

Natasha Flores

Professor Grant

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Sex trafficking: Defining Terms and identifying methods of trafficking

Sex trafficking falls under the umbrella term Human trafficking which consists of other forms of abuse: forced labor otherwise known as slavery and illegal organ donation. In this industry young women, men and children are either forced or coerced into sexual exploitation or sexual slavery. Victims are involuntarily placed into situations where dependence on their traffickers is vital in order to survive. They are abused and forced to perform sexual services in exchange for monetary gain. The three major forms of sex trafficking crimes are transportation, purchase, and exploitation this also includes commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST). This paper discusses the terminology used in sex trafficking followed by addressing common misconceptions surrounding this issue. The paper will also introduce important concepts such as who is affected and provide thorough explanations concerning the two most common methods of recruitment and their processes.

Defining Terms

To preface the issue, it is essential to understand the terminology that is used when discussing the complexity of the sex trafficking industry. Differentiating between the numerous terms such

as sex trafficking, prostitution, survival sex, sexual exploitation, and sex work avoids misunderstanding and clouded judgment. When distinguishing between these terms, confusion may arise within scholarly, legal, and popular sources (Gerassi). Therefore, it is essential to consider the contexts to which they are applied.

Misconceptions

The various terms used in this industry often become misinterpreted among different contexts; however, others argue that because of the “lack of a uniform system of data collection to identify victims increases the difficulty of obtaining accurate statistics” (Garessi, 594). This is where using the correct terminology is key because the terms “prostitution” and “sex work” are often used interchangeably when gathering data. To understand the difference, it is important to keep track of every nuance between the terms, especially when identifying how many individuals are deliberate sex workers and involuntary sex workers. These misunderstandings lead people to believe that individuals who were trafficked from a young age and remained in the industry belong in the same group as adults who deliberately participated in sex work.

Sexual exploitation

Initially, sexual exploitation referred to “any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation” (Gerassi, 592). However recent changes to the term have been made to include “any individual, regardless of age, who was affected by sexual violence for political or social advancement” (Garessi, 592). Although it

is important to note that several academic and world organizations such as the United Nations use the term to refer to “sexualized, exploitative gender-based crimes against women and girls exclusively, U.S. law has used the term only to refer to treatment of minors” (Garessi, 592). This indicates that the terminology used in this industry is constantly evolving based on the situation it is being used in; therefore, it is understandable how some terms may be used interchangeably.

Sex trafficking

According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act which was passed by U.S. Congress on October 28, 2000 a sex trafficking victim is defined as a “person induced to perform a commercial sex act through force, fraud, or coercion regardless of citizenship or national origin” meaning that regardless of other factors like age or gender, any individual whether a minor or adult that is involuntarily forced to perform sexual services is considered a sex trafficking victim according on the act.

Commercial Sex Exploitation of Children and Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)

The commercial sex exploitation of children and domestic minor sex trafficking in essence refer “to the sex trafficking of minors, stipulated to be individuals under the age of 18” (Garessi, 593) as opposed to the national definition for adults trapped in sex trafficking where force, fraud, or coercion are not necessary for sexual exploitation and trafficking crimes. Committing the illegal acts of “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (Garessi) violates federal statutes prohibiting the sexual exploitation of women, men and children.

Prostitution & Sex work

The act of voluntarily performing sexual services in exchange for payment is what differentiates prostitution workers from victims of the sex trafficking industry. However, recently the term “sex work” has been introduced to provide a sense of professionalism in order to remove the stigma that comes with the service. Legally prostitution is defined as “the unlawful promotion of or participation in sexual activities for profit, including attempts or the solicitation of customers or transport of persons for prostitution purposes” (Gerassi, 594) which provides a clear distinction between sex work and sex trafficking crimes.

Pimp-Controlled Trafficking

Pimp-Controlled Trafficking is identified as “commercial sexual exploitation to include both circumstances of force, fraud, and/or coercion by any third party, such as pimp-controlled prostitution” (Fedina, Williamson, Perdue) indicating that victims become physically and psychologically manipulated by their traffickers through building a foundation of trust.

According to a study done in Mississippi traffickers recruit victims- typically minors, through the “grooming phase” in order for the victims to become “dependent on traffickers to meet the monetary and emotional needs that parents and the community are not meeting”. By building this sense of trust, traffickers coerce victims into performing commercial sex acts and eventually trafficking them to more abusers which leads to a continuous cycle of abuse.

Gang Trafficking

Gang-controlled trafficking differs from pimp-controlled trafficking because instead of one person trafficking victims the entire gang ‘family’ takes part in distributing victims to “trusted buyers, using intimidation and their reputation for violence” meaning that victims are thought of as property and a form of profit allowing gangs to disperse the victims without apprehension. Gangs typically benefit from trafficking as a whole and generate high profits for everyone involved. Typically, gang-related trafficking occurs when victims are sold to get into a gang, as a part of their loyalty to the gang, or to receive protection within the gang.

Traffickers recruit victims they deem vulnerable and coerce them with false promises of stability and protection; they target individuals of all ages and perceive them as property. The different methods of trafficking vary depending on the situation the victims are in. In some cases, victims are trafficked by their family members and are forced to perform sexual services in return for profit. Other victims are coerced or forced into trafficking through gang affiliation or pimp-controlled situations, most victims are manipulated into abusive roles making it extremely difficult to escape. However, there are several non-profit organizations in effect meant to aid in the rescue of individuals trapped in sexual exploitation situations such as the International Justice Mission that combats sex trafficking in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, the Polaris project, and with the establishment of the Innocence Lost Initiative which was an FBI lead investigation played a major role in the capture of several sex traffickers and rescue of numerous victims.

Jeffrey Epstein: Sex crimes of the elite

Reportedly found dead in his Manhattan jail cell on August 10th under “suspicious circumstances” Epstein managed to evade charges of one count of sex trafficking of a minor and

one count of conspiracy to commit sex trafficking. Revealed to have been part of a much larger ring of powerful well-connected individuals Epstein trafficked several minors to himself and his other contacts through promises of stability and freedom. One of his victims, Virginia Roberts Giuffre sued Epstein's longtime girlfriend and alleged procurer of girls, Ghislaine Maxwell who denies all allegations. Following his arrest, several claims from different victims came forward each declaring the abuse they experienced at the hands of the wealthy and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Epstein's transition from educator to successful money manager led to the development of his relationships with other powerful individuals such as former impeached President Bill Clinton, Donald Trump and modeling agent Jean-Luc Brunel—one of Epstein's esteemed contacts. Documented heavily is the relationship between Epstein and Clinton from 2002 to 2003 and their many flights on his private jet, the "Lolita Express" to his private island which has garnered nicknames such as "Island of sin" and "Pedophile Island". Their frequent flights have caused a lot of suspicion regarding their actions on the island and the purpose of the visits. A statement released by Angel Ureña, a Clinton spokesperson addressed the former president's flights to Europe and Asia were accompanied by Clinton's staff and secret service agents to continue the work of the Clinton Foundation, stating that Clinton had "not spoken to Epstein in well over a decade, and has never been to Little St. James Island, Epstein's ranch in New Mexico, or his residence in Florida".

Epstein distributed these young girls to his most trusted associates among the most influential individuals, one of them being Prince Andrew. Ghislaine Maxwell brought together

Epstein and Andrew in the 1990s which led to their close friendship. The Duke of York received heavy criticism for his frequent flights to Epstein's island on taxpayer dollars only furthering the suspicion of his involvement in the sex trafficking ring. It is estimated that the number of girls allegedly abused by Epstein ranges from a dozen to over one hundred. Epstein's victims are examples of the "325,000 children at risk for sexual exploitation in the United States" every year.

His position allowed him to exploit children and force them into oppressive positions where he continuously sexually abused them and freely solicited the young girls to his close associates. Epstein moved freely and sought young vulnerable girls and once under his control he threatened them with his wealth and power ensuring their obedience.

Virginia Roberts Giuffre one of Epstein's victims alleged that at the age of seventeen she was forced to act as Epstein's sex slave and was trafficked three separate times to Prince Andrew and Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz by British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell. According to The Independent Giuffre claims that she served as Epstein's sex slave from 1999 to 2002 and was made to recruit other underage girls.

This case is far wider than Epstein, he did not do this himself he had a lot of help and support from other powerful people such as his then-girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell, Jean Luc-Brunel and other alleged names; they produced massive amounts of wealth from the victims and opened up more opportunities to uncover who took part in the trade and abuse of the girls. Epstein's capture revealed the open secret within the wealthy and powerful society that participates in the trafficking of several victims every year. This case attaches a face to the

criminals responsible for the exploitation of “14,500 to 17,0000 individuals” that are trafficked into the United States and “80% of these international victims are female and 70% are trafficked into the sex industry.”

Jeffrey Epstein was simply one figure in a multifaceted ring of sex traffickers, the only difference being that he got caught. His crimes led to the exposure of others in his position and allowed victims to come forward with their claims. What was a widely known string of crimes, are no longer kept hidden among society’s elite. Instead, people are now aware of the severity at which sex trafficking victims are placed in and how young the victims often are. This case influences the common perceptions people have regarding sex traffickers and provides an understanding that the people behind these crimes are typically those we don’t often expect.

Rationale

My first composition is an explainer article which means that it requires it to be informative and objective. In this first composition, my targeted audience was individuals who had some knowledge of the sex trafficking industry or who were aware of its existence but were not well informed on the topic. This was essential because it gave me a direction to how I should format my composition in a way that would make it easier for readers to understand. I decided to use subheadings to introduce the most essential aspects of sex trafficking by making each subheading a new idea as it makes it easier for the audience to navigate through the article. The language I used throughout the article was straightforward and factual. However, I avoided complicating the issues, so instead of using jargon, I used simple and concise language that would appeal to a general audience.

My purpose was to communicate the most essential aspects of sex trafficking to a large group of people and the best way to effectively communicate this was by using statistics and referencing studies to inform the audience. I wanted my stance to be objective and neutral as my purpose was not to persuade the audience or argue any claim. By using this genre it was easier to introduce the ideas in an organized and clear manner. I did not want to include too much information that would confuse the audience, so I included quotes that were the most supportive of my topics.

The second piece differs from the audience in my first piece because it was an opinion article focused on a group of people who are aware of the Jeffrey Epstein case and didn't require much of an introduction to his crimes. The purpose of the article was to convince my audience that Jeffrey Epstein was one of the many wealthy, elite and powerful individuals whose actions were exposed to have been sexually trafficking minors in an elite ring of well-connected millionaires and billionaires. The focus audience were people interested in following up on the case, such as details on his death and people that have a sufficient level of knowledge on the case such as the charges he faced and who was involved and the victims that were affected and people that are more interested in understanding his role in the sex trafficking industry. I chose to target this audience because I want people to understand that people such as himself are not rare, they exist and that they are most likely people in power, they are part of elite groups of people all over the world.

My second composition used more conversational language instead of the professional and factual language as in my first composition because I wanted to take into consideration the genre I used for each article and how I could effectively appeal to two separate audiences.

Taking on a subjective stance and coming across really opinionated on this issue was really important because my purpose was to argue a certain view and I wanted my audience to agree with me or at least contemplate what I was arguing.

The major differences between my compositions were the audiences and the purposes of the articles. The main connection between my compositions was the importance of conveying how the majority of the victims are children, specifically female children below the age of 18. I chose to write an explainer article because it provided a more objective and well-researched perspective of the issue, while the second composition provided an example of who was responsible for participating in those crimes. By doing so I targeted two separate audiences with different levels of knowledge, but I wanted both audiences to receive the same understanding of the industry.