the U.S. military explaining the prevalence of female soldiers being raped by other military members and the system's cover-up of these crimes ("About: The Movie"). The institution of the military is embedded in a culture that relies heavily on static gender roles and dominant narratives of power, which perpetuate gender inequality and violence. One of the critiques of the neoabolitionist framework is that they rely heavily on the picture of the damsel in distress, which can re-inscribe these narratives of power. This depiction emphasizes "protection over autonomy and empowerment" (Soderland 81).

Rebecca explains misogynist cultural values as the reason for the violence within trafficking and prostitution. She writes, “I want to end the divisions between sex trafficking and prostitution—and instead seeing with a clear eye that the conditions are similar, see that all are in the line of male violence and hate” (Mott Apr. 2, 2014). She also calls prostitution “an extreme form of torture and a matter of slavery” (Mott May 12, 2014). Christine, another survivor, explains trafficking as the “tidal wave of male violence towards women” (Bales and Trodd 102). While gender-based violence is a cause of sex trafficking, the way it is explained here, makes it sound unstoppable. There is no doubt that these women experienced violence at the hands of men that could be described as torture. However, can this male violence be attributed to male hatred towards women? Or something else? Explaining the issue as a result of male hatred towards women frames the issue in a tragic way. There is a sense of fatalism, of powerlessness, when trafficking is explained by male hatred and violence, which is a common plot device in tragedies. Burke writes, “Call a man a villain, and you have the choice of either attacking or cringing. Call him mistaken and you invite yourself to attempt to setting him right” (*Attitudes* 4). In this example, the hatred of the men and the torture of the slavery causes the audience member to cringe, to get angry, but only explaining it in these terms gives the reader little idea of how to respond. Not knowing how to respond can leave the reader feeling helpless and resigned, believing that this is the way of the world.

Rebecca’s arguments about the slave-like conditions of prostitution fit into the neoabolitionist framework towards sex trafficking, which the human rights framework supporters critique because of the moral qualities they believe are behind the explanation. Alison Brysk writes in “Rethinking Trafficking: Human Rights and Private Wrongs” that “The United States has a particular history of Protestant condemnation of prostitution and a quest for

social purity through the abolition rather than the prevention or regulation of socially harmful activities” (Brysk 82). The critique of this view is that the neoabolitionists are more concerned with the type of work, that is, illicit sex, and place less of a concern on the welfare of the victims. Brysk asserts that the real problem is “powerlessness, not prostitution” (Brysk 75). However, Rebecca, who is British, complicates this notion about the motivation of those who equate prostitution with sex trafficking. She started her blog because the number of prostitutes that are murdered on the job sickened her. She was tired that the murder of prostitutes only got media attention if it was part of a serial murder case. She feels like they are a disposable class of people that society cares little about. She writes,

I see prostitution as a violation of the prostituted woman’s or girl’s human rights. Her rights to safety. Her right to dignity. Her rights not to be tortured. To fight for justice for prostituted women and girls is not a moral issue. It is an issue of giving them back their right to be full humans. (Mott June 19, 2008)

She also says that “I don’t care what you do in your private lives. But do not be part of an industry that is giving men permission to treat prostituted women and girls as sub-humans” (Mott Nov. 27, 2008). For her it’s not “just individual men being nasty to individual prostituted women and girls. Men who buy sex all are paying for a system that said there is a whole class of women and girls that are ‘hard wired’ to enjoy/accept any fantasy the man has” (Mott Sept. 30, 2008). Here Rebecca seems to be integrating the two frameworks. She is explaining all forms of prostitution as slavery; however, she is not approaching it from a moral standpoint, and is even using the language of the human rights framework. She believes that prostitutes are part of a system that treats them as a separate class and wants to address this system.

In the scholarly literature on human trafficking the neoabolitionist framework and the human rights framework to trafficking are set up as binaries, as opposites. However, the survivor narratives do not fall into these binaries. Many times they combine and synthesize parts

of the different frameworks, leading to new ideas, new ways of seeing the issue. Burke called this “perspective by incongruity,” which takes concepts that seem incompatible, and places them side by side to show an alternative perspective. In describing this theory, Joseph R. Gusfield writes, “Perspective by incongruity is more than style in Burke. It is an exhortation to see the limited nature of any one cognitive framework...A new taxonomy, a new vocabulary produces an additional angle from which to see reality (Gusfield 26). While abolishing prostitution has previously been viewed as a moral agenda, the words of this survivor gives an alternative perspective, a new way of seeing, which may suggest that those fighting for the abolition of prostitution are concerned with human rights abuses just as much as those who advocate for the human rights framework. This perspective by incongruity reveals that these two camps may not be so opposite after all. The overlaps of these frameworks will be explored in more detail in the next section, which describes the ways survivors call for action and change.

In her article, “Beautiful Dead bodies: Gender, Migration and Representation in Anti-Trafficking Campaigns,” Women’s Studies scholar Rutvica Andrijasevic claims that “the representation of trafficking relies on an extremely simplistic dualism that sets apart young and innocent victims from malevolent traffickers” (32). The representations referred to in this article align with the neoabolitionist framework. The tragic frame is also described as a simplistic dualism of black and white, of heroes and villains. The problem with the tragic frame, and I would argue the neoabolitionist framework, is that it “works rhetorically and ideologically to relieve the public of its social complicity and culpability” (Ott and Aoki 485). As Ott and Aoki suggest in their analysis of the media framing of the Matthew Shepard murder,

The shortcoming of tragic framing is that it brings about symbolic resolution without turning the event into a lesson for those involved...this mode aggressively perpetuates the status quo, cloaking but not erasing the public’s homophobia so that it can return another day. (Ott and Aoki 496)

In relation to sex trafficking, tragic framing can re-inscribe narratives about deviant individuals, morality, and women's victimization, presenting the issue with "clear-cut moral characters—victims and criminals" (Hua, *Trafficking Women's Human Rights* 54). As the findings from my study suggest, both tragic framing and the neoabolitionist framework are incomplete and are therefore an inaccurate depiction of the reality of sex-trafficking survivors. The terministic screen of this framework is blind to crucial aspects of survivors' realities. This chapter has served to highlight the many examples of how the neoabolitionist framework is resisted or complicated with concepts integrated from the human rights framework. At the same time, there are clear ways in which the human rights framework is resisted, especially in the way it explains and depicts perpetrators. Each framework "contains its own special kind of blindness" (Burke, *Attitudes* 41). The goal of the next chapter is an attempt to set these blindnesses right by an alternative perspective, a perspective by incongruity that will fuse the two frameworks in the ways survivors combine the frameworks in their narratives, and suggest potential avenues for change.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

When approached from a certain point of view, A and B are ‘opposites.’ We mean by ‘transcendence’ the adoption of another point of view from which they cease to be opposites (Burke, *On Symbols and Society* 275).

Seeing the world from its opposite, from incongruity, is not a literary conceit. It is a serious method...It is a means for overcoming the limitations, which any single system of thought and classification places on us. It is an unsettling process in which transformation is potentially possible (Gusfield 7-8).

The neoabolitionist framework of trafficking and the human rights framework of trafficking have been set up in the scholarly literature as irreconcilable opposites, suggesting that alliance with one framework rejects the values and work of the other. However, the women in this study find ways to integrate the two frameworks, creating a narrative that does not quite inhabit either framework. By doing this, these women create a hybrid, an alternative framework to describe their experiences. When traditionally incongruous ideas are placed side-by-side and rearranged it creates what Burke calls a perspective by incongruity that can “produce new ways of seeing” (Gusfield 26). This alternative perspective can transcend the original incompatible ideas. I believe that the women in this sample set transcend the boundaries of the two prominent frameworks of sex trafficking, by juxtaposing unlike ideas. This juxtaposition allows for new ways of seeing and responding to the issue. To illustrate this point, I give some examples of how the women blend the two frameworks in their discussion of solutions and change.

Transcending Frameworks for Change

With ten women’s voices, these survivors offer a variety of solutions to combat sex trafficking. The neoabolitionist framework advocates for individual level change and the necessity of rescue by law enforcement. The human rights framework emphasizes

empowerment of victims and that solutions should be more structural. There are several survivors that advance the idea that change needs to happen both at the individual and structural level.

Rebecca and Rachel M. mention their belief in a law that prosecutes buyers as part of the solution. Punishing buyers would more thoroughly help to decrease the demand. This focus on law enforcement and punishment is characteristic of the neoabolitionist framework. However, while Rachel M. believes a law like this would be an important step, she says it isn't enough

I've always said that legislation alone will never eradicate prostitution unless and until it addresses the constraints of women's choices that turn women towards prostitution in the first place... Whether a woman was coming to prostitution for the first time as a thirty-something mother who'd just found herself the sole provider for her kids, whether she's been years on the game and just could not see or imagine any way out, whether she, like me, had come to prostitution through homelessness and destitution, in all these scenarios we women needed more than the criminalization of demand to have a positive impact on our lives. (Moran May 29, 2012)

Here Rachel M. blends the two frameworks of neoabolitionism and human rights. She claims that laws are important, but strong laws that go after the "bad guys" do not solve everything for the victims. In this quote she mentions poverty as a reason many women find themselves in these situations and a law that criminalizes demand does not address this. In explaining Burke's theory, Joseph R. Gusfield says, "In his often-quoted phrase 'perspective by incongruity,' sometimes also expressed by 'the comic corrective,' he (Burke) takes aim against monistic thinking that fails to reveal the limits of a single form of thought to understand and experience reality" (Gusfield 23). Rachel M. helps show that an approach entirely dedicated to laws and their enforcement does not encompass or change her own reality. By explaining the importance of laws, as well as empowering women, she gives a fuller, more comprehensive way for change.

Rachel M. isn't the only survivor to blend the two frameworks. Carissa says, "Though empowerment is the goal, the first step continues to be the most grueling and at times the least rewarding work: rescuing victims from the street and providing for their immediate needs" (Phelps 290). Rescuing victims and caring for their immediate needs is the standard solution for the neoabolitionist movement. However, what makes this solution a blend is the idea of empowering survivors. Carissa makes the case that empowerment is difficult to do if victims are still in their exploitative environment. This particular excerpt shows how Carissa blends the approaches in the same concept, in the same sentence. Several of the survivors gave a list of different solutions, placing solutions that are performed at the individual level and solutions that are more structural on the same list. Carissa emphasizes the power of mentors to help her keep her life on track. Patient, kind, accepting teachers and counselors who knew her past and gave her positive encouragement are the main reasons she attributes to successfully graduating high school, college, law school, and a MBA program. By combining empowerment and longer-term solutions with the idea of immediate rescue, as well as suggesting the value of individual intervention like mentors, Carissa utilizes perspective by incongruity. She takes parts of the neoabolitionist framework and the human rights framework and explains how rescue and empowerment are both possible and how individual level solutions can make a deep and abiding change in a girl's life. This combination provides the audience member who knows of the different frameworks an alternative perspective, a perspective from a survivor's voice about what worked for her, and if anything, this alternative perspective asks those, especially those who subscribe to one framework or the other, to explore the different options proposed by Carissa.

Holly also suggests solutions that blend the two frameworks. Many of her solutions point to the systems and structures. For example, she believes that john schools alone aren't effective,

because by this time it is very hard for men to unlearn the misogynistic viewpoints they've adopted.

I worry the issue runs much deeper than any 'john school' can fix. There are men and older boys looking to sexually exploit women and girls in every city and suburb across America. There needs to be a diversion program that begins in high school, middle school, even elementary school. It begins with media literacy. Kids must be raised with the understanding that images of objectified and exploited women and girls create a climate that supports violence against women and children. (H. Smith 103)

Holly combines her suggestions of larger societal factors with ways that individuals can help.

She suggests that people stop buying products from advertisers and artists that objectify women.

She also points to the systems while providing an individual solution to help fix them. "Victims of commercial sexual exploitation are often raised by families struggling with a myriad of personal and social issues, including poverty, domestic violence, addiction, and mental illness.

Supporting *any* organization that provides services to vulnerable children *and their families* will help" (H. Smith 170). She encourages her readers to donate time or money, however small, to a host of causes that can indirectly and directly advance anti-human trafficking efforts. She asks her audience to volunteer their time and talent. These examples illustrate the ways in which these women want intervention and prevention efforts at multiple levels: individual, local, and communal.

"The Listening Abolitionist"

In 1827, the first issue of the *Freedom's Journal*, an abolitionist newspaper, included the following quote: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly" (Bales and Trodd 2). The misrepresentation of the experiences of slaves continues today.

Slavery expert Kevin Bales writes,

When we typecast freed slaves as pathetic victims, however well meaning that action might be, we deny the unique truth of each lived experience of slavery. We once again steal the individuality of the person who has been enslaved. If we do so to make slavery meet our own emotional, social, and economic needs, then we are not serving freedom—only ourselves. The antidote to this hubris is to be guided by those who know slavery best and appreciate freedom most: The survivors of slavery...if we listen, we'll be better abolitionists. (Bales, *Foreword* xii).

Rhetoric and Composition scholar Krista Ratcliffe has noted the importance of listening as a means to understanding. She says that by listening to understand one must do more than listen for one's own interests and agreements. Instead of understanding one must do a "standing under," acknowledging our own viewpoint and then "letting discourses wash over, through and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics" (Ratcliffe 205). This kind of understanding avoids the desire to master or appropriate the discourse, but instead is receptive, carving out space for this discourse to be heard (207). In this space there also needs to be a place for dissonance, as listening for understanding may involve being "challenged, convicted and hurt by the truth" (210).

To those who subscribe to the neoabolitionist way of portraying victims, I would argue that if these organizations want to serve more than themselves, want more than financial support or want to do more than sensationalize their subject matter to move audiences to action, they must listen to the ways the survivors in this sample set talked about themselves. These women do not want to be seen only as victims. Yes, they were victims of terrible abuse, but this does not mean that they were completely powerless; they fought hard, struggled, and found ways to resist, even if it was small acts of daily resistance. They are uncomfortable when the only response to their story is pity. They also want the narrative of trafficking victims to be complicated. Some women are kidnapped, forced into brothels, and are prey to a plan of elaborate deception. Other women's stories do not follow this plotline and yet they end up in similar places with similar outcomes. They want others to understand the blurred lines regarding

choice or as Richardson calls it, “trauma-induced choices,” and how sex trafficking victims come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and age. There is no ideal victim; there are only victims who are exploited.

This redefining of victimhood can happen through awareness. Awareness as a means for change was mentioned by all of the survivors in this sample set, and one reason awareness is so important to them is because it can help others recognize that those who are victims of this crime rarely fit into a neat category. Holly calls for a change in the representation of anti-trafficking campaigns. These campaigns use sensational images of children chained up, and while there are cases of trafficking like this, these images distort public knowledge of the issue. She says,

Many children in the United States are lured into trusting their traffickers, or they are intimidated or exploited by traffickers and/or buyers because of their lack of options. Because their situations do not match those widespread anti-trafficking images depicting violence, these victim are often left feeling as if they are at fault. Or worse, the public may project fault onto them. Awareness campaigns must included images of *all* potential cases of trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Otherwise society will continue to label certain kids as ‘child prostitutes’ or ‘teen prostitutes’ as opposed to *victims*. (H. Smith 14)

Representations need to be more accurate, need to bring about the appropriate awareness to provoke a response that helps *all* who are exploited in this way. Representation can change the language of trafficking, which can then change public attitudes. As scholar Julietta Hua says, “Conceptual frames delimit how and what gets identified as trafficking, and who is able to become legible as trafficking subject” (Hua, *Trafficking Women’s Human Rights* 121). Mass Communication experts Anne Johnston, Barbara Friedman, and Meghan Sobel agree with Hua by claiming

Through the framing of the parameters of the problem or issue, news media coverage of such issues may set the stage for how policy makers and the public understand that problem and, consequently, respond to it. Particularly in early reporting of an issue, there is power in the words used, the sources cited, and the issues and definitions associated with the problem. (Johnston, Friedman, and Sobel 13)

Public policy and public perception have a bearing on the material reality of victims. The language used to describe the issue and those involved contains power.

Rachel L. in particular advocates for an attention to language within representation and awareness, a point particularly relevant for Rhetoric and Composition scholars. She writes,

Constantly reframing the issue and changing the language has been imperative in changing public reception and sympathies. It's been a battle particularly with people in the media who feel that using the term commercially sexually exploited will confuse their audience. One reporter refused to change his terminology, saying that he felt that the term was 'euphemistic.' We debated for a while on how sexually exploited could possibly be considered euphemistic when it accurately described what actually happened to children and youth, whereas *child prostitute* seemed to denote *who* the child was as opposed to what was being done *to* her. In his article, he went ahead and called them 'teen prostitutes' anyway, failing perhaps to understand that it wasn't a question of semantics, that words, names, terminology really do matter. (Lloyd 215)

Johnston, Friedman and Sobel argue that phrases like "domestic minor sex trafficking" or "commercial sexual exploitation" are not assumed by journalists because they are "trained to favor brevity and to write for a mass audience" (16). This is a way in which speaking for others becomes unethical, as it is not serving the needs of those who are being spoken for.

Misrepresentation can be potentially more harmful than no representation.

These women care about how they are represented by others. However, a central tenet of the human rights perspective also advocates for survivors to have self-representation. Survivors need to be trained in "politics, profit, and power" and "representation in political, economic, and cultural spaces" in order to prevent re-exploitation and improve conditions for others who are vulnerable (Choi-Fitzpatrick, "Human Rights Approach" 12). While survivor leadership and survivor advocates are not discussed much as solutions in the human trafficking literature, the importance of survivor leadership takes main stage in these survivor narratives. Part of the reason may be because many of these authors self-identify as survivor advocates and believe that their voices need to be leading the movement. Rachel L. dedicates an entire chapter on

leadership and other survivors, like Carissa, reference Rachel L.'s work as a model. Carissa claims, "Continuing the transition from victim to survivor and later to advocate enhances the quality of our services and keeps our efforts in outreach and prevention informed. How can we know about the greatest harms done in our communities unless we build bridges for those who have lived through them?" (Phelps 290). Though Rachel L. is quick to point out that those who are survivors have had much of their life dictated for them and that no survivor should feel forced to be a leader or an advocate in the field. If they want a break from anything that reminds them of their past, that choice should be respected. However, increasingly survivors are trying to be involved in raising awareness.

While the previous chapter made claims about the dangers of tragic framing, and I do believe the social consequences of how this issue is framed are substantial, it is important to note that the women consistently portray their perpetrators in a tragic way that aligns more with the neoabolitionist perspective. By portraying traffickers and pimps as evil, corrupt individuals, there is a risk of framing sex trafficking as a problem of social deviance, something that several of the survivors reject. However, ignoring the interpersonal violence of traffickers and looking only at the structural violence inflicted by issues like poverty and gender inequality would be inauthentic to these women's experiences. In testifying to their experiences, these women should report on the cruel acts of violence they encountered every day; omitting these details would omit the realities of what it means to be a sex trafficking victim and survivor. This means that those who align with the human rights framework need to think of ways to represent perpetrators that are genuinely informed by the women's experience. The violence of traffickers has been highly visible in representations of trafficking and the contributing structural issues and other outside actors like government and corporations have been relatively invisible. It is

therefore a significant project to make visible the systems that allow trafficking to thrive. However, these women focus on the interpersonal violence that created an environment of fear and enslavement. This emphasis should not be silenced by academics because it fails to fit within the human rights framework. Academics need to listen to these narratives and not try to mold them into a particular agenda. The challenges going forward will be to find a balance of revealing the inhumane actions of perpetrators, while at the same time not framing trafficking as entirely a result of these actions. As some of the women suggested, it is also important to uncover how society at large is complicit.

Breaking the Binary

The tensions between individual and structural understandings and representations of a phenomenon are by no means limited to the discussions surrounding the neoabolitionist framework and the human rights framework. In media studies, individual and structural portrayals of a problem are called episodic framing or thematic framing (Johnston, Friedman and Sobel 6). In a study conducted by Mass Communication experts, 710 newspaper stories and 79 broadcast stories on sex trafficking from the years 2008-2012 were collected and analyzed for their framing techniques. The findings demonstrate that

As an issue becomes more familiar on the public agenda; that is, once the basic ‘facts’ have been established, the news coverage can move from episodic to more thematic reporting, as is demonstrated in the later years of the sample. Given that thematic framing tends to lend itself more to notions of collective responsibility, the shift in sex trafficking coverage to the use of more thematic frames may demonstrate the beginnings of a transformation in societal perceptions of accountability regarding the issue. (Johnston, Friedman and Sobel 26)

While this study showed a predominance of episodic framing in the media’s coverage of sex trafficking, it also signaled a shift towards more thematic framing, which may also signal a shift in broader understandings of the issue (Johnston, Friedman, and Sobel 29). In her book

Rhetorics for Community Action, Phyllis Mentzell Ryder notes that the dichotomy between behavioralism and structuralism is common in discussion of social issues and notes that Cornel West, in his work *Race Matters*, argues that “we need to create a space for a third option, one which acknowledges the interrelationship between structural and behavioral root causes and one which allows for an agency that is neither only individual nor only about collective action against institutions of power” (Ryder 47). I too advocate for a third option in relation to sex trafficking. This option would break down the dichotomies of the existing frameworks and take the best aspects of both according to the survivors.

Final Thoughts

One of the central questions driving this research is the question: How can survivor narratives best be used to inform future framing of and response to human trafficking? I hope my analysis of survivor narratives can suggest ways that individual and systematic methods towards creating change are possible and that personal and societal factors are both responsible for the proliferation of sex trafficking. My findings also reveal that survivors do not want to be only recast in the victim role. As the survivors suggest and as scholars argue, this innocent, disempowered victim is a distorted filter, an inaccurate framing device. Representations can also be dangerous when they use too much sentimental appeal, by overemphasizing the abuse and violence. Julietta Hua argues that “the exoticization of the suffering makes it both easier and harder to care—easier in that the spectacular nature of the narrative draws us in, yet harder because we are distanced from it, unable to see how we are complicit” (Hua, “Telling Stories” 202). However, the abuse and violence must be present in some way as they are a fundamental part in the trafficking experience. Finding a way to balance these representations may be challenging, but with collaborative work among different stakeholders can be possible.

In her chapter titled “Ethnography and the Problem of the ‘Other,’” Patricia Sullivan explains that when “we seek to understand and render the lived experiences of others, our research should ultimately aim to benefit those whose voices, text, and circumstances make such understanding possible” (98). It is my hope that my analysis of these women’s stories will contribute to more realistic representations of sex trafficking narratives. My suggestions for framing are not my own, they are not my ideas or words, but rather a relaying of the suggestions of the survivors in this sample set. Because these findings are found in the genre of a thesis, I also have to think about audience reception. My words will most likely reach other academics, but it is my hope that they do not end there. As Laura T. Murphy says about her edited collection *Survivors of Slavery*, this thesis has both scholarly and activist purposes, and like her I believe that “rigorous scholarship that is profoundly informed by first-hand lived experience is the foundation of effective change in the world” (Murphy, “Introduction” 2). Because I have activist purposes in the writing of this research, I would like to conclude this thesis with a section that provides suggestions for how those speaking for and representing survivors could frame their language in ways that better reflect the experience of the women in this sample set, though I understand that this sample set is small and does not encompass all the stories and experiences of those who identify as victims of sex trafficking. As more women continue to find the courage to share their story, we should clear space to listen and understand what each individual has to say.

Suggestions for those Representing Survivors

- Do your research and practice reciprocity. Make sure to check back with the survivor whose story you are portraying after you have written the story to make sure that it is an accurate portrayal.
- Try to show the range of both causes and solutions at both the individual and structural levels. This can help make visible the complexity of the issue and the many ways to get involved.

- Find ways to portray these women that do not make them *only* objects of pity. Gauging this might be difficult and may include an analysis of audience reception.
- It is important to explain the realities of violence in these situations of exploitation. However, try to find ways to avoid demonizing traffickers, as this strategy makes invisible the ways the audience members and society as a whole may be complicit.

I reach the end of this thesis feeling a sense of hope. This is a significant place to be as there were times during the research process when I felt a sense of hopelessness. There were moments when the cruelty, injustice, and inhumanity portrayed in these narratives felt overwhelming and I wondered why I had decided to engage in research on this topic. I wondered if the abolition of slavery was possible. As I continued with my research, I was renewed by the survivors' enthusiasm and desire to advocate for change even after such horrific experiences. They believe that there are many ways to get involved and make a difference. As a member of the field of Rhetoric and Composition, I am a believer in the power of language to enact social change. I am hopeful that by offering an alternative perspective to the common frameworks of sex trafficking and by providing an analysis of sex trafficking representation that this thesis is a small step towards change.

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