

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF  
GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ALBERTA**

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## ABSTRACT

Canada, like many other countries, has to deal with the issue of human trafficking which is both a product and response to globalization. In addition, Canada also has to deal with human trafficking being conflated with various other social issues, such as sex work, illegal migration and labour rights. This study examined how discourses of human trafficking were constructed and disseminated by three federal governmental organizations and six provincial non-governmental organizations in Alberta. Using critical discourse analysis the study analyzed three possible webpages on each organizations website, including the homepage, about us page and a page with a definition of human trafficking. It demonstrated how through the use of critical discourse analysis two main levels of power relations were found: one between the government and non-governmental organizations and another between the non-governmental organizations and the public. The first power relation between the governmental and non-governmental organizations demonstrated a lack of power influence from the governmental organizations onto the non-governmental organizations. However, the relationship between the non-governmental organizations and the public showed a clear exercise of power by the non-governmental organizations through their ability to produce knowledge in society. By comparing and contrasting the thematic codes evident in both the governmental and non-governmental organizations, this thesis also addresses how power relates to the discourses of human trafficking. The study also acknowledges how the limited discourses of human trafficking found in the non-governmental organizations may be problematic in continuing to silence certain groups and the implications this has on anti-trafficking efforts and knowledge.

Keywords: human trafficking, critical discourse analysis, governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, power, knowledge

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## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

In 2019, forty-three individuals, mostly men between the ages of twenty to forty-six, were brought over to Canada from Mexico by traffickers (Draaisma, 2019). The individuals moved with the promise of educational opportunities, work visas, and eventually permanent residency status (Draaisma, 2019). Upon arrival they were forced into working long hours as cleaners for a cleaning company that moved them from hotels and vacation properties in Eastern and Central Ontario (Draaisma, 2019). In addition, they were forced to live in unacceptable, squalid conditions while they were exploited by their traffickers (Draaisma, 2019). The traffickers controlled them through their pay – they were only left with fifty dollars a month after they had paid all the fees charged to them by their traffickers (Draaisma, 2019).

This case is only one example of what human trafficking may look like in Canada; there are many other cases. Not all cases of trafficking resemble ones like this case; however, that does not decrease the severity of the issue. With the number of human trafficking cases increasing in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2014), it is reasonable to assume that awareness efforts and anti-trafficking strategies among organizations will also increase to address these issues.

A simple Google search on human trafficking immediately results in over two million results that include anti-trafficking organizations and campaigns. In addition to these results are numerous images of young women with their hands bound or mouths covered. These typical representations of human trafficking promote a certain definition or narrative of what human trafficking looks like. However, it is not just media representations in the form of pictures that contribute to this understanding. Anti-trafficking organizations and awareness campaigns also may construct human trafficking in a certain way through discussions on websites, or other types

of social media. The nature of any awareness campaign is that it will use its power to take a stance on the issue and present a certain framework from which it attempts to address the position. The way a society constructs the issue of human trafficking impacts the framework that both groups of people and organizations will use to combat trafficking.

Nonetheless, not all societies construct and understand trafficking in the same way. This may be a result of countries either being places of origin, transit or destination (Ren, 2013, p. 65), and therefore having the power to choose to address trafficking differently based on their experiences with it. The result is different countries implementing varying strategies and efforts to combat the same issue. Scholars such as Amahazion (2015) argue that larger social issues, such as human trafficking, may even be used as vehicles for other politically motivated problems (p.170). Human trafficking specifically is often accused of being used by governments as an issue to drive more restrictive immigration policies and sex work laws. In these cases, it is thought that rather than addressing the trafficking of persons specifically, this social phenomenon is framed as a problem of illegal migration or sex work in order to promote those social problems over trafficking.

It is for this concern of conflation with other issues that this study will examine the discourses of human trafficking and anti-trafficking campaigns within Canadian governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in Alberta. The aim of this study is to critically analyze the discourses and demonstrate how human trafficking is defined and prioritized by these organizations. This will be done to see if the influence of power (governmental and non-governmental, and non-governmental and the public) drives which discourse of human trafficking is used to define and understand the matter of human trafficking.

The following paper will review the theoretical framework of the study, including discussions on the complexities within human trafficking and the various discourses that are currently found within the literature. These discourses include looking at human trafficking as sex work, smuggling, and labour. All of which are commonly conflated and confused with instances of human trafficking. Afterwards, the paper will outline critical discourse analysis as the methodological approach used in addressing the research questions that will demonstrate which discourses are seen within the governmental and non-governmental organizations. This will be followed by a discussion of the results and the power relations evident in these discourses and definitions, and how this impacts the societal understanding of human trafficking. Concluding with the implications of these results and issues that future studies could possibly address.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The literature on human trafficking addresses a wide variety of discourses of human trafficking, including human trafficking as an issue of sex work to being an issue of illegal migration and labour rights. While these are some of the discourses that individuals may be exposed to, it is not often that all of the complexities of human trafficking are explained and contextualized within these definitions. For example, people may not be aware that the trafficking of persons includes more than just the “perfect victim” – a young, innocent, naïve, white female exploited through sex work. That is not to suggest that this image is not also a part of trafficking; however, this image does not take into account the diversity and range of trafficking victims that are exploited. To understand trafficking as accurately as possible means setting aside preconceptions of the “perfect victim” and rather, looking at the limited options that led victims to consent to their exploitation (Nawyn, Kavakli, Demirci-Yilmaz & Oflazoğlu,



2016, p.201). Unlike what the representation of the “perfect victim” implies, other representations of trafficking include the foreign worker that works in poor conditions at a plantation, the removal of organs, and forcing young girls into the sex trade. Jahic and Finckenauer point out that representing trafficking victims as the “girls next door” greatly oversimplifies the problem (2005, p.26). Trafficking takes on many different forms and is a result and response to many factors of globalization, including capitalism, migration, and the fluidity of state borders.

Understanding human trafficking requires the acknowledgement of the relationship between structural contexts and proximate factors (Cameron & Newman, 2008, p.1). The structural contexts refers to phenomena and ideologies that stretch across countries or within a country and impact the structure of society; for example, it may include globalization, gender and social inequality, racism, war and economic downturns (Cameron & Newman, 2008, p.1). Proximate factors are factors which are more centralized to countries, as they are specific and localised to the nation-state, such as poor law enforcement, organized crime, poor accountability of the state, and immigration and migration laws and policies (Cameron & Newman, 2008, p.1). Trafficking that occurs between countries pushes victims to migrate away from their country of residence due to inadequate employment, or political and economic insecurity, while being pulled towards a country of settlement because of increased ease of travel, higher salaries, and an active demand for migrant workers (Aronowitz, 2009, p.11).

These push and pull factors show the interaction between structural contexts and proximate factors. Structural contexts such as globalization make travel easier and therefore pull migrants towards new countries, while proximate factors such as economic downturns in parts of the world may push migrants away. Proximate factors such as poor law enforcement in

destination countries may also increase the demand for migrant workers due to their lack of worker rights or regulation of trafficking. Since so many factors influence and result in the trafficking of persons, many countries and organizations have used their power to create a framework from which they address some of the structural contexts and proximate factors associated with the exploitation of individuals. Some of these efforts not only look at these factors but also at some of the more specific intersecting elements that make some individuals more vulnerable to trafficking than others.

Women are an example of one of the groups that are more vulnerable to being trafficked compared to others. According the United Nations global report on human trafficking, the most common form of trafficking in North America is sex trafficking, making it a gendered issue (UNODC, 2016, p.29). In sex trafficking, women are essentially bought and sold as though they are a commodity. In Canada, it is mainly women that are sold while men buy them (Statistics Canada, 2014; UNODC, 2016, p.34). Within a patriarchal society, women are viewed as possessing certain proscribed gender roles, including being caregivers, engaging in domestic work, and providing sexual entertainment to men. Since women are viewed as less valuable within society in comparison to men, the buying, trading and exploiting of women has become rationalized and normalized.

Gender also intersects with race and ethnicity, and together with racist ideology create a “high demand for marginalized persons” (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017, p.154). In relation to sexual exploitation, sexual stereotypes around marginalized women lead to the idea that they simply exist for the purpose of pleasure and are to take on proscribed sexual roles (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017, p.155). Racial stereotypes set the stage for a metaphorical market of being able to purchase any “type” of women the buyer wants. Many

racialized women are at higher risks of trafficking for reasons including histories of colonial sex trade, exploitation, prostitution, stereotypes and low valued social roles (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017, p.155). Racist ideology can be used to justify the demand for a particular “type” of sex worker (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017, p.156). All of these factors intertwine to limit the options for racialized women, subsequently leading to their exploitation. A common global migration pattern of trafficking victims is the movement of women from the Global South to destination countries in the Global North (Poulin, 2013, p.305). This movement of people emphasizes and provides insights into the role and impact of migration on human trafficking.

It could be argued that victims of human trafficking should seek entrance to countries of destination in safe and legal fashions. However, strict immigration and migration policies and controls result in many migrants seeking illegal methods instead (Amahazion, 2015, p.168). Migrants are made more vulnerable to all types of trafficking through their inability to obtain legal work permits, and, therefore, they enter the informal labour market at the lowest sector (Nawyn et al., 2016, p.199). The International Labour Organization (ILO) report, as cited by Jahic and Finckenauer, states that exploitation in wealthy countries is sometimes preferred over free labour in their country of origin, and it is these labour markets that open the door to the trafficking of persons (2005, p. 36).

Human trafficking is then not just an issue of gender, migration, race and ethnicity, but also an issue of labour rights. Countries may experience human trafficking as any one of these factors, or as a combination of issues due to the fact that each country experiences trafficking differently. This introduces challenges and issues in addressing trafficking as a global issue rather than each country exercising their power to address the circumstantial factors relating to

trafficking within their own country. In attempts to create one unifying definition of human trafficking, the United Nations created a protocol to address trafficking in persons.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children was created in 2000, and has over 100 countries that have signed or ratified it, including Canada (UNTC, 2018). The protocol is supplementary to the United Nations' Convention against Organized Crime, and should be interpreted in relation to the convention (United Nations, 2000). The Protocol defines human trafficking as:

the recruitment, transportation, harboring and receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations, 2000).

This definition has three main components to it: the act, the means and the purpose (UNODC, 2018). The act refers to the recruitment, transportation, and receiving of persons. The means is the use of force or other forms of coercion to achieve the consent of an individual. Lastly, it is done for the purpose of exploitation. On top of creating one unifying definition of this global issue, the protocol has three main purposes: (a) to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, (b) to protect and assist victims, and (c) to promote cooperation among states in order to meet these objectives (United Nations, 2000, Article 2). Once countries sign or ratify the protocol, they agree to the U.N.'s definition of trafficking and can implement it within their own definitions or additional legislation. In this respect the U.N. uses its power to help create one unifying definition of human trafficking as a global problem.

Part of defining human trafficking is also addressing its prevalence on the global stage. The most common type of trafficking is sexual exploitation, which makes up seventy-nine

percent of all trafficking globally (UNODC, 2018). However, in North America, only fifty-five percent of trafficking is for sexual exploitation and thirty-nine percent is forced labour (UNODC, 2016, p.29) The remaining six percent of human trafficking in North America is categorized as trafficking for other purposes, such as servitude and forced begging (UNODC, 2016, p.29). Within North America, the U.N. does not report any cases of removal of organs (UNODC, 2016, p.29).

The U.N.'s global report on human trafficking notes that between the years of 2012-2014, 63 251 victims were detected globally (UNODC, 2016, p.23). Of the global victims, fifty-one percent are women, and twenty-eight percent are children (UNODC, 2016, p.7). Men are also victims of trafficking, and make up approximately twenty-one percent of all trafficking victims globally (UNODC, 2016, p. 25). However, it is important to note that while women do make up the largest proportion of victims, the number of women victims is decreasing (UNODC, 2016, p.23). The U.N.'s global report notes that while in 2006 they made up sixty-seven percent of the victims by 2014 this decreased to fifty-one percent (UNODC, 2016, p.23). In comparison, men are increasing in their proportion of victims – in 2006 they were eleven percent but increased to twenty-one percent by 2014 (UNODC, 2016, p.23).

While these statistics may be a good way to bring awareness and attention to the issue, they also raise their own complexities and challenges. There is more unknown about human trafficking than there is known; this is in part due to the clandestine nature of the activity (Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005, p. 27). Huge discrepancies suggest that we are not counting the same things; some may count border crossing and arrest data while not differentiating between trafficking and smuggling (Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005, p. 27). Since human trafficking is not easily measured, some argue that it is understated. This claim is backed up with the argument

that statistics only show the tip of the iceberg; for example, NGOs only report those who seek help (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 20). Needless to say, it is extremely difficult and unrealistic to assume that one could count every incident of human trafficking. In addition to this, these statistics may also be understated due to a country's limited definition of human trafficking or an absence of legislation (Aronowitz, 2009, p.15). Defining human trafficking as just sexual exploitation means that counts of labour trafficking and organ removal will be missed, this is simply dependent on how a country chooses to define human trafficking. In some instances, the numbers on trafficking may also be overstated due to the fact that statistics on human trafficking are also combined with statistics on other social issues that are conflated with trafficking, such as smuggling, illegal migration and prostitution (Aronowitz, 2009, p.19).

It is because of these issues in human trafficking statistics that there have been more questions than answers, and are commonly referred to as “guesswork” and “politically motivated” (Amahazion, 2015, p.170). While these numbers may not be exact or completely valid, knowing the general scope of the problem allows governments, policy makers and service providers, such as various non-governmental organizations, to address the concern, to allocate resources, plan and prepare for future actions (Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005, p. 28). General statistics on human trafficking also help clarify and address common representations of trafficking, specifically the discourses of trafficking that lead to master narratives on the issue.

### **DISCOURSES AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

The literature on human trafficking includes various interconnected discourses. Discourses, in general, refers to talking and writing, but they are, more specifically, interrelated texts and discussions (Phillips & Hardy, 2011, p.3) The importance of discourses is how they are produced, disseminated, and received and how these bring it into social reality (Phillips &

Hardy, 2011, p.3). Addressing these three aspects of discourse may also lead to discussions on who or what is producing, disseminating and receiving these discussions. Since this study is using critical discourse analysis, a Foucauldian approach to discourses is useful in addressing these and how they relate to power and power relations. From this approach, a discourse refers to a “complex entity that extends into the realms of ideology, strategy, language and practice, and is shaped by the relations between power and knowledge” (Sharp & Richardson, 2001, p. 195). In this definition, power relations are central, and attempts to understand how certain ideas, thoughts, and actions may be controlled or constrained (Sharp & Richardson, 2001, p.197). The Foucauldian approach believes that power and knowledge are always intertwined (Delaney, 2005, p.284). In addition, social institutions that are in positions of power have the knowledge to manipulate others in order to maintain the status quo, including things such as norms, and values in society (Delaney, 2005, p.284). This approach is useful in attempting to analyze the discourses both at the federal governmental and provincial non-governmental level by providing a theoretical framework from which to understand power relations and how they influence knowledge production of human trafficking.

In human trafficking there are a few common discourses which shape the understanding, approach, and efforts used to combat the issue. This can be seen in the connection between the definition of human trafficking created by the U.N. and how countries have adopted this, as well as creating their own separate human trafficking legislation based on the power they have. These discourses and definitions are absorbed and adopted by societies. However, it is important to note that the bridge between the federal governments and the public are non-governmental organizations that work closely with the communities by disseminating the information. This

explains the significance of analyzing both the federal governmental organizations as well as the non-governmental organizations within Alberta.

There are various discourses of trafficking that are present at different levels of government (global, national, and local), within awareness campaigns and organizations, and within academic literature. In relation to these various discourses this paper will focus on the three most common and prevalent narratives found within human trafficking: sex work, migration and labour.

### **Human Trafficking as Sex Work**

There is a tendency to blend human sex trafficking and sex work; however, these two are not synonymous. Both sex work and human trafficking can involve coercion and exploitation as a result of cultural and social inequalities (Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005, p. 25). Nonetheless, sex work refers to having sexual intercourse or performing other sexual acts in exchange for material consumption, while trafficking is the forcing or coercing of individuals for the purpose of exploiting them (Batsyukova, 2007, p.47; UNODC, 2018). While there are similarities, it is important to differentiate between the two because conflating them makes it difficult to address the reality of each issue, as well as implement appropriate and effective strategies.

Since trafficking involves the movement of people by means of force or coercion for the purpose of exploitation, these victims may also end up in sex work but are forced to do so by their traffickers (Batsyukova, 2007, p.47). The main difference between the two concepts is the issue of consent (Batsyukova, 2007, p.47). Sex work involves sexual acts the same way sex trafficking does; however, those in sex work may do this voluntarily and consensually (Batsyukova, 2007, p. 47). If sex work is done under duress, it then becomes a case of human trafficking. Jahic and Finckenauer (2005) point out that those in sex work have gained control



over their work and are able to refuse customers, but this is not an option for those in sex trafficking (p.35).

Since victims of human trafficking are also forced into sex work the issue of trafficking is commonly conflated with sex work and perceived as a sex work issue, this resulting in efforts and responses that address trafficking in this manner. In addition, conflating trafficking and sex work also makes it difficult for those in sex work to achieve labour rights (Jackson, 2016). When society views sex work as trafficking, it evokes a negative emotion, and people are less willing to create labour rights that may increase safe and legal participation in sex work (Jackson, 2016). A balanced interpretation of human trafficking and sex work is that while there may be overlap between the two, they are still two distinct issues that must not be addressed as if they are the same.

### **Human Trafficking as Smuggling**

Human trafficking is also commonly confused with human smuggling, however, the two are different. Smuggling is defined as paying transportation costs before or after entering a destination, thus ending the relationship between the smuggler and the person being smuggled (Aronowitz, 2009, p.4). Smuggling in a general sense is illegal migration. The difference may only be seen after the journey ends, where smuggling may turn into situations of trafficking (Aronowitz, 2009, p.4). That is to say, the “trafficking of human beings can be viewed as a process rather than a single offence” (Aronowitz, 2009, p.9). Once an individual is smuggled over a border, the act is done; however, in human trafficking, the relationship between two people or groups does not end after being transported, the individuals are continuously exploited for the benefit of the trafficker.

There are four general criteria that distinguish smuggling from trafficking: consent, exploitation, transnationalism, and source of profit (NAPCHT, 2012). Unlike victims of trafficking, migrants that are smuggled consent to the act and are moved transnationally. Therefore, they must cross international borders. Human trafficking, on the other hand, can be international or domestic, and those who are trafficked do not consent to their exploitation. While migrants who are smuggled may travel through difficult and severe conditions, they are not continuously exploited like victims of trafficking.

Another major difference between the two is the source of profit. Smugglers make their profit from the migrants that they are moving. In exchange for entry into another country, migrants pay the smugglers either before or after they have arrived. Traffickers make their profit from the exploitation of their victims. Victims are exploited for labour in exchange for monetary or material payments. Human trafficking and human smuggling, in some instances, share the illegal crossing of international borders which is why they are commonly conflated with each other.

### **Human Trafficking as Labour**

Capitalism has grown as a result of the effects of globalization and therefore has changed the relationship between capital and labour. Earlier, a worker would sell his/her labour in exchange for capital. This is more or less a direct transaction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. However, with globalization having influenced the perception of states and their borders, there is a change in the way capital moves globally within the framework of capitalism (Steger, 2017, p.66). New technology has impacted the ways in which capital moves between borders; it now moves freely through simple forms, such as email-transfers. Labour, however, does not move this same way. Labour cannot move freely across borders. Labour, in this sense,

really refers to the movement of workers that want to sell their labour, and these people tend to move across borders and want to settle in communities they believe will provide them with a better life. This is critical for human trafficking because the trafficking of individuals is labour moving through space.

Capitalism in terms of human trafficking revolves around one common theme: Selling sex. The sex industry has a strategic and central position in international capitalism (Poulin, 2013, p.302). Trafficked women are viewed as “goods” that are taken transnationally from areas of weak concentration of capital to areas of strong concentration of capital (Poulin, 2013, p.303). Globalization and capitalism allow for the commodification of bodies within a new global framework. The capitalist market does not care what is being sold and bought. If bodies are bought and sold, it implies there is a market for it. Anti-trafficking efforts that focus on capitalism argue that human trafficking exists because there is a demand for it. Therefore, preventing and combatting trafficking in persons means that the state has to ensure that the demand for it is dead. This is complicated because many companies and organizations hire foreign workers as a cheaper option to paying domestic workers. Due to outsourcing of jobs and bringing in foreign workers, the line between paying foreign workers less and meeting the conditions of labour trafficking becomes more and more blurred.

### **ADDRESSING HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Human trafficking being a global issue means that it would be difficult to solve by any single nation-state. As a result, in tackling human trafficking there would have to be global cooperation among nations. The U.N.’s Palermo Protocol on human trafficking has 117 signatories and 173 parties, with majority of the states having ratified it (UNTC, 2018). While one of the main purposes of the protocol was to promote unity and cooperation to meet the same

objective, many states have created supplementary legislation and policies to further their attempts in addressing human trafficking. Canada, in addition to the Protocol, also created the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in 2002 and implemented human trafficking in the Criminal Code in 2005. Other countries, such as the Netherlands and Germany that have signed the Palermo Protocol have employed other measures to reduce human trafficking, such as making sex work legal or illegal in attempts to decrease the number of women who are sexually exploited (Marinova & James, 2012).

While human trafficking is on a global scale, countries are still addressing the issue in their own ways with a lack of consistency in enforcement (Amahazion, 2015), regardless of the fact that many states have agreed or given consent to the fact that they will do their part to combat and prevent human trafficking. Not all countries experience human trafficking in the same way; for example, some may be countries of origin in which many individuals are pushed away to other states. Other countries may be ones of transit and see a high concentration of traffic to countries of destination. How the state experiences human trafficking will shape the ways in which they choose to address the issue and implement strategies.

Varying discourses may not just exist at the international level but also at the national and provincial levels. Within Canada, for example, provinces may implement their own strategies of combatting human trafficking due to their differing experiences of it. The discourses and social constructions of human trafficking that are utilized impact the way organizations frame their anti-trafficking strategies and efforts. As mentioned previously, the three most common discourses in trafficking are sex work, migration, and labour. These are the discourses that may lead to the most common types of efforts or strategies to combat trafficking and therefore shape anti-trafficking campaigns and legislation.

## **Anti-trafficking via Sex Work Legislation**

Since human trafficking is often converged with sex work, it can lead to countries implementing anti-sex work efforts and legislation as a way to combat the trafficking of persons. Although the two concepts are different, they also relate to each other in that victims of human trafficking may be forced into sex work. The simplification of trafficking to sex work is in part due to the lack of knowledge and training within law enforcement and its inability to distinguish between the two (Batsyukova, 2007, p. 47). Since the most common form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation, some countries adopt an approach that tackles sex work; however, even within this single approach, there are varying strategies. Anti-sex work legislation may be prohibition or abolition (Marinova & James, 2012). Prohibition means that sex work is illegal, and, when they are caught, it is the sex worker that receives the penalty (Marinova & James, 2012, p. 234). In contrast, abolition also means that sex work is illegal, but, instead, the penalty goes to the purchaser of sex rather than the worker (Marinova & James, 2012, p. 235). A study done by Marinova and James (2012) explored whether criminalizing sex work actually decreases cases of human trafficking; however, the results vary and exact numbers are difficult to obtain.

Sweden implemented an abolitionist approach in 1999 and also implemented across-the-board collaboration of government agencies in anti-trafficking efforts (Marinova & James, 2012, p.237). While there are no exact numbers on whether this has significantly decreased the numbers of human trafficking victims, some of the individuals interviewed by the researcher stated that “it is not the law that matters, but police methods” (Marinova & James, 2012, p. 239). This implies that whether sex work is legal or illegal does not significantly impact victims of trafficking, but what really matters is how law enforcement authorities are engaging with the issue. Whether a country renders sex work legal or illegal may not notably decrease trafficking in

that area, since the act itself is illegal. For instance, if sex work was to be legalized, perhaps the flow of trafficking victims would increase. On the other hand, if it was illegal, it would not change the conditions under which trafficking currently occurs.

Both the Netherlands and Germany have legalized sex work (Marinova & James, 2012). The data from the Netherlands shows that there was an increase in trafficking after the legalization on sex work (Marinova & James, 2012, p. 243). Germany also saw an increase of sex work after it was legalized (Marinova & James, 2012, p.246). The data between 2001-2008 showed an overall decrease in trafficking, except after the year of legalization (2003) in which the numbers spiked (Marinova & James, 2012, p. 246) The legalization of sex work did temporarily increase trafficking; however, law enforcement authorities were able to reverse this increase after 2003 (Marinova & James, 2012, p. 246). The limited trafficking activity is, in part, due to the strong preventative measures taken by law enforcements in Germany as well as information campaigns in the countries of origin, echoing the idea that the law may not impact human trafficking as much as is believed (Marinova & James, 2012, p. 247).

Instead, what really matter is the education of law enforcement officials, and service providers, as well as the educational campaigns in countries of origin about trafficking. The emphasis is on a strong government approach with a focus on human rights values (Marinova & James, 2012). It is this focus that leads some countries to believe that legalizing sex work will allow for better working conditions and labour rights for the workers. These human and labour rights allow for the protection of workers, and their ability to refuse work in conditions which are deemed dangerous to the person.

## **Anti-Trafficking via Migration Legislation**

One of the key components of human trafficking involves the transportation, holding and receiving of persons. Due to this aspect of trafficking, there are countries that believe trafficking is really a concern of illegal migration and border crossing. This discourse of human trafficking explains the common conflation of human trafficking and human smuggling. The illegal migration of victims means that they often have dual status before the law; they may be trafficked, as well as be illegal immigrants or have a criminal status (Ren, 2013, p.69). Therefore, the anti-trafficking approach here is to control borders more strictly and ensure that no illegal migrants are entering the country of transit or destination.

This is one approach that Canada has taken by creating the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in 2001. This Act's objectives includes protecting public health and safety, as well as promoting human rights by denying access to individuals that may be considered criminals or a security risk (IRPA, 2001). While the Act has many other objectives which address immigration and refugee status, these two particular objectives are relevant to the discussion of trafficking victims and traffickers. Using strict immigration laws such as these gives border enforcement authorities the right to deny individuals who may impede on the security and well-being of the nation. Enforcing border restrictions such as these do not stop the flow of illegal migrants; instead they turn to alternative ways.

## **Anti-trafficking via Labour Legislation**

Global capitalism pulls workers from all areas of the world and moves them to areas in which they can sell their labour. Similar to efforts in anti-trafficking that focus on sex work, countries have implemented labour rights to address issues of exploitative labour. Some of these labour rights may include the length of work days and minimum pay required for workers. In

addition, laws against including children in the work force, or the types of work that may be legal. However, the extent to which these labour rights extend to illegal migrants and in what circumstance varies.

The labour exploitation framework claims that trafficking should be viewed through a lens of exploitation and offer more labour rights to individuals rather than criminalizing them (Nawyn, et al., 2016, p.190 &193). This approach aims to use policing as a mechanism to control labour and labour rights, while also improving the conditions of work for victims (Nawyn, et al. 2016, p.193). The labour approach focuses on the idea that human trafficking would have less victimization if the working conditions of the victims were more routinely regulated. If the working conditions were better, there is less opportunity for perpetrators to exploit victims. This is backed up by the idea that those that are pushed out of their countries of origin due to lack of education and employment may find themselves being exploited and forced to work in the informal labour markets of countries of destination. Commonly this involves the movement of individuals from the global south to the global north due to perceived better employment or opportunities (Poulin, 2013, p.305).

### **HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CANADA**

A country may choose to approach the problem from a certain perspective depending on the role it plays in the globality of human trafficking. For instance, Canada is considered a country of destination and therefore, it applies approaches and strategies in accordance to how it experiences trafficking as a destination country rather than a country of origin. While countries may experience trafficking in a variety of forms, within North America human trafficking commonly takes on one of two forms (UNODC, 2016, p.29). Approximately half (55%) of the overall trafficking is for sexual exploitation, while the other half (39%) is for forced labour and



the remaining six percent constituting trafficking for other purposes outside of sexual exploitation, forced labour and organ removal (UNODC, 2016, p.29). While the United Nation's report (2016) does not break down what human trafficking specifically looks like in each country within North America, these statistics still provide some insight into what human trafficking looks like in Canada.

Not only do countries experience human trafficking differently, but provinces or states within a country may vary in the discourses and experiences of trafficking as well. In Canada, the provinces in which human trafficking is most prevalent are British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, with Alberta and Ontario having the most prevalence (NAPCHT, 2012). Since some provinces have increased contact with human trafficking, their efforts and strategies may be stronger or more developed than other provinces. The differing experiences of trafficking results in the creation of differing discourses on the issue and as a result, its solutions and responses. However, despite the varying discourses of human trafficking, Canada still has to deal with the issue of human trafficking as a whole.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority (90%) of human trafficking in Canada is actually domestic while only ten percent is international (NAPCHT, 2012). This goes against common misconceptions of human trafficking; that is, that trafficking mostly consists of international victims being brought to foreign countries. Within Canada there are many discussions on human trafficking as a "domestic" issue, meaning within its borders, or "international", involving migrants. Victims of domestic trafficking are commonly recruited in a variety of ways including at airports, schools, and bars, however, it is also done through the internet and other victims that have already been recruited and are ordered to bring in more individuals (Sethi, 2007, p.60).

Part of this is addressing the fact that majority of trafficking victims in Canada are domestic, involving Indigenous women and children due to socioeconomic factors (Kaye, 2017, p.28). However, the mainstream understanding of human trafficking ignores the trafficking of this marginalized group (Kaye, 2017, p.28). By labeling this group as “victims” society overlooks the impact of settler colonialism and state control on the violence against Indigenous women (Kaye, 2017, p.29). Canada’s colonial history provides some insight into who is currently being trafficking in Canada. Julie Kaye points out that Indigenous women’s relation to trafficking has a long history in colonialism, and includes problems with discourses of human trafficking (Kaye, 2017, p. 4). For example, the sexual exploitation of Indigenous women and girls is portrayed and understood as a problem of sex work rather than under the framework of human trafficking (Sethi, 2007, p.57).

While Indigenous women and girls are considered most vulnerable due to their socioeconomic status, there are other root causes of their overrepresentation in domestic trafficking. These root causes include things such as the legacy of colonialism and residential schools, the lack of awareness and acknowledgement of these victims, violence, poverty, isolation, substance abuse, racism and the role of gangs (Sethi, 2007). Furthermore, rather than it being any one of these factors that makes these victims more vulnerable, it is the interlocking of these social factors (Bourgeois, 2015, p.1439).

Bourgeois (2015) argues that Canada’s efforts fail to adequately and effectively meet the needs of Indigenous victims and their communities when it comes human trafficking (p.1432). In addition, since domestic trafficking has not received the same attention as international trafficking, it can be argued that Indigenous women and girls remain absent in discourses of human trafficking in Canada (Bourgeois, 2015, p.1432). Bourgeois (2015) continues to argue

that what is noteworthy about the Canadian conceptualization of human trafficking is that it is mainly focused on individual perpetrators and criminal organizations, such as gangs, and not on the nation state as a perpetrator (p.1438). The nation state may be considered a perpetrator due to issues relating to the impacts of colonialism and residential schools, as well as the lack of attention and acknowledgement of the complex needs of Indigenous communities.

As a result, not many discourses on human trafficking include discussions on Indigenous people and social factors that make them more vulnerable. Common discourses include the ones previously discussed, including human trafficking as an issue of sex work, migration, and labour. Overall, discourses of trafficking are impacted by power relations whether it be global, national or local. Some of the institutions that may lead discourses on trafficking are those that are not only closer to the community such as non-governmental organizations, but also distinct institutions such as the United Nations. While the U.N. helps society to understand human trafficking on the global stage, federal organizations provide insight into what trafficking looks like within Canada. In addition, non-governmental organizations within provinces and territories provide the bridge and more local contexts of human trafficking to the general public. It is noteworthy that the discourses of human trafficking may not necessarily be the same at the international, national, and provincial level, and as a result each one provides insight into how that level of power experiences or perceives human trafficking.

### **Discovering Discourses**

The aim of this study is to analyze what kind of discourses of human trafficking are held by certain organizations, and which definition or aspect of trafficking they chose to focus on. As a result of this, applying a preconceived definition of human trafficking to examine these organizations defeats the purpose of the study. Instead, through analysis the study will attempt to

understand what definitions are being utilized by federal governmental organizations (GO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO) in Alberta.

By comparing the discourses of human trafficking held by GOs and NGOs in Alberta, the study also attempts to discover if power and positions of privilege play a role in which discourses are prioritized. The comparison of the discourses between these organizations for similarities and differences may provide insight into the role that the federal government plays in creating the existing discourses of human trafficking, and how solutions and efforts are prioritized. To leave out an aspect of human trafficking in the discourses means that we are not handling the issue as a whole. However, in this case, it may be the federal government stating which aspect of human trafficking is more important and should receive more attention than the others. This means that the country or province could essentially decide what constitutes as an important aspect of trafficking and push it forward as an effort to combat human trafficking, when in reality, organizations may be addressing migration control, for example. This leaves the question of how societies can effectively combat and prevent human trafficking if there is a gap in the understanding and conceptualization of trafficking, and in the approaches used to combat trafficking.

One could argue that, perhaps, there is no harm in addressing different aspects of human trafficking if all the parts get some attention. However, this is not the case because, within each discourse, there may be a gap, and this gap does not allow for an effective and accurate plan to combat trafficking. Addressing human trafficking from the discourse of sex work does not take into account a big fraction of trafficking that is labour exploitation or trafficking for other purposes. This gap in the definition of human trafficking makes efforts that address sex work to

be cloaked as anti-trafficking. As a result, single efforts that focus on only one aspect of trafficking may not be addressing the issue in all its intersectionality and complexity.

If communities continue to pour resources and efforts into an organization that does not effectively and accurately work towards what it aims to do, it is not effectively addressing trafficking. The issue with not effectively addressing human trafficking as a whole is that society may not be equipped to aid victims properly through resources and services. The prioritization of some victims or survivors over others may further perpetuate the notion that there is an “ideal victim”. The prioritization of certain discourses over others means that power influences which discourses will be used. Critically analyzing human trafficking within Alberta therefore means having to look at the power dynamics and noting whether it influences which discourses are prioritized over others.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What discourses of human trafficking are held by the federal government and provincial non-governmental organizations in Alberta?
2. How do these discourses show how human trafficking is defined and prioritized?

## **METHODS**

Varying discourses of human trafficking may be the result of differing levels of organizations exercising their power over the definition of human trafficking. Each organization has a specific narrative of human trafficking they use to shape their information platforms and awareness campaigns. Since the focus of the study is the discourses of human trafficking that are utilized by these organizations, as well as the role power plays in which ones are prioritized critical discourse analysis is the most effective methodology to use in order to answer the research questions.

Discourse analysis involves looking at the discourses that produce and give meaning to social reality, and the job of the analysts involves analyzing the relationship between discourses and social reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2011, p.3). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) includes the analysis of discourses but it also allows the study to explore “(re)production and challenge of dominance” within those discourses (Van Dijk, 1993, p.249). Dominance, in this study, refers to the inequality that results in the exercise of power over institutions and groups (Van Dijk, 1993, p.250). CDA, similar to discourse analysis, refers to interrelated texts and their production, dissemination and reception, and how these bring a meaning or discourse into social reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2011, p.3). However, the purpose of CDA is to understand and explain how power is enacted, reproduced, and legitimated through texts and discourses of dominant groups in society (Phillips & Hardy, 2011, p.8).

Discourses of any sort are always connected to other discourses, and this makes the study of discourse analysis “three-dimensional” (Fairclough, 1992 as cited in Phillips & Hardy, 2011, p.4). This means that discourses are located in a historical and social context, including certain actors, relationships and practices (Phillips & Hardy, 2011, p.4). Therefore, analyzing individual texts does not give a good insight into a discourse, but the analysis of the combination of texts, changes in texts, new texts and the distribution of texts can provide a concrete understanding of the relevant discourses (Phillips & Hardy, 2011, p.5). However, it is difficult for any one person to study all the texts on a particular topic or subject and, therefore, only a sub-section of texts is usually analyzed. It is because of this that not all of the texts addressing anti-human trafficking across Canada can be analyzed for their discourses. Instead, this study will look at an important sub-section of texts that will provide insight into the discourses of

trafficking in a more centralized and specific area: Alberta. To do this, only the discourses within the GOs and NGOs will be examined.

By analyzing the websites of GOs first, the discourses at the governmental level will be presented prior to analyzing the discourses at the NGO level. The subsequent analysis will compare and contrast the nature of the discourse employed by the two institutions and analyzed through CDA. Since the focus of the research questions is to see which discourses are prioritized, CDA allows for the analysis of how definitions may be produced and disseminated into the public. Furthermore, by using CDA the study would also be able to see if the discourses at the non-governmental level reflects those at the governmental level, and thereby allowing the researcher to make an inference of who is leading the discourses on human trafficking, or whether power may influence which discourses are prioritized.

### **Data Collection**

For the purpose of this study, GOs will be those that are created and operated by the government. While NGOs are non-profit organizations that function independently from the government and serve specific social or political purposes (Folger, 2018). Additionally, these organizations may receive funding in a variety of ways including membership dues, private donations, the sale of goods and services and grants from the government (Folger, 2018). To determine the population of anti-trafficking GOs and NGOs an exhaustive list was made. This was done by conducting an internet search for all anti-trafficking NGOs in Alberta using key search words such as “human trafficking organizations in Alberta”, “anti-trafficking organizations”, “anti-trafficking”, “modern slavery”, and more. This was repeated again for the federal GOs using similar key search words but also added “Canadian anti-trafficking”, “anti-trafficking governmental organizations”, and “Canada government human trafficking”. This was

accompanied by searching through other sources which contained lists of organizations. One of these resources included books such as Julie Kaye's *Responding to Human Trafficking: Dispossession, Colonial Violence, and Resistance Among Indigenous and Racialized Women* (2017). Kaye's book was used due to how it informed the study and provided significant information for human trafficking within Canada. Within the index, Kaye provides a list of organizations that deal with anti-trafficking which was used to add and develop the exhaustive list for this study.

The exhaustive list was filtered to include only GOs and NGOs which have a website. Websites were specifically looked at because anyone in the general public can freely access them, and therefore, they reach farther into the population than a brochure or pamphlet. Brochures or pamphlets tend to only be distributed in certain communities and are not easily accessible by everyone. The organizations' websites were analyzed in attempts to understand the discourses of each organization and was based on these three potential pages: the homepage, about us, and a page that provides a specific definition of human trafficking.

The search for anti-trafficking NGOs in Alberta and federal GOs yielded thirty results in total. Due to the small population of both federal and provincial GOs and NGOs that met the criteria, a random sample was not used. Rather, all the organizations that met the criteria were used and analyzed. Due to there not being a substantive amount of GOs, all three organizations that were found were used. However, since there were multiple NGOs the following criteria was applied to select the final sample. The non-governmental organizations had to directly be an anti-trafficking organizations rather than an organization that had a department or branch that focused on the issue, even if the issue was clearly framed as one single discourse. In order to standardize the data all websites were collected within a certain time period, and each website was dated and



a snapshot was taken. The GOs were collected between October 5-21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 and the NGOs were collected between November 16-20<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The following table lists the GOs and NGOs that were analyzed in the study.

**Table 1: List of Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations**

<b>Governmental Organizations</b>	<b>Non-governmental Organizations</b>
Public Safety Canada Royal Canadian Mounted Police Department of Justice	CEASE (The Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation) RESET Society of Calgary (Rapid Exist from Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking) ACT (The Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Alberta) Magdalene House Aurora Home CHILL

**Analysis**

Coding and analyzing of the data collected was conducted with MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software program. The coding process was completed in two phases: coding for actions and coding for themes. The pages from the websites were initially coded for actions, which is the main purpose and intention of the material or information (Charmaz, 2014, p.116). Action coding was completed on a sentence by sentence basis as the focus on the analysis was the content rather than the specific language used. The thematic coding looked for patterns and trends that occur within the texts and transcriptions of the videos and images (Charmaz, 2014, p.124). This study specifically looked at the discourses of trafficking that were being used, such as human trafficking as sex work; as migration; as labour. In order to analyze the data, a coding system was developed to allow for any new or unanticipated discourses that may emerge throughout the study.

While analyzing the thematic codes the following questions were used in critical discourse analysis as suggested by Bacchi (2009, p. 7): What are the presumptions and

assumptions that underlie the “problem”? What are the silences? How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? Using these questions as a guide allowed the researcher to analyze the discourses to see if a certain narrative of human trafficking was missing and if it implies that human trafficking is conceptualized as mainly one issue. For example, if the discourse is one of human trafficking as sex work, it ignores the labour aspect, but it also assumes the problem is simply just sex work.

In addition, during analysis it was important to acknowledge which organizations are governmentally funded and which are not as this may indicate support or the pressure to comply with powerful institutions. Information on funding was retrieved from the organization’s websites. If the website did not indicate whether they received funding or not, the researcher emailed each organization inquiring on their funding. The following table represents which organizations are funded by the government and their source of funding.

***Table 2: Non-governmental Organizations and Funding***

<b>Non-governmental Organization:</b>	<b>Government Funds:</b>
CEASE	Alberta Government, The Stollery, Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph, United Way and Edmonton Community Foundation
ACT (The Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Alberta)	Federally funded from Justice Canada’s Victims Fund and Status of Women Canada, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General’s Victims of Crime Fund and Human Services’ Family and Community Safety Program
CHILL	<i>No funding</i>
Aurora Home	<i>Unknown</i>
RESET	Government of Canada
Magdalene House	<i>No funding</i>

\*\*Aurora Home did not indicate on their website whether they received funding of any kind and no response was received when inquired over email.

The GOs were coded first for both action and thematic codes, and the same was done for the NGOs. Since the study aims to compare and contrast the discourses of the varying organizations, the GOs and NGOs were coded separately so that they do not influence each other during the coding process. The thematic codes from both groups were compared and analyzed. This resulted in several insightful findings that answered the research questions and explained potential power relations.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

Both the governmental and the non-governmental organizations yielded thematic codes that were critically analyzed in order to answer the two research questions of what the discourses held by the GOs and NGOs are, and how these discourses show how human trafficking is defined and prioritized. Critical discourse analysis revealed two different power relations: 1) Power relations between the GOs and NGOs and 2) Power relations between the NGOs and society. These two power relations help to understand the influence of power on the understandings of human trafficking within society.

### **Governmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations**

The first power relationship that was evident through the analysis is between the GOs and the NGOs. Prior to analysis an assumption could be made that because the GOs are federal they would have some power influence over the NGOs, whether this be through regulation or quotas for the number of organizations in each aspect of the issue. However, what is significant about the relationship between the GOs and the NGOs is the lack of a power relationship that was found to be there. While the thematic codes demonstrated how the NGOs comply with the GOs in some aspects, overall and even within the commonalities, the NGOs are consistently

challenging the GOs in their understanding of human trafficking. This claim is backed up by discussions on three main themes within the thematic codes found between the two groups of organizations. These thematic codes are the types of approaches utilized to address human trafficking, the ways in which human trafficking is defined (including discussions on victims), and the types of responses these organizations promote and work towards.

**Approaches.** While both the GOs and NGOs are working towards addressing human trafficking in Canada they have very different approaches to the problem. This is evident in the thematic codes that came from the GOs and NGOs. The GOs yielded the thematic code of *Criminal Approach*, while the NGOs yielded the thematic code of *Victim-focused Approach*. In regards to the GOs, the federal organizations address trafficking as a crime rather than an issue of migration, border control, prostitution, or lack of education. All of the GOs; Public Safety Canada, Department of Justice, and the RCMP, refer to human trafficking as a horrible crime in some form. Public safety refers to it as “the most heinous crimes imaginable”, and the RCMP explicitly states that “human trafficking is a crime”. The Department of Justice not only refers to the issue as a crime but also discusses it in relation to the criminal code and the various penalties and sentences associated with the offenses within trafficking (i.e. withholding documents, abuse, etc.) and the age of the victim(s). Of the three organizations only one (Public Safety Canada) directly discusses the victims that are vulnerable to trafficking. While this discussion is brief, the organization does mention women as being most vulnerable in addition to those that live in poverty, youth and children, migrants, and “some Aboriginal women” (Public Safety Canada). The lack of focus on the victims and the concerns related to them consenting to their exploitation makes their approach more objective and directed towards the criminality of trafficking rather than the protection and healing of victims, as well as the societal impact.

In contrast, the NGOs focus on the issue of human trafficking from a victim-focused perspective or approach. This thematic code was found in all of the NGOs: ACT, CEASE, CHILL, RESET, Aurora Home and Magdalene House. The victim-focused approach is seen in the organizations by providing options for victims and those impacted such as counselling, housing rehab programs and financial aid. These NGOs focused more on helping victims to recover, in addition, they emphasized hope and the empowerment of victims. This was seen explicitly in organizations such as Magdalene House which state “Restoring hope and dignity in people exploited by human trafficking”. In addition, Aurora Home exemplifies the caring and personal aspect of the victim-focused approach through claims such as “provide a non-judgemental, caring and sensitive environment where women are able to begin rebuilding their lives”. As demonstrated through the quotes, the NGOs are more focused on the well-being and recovery of the victims rather than the objectivity of the crime.

While the criminal approach (thematic code in GOs) was mentioned on the NGOs’ websites, it was only in relation to victims getting help from being trafficked or a brief reference to the criminal code. The criminal approach came up five times throughout all the NGOs, this is in comparison to the victim-focused approach which came up forty-five times. The victim-focused approach is accompanied by discussions on the push factors, which are the factors that push victims into trafficking, such as poverty, substance abuse, or lack of education. While some organizations do not directly refer to them as push factors, organizations such as Aurora home discuss societal pressures such as “vulnerability due to lack of family support, employment and safe housing” and “dependency on drugs/alcohol”. Four of the six NGOs (including RESET, CEASE, Aurora Home, and ACT) directly discussed these push factors in relation to victims of human trafficking. This is evident within the organizations through quotes such as “builds

bridges over poverty and creates pathways out of exploitation” in CEASE. Furthermore, ACT states that “a set of interrelated ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors contribute to trafficking in persons”.

What is significant about the different approaches to human trafficking between the GOs and NGOs is what it implies about the power relation between the two. For the GOs, the criminal approach could be rationalized due to the distance between the federal organizations and the general public, and therefore it may be easier to focus on the legal and objective aspect of trafficking than the subjective experiences of victims and communities. In comparison, since the NGOs are closer and more integrated into the communities, in which they see and deal with victims, a victim-focused approach may be more appropriate and effective than the criminal approach. The NGOs not having the same approach as the GOs demonstrates a resistance on the NGOs part, and their ability to choose their own approach rather than being directed by the GOs. This demonstrates one disconnect between the GOs and the NGOs in terms of the expected power relation. Another thematic codes that adds to this conclusion is the discussion on the definition of human trafficking.

**Definition & Victims.** In terms of the definition, the thematic codes that were relevant to the GOs are *Human Trafficking as Forced Labour* and *Human Trafficking as Sexual Exploitation*. Among the three GOs human trafficking was defined as forced labour nine times, while sexual exploitation was mentioned seven times. This demonstrates a balanced understanding of human trafficking as equally including forced labour and sexual exploitation. Similar to the U.N.’s definition, the GOs’ definition of trafficking does not prioritize one type of trafficking over the other but rather looks at both types equally. Human trafficking as forced labour was coded for any action codes or sections of texts that talked about human trafficking as the exploitation of someone through their physical labour, servitude or domestic work. In

comparison, human trafficking as sexual exploitation was coded for those sections which included discussions of sexual abuse, sex or sexual acts in exchange for material or financial benefits. In addition, the code included discussions of being forced into sex work. Within the GOs, common definitions of human trafficking grouped the two types together; this is demonstrated in quotes such as “in order to exploit that person, typically through sexual exploitation or forced labour” as seen in the Department of Justice Canada website. While the GOs equally represent both of the common types of trafficking they do not go further to explain what each of them directly refers to but rather continue to cement them together with the assumption that the reader knows the difference between the two.

Contrary to the GOs, the NGOs’ definition of trafficking is significantly different and not as balanced between the two main types of trafficking. While the GOs give equal attention to both types of trafficking evident in Canada, the NGOs focus on one type predominantly over the other. Throughout the NGOs the focus is mainly on sexual exploitation as human trafficking, and while some organizations did mention forced labour, these discussions did not compare numerically to those of sexual exploitation.

ACT may be the most well-known and popular organization in Alberta based on the frequency with which it came up in the google searches, as well as the number of times it is referenced by other NGOs. The significance of this is that ACT is both governmentally and provincially funded and in addition it has a definition of human trafficking that is identical to that of the GOs. Within ACT forced labour and sexual exploitation both came up five times each throughout the webpages. While this may signify the power influence of the GOs on the NGOs and their definition of human trafficking, this understanding is contradicted by the rest of the

NGOs. Although ACT was almost identical to the GOs it still differed in its approach and response to human trafficking, which will be discussed in the coming sections.

Other NGOs such as CEASE and REST also receive government funding, however, the definition of human trafficking in both of these organizations predominantly focuses on human trafficking as sexual exploitation. CEASE mentions sexual exploitation ten times while forced labour is only mentioned three times. RESET defines trafficking as sexual exploitation four times, but does not mention forced labour at all. So although ACT could potentially be influenced by the GOs, it represents an outlier as the rest of the governmentally funded organizations do not promote the same balanced definition of human trafficking as the GOs. This same single focused definition is seen in the NGOs that are not governmentally funded. However, the other organizations that are not governmentally funded (Aurora Home, Magdalene House, and CHILL) only define human trafficking as sexual exploitation.

Overall, four of the six NGOs define human trafficking only as sexual exploitation. Throughout all the organizations' webpages sexual exploitation is mentioned fifty-four times, and forced labour only ten times. CHILL, one of the NGOs, defines human trafficking as "Sexual exploitation is often defined as the sexual abuse of children and youth through the exchange of sex or sexual acts for food, drugs...other basics of life, and/or money". This definition completely ignores forced labour or trafficking for other purposes and only defines it as sexual exploitation. Other organizations, such as RESET, do not even define human trafficking or sexual exploitation but rather just discuss it on the website as though the reader already knows what sexual exploitation is. This is seen on the RESET website in quotes such as "We provide ... support for women (age 16 and above) who have experience sexual exploitation and/or sex trafficking". The problem with this is that while they address the sexual exploitation



aspect and ignore forced labour, they also do not provide a definition of sexual exploitation. This leaves those visiting the site still not completely understanding what human trafficking is.

Another insightful finding from the NGOs is the predominant focus on sexual exploitation even when forced labour is mentioned. In the organization CEASE, human trafficking is defined as both sexual exploitation and forced labour, however, under their section of “Real Stories of Hope” only stories of sexual exploitation are mentioned.

The primary focus on sexual exploitation is intriguing since the literature on human trafficking examines various discourses, and yet sexual exploitation is overwhelmingly focused on over forced labour and trafficking for other purposes. This means that while the government supports ACT in its efforts of addressing various forms of human trafficking, it also supports efforts made in combatting just the sexual exploitation aspect. This may demonstrate that the GOs perhaps do not have any influence over the NGOs in deciding their definition or approaches to human trafficking.

Although, one area in which the GOs and NGOs seem to comply with each other is in the discussion of the victims of human trafficking. Both groups of organizations seem to focus on women as victims over other vulnerable groups. Although their definitions of trafficking vary between the two, both came up with the thematic code of *Women as Victims*. Within the GOs this thematic code came up nine times (while men were only discussed four times), this is compared to twenty-one times in the NGOs and men only six times. While at first this may seem like they are agreeing on who is more vulnerable and deserves the most attention, it is important to understand the context in which these numbers come up. The GOs focus on human trafficking at the national level and therefore discuss the scope of the issue in that context. Nationally, women make up the majority of victims identified by Statistics Canada (2016), therefore

justifying the GOs' focus on women compared to other victims. However, at the provincial level, ACT reports that roughly half (53.9%) the cases of trafficking are sexual exploitation and other half (39.4%) are forced labour, with an almost even distribution of victims being male and female. When considering this information and the fact that the NGOs still predominately focus on women victims there seems to be disconnect between what is reported about human trafficking in Alberta and the information the NGOs are disseminating to society.

So while it may seem like the NGOs are complying with the GOs focus on women as victims, both of these thematic codes come up under different contexts and approaches. In addition, the NGOs as a whole challenge the GOs' definition of human trafficking by focusing primarily on sexual exploitation. The lack of commonality and compliance between the GOs' and NGOs' definition and focus on victims, in addition to the different approaches, reinforces the idea that there is a lack of power influence between the two groups. One would expect that because the GOs are federal and governmental they would have the power to influence the NGOs. However, the data indicates that either there is a lack of power being exerted or the GOs do not care to regulate which aspects of human trafficking are being addressed. Another discussion relevant to the understanding of the power relation between the two groups of organizations is the types of responses they promote and endorse. While the responses share commonalities, like the focus on victims, the NGOs again demonstrate their challenging of the GOs through their responses.

**Responses.** Similar to the thematic code of women as victims, both the GOs and NGOs seem to focus on the same type of response to human trafficking, however, through further analysis it is insightful to see how the NGOs use the same response but alter it in a way that it reinforces the challenging of the GOs. While the GOs address the issue from a criminal

approach, their most common type of response resulted in the thematic code *Cooperation and Coordination as a Response*. Of the responses, cooperation and coordination came up eleven times in comparison to other responses such as protecting victims and prevention which came up twice. This thematic code refers to the GOs references to countries, organizations, and individuals having to work together in order to combat human trafficking. This also suggests bringing together different approaches, efforts and organizations to effectively address the issue and its various components. This could include combining the criminal justice system, victim protection services, and awareness campaigns as a way to address multiple dimensions of the issue in order to handle trafficking as a whole. While other responses were mentioned once or twice within a single organization, such as developing tools to help facilitate investigations in the RCMP's website, the response of cooperation and coordination was mentioned across all three GOs. This thematic code was seen in quotes such as "a coordinated national approach to tackling this crime is still required" (Public Safety Canada) and "Coordinate national awareness/training and anti-trafficking initiatives" (RCMP).

The NGOs take on a similar approach in which they demonstrate the practical aspect of the cooperation and coordination response that the GOs discuss. While cooperation and coordination was not a direct thematic code within the NGOs, they did present a thematic code which related to this response but was more specific in the way in which they enact this. As a result, the NGOs came up with the thematic code *Reference to other Non-Governmental Organizations*. The NGOs did mention other responses such as counselling and building support systems, however, the response of referencing to other NGOs came up more commonly among the NGOs. Reference to other NGOs came up eighteen times, and the response of cooperation and coordination was evident in five of the six organizations, and fifteen times overall.

Referencing to other NGOs displays the cooperation and coordination of organizations in attempting to combat trafficking. Although not all of the NGOs are supported by the federal government through funding, they still demonstrate this similarity in strategies to combat the issue. In terms of power relations, while this could be taken as the GOs demonstrating their power over the NGOs, further analysis shows how the NGOs actually challenge the GOs through their own interpretation of this response. Instead, what may be present is the NGOs respecting aspects of the GOs attempts to combat trafficking as it is difficult to challenge the notion that human trafficking requires the coordination and cooperation of multiple parties and approaches. Rather they challenge the ways in which cooperation and coordination plays out in a practical aspect.

The significance of NGOs referring to other NGOs as an attempt to cooperate and coordination with other organizations is the way in which they refer to similar types of organizations rather than ones addressing human trafficking from a different angle. Instead of referring to organizations that engage with different discourses of human trafficking they include references to other NGOs that include narratives of human trafficking as sexual exploitation. This not only includes anti-trafficking organizations but ones that specifically address sexual violence of sex work, this adding to the conflation of sexual exploitation with sex work and developing this discourse on the issue. By cooperating and coordinating only with organizations that are similar to theirs they build up the importance of their discourse as well as create the impression that it is more prevalent and therefore important. In doing this, these organizations benefit themselves and create the illusion that they are complying with the encouraged response that the GOs discuss.

This is in sharp contrast to what is discussed and implied in the context of the GOs' promotion of cooperation and coordination as a response. Cooperation and coordination in the way in which the GOs discuss it implies that there should be an inclusion of various organizations that address and approach human trafficking from different discourses so to combat every aspect of the issue. This in combination with the GOs' definition of trafficking, which is balanced between sexual exploitation and forced labour, means that they want different organizations, efforts, and strategies to come together as a response to human trafficking. The NGOs on the other hand use this response but rather than including different discourses they commonly refer to ones that approach the issue in a similar way.

While overall, there seems to be a lack of power influence from the GOs onto the NGOs, the second power relation does not demonstrate this same challenge of powerful institutions. Instead, the power relation between the NGOs and the public demonstrates how power is enacted by the NGOs onto society through their ability to produce and disseminate knowledge.

### **Non-Governmental Organizations and Society**

The relationship between the NGOs and society more directly demonstrates the power of one institution over another. Two main themes are significant in the discussion on this power relation, specifically in understanding how the NGOs use their power to influence and control the public's understanding of human trafficking. These two themes include discussions on the thematic code *Education as a response* and how this intertwines and relates to the organizations' ability to produce knowledge within society, specifically in relation to the dominant conceptualization of what human trafficking is and entails. Together these two themes demonstrate the power relationship between the NGOs and the public.

**Education & Knowledge Production.** One of the main ways in which the NGOs demonstrate their power over the general public is through their ability to produce knowledge on human trafficking. The general assumption is that these NGOs are knowledgeable and since there is a whole organization surrounding the issue then what they are teaching the public must be true or hold some significance. This assumption helps to understand why it may be problematic that education is the main response of these organizations in relation to how creating and disseminating single discourses of human trafficking results in implications for societal understanding on the large problem. The thematic codes for this section are intertwined and all significantly contribute to the conceptualization of power between the NGOs and the public. The relevant thematic codes include education as a response, human trafficking as sexual exploitation and women as victims. In addition, other thematic codes will be included throughout the discussion due to their relevance, however, they are not significant enough to make up their own section. Before addressing the theme of producing knowledge it is important to unpack the thematic code of education as a response.

Education as a response as a thematic code included any action codes or sections of texts that discuss educating both the victims and the general public, whether it be on what human trafficking is, what it entails and how it should be addressed. Education for victims included being informed on areas such as academic education, financial problems, and counselling or therapy that would help victims reintegrate into society. This was seen in organizations such as RESET which provide resources such as “Life-skill Classroom”, “Educational Scholarships”, and “Employment Skills”. Educating the general public included gaining a better understanding of what human trafficking looks like in the community and society at large. The key idea in educating the general public is demonstrated in the quote “Educating Everyone: Preventing

sexual exploitation before it even occurs” found on CHILL’s website. By educating everyone on human trafficking it allows individuals to understand the signs of human trafficking and how to prevent it. This same idea is also seen in ACT which claims, “We will increase knowledge and awareness on human trafficking.” Education as a response came up twenty-nine times across all the organizations, and was specifically discussed in five of the organizations (all of them except Aurora Home). This made it the most common response discussed, and a major thematic code within the NGOs.

In relation to education, it is also important to consider how and what these organizations are teaching as knowledge on human trafficking. In addition to providing definitions and explanations of human trafficking, the NGOs also provide other resources for those visiting the site. Some of these resources include referring to other organizations that work within the area of human trafficking or related areas such as sexual violence and migration. While the thematic code of reference to other NGOs was explained in the previous section, is it necessary to establish the connection between this thematic code and education as a response. The significance of this is how the single narrative of human trafficking as the sexual exploitation of women is created, disseminated and then reinforced by other organizations as well. As a result, these organizations not only play a substantial role in producing knowledge but also reinforcing and reproducing it. Overall, these organizations educate the public through the content on their own websites but this is also replicated and reinforced by other organizations. The result is that the same discourse of human trafficking is predominantly seen across organizations. This has several implications in regards to what exactly is being produced, reproduced and disseminated into the public.

It is essential to recall that sexual exploitation is overwhelmingly mentioned over the other types of trafficking and therefore there is a heavy emphasis on this aspect of the problem and the prevalence of it within society. The conceptualization of trafficking that is promoted by the NGOs is contradictory to what is seen in the literature and research on human trafficking in Canada. The U.N., in addition to the ACT, claim that forced labour makes up almost half of the trafficking cases within North America and Alberta respectively (UNODC, 2016, p.29; ACT, 2019). By representing human trafficking as primarily an issue of sexual exploitation, NGOs produces the knowledge that sexual exploitation is the more common and significant aspect of trafficking. As a result, this shapes how society believes anti-trafficking efforts should look like.

The combination of human trafficking as sexual exploitation and women as victims makes up the dominant discourse that is disseminated through the NGOs. The implication of this single narrative is that individuals coming to these organizations for either help or education may believe that unless a case fits into the category of sexual exploitation of women, it would be disregarded as a legitimate case of human trafficking. This meaning that some instances of trafficking may be missed or ignored because they are not understood by society as an aspect of trafficking. Furthermore, while these organizations mainly emphasize sexual exploitation they do not go beyond the general explanation to help educate the public on what this actually involves and the complexities within this single category. For example, the public may not understand how an individual in the sex trade may exemplify a case of sexual exploitation as well as forced labour. The vagueness in these definitions is seen in quotes such as “Sex trafficking is a serious threat to women’s equality and the basic right of every woman and girl to live free of violence. It uses threats, force, deception and the abuse of power to recruit women and girls into sexual exploitation” (Magdalene House). While this statement addresses the fact that trafficking goes



against the rights of an individual, as well as some of the ways individuals end up in sexual exploitation it does not express what sexual exploitation actually is or involves.

These vague definitions and discussions on trafficking, specifically sexual exploitation, may lead the public to continue to conflate human trafficking with other social issues such as sex work. Without expressing the reality of trafficking and teaching the public what sexual exploitation actually is and how to distinguish it from other social issues, the public may accept this over-simplified definition of trafficking as the whole problem rather than an aspect of the problem. The consequence of this may include society believing that anti-trafficking efforts should address the problem from a sex work approach, rather than understanding and targeting the complexities within human trafficking.

In addition, by emphasizing women as the victims of human trafficking these organizations are able to evoke a stronger societal reaction than if they focused on men as victims of forced labour. However, under one of the organizations (CEASE) men are discussed in relation to trafficking. What is questionable about this is that rather than discussing them as victims, the section focuses on “men of honour” and discusses them as honorary people that have made contributions to the anti-trafficking efforts. This understanding places men in the position of saviour and women as the ones needing saving. This discourse matches common societal assumptions about the role of men and women. However, it also erases discussions of men as victims of all types of trafficking, and women as victims of forced labour or other types of trafficking.

Producing knowledge in this fashion relates to the power relation between the NGOs and the public because of the way that maintaining this singular discourse of trafficking helps NGOs remain relevant and powerful. In combination with the thematic code of reference to other

NGOs, these organizations reinforce patriarchal societal assumptions that actually benefit them. In a patriarchal society, it is more shocking and horrific to have women exploited as they are seen as innocent and helpless. By focusing on an issue that sparks societal emotions and disapproval these organizations are able to grab the attention of society better than if they were discussing the exploitation of men or women in forced labour or removal of organs. In addition, sparking such an emotional response allows these organizations to be the ones that society is more likely to donate to. The relevance of this being that many NGOs operate off of donations and therefore, evoking this response ensures that they receive the funding they require in order to keep working. This is supported by another thematic code found within the NGOs, *Donations as a Response*. This came up thirteen times and within three organizations (ACT, Magdalene House and CEASE). Furthermore, by having other organizations reinforce the moral panic that is built around human trafficking as sexual exploitation the NGOs are able to ensure that they continue to receive donations by making the problem seem more prevalent than it actually is.

Representing trafficking as this single discourse has implications both relating to who and what it omits and the types of efforts that may be put forth in order to combat human trafficking. As mentioned, the definition of trafficking that these NGOs promote silences men as victims, especially in relation to forced labour. By ignoring forced labour, it excludes discussions on men as victims and essentially ignores a big chunk of victims, in addition it deems their exploitation as insignificant in comparison to those that are sexual exploited. Furthermore, the definition not only lacks attention on men as victims but also women as victims of forced labour, and other types of trafficking. By using only the discourse of sexual exploitation of women, the NGOs disregard these various experiences as legitimate cases of trafficking, and exclude discussions of trafficking as a larger issue than just the sexual exploitation of women. This is not to say that it is

not important to address victims of sexual exploitation, however, it is also important to understand the harm that may come out of the limited discourses of trafficking present in NGOs in Alberta.

Another absence we see is discussions on ethnicity. From the Canadian literature on human trafficking we know that Indigenous women and children are most vulnerable due to socioeconomic status (Kaye, 2017, p. 28). However, besides being mentioned briefly under other groups that are vulnerable, Indigenous victims are not discussed at length, if at all. In comparison, Indigenous people are only discussed twice within the NGOs, this is significantly less than the amount of times men are mentioned (six times). In addition, Indigenous people as a vulnerable group are only discussed in two of the NGOs (and only mentioned once in each organization), representing the lack of attention that is given to them as victims of human trafficking. Indigenous populations have a long history of being trafficked in Canada due to colonialism but this is not discussed by any of the organizations. While one organization, Aurora Home, does mention factors that push some victims into trafficking such as “inter-generational trauma” and “impacts of colonization” it does not go further to explain these and how it has impacted Indigenous communities to make them more vulnerable. Since this is not a common or larger discourse within the organizations it is not hard for society to move past and disregard it a reality. By excluding Indigenous women and children it further marginalizes a vulnerable group in society, and continues to tolerate the exploitation of this group of victims. Although it is known that Indigenous women and children are the most vulnerable group to domestic trafficking, these NGOs present human trafficking to be an issue of the sexual exploitation of the “perfect victim” rather than our own Indigenous people.

The implication of the single discourse and silences within it is that it creates a contradiction between their response to educate and their lack of follow through to do so. By using education as their main way to combat the issue it places the NGOs in the position of teacher and society as students, this creating a power differential between the two groups. This means that these NGOs have the power to essentially teach whatever version of human trafficking, and the public (the students) believe this to be the truth. Those that are visiting the sites are expected to accept the vague, single definition of trafficking that the organizations provide to the public, and in addition, further educate themselves by referring to the other organizations that also focus on this single discourse. By having education as a main response to human trafficking, what these organizations are implicitly stating is that they want to educate the public on the discourse they have created and are disseminating through their websites.

### **LIMITATIONS**

The study revealed two significant power relations that provided substantial and meaningful findings for the two research questions. While the results did yield answers to which definitions are held and prioritized by the GOs and NGOs, the study did have some limitations. The first of these limitations is the lack of provincial GOs in Alberta that address human trafficking. While the NGOs provided the bridge between the federal GOs and the public, another intersection between the federal GOs and provincial NGOs would have provided a more direct transition of power, and provided more insight into how power plays a role in which definitions are prioritized. The google search for anti-trafficking GOs at the provincial level did come up with some results, including organizations such as Alberta Health Services. However, this organization, similar to the other ones, did not have any resources regarding human trafficking and therefore a lack of data to analyze. Therefore, future studies could explain why

there is a lack of organizations at the provincial governmental level that address and combat human trafficking, and perhaps what role these organizations play in the discourses of human trafficking.

Another limitation of the research project is the generalizability of the results. While there was a diverse group of NGOs, many of them (three of the six organizations) were based out of Calgary and therefore the results are not very representative of Alberta as whole. However, the exhaustive list on anti-trafficking organizations that met the criteria did not bring up organizations in other cities or towns besides Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, and Grande Prairie. This could be due to the nature of human trafficking occurring mainly in large urban areas. However, regardless of this there was a lack of anti-trafficking organizations in some of the other large cities within Alberta such as Lloydminster and Lethbridge. Therefore, the results are only representative of the cities in which the NGOs are based out of.

Lastly, the results are only limited to those organizations that strictly address human trafficking and not in combination with other social issues. As part of the criteria only organizations that solely worked on human trafficking were included. However, there are other NGOs within Alberta that focus on human trafficking in addition to other issues such as human rights, sexual violence and immigration. Future studies could include these when looking at discourses and see if the same general results come up or whether other discourses are located within these organizations. Widening the scope of organizations included could provide a fuller and more exhaustive view on the discourses of human trafficking that are held by NGOs in Alberta.

Regardless of these limitations the results provided significant insight into the primary discourses of human trafficking in Alberta, and which of these definitions are prioritized. While

there is room for future studies to address some of the limitations mentioned, the study was successful in answering the research questions presented in the research.

## **CONCLUSION**

By representing human trafficking as the single discourse of the sexual exploitation of women it prioritizes this definition and explains it as the whole issue rather than an aspect of it. While each aspect of human trafficking is still a part of trafficking, it is important to contextualize the parts within the whole as to not silence or ignore any forms or victims of human trafficking. The concern with producing knowledge in this way could be detrimental if framed or used as a vehicle for other social issues, therefore addressing those problems rather than human trafficking. Specific to sexual exploitation, it could be used as a way to address sex work instead of combatting trafficking. In order to effectively handle the issue society first needs to appropriately and accurately define and prioritize the issue as a whole. This is not to undermine human agency in deciding and challenging common representations of human trafficking, however, it is important to understand the role powerful institutions play in (re)producing and disseminating information into society. It would be harder for individuals to believe that human trafficking encompasses a variety of issues if they continuously see a single narrative being discussed and addressed by organizations in the community.

It is important to state that these findings do not suggest that individuals should stop supporting and donating to organizations such as those analyzed in this study. Rather society should be more critical and aware of the influence of powerful institutions in producing knowledge within society. Supporting organizations that only address the sexual exploitation aspect of human trafficking are still combating part of the problem and this is a start. The

essential part, however, includes acknowledging the silences. The responsibility of this is twofold as it requires action from both the federal GOs and society.

Due to the NGOs having the freedom to address trafficking as they see fit, one could argue that perhaps some more government regulation around NGOs that focus on human trafficking may actually benefit the cause more. The lack of power influence of the GOs over the NGOs raises the questions of whether the GOs care about how the NGOs are addressing human trafficking, and whether the lack of a power relationship is problematic for societal understanding of the issue. By including regulations, the government and countries in generally, would be able to ensure that there is appropriate and representative attention given to human trafficking as a whole. Through regulations the government can ensure that there is even representation of all types of trafficking, and that no groups are silenced within these single discourses. This means that organizations are still able to focus specifically on sexual exploitation, but in addition, these organizations should be regulated to fill quotas for the other types of trafficking that are common within Alberta such as forced labour.

In addition to increased government regulation, individuals in society should be more critical of knowledge produced by those in positions of power. Rather than looking at one organization and accepting the content as truth, individuals should do their part in guaranteeing that they are using multiple sources to learn about human trafficking. The issue with looking at multiple sources, such as the organizations analyzed, is the tendency of these organizations to consistently refer back to each other and build up this single discourse. Due to this it is vital that society be aware of the role power plays in the (re)production of knowledge and how this may maintain the status quo. The challenge in this is that individuals are not aware of the information they do not know. A way to counter that would be to utilize the questions that guided the critical

discourse analysis done in this study. Those questions including: What are the presumptions and assumptions that underlie the “problem”? What are the silences? How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? (Bacchi, 2009, p.7).

By using these questions as a way to critically analyze information that is disseminated into society individuals are better able to grasp other concerns surrounding human trafficking. Human trafficking needs to be understood as a larger societal problem which involves various intersecting issues in order to be addressed effectively. As Jahic and Finckenauer (2005) point out human trafficking encompasses a variety of issues, but “it is not any of these problems *alone*” (p.37).



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