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Human Trafficking in the Media: Who, What, Where, and Why?

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE MEDIA: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, AND WHY?

by

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Abstract

This study examines themes within the media around the coverage of human trafficking. Theory of media framing suggests that the media holds the power to influence the ideas and beliefs the public has around issues through the information presented. This study presents a content and thematic analysis of three newspapers in Delaware, Maine, and South Dakota during the year 2014. Themes emerge within the categories of what is human trafficking, where is it happening, who is involved, and why is it happening. Overall, there was a lack of discussion and explanation about what human trafficking actually is. In addition, analysis revealed rich yet incomplete portrayals of prey, perpetrators, and rescuers. While coverage revealed several common messages within the media, the "blanks" and missing information illustrated the several needs within the media discussion of trafficking.

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Introduction

Human trafficking is a social problem trending both domestically and abroad with estimates of millions of victims within a multibillion dollar industry. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has documented human trafficking as the fastest growing industry of organized crime (Alexandre et. al., 2014). Furthermore, at least 700,000 persons annually are victims of trafficking within or across international borders (United States government, 2000). According to the Victims of Trafficking Protection Act of 2000, human trafficking refers to

> the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (US government, 2000).

Due to the growing prevalence of this problem, this study seeks to explore the media's coverage of the issue and identifying any themes that present themselves. Given the critical importance of news in shaping public attitude, examining the portrayal of human trafficking in news can shed light on how trafficking is perceived, what types of policy and service responses are crafted, and how journalism can provoke social change. This study was undertaken to examine popular journalism on human trafficking in three states to determine the meanings that are communicated to the reader as the basis for informing activism.

Background

Framing theory: an important analytic lens for media analysis

The majority of Americans gather their information about events and issues through diverse forms of popular media. Even in the digital age, journalism and electronic or paper newspapers are consulted by over 60% of news consumers, rending this medium influential, not only in providing information, but also in influencing belief and attitude ("The Pressing News Cycle", 2014). Through media, the public learns about political elections, wars, natural disasters, sporting events, etc. which would not have been otherwise obtained. The public looks to the media to inform and interpret these events. As a result, the media holds the power to influence what the public learns (Wallinger, 2010).

Framing theory has been particularly useful in analyzing the interaction between media and consumer. By framing, Templeton refers to the intentional or unintentional process of a communicator creating a perspective that shapes the interpretation of the message receiver around a particular issue, event, or problem (2011). This technique is used to emphasize certain aspects of a subject while de-emphasizing or ignoring others. How an event is framed, in turn, affects how a problem is defined, what are observed to be the causes of the problem and its consequences, and what solutions are seen as effective for remediating or resolving all or part of the problem (Gulati, 2010). The media often use particular words, phrases, or images to provide a shorthand interpretation of a subject, which forms a point of view by which future actions related to that problem may be judged (Templeton, 2011). In an inductive logical process, authors both search and then code for specific frames or for various categories such as issue foci, sources, causes,

and solutions. Researchers suggest that rather than affecting the issue by sparking debate, the news media tend to echo the narratives presented by the major participants in the policy process; as a result, the news helps support the dominant views (Gulati, 2010). For this reason, framing theory can be extremely useful in identifying predominant values and their actualization in policy. Frame theory has been used by several researchers to examine how attitudinal and policy responses to human trafficking have been approached. This theoretical framework, although emergent in its application to trafficking, show promise for expanding and deepening knowledge to understand the association between policy and public attitudes related to trafficking.

Human trafficking and the media

Human trafficking is usually generalized as the procurement and maintenance of free labor by use of force (Wallinger, 2010). There are three main forms of human trafficking: trafficking for forced labor, trafficking for sexual exploitation, and trafficking of organs. Each form utilizes the vulnerability of another to limit a person's rights ("Types of human trafficking, n.d.). According to *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, human trafficking violates several essential entitlements including the right to life, liberty, and security of person; the right to be free from slavery or servitude; freedom from torture or to cruel or degrading treatment; and the right to work in just and favorable conditions (1948). As a result, trafficking also violate numerous laws, including laws against kidnapping, slavery, false imprisonment, assault, fraud, and extortion. Although human trafficking has occurred throughout documented history, it has not been considered a crime until recently (Alexandre et. al., 2014). It was not until the year 2000 when the first policy and legislation were created in the United States to help reduce

these crimes. This increase in policy attention also facilitated an increase in academic and research attention. Research has been focused on diverse approaches that result in empirically informed descriptions and explanations of human trafficking. One of these agendas which is particularly potent in advancing analysis investigates human trafficking within the media. Media hold the power to steer public to opinions through the information and language articulated and shared. A number of the articles using media framing and agenda setting theory present content analysis of the text of newspaper articles each revealing meaning and then quantifying it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

In Pajnik's (2010) work with Slovenian newspapers, the text analysis showed four consistent frames: criminalization, nationalization, victimization, and regularization. Criminalization describes human trafficking as a highly profitable, illicit industry which could be eradicated through stricter legislation and more severe punishments. Nationalization depicts trafficking as a problem with illegal immigration and border control. This frame focuses on migration and immigration as causes for trafficking. Victimization refers to innocent woman who have been exploited and harmed by trafficking. Finally, the frame of regularization depicts the new legislation and training for law enforcement as a mandatory and normal procedure once the trafficking has occurred, but one that omits prevention and combating trafficking. While Pajnik explains, in depth, the descriptions of the four frames and their meanings within the Slovenian media, she does not include magnitude statistics, so the strength of each theme is unknown. Alexandre et al. (2014) employ two frames: government responsibility and societal responsibility. This article presents research comparatively analyzing the national characteristics and magnitude of each frame within eighteen different countries. The data

shows that higher GDP per capita was positively correlated with a media emphasis on government responsibility to end trafficking. In addition, the authors found a significant correlation between female school life expectancy and media support of government responsibility. The conclusions only presented the data which supported the frame of government responsibility and thus may have reflected a political agenda.

Another methodology for examining the effects of framing in the media is thematic analysis. This strategy is particularly useful for finding aggregate meaning in diverse media texts (DePoy & Gitlin, 2010). Although some categories differ from article to article, there is a common set of themes across the contemporary research, including type of trafficking addressed, solutions, causes, and sources mentioned. Gulati (2010) analyzed media representation of human trafficking in the US, Great Britain, and Canada from 2000-2005. This author coded for type of article, placement of the article, type of trafficking addressed, sources cited, causes cited, and solutions cited. Findings revealed that the articles rarely addressed labor trafficking unless the topic was paired with a discussion of illegal immigration. In addition, within the news of each country, over 50% of the articles did not mention a preventive solution to the trafficking. Sobel (2012), affirmed this finding. Sobel analyzed the effect of the United Nation's anti-trafficking initiative in 2012 on newspapers from India, Thailand, and the US by collecting and comparing data before and after the initiative launched. After the UN document was release, the number of articles mentioning solutions increased. In addition, the Indian and Thai articles began to discuss human trafficking as a reoccurring issue rather than an isolated incident. These data are contradictory to Johnston et al.'s (2012) analysis which revealed that the media described sex trafficking as event-driven and more episodic than

a thematic reoccurring problem. These authors coded news articles addressing sex trafficking in major US papers in 2009. The authors found that when crime was the major frame, the sources were usually from law enforcement or government officials; whereas, when policy or human rights was the frame, the sources came from more academically-oriented officials or experts. Marchionni (2012) analyzed the coverage of human trafficking within the US and British press from 2002-2006. Marchionni looked specifically at which form of trafficking was addressed (sex, labor, domestic, other, several, and non-specific) and found that sex trafficking as the most frequently appearing subcategory.

Summary of literature

Overall throughout the research reviewed, there were common conclusions. First, sex trafficking was the most common form addressed. Next, victims were one of the least groups cited as informants within articles. Finally, the most common frame between crime, policy, or human rights was crime; the most common sources include government officials and law enforcement.

Through the two methodologies discussed in the work above, authors attempted to achieve understanding of media effect on the public's view of human trafficking, analyzing the various frames and possible agendas that the media commonly utilize. In each study, the researcher assigned various search terms to develop a database of articles for analysis; some terms were more inclusive than others. Some researchers utilized only "human trafficking" (Marchionni, 2012) or "trafficking in human beings" (Pajnik, 2010). Moreover, these research articles expressed a need for more research within this field. Given the limitations of imposing preexisting categories (frames) on text analysis,

expanding interpretive potential could illuminate additional understandings of trafficking media, its reflection of attitude and purpose, as well as its potential to shape public opinion. This study was therefore undertaken to meet this call using an inductive methodological approach that does not constrain analysis within preexisting theory.

Methodology

A naturalistic study relying on narrative analysis was used to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the common themes around human trafficking within the media?

RQ2: What are the differences in themes between the three states reflecting diverse policy approaches to trafficking?

Data collection

Eighty-nine (89) articles from January 1st, 2014 to December 31st, 2014 appearing in the news venues presented in Table 1 were identified as the data source. Articles were selected if they contained the key word: "trafficking". Stories captured in the search that were not related to human trafficking, such as drug trafficking, were removed from this analysis. This strategy was selected to obtain current meanings reflected in popular culture news outlets in three states and to distinguish thematic differences among the states. The states were selected from the each tier (1 best, 4 worst) of the Polaris Project's annual report which ranks all fifty states based on ten categories of law which are critical for combating trafficking. One state from each tier was chosen: Delaware for Tier 1, Maine for Tier 2, and South Dakota for Tier 3. There are no longer any states in Tier 4. Delaware was selected from Tier 1 out of the three states with a perfect score because

Delaware is also one of the states which the Polaris Project mentioned was most improved for this year. Maine was chosen for the Tier 2 because of convenience and investigator interest. Finally, South Dakota was selected out of the two states in Tier 3 because in 2013 South Dakota was the only state in Tier 4. Newspapers from the most populated city within each state were chosen. Therefore, the three newspapers which were analyzed were *The News Journal* (Wilmington, DE), *The Portland Herald* (Portland, ME), and *Argus Leader* (Sioux Falls, SD).

Table #1: Number of Articles per Paper

	Delaware *The News Journal*	Maine *The Portland Herald*	South Dakota *Argus Leader*	Total
Number of articles (#)	20	35	34	89

Data analysis

Because of the framing's influence on the perception of human trafficking as an issue, naturalistic inquiry was conducted. This line of inquiry observes the process within its own contexts. Furthermore, thematic and taxonomic analyses were conducted to answer the research questions. Thematic analysis is an inductive process in which themes that emerges from inductive analysis of data. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes are identified as the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Each set of articles was read multiple times until themes emerged. The data analysis lent itself to the development of a rich taxonomy. Thus, taxonomy was developed depicting relationships and linkages among themes and sub-themes. To assure

the rigor criterion of credibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; 2012), multiple analyzers were used. Each article was read by three analyzers separately utilizing their knowledge on thematic analysis to develop their own findings of the patterns within each data set. Due to the interpretive nature of naturalistic research, the meanings negotiated until a final set of themes was agreed upon. Limited reflexive analysis was done in negotiation to identify the individual views which shaped each analyzer's findings.

Findings

RQ1: What are the common themes around human trafficking within the media?

The themes which progressed throughout all three states can be broken down into categories: what is it? Where does it happen? Who are the players? Why? (Figure 1. at the end of the section (page 22) displays a taxonomy map of the major themes.)

What is it?

When addressing what is human trafficking, there was an overall dearth of definitions, so its scope and substance were unclear in the journalistic narratives. Two elements of trafficking were consistent across defined and amorphous scopes: exploitation and manipulation. An implicit theme across all three states was the delimitation of trafficking to sex trafficking its substance. Moreover, South Dakota was the only state to provide a formal definition of any sort, in which the journalist of "Noem: Washington With Debate Sex Trafficking Bills This Year" (January 22nd, 2014) quoted, "Sex trafficking is defined in federal law as using force, fraud or coercion to entice another person to engage in a commercial sex act (Hult, 2014)." This definition provides a description of only one facet of the three forms of trafficking that exist. In fact, this

preference to sex trafficking can be seen throughout all states, for sex trafficking was the most prevalent type of trafficking covered. The journalist of "No such thing as a child prostitute" (February 18th, 2014) tries to humanize the victims for the public: "Sandra ran away from an abusive foster care home in Florida at 12. She was found at a bus stop by a pimp who promised to love and care for her forever. He sold her to at least seven men a night (Saarx, 2014)." Sandra, like many others, was manipulated by her pimp into thinking he loved her.

Where does it happen?

When discussing where trafficking exists, the news presented various geography locations where trafficking commonly is found. Trafficking's geography includes both physical and virtual. One major sub-theme under location was the propensity for a common link between trafficking and large events due to the convenience, large population trafficking, and anonymous nature of a crowd. Delaware's articles focused on two major locations for trafficking: I-95 highway and the Super Bowl. According to "The Super Bowl and Sex Trafficking" (January 23rd, 2014), Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott stated that the 2011 Super Bowl is "commonly known as the single largest human trafficking incident in the United States (Reagan & Elam, 2014)." South Dakota focuses on their event: the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. The majority of South Dakota's undercover operations went towards arresting "johns" from the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. The journalist states during one of the numerous cases,

> The conviction stems from Larive responding to a Craigslist advertisement posted by Division of Criminal Investigation undercover agents, which purported to offer young girls for sex. Larive was one of nine men who were arrested and federally

indicted as a result of an undercover sex trafficking operation during the 2013 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally (Associated Press, 2014b).

The focus on the Super Bowl and the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally emphasizes the correlation between large crowds and the human trafficking industry.

In the world of human trafficking, the virtual world functions as a place for both victim pool and distribution of "product". Journalist of "Social media factor in driving sex trafficking, speakers say" (February 25th, 2014) addresses the correlation between social media and human trafficking; the author elaborates on the relationship building which usually occurs: "She said it's generally not a dramatic incident that ensnares someone, but more often something that 'develops over weeks, even months, where they're drawn into a relationship (Walker, 2014).'" In addition to drawing in victims, traffickers often utilize websites like Backpages.com to sell their "products". Kristi Noem along with her fellow representatives of Congress sent letters to the U.S. Attorney General petitioning to prosecute Backpages.com for their site's involvement with human trafficking and prostitution. Noem states, "Every day, advertisements are posted on Backpage.com that market kids for commercial sex. We can't sit by while this happens (Lowrey, 2014)." This virtual realm serves to provide human trafficking with an accessible venue for illicit activities with a relatively low risk of punishment. The trend of human trafficking within the virtual world creates its own challenges and a need for more preventative measures for combating it.

In addition to the "where" theme, there was an element of negative tone associated with judgments of the media on the public. The newspapers created an underlying tone of scolding the public for allowing human trafficking to occur under the "public nose" so to speak, both in-built and virtual spaces which can be observed.

Who are the players?

The players are the prey, the perpetrators, and the rescuers.

The prey

The prey was generally portrayed as women or children who are vulnerable because of their own experiences as children of poor parenting, their own or parents' drug additions, immigrant statuses, naivety, etc. These prey targeted for sex slavery. Maine addresses this exploitative nature of trafficking in which the journalist of "More charges likely in central Maine sex trafficking cases" (April 24th, 2014) states,

> Finding women with rough childhoods is common practice for sex traffickers, according to Destie Hohman Sprague, program director of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault. "The reality is the majority of victims of sex trafficking have really tough backgrounds and we find that traffickers prey on that," she said Friday. "Victims come from such trauma and instability and this appears at first to be an opportunity for stability where they didn't previously have any." She said traffickers use that "as part of the coercion (Scardina & Calder, 2014)."

These messages reaffirm the idea that human trafficking victims are women who are vulnerable due to their previous trauma and backgrounds.

Who is missing in the prey roster? There was little to no mention within all three states around the victims of labor and organ trafficking; for example, the gardeners, maids, and domestic workers who are forced to work within homes and companies with little to no pay.

The perps

The perpetrators are either described as residents of the "hood" or villains. Residents of the "hood" are characterized as males, from poor backgrounds themselves. The villains tend to be an elusive organized crime network or individuals painted as men

within the lower classes who the public would expect to commit crimes. These residents

of the "hood" were best shown through the arrest photos presented to the public.

Journalist of "Three Gorham residents charged with sex trafficking" (March 18th, 2014)

provides an example of the perpetrators.

(Bridgers,

2014)

With the media constantly portraying these types of images, the public could be distanced

from their own involvement in human trafficking by creating the stereotype that only

people of lower status or "those types of people" participate in trafficking. In addition to

the stereotyping, there consisted of little to no discussion around demand within the realm

of human trafficking. The media failed to discuss the factors involved with "johns"

having easy access to victims of trafficking; furthermore, the media was unsuccessful at

conceptualizing the factors within our society which causes members of society to be

"johns".

The rescuers

Service providers, legislative officials, law enforcement, or advocates are the

heroes of the stories. The majority of South Dakota's articles utilized a "rescuer" agenda

to help promote the image that the heroes were taking action to combat human

trafficking, such as Kristi Noem and the law enforcement that were running undercover

operations. The majority of the articles in South Dakota mention Kristi Noem, South

Dakota's U.S. Representative. Journalist of "Rep. Kristi Noem: Focus needed on human

trafficking threat" illustrates common messages about Noem as a hero within the

legislative realm. "Noem has made human trafficking a signature issue, working with

House leadership on potential legislation that addresses the issue. Earlier this week, she

hosted an event in South Dakota called the 'Justice Against Slavery Summit' that focused

on potential solutions (Associated Press, 2014a)." In addition to highlighting their

legislative hero, South Dakota's newspapers emphasize the law enforcement's efforts

with undercover operations to arrest "johns". South Dakota's Attorney General was

quoted stating that "the undercover sex trafficking operations by state and federal

authorities are having a positive impact and showing results, but it's still a problem that

needs to be addressed (Associated Press, 2014c)." This rescuer agenda promotes the

government officials and comforts the public into believing that all the necessary

measures of combating trafficking are in place.

Why?

These prey, perpetrator, and rescuer stories within the media all provide a

purpose. Describing the victims as vulnerable and pitiable helps citizens feel outraged

and experience a call for action. Describing the perpetrator as a villain helps the public

distance themselves from the individuals because they may not associate with "those

kinds of people". Furthermore, each rescuer can utilize the agenda which benefits them.

For example, the legislative hero can gain public buy-in and lobbying momentum for

their proposed bill. Or the service provider may gain donations after gaining attention in the news.

An important aspect of these articles is to address who is missing within the media. There was a major lack of discussion around the players involved with long term solutions within the societal and economic environments which perpetuate the ability for human trafficking to sustain as a flourishing industry. Therefore, there is a need of economists, sociologists, academics, and the public to add their positions into the dialogue.

There were several explanatory elements which were storied in the narratives: inadequate policy, crime industry and profit, and morality. The most prevalent theme of the inadequacy within policy and legislation creates a lobbying agenda from this bolus of articles. Techniques used by journalists to increase favor for a particular legislative texts were shaming, guilt, and awareness raising. Several articles within each state linked human trafficking to a need for stricter immigration and border controls. Journalist of "No such thing as a child prostitute" (February 18th, 2014) utilizes guilt to call the public into action around arrest policy with prostitutes versus "johns". She maintains, "But should an abused child be incarcerated for the abuses perpetrated against her? The people who rape these girls, the politely termed "johns," are rarely arrested for statutory rape, child endangerment or sexual assault of a minor (Saarx, 2014)." This pity and uses of innocence provides a means to create an outrage within the public to take action.

Organized crime made a vague appearance in the news particularly to relieve the "uncaring" public from any responsibility in acknowledging trafficking or taking action to stop it. The extent of the organized crime is demonstrated through the crime industry

statistics. Journalist of "The Super Bowl and sex trafficking" (January 23rd, 2014) states, "In the United States, human trafficking is a $9.5 billion industry according to the United Nations (Reagan & Elam, 2014)." The author testifies further explaining, "The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports that the average age of a sex trafficked child in the United States is 13-14 years old and the average pimp controls 4-6 children and makes $150,000-$200,000 per year from each child (2014)." These statistics assist in the conceptualization of human trafficking as a flourishing, successful business.

The theme of morality made its presence known in attempts to designate individual blame for trafficking. Journalist of "No such thing as a child prostitute" calls to the public, declaring, **"**Perhaps it is too difficult to accept what happens on U.S. soil, to our own daughters. Regardless, we must call this trafficking what it is: serial, systematized rape. And we must care for these girls, too often invisible to society, as victims and survivors of child sexual abuse (Saarx, 2014)."

What were missing from the narratives were the important societal and structural causes of trafficking such as poverty, oppression, the stigma around prostitution, unemployment, patriarchy, etc.

Figure 1. Taxonomy Map
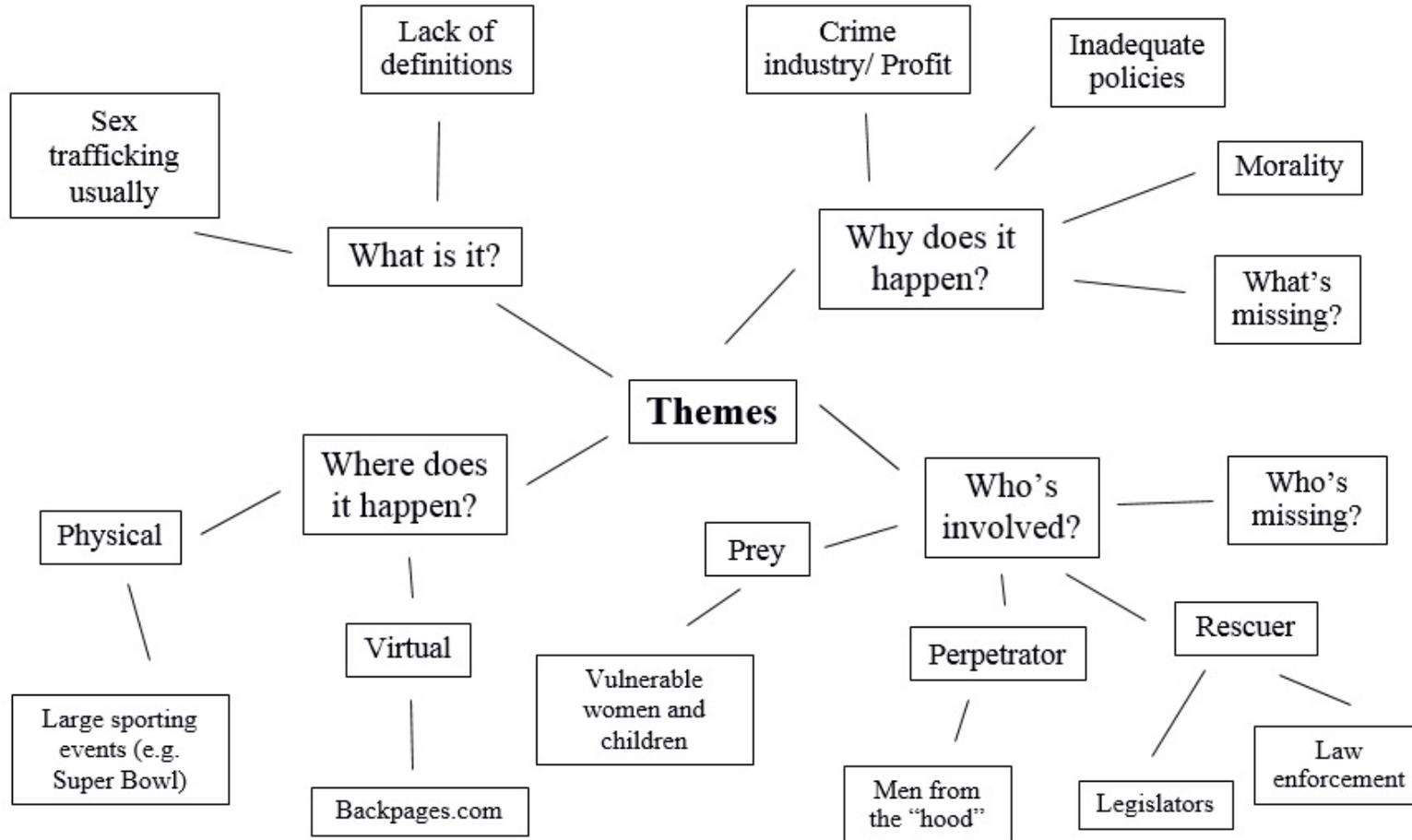
RQ2: What are the differences in themes between the three states reflecting diverse policy approaches to trafficking?

Within the common themes, each state had a slightly different lens through which trafficking was discussed in the media. Maine tended to have a case-focused voyeuristic frame, providing details of each individual isolated crime. South Dakota presented a legislation-focused frame, displaying Kristi Noem, South Dakota's Representative, as a rescuer and activist for human trafficking within the realm of policy development. Delaware journalists mixed isolated incidences with broader discussions tending to discuss "the bigger picture" and broader issues more commonly than Maine or South Dakota. In other words, while Maine and South Dakota commonly focus on each individual case of trafficking, Delaware tends to discuss human trafficking as a problem within society. This change in language helps reaffirm the notion that human trafficking is a pressing issue which needs to be dealt with. Editorial "It is time to fight human trafficking" (April 11th, 2014) utilizes this larger application to discuss trafficking as an issue for Delaware. The author states, "Law enforcement officials are just beginning to grasp how big the problem is. Most people when hearing the words "human trafficking" think about a far-away problem. Yet, according to federal statistics and other studies, human trafficking is the second most profitable enterprise. It ranks just below drug trafficking (Editorial, 2014)." The journalist creates the message that human trafficking is a flourishing business that is an issue within the United States, rather than addressing each isolated case.

Another characteristic which distinguished the states from one another was the difference of treatment of foreign perpetrators in Maine and South Dakota. Maine presented a piece on an Indian woman who took advantage of her housekeeper, an

example of labor trafficking. The result was the Indian woman being returned to India.

Whereas, South Dakota presented an article about an Iraqi man who kidnapped and sex

trafficked a woman, resulting in his conviction and life sentence. There were several

articles on this particular case including a quote from the Judge:

> An Iraqi refugee convicted on four sex-trafficking charges was sentenced Monday
> to concurrent life sentences on each count after U.S. District Court Judge Karen
> Schreier agreed with victims who called him a 'monster (Young, 2014).'

It is curious that a similar case in South Dakota involving a local man who kidnapped and

sex trafficked a woman only resulted in his conviction and sentence of ten years in

prison. This punishment revealed not only the variability in severity of punishments for

an equivalent crime but the harsh response to "the other" as a perpetrator.

Conclusion

The analysis revealed rich but incomplete stories and portrayals of prey,

perpetrator, and rescuer. Describing the victims as vulnerable and pitiable provokes

citizen outrage and extends a call for action. Vilifying the perpetrator distances the news

consumer from "those kinds of people" yet provides a platform for blaming an

identifiable persona. Thus, the agenda of call to action is neutralized by these stories as

the locus for action is perpetrator incarceration, not economic and social change. Each

rescuer can utilize the agenda which benefits him/her best. For example, the legislative

hero can gain public buy-in and lobbying momentum for his/her proposed bill. Or the

service provider may gain "business" or tax deductible donations after gaining attention

in the news.

Analyzing the "blanks" in the stories reveals equally as much as encountering the text itself. The major lack of discussion about the players and social and economic long term solutions perpetuates the sustainability of human trafficking as a flourishing industry. Therefore, there is a need to entice economists, sociologists, academics, and the public into the dialogue.

This is one of an emergent group of studies comparing the news media on human trafficking within different states of the US. Similar to Pajnik's findings, there was a common language about victims as innocents, naive, exploited woman and children. In addition, similar to Marchionni's work, this analysis revealed that sex trafficking was the most common form addressed.

It is interesting that there are vague or even no definitions and explanations about what human trafficking is accompanied with a lack of a conversation around the societal and economic factors that perpetuate trafficking as a successful industry. Thus, the news media bring human trafficking into the light just enough to make the public hear about it, but not enough to ignite action. It is possible that this phenomenon is driven by a profit motive to sell the news. Thus, writing what the public is not ready to accept is not feasible for business entities such as popular news media.

However, themes foregrounding the prey, perps and rescuers reveal that news is powerful in both reflecting and shaping public opinion about trafficking and responses (or lack thereof) to it. The purposive development of characters within stories highlights journalism as political and social tool, within differing agendas in each state. Future research on the absence of labor trafficking and organ trafficking in the news media is warranted to obtain a deeper and broader understanding of the full construct of

trafficking. Given that the majority of research has addressed trafficking within the newspaper system, another avenue for future research is the comparison of the messages and representations of human trafficking across diverse types of media systems. Finally, action and critical theory methods might look to empirically engaging readers in social and economic solutions to halt trafficking.

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Author's Bio

Mary "Catie" Borer was born on April 25th, 1993 in Sacramento, California. She has lived in California, Nebraska, England, Minnesota, and Maine. However, she spent the majority of her life growing up in Minnesota. In 2011, Catie graduated from the Convent of the Visitation School in Mendota Heights, Minnesota. At the University of Maine, Catie majored in social work and minored in religious studies. During the fall semester of her senior year, Catie took a semester abroad in Antwerp, Belgium studying orthopedagogy and interning at Intercultureel Vrowencentrum Antwerpen. This internship involved working with immigrant woman and children, developing programs to help facilitate mother-child attachment. During the spring semester of her senior year, she interned with Dr. Jennifer Middleton, assisting with several projects including the Penquis Regional Linking Project (PRLP), Sex Trafficking Action and Response Team (START), Child Advocacy Center of the Penquis Region, and Hope Rising safe house of St. Andre Home. Upon graduation in May 2015, Catie hopes to move and begin working to gain further experience before returning to get her Masters in Social Work.