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Constructions of Human Trafficking in the Australian Sex Industry: an International Relations Perspective

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Abstract

Human trafficking in the sex industry is an international problem, and while this dissertation is about the trafficking of women, it is not about women who have been trafficked. As one of the most lucrative transnational crimes, human trafficking is seen as a world problem, where globalisation of the world economy and the rapid development of information technology provide many opportunities for criminal syndicates to operate across borders. Australia is not immune to the problems of human trafficking, which has led to the Government working on both domestic and international fronts, taking its place as a regional leader through several initiatives aimed at combatting issues of human security.

In this dissertation, I analyse the social construction of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry as a public problem, by looking at responses to this problem from both government and non-government agencies. I explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking, how this shapes public opinion of the sex industry, and then look at the effect this has on those who work in this industry.

The principles of constructionism best suit my research methods as I examine how people shape their understandings of a problem based on their beliefs, values, and past experiences. I am interested in whose voices are listened to and whose are silenced as migrant sex workers are constructed as victims of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry.

This research is significant in the field of International Relations because it looks at how an issue of human security is constructed concerning a group of people whose voices are often ignored, as well-meaning citizens speak for and about them.

Statement of candidate

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number # HR183/2011

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1 Motivation

A passing remark from a friend of mine sparked my initial interest in researching human trafficking in the Australian sex industry. We were at a cafe and a newspaper had been left on the table where we were sitting. It was open at the Personal section of the Classifieds[1] and someone had circled a couple of the advertisements for private sex workers. This is part of the conversation we had over coffee.

Christine: *"Look at this here. These ads shouldn't be in the paper, should they?"*
Angela: *"Why do you say that?"*
Christine: *"Well ... (she paused) ... prostitution. It's just wrong."*
Angela: *"Hasn't it been around forever?"*
Christine: *"Yes, but these girls are all forced to sell themselves. Poor things."*
Angela: *"Oh, I don't know. Maybe they want to do the work."*
Christine: *"How could they want to?"*
Angela: *"Maybe they just see it as a job?"*
Christine: *"No! They can't. And there are so many Asians in the ads. They must all be trafficked because nobody would choose to do that job."*

(Conversation with Christine - a friend, Fremantle, Western Australia, July 2010)

Our coffee and cake arrived at that time, so the topic of conversation changed. However, when Christine went to the bathroom, I quickly wrote down what had been said because these few sentences from our coffee catch-up left me wondering what had caused my friend to draw these conclusions. Our beliefs and values help us to shape our opinions and I was curious whether *"They must all be trafficked because nobody would choose to do that job"* was a commonly held opinion among people outside the sex industry. My friend was completely unaware that I worked in the sex industry; very few people outside of the industry knew. When I began my dissertation, I told Christine it was her remark that had initiated my interest in this topic, and I got her consent to quote this conversation.

[1] The Classifieds is a section of many newspapers where goods and services are advertised. This can include a Personal or Adult Services section where phone chat lines, brothels, swingers' clubs, private sex workers and sensual massage services are listed.

A story, once written, can be read in several ways. Narrative is constructed by the writer but interpreted by the reader, depending on the beliefs and values they bring into the equation; it would appear this is the case regardless of the length of the text. A few lines of script can be taken at face value, or examined for what is written as well as what is not written, which may lead to speculation regarding the circumstances faced by the subject. Such was the case with the way Christine had viewed the newspaper advertisements for sexual services offered by Asian women in the Australian sex industry. Her assumption was that they must all be trafficked; she could not conceive of the idea that these women would voluntarily come to Australia to work as prostitutes. In later discussions with Christine, she did not believe anyone could freely choose to *sell themselves for sex* (Christine's phrasing). She assumed every prostitute was forced into it. Her sentiments were echoed by other people I spoke with, as illustrated in the following excerpt from an interview with a fellow Humanities student at university. It was conversations like this which further motivated me to research the Australian sex industry.

E.B:	*"I honestly don't see how any woman can sell her body for sex."*
Angela:	*"Do you think they are selling a service and are able to see it that way?"*
E.B:	*"Not at all. Sex is way too intimate. It's what you do when you have a connection with someone …. When you feel something for them."*
Angela:	*"What about one night stands? Couples who 'hook up' at nightclubs and go home together, or even have sex in the carpark? Do they have feelings for each other then, or is that 'just sex'?"*
E.B:	*"Well, that's disgusting and I wouldn't do that!"*
Angela:	*"Okay, but some people do. I guess my point is that most women who choose to charge money for sexual services are in control of their bodies, of the situation. By charging a fee and agreeing on a service, it becomes a business transaction between consenting adults."*
E.B:	*"I don't agree with you, Angela. You make it sound like a visit to a physiotherapist. I've seen these reports on TV where the prostitutes are beaten up, raped, and forced to do things they don't want to do. Their pimps take the money and let these men treat them badly."*

(Excerpt from an interview with E.B - a Humanities student at university, Perth, February 2012)

Throughout this thesis I have used the terms 'prostitute' and 'prostitution' largely to reflect the voices of others. Those of us in the sex industry prefer the term 'sex worker' and 'sex work'. Prostitute is synonymous with the idea that one is selling oneself. Sex workers sell a service – we do not sell ourselves. This seems to be the

main point of conflict between sex workers and anti-prostitution activists, both in the literature and among those people I have met on each side of the debate.

My preliminary reading of relevant literature, coupled with my own involvement in the industry for a number of years, indicated that the sex industry in Australia and how it fits into a global network is understood in many different ways. Those who work in the industry, their clients, State and Federal Government departments, the police, non-government organisations (NGOs), sex industry support groups and the general populace all seem to have views on the nature and extent of the sex industry. However, these opinions tend to be formed from limited knowledge, shaped by how each person constructs their world view based on life experience, beliefs and values. As McKewon (2005) suggests:

> *Often what people think they know about prostitution is actually based on conjecture, prejudices and myths that have been handed down unchallenged from one generation to the next.* (McKewon, 2005, p1)

Perhaps this is the only industry on which most people feel they can have an opinion, regardless of whether or not they have had any interaction with those who work in this field. Images in the media, news reports, television crime series, and movies portray a stereotype which may not fit with the reality of the situation, yet these are often used to form a homogenous picture of the sex industry, sex workers, and human trafficking into this type of work (Smith, 2013; Maclean, 2018). I examine this when looking at factors that shape public opinion about the Australian sex industry and have influenced the construction of migrant sex work as human trafficking. As a sex worker, I lost count of the number of times I have listened to groups of people discuss what a prostitute looks like, what she wears, how she behaves, and so on. Sitting with a dozen ladies at a regular sewing group while working on my embroidery and smiling to myself, wearing a grey and pink floral dress which could only be described as demure; I didn't exactly fit the image they were describing of a woman in revealing clothing with heavy makeup, standing on a street corner touting for business. I was a student and they assumed I tutored.

In this dissertation I expand upon and explore some of the issues regarding human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, as some concern was originally pointed out to me because of newspaper advertisements. The realisation that migrant sex workers

in Perth are not simply working in a local industry facing their own dilemmas; rather they form part of an issue which is a matter of considerable concern for many, brings my research into the field of International Relations. The topics of migration for work, migration of women, the illegal movement of people, human trafficking, international laws, human rights, and border security appear on international agendas and provide the framework on which I ground my research. I examine how the Australian Government has shaped its response to human trafficking in the Australian sex industry and the effect this has had on those who work in that industry. Several researchers (Perkins, 1991; Lim 1998; Raymond, 2004; Poinier and Fautre, 2010) note there appears to be a large demand for professional sexual services, both in Australia and internationally. The demand for professional sexual services is difficult to quantify, given the stigma attached to both working in the sex industry and using the services provided, however, a figure of almost one in six Australian men having used professional sexual services (15.6%) is often used as a benchmark figure (Rissel, et al, 2003; Magnanti, 2014). This demand is met by both local and migrant sex workers, catering for the different tastes and requirements of clients.

I position myself in this dissertation as being anti- human trafficking, this being a humanitarian issue affecting the lives of many thousands of people around the world. What I do state is that I am anti anti-trafficking, being opposed to those movements which remove agency from those they purport to be helping, denying their voice in activities directly affecting their lives. According to Geertz, this double negative *enables one to reject something without thereby committing oneself to what it rejects* (Geertz, 1984, p264).

1.2 Locating the research

This study began in Perth, Western Australia (W.A.), one of the world's most remote capital cities, where the majority of the state's population live in the Greater Perth metropolitan area, which stretches for approximately 150 kilometres along a narrow strip of the coastal plain of W.A. This study took place between 2011 and 2016, when the population of W.A. was approximately 2.6 million, representing 11% of Australia's total population; 2.04 million people lived in the Greater Perth area (79% of the state's total). Between 2014 and 2015 the population of Greater Perth

increased by 1.6% (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016), and according to Salt (2016):

> *What the rest of Australia and perhaps much of Asia doesn't understand about Perth is that it is one of Australia's, and the world's, most multicultural cities. Some 41 per cent of the Perth population was born overseas; this proportion for Sydney is 42 per cent; for Melbourne and Brisbane it is less than 40 per cent. By this definition Perth can only be described as being welcoming of migrants. Indeed Perth has a greater ethnic eclecticism than does New York, where just 29 per cent of the population was born overseas. Even London, regarded as one of the world's great melting-pot cities, has a lesser proportion of migrants (36 per cent) than does Perth.* (Salt, 2016)

Australia is now considered to be the most ethnically diverse country in the world (ABS, 2016). According to the 2016 Census, 26% of Australians were born overseas and 49% of people had at least one parent born overseas. There were 100 religions and 300 ethnic groups listed in Australian society on the 2016 Census (ABS, 2016). This ethnic diversity is reflected in society and also by the number of migrant workers in the Australian workforce; yet migrant workers in the sex industry still face the stigma of being labelled as victims of human trafficking because of their chosen occupation.

The relevance of these figures quoted for Perth and other Australian capital cities becomes important for this study because my starting point was considering migrant women working in the local Perth sex industry. Four Asian migrant sex workers known to me had been labelled as victims of trafficking, in spite of Perth being considered a multicultural city. They were in Perth on the same type of work visa as an Irish sex worker also working at the same brothel; however, nobody tried to rescue her. One of the sex workers told me:

> *"Mia, Poppy, Tina, and me. We got picked up and taken to some rescue group. Gave us some tea, sandwich and cake. Try to say we are trafficked here from Thailand. We all take our passports and visas next day to show them. Not trafficked."* (Nataporn -Thai sex worker, Perth 2011)

I discovered by speaking with several people and through a preliminary review of the literature, that anti-prostitution sentiments were often linked with anti-trafficking. Several people I spoke with from outside the sex industry, unaware of my sex worker background, voiced their concerns about the dangerous world I would be researching, with pimps, drugs, and gangs. For example,

> *"Make sure you meet these people in public places. Tell someone where you're going and call when you're finished. Can you take someone with you to the interviews?"*
> (S.W. - Research Mentor at Curtin University, Perth, 2011)

These are two examples of the initial discussions I had with people from both sides of the argument that prompted my investigation of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry. I felt that as an insider working in the sex industry, I was able to see things from a different perspective, to speak to people who might not talk freely to non-sex workers, and be part of discussions, forums, workshops, and working groups reserved for sex workers only. This insider knowledge and access would set my research apart from some of the work that had been done by other people from the outside looking in. At this stage, I was still working on my aim and research questions, so I was trying to get a general feeling for topics to research. However, recurrent themes began to appear as I talked with sex workers: that of being labelled as trafficked, abused, victims with no freedom of choice; and the desire other people had to rescue them. I expand on these themes throughout this dissertation, piecing parts of stories together in a method Saukko (2000, pp299-303) likens to quilting. The resulting synergy created from all the pieces tells a stronger story than the individual narratives.

The sex industry is not a homogenous workforce; services are offered by women, men, transgender, transsexuals. However, I have chosen to limit my study to women providing sexual services, thus locating this dissertation within studies of female prostitution and the history of the movement of women for work, both forced and by choice. Human trafficking, as it has been defined by international protocols, includes several forms of labour exploitation; however, it is the illicit movement of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation which has caused the greatest concern from activists and attracted the most media attention. Therefore, I have focused on human trafficking for the sex industry for this study.

I also acknowledge that since British settlement there have been many occurrences of Aboriginal women being used for prostitution where they have been trafficked, exploited and abused. I feel this topic requires a much more in-depth coverage which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.3 Aims and research questions

As a student of International Relations, I initially sought to focus on how Australia responded to the issue of human trafficking in the sex industry, both nationally and as a Middle Power in the region. However, as I became more involved in the research, it became clear that I also wanted to present some of the voices of both migrant and non-migrant sex workers in Australia as they constructed their reality, in conjunction with those who sought to disregard these voices. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), it is often

> *...well into the process of inquiry that one discovers what the research is really about, and not uncommonly, it turns out to be about something rather different from the initial foreshadowed problems.* (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p206)

By drawing on text-based discourses on the sex industry and human trafficking, and also through ethnographic inquiry centred on participant observation and interviews, this study developed into an exploration of how constructions of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry have affected that industry.

Therefore, my aim in this study was to explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking.

My specific research questions were as follows:

Research Question 1: Who speaks for and about migrant sex workers in Australia?

Research Question 2: What effect does this have on shaping public opinion about the industry?

Research Question 3: How does this impact upon those who work in the Australian sex industry?

1.4 Significance of this research

In Australia, a perceived influx of overseas sex workers, largely from parts of Asia, has led to the Government working on both domestic and international fronts to combat the influence of transnational crime in the sex industry and to aid its victims. In this dissertation, I examine the response to this problem in Australia from both government and non-government agencies, exploring how they construct the

international dimension of this activity and how these understandings are acted upon, with Australia being labelled as a destination country for human trafficking by both national and international authorities (Australian Federal Police, 2016; U.S. Department of State, 2016; World Vision, 2016). In this international context, I examine how Australia's handling of the problem of human trafficking conforms or conflicts with international standards, to ascertain whether enough is being done by both government and non-government agencies to prevent this transnational crime and to prosecute those involved in the trafficking of women to work in the Australian sex industry. As a party to the United Nations Trafficking Protocol (2000), the Australian Government is committed to the prosecution of perpetrators involved in this transnational crime, and to assisting victims of trafficking.

Human trafficking is spoken of as if it is an issue affecting significant numbers in the Australian sex industry, largely by those who approach it from an anti-prostitution perspective (for example, see ACRATH, CATWA, and Project Respect websites). Instances of human trafficking have been found in Australia, however, the numbers are small, and while not denying that even one person saved is worthy of having policies and action plans in place, there is a common opinion among sex industry support groups suggesting human trafficking is not a serious problem in the Australian sex industry (for example, see Scarlet Alliance website and Sex Worker Outreach Project website); the majority of migrant sex workers choose to come to Australia to take advantage of a higher income and better working conditions than in their home countries. If it is sometimes understood that a woman may choose to come to Australia and work in the sex industry for her own reasons, then the only issues of concern for the Government are those of her visa and whether taxes are being paid. This might be construed more as an issue of immigration, not trafficking, with there being no possibility to declare working in the sex industry as a legitimate occupation on a visa application. However, those who are trafficked need to be protected and given help to choose their own future, in an effort to combat this international crime. I am concerned with how this is constructed as a public problem by the various government agencies and non-government organisations who claim to have an interest in addressing human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, and how they distinguish between genuine cases of trafficking and those who come here on holiday, student or working visas and decide to work in the sex industry.

1.5 Thesis outline

In Chapter One, Introduction and Research Background, I explain my motivation for this research topic, locating the research in Australia. My aim is stated, as are three research questions.

Chapter Two, Theoretical Framework and Literature Review, begins with an overview of some of the main theories and approaches of International Relations, showing how these have shaped national and international responses to security problems, and more specifically the issue of human trafficking. I use this to position my research within a constructionist theoretical framework. The chapter continues with an outline of the current state of research on this issue, identifying the key national and international contributors to debates about women, sex work, migration and human trafficking. I compare current constructions of these debates with narratives of women migrating for sex work during the Nineteenth Century, connecting images from the past to present ways of thinking.

In Chapter Three, Research Methodology, I explore relevant methodology literature and demonstrate how I have applied particular qualitative methods in my research. Two separate sets of data were collected – one comprising text-based discourses on the sex industry and human trafficking, and the other from ethnographic inquiry centred on participant observation and interviews. Through repeated observation and interaction over an extended period, I was able to follow local narratives within a socio-political and cultural context. In this chapter, I also outline my position as a researcher in this study, the roles I took on, and the reasons this approach was necessary to gather information.

Chapter Four, Influences on Australia's Response to the Sex Industry and Human Trafficking, is an historical overview of the influences on Australia's official response to the sex industry and human trafficking, particularly with regard to migrant women in the Australian sex industry. In addition, this chapter discusses how the Australian Government takes a leading role in the region in the fight against human trafficking, providing funding and expertise for a number of programs in neighbouring nations where human trafficking is seen as a major concern, in an

effort to maintain stability and human security in the region. I focus on Research Question 2 in this chapter.

Chapter Five, Rescue: A Contested Narrative is a case study of a non-government organisation (NGO) that widely distributed its anti-prostitution and anti-trafficking messages into Australian homes during two of its annual fundraising campaigns. Through a mix of text-based information from public discourses and original material sourced from my ethnographic observations, I particularly examine Research Questions 2 and 3. This chapter adds to the body of this dissertation by demonstrating the power of the narrative to justify, and then to sustain actions in the face of criticism.

In Chapter Six, Hear Their Voices: Sex Workers in Australia, I examine some of the many voices that play off against each other: be they local or migrant sex workers, the people who support them, or those who vehemently oppose what they prefer to call prostitution. I look at both sides of the story in a nation where sex work is not a crime, and free choice is encouraged as one of the values of Australian society. The evidence provided responds to all three research questions.

Chapter Seven is the Conclusion to my dissertation, where I summarise the main points I have made regarding my aim, which was to explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. I discuss the main findings for each of the three research questions, and then outline the implications of these. This leads to recommendations for further research in the Australian sex industry.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

No state has the capacity to deal with human trafficking alone, especially when the illegal crossing of borders undermines sovereignty. Issues of protecting state sovereignty have long been viewed as a problem to be dealt with by a show of military strength, often resulting in warfare if a peaceful resolution cannot be found. However, human trafficking does not involve an invasion or border skirmish necessitating an act of military retaliation. Other measures are necessary to combat this breach of border security, in addition to tackling the perhaps more important humanitarian problems connected with trafficking people into situations where they are exploited as part of an illegal work force. It is how states view this issue, the priority it is given, and how they frame it within their policies, which brings human trafficking within the realm of International Relations.

I am interested in the way state-to-state relations have been constructed to show concern for trafficking into the global sex industry, and closer to home, what is being done to address this issue in Australia. Throughout this thesis, I examine the factors, both internal and external, that have shaped Australia's responses to human trafficking to ascertain how much influence they have had on the formation and continuation of a whole of government approach to this issue. This course of action, detailed in the *Australian Government's Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons* (2004), was replaced by a whole of community approach, set out in the *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery, 2015-2019* (Australian Government, 2014). Response to human trafficking is often thought to be approached from a humanitarian perspective, being concerned with the effect of such criminal practices on the lives of its victims, although the extent of this is dependent upon how the resulting national security risk is assessed. Trafficking into the sex industry introduces overt moral concerns regarding the arguments for and against prostitution, and whether it can ever be viewed as a freely chosen occupation or always involves exploitation and abuse. Anti-trafficking discourses have helped to shape the parameters for what constitutes trafficking and who should be labelled as

its victims. My aim in this study is to explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking.

In this chapter I consider some of the main theories and approaches of International Relations, commenting on how these have shaped national and international responses to security problems, and more specifically the issue of human trafficking. It is not possible to examine every theoretical variation associated with the field of International Relations; therefore, I have chosen to examine realism and liberalism to highlight significant strengths and weaknesses of these theories towards a humanitarian issue. I also discuss feminism and constructionism as approaches used to address the issue of human trafficking, and by analysing the concerns these theories and approaches agree are worth disagreeing about, I position my research which I locate in Australia.

I then examine a body of literature which discusses the shaping of Western societal attitudes towards human trafficking, the sex industry, and migrant sex work. Here I compare current concerns about trafficking in women for sexual exploitation with the discourses that occurred at the end of the Nineteenth Century regarding the corruption of white women. I discuss the similarities in these narratives and show how contemporary fears about sex worker migration are a modern version of what has been referred to as the myth of white slavery (Doezema, 1999). Specific feminist campaigns against prostitution and human trafficking are considered as underlying motivations for these concerns, both in past and present times. I also examine how framing the issue of human trafficking as a threat to national security rather than in terms of human rights can have a positive effect on the willingness of states and policy makers to adopt strategies for dealing with this international problem.

2.2 Theories of International Relations

The study of International Relations, where scholars examine the foreign policy of states and the resulting relationships with international organisations, non-government organisations (NGOs) and multinational corporations has been recognised as a discipline in its own right since the early Twentieth Century. At this time, the first efforts were made by states to seek alternative strategies to war to settle grievances, through events such as the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and the

newly formed League of Nations (US Department of State, 2014). A branch of political science, the study of International Relations draws heavily upon such fields as history, economics, law, philosophy, and sociology to make sense of the way states operate and engage with one another in the international system (Wiener, 2006, pp6-7).

Two dominant approaches developed in the early years of International Relations as a discipline; realism focussing on the use of dominance and military strength to achieve the balance of power, and an oppositional school, liberalism, believing in the strength of international law and cooperation between states to maintain peace (Burchill et al, 2005, pp 6-10). These two schools of International Relations theory see the state as the main unit to be analysed. It is the motivation for the actions of the actors which distinguishes these schools of thought. They differ in that realism is concerned with power while liberalism focuses on economic prosperity, that is, the absolute gains of liberal theory versus the relative gains favoured by realists (Stanton Jr., 2002). These motivations give insight into how the world operates and are the basis for the theories of International Relations. Liberalists see that cooperation between states is possible for economic reasons; realists, with their focus on military strength and security, see very little cause for cooperation. While both schools of thought agree the world is in anarchy, having no hierarchy where a single state makes global laws, they do not agree on how to tackle the anarchic nature of the international system, or the reasons why cooperation occurs between states.

2.2.1 Realism

Realism, as a school of thought that has dominated the study of International Relations since the 1950s, makes several basic assumptions regarding how state-to-state relations are conducted. These relate to the central theme that the state is the most important actor in world politics and can be summarised as follows:

- Power is the only certainty in a harsh, dangerous world, and military power is the most reliable means of obtaining and retaining power
- Self-preservation of the state is paramount to its survival
- The international system is based on anarchy, with no international government to control or punish states

- Morality and ethics are not important in the pursuit of national power, and cannot be allowed to obstruct or influence policy makers

(Adapted from Kegley and Wittkopf, 1999; Donnelly, 2000; Mearsheimer, 2002; and Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2010)

Realist theory stems from the basic principle that every other state is a threat. Securing sovereignty relies on having greater power than rival states, promoting national interest, and acquiring military strength and capability. Economics is viewed as a means of acquiring this capability (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1999, pp28-29).

In the struggle to increase the power and capability of the state, the needs of the individual are seen as unimportant by realist leaders and policy makers. Realism does not value moral ideals and ethics, as these can obstruct the pursuit of power and influence the decisions made by policy makers, should they be concerned with the requirements of the individual rather than those of the nation. As described by Kegley and Wittkopf (1999),

> *A state's philosophical or ethical preferences are neither good nor bad – what matters is whether they serve its self-interest. Thus, the game of international politics revolves around the pursuit of power; acquiring it, increasing it, projecting it, and using it to bend others to one's will. At the extreme, realism appears to accept war as normal and rejects morality as it pertains to relations between individuals.* (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1999, p28)

Rather than dealing with situations requiring moral judgements, realists see affairs of state pertaining to power relations as being of utmost importance to policy makers, and are sceptical of the relevance of morality in international affairs.

Realism espouses the view that the primary focus of national security is the defence of territory from external military threats. However, for the majority of people, it is threats such as disease, hunger, crime, political turmoil, domestic violence, and human trafficking that bring the notion of insecurity closer to home. As noted by Newman (2001, p241), human security deprivation impacts upon feelings of peace and stability, both within and between states, regardless of how secure a state may be in the traditional sense. It is here that issues such as human trafficking can have an effect on state security, as this transnational crime spreads across borders and involves the illegal movement of people and funds. Efforts to combat human trafficking increasingly require state-to-state cooperation to both protect victims and

prosecute offenders involved in this threat to human security, which cannot be dealt with adequately by a traditional realist approach to such matters. While it is impractical to ignore the role of power in state-to-state relations, it is also naïve to rely on power as the only answer. Further theories and approaches to the study of International Relations demonstrate how realist theory has been challenged by scholars, leaders, and policy makers, particularly regarding humanitarian issues such as human trafficking, slavery, poverty, and freedom.

2.2.2 Liberalism

After the First World War, liberalism flourished as a conceptual rival to realism, particularly with the goal of encouraging peace in the hope of preventing another world conflict. The theories of liberalism for understanding International Relations and analysing the decisions of state policy makers are grounded in the following beliefs:

- Human nature is essentially good, so mutual aid and collaboration are possible
- People have a fundamental concern for the welfare of others
- Lasting alliances based on common beliefs and ideas are possible between states
- Real power comes from these alliances and the interdependence of states
- Strong institutions formed through alliances will work to prevent war
- Democratic states may wage wars against other states, however they do not fight each other
- International norms affect the incentives facing societal actors and policy makers by constraining behaviour

(Adapted from Moravcsik, 1995; Cortel and Davis ,1996; Kegley and Wittkopf, 1999, pp24 -27; Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2010; and Slaughter, 2011)

Liberal theorists support the idea that cooperation between states is more likely to be for economic reasons rather than as a result of military strength. This is in line with the view of the 18th Century German philosopher Kant, who argued that *the spirit of commerce, which is incompatible with war, sooner or later gains the upper hand in every state* (Kant, 2007, p39). Liberalists are more optimistic than realists, who tend

to focus primarily on the tragic or sinister side of human nature. By attempting to meet as many human needs as possible, liberalists see progress toward peace as an entirely feasible concept, rather than the realist assumption that co-existence is all that can be achieved in state-to-state relations.

The basis of liberalism is that the national characteristics of states matter in the international arena, in contrast with realism, where all states are deemed to have the same goals and behaviours of wealth and survival (Slaughter, 2011). Common beliefs, religions, economies, and political systems can provide useful links between states, thereby fostering interdependence, even if this should mean yielding some of their sovereignty. Liberalists see that states will search for similarities and form alliances rather than looking for differences and solving disputes with armed conflict. Trade agreements between states can be used to form positive connections, with the threat and imposition of economic sanctions being used to punish states not cooperating within the world system. International institutions, multinational corporations, and international law are important to liberal policy makers, who are able to see the benefits of dealing with institutions that have influence across national borders, for example the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the World Bank. Such institutions, with their focus on rules, norms and principles, provide guidance to states and non-state actors as they interact in international affairs, promoting cooperation with the aim of increasing economic development, improving human rights, and addressing environmental sustainability. It is these issues which can be said to differentiate liberal theory from realism (Devitt, 2011).

The list of beliefs on which liberalism is based reads as if those adhering to the tenets of this theory would be supportive of actions to combat abuses against human rights. Human nature being essentially good, concern for the welfare of others, and alliances based on common beliefs would seem to indicate that tackling issues such as human trafficking would be a high priority. The power of governments is not seriously threatened by human trafficking, and yet they still cooperate with other states to address this problem out of concern for the welfare of others. According to Birkenthal (2012, p30) *this confirms the liberal theory that states will act on an issue that does not directly harm their existence.* The idea of cooperation between states to

address problems is indeed noble, but it is the threat of sanctions, co-opting domestic political institutions, and being shamed into action for non-compliance which, according to Moravcsik (1995), are the mechanisms most often utilised to coerce a state to act.

Both realist and liberalist theories do not place importance on the influence domestic policies can have on state-to-state relations. Cooperation between states can be positively or adversely affected by decisions made by an influential party on moral and ethical concerns, with a bad track record on the domestic front regarding issues such as human rights having an effect on the way states interact. Conversely, domestic policies which address issues of human rights abuse, environmental concerns, and poverty can foster good relations between states in international affairs. Nevertheless, one still needs to question the motive for these policies; is it humanitarian or self-interest? Milner (1997) points out that:

> *If the political actors making this choice are politicians who might be (re) elected to office then their reasons for seeking cooperation with other nations can be related to electoral concerns* (Milner, 1997, p42).

As an issue of concern, human trafficking has gained international attention through the work of major intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations, ASEAN, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). However, such organisations have little real effect over policing or overseeing responses to human trafficking when faced with a realist desire to maintain state sovereignty. Non-government organisations (NGOs) are seen as playing an important role in the liberalist realm of international affairs, although they tend to receive most of their funding from state governments, thus leaving them ultimately under the control of a state's major decision makers (Birkenthal, 2012, p35). In spite of this, several NGOs around the world have been active in organising campaigns to spread awareness of the incidence and effects of human trafficking, filling the gap left by the relative lack of government initiatives. It should be noted here that NGOs may be either for or against prostitution, while being against human trafficking.

2.2.3 Feminist theory

While approaches grounded in realism and/or liberalism dominated International Relations theory through the last century, in more recent decades other approaches,

centred on principles of feminist thinking, have also come to the fore. In contrast with theories grounded in the analysis of traditional security threats such as warfare and border security, where abstract notions such as the state and the system are discussed, feminist theory brings different perspectives to the discipline of International Relations by looking at who is shaping politics in both the national and international arena. Along with new perspectives on world politics such as postmodernism, constructionism, and critical theory, feminism contests the mainstream approaches to power and knowledge in International Relations demonstrated through realism and liberalism (True, 2005, p213). Two key terms, gender and patriarchy, are central to feminist discourse, where the interactions of power involving men and women are analysed, largely through critiques of masculine approaches to mainstream issues (Youngs, 2004). Many feminists take the view that because the majority of key players in inter-state relations, such as heads of government and policy makers, are male, resulting decisions are skewed in favour of male patterns of thinking (Tickner, 1992, 2001; Youngs, 2004; Ruiz, 2010). This perpetuates male-dominated attitudes and responses to issues of state security, seen as favouring a realist approach, while gender-related human rights abuses are not given the same degree of attention.

Feminist analyses of mainstream approaches to International Relations note the absence of women and gender in theoretical works. Consequently, the agency of women has been a major area of focus for feminist theorists and researchers, leading to a wider meaning of security (Youngs, 2004, p77; Pourmokhtari, 2015, p165). Youngs (2004) claims that:

> *Feminist IR has broadened the definitions of security, and gone deep inside state boundaries as well as across them, to get behind the masculinist warrior/protector mythology that tends to depict war and conflict in archetypal (gendered) and frequently nationalistic terms, and to reveal the increasing suffering that women and children have endured through death and injury, rape, displacement and deprivation, as well as the many roles women have forged in peace- and community-building* (Youngs, 2004; p84).

Examining matters of state security from a feminist perspective has opened up the possibility for scholars to move away from traditional issues into areas affecting human security and human rights.

Approaching an issue such as human trafficking from a traditional realist or liberalist security perspective emphasises issues of border security, illegal migration, and the need for cooperation in international law enforcement. According to Lobasz (2009, p322), feminists have argued that these approaches merely compound the issue of human trafficking, rather than providing positive outcomes. Making migration more difficult through repressive border control policies can predispose vulnerable people to the influences of traffickers as they attempt to find work away from home. It is issues such as these which highlight the need for alternative approaches to world security, rejecting the realist and liberalist preoccupations with relative versus absolute gains to achieve either military or economic power, in an attempt to deal with the demands of human security. According to feminist approaches such as those discussed in Lobasz (2009) and Heyzer (2006), the application of human security requires a people-centred assessment of the insecurities experienced by those under threat, which varies both within and between states and can change over time.

Lobasz (2009) asserts that feminists have made the following two significant contributions to the analysis of human trafficking as a security issue. Firstly, they have expanded the focus of human trafficking to account for the exploitation of trafficking victims rather than it being seen as only an issue of border security; and they have also considered how human trafficking is socially constructed (Lobasz, 2009, p323). The question of who, or what, is being secured seems to be the lynchpin of the debate feminism has with approaches to counter human trafficking (see Youngs, 2004; Lobasz, 2009, p343; Pourmokhtari, 2015). If the state is the object being secured, anti-trafficking measures will be formulated around border control policies. In this instance, trafficked individuals will be seen as criminals who have entered a state illegally. Deporting these alleged criminals, in accordance with the system in place, simply returns them to the situation from which they were trying to escape, leaving them vulnerable to being trafficked again. Here we see abstract categories, the state and the system, being used to remove agency from the people involved while protecting state sovereignty. Extending state security to include human security allows for human rights issues to be addressed, hopefully helping to prioritise the protection of victims of trafficking, and to prosecute those responsible for the offences committed (Lobasz, 2009, p343). According to Heyzer (2006), *violations of human rights are both a cause and a consequence of trafficking in*

persons (Heyzer, 2006, p112). Heyzer continues her discussion by looking at the way feminist analyses of human trafficking go further than traditional and even human security analyses by emphasising gender as a vital component of any study of this issue (Heyzer, 2006, p112). Gender stereotypes help perpetuate images of perpetrators and victims, and by emphasising the status of trafficked women as victims, feminists, particularly those opposed to prostitution, have sought to use the resulting narratives in support of their cause, giving value to the stories of women who have been trafficked (see Barry, 1979; Maltzahn, 2008; Norma, et al, 2016). Gender stereotypes help perpetuate images of perpetrators and victims, and by emphasising the status of trafficked women as victims, feminists have sought to use the resulting narratives in support of their cause, giving value to the voices of women who have been trafficked (see Barry, 1979; Maltzahn, 2008; Norma, et al, 2016). At times feminists would seek to diminish the use of narratives where women are seen as victims, rather focussing on their strengths and abilities. In these instances, the victim narrative is used specifically to strengthen an argument.

These resultant voices are heard and responded to in different ways by two distinct factions of the feminist debate against human trafficking; those who support prostitution and those who are against it. One side of the debate values freedom of choice, thus supporting the notion that many women choose sex work as a viable option, even if from a limited number of choices. Here, migration for sex work is separated from those cases deemed to be instances of human trafficking (Doezema, 2005; Agustin, 2007; Scarlet Alliance website). The other side of the argument holds the view that all travel for sex work is trafficking, being of the opinion that no woman would freely choose to enter prostitution and that abuse is inevitable (S. Jeffreys, 2008; Raymond, 2004; Lobasz, 2009; Coalition Against Trafficking in Women website).

2.2.4 Constructionism

The period from the end of the Cold War and into the Twenty-First Century has seen International Relations scholars focussing on issues other than the roles of, and interactions between, states as they function in the international arena. Problems such as terrorism, ethnic and religious conflict, the emergence of non-state actors as threats, nuclear proliferation and the spread of weapons of mass destruction,

transnational crime, modern slavery, and other human rights abuses have risen in importance as governments are being urged and influenced by both internal and external factions to search for solutions to these asymmetrical threats to the peace and stability of nations. Attempts to respond to these issues generally rely on state-to-state cooperation, largely due to the global nature of efforts required to protect against, and the effects caused by, these problems. The resulting interdependence of states in areas such as border security, international law, and information sharing has challenged the core theoretical structure of the discipline of International Relations, with cooperation between states often seen as a better way to tackle these problems than the traditional realist and liberalist approaches, where state sovereignty, military and economic power are paramount to the survival of the state (Adler, 1997; Checkel, 1998; Price and Reus-Smit, 1998). However, it is possible that, despite pressure from outside sources, individual governments may not want to acknowledge that the problem of human trafficking exists within their jurisdiction. Such an admission could be construed as an indication of a lapse in national security, a failure to protect citizens, and an involvement in this transnational crime (Brown, 2011).

Constructionism, also referred to as constructivism, became prominent as an approach to International Relations theory in the late 1980s. In the United States, it was seen as the grand alternative to rationalist approaches involving cooperation and competition, while European scholars were more likely to view constructionism as lying somewhere between rational-choice theories and postmodernism (Adler, 1997; Checkel, 1998; Price and Reus-Smit, 1998). Constructionism, with its premise that state-to-state relations are socially constructed rather than resulting from a constant human need for power, provides an approach through which scholars can explain the changing shape of political influence. As they move away from the staid theories of realism and liberalism, constructionists consider both the factors that motivate actors in the decision-making process, and the language used to convey their messages. According to Weldes (1998):

> *Language does not mirror the world, but instead constitutes the world as we know it and function in it. … The language of policymaking, that is, does not simply reflect "real" policy issues and problems; instead, it actively produces the issues with which policymakers deal and the specific problems that they confront.* (Weldes, 1998, p217)

Policy makers tend to choose their words carefully, mindful of their audience and

selected to achieve maximum impact. Details of the issues they address may have been given to them by advisors and organisations with particular points of view, then these socially constructed interests are discussed, reproduced and adjusted by the actors involved to produce a particular narrative.

While constructionists agree the world is in anarchy, rather than accepting the realist and liberalist inevitability of anarchy, they disagree with traditional approaches regarding how governments should deal with living in an anarchic world. Relative and absolute gains made through military or economic power do not take centre stage; power comes from how an issue is constructed and who talks to that issue, as well as who does not. According to Finnemore and Sikkink (2001):

> *While realist and liberalist theories of International Relations focus on retaining sovereignty, military strength, and economic power, constructionism sees these as attributes which have no material reality except for that which is bestowed upon them through the collective belief that they exist as forces of some influence.* (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001, p393)

Constructionists see the world as being in a constant state of change, as actors use their ideas rather than material things such as military or economic strength to influence the beliefs and attitudes of those in power (Neal, 2010). Actors are shaped by their world, while also having the ability to change it through the influence of their ideas (Klotz and Lynch, 2007, p3). Wendt (1995, p74) also stresses the importance of ideas, claiming shared knowledge gives credence to power and interest. According to Locher and Prugl (2001):

> *Constructivists describe the world not as one that is, but as one that is in the process of becoming; they replace a "positional" with a "transformational ontology".* (Locher and Prugl, 2001, p114)

Constructionism provides valuable insights into national and state-to-state relations by examining the nature of norms, identity, and social interactions as they are displayed by actors involved in these dialogues. From a constructionist perspective, international relations are built upon discussions between actors who are guided by what they perceive to be relevant rules and norms, understanding that societies are complex and they change over time, with history having been constructed largely by those in power to reflect specific opinions and values. This is of particular relevance when considering threats to a state, which are not seen as constant, in contrast to the realist perspective of threats being against state sovereignty, as the result of the

anarchic nature of the world. According to Wendt, a political scientist who is one of the core social constructionists in the field of International Relations, *Anarchy is what states make of it* (Wendt, 1992, p391), being socially constructed and shaped by the attitudes of states. As social norms and conventions change, foreign policy reflects these changes (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2010, p123).

Checkel (1997) compares liberalist and constructionist views on the effect of international norms, with liberalists arguing they constrain the behaviour of societal actors and policy makers, while constructionists claim norms are shared understandings that constitute the identities and interests of actors (Checkel, 1997, p473). He takes the view that norms play multiple roles in the social world; sometimes constraining and sometimes constituting behaviour, depending upon the desired result and the actors involved. An example of this is given when he explains the societal pressure dynamic using rational choice, illustrated by international norms constraining the behaviour of policy makers where objectives such as re-election affect their responses to issues. When new values and interests influence policy makers, Checkel (1997, p477) explains this elite learning mechanism through constructionism, and Kowert (2001) describes the role of identity in the formation of policy, saying that:

> *Identity is the medium through which national leaders and ordinary citizens alike translate recognition of similarity and difference (in threat, capabilities, and so on) into ontological statements about international relations. It is the way they "construct" the world they hope to affect through their foreign policies, populating it with agents.* (Kowert, 2001)

According to Hopf (1998, p175), identities perform essential functions; *they tell you and others who you are, and they tell you who others are*, thus contributing to an understanding of the interests various actors bring to the table. Hopf writes of the politics of identity, mentioning that nationalism, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, and sexuality all influence global politics (Hopf, 1998, p192). As objective as one tried to be, it would be extremely difficult to put such factors aside completely when faced with issues of a contentious nature, such as human rights abuses based on any of the aforementioned considerations. However, constructionists favour the view that interests and identities are not static; rather they are influenced by past events and change accordingly. For example, this would explain cooperation between states previously involved in conflict (Hopf, 1998; Kowert, 2001). Both realists and

liberalists are sceptical regarding the authenticity of a person's beliefs or identity, believing it is possible for an actor to adopt a position simply for strategic benefit (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2010, p126). For example, agreeing to examine human rights abuses such as human trafficking if it might result in international aid being given, whether or not results are forthcoming.

A constructionist approach understands that policy making is already influenced by power relations before agendas are set (Weldes, 1998, p221). Each actor brings pre-conceived ideas to a discussion, as they utilise their own beliefs and values to formulate responses to the issues being discussed, albeit within the constraints of the organisation they represent. As stated by Foucault (1977) in his argument that power produces knowledge,

> *Power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.* (Foucault, 1977, p27)

This synergy of power and knowledge can be seen where states are influenced in policy making by their relationships with other states, with past history indicating how successful future interactions may be, or for example, in response to misdemeanours, with the threat of sanctions being used to influence decision-makers. Powerful states are often able to control the agenda in the international arena and convince others to follow their lead (Simmons and Lloyd, 2010, p7), with some voices being privileged while others are marginalised.

Constructionists and feminists share a commitment to an ontology of becoming; a way of depicting the world, accounting for the influence of social interactions. According to Locher and Prugl (2001), in their article entitled *Feminism and Constructivism: Worlds Apart or Sharing the Middle Ground?*, several important concerns and assumptions are common to both approaches, which provides a basis for common threads of conversation, thus facilitating the two approaches combining aspects of their theories to better understand issues important in International Relations. However, they argue that while feminists see gender and power as central to discussions, viewing power as a social construct and gender as an element of power, most constructionists consider power to be external to such processes, seeing

it as either a material quantity or as part of the institutions of the state. According to the aforementioned article, constructionists tend to ignore the implications of a post-positivist epistemology where a view of the world is influenced by, and constructed based on perceptions, whereas for feminists the question of "Who knows?" is fundamental to their understanding of power politics, where having knowledge brings power (Locher and Prugl, 2001, p111).

According to Burchill and Linklater (2005, pp18-23), the theories of International Relations differ over four main issues. These are: the object of analysis and the scope of the enquiry; the purpose of social and political enquiry; the appropriate methodology for the discipline; and whether International Relations should be thought of as a relatively distinct area of intellectual endeavour or as a field which relies on other areas such as Sociology and History for its development. Each theory of International Relations provides its own explanation for why states and people behave as they do in response to world anarchy, the balance of power, threats to state sovereignty, and human rights abuses. This results in many reasons for actions taken, as well as for those not taken. While it is difficult to say that one theory or approach provides the best solution in response to the problem of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, focussing on how people construct their views of the world, a constructionist approach allows for analysis of the role played by non-state actors in the formation of policies, where non-government organisations are able to use information rather than military force to influence decision makers; a relationship between knowledge and power. Understanding these activities from a constructionist point of view provides a theoretical approach where I can make sense of how trafficking is constructed and addressed as a public problem, using the narrative to demonstrate my findings. I do not take a traditional rationalist approach, where the state is the most important actor and state sovereignty requires those with power to advance the state's interests at almost any cost.

I utilise the tenets of constructionism to address this problem, as this approach facilitates more than one view of how the world works. This provides a framework with which I can explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. I concentrate on the voices that speak to this issue, whose definitions become dominant, and why

some opinions are overlooked or ignored.

2.3 Constructions of human trafficking

2.3.1 Introduction

Whenever human trafficking into the sex industry is regarded as a problem states need to address, regardless of where they are situated as possible supply, transit, or destination countries, or their laws regarding prostitution, it is the way this problem is framed in both domestic and international arenas which affects the level of importance given to it, and also how readily policies to deal with human trafficking are accepted globally. There are three important frames which have been utilised to interpret the problem of human trafficking, with varying degrees of success: as an issue of victim protection; framed as a violation of human rights; and as one of transnational crime. Here, the opinion of the general populace towards issues such as crime, prostitution, illegal migration, and multiculturalism can affect the choice of approach taken by policy makers. The use of these frames at different times and for different purposes is explored throughout this work, as I consider whose voices are allowed to be heard and whose are silenced, which groups are given credence, and on what basis, with regard to the issue of constructing migrant sex work as human trafficking.

In this thesis I show that the development of anti-trafficking measures is affected by how the problem of human trafficking has been constructed, at both national and international levels. Policy makers working as part of groups such as the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the European Union endeavour to address this issue from an International Relations perspective, in light of how nations respond to international conventions pertaining to human trafficking, human rights, acts of slavery, and worker exploitation. Even individual nations are sensitive to the actions of others, holding them accountable for poor border security, issues of poverty, oppression, the abuse of human rights, the lack of social or economic opportunity, political instability, and conflict; all of which have been attributed as factors facilitating human trafficking. As an example of the actions of one powerful state affecting others, the United States takes a lead here with its annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, where the US State Department gives each nation a scorecard depending on how well they are performing against human

trafficking. Distribution of financial aid from the United States Government is dependent upon a nation's commitment to anti-trafficking efforts, linked to anti-prostitution sentiments and measured by American standards (Department of State, USA, 2012). These reports followed the passing of the United States Government's Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000. One of the recommendations of the TVPA is the criminalisation of the sex industry as an effective means to combat trafficking. The United States Government imposes its power on others by requiring that states and international organisations being offered American Government funding to help combat human trafficking sign what amounts to an anti-prostitution pledge (Provost, 2012).

2.3.2 Framing issues as public problems

A public problem, often referred to in the literature as a social problem, is constructed when a particular group uses their value judgements to define an issue as a problem affecting the social order. The complaining group wishes to eradicate the problem through policy intervention and public action, or at the very least change it so that it is no longer viewed as a threat to the social fabric of society. According to Spector and Kitsuse, *social problems are generated and sustained by the activities of complaining groups and institutional responses to them* (Spector and Kitsuse 1973, p158).

As discussed by Spector and Kitsuse (1973), the confirmation that a public problem exists is not necessarily that there is a high incidence of the actual problem itself; rather, evidence is manifested by the high number of individuals and groups complaining about and drawing attention to the very existence of the issue. The repeated objections of a small number of individuals can also describe the existence of a problem if their voices are strong enough. It is not necessary for those directly involved in the problem to see it in this light. A public problem is constructed externally to the actors involved or the act itself, where the issue is seen by the complaining group as violating particular values and beliefs as to how that society should function, resulting in a demand for change through public measures. Here I note that Joseph Gusfield, a key figure in the development of constructionist social problems theory, prefers to use the term public rather than social problems, claiming that not all human social problems become issues of public concern (Gusfield, 1981).

In a later work, Gusfield (1989) discusses that having ownership of a public problem, claiming its existence, and having information about that problem gives one the authority to suggest courses of action, and to influence the use of public facilities to work towards a resolution. Contrary to this, disowning a problem does not deny its existence; rather the responsibility for dealing with it is removed. These points become important when one considers situations where people are spoken about rather than being given agency and space to speak, as can happen when groups are marginalised by society.

The outrage over some public problems may be disproportionate to the actual size of the problem, depending upon the power and influence of those complaining about the issue. Their voices may be far-reaching especially should the cause be taken up by the mass media, government agencies and NGOs receptive to the cause. Through these and other means the complainants are able to appeal to the fundamental values and beliefs of society, using emotive reasoning on issues such as religion, marriage, the spread of disease, and the extent of the criminal element to further influence the construction of a problem, thus shaping it as one of major concern. As discussed by Sheldon (2003), the ensuing moral panic further escalates alarm about an issue, skewing public perceptions in favour of a community, or ultimately a government, response. The actual threat is exaggerated, being constructed to generate a feeling of social anxiety, thus allowing authorities to impose moral order (Sheldon, 2003, p275). Labelled as the issue of disproportionality, which is described as

> *the power of moral entrepreneurs to exercise social control by amplifying deviance and orchestrating social reactions so that the panic becomes a consensus-generating envoy for the dominant ideology* (Sheldon, 2003, p284),

this inequitable focus on actors believed to be a menace to society spreads fear which may be unwarranted, yet facilitates social control. The real threat to a society is seldom as great as it seems. The myth surrounding the perceived danger of a public problem can help to perpetuate and feed it as more members of the general populace come to view and refer to a myth as fact. Indeed, the power of the myth is that narratives created seem true without needing to be substantiated, and they are sustained through retelling. According to the French literary theorist, Roland Barthes (1972), myth is not necessarily a fictitious tale. It is a perpetuation of mass culture

upon the world. Barthes claimed that what we accept as being natural is in fact an illusory reality constructed in order to mask the real structures obtaining power in society (Barthes, 1972). As discussed below in section 2.4, the myth of white slavery in the Nineteenth Century and the moral panic that ensued are examples of such an illusory reality being shaped into a public problem, which was used by governments to control the movement of working class women, under the pretence of safeguarding their virtue (Doezema, 1999; Limoncelli, 2010).

People in positions of influence who speak to the masses are able to control and set the moral boundaries of society according to their own beliefs and values. They wield great power over those who listen to them, spreading their own views, which become the accepted opinions of others via the authority given to the position they hold. As Stanley Cohen (1972) states, *the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people* (Cohen, 1972, p9). Dominant voices help to set the tone for how an issue is viewed, the priority it is given, and the responses that ensue, with the Twenty-first Century globalisation of information through technology helping to spread these ideas and voices throughout the world. According to Chong and Druckman (2007), the "lens" through which a person views an issue has some bearing on responses to that issue, especially if the source of the information is respected by the viewer. Simmons and Lloyd (2010, p3) take this further by arguing that whether these dominant discourses are adopted and implemented as policy is dependent upon the calculated material costs and benefits to the parties concerned, rather than for any other reasons such as on humanitarian grounds. They suggest that:

> *Rational policy choices are conditioned on the prior and socially defined processes of issue framing. Once a dominant frame is broadly accepted, states adopt policies that are appropriate to their situation as interpreted through the selected frame.* (Simmons and Lloyd, 2010, p3)

Approaching the analysis of public problems by using the tenets of constructionism acknowledges that they take shape in response to socially constructed phenomena. The many social, cultural, political, and economic factors affecting how a society functions compete by exerting pressure on that society, and at particular times these pressures can result in the labelling of certain issues as public problems. In a different time and context, the same issue may not be labelled as a public problem, as

this is dependent upon it being viewed as such. Here I reiterate that those about whom the public problem is constructed may not themselves see the issue in this way.

2.3.3 Historical narratives of good and bad women

In our attempts to make sense of events throughout history, we search for a master or grand narrative to provide the overarching story from which all the other stories connected to an issue can be positioned (Taylor and Lambert, 2004, pp42-43). However, in some cases the desired grand narrative may never be fully articulated, as those who attempt to create it try to incorporate all aspects of the issue into a succinct definition that is acceptable to all parties who have ownership of the public problem. The way an issue has been approached can be assessed by considering both domestic and international events at that particular time, in conjunction with the political situation and level of power wielded by the actors having agency. With these factors in mind, a narrative is constructed from what is judged to be expert information, with selected information being reproduced over and over, usually gaining credibility with each retelling. This provides a framework on which responses to a problem can be shaped, as the narrative becomes even more widely accepted as the authoritative view. By selectively choosing the information to be disseminated, the creators of a narrative are able to exercise control over the smaller stories and the responses to these, as they seek to formulate a grand narrative on which to position their responses to a public problem. These grand narratives are the stories we tell ourselves to explain the world as we see it (Taylor and Lambert, 2004).

In Western societies women have played many roles as nation builders by helping to form kinship ties through marriage, by physically giving birth to future generations, and by helping to nurture the spread of ideas and culture to these future citizens of a nation. However, it may be the grand narrative constructed around their passive role as good women in need of protection, which is of most importance to the state, particularly with regard to the formulation of policies for immigration and the control of prostitution (Barry, 1979; Frances, 2003, p19; Limoncelli, 2010, p3; Summers, 2002; Yarwood, 1958, p27). Indeed, according to Obbo (1989):

> *Women's security is often the last frontier men have to defend when all the other battles against colonialism and imperialism are lost. Human societies*

> *always portray their women as more virtuous than women of other groups and therefore in need of protection. Never mind that each society also coerces women to be "good women" through imposing a number of sanctions against "bad women".* (Obbo, 1989, p85)

Stephanie Limoncelli (2010) discusses the first anti-trafficking movement from its beginnings as a global humanitarian effort to protect women from sexual exploitation, to its demise into a series of concerns about protecting nations from undesirable migrants and also the control of women. Gender and sexuality became issues of importance to state officials engaged in nation building during the Nineteenth Century, when it was seen as improper for sexual relations to occur between men and women of different races, and yet there was an imbalance of men and "suitable" women in the colonies due to large numbers of men being sent abroad to work. This extended to women working in the sex industry, resulting in European women being taken to the colonies for the purposes of prostitution with European men; an act which would be labelled as trafficking under different circumstances, yet here evidently sanctioned by colonial governments in this conflict of competing sexual values. The need to protect one's own men from the perceived dangers of inter-racial relations apparently legitimised such actions. Protecting one's "own" women while using "other" women was also taken to the extreme in some cases, as demonstrated by the words of an Italian colonial authority in Somaliland:

> *"It is an elementary question of prestige in relation to the natives" that non-Italian white women were used for prostitution* (Limoncelli, 2010, p34)

Not only race but ethnicity was protected from any slur in this instance, as government officials stepped in to ensure purity of their own women, for the sake of the women themselves and also in the eyes of those men considered beneath them.

In spite of such government-sanctioned movement of women into the sex industry in those areas colonised by Western European powers, the notion of virtue needing to be protected was a driving force behind the Eurocentric anti-trafficking movements of the Nineteenth Century, and it is still prevalent in today's actions against the sexual exploitation of women and children. It has also served to fuel the actions of anti-prostitution lobbyists, both in the past and at the present time, as they seek to link the problem of human trafficking with the supply of and demand for prostitution services. The writings of prominent anti-trafficking abolitionist activists such as

Kathleen Barry who co-founded the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) in 1988, and Sheila Jeffreys, founder of the Australian branch of CATW, have made an important contribution to the argument against prostitution and the sexual exploitation of women in all its forms. Barry's first book, *Female Sexual Slavery* (1979) has been hailed as a feminist classic which launched a global movement against human trafficking, exposing the social, political, and economic factors contributing to this heinous crime, as well as what she refers to as the insidious sexualisation men impose on women. According to the *Los Angeles Times,* this book has been described as:

> *A powerful work filled with disbelief, outrage, and documentation … sexual bondage shackles women as much today as it has for centuries.* (Los Angeles Times, 1984, quoted on www.kathleenbarry.net)

Sheila Jeffreys, a prominent feminist activist scholar, has produced many works on the history and politics of human sexuality and is known for her controversial views on transsexuality. However, it is her work, *The Industrial Vagina: The Political Economy of the Global Sex Trade* (2009) which is of interest here, where Jeffreys describes the industrialisation and globalisation of the sex industry as follows:

> *… in recent decades, prostitution has been industrialised and globalised. By industrialisation I mean the ways in which traditional forms of organisation of prostitution are being changed by economic and social forces to become large scale and concentrated, normalised and part of the mainstream corporate sphere. Prostitution has been transformed from an illegal, small-scale, largely local and socially despised form of abuse of women into a hugely profitable and either legal or tolerated international industry.*
> (S. Jeffreys, 2009, p3)

She continues by quoting Barry's work, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, to describe the result of this industrialisation as *a multibillion-dollar global market in women, at home and abroad, in highly organised trafficking and in the most diffused, informal arrangements* (Barry, 1995, p122). Here Barry discusses the links between prostitution, trafficking in women, and economic development in Asia, citing rapid industrialisation, changes in the structure of the family unit, and migration of women from agricultural areas to the cities as reasons why prostitution has increased in the developing world. *Prostitution may well be among the high costs women pay for their country's development* (Barry, 1995, p197). This statement echoes sentiments of the Nineteenth Century, when women were moved to brothels in distant colonies as the industrial nations of Western Europe expanded their empires across the globe.

It would appear prostitution and the movement of women to service this industry features, one way or another, in the development of a nation.[2]

2.3.4 Controlling the narrative

In both the Nineteenth Century and in recent times, largely unsuccessful attempts have been made to regulate or ban prostitution in an effort to control the movement of women involved in the sex industry. These measures have often been touted as being for the protection of sex workers from sexual exploitation, but they have tended to cause more harm than good. Approaching human trafficking as a matter of victim protection from sexual exploitation has facilitated action based on the perceived need for women to be protected, thus making this an issue of gender; the trafficking of men is generally considered to be for other reasons. By controlling this smaller story as part of the grand narrative of good women and bad women, and emphasising the vulnerability of women and girls involved in the sex industry, the voices of those identified as victims can be silenced as they are spoken about rather than to, being deemed too damaged to speak for themselves.

Such stories, while tragic, appear to be used to gain support for a cause, with many examples spoken about in works such as Siddarth Kara's *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery* (2009). Although acclaimed by several organisations as being a knowledgeable work, containing useful economic and strategic analysis of modern slavery and labelled by the president of Free the Slaves as a "*quantum leap in the study of this subject"*[3], this view of Kara's writing is not universal. According to Agustin (2012a), Kara has not produced a scholarly work; and she sums it up as follows:

> *Neither based on methodological research nor reflecting knowledge of literature that could give context to the author's experience, this reads like the diary of a poverty tourist or the bildungsroman of an unsophisticated man*

[2] Jeffreys (2009) also refers to marriage as prostitution by examining feminist approaches to marriage from the Nineteenth Century until the present day, and through discussions of arranged marriages, mail-order brides, bride price, and women's position in marriage being one where sexual favours are used in a manner similar to prostitution in return for subsistence (S. Jeffreys, 2009, pp38-61).

[3] Reviews found on the Columbia University Press website as part of an advertisement for Siddarth Kara's *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery* https://cup.columbia.edu/book/sex-trafficking/9780231139601 accessed 16 August 2017.

> *of moral sentiments demonstrating his pain at unfathomable injustices. This places Kara in the tradition of colonial writers who believed that they were called to testify to the suffering of those not lucky enough to be born into comfortable Western society.* (Agustin, 2012a)

Agustin's comparison of Kara with colonial writers is an illustration of how a constructionist approach can be used to analyse a situation. Kara compares the circumstances he sees with his own knowledge base of what is right and wrong, judging his truth to be the acceptable one, and all other variations to be deplorable. Although admirable in that he, and those writers creating narrative in a similar vein, seek help for the people they see as victims in these circumstances, such views do not allow for alternative versions of reality. They see victim and villain in a situation where choice does not exist, and rescue is the only answer. Agustin, known as The Naked Anthropologist because of her blogging and speaking openly on controversial issues such as undocumented migration, informal labour markets, trafficking and the sex industry, refers to Kara's pain at what he witnesses in the sex trade of these developing nations. She criticises what she sees as his lack of scholarly application in the use of charts and figures to create an apparent picture of what is happening in the global sex industry; from human trafficking to gross mistreatment of sex workers in situations amounting to sexual slavery. Although Kara's charts and tables have been praised and used by others to illustrate the extent of modern day slavery, it would appear he uses the language of economics and statistics to make speculations based on his preconceived ideas of the sex industry. However, this format can send a powerful message either in support of, or in place of the written word to further control the small stories that combine to construct the problem of human trafficking.

2.4 White Slavery Panic

Human trafficking in the sex industry is an issue that has waxed and waned in significance at times, depending on whether it has been escalated to the status of public problem. Nineteenth Century Western concerns with this issue were generally based on the noble ideal of protecting the purity of a nation's women abroad. At this time, it became possible for working class women to move around the world unaccompanied, taking advantage of improved and cheaper methods of transport, in order to find work. These better modes of transport, combined with the colonialism of the Pax Britannia, made travel from the 'centre' to the 'periphery' a possibility for

large numbers of working-class people. While many went to the more established parts of North America, others ventured to South America, parts of Asia, and the new colonies in Australia. Advances in communications technology also enabled working class migrants to invite others back home to join them; a trend repeated in modern times as technology such as social media enables workers migrating from developing nations to send tales of good fortune back home. However, the trend is now for movement from the developing to the developed world – the 'periphery' to the 'centre'.

Colonisation and the spread of Empire during the Nineteenth Century resulted in large numbers of men going overseas either for work or for military service, which caused an imbalance between the numbers of men and women overseas in Western enclaves. Concerns were raised regarding both the protection of those Western women, who had ventured to the new colonies, from the advances of foreign men, and the need for suitable women in the colonies to provide for the comforts of men working abroad (Limoncelli, 2010). This led to fears regarding white slavery; a term first used in the mid-Nineteenth Century to describe European women and girls apparently forced into prostitution. These narratives told shocking stories of young white girls and women, who had been abducted and sold into prostitution in far off lands, being forced to service foreign men. These tales of 'mixed race' encounters were designed to strike fear in the hearts of young working-class women who might be thinking of seeking their fortunes overseas, implying that their virtue would remain unsullied if they stayed at home. Often played out as entertainment in the form of Victorian melodramas, the theme of the white slave trade was well-suited to the victim narrative of innocent maiden falling prey to dastardly villain, rescued by handsome hero; images repeated in modern stories of rescue connected with human trafficking in the sex industry (Irwin, 1996; Doezema, 1999; Agustin, 2007).

The white slavery narrative helped to reshape the image of the Nineteenth Century sex worker at a time when debate over public morality had been high. Great Britain's Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 had been implemented to control what was seen as an increase in prostitution and subsequent spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Opponents of the Acts declared this system of regulating the sale of sexual services was responsible for sexual slavery and stimulated human

trafficking (Irwin, 1996). The revelation that innocent women were apparently being stolen away brought all of these fears together. According to Irwin:

> *The tensions created by economic depression, political upheaval, social reorganisation, and demographic imbalance found voice in the seemingly endless debate over private morality, and set the stage for the evolution of the white slavery metaphor and the panic its rhetoric fuelled.* (Irwin, 1996)

As attention shifted from the woman who sold sexual services to those who profited from her trade, the idea of the prostitute as a victim emerged. Although prostitution had been present throughout the Nineteenth Century, and of course prior to then, it took conflation with the idea of white slavery to create a victim narrative, shifting emphasis from the seller to the purchaser. The tensions already being faced by society helped to shape prostitution into a public problem at this time, shifting the focus from economic and political problems to moral depravity. According to Doezema (1999):

> *Only by removing all responsibility from her own condition could the prostitute be constructed as a victim to appeal to the sympathies of the middle-class reformers, thereby generating public support for the end goal of abolition.* (Doezema, 1999, p.28)

Such concerns spoken of by Irwin as the white slavery metaphor elevated human trafficking in the sex industry to the status of a public problem as working-class women, no doubt some of them migrant sex workers, moved to developing nations to seek their fortunes and tales of white slavery flourished. Others may have turned to sex work once arriving at their destination, after trying their luck at other occupations. This situation has similarities with the present-day movement of migrant sex workers and women turning to sex work after trying other jobs, who get caught up in the issue of human trafficking as a public problem. The main difference is that the direction of the movement has now reversed from developing nations in the global South to the developed nations in the global North.

White slavery has been labelled an urban myth which was perpetuated by those seeking to control the movement of Western working-class women in the late Nineteenth Century, with attention being focussed on tales of the apparent abduction of white women and girls for sexual exploitation in South America, Africa or 'the Orient' (Doezema, 1999, p24; Agustin, 2007, p119). Doezema (1999) claims that:

> *...while the myth of "trafficking in women"/" white slavery" is ostensibly*

> *about protecting women, the underlying moral concern is with the control of "loose women."* (Doezema, 1999, p.23)

Regulating female sexuality under the guise of protecting women was seen as the answer to problems occurring because of a decline in moral standards. Protecting 'good' women ultimately meant controlling and punishing 'bad' women, if we consider laws introduced at this time under the Contagious Diseases Acts. These included laws forcing women who were even suspected of being prostitutes to undergo medical examinations for venereal diseases in case they spread them among the menfolk of society. Any alleged prostitute could be detained by police and forced to undergo an examination; thus, many working-class poor women were caught up in this moral panic. Feminists against this treatment were known as abolitionists who saw the prostitute as a victim in need of rescue, not as a fallen woman.

Although the abolitionist movement was meant to decrease state control over working-class poor women, it had the result of supporting social purity through its campaign against white slavery, which was able to gain tremendous support among the general populace as this issue was elevated to the status of a public problem. This led to the adoption in Great Britain of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 1921, known as the White Slave Act, which ironically, was used against prostitutes and working-class women, not their supposed oppressors. The outbreak of the First World War effectively stopped migration, and campaigns against white slavery disappeared during the war years in favour of more pressing concerns. As this example demonstrates, support for a public problem can wax and wane depending on the stimuli present at any given time.

The outcry against white slavery gave impetus to the Nineteenth Century moral stand against prostitution; a situation repeated in current times whenever human trafficking is linked to current anti-prostitution campaigns, calling for the removal of demand for commercial sexual services as the key to eradicating human trafficking (CATWA, 2013). Commenting on differing perceptions of white slavery, Irwin (1996) says:

> *Many Victorians were convinced that white slavery existed, while many others were just as certain that it did not; what is of concern is the dialogue itself. The issue is essentially one of definition: acceptance of the white*

> *slavery idea depends a great deal upon how one defines it.* (Irwin, 1996)

This can be likened to the current situation with human trafficking in the Australian sex industry. Whether trafficking is deemed to be occurring depends on the definition being used by those who are labelling the act and searching for victims, and also from whose perspective the situation is being assessed.

2.5 The contemporary issue of human trafficking

The trafficking of women as an issue for discussion in the international arena reappeared in the 1980s, with concerns arising about the movement of women for the sex trade from Asia, Russia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. The following quote from a story called "The Selling of Innocents" published in the *Kathmandu Post* paints a picture of despair, illness, helplessness. The final sentence sums up a hopeless situation; what else could this woman be? The whole image here is designed to tug at the heart strings of well-meaning citizens as the sex worker is constructed as a victim needing to be rescued.

> *A woman tries to stand up, saunters and falls back ... She doesn't say anything ... can't say it ... and the words don't come out. She's embarrassed. She's sick. She's a sex worker.* (*Kathmandu Post*, 27 October 1997, as quoted in Doezema, 1999, p36)

Abolitionist feminists, religious groups, and human rights organisations describing this modern trafficking in women choose to construct their narratives using thick descriptions similar to those used in the past in reference to white slavery. The victims may be different, yet the images are the same. However, as Doezema (1999) asks:

> *If 'white slavery' has been shown to be a cultural myth with repressive consequences for women, especially prostitutes, what are the implications of this for the current campaign against 'trafficking in women'?* (1999, p31)

Doezema (1999) examines what she sees as the myth of trafficking in the sex industry, questioning the current feminist preoccupation with the victim narrative. She does not deny the existence of human trafficking in the sex industry, along with exploitation in the workplace. Some women are subjected to violence and slavery-like conditions, or may be lied to about the type of work they will be doing or circumstances such as the amount of money they will be earning. What she does base her work on is the assumption, by those campaigning against trafficking, that victims

conform to the stereotype of the innocent maiden captured and forced into prostitution. This narrative sits nicely with the images acceptable to those who subscribe to the victim and rescue scenarios necessitated by an inability to comprehend freedom of choice, albeit from a limited selection. However, a phenomenon exists whereby sex workers who have previously worked in the sex industry and know the type of work they are going to can be re-invented as innocents if their situation is seen as dire enough. It is all a matter of perspective, as Doezema reminds us: *The sex worker who is a 'trafficking victim' is rendered innocent by the ritual invocation of her poverty and desperation* (Doezema, 1999, p34). Here we see the narrative being reconstructed to suit the audience. The sex worker becomes acceptable if she can be cast as a victim in this story.

It would appear, according to Doezema (1999), that the obsession with the victim narrative is ongoing, thus largely negating the idea of migrating for sex work. In Laura Agustin's work (2007), she compares the anti-trafficking movements of today with those of Nineteenth Century women who made it their mission in life to save prostitutes. While not denying the existence of human trafficking, Agustin argues that anti-prostitution activists overestimate figures in order to gain support for their cause. Agustin's work differs from many others in that it undermines several of the stereotypes, claiming migrants make rational choices to travel and work in the sex industry, thus forming part of the dynamic global economic system.

According to Snajdr (2013) the contemporary problem of human trafficking for the sex industry has its own grand narrative, largely constructed by the anti-trafficking community, and based on the following three assumptions:

1. *Trafficking exists on a massive and ever-increasing scale*
2. *Human trafficking is the result of a set of legal shortcomings on the part of other states*
3. *The way to respond is to strengthen laws and law enforcement in as many ways as possible and to encourage the non-profit sector to assist with helping victims.* (Snajdr, 2013, p231)

These assumptions form the framework on which current global anti-trafficking responses are constructed, with voices judged to be knowledgeable providing figures and statistics to support these. The United States Government's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, produced annually by the U.S. Department of State, assesses

each nation and gives it a rating according to parameters set by the Department itself. It is the main provider of evidence regarding the response of each state to human trafficking, with this information being reproduced as fact by other actors in the anti-trafficking community. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), World Vision, and The Salvation Army are only a few of the NGOs using figures from the United States TIP Reports to support their work. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provides information to the U.S. Department of State detailing trafficking cases they have assisted, which gives authority to some of the figures in the TIP Report (IOM, 2012, p3). By supporting and referencing each other, organisations and government departments provide credibility to each other's claims, thus perpetuating the narratives they construct. The retelling of their evidence gives depth to claims that human trafficking is a global problem, with no state being immune from this crime. However, it is indeed possible any contradictory accounts or opinions could be hidden or deliberately overlooked, were they to be judged detrimental to the overall cause.

Nonetheless, writing the grand narrative of human trafficking would involve consensus on what constitutes trafficking, how it happens, and the actions required by states to deal with this crime. *The United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol* (the Trafficking Protocol), which entered into force on 25 December 2003, was the first international instrument to provide a definition encompassing the acts, means, and purpose of human trafficking (Schloenhardt, 2012, p3). However, it was created as a law enforcement instrument concerned with issues of sovereignty and security, not as one of human rights, so although its definitions are broad, the Trafficking Protocol still does not provide a basis on which to construct a grand narrative in the style referred to by Snajdr (2013). Local narratives using Snajdr's assumptions are constructed where human trafficking is seen as a public problem, but an overarching grand narrative does not seem possible to articulate when many factors such as the difference between trafficking and migration for work need to be considered.

2.6 The victim narrative

Sheila Jeffreys, in *The Idea of Prostitution* (1997) discusses two opposing points of view: the first being prostitution is a legitimate and acceptable form of employment, freely chosen by women; and the second, that men's use of prostitution is a form of

degrading women which causes grave psychological damage. Jeffreys considers the claims of sex worker support groups; however, it is clear she is fully supportive of the second argument. She speaks of a fiercely contested global battle between the international sex industry, where women's bodies are treated as commodities traded in a world market with states profiting from the transactions, and an opposition made up of human rights activists, abolitionists, and governments working to stop this form of male-pattern behaviour in the interests of equality and freedom from harm for women (S. Jeffreys, 1997, p viii). It is this contradiction between opposing groups which drives the constant battle over what constitutes human trafficking, whether the sex industry should be legalised or banned, and whether a sex worker can ever freely choose to enter the industry or is a victim being forced in some way into prostitution.

Anti-prostitution abolitionists have a wealth of literature to choose from to support their cause. Stories of human trafficking often tend to list prostitution as the destiny of female victims, with these accounts featuring on the websites of NGOs pursuing anti-trafficking measures, in the media as feature stories, and in books written by prominent authors promoting their cause, seeking to end trafficking and often to eliminate prostitution at the same time. Kara (2009) uses the victim narrative to call for donations toward his cause "Free the Slaves". Kathleen Maltzahn, the founder of Australia's Project Respect, a support group for women working in the sex industry, wrote *Trafficked* (2008). This collection of first-person accounts, along with similar books (see for example Norma, Tankard Reist & Moran, 2016) are often quoted as the only real accounts of sex worker experiences, with tragedy stories being the expected narrative here. Books written by sex workers giving any positive versions of their experiences (see for example, Magnanti, 2007) are dismissed as fantasy by the anti-prostitution abolitionist movement. Maltzahn's *Trafficked* was advertised on the website of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea with the opening lines,

> *Did you know that hundreds of women are smuggled into Australia each year to work in the sex trade? The Institute's Specific Issues Committee, Women and Poverty alerts all people of good will to the recently released book Trafficked, by Kathleen Maltzahn. Kathleen is well known for her work in supporting women who have been trafficked and for endeavouring to ensure that the issue of trafficking of women be addressed.* (Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, 2008)

Numbers of victims trafficked each year are quoted in accounts like these, often unreferenced yet repeated as fact. Each occurrence serves to strengthen the narrative as stories become accepted, by followers of these sources, as true accounts of what has happened, in the same way urban myths or legends are given credence. Unfortunately, it would seem that because the veracity of victim stories is difficult to check, they can be elaborated or completely fabricated in an attempt to elicit donations to fund anti-trafficking activities. Yet anti-trafficking activists still rely on such victim stories to perpetuate their narrative, until they get caught out. The exposé revealing that Somaly Mam, author of *The Road of Lost Innocence* (2009) and founder of the Somaly Mam Foundation, stretched the truth about incidents in her book had disastrous results for the foundation itself, as it ceased operations in 2014 (Murdoch, 2014). Although Somaly Mam spent many years working to rescue victims of human trafficking, the character of the person representing such an organisation is central to the test of its authenticity. The lack of integrity in some of the victim narratives presented by anti-trafficking organisations is indicative of good causes being tainted by unscrupulous methods, even if with the best intentions. However, the audience for whom these narratives are constructed must take some of the blame. A story would seem to attract more attention, and donations, as the level of sensationalism increases. The worse a situation appears, the more we seem to be attracted to it. According to Brandt (2014), *we have created a hierarchy of evil, and our generosity has become conditional on the grade of injustice given to the stories we consume*.

Brandt (2014) writes of storytellers embellishing the truth, making inhumane situations appear worse, in order to provide the emotional leverage necessary to elicit donations. A similar sentiment was expressed by John Curtis, founder of the now-defunct Australian charity, the Grey Man, when interviewed by a reporter from *The Age* in 2012. Curtis claimed that "*Younger girls are most interesting for donors,* and he added that he never changed reports *except to make them more readable and media-orientated"* (Murdoch, 2012). Here, Curtis admits to blurring the truth in order to elicit more publicity and financial support for his cause. The general public may be outraged by underage girls being prostituted, but with the age of consent varying from as low as 12 in some parts of the world, and 13 or 14 years old in many

other nations (www.statisticbrain.com), what constitutes underage needs to be dramatic enough so that a victim narrative can be constructed to facilitate the desired response.

Contemporary anti-trafficking movements can be separated into those seeking to eradicate prostitution and label all as victims, such as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH), and those who focus on the crime of trafficking rather than the act of prostitution. The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) does not consider prostitution to be a violation of human rights; rather they focus on the circumstances of this work, and the rights of those who choose to engage in it. GAATW looks at the reasons for undertaking sex work, where they state:

> *This perspective recognises that for some women the options are very limited, but that within these limited options the woman does weigh her options and makes a choice. As such, not all sex workers are considered coerced* (GAATW, 2010, p6).

Although contemporary sex worker organisations do not deny the existence of human trafficking, they see the confusion of this crime with migration for sex work as detrimental to their efforts towards improving working conditions, and to migrant sex workers themselves. The Australian national sex worker organisation, Scarlet Alliance believes:

> *A distinction is required between human rights abuses arising from bad work conditions in sex work (or any other work) and the perspective that all migrating sex workers are forced, coerced, exploited and/or trafficked* (Scarlet Alliance, 2015).

Migrant sex workers who have spent money to come to Australia, possibly incurring debts in the process, are labelled as victims of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry by anti-prostitution activists, under the pretext of anti-trafficking (E. Jeffreys, 2009; Kim and E. Jeffreys, 2013; Wilson, 2015). Here I wish to point out that Elena Jeffreys is a past president of Scarlet Alliance who writes extensively on sex work, human trafficking, feminist theory, and HIV/AIDS. I distinguish between Elena Jeffreys and Sheila Jeffreys, a radical feminist anti-prostitution activist, by using (E. Jeffreys) or (S. Jeffreys). Jules Kim is a Korean-born Australian sex worker. She was the Migration Project Manager at Scarlet Alliance; a project run by

and for migrant sex workers to increase understandings of migrant sex worker issues, ensuring representation by migrant sex workers in all policies, projects and issues of concern. Kim is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Scarlet Alliance. She has written and presented on a range of issues in relation to human trafficking, law reform and sex work. These two women have been at the forefront of several campaigns in support of sex worker rights, both in Australia and internationally. They participate in demonstrations, give interviews, provide written testimony and submissions at government hearings, and are active on committees, as are several other members of Scarlet Alliance. I feel this gives them the authority to write on this topic, particularly given their first-hand knowledge of the Australian sex industry and migration for sex work. I quote from several of their written submissions and published articles throughout this study.

2.7 The rescue industry

It would appear that the sex industry, particularly in developing nations, is often spoken about in terms of all sex workers having no choice in their fate. It is in this context arguments have been made that the distinction between forced and freely chosen prostitution is hollow. Furthermore, trafficked women are spoken of as if they are helpless in the process of being trafficked and working in the sex industry, being rendered passive by the victim narratives constructed about them. The grand narrative is that they cannot save themselves; others need to rescue them from the *barbaric Other* (Agustin, 2012b). Whether or not this is true appears to be immaterial; the spectre of such a presence and inability to save oneself is a common thread running through stories of rescue. The contemporary victim narratives, presented by organisations involved in anti-trafficking and rescuing those caught up in this crime, fit into a genre of stories throughout the ages, where innocent victims are rescued from villains, amid images of knights in shining armour and damsels in distress. Here, we see a situation where it is assumed the victim does not have a voice or agency. This again perpetuates the image of helplessness as their stories are told for them. These short pieces of narrative give just enough information to create intrigue, but are not long enough to provide any in-depth detail of time, location or background which could be used to prosecute traffickers, with the accounts being largely unverifiable. The reader has to fill in other details from the imagination, following a pattern of victim stories, thus perpetuating the urban myth. Evil villains

prey on unwilling, unsuspecting, helpless protagonists in these two-sided tales of morality versus immorality (Snajdr, 2013).

Rescuing victims of trafficking has been turned into a business venture by some NGOs and charity organisations promoting the ideals of good works being done, at times, with what seems to be little consideration for those affected by their raid and rescue actions (Murray, 1998, pp417-418). In some cases, there appears to be no follow up providing services to rescued victims, particularly in those anti-trafficking groups where the undercover sting is the main focus of their mission (Agustin, 2008; Ditmore, 2009; Paterson, 2009; Hopkins, 2016). This can lead to psychological, social, and economic issues, especially in cases where victims of trafficking are objectified quite deliberately, to serve the purposes of the rescuers (Ditmore, 2009, Paterson, 2009). Situations affecting the alleged victims are homogenised, with broad statements being made connecting poverty, low levels of education, and trafficking (Santos, 2004; Utomo, 2004), and while these factors do indeed contribute to trafficking, the lack of choice usually features prominently in accounts describing how women end up in the sex industry.

Rules and norms are considered, as expectations are established relating to how the world works, what behaviours are legitimate, and which responses are acceptable (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Klotz and Lynch, 2007). As an example of these responses, anti-trafficking movements have been fuelled by international condemnation of this transnational crime. At the same time, the rescue industry has gained in momentum as stories of women and children being forced into sexual slavery appear in the media, bringing images of suffering closer to the source of funding (Pesta, 2011; Stewart, 2014). These accounts help to shape the opinions of policy makers, activists and the general public, as they react to the desperate situations outlined in these print and audio visual media releases (Gould, 2010; Musto, 2009). While there are people who need to be rescued from desperate situations, doing something with the best of intentions doesn't always make it right. Bhumiprabhas (2012) quotes a sex worker as saying:

> *"We came to build new lives for our families, not to be sent home empty-handed and ashamed," explained Dang Moo, a Burmese sex worker in Mae Sot.* (Bhumiprabhas, 2012)

It would seem obvious that ascertaining whether a person wants to be rescued, as well as listening to the responses given, would form part of the rescue process. However, many cases have been written about detailing the rescue of women from sex work who have no say in the matter, being denied both voice and agency (Sukpanich, 2007; Agustin, 2011; Curtis, 2012).

One of the most prominent writers at this time on the wrongs which can be caused by the anti-trafficking crusade is the Anthropologist Laura Agustin. Agustin (2007) coined the phrase, 'the rescue industry,' in reference to those people and organisations determined to rescue and rehabilitate all sex workers, as well as the narratives created to justify their actions. Often portrayed in gendered terms, the rescue narrative often involves a heroic male rescuer saving a helpless female victim from her cruel trafficker (Baker, 2013, p.2). Framing human trafficking using the rescue narrative reiterates traditional Western beliefs and values of gender, nationality, and sexuality, where innocent women are protected from the 'Other', whether in the form of cruel traffickers or abusive men using the services of prostitutes.

In its report released in March 2012 the Empower Foundation, which represents and supports sex workers in Thailand, stated:

> *We have now reached a point in history where there are more women in the Thai sex industry who are being abused by anti-trafficking practices than there are women being exploited by traffickers* (Murdoch, 2012).

Here we see a situation of contested understandings. Western perspectives tend to cast the sex worker as a victim, accepting this as fact rather than as social construction (Mohanty, 1988; Doezema, 1999; Agustin, 2007; Sukpanich, 2007; Agustin, 2008). The rescue industry is fuelled by this Western perspective and constructs a narrative that insists all those involved in sex work need to be rescued from their situation, and they are portrayed as passive victims of their circumstance. Its supporters do not seem to consider or accept a counter-narrative where some women choose sex work from a limited number of options, as a way of providing an income or even escaping from a situation such as an arranged marriage or a violent husband. Trafficking does occur, however according to a number of sources, its extent has been greatly exaggerated (Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Duffy, 2008; Curtis,

2012). Similar situations have occurred in Australia, where, as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> *This is because the so-called rescue industry often deliberately confuses it with another and far more common activity: voluntary travel by women who want to work in another country's sex industry* (Duffy, 2008).

As anti-trafficking and rescue organisations advise policy makers at both state and international levels, the solution to the issue of human trafficking into the sex industry as a problem of human rights abuse can become misconstrued as a fight against prostitution. Where states have decided demand is a major cause of trafficking, attempts have been made to criminalise prostitution and/or its users (Hunt, 2013; Goldberg, 2014). Migration for work and trafficking are intertwined as states attempt to protect their borders from what has been labelled as the transnational crime of human trafficking. Broad definitions of trafficking have been criticised as part of the problem where any movement of people to work in the sex industry could be construed as trafficking (Curtis, 2012). However, Duffy (2008) refers to deliberate confusion in order to boost the recorded numbers of women rescued, thus providing evidence to support anti-trafficking measures. These measures serve the interests of the state and the rescuing organisations more than those of the alleged victims, promoting the need for stricter border control, visa restrictions, and the criminalisation of the sex industry. Just as trafficked and migrant sex worker are terms not distinguished at times, the confusion of people smuggling with human trafficking adds to public outcry as these terms are interchanged, perhaps deliberately, to construct narratives with a stronger impact.

Rescuing women from the evils of prostitution is not a modern-day phenomenon; middle class women in Nineteenth Century England saw a need to step in to help and save those less fortunate than themselves. As Agustin (2007) suggests:

> *The role of the feminist "helper" in relation to sex workers was built within welfare infrastructure in post-industrialised Western Europe and the UK* (Agustin, 2007).

Nineteenth Century moral panic regarding white slavery and current issues surrounding human trafficking in the sex industry have similarities, and contemporary understandings of sex work still share in values from the past, where sex workers are seen as unfortunates in need of salvation. The rescue industry, as

with the good works done by middle class women in the past, denies women the right to choose their own destinies, with accounts being constructed from the point of view of the rescuer rather than the one being rescued. Victim narratives advocating the point of view that all of these women need to be rescued have resulted in research promoting this ideal, along with an anti-prostitution message (Sullivan, 2007; Kara, 2009). However, what needs to be considered here with these contested narratives is the perspective from which these researchers view sex work, and whether they have actually asked sex workers what they want. Sullivan pursues the argument that all prostitution is exploitation, and according to Zajdow (2008), Sullivan argues there is little distinction between forced and freely chosen prostitution, since all prostitution is violence against women. From this abolitionist perspective, choice for the prostituted woman and girl is thus an irrelevant idea. This discourse does not allow for the idea that anyone could freely choose to work in the sex industry, and by removing voice and agency, these women are further disempowered. In this case rescuers adopt a position of power; of one who knows what is best for another. This puts the relationship into a situation of overbearing parent/protected child or saviour/sinner rather than one of helping. The dominant party makes all of the decisions, without consultation. Contrary to this notion, stories from sex workers and research based on their accounts have been written detailing how even some women and underage girls initially trafficked into sex work have chosen to continue rather than take up the options of returning home or seeking alternative employment (Sukpanich, 2007; Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Agustin, 2012a; Curtis, 2012). As E. Jeffreys points out:

> *Sex work is an avenue to live your life on a chosen path, different to that chosen by society.* (E. Jeffreys, 2010)

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for this research and the review of a body of literature pertaining to the major themes of human trafficking, International Relations, public problems, the sex industry, migration of women, victims, rescue, and the shaping of narratives. The research is situated in the field of International Relations as an issue of human security, where the tenets of constructionism best suit the ethnographic approach I have taken to examine the Australian sex industry from the inside, rather than from the perspective of an outsider.

The field of International Relations in the Twenty-first Century has seen an increased focus on the trafficking of women, specifically related to the sex industry, with narratives being constructed portraying them as victims of this heinous crime. This has resulted in many states declaring their support for anti-trafficking measures, which often involve anti-prostitution sentiments. This attempt to stamp out prostitution can be likened to the campaigns of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries when prostitution was labelled as a social evil by purity crusaders, who sought to protect innocent women and to blame men for the corruption of innocents.

Current concerns surrounding human trafficking are largely focussed on the sexual exploitation of non-western or third world women by both western and non-western men. Accounts can be found of women being trafficked into prostitution from the global South and East to the global North and West, with Australia featuring as a destination country. This is in contrast with Nineteenth Century fears that European women and girls were being abducted to work as prostitutes and sex slaves for non-western men. However, although the movement of women has reversed in direction, the narratives of both white slavery and human trafficking in women can be viewed as cultural myths, where all migration to work in the sex industry is portrayed as the corruption of young, naïve innocents lured into a life of sordid horror.

The Nineteenth Century moral panic surrounding the fear of white slavery is being adopted, re-shaped and retold by contemporary activists in the fight against human trafficking, positioning a seemingly modern problem in a historical framework. This is evidenced by the content of stories about women and girls being moved within and across boundaries for the purpose of sexual exploitation. By telling familiar stories already known, the myth is continued, and is likely to be accepted as fact, contributing to human trafficking for the Australian sex industry being labelled as a public problem.

Although work has been done in this field, there is still a need to explore the effect this has on the people involved; that is, the sex workers. Adopting a constructionist point of view provides a theoretical approach where I can make sense of how trafficking is constructed and addressed as a public problem, while at the same time

allowing more than one view of how the world works. My study explores the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. I concentrate on the voices that speak to this issue, whose definitions become dominant, and why some opinions are overlooked or ignored, to address the following research questions:

1. Who speaks for and about migrant sex workers in Australia?
2. What effect does this have on shaping public opinion about the industry?
3. How does this impact upon those who work in the Australian sex industry?

The next chapter details the methods I have used in this research, which are a combination of ethnographic interviews, field observations, discussions, participation in workshops, and reviews of media and institutional discourses.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain my methodology and demonstrate how I have applied qualitative methods in designing and carrying out my research. There were two separate sets of data collected – one comprising text-based discourses on the sex industry and human trafficking, and the other from ethnographic inquiry centred on participant observation and interviews. Each of these will be outlined below, along with a discussion on my position as a researcher in this study, the roles I took on, and the reasons this approach was necessary to gather information.

3.2 Qualitative methodology

The aim and function of a qualitative study is to understand the meaning of human behaviour by describing the inherent or essential characteristics of social objects or human experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, pp110-111; Jackson et al., 2007, p21; O'Shaughnessy and Krogman, 2012, p498). By using a qualitative approach, the researcher is able to explore people's worlds, examine meanings in social contexts, and take into account the subtleties of human interactions. Richardson (1990, p24) describes participation in a culture as including participating in the narratives of that culture, where the process of telling the story creates and supports a social world. According to Brockington and Sullivan (2013, p59), physical and emotional experiences cannot be explained or understood by numerical data alone. It is by making field notes, transcripts, photographs, and listening to conversations that researchers can position themselves within the community being studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p3), thus gathering what Geertz (1973) refers to as thick description – a way of providing sufficient context so that people outside the culture can make meaning of the behaviour, and to uncover the culturally located significance of particular social practices to those who apply them.

Qualitative research can be conducted in natural settings rather than a laboratory, thus allowing the researcher to observe the nuances of human interactions, through factors such as body language, facial expressions, and the setting chosen for the

interaction (Morgan, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998, p111). This is particularly useful when conducting discussions, open-ended interviews, and ethnographic observations to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and context behind answers given and conversations occurring between members of a group. The interplay of ideas and conversation between participants in a study may prove to be just as informative to the researcher as the answers to set questions, even if it is to identify which individuals have the louder voices and the potential to influence the participation and responses of others in the group (O'Shaughnessy and Krogman, 2012, p495).

3.2.1 Many voices to be heard

As stated in chapter 2, my aim in this study was to explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. The sex industry is understood in many different ways by those involved in it, working with it, or against it. This includes external agencies wanting either to work with or rescue sex workers, government agencies, non-government organisations (NGOs), and the general public. Adopting a qualitative research methodology, and applying a evaluative constructionist lens, I have gathered and analysed evidence from a range of participants who hold divergent constructions of migrant sex work, in order to demonstrate how the Australian sex industry has been constructed as an entity and how this has been used to influence policies affecting those who work in the industry, especially if they have been labelled as trafficked. The voices who speak for, and in opposition to, the sex industry set these constructions against each other in an effort to have their opinions heard in an argument where sex work and trafficking are so often linked. Such completely opposite views as '*sex worker human rights'* (Stardust, 2014) and '*prostitution is violence against women'* (Raymond, 2004; Norma et al, 2016) need to be considered when examining how migrant sex work is constructed as human trafficking in Australia. Alongside sex workers and advocates on either side of the sex industry debate, I was also interested in exploring how the various government departments and NGOs in Australia shape this multi-faceted issue into a singular problem, and how they connect their understanding of the issue with other organisations and the governments of other nations. This is in keeping with international policies and protocols such as the *Trafficking in Persons Protocol* (United Nations, 2000) and the annual US Department of State (USDOS) *Trafficking in Persons Report*, both of

which form the basis for international responses to human trafficking. To understand the way that the sex industry, and sex trafficking is constructed as a problem in Australia, I collected and analysed a wide array of text-based information that reveals 'voices' from policy, institutional and media discourses.

It was impossible to know when I started, exactly how many people I would interview, how many websites I would look at, or where my review of reports and submissions would take me. I approached my research with the expectation that leads would unfold as I read more widely and spoke with members of the sex worker and wider community. Using a qualitative approach allows for flexibility to follow such leads and to use a variety of techniques (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p9; Brockington and Sullivan, 2013, p58). What I did know was that I did not want to restrict my sample to women who had been trafficked because of the tendency for research into sex trafficking to become what sex workers and their advocates refer to as tragedy porn (E. Jeffreys, 2011). In this instance, the term 'tragedy porn' refers to those stereotypical narratives of physical and mental abuse, both in their past and from clients, often equated with sex workers. Also, my preliminary readings led me to believe that the situation in Australia was different from other parts of the world, with fewer cases of human trafficking being reported or prosecuted (O'Brien, et al, 2013; University of Queensland, 2015).

3.2.2 Quilting frameworks

My aim was to look at how migrant sex work in Australia was constructed as human trafficking by considering the lived experiences of sex workers and members of the wider community, as well as sources such as written texts, websites, and the media. Saukko (2000) proposes the use of "quilting" when doing and writing up research as a way to include personal stories, which she refers to as patches, stitching them together to form a bigger picture (p299). Saukko asks:

> *"How can we be true to and respect the inner experiences of people and at the same time critically assess the cultural discourses that form the very stuff from which our experiences are made?"* (Saukko, 2000, p299)

Here she refers to the problem faced by the researcher, who must be sensitive to the voices of the people being studied while mindful of the social discourses that have helped them form opinions. By understanding and writing up each story as a rich and

textured patch then looking for ways to connect it with other stories, looking for points of both similarity and difference to ascertain where they fit in the overall plan of the study, the researcher is able to work with them as part of what Saukko refers to as a larger discursive panorama (Ibid, p303). Rather than focussing on individual stories, perhaps it is the synergy produced when having many voices speak which tells the greater story.

Saukko chooses two themes to piece her stories around, again using the image of making a quilt. In keeping with this analogy, I found two themes were common throughout the interviews I conducted with sex workers: that of being labelled as trafficked, abused, victims; and the need of others to rescue them. I expand on both of these themes throughout this dissertation.

3.3 Collection of information

3.3.1 Using the literature

According to Lobasz (2012, pp52-53), International Relations scholars have produced trafficking research similar to that in other disciplines of the Social Sciences. Their strength lies in the notable contributions made in the study of anti-trafficking norms and transnational advocacy networks. However, Lobasz argues:

> *their focus on norm emergence, adoption, and implementation naturalises the existence of a specific human trafficking "problem" and pays insufficient attention to the power relations that pervade such processes.*
> (Lobasz, 2012, p53).

When human trafficking and its insecurities are naturalised, in the sense that they are treated as facts, there is a danger they can be taken for granted (Weldes et al, 1999, p9). By speaking of human trafficking as a specific problem, the nuances of how it is constructed as an issue may be missed by the actors who talk about it.

As stated in Friesendorf (2009), policy makers, government agencies, NGOs, and researchers are unable to agree on a clear definition of what constitutes human trafficking and what does not (Friesendorf, 2009, pp23-24). Different actors bring their own interpretations to the table when trafficking is discussed, thus a consensus is difficult to achieve, particularly where realist issues of border security conflict with those of human rights. Whether migration for sex work is considered as

trafficking can greatly affect figures, so ascertaining an author's views on this is important in order to understand the collection of data and the narrative constructed from it. This meant that as I found each new source to read on human trafficking, I did an internet search of the authors to find their background, any relevant papers they had written and who their co-authors were, where they were doing their research, and any other affiliations that would be useful.

I started with a library search using these terms: human trafficking, sex trafficking, sex industry in Australia, history of prostitution in Australia, history of the movement of women for work, constructionism in International Relations, feminist theory in International Relations. This produced a large number of books and journal articles which I was able to look through to assess their relevance for my research. Several of these are discussed further in my Literature Review and referred to throughout this dissertation. I used the same terms to search on Google and Google Scholar for further articles to read.

My concern was with how the different voices talk both to and past each other. There is no single truth to be discovered. Many different readings and interpretations of what constitutes human trafficking in the sex industry can be made, and when supported by persuasive narratives, these attract followers who are convinced they have found the real story. It is the authority of the authors or organisations responsible for creating these narratives which gives them credence in the eyes of followers, who are then apt to re-quote the story as fact. I wanted to look at some of the discrepancies between groups claiming sex trafficking was prevalent in Australia and the sex industry argument that many of their migrant workers were being wrongfully labelled as victims of this heinous crime (E. Jeffreys, 2009; Kim and Jeffreys, 2013; Kamler, 2014).

After conducting a review of the vast literature on human trafficking into the sex industry, I needed to discover why the various actors in my area of concern took particular points of view. Although my aim was to conduct open-ended interviews, I first needed to ascertain who would be appropriate to talk to, based on their expertise in the area and the work of their department or organisation. I conducted preliminary research through reading websites, journals, submissions to working parties, books

written by well-known authors in the area of human trafficking, and newspaper articles. I listened to or watched radio and television programmes and interviews on the topic of human trafficking, both in Australia and internationally. According to Punch (2009):

> *The ethnographer will make use of all manner of written resources … that will help in documenting either the immediate natural and detailed behaviour of participants or the cultural and symbolic context and significance of that behaviour.* (Punch, 2009, p159)

Once I had identified a range of discourses, with some being more dominant than others, I was better able to identify the key texts to study and people or organisations to approach. Works repeatedly cited or cross-referenced formed the bulk of my initial reading list and led me to other texts. I began to form a picture of the context and significance of comments made by different actors. For example, works by Elena Jeffreys, Jules Kim, Jo Doezema and Laura Agustin were written from a pro-sex work stance, as were those from Scarlet Alliance, Vixen Collective, Magenta, and RhED (Resourcing Health and Education in the Sex Industry – Victoria). Sheila Jeffreys, Kathleen Maltzahn, Janice Raymond and Kathleen Barry took the abolitionist point of view, as did CATWA, ACRATH, and the Salvation Army.

However, it became clear that figures quoted regarding the number of people trafficked to Australia for sex work varied considerably, depending on whether the author was pro- or anti-prostitution, as did the tone of accounts of those involved in sex work. At times the stories told were of women performing day-to-day work; others told tragic tales of suffering and abuse. With this in mind, I expanded my scope of research to include a variety of sources such as non-fiction accounts written about rescuing victims of trafficking and sexual slavery (Maltzahn, 2008; Kara, 2009; Somaly Mam, 2009). Wherever human trafficking or sex work were mentioned, I used this as a starting point to examine the resulting discourse, looking at the speakers and their target audience. This provided me with leads to other sources, as I sought to verify the information in these narratives, and to question why they were constructed in a particular way.

3.3.2 Gathering information from government websites

Each Australian Federal and State Government department has its own official website giving details of its mission, aims and objectives. Departmental annual reports and media releases are freely available through these sites. The relevant Minister for each department also has a website where speeches and transcripts can be found. These official government websites can be subjected to scrutiny by the Opposition and the general public, so the information on them is often accepted as a true representation of the actions of that department.[4] Information given is written by policy officers as an authoritative discourse after much research[5], leaving little room for questioning the veracity of these claims, particularly when it is repeated on several different government websites. Where it was part of their brief, these provided the official stance on human trafficking from the Australian Government perspective, claiming it as a heinous crime requiring a whole of government approach.

There is no single Government department responsible for legislation that covers the issue of human trafficking in Australia. Aspects of immigration, transnational crime, visas and tax regulations deal with the movement and employment of people but are not specific to individuals coming to Australia to work in the sex industry. The following Government departments have 'Responding to human trafficking' as part of their mandate and I was able to find lists of media releases, reports and submissions pertaining to this topic on their websites:

<u>Federal Level</u>

- Attorney-General's Department (Federal)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Australian Federal Police (AFP)
- Department of Justice (Federal)
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Australian Institute of Criminology
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- Department of Home Affairs (formerly Department of Immigration and Citizenship - DIAC)
- Fair Work Commission

[4] Information gathered from discussions with several people throughout this research reflected this view.

[5] Information on the role of policy officers gathered from interviews with representatives from the Fair Work Commission (July 2013) and Department of Immigration and Citizenship (May 2014).

- Department of Social Services
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCHSIA)
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)

Western Australian State Government

- Attorney-General's Department (State)
- Western Australian Police (WAPOL)
- Department of Justice (State)
- Department of Communities

I visited the websites every two weeks between 2011 and 2016. I also checked the information I had referenced from these sites after 2016 to see whether it was still available. However, with no department claiming to take leadership with this problem, it was difficult to ascertain whether a whole of government approach was achieving the desired outcomes.

Under the heading of Human Trafficking, the phrase '*Trafficking in persons is a complex, multi-faceted crime and a major violation of human rights'* was found on several sites. Finding the same phrases on a number of government websites reinforces the statements as fact, and gives the impression that actions are being taken to combat this '*complex crime'.* Australian society expects the problem of human trafficking to be addressed, and it appears that this is being done through a '*whole-of-government approach'*. The perceived authority of government departments gives credibility to statements made on their websites, with claims of '*We work with other governments and organisations to prevent human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices, prosecute the offenders, and protect and support victims.'* being accepted as evidence of positive action. This is the kind of response the general public both wants and expects to see when the lives of victims of trafficking are at stake. Government websites convey a powerful message that something positive is being done, even though details of how and when are not included.[6]

[6] Phrases in italics were found on a number of Australian Government websites accessed throughout this study, for example, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Attorney-General's Department, and the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

I used government websites to access media releases which announced updates on responses to human trafficking. For example, the Hon Michael Keenan MP released "Commonwealth funding to fight human trafficking and slavery" (25 March 2014). I was also able to read policy documents and submissions to ascertain the government stance on issues relating to sex work and how it was being linked with sex trafficking. I then looked at the media releases, reports and submissions produced by these government departments before deciding who to interview. I searched for any further output from the departments as my research evolved. I used them to gain background information as well as to see which organisations were contributing their opinions to Government; who supported each other and who they criticised. Scarlet Alliance, Project Respect, World Vision, Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking Humans (ACRATH), Anti-Slavery Australia, the Salvation Army, and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Australia (CATWA), are a few of the non-government organisations which provide both the Federal and State Governments with information regarding the situation as they see it, arguing from their perspective. I was able to interview representatives from six of these seven organisations, between 2011 and 2016.

3.3.3 Non-government organisation websites

I did an internet search for non-government organisations (NGOs) with an interest in humanitarian issues. When I found an organisation, I looked at the links to other organisations listed on each website to form a map of who was on-side with each other. NGOs gave details of their responses to human trafficking on their websites if this was one of the briefs of the organisation, although it might have been located on a sub-menu rather than as a main heading, depending on the priority this topic took at the time.

The NGO websites I used in my research project were:

<u>Australian-based</u>

- Scarlet Alliance
- Vixen Collective
- Project Respect
- Resourcing Health and Education in the Sex Industry (RhED)
- Magenta
- Sex Industry Network (SIN)
- Anti-Slavery Australia

- Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
- The Nordic Model Australia Coalition (NorMAC)
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia (CATWA)
- Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking Humans (ACRATH)
- Grey Man
- Australian Christian Lobby
- Family Voice Australia
- Bush Church Aid
- Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

World-wide

- Amnesty International
- United Nations
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- Salvation Army
- Red Cross
- World Vision
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – International (CATW)
- Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)
- Somaly Mam Foundation
- Exodus Cry
- Collective Shout

Websites are moving pieces of information, changing to suit the audience and current trends. In my initial searches of NGO websites from 2011 onwards I found opinions on human trafficking were relatively easy to find; however, by the end of my project these seemed to be either harder to find or more guarded in what is said. More recently, the layout of several websites has changed from portrait to landscape, with less information on the homepage. Navigation appears to me to be more difficult, with human trafficking not appearing as often as a hot topic of conversation, and policies on this topic being less open. For example, the Australian organisation Project Respect produced two documents in 2008 which were widely circulated among anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution activists' groups, *"How Are Women Trafficked?"* (Project Respect, 2008a) and *"Why Australia? What makes Australia appealing for traffickers?"* (Project Respect, 2008b) Both documents were on their website when I checked in April 2015 but are now (2021) no longer available. I discuss the contents of these two documents in Chapter Six, "Hear Their Voices:

Asian Sex Workers in Australia" and it is possible that the material has been either superseded or deemed no longer appropriate.

There are many different voices to be heard, each with their own relative strengths and power; however, it would be impossible to read and analyse every report on sex trafficking. I selected what I considered to be relevant examples from the multitude of reports that exist on this topic, examining them from an interpretivist-constructionist perspective. I looked for links between NGOs throughout these documents and noted which ones were referred to in either good or bad terms or sometimes ignored by each other. They constructed networks of like-minded organisations to share the information they had produced, creating their own social worlds. This gave me a list of organisations to contact or to search for on the internet.

3.3.4 The Media

It is virtually impossible for a person to have been everywhere and experienced everything. The idea that globalisation is making the world a smaller place, bringing people together through technological advancements, still does not change the fact that most individuals have limited experiences which they use to shape their views on issues. According to Hannerz (2004, p23) we rely on representations provided by various agencies of information brokerage, particularly the news media, to keep us informed. Here is where we can see the two extremes of philosophy in International Relations at play; where the realist perspective assumes there is a truth out there and the media can uncover that truth, while constructionists concern themselves with the way narratives are written by the media, and the resulting truth this portrays. The way a journalist reports a story is affected by many factors such as culture, religion, socio-economic status, and the laws of the country where a story is written or released, so that knowledge and information imparted through a narrative is influenced by a set of variables. The media organisation a journalist works for will also affect the tone and nature of their end product (Garcia, 2015, p43). Journalists tell a story, but we can only make sense of it when it fits the parameters of what is credible to us, located and contextualised within our sphere of acceptance. A narrative outside of this does not sit well with us.

Hannerz (2004, p102) speaks of correspondents reducing a narrative thread to manageable dimensions, using a single overarching theme for each dramatic incident. This allows the audience to put information into context, giving it a sense of place, but also simplifying complex material so that it can be processed and spoken about easily by the target audience. By concerning themselves with particular topics and ignoring others, and by connecting a narrative to preconceived ideas and themes, that narrative is perpetuated by the media. Straying from this format does not work well because, as suggested by Hannerz (2004), we expect a particular narrative to be framed in a specific way. For example, the dominant story line associated with sex work is one of exploitation and trafficking, not of women enjoying their work or participating in mundane activities such as grocery shopping and gardening once their working day has finished.

I looked at stories of human trafficking in the sex industry in print form and as news videos or documentaries to see how the evidence was presented and spoken about. I searched for news stories relating to my research topic on the internet using the following terms: sex trafficking, human trafficking, migrant sex work, illegal brothels, sex work, sex industry, prostitution, raid and rescue. The University of Queensland, TC Beirne School of Law lists hundreds of relevant Australian news articles between 2008 and 2018 under the heading of "Human Trafficking in the Media".

The newspapers I used were:

- *The West Australian*
- *The Weekend West*
- *The Sunday Times*
- *The Australian*
- *The Sydney Morning Herald*
- *The Age*
- *The Tasmanian Times*
- *The Guardian*

I searched for relevant newspaper articles referring to alleged incidents of sex trafficking in Australia to ascertain the extent of the coverage, style of writing, whether the heading actually reflected the content of the story, and if the images used were real or stock. In later discussions with interviewees about these articles I asked whether the origin of these images mattered when it came to forming an opinion

about the accuracy of the story. Photos that fit the expected image are often used, whether the subject matter is real or not. This is illustrated in newspaper articles relating to women being trafficked into the sex industry, where it would be difficult to photograph the alleged victims. The women shown in these images tend to be young, with faces obscured, either in settings that could be interpreted as inside a brothel, or in squalid conditions if the story is emphasising the plight of trafficking victims. According to Kelly (2005):

> *Books and articles written putatively about human trafficking restrict their focus to sex trafficking only; news reports and documentaries overwhelmingly focus on titillating reports of "sex slavery" instead of enslaved domestic staff or abused farm workers.* (Kelly, 2005; as mentioned in Lobasz, 2009, p337)

However, it is interesting to note that more recent narratives of human trafficking into Australia featured incidents outside of the sex industry. During the time I was researching the sex industry, workers who were being exploited in other industries such as agricultural and factory work started to be mentioned in newspaper articles, documentaries and news reports, resulting in investigations being discussed by the Fair Work Ombudsman (Conifer, 2015). I did not look into these cases of exploitation, as they were not the focus of this dissertation.

3.4 An ethnography

Contemporary ethnography seeks to examine the everyday cultural life of a social group to understand what is happening from an insider rather than outsider perspective (Runcieman, 2018; Hoey, 2020). It describes the sometimes chaotic, contradictory, polymorph character of human behaviour in concrete settings (Blommaert, 2007), taking into account the view of the participants and the complexity of their interactions. According to Hoey (2020, pp60-61), ethnography from an "insider's point of view" allows critical categories and meanings to emerge rather than them being imposed from pre-existing models. This requires using ethnographic tools such as participant observation, field notes, and open-ended interviews while being immersed in the other culture.

In order to compare societal views of the sex industry and the human trafficking situation in Australia with the lived experience of women who work in this industry,

I used ethnographic methods such as unstructured personal interviews and participant observation, which allowed me to work with them rather than looking in from the outside, as if sex workers were objects to be studied and spoken about. Doing repeated observations and interactions with a range of participants allowed me to follow local narratives within a socio-political and cultural context, providing a snapshot bounded by the parameters of time and people available. One cannot record every point of view, capture every incident, or fully understand the complexities of relationships between people, regardless of the community being studied. I took notes and observations between 2011 and 2016, from within the sex industry and also of members from the broader society, in order to gather perceptions of how that industry worked.

One of the advantages of conducting ethnography is that it allows the researcher to collect data in a realistic setting where people act naturally, focusing on both verbal and non-verbal behaviours, to get an insider's view of reality (Sangasubana, 2011, p568). One may argue that observing sex workers whose entire focus is to create an illusion, an alternative reality for their clients, involves them working in a fantasy world where they cannot act naturally. However, it is this juxtaposition of realities which led me to this research, to ascertain whether the language and culture of those within the sex industry tells a story quite different from the one portrayed by those external voices constructing migrant sex work as human trafficking.

3.5 Role of the researcher

Several well-meaning colleagues and friends were concerned for my safety when conducting ethnographic research with "*those types of women"*, under the assumption that the sex industry in Australia was rife with pimps and criminal gangs. A lady I met with regularly in a sewing group made the comment, *"Can't you find something nicer to research?"* (A.L. – a friend, Perth, February 2015). The views of the people concerning my safety and my choice of topic were equally important as narratives in shaping this study. However, it was these types of comments and concerns that led me to take on several different roles throughout my ethnographic research. I needed to remain as unbiased as possible and listen to all sides of the argument, although we all bring our beliefs and values with us into every situation in life. According to Ratner (2002), being objective is the highest form of respect one

can show for the subjects of a research study. He explains it is the choice of methods that enables a researcher to organise their own subjectivity, so it does not affect the evidence (Ratner, 2002).

3.5.1 My personal identity

As I began to unravel the complexities of my research topic it became clear I would take on different roles as a researcher, depending on who I was interviewing, observing, or discussing my research with. Initially, I thought I would restrict my interviews to official representatives of government departments and NGOs, but this meant ignoring the very group of people who had inspired me to write. According to one sex industry insider:

> *"If there is a discussion on sex work happening in Australia, in government, on policy, in media, on our LIVES – if sex workers are not INCLUDED, if our representative organisations are not there – then be aware a choice has been made to deliberately exclude us."*
> (Jane Green - sex worker, speaking at a public forum in Perth, 2015)

I realised the opinions of sex workers and even their clients were going to form part of my study. However, no hegemonic voice speaks for the sex industry, regardless of which nation we look at; even among sex workers themselves, there is no single voice because experiences are many and varied. As Jane Green, a sex worker, activist, and spokesperson for peer-only sex worker organisation Vixen Collective stated when she spoke at the 2015 Forum on Regulating Sex Work in Western Australia:

> *"I do not speak for all sex workers because no one can. I speak from my own personal experience of sex work."* (Jane Green - sex worker, Perth 2015)

My initial thoughts were to write from outside the sex industry; however, this left too many unanswered questions and did not sit well with me. I kept hearing the voices of strong sex workers at forums; people I know and respect, stressing their lack of trust in researchers who are outsiders. *"Nothing about us without us!"* being chanted as we stood united together on a number of occasions. I position myself as an insider, having worked in the Australian sex industry for several years, although this was not revealed to those outside the industry (except for a few close friends, and clients of course).

I wear several hats as a researcher – migrant sex worker, member of a church congregation, member of community and charity groups, and researcher interviewing government officials. My identity as anything other than a researcher was not necessary, except when involved in the sex worker community where issues of trust and confidentiality were paramount. Being an insider gave me access to discussions and situations that would not have been possible otherwise.

3.5.2 Participant observation

When I was not working with text-based evidence, participant observation seemed to be the most appropriate method for me to use to collect ethnographic information, helping me to describe and understand the nuances of human actions. In this particular qualitative research technique the researcher is able to observe the research participants as well as actively engage in the activities of the group. The goal of participant observation is to gain an in-depth understanding and familiarity with a group of people, their values, beliefs, and way of life. Some contemporary researchers share the belief of early anthropologists, that in order to understand what is happening in a community you must participate rather than observe from a distance. As stated by Atkinson and Hammersley (1994):

> *In a sense, all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it. From this point of view, participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers.* (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, p249)

Kawulich (2005) refers to four types of participant observation:

> **1) Complete observer** – This is a situation where the researcher is completely hidden from view or in a public setting, but the group being studied does not know they are being observed. The researcher does not participate in any of the group activities.
>
> **2) Observer as participant** - In this scenario, the researcher is able to participate in the group activities, yet their main role is to collect data. The researcher is not a member of the group. This is considered to be the most ethical form of participant observation.
>
> **3) Participant as observer** – Here, the researcher is a member of the group being studied and the group is aware of the research project. This situation may result in a compromise between depth of data revealed and level of confidentiality provided to the group for the information they provide.

> **4) Complete participant** - By completely immersing in the group being studied and concealing their researcher role from the group, a researcher can avoid disrupting normal activity and gather information in as near to natural a setting as possible. However, group members may feel distrustful when the research role is revealed.
> (Adapted from Kawulich, 2005, Section 6, p21)

The nature of my research topic led me to use all four of these types of participant observation to investigate the how, why and who questions which evolved throughout this study. However, the most common occurrences were Observer as Participant and Participant as Observer. The situations where I acted as a Complete Observer or Complete Participant were when observing the responses of members of the general public to discussions about prostitution, human trafficking, sexual abuse, and the rescue of sex workers. For example, between 2011 and 2016, I attended the following: a fund-raising activity for the Grey Man charity group involved in rescuing sex workers (2011); a church supper event where one of the topics the guest speaker spoke about was prostitution (2015); a fund-raising afternoon tea for a pregnancy help group which was organised by the church I was attending (2016); and several small casual discussions with acquaintances about events in the news such as the murder of a sex worker in Melbourne in 2013 (Khan and Landy, 2014). Revealing my position as either a researcher or sex worker would not have benefitted any of these situations because I was not there in that capacity.

3.5.3 Presenting myself as a researcher

I have always been a good listener; someone people open up to, share their stories with, and trust they will not be judged. I observe people and situations with an open mind. My role changed during this study depending on the people I was with; whether I was interviewing them, being an observer, or participating in discussions and activities. Also, the dynamics of the group determined my identity - was I presenting as a researcher, sex worker, or member of the wider community?

When working with the Australian sex worker community I presented myself as a participant observer, making it quite clear that I was both working in the industry and conducting research. The sex worker community is often wary and quite disparaging

of academics from outside the industry, unwilling to discuss topics or trust them to portray an accurate account of the situation (see E. Jeffreys, 2010). However, as a member of this industry, I was able to conduct semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participate in discussion groups, observe and listen to talks given by focus groups - specifically the Migrant Sex Worker Project, and have access to documents produced by sex worker organisations. I was involved in three annual National Sex Worker Forums, online chat groups, and action groups for sex worker rights. I led discussion groups, visited local and national sex worker organisations, and participated in sex worker-only social functions. This broad range of activities gave me opportunities to conduct interviews, take part in conversations, observe interactions and responses to discussions regarding policy and governance, participate in decision making activities, and take field notes over a period of approximately six years.

Empirical evidence is the information received by using the senses, particularly through observation and documentation of patterns and behaviour exhibited by those being observed. I gathered this type of evidence by presenting as a participant-in and observer-of the daily functioning of several sex industry establishments around Australia between 2011 and 2016. I also gathered empirical evidence from other sources open to my visits for research purposes. I visited Project Respect – a Melbourne-based anti-trafficking support group in Australia, and Magenta – the sex worker support group in Western Australia. The Red Cross representative dealing with human trafficking couldn't meet me while I was in Melbourne, so we spoke on the phone. I chatted with members of church groups including several priests, a bishop and an Archbishop. I interviewed leading members of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia (CATWA) and of Anti-Slavery Australia. I also interviewed representatives from the Fair Work Ombudsman, the State and Federal Police, and West Australian Newspapers. The answers to questions provided one level of information which I have used throughout this study. However, the ease with which each person spoke to me, their body language, and the setting they chose for the interview, all formed part of the observations I made and empirical evidence gathered.

3.5.4 Interviews

I conducted most of my research between 2011 and 2016, with some additional information gathered after that time. Although I used participant observation as my main form of interaction with sex workers and members of the wider community, during this period, I also conducted 41 interviews with sex workers and 19 interviews with men who were clients of sex workers. These took place at private places of work, in cafes and bars, in a park, at my home, at their home, in hotels, by telephone, and in my car. I gained ethics approval for this research and sought informed consent from all participants in the interviews. Each person has been identified in this research using a name they were comfortable using, with details of the city, and year of the interview listed. Where relevant, the nationality and age of the interviewee has also been listed. The exact date of the interview has not been listed as several participants from the sex industry felt it would not be in their best interests to locate them in specific places at specific times. My aim was to make my research participants feel comfortable and safe, so I have respected their wishes.

These people were recruited because of where I was at the time. As an insider I had access to people. I used snowball or chain sampling (Naderifar, et al, 2017), where people I knew gave me names of other people to contact or recommended that I attend certain events as a participant observer. Snowball sampling is a useful method when it is difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics; in this instance, migrant sex workers, other sex workers, and men who use sex worker services. It provides subjects who are acquaintances of the first sample, who in turn are known to the interviewer. This type of networking helps relax people who are not usually willing to come forward and be interviewed (Naderifar, et al, 2017).

On occasion, open-ended interviews were opportunistic, taking advantage of new leads to discuss issues of concern with people. I was upfront with my reasons for asking questions and mindful of a respondent's right to refuse. At times, other people joined in discussions I was having with a couple of participants. I made them aware of my study and offered them consent forms. On most occasions, these extra people refused the forms, but they wanted to listen and contribute, which I understood to be verbal informed consent, although they did not always give their names. These incidents happened when I was a participant observer in the sex industry, but also

with community groups, and at a church gathering. The nature of my research topic and ethnographic style of information gathering as a participant observer within a community makes it difficult to quantify the exact number of people or to name everyone who contributed their opinions.

As well as using participant observation, I interviewed official representatives from State and Federal Government departments, anti-trafficking activist groups, and sex industry support organisations to gather information about the extent of trafficking in Australia and the relevant responses to this problem. I was interested in the importance placed upon this issue by each of the relevant agencies, the official stance, the level of communication and cooperation between these agencies, and some insight into more personal views regarding the ideologies of race and gender constructing migrant sex workers as victims of trafficking. Through ethnographic interviews with representatives of the various agencies and organisations involved, I wanted to examine how they determined whether the women coming to Australia to work in the sex industry were trafficked, or had made a decision to come here, largely from the global South, to better their situation.

I interviewed representatives from the following organisations and departments:

- West Australian Newspapers – September 2011, by telephone
- WA Police (2 officers) – January 2012, in Perth
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship – May 2014, Melbourne, by telephone
- CATWA – July 2013, in Melbourne
- Project Respect – July 2013, in Melbourne
- Magenta – several visits, 2011 - 2016, in Perth
- RhED – July 2013, Melbourne, by telephone
- Red Cross – July 2013, Melbourne, by telephone
- World Vision – January 2014, Sydney, by telephone
- Scarlet Alliance – March 2012, by telephone
- Fair Work Commission – July 2013, in Melbourne
- Australian Federal Police (2 officers) - August 2014, in Melbourne
- Anti-Slavery Australia - July 2013, in Sydney
- Vietnamese Christian Church – March 2012, in Perth
- Anglican Church – several visits, 2011 – 2016, in Perth
- Catholic Church – several visits, 2012 – 2015, in Perth
- Salvation Army – November 2016, in Perth

Collecting information by using open-ended ethnographic interviews suited the aims and objectives of my research, where I wanted to gain a people-centred understanding of how ideologies of race and gender had been used to construct migrant sex workers as victims of human trafficking. I intended to have themes to lead the discussion if necessary, but largely wanted the people I spoke with to tell me how their organisations viewed human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, how they framed this issue, and any courses of action that had been tried or were planned for in the future. Specifically, when speaking with non-government organisations (NGOs), the other organisations they saw as allies and those they viewed with disdain would provide a picture of the links between the various voices speaking to this problem.

Setting up these interviews was a long process, especially given the constraints of distance and timing. I am based in Perth, Western Australia, while most of the people I wanted to interview were in Sydney and Melbourne. A distance of about 4000km, at least a four-hour flight, and a time difference of two to three hours separated us. Although technology allows for interviews to be conducted regardless of location, I wanted to meet as many people as possible face-to-face. The dynamics of meeting in person allow one to consider body language and facial expressions, which can often convey unspoken messages such as disapproval, thoughtfulness, and agreement. Also, the location set aside by the interviewee, positioning of chairs for the interview, punctuality, whether refreshments are offered, can provide clues to the overall ease of the person you are interviewing. However, the constraint of busy schedules and physical distance made it impossible to conduct some interviews other than by telephone.

In preparation for each interview, I read extensively about each government department or NGO. I referred to their official websites then looked for materials produced by the organisation, and more specifically written by the person I was to interview. Policy documents, submissions to committees, books, journal articles, and newspaper articles about the organisation all helped me to frame discussion points relevant to my research. This preparation proved to be invaluable during several interviews when resources I had examined were mentioned and taken as read. For example, I spent almost two hours with one academic who was very active in an anti-

trafficking abolitionist NGO, as well as being the author of several books against prostitution. Throughout the time she repeatedly said *"As you will have read in my works …"*[7] Luckily, I had read them.

Most of the people I interviewed wanted to know why they should talk to me. I had to give them valid reasons to take up their valuable time, as one spokesperson said, "*with yet another interview by a PhD researcher."*[8] Convincing key players that my research would be different from other studies was one of the barriers I had to break through to get to the interview stage with several organisations. Emails were unanswered, or partially answered with no precise details for the time and place of interview confirmed. By resorting to phone calls, I was able to confirm a few of the details. However, some organisations, while reluctant to give a straightforward "*No"* to an interview, never finalised arrangements so a meeting was not possible.

I found that many of the people I contacted who worked in organisations supporting the Australian sex industry were very protective of both themselves and the industry. In some cases, I made multiple attempts to contact individuals by email and then by phone, before securing an interview. Emails were not answered, calls were not returned. However, although difficult to organise, once I was either there in person or on the phone for an interview, the people in question were friendly and forthcoming with information. It was at this point that I revealed my position as an insider in the sex industry. The general feeling seemed to be that they wanted to make sure anyone conducting research into the sex industry was genuinely concerned about the issues faced by sex workers, not just interested in colourful stories. Also, there was some reluctance to give information that could not be controlled, with individuals seeking assurance that I would not directly quote them on certain issues. Some representatives of organisations said that they had to be careful what research they participated in, as their funding could be affected by being included in controversial studies or quoted as saying something contradictory to the ideals of those in charge of the funds. I felt that I needed to prove myself as a serious researcher, concerned about the problems experienced by sex workers in Australia before they were relaxed

[7]Interview with representative from Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia (CATWA) at the University of Melbourne (July 2013)

[8] Interview with representative from Anti-Slavery Australia at the University of Technology, Sydney (July 2013)

enough to talk with me. In one instance, while visiting a Melbourne-based NGO[9] for research, I was invited to a casual weekly lunch to meet with outreach officers, sex workers and possibly some women who had been trafficked. The outreach officer who invited me suggested this as a better way to gather information than formal interviews, writing in her email, "*You'll be surprised what you will pick up on.*" After some general small talk and an explanation of what I was aiming to achieve with my research, the staff and clients relaxed and became more social and 'chatty.' I felt I had been judged to be okay to talk to. Recording the conversations around the lunch table and afterwards in the kitchen while helping to dry the dishes was not possible, neither was note taking, but the insights and stories shared with me by the women present were invaluable for my study. As soon as I left the premises, I went to a cafe and wrote field notes on what I had been told by the women I had met and also the atmosphere of the place. Throughout my study I found these types of ordinary "informal" conversations provided me with a wealth of information about people's feelings and reactions to topics related to my research questions.

The way people act in an interview involves interpretation and judgement, as both the interviewer and interviewee read each other's body language and try to gauge the meaning of what is not said as much as what is said. With this in mind, each interview was preceded by a short period of general discussion to develop a rapport between myself and the interviewee. I then outlined the objectives of my work so far and what I knew about the work of their department or organisation. This led to an opening question designed to encourage the interviewee to explain how their department or organisation framed human trafficking in the Australian sex industry. My aim was to get the interviewees to talk, rather than for me to work through a list of questions. While I did have key themes written down as a guide, I planned for these to be used only if the interviewee needed prompting to discuss topics, or if certain information I wanted clarified was not mentioned. It was important that the information I gathered should not be coloured by my perception of what occurs in the Australian situation.

[9] Informal lunch with members of Project Respect, Melbourne (July 2013)

By choosing to use certain words and phrases, the interviewees were not choosing other words. Some statements made sounded as if they had been said many times before; however, answers to most questions I asked were generally preceded by a pause for thinking and formulating an appropriate answer. While not an unusual practice, I certainly got the impression that nothing was going to be answered flippantly by anyone I interviewed who was acting as an official representative of either a government department or a non-government organisation.

3.5.5 Case study

Cronin (2014) sees the case study as a highly legitimate method for both qualitative and quantitative research, allowing for an in-depth examination of a particular group or event within its real-life context. According to Jackson et al (2007), a case study tells its own story, with the researcher often at a distance from the phenomenon being studied, using printed materials and other media to supplement information gained from interviews and focus groups. At the same time, as Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests:

> *The advantage of the case study is that it can "close in" on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice* (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p235)

In order to look more deeply into the operations of organisations involved in rescuing victims of sex trafficking I focussed on an NGO active in Australia that used its influence on the Australian general populace to gain support for its work at home and elsewhere in the world. I chose the Salvation Army, an international Christian organisation which conducts campaigns in many countries to combat sex trafficking, because of the way it operated and the publicity it received, which fuelled sentiments against human trafficking, but more specifically against sex work and migrant sex work.

My aim was to investigate the effect this organisation had on constructing migrant sex workers as victims of trafficking, and on its wider anti-prostitution messages because it operated in Australia to raise funds and awareness of this issue as a public problem.

I gathered examples from some of their overseas actions to assess how the Salvation Army responded to sex workers in other countries. I did this by looking at their

websites and also at the responses from sex worker support groups in the nations where these actions took place (Salvation Army, 2009; Just Salvos, 2011; Davis, 2009; Hasiuk, 2009). I then looked at the actions of the Salvation Army in Australia which had affected sex workers by portraying them as victims or stigmatising them in any way. My reasoning for doing this was that Scarlet Alliance, the Australian national sex worker organisation, and SWOP, the Sex Worker Outreach Project, had voiced several issues with the Salvation Army (Balakumar, 2016). I wanted to ascertain whether issues between the Salvation Army and sex workers in Australia were isolated, or simply the reaction of one branch of the Salvation Army in response to society's demands.

I use this case study to illustrate the rescue industry. This forms part of my research using written documents, online newspaper articles, documentaries, interviews, discussion groups, advertising materials, and observations.

3.6 Limitations

An unstructured approach to data collection meant that the majority of my interviews and observations were open-ended, working with the responses of the people I talked to rather than using a set of predetermined questions. Punch (2009) discusses the emergence of the categories and concepts for describing and analysing the data as it is being analysed rather than imposing these from the beginning of the study and trying to make the data fit. This is definitely how my research developed as the ethnographic approach meant I had to search for ways to find the answers rather than following a prescribed plan of attack. As I read more widely and interacted with different groups as part of this ethnographic study, my original research ideas and questions were reshaped and rewritten.

One of the limitations or drawbacks of my research was my own emotional reaction to the topic itself. There were times when I found the opinions of others quite confronting, especially when they had no idea I worked in the sex industry. Some of the anti-prostitution literature was also quite graphic in nature. This affected my progress, as I had to step back, centre my thoughts and inner strength, then step into my researcher role again. Being told how dangerous, damaging (both physically and mentally), immoral, and even disgusting prostitution is can take its toll. However, I

feel my decision to not disclose my background when talking with most people was the best approach; I suspect some of their responses may have been different had they known.

A large number of my interviews were with sex workers (41) and their clients (19). As a second limitation, while I have no reason to doubt the information and opinions they shared with me, it would be difficult for others to verify this because working names rather than real names were used, and verbal consent was the preferred method rather than signing a written consent form to participate in this study. I assessed them as credible sources of information because they were known to me or found by snowball sampling, as friends of friends (Naderifar, et al, 2017).

I believe that I took into consideration the effect my presence would have on the way the people I was interviewing and observing reacted to situations and questions. My study occurred over a substantial period, between 2011 and 2016, and I am confident in my ability over that time to collect ethnographic evidence, to cross-check information, and listen attentively and objectively to different versions of a story. According to Jackson et al. (2007) we cannot grasp every aspect of a social phenomenon or question; however, researchers must approach their topic with as much objectivity and rigour as possible. I interacted with anti-prostitution abolitionists, the sex industry, and its support organisations, even admitting to one prominent abolitionist activist that I had been a "working girl"[10] for several years. Her response was sympathetic and supportive, yet she did not waiver from her abolitionist stance.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained and justified my research design and methodological underpinnings, giving a detailed account of the kinds of data I collected and problematising aspects of the research process, including my role as both industry insider and academic researcher. My aim in conducting this study was to explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. I was interested in who spoke for and about

[10] Term used for a sex worker.

sex workers in Australia, and what effect this had on shaping public opinion about the industry and those who worked in it. I worked with the data gathered through interviews set up formally with people and by being a participant in a number of different situations, taking field notes, having conversations, and observing people's reactions to topics being discussed. Written sources, media, and websites not only provided background information and other points of view but also provided evidence on how the sex industry and sex trafficking are discursively constructed as social problems in the Australian context. I cannot guarantee to have captured every aspect of this issue because, *we cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything* (Punch, 2009, p162). However, I have provided a snapshot of the situation and the effect it had on the people I worked with in the Australian sex industry.

CHAPTER FOUR

INFLUENCES ON AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO THE SEX INDUSTRY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

> *"Australia has demonstrated strong leadership in combating trafficking in persons regionally and domestically, however it needs to devote greater attention to the rights and needs of victims"* Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, (Scoop Independent News, 2011)

4.1 Introduction

Societal beliefs and values about good and bad women (Obbo, 1989; Summers, 2002) frame the way the sex industry and those who work in it are viewed in Australia, which is reflected to varying degrees in government and policy discourses. This chapter is an historical overview of the influences on Australia's official response to the sex industry and human trafficking, particularly with regard to migrant women in the Australian sex industry. I have used information from historical accounts, government documents, submissions to the Australian Government from concerned groups, and media stories, to explore the social construction of the sex industry within these influential discourses. I also draw from interviews with representatives from some of the non-government organisations that have contributed to government submissions, and these are mentioned throughout the chapter.

My focus is on how the sex industry and human trafficking has been constructed throughout Australia's history since white settlement in accordance with dominant society beliefs and values. Western cultural standards of the Nineteenth Century were reflected in the initial acceptance of state-sanctioned trafficking of female sex workers for the good of racial purity, only to reject those who were trafficked into the sex industry when their usefulness came to an end (Frances, 2003, pp10-13). I also consider how the policy restricting non-white (particularly Asian) migration to Australia, in an effort to keep the nation 'British', promoted feelings of mistrust of foreigners among some members of the Australian population (Jupp, 2007, pp197-219)

In addition, this chapter discusses how the Australian Government takes a leading role in the region in the fight against human trafficking, providing funding and expertise for a number of programs in neighbouring nations where human trafficking is seen as a major concern, in an effort to maintain stability and human security in the region. A strong media focus on human trafficking in neighbouring nations, specifically in the sex industry, alerts the Australian people to this issue, implying that the problem could also be happening in the Australian sex industry (World Vision, 2007; Australian Story, 2009; SBS, 2015).

There are a number of voices wishing to be heard connecting human trafficking with the Australian sex industry. Some of these follow the official channels; with many submissions having been made to parliamentary inquiries since the Australian Government formulated its first official response to human trafficking in 2003 (see the Australian Department of Home Affairs website for a current list of reviews and inquiries at www.homeaffairs.gov.au). Others are more likely to be heard through popular media, as the number of stories on the topic of prostitution seems to escalate when there is a mention of human trafficking. For example, there were over 420 newspaper articles relating to human trafficking and the sex industry in Australian newspapers from 2008-2014 listed on the T C Beirne School of Law, Queensland University of Technology website. I focus on those individuals and groups which stand out for particular reasons, looking at what they add to the official Australian anti-trafficking debate.

4.2 Australia: Land of opportunity or a history of trafficking?

4.2.1 A concern for health

Prostitution was not illegal for the first one hundred years of British colonisation in Australia; however sex workers could be arrested under the laws of vagrancy and offensive behaviour (Kimber, 2013). There is no doubt some women were transported to Australia for the crime of prostitution; others would have turned to it once arriving as free settlers and trying other occupations (Frances, 1994). Both soliciting and living off the earnings of prostitution were criminalised in the 1890s, as was keeping a brothel or being the landlord of a sex worker. Similar laws still exist, with private sex work generally not being an offence throughout the different Australian states and territories, while both soliciting and living off the earnings of a

sex worker are still illegal. All forms of sex work are illegal in South Australia. A full explanation of the current state by state prostitution laws in Australia can be found on the Scarlet Alliance website (Scarlet Alliance, 2019).

Reflecting the moral, religious stance and concern for the hygiene of the lower classes taken by some members of late Nineteenth Century British society, female sex workers of that same period in both Great Britain and Australia were subjected to mandatory testing to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, although their clients did not undergo the same indignity. Ostensibly, these measures were taken to clean up the streets and brothels of women who may have been spreading venereal diseases among the men of society in Great Britain and its colonies, but it has been suggested this was used as a way of controlling the sexuality of working class women, restricting their movement and limiting their work to choices considered more socially acceptable (Jordan, 2007). In a similar vein, some Australian states still require sex workers to undergo regular screening for sexually transmitted infections and to provide proof of such tests (E. Jeffreys et al, 2012), possibly to allay community fears surrounding issues of public health, or as an attempt by government authorities to keep a sense of control over the sex industry, and to be seen to be doing so.

4.2.2 A matter of race

Along with concern about working class women of questionable morals spreading sexually transmitted diseases, inter-racial relationships in the colonies were also an issue causing great distress among the upper echelons of society (Doezema, 1999; Frances, 2003). However, the new colonies of Australia had a large number of non-white men brought in to work on plantations in the tropical regions; as pearl divers in the north; and attracted by the gold rushes in the west and east in the late Nineteenth Century. For this reason, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japanese women known as Karayuki-san were recruited from poor regions of Japan to work as prostitutes throughout South East Asia and the Pacific. These women provided services to men working on the goldfields of Western Australia, as well as in northern parts of the colonies, where pearling and sugar cane industries were established. At any given time, it is estimated about 300 Karayuki-san were working in Australia (Frances, 2003, p6). The attraction with these women was that they were

'oriental' and could cater for the needs of the many non-white men who had been recruited to work in Australia during the latter years of the Nineteenth Century. According to a report by Police Commissioner W.E. Parry-Okeden in February 1899:

> *Social evil exists and flourishes nearly everywhere in districts where large numbers of coloured aliens are located … The supply of Japanese women for Kanaka demand is less revolting and degrading than would be the case were it met by white women.* (Quoted in Evans, 1984, p139)

The social evil referred to in the above quote was a term used for prostitution at the time. Colonial authorities feared that 'coloured' men would rape white women, if an outlet for their sexual desires could not be found. Importing Japanese women for this purpose would apparently maintain the status of the white race (Frances, 2003, p9). This importation of Japanese women may have been viewed as a solution to a problem by the authorities at the time, but these women were part of a government-sanctioned movement of women to work in the sex industry. Reports show that some of the methods of transportation were sub-standard (Sissons, 1977; Frances, 2003, p6) and debts were incurred which had to be paid off before the women could start earning for themselves (Tomoko, 1975, p52). The Federation of Australia in 1901 and the immigration laws that followed saw an end to the need for Japanese prostitutes to satisfy the lusts of 'non-white' men, as the numbers of 'coloured' immigrants dwindled, with many being deported. These Japanese women were no longer welcome and most left Australia (Frances, 2003).

By 1901, large numbers of non-English women were already working in the Australian sex industry, as acknowledged in the following statement made in 1915 by a West Australian politician, the Honourable R. H. Underwood, when he addressed the Legislative Assembly:

> *We can take credit, and I think we should take credit to ourselves in WA for our social conditions when we reflect that the supply of prostitutes in this country has given out. Most honourable members know that prostitutes in WA are supplied chiefly from France, Japan, and Italy. As a matter of fact, the Australian social system has kept the Australian women out of it.* (Quoted in Frances, 2003, p15)

The politician in question was congratulating the Australian social system of the time for keeping their own women out of prostitution; instead relying on a supply of migrant sex workers. However, according to Frances (2003), this was thought to be more an illusion than the truth because the majority of prostitutes in Australia at the

time were actually Australian born (Frances, 2003, p15).

4.2.3 The White Australia Policy

The Federation of Australia in 1901 enabled Australians to elect their own parliament. The formation of laws was controlled by the newly formed parliament; however foreign policy and defence were still controlled by Great Britain, thus limiting Australia's operations in International Relations (Thompson, 2007). One tool used by Australia to control those considered to be undesirable immigrants entering or remaining in the country, sanctioned as an Act of the newly formed Federal Parliament, was The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, later referred to as the White Australia Policy, which remained in place until it was abolished in 1978 (Thompson, 2007). It was designed to prevent entry of persons or races considered undesirable or detrimental to Australian society, essentially implying all non-European races (Palfreeman, 1958; National Archives of Australia, 2017). 98 per cent of Australians at the time were white, and many held fears that Chinese and Pacific Island workers would undercut wages and take their jobs (Thompson, 2007). As part of the Commonwealth, Australia was obliged to follow guidelines from Great Britain; therefore, it was not possible for the White Australia Policy to directly exclude someone because of race, as this went against the ideals of Great Britain and its ally Japan. In order to circumvent this, the Dictation Test was introduced in 1901. This was to be given at the discretion of Australian Customs Officers to anyone they felt was undesirable as an immigrant. The test could be administered in any language chosen by the Customs Officers, resulting in large numbers of failures. It was fully intended that the person failed the test because it was administered in a language they did not know (Thompson, 2007). After 1912, the Dictation Test was also used to justify the deportation of any Europeans who were deemed to be undesirable as citizens on economic, political, or moral grounds (Yarwood, 1958). Giving such powers to Customs Officers turned them into moral police, allowing them to decide who should be allowed to settle in Australia.

4.3 Early international laws against human trafficking

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries several international treaties were established in an effort to prevent the exploitation of human beings. These laid the foundation for current international law in this field, focussing on the areas of

slavery, prostitution, labour, human rights, and the rights of the child. However, these early attempts to combat exploitation tended to be aimed at specific groups rather than being all-encompassing. The 1904 *International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic*, to which Australia was a signatory, defined trafficking as the coercive procuring of Caucasian women or girls abroad for immoral purposes (Morcom and Schloenhardt, 2011). It was both gender and race biased, and failed to recognise that anyone other than white females could be trafficked. In 1921, the words '*White Slave'* were removed so as to include other races and the words '*in Women and Children'* were added. By 1933, four international trafficking conventions had been formulated, each addressing the recruitment and movement of victims, both within and across national borders. However, dealing with the end purpose of trafficking, largely thought to be prostitution, was deemed to be a matter for the jurisdiction of individual states, not international law. Australia was a signatory to these conventions, with Australian feminists actively campaigning at both national and international levels. According to Frances (2003):

> *Being amongst the few enfranchised women in the world at the time, Australian feminists felt a responsibility to take a leading role in the international battle to improve women's status.* (Frances, 2003, p16)

However, the debate between abolitionists and those who supported regulated prostitution was as heated during the early Twentieth Century as it is now. For example, in 1923 a proposal was put before the Traffic in Women and Children Committee of the League of Nations calling for the prohibition of foreign prostitutes in brothels, pending the abolition of regulation (Limoncelli, 2010, p79). In the space of only twenty years since the first International Agreement of 1904, concern had shifted from trafficking women and children to prohibiting foreign prostitutes from working, making this an issue of controlling the movement of women for work rather than one of preventing human trafficking.

The outbreak of World War Two saw human trafficking and prostitution take a back seat in international politics, as the nations of the world faced more pressing concerns. The period following the Second World War was also a time of little public debate on the issue of prostitution in Australia, with only minor legislative changes being made at a state rather than federal level. It is also thought the industry

in Australia was in a period of natural decline given the reduction in numbers of Australian and Allied servicemen seeking female company as they returned to their homes (Sullivan, 1997, p46). This removed the issue of large numbers of sex workers and other unattached women from public view, as Australia settled into rebuilding society and family life after years of being at war.

4.4 The 1949 Convention

During the post-war period the international arena saw the establishment of new borders as the Soviet Union gained strength, colonial powers relinquished control over some of their territories, and new nations were formed. The threat of the Cold War occupied the halls of Western Governments, as the fear of nuclear war seemed to overshadow all other concerns. Yet, in spite of the fear of conflict, perhaps the most significant international agreement of this period came from the newly formed United Nations; this being the *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* (the 1949 Convention), which was adopted in 1949 and entered into force in 1951. It is important, not because of its acceptance, which was not widespread; rather because it was the first instrument pertaining to trafficking and prostitution that was legally binding. In Article 1, of 28 Articles, it states:

> *The Parties to the present Convention agree to punish any person who, to gratify the passions of another (1) procures, entices or leads away, for the purposes of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person; (2) exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person.* (United Nations, 1951, p3)

The 1949 Convention declares prostitution *incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person* (United Nations, 1951, p3), thus adopting an abolitionist stance. It requires Member States to criminalise prostitution, so it is unsurprising that it has not been widely ratified. Further, despite the efforts of the 1949 Convention to address prostitution, which it viewed as the catalyst for trafficking, it failed to challenge other forms of trafficking in persons not linked to the sex industry, thus leaving a large gap in legislation to prevent labour exploitation.

Few European states signed the 1949 Convention, while it was supported by many postcolonial states in their own processes of nation-building. It was also supported by

socialist states as a way of demonstrating superiority over Western nations, amid claims of having solved the problems causing human trafficking within their borders (Limoncelli, 2010, p11). Australia, although a relatively newly formed nation, did not break ties with its colonial power, electing to follow the lead of Great Britain by not ratifying the 1949 Convention.

Reports from the United Nations at the time suggested the incidence of trafficking in prostitution was low during the 1950s, with the industry mostly comprised of nationals (Limoncelli, 2010, p32). Human trafficking was not considered an important topic for legislative attention, with the Cold War and threats of nuclear attack being high on the agenda of international politics. However, it resurfaced decades later, during the 1980s (Limoncelli, 2010).

4.5 The Australian sex industry from the 1980s

> *It is clear that the feminist sex wars never went away; they just re-focused from pornography to sex trafficking.* (Jackson, 2013, p188)

When the 1949 Convention was drawn up, all forms of procurement for prostitution were to be taken into account, regardless of a woman's consent. However, during the 1980s and 1990s the issue of force or deception again became an important factor when trying to determine whether trafficking had occurred; this being reflected in international discussions such as the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in Section 3, *The equal status and human rights of women* (OHCHR, 1993) and the Global Framework section of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995). Human trafficking for the purposes of prostitution had again become a topic of international concern as issues such as poverty, instability, and conflict saw women move from rural to urban areas, both within states and across borders, in order to find work. According to Perkins (2003), it was the increase in concern about pornography and sex tourism during the 1980s that reignited the anti-trafficking lobby, referred to as the *feminist sex wars* by Jackson (2013, p188), which were led by prominent anti-prostitution abolitionist feminists like Kathleen Barry, Andrea Dworkin, and Sheila Jeffreys. As Western sex worker organisations gained support from feminists who could see the benefits of decriminalisation and better working conditions, those favouring the abolition of prostitution began to lose support. According to Perkins (2003):

> *In response, they focused attention on those who are not in a position to speak for themselves: viz. Burmese workers in Thailand, sex tourists in Asia, and Asian sex workers in Australia.* (Perkins, 2003)

The issue of force or deception affected the Australian sex industry during the 1980s as concern was raised regarding the number of Asian sex workers appearing in brothels, particularly in the larger cities (AIFS, 2005). However, this coincided with the period after the Vietnam War when thousands of refugees initially fled Vietnam in small boats, prior to their Government making a decision in 1982 allowing them to leave without persecution. During the 1970s, the Australian Government was pressured by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to accept more refugees; an act which contributed to the end of the White Australia Policy in 1978 (NSW Migration Heritage Centre, 2010). Migrants from Asia and the Middle East were also encouraged to settle in Australia, whereas previous waves of immigration had been from Great Britain and Europe. This change to immigration policies meant that Australia was becoming a nation of different nationalities, which one would expect to be reflected in many occupations. There is a possibility some of these migrants were sex workers who ended up working in Australian massage parlours in the late 1970s–1980s (AIFS, 2005).

Towards the end of the Twentieth Century, migrant women located in Australian brothels without the correct visas were deported, with no onus on immigration officials to question them regarding whether they had been trafficked into the sex industry. According to figures quoted from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), 56 women were deported under these circumstances in 1996-1997, while the figure had increased to 237 in 1998-1999 (AIFS, 2005). According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), it would appear from these figures that there had been an increase in the number of women being trafficked into the Australian sex industry during this period (AIFS, 2005).

4.6 A definition of human trafficking

In 2003, *The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,* known informally as the Trafficking or

Palermo Protocol, entered into force internationally, having been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 (OHCHR, 2000). The Trafficking Protocol changed the international legal landscape by providing the first accepted definition of trafficking and setting out details of how states should prevent and manage this transnational crime.

Article 3 of the Protocol states that:

> *(a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. 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.*
> *(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.*
> *(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purposes of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article.*
> *(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.*
> (OHCHR, 2000, p2)

According to strict definitions of the Trafficking Protocol the very acts of recruitment, transportation, and transfer for the purposes of prostitution may constitute human trafficking if there has been any threat, use of force, deception or other abuse of power, regardless of whether consent has been given to knowingly work in the sex industry. It is the nuances of how these terms are interpreted which constructs the Australian argument surrounding whether one can migrate for sex work without being considered as a victim of human trafficking. In a country where international borders are not shared with other nations, foreigners enter Australia by either air or sea and must produce a valid passport and visa stating the reason for and length of their visit, as well as providing proof of ability to support themselves financially (www.immi.homeaffairs.gov.au).

4.7 A catalyst for action

In 2001, Ms Puangthong Simaplee, a young Thai woman suspected of being trafficked into the Australian sex industry some 15 years earlier, died in a pool of her

own vomit while being detained at a Sydney immigration detention centre. Immigration officers had raided a Sydney brothel, discovered Ms Simaplee on the premises, and taken her to the detention centre. She was given medication to help with the withdrawal symptoms from heroin addiction, but died from pneumonia and malnutrition, weighing a mere 38 kilograms at the time of her death. Here I note that while a search for media articles written about this death in custody at the time it occurred revealed none, the subsequent coronial inquest in 2003 was widely reported, both in the media and in scholarly articles. The media largely portrayed this tragic death in custody as the Australian Government's failure to address the issue of protecting victims of human trafficking, using headings such as *"Sold at 12: nightmare ends in death"* (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2003), while the coronial inquest that followed further showed the inadequacy of both the Australian legal and migration systems to cater for trafficking victims (Frances, 2003). Although the veracity of certain aspects of this case has since been called into question, the fact that a possible victim of human trafficking was awaiting deportation, especially given her heroin addition, rather than being offered assistance for what amounted to an abuse of her human rights outraged those fighting for the rights of victims of human trafficking (Project Respect, 2003).

4.8 Australia responds

4.8.1 The Commonwealth Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons

The death of Ms Simaplee sparked a media-led public outcry over human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, the coronial inquest into her death coinciding with international action against this transnational crime. This became a public catalyst for the Australian Government to respond by allocating $20 million funding for national programs under the umbrella of the *Commonwealth Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons* (2004) and to take a lead in regional initiatives against human trafficking (Burn and Simmons, 2006, p556). In 2003 the crime of human trafficking was elevated to the Australian national policy agenda. Australia had signed the Trafficking Protocol in 2002, although the Government did not ratify this until 2005, having amended the *Slavery and Sexual Servitude Act* 1999 to reflect the requirements of the Protocol more adequately (Segrave, 2004, p86). Prior to this, no distinction had been made between illegal immigrants who had overstayed their visas or entered on the wrong type of visa, and those who might have been trafficked or

smuggled into Australia, with no training provided to officials so they could distinguish between these categories of illegal immigrants (Gallagher, 2005). Human trafficking is generally defined as the movement of people within or across borders, through coercive or deceptive means, for the purpose of exploitation; whereas people smuggling is the illegal transportation of people to another country for a fee. There is no continuing relationship with the smuggler after the transaction (ANAO, 2009).

The primary focus of the 2004 *Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons* was on the trafficking of women into the Australian sex industry, with policy responses emphasising criminal justice (Segrave, 2004). This was evidenced by over half of the initial $20 million funding package being dedicated to policing resources to enhance investigation, enforcement and prosecution measures connected with the sex industry (Segrave, 2004, p86). This intrinsic linking of human trafficking with the sex industry, both internationally and in an Australian context makes it virtually impossible for dialogue to occur about human trafficking without the sex industry being mentioned at some stage, along with the moral dilemma this can evoke among the voices speaking to this topic. According to some critics, the Australian response to trafficking in its 2004 *Action Plan* was similar to that of other nations, being described as a document with *gendered, racialised and sexualised myths of victimisation and criminalisation.* Victims were portrayed as being *naïve, Third World women 'tricked' into migrating and 'forced' to provide sexual services,* while the men accused of trafficking were generally *from other developing nations* (Augustin, 2007; Segrave and Milivojevic, 2010, p66).

The image of the naïve, Third World woman as a victim may not have been intended as racist; however it does not credit these women with agency. By using this model to frame its own response, the Australian Government conformed to the global standard implying Third World victims needed to be rescued from both trafficking and prostitution. However, when migrant sex workers in Australia are labelled as victims of human trafficking rather than being recognised as having chosen to migrate for work, it leads to a situation where moral panic often outweighs common sense and migrant sex workers' voices are silenced as others speak for them (O'Brien, et al, 2013, p13). According to Jules Kim (2015), a migrant sex worker activist and the Chief Executive Officer of Scarlet Alliance:

> *Unlike other professions, people can't seem to accept that we have chosen our work, especially if we are Asian or migrant women. There is an inherent and pervasive racist and sexist stereotype of the tricked, helpless, submissive sex slave.* (Kim, 2015)

The very nature of their work divides public opinion as to whether steps should be taken to protect sex workers while they undertake their chosen line of work or to rescue all of them from something that should be abolished at all costs, amid heated moral discussions about what is sometimes viewed as men buying the right to abuse women (see Barry, 1995; Dworkin, 1997; S. Jeffreys, 2008, 2009).

The Australian Government is not immune from such extremes of public opinion, as it constructs policy in line with the Trafficking Protocol to act upon human trafficking. In a democracy, where votes are important, the Government of the day is obliged to take heed of the voices that speak both to and for the general populace on topics subject to moral judgement, although taking a strong moral stance does not seem to be the custom for governments in Australia. Seizing the middle ground is more common so as not to offend anyone, unlike in the United States, where politicians and policy makers will take a strong moral position on issues (O'Brien, et al, 2013). I make this comparison between Australia and the United States because of the issuing of the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report by the US Government and the effect this can have on a nation's approach to the sex industry; this being linked to the distribution of US Government aid.

4.8.2 A whole of government response

The complex nature of human trafficking encompasses many different factors, making it difficult under the Australian system for a single government department to handle all aspects of this transnational crime. In 2003, when international conventions were being written to respond to the problem of human trafficking, and the United States was strengthening its position as 'global sheriff' by emerging as a dominant force with the political and financial ability to influence how other nations respond to human trafficking (Chuang, 2006, p438), the Australian Government responded to the world situation by elevating human trafficking to a position of national concern and adopting a coordinated approach across a number of government departments to work towards its eradication.

The *Australian Government's Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons* (2004) was established with an implementation plan focussing on a '3Ps' paradigm of prevention, prosecution and protection, with a fourth 'P' of partnership added in 2009. This has served as the fundamental international framework for nations responding to all forms of human trafficking, including for sexual and labour exploitation (US Department of State, 2016). Also in 2004, Australia received its first ranking under the United States *Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report* system, being rated as a Tier One country; the highest rating available in a system that ranks nations according to the extent to which they meet US-defined minimum standards for counter-trafficking efforts (US Department of State, 2010). This is further evidence of the United States taking the position of 'global sheriff' by determining what the minimum acceptable requirements of anti-trafficking efforts are, followed by the issuing of a report card for each country. On the basis of this ranking the Australian Government began to push its anti-trafficking framework as best practice in the region (Segrave and Milivojevic, 2010, p64), providing leadership and initiating anti-trafficking programs. Through cooperative activities such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related transnational Crime, Australia serves as a Middle Power in the Asia-Pacific region, taking a leadership role and providing aid and assistance to developing nations with which it has established links. The Bali Process is a series of capacity-building activities and practical workshops co-chaired by Australia and Indonesia, currently attended by more than 45 member nations (http://www.baliprocess.net/, 2017). The strength of Australia's voice on addressing human trafficking is further demonstrated where Australia is the only ASEAN dialogue partner to have worked consistently with ASEAN Member States since 2003 to strengthen criminal justice systems in the region, so that human trafficking can be tackled using a victim-centred approach (Australian Government (DFAT), 2015).

4.8.3 Australia's position in the world

In International Relations, Australia defines itself as a Middle Power in the modern world due to the influence it has in the international arena, where it cannot change the world by itself but can certainly make a major contribution towards change (Evans, 2011). Through diplomatic relations with other states sharing similar ideals,

it is possible to tackle international problems which by their very nature cannot be solved by states working alone. Terrorism, climate change, drug trafficking, arms control, the flow of refugees, human smuggling, pandemics, and human trafficking are some of the major world issues where cooperation between states is necessary to develop plans of action. Australia is involved in several initiatives, as policy makers cooperate to develop strategies in an effort to address non-traditional security challenges and related issues arising from these. This cooperation is best done at a regional level, close to the root of the problem and where solutions may be found in a timely manner. To this end, Australia has been involved in regional cooperation by being a dialogue partner in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for more than forty years, where issues such as security, trade, stability, and peace within the region are discussed. This long association has helped to shape Australia's responses to its international responsibilities (dfat.gov.au , 2017b).

The Australian Government has been involved with the Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking (ARCPPT) 2003-06, the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project (ARTIP) 2006-12, and the Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP) 2013-18. Several of Australia's neighbours are classified as Tier 2 or Tier 3 on the annual US Trafficking in Persons Report. This latest program has seen the Australian Government commit $50 million to work with the ASEAN regional anti-trafficking bodies and individual partner states to reduce opportunities and incentives for human trafficking in the ASEAN region. Based in Thailand, this body has a focus on the prosecution of human trafficking cases (DFAT Program Fact Sheet, 2016). Through strengthening the criminal justice system's support for victims of trafficking into all areas of labour exploitation, not limited to the sex industry, this latest development program, funded by the Australian Government, builds on previous years of cooperation between the nations involved. This example shows how a nation can use its strengths and financial aid to influence others, thus improving the situation in its near neighbourhood (dfat.gov.au , 2017b).

In August 2019, Australia joined the United Nations' Blue Heart Campaign, a global initiative to raise awareness and control the heinous crime of human trafficking on a national, regional, and global level (Keck, 2019). This was followed by an $80 million joint campaign between Australia and the Association of Southeast Asian

Nations (ASEAN) to enhance law enforcement and defend the rights of trafficking and slavery survivors. In the years since the first Australian Action Plan of 2004, over 13,000 justice officials have been trained to improve the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons in the ASEAN region (DFAT, 2019).

4.8.4 Who owns the problem?

The multi-faceted nature of human trafficking requires input from several government departments in the Australian system. Consequently, an Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) chaired by the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) was established with responsibilities for monitoring the implementation of anti-trafficking strategies, reporting to Parliament, and ensuring issues are addressed following a whole of government approach (Parliament of Australia, 2013, p32). A smaller Operational Working Group was also formed from within the IDC, comprising of the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the Attorney-General's Department (AGD), the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP), the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCHSIA). This sub-committee is tasked with resolving operational issues and referring concerns to the IDC. Membership of the IDC is largely made up of agencies concerned with the control of illegal migration, thus framing human trafficking as a security issue rather than one of human rights.

My research of documents pertaining to Australia's whole of government response to human trafficking (see reference list for details) shows the involvement of many government departments and agencies at a federal level, forming committees and working parties, with submissions to inquiries being made by non-government organisations, lobby groups, and numerous private individuals. The People Trafficking Section of the Attorney General's Department oversees the nation's strategy to combat slavery, slavery-like conditions, exploitation, and people trafficking, being responsible for whole of government policy development (Australian Government (AGD), 2012, p9). However, no single agency owns the whole problem of human trafficking in Australia. While this division of tasks ensures the problem is approached from different angles, it makes it difficult to ascertain whether progress is being made or solutions are being found. A number of

government department websites mention they are tackling human trafficking, but with no single department taking ownership, measurement of success or failure of the approach in its entirety becomes complicated. In 2009, the Australian National Audit Office concluded that the whole of government arrangements were broadly effective in sharing information and making decisions; however, management effectiveness varied between agencies (ANAO, 2009).

As stated by Pearson (2007), from a legal perspective, according to the United Nations Trafficking Protocol, three core factors have to be present cumulatively for an incident to be labelled as human trafficking. These are: 1) the 'act' which encompasses recruitment, transportation, or harbouring, 2) the 'means' where threat, use of force, deception, or coercion is used, and 3) the 'purpose' which is exploitation or the intent to exploit (Pearson, 2007, p.33). Subsections of Section 271 of the Australian Criminal Code describe human trafficking as the trafficker organising or facilitating the transportation of a victim into, out of or within Australia, by using force, threats or deception or by being reckless as to the exploitation of the victim (IDC, 2013, pp.13-15). However, the Australian Criminal Code does not seem to comply with the requirements of the Protocol, in that all three key elements of act, means and exploitation, do not appear at the same time in each subsection. Exploitation is not mentioned in some of the subsections, even though it is a crucial part of the United Nations Trafficking Protocol. The 'means' described as the use of force, coercion or deception, is not an element of other subsections of Section 271. The Australian Criminal Code, in Section 271 referring to the trafficking of people, focuses on the act of organising or facilitating the entry or exit of a person in each of its subsections. This indicates an emphasis on the issue of irregular or illegal migration, rather than on the other elements that combine to indicate trafficking.

Border security and maintaining state sovereignty seem to be the catalyst for Australian Government actions to combat human trafficking, with an over-emphasis on law enforcement to the detriment of a human rights approach, as indicated by the relevant section of the Criminal Code. Both state security and human rights should be considered to deal appropriately with the issue of human trafficking, where illegal acts occur, and the dignity of its victims is compromised. However, solutions to the

problem of human trafficking vary depending upon how it is constructed and whose interests are being served. According to Kneebone (2009), human trafficking in Australia is seen as a crime against the state not against the person, while those who are trafficked are treated as witnesses and victims of crime, not as having suffered human rights violations. Their voices are heard, but it would seem only if they were willing and able to make a contribution towards prosecuting the criminals involved in trafficking. Failing this, suspected trafficking victims can be removed from aid programs offering government support (Uibu, 2015). Furthermore, they are silenced by being returned to their country of origin if not in possession of an appropriate visa; a gesture which may not necessarily solve an abuse against human rights.

According to Gallagher, when speaking about the Trafficking Protocol in 2009:

> *A decade later, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is no way the international community would have a definition and an international treaty on trafficking if this issue had stayed within the realms of the human rights system* (Gallagher, 2009, p793).

It is the strong desire for state sovereignty and border security, particularly since the terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September 2001, which has provided the impetus for realist policy makers internationally to address the issue of illegal migration. Tackling this as human trafficking is a way of getting public opinion on side, especially when people smuggling is also seen as illegal migration and the terms 'trafficking' and 'smuggling' are often confused, perhaps not always by chance. Trafficking evokes images of people being forced across borders against their will, stirring up sympathy for these unfortunate victims. The narrative surrounding asylum seekers who enlist the services of people smugglers by paying comparatively large sums of money does not always elicit the same response. According to Pedersen and Hartley (2014), in their exploration of factors underlying negative sentiment towards asylum seekers in Australian society:

> *We have found that people who held prejudiced views against asylum seekers are also notably more likely to over-estimate support in the community for these views compared with those more accepting of asylum seekers.* (Pedersen and Hartley, 2014)

Similarly, when sex work is added into the narrative as the possible catalyst for human trafficking, support for anti-prostitution sentiment is likely to be over-estimated by those who seek to abolish all forms of this industry. Those who

consider they have the majority voice on any contentious issue, whether proven or not, are often more vocal and less accepting of other points of view than those voices in the minority (Pedersen and Hartley, 2014). This encourages the assumed majority voice to push forward, often with sweeping statements, designed to stir up feelings of outrage against perceived public problems. These statements are then repeated and used by other organisations, treated as fact. For example, the Australian NGO Project Respect, a support service for women trafficked for sexual exploitation and women working in the sex industry, is credited with claiming that 1000 women each year are trafficked into Australia (O'Brien et al, 2013, p83). They first made this statement in 2004, following a case-based research project conducted over a six week period. Project Respect researchers extrapolated from their research results to come up with the figure of approximately 1000 per year, and yet this figure has been so often quoted over the past decade it is accepted as fact that 1000 women each year are trafficked into the Australian sex industry, without mention or questioning of the methodology behind its existence. Project Respect has a particular focus on women trafficked for sexual exploitation and sex workers who are experiencing harm and violence (www.humantrafficking.org, 2015), so perhaps their view is not supportive of the sex industry and their extrapolated figure served a purpose at the time it was published, coinciding with the release of the *Australian Government's Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons* (2004).

4.9 Contradictory voices

4.9.1 Criminalising the sex industry

The Australian Government ratified the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in 2005. Article 9(5) of the Protocol requires State Parties to

> *adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures … to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children.* (OHCHR, 2000, p6)

The Protocol has been written in such a way as to allow nations their own interpretation of terms such as *'exploitation of the prostitution of others'* and *'sexual exploitation'*, thus taking into consideration domestic policies on these issues (Schloenhardt, 2012, p6). Australian policy makers have chosen to consider the exploitation of sex work, rather than sex work as exploitation, with sex work being defined as the *provision by one person to or for another person (whether or not of a*

different sex) of sexual services in return for payment or reward (Sex Work Act 1994, p10). Using this as their working definition, and focusing on the exploitation of individual sex workers rather than on sex work itself as exploitation, the Federal Government is able to detach itself from legislating about prostitution; this being under the jurisdiction of state legislation in Australia (Sex Work Act 1994).

The Coalition Against Trafficking Women Australia (CATWA) is a women-only feminist organisation working as the Australian branch of an international non-government organisation to end human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of women and children. By allowing each state or territory to legislate the sex industry under its own jurisdiction, CATWA has determined that the Australian Government is in breach of Article 9(5) of the Trafficking Protocol by allowing the demand that fosters exploitation to continue. In a 2012 statement, they demanded the Federal Government override various state-based prostitution laws so that *the human rights of women and children in Australia to live free of sexual exploitation might be better upheld* (CATWA, 2012a, p2).

Such poignant words are carefully constructed to gain leverage by appealing to the emotions of the general populace, urging the Federal Government to step in and protect the innocent where the state and territory governments are deemed to have failed. My research of websites and publications found that, although not a religious organisation, CATWA's views are often referenced by several faith-based organisations in Australia, giving them access to a wide following among groups not known for being supportive of the sex industry. Here they gain certain credence among these groups, who seem willing to follow strong voices speaking out against perceived threats to the moral framework of society (Family Voice, 2012; Australian Christian Lobby, 2013; ACRATH, 2017). This was also noted as part of my ethnographic research in interviews and participant observations I undertook between 2011 and 2014 with members of a church group in Perth who receive the Family Voice newsletter and support the Australian Christian Lobby.

According to the founder of CATWA, Sheila Jeffreys, who is also an academic and respected author, their work is well received in the international arena, where they are able to use Australia as an example of how the legalisation of prostitution can

have disastrous effects. Jeffreys spoke about the Australian situation to a group of several hundred delegates at the United Nations Commission on The Status of Women in 2012, who she claims appeared shocked (S. Jeffreys, 2012). On both the aforementioned occasion and in an interview I conducted with Sheila Jeffreys in July 2013, she makes mention of Australian male politicians and their attitudes toward the sex industry. Male politicians being understood to have used women in prostitution would be seen as *"a bit of a lad"*. She sums up a certain reluctance towards dealing with the issue of prostitution as follows:

> *I think that Australian political culture is particularly masculine and the right of men to buy women for sex has been an important part of Australian history. Australia is still heavily imbued with this masculine ethos. It is possible that some male politicians have vested interests in prostitution i.e. they do not want their own male privilege of buying women for use to be curtailed.* (S. Jeffreys, 2012; also discussed during an interview in Melbourne, July 2013)

It is the belief of CATWA and their supporters that all aspects of the sex industry such as prostitution, pornography, stripping, peep shows, and lap dancing encourage human trafficking, harm, and exploitation by increasing the demand for women to perform these services. Accordingly, they assert that challenging the social acceptability of this demand is the key to addressing this issue through targeting the buyers of the services, educating the public about the harms of prostitution, and providing support services for those who wish to leave prostitution (CATWA, 2012b, p2).

4.9.2 The Nordic model

Anti-prostitution activists tend to favour the Nordic model as the best method to stop trafficking for sexual exploitation (NorMAC, 2015; CATWA, 2013). Under this model the sex worker is not prosecuted; rather the operational aspects of sex work, such as purchasing sex and renting out premises in which sex is sold are criminalised. Here, it is the client not the sex worker who is the criminal, and this change is claimed to be responsible for a decline in sex trafficking by reducing or even removing the demand for sex workers in the nations where the Nordic model has been adopted (CATWA, 2013, pp11-12). Australian groups supporting the Nordic model have been lobbying members of Parliament at both State and Federal levels to have their views heard on the merits of this system for reducing both the

harms of prostitution and human trafficking for the sex industry. However, sex workers in Australia are opposed to the Nordic model, believing this model leaves the sex worker vulnerable to violence (Scarlet Alliance website, 2013). The Australian Government, through the Interdepartmental Committee (IDC), suggests there is evidence that criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services may force trafficking victims underground and believe the Nordic model is unlikely to be the answer to the problem of human trafficking (Australian Government (AGD), 2012, pp14-15).

4.9.3 A battle against evil

'A battle against evil': Australia urged to act on sex trafficking

This was a headline constructed to strike fear or at least gain an emotive response from readers of online news in July 2015 (SBS, 2015). The release of the 2015 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report by the United States Government again saw Australia ranked as a Tier One nation, thus complying with the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking, as determined by the United States. However, according to the former US Secretary of State John Kerry, Australia needs to step up its efforts, with the TIP Report describing Australia's anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts as modest (SBS, 2015). Headlines are designed to attract people's attention and unfortunately, as our lives become busier, up to eight out of ten people do not read further (Unerman, 2015). The actual online news story focuses more on the world situation than on painting a bleak picture of Australia. However, through the use of the metaphor *'a battle against evil'* followed by Australia being urged to do something, the headline is enough to stir up support for the anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution movements, in an attempt to get the Government and society in general to take a moral stance against what is seen by some as *an abuse of women* (Barry, 1995; Dworkin, 1997; S. Jeffreys, 2008, 2009, 2012).

In the United States, where seventy percent of the population still identify with some branch of Christianity and want to know the religious affiliations of their politicians, those standing for election are expected to make statements on contentious moral issues such as abortion and prostitution (Pew Research Centre, 2015). In Australia, on the other hand, the Federal Government has continued to support the national sex worker organisation Scarlet Alliance, in spite of demands from some groups that this

is a wrong use of taxpayers' money (Holloway, 2014; Tankard Reist, 2015). In spite of claims from the US Secretary of State that Australia needs to do more to combat human trafficking, and knowing the US State Department's preference for nations to sign an anti-prostitution pledge, the Australian Government is prepared to recognise the work of the national sex worker organisation, Scarlet Alliance as an authority in this area.

4.10 Two sides of the argument

Project Respect is an Australian organisation which has a vision for a world where women are free from trafficking, prostitution and sexual exploitation (www.projectrespect.org.au, 2017). Although supportive of women who work in the sex industry, having an ultimate aim of seeing a world with no prostitution puts this group at odds with the objectives of sex industry support organisations such as Scarlet Alliance whose members do not share the same aim, seeing sex work as work, not as a cause of trafficking, harm, and violence. These two organisations, Project Respect and Scarlet Alliance, are considered by the Australian Government to be strong voices for the sex industry, and yet they do not speak from the same narrative. They see the sex industry and the extent of human trafficking in Australia from opposing sides; something which is clearly used to great advantage by the media when a story breaks concerning any aspect of human trafficking. This was evidenced in an episode of the ABC's *Lateline* on 13 March 2015 (see Koloff, 2015), where the compere Emma Alberici:

1) showed a pre-recorded interview supporting the Nordic model
2) interviewed a supporter of decriminalisation from Canada
3) showed a pre-recorded interview with Kate Connett, an outreach worker and former sex worker from Project Respect
4) interviewed Jules Kim, who at the time was the Migrant Project Officer of Scarlet Alliance.

It is interesting to note that the two examples of anti-prostitution sentiment were of pre-recorded interviews, thus allowing these to be heard in their entirety without interruption. However, the two live interviews in support of sex work as work involved Alberici questioning each interviewee on sex workers' lack of agency, no freedom of choice, and the dangers they face, often inserting her own answers. These two interviews were cut short with" *We have to leave it there."* The impression

Alberici gives through these actions suggests a perceptual bias towards the anti-prostitution position, and indeed, this is consistent with some of the social media commentary at the time, which included the following:

> *Her bias was palpable and prevented her from actually listening – or giving sufficient airspace – to those far more knowledgeable and experienced than she on the matter and its manifold intricacies and ramifications.* (Kouvaras, 2015)

On the other hand, the Australian Government does not appear to have an issue with listening to advice from sex worker support groups, deferring to their knowledge in the areas of human trafficking, exploitation and slavery. In the first ten years of the Australian Government's strategy to combat human trafficking and slavery, more than 400 Federal police investigations were undertaken, and 228 victims were identified (Keenan, 2014). The Government dedicated over $150 million to this effort, and provided grants totalling $1.44 million to the following non-government organisations with specialist skills in preventing human trafficking and slavery: Anti-Slavery Australia, Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH), Project Respect, and Scarlet Alliance each received $360,000. Here I note that I was able to interview representatives from three out of four of these NGOs; I did not manage to secure an interview with ACRATH. According to the Minister for Justice, Mr Keenan (2014),

> *"This funding will be used for detection activities, direct support for individual victims of trafficking and slavery, and cutting-edge awareness programs to push our community to expose suspected exploitation."* (Keenan, 2014)

However, the Nordic Model Australia Coalition (Normac), Australia's leading secular organisation campaigning for a human rights based approach to prostitution and the introduction of the Nordic model laws in Australia (www.normac.org.au, 2015) called for Minister Keenan to cut funding to Scarlet Alliance, but not to Project Respect, taking the stance that taxpayer dollars were going towards supporting the work of an organisation which promotes an unregulated industry and challenges the anti-trafficking framework (Holloway, 2014). Such comments from groups sympathetic to anti-prostitution activism are written in a style that generates support for their own cause by discrediting the work of another organisation. Mentioning a possible misuse of taxpayer dollars increases the chances of eliciting a response from an audience with perhaps no other interest in this debate. The

dispersal of funds is part of the Grants to Australian Organisations Program, where the Government has chosen specific organisations as recipients because of the invaluable work these are performing; decisions not made lightly. It would appear the Government and its advisory committees are able to see past any moral issue of Scarlet Alliance being an organisation representing sex workers and acknowledge the good work being done by this group (see Keenan, 2014), whereas anti-trafficking activist groups with strong anti-prostitution agendas are unable to do the same and would seek any opportunity to speak out against organisations supporting sex work as work.

Anti-Slavery Australia, one of the recipients of government funding, is the only centre of its kind in Australia specialising in the research of laws and policy concerning the abolition of slavery and slavery-like practices, trafficking and the exploitation of workers. This organisation released figures indicating that fewer than 400 people were officially identified as being trafficked into Australia from 2005-2011, with the majority of cases being women exploited in the sex industry (interview with the Director of Anti-Slavery Australia, Sydney, July 2013).

Exploitation can occur on a continuum in most forms of employment, however when connected with the sex industry this often takes on a more sinister context than someone working in poor conditions or for low wages in another occupation. In spite of a lack of evidence to the contrary, the image of Asian sex workers being trafficked into Australia is perpetuated when the issue of exploitation is linked in any way to the Australian sex industry. Jules Kim, the Scarlet Alliance Migration Project Manager at the time, gave evidence at the inquiry hearings into regulating the sex industry in New South Wales (NSW), where the graphic details of one case of Asian sex worker exploitation were read out to in an attempt to sensationalise and extrapolate to the whole industry. *The details of the case are clearly disturbing, but this is one case, and it is not the norm for the sex industry in NSW* (Kim, 2015). Here it appears one example was used as evidence to support the case for changing the law in NSW, where decriminalisation has been working as the best practice model since 1995 (Scarlet Alliance, 2019).

Further demonstrating this acceptance of the Asian sex worker victim narrative,

Family Voice Australia, a national organisation providing *a Christian voice for family, faith and freedom* (www.fava.org.au), are of the opinion that human trafficking into Australia for sexual servitude is a problem. This organisation cites the United States *Trafficking in Persons Report* as credible evidence of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry (Parliament of Australia, 2013, p27). Collective Shout, the Coalition Against Trafficking Women Australia (CATWA), Christian Faith and Freedom, Project Respect and the Australian Christian Lobby all agreed with the view of Family Voice. In particular, Christian Faith and Freedom put forward the following view in a Parliamentary Submission to a human rights inquiry, *Trading Lives: Modern Day Human Trafficking* (2013), claiming that trafficking victims were from Asian nations, stating:

> *Australia has been reported as being a destination country for human trafficking with victims being trafficked from predominantly China, Korea and Thailand, with many being coerced into exploitative conditions.* (Parliament of Australia, 2013, p27)

The sex worker organisation Scarlet Alliance suggested that trafficking was not widespread (Parliament of Australia, 2013, p27). The point here is that many NGOs and community groups form their opinions on this topic from the US *Trafficking in Persons Report* by trusting the authority of an international power, rather than from those able to gather first hand or anecdotal evidence of the situation in Australia.

The voices positioned as having authority on an argument appear to be sourced from where an audience is able to accept opinions. We construct our beliefs and values based on our own experiences of the society we are born into, or we listen to people we view as having specialist knowledge in an area and use their influence to shape our ideas. Therefore, it is important here to look at who is influencing the community or allowed to speak at gatherings. For example, at an event held in 2014 called "Women for Sale", which was part of the Festival of Dangerous Ideas in Sydney, sex workers were mentioned as women for sale, but sex workers were not invited to be part of the panel. Instead, panellists were warned before the event that sex workers may stage a protest. One of the protesters, Jules Kim, was eventually invited to join the panel, where she stated, *"Sex workers are not 'women for sale'"*. It would appear the festival organisers preferred to talk about sex workers, basing their evidence on preconceived ideas, rather than engaging in discussions with those who have first-

hand experience (Halpin, 2014). When this occurs, the topic put forward for discussion has already been discussed because no new voices are allowed to be heard; the outcome is the same every time. In this case, as with similar occurrences where particular voices are not allowed to be heard, community opinion is shaped by the same narrative they have heard many times before, thus reinforcing a one-sided argument. The use of emotive language by anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution activists serves to reinforce moral judgement of sex work while detracting attention from the exploitation of migrant workers, regardless of employment. Denying sex workers and their advocates the right to speak makes them appear as helpless victims, thus perpetuating the trafficking and rescue narratives. There are two sides to the argument, but one is often silenced or absent. Discussion of the sex industry silences those closest to the issues (Halpin, 2014).

4.11 A whole of community approach

The Australian Government has adopted a new method for tackling some of the problems faced by society. Countering violent extremism, emergency management, and human trafficking and slavery are three areas where a whole of community approach has been touted as the new best line of attack and defence, replacing a whole of government response which, at least in the case of human trafficking, is now seen as being part of everyday practice. This whole of community approach is outlined in the *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery, 2015-2019* (Australian Government, 2014). By engaging with the whole community, it is possible to take advantage of the synergies created by combining the strengths of several organisations as well as individuals to tackle a public problem. A whole of community response brings with it distinct advantages; the possibility of accessing a wider range of both physical and intellectual resources, as a diverse and broad base can become involved in addressing the complexities of an issue. As stated in the Executive Summary of the *National Action Plan* (2014):

> *Cooperation between governments, between government agencies, and between governments and civil society, business and industry, and unions is key to preventing human trafficking and slavery, detecting, investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators, and protecting and supporting victims.*
> (Australian Government, 2014, p2)

This suggests that strengthening relationships between these significant stakeholders forms the basis of a united approach against slavery and slavery-like practices,

human trafficking, and the exploitation of workers. The inclusion of business, industry and unions in this plan focuses on the areas where victims of trafficking may be found and exploited rather than simply dealing with this issue at a governmental level, although it remains to be seen which industries' and unions' voices are heard.

In October 2016, the Australian Fair Work Ombudsman released the results of a two-year inquiry confirming backpackers had been underpaid or not paid at all for work done, had to buy their own equipment, and even to pay for the job itself because of a requirement to complete 88 days of farm work to get a second-year category 417 (working holiday) visa extension to extend their stay in Australia (Reynolds, 2016). This inquiry demonstrated a shift in focus from worker exploitation in the sex industry to the wider workplace, although it is likely that such an investigation would not have been undertaken if only to look at situations of underpayment or poor working conditions in the sex industry. I interviewed a representative from the Department of the Fair Work Ombudsman in Melbourne, July 2013 and discussed sex workers not reporting exploitation. At that time, the majority of suspected trafficking cases being investigated were women exploited in the sex industry (interview with the Director of Anti-Slavery Australia, Sydney, July 2013). However, while backpackers are considered as young travellers who choose to visit Australia as part of an adventure, with some being exploited, those travellers who choose to come to work in the Australian sex industry are still mislabelled as trafficked, based on the moral judgement that they could not have freely chosen to work in the sex industry. The Government's approach may have changed, yet the story remains the same. Human trafficking in the Australian sex industry has been framed as a community issue; a public problem, largely fuelled by the sensationalised headlines and graphic images portrayed by the media, closely followed by anti-trafficking abolitionists using similar tactics to gain support (see E. Jeffreys, 2009; Barnes, 2018).

A whole of community approach lends itself to inclusivity. Every community is different; therefore, community engagement draws on the particular strengths of its members, taking into account the demographics of the area, values, norms, and existing community structures (Harris, 2011). This allows both stakeholders and the

general public to work together to understand the needs of their community. In rural areas where backpackers may be subject to exploitative working conditions, involving businesses, unions, and the wider community will hopefully have a positive effect on this situation. However, in the case of human trafficking in the sex industry, this could result in strategies to help alleged victims of trafficking again see the mislabelling of migrant sex workers as trafficked. Members of the general public opposed to the idea of prostitution are likely to campaign to remove all sex workers from the area. This was evidenced in Western Australia when the State Government tried to introduce the Prostitution Bill 2011, which was stalled in Parliament (ABC News, 2014).

By responding to a public problem as a community, responsibility for outcomes is decentralised, meaning broader stakeholder buy-in to the success of the initiative (Adams, 2015). This establishes communication channels between community stakeholders and between community and government agencies, thus fulfilling some of the objectives of the whole of community approach detailed in the *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery, 2015-2019* (Australian Government, 2014). Responsibility is decentralised, resulting in broader ownership of the problem. However, if still no single government department or community organisation 'owns' the proposed solution to the problem, ultimately it may be difficult to measure success or to ascertain who is responsible if it fails.

It remains to be seen whether the new whole of community approach to combat human trafficking taken by the Australian Government will result in any real change from the previous focus of border security and maintaining state sovereignty. Certainly, the involvement of the Fair Work Ombudsman indicates an interest in investigating worker exploitation in a number of industries, which is where the whole of community approach would be beneficial. Media involvement has brought this situation into the public domain, which has a positive effect because the jobs being undertaken are not illegal; the people undertaking them are being exploited in the types of jobs where traditionally conditions are arduous, hours are long, and the pay is low.

However, the reaction is not the same for migrant workers in the sex industry, where

the work being done is more often than not considered any combination of illegal, criminal, immoral, dangerous, abusive, or simply wrong. Despite sex worker organisations insisting human trafficking in the Australian sex industry is not a problem; that there is an issue with worker exploitation as there is with many occupations, instances involving migrant sex workers are constructed as human trafficking, largely with media intervention exacerbating the situation with *well-worn stereotypes which then become public opinion* (Scarlet Alliance, 2009). Their voices are silenced as others speak for them. Human-trafficking activists who are also anti-prostitution abolitionists construct victim narratives telling tales of violence and abuse, based on other stories (Barnes, 2018). This then becomes an issue of illegal migration and rescue rather than something to be addressed by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an historical overview of the major influences on Australia's official response to human trafficking and the Australian sex industry, particularly with regard to migrant sex workers. In the early years of white settlement in the new colonies, government officials accepted the movement of sex workers to provide for the needs of a largely male population of workers. I first considered whether Australia was a land of opportunity or if it has had a history of trafficking. This was based initially on the acceptance of state-sanctioned trafficking of female non-Caucasian sex workers to cater for the needs of men from different racial backgrounds. While this was officially deemed to be for the good of racial purity, many of these women were later rejected and deported when the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act (White Australia Policy) came into force; a policy restricting non-white (particularly Asian) migration and contributing to a racially insular white Australian society. The White Australia Policy officially ended in 1978, being replaced with the concept and policy of multiculturalism. However, by this time, migrant sex workers were being labelled as victims of human trafficking.

Next, I discussed early international anti-trafficking movements and how they played their part in shaping current international policy and discourse surrounding human trafficking in the sex industry. Feminists seeking to abolish prostitution, religious reformers protecting the sexual honour of the women of their nations, and

government officials with various interests in controlling women's sexuality were active in the past and can also be found in contemporary anti-trafficking dialogues.

In addition to these three contributing groups, sex workers and their support organisations have appeared as active participants in contemporary discourse. The Australian Government accepts advice from sex worker support groups, deferring to their knowledge in the areas of human trafficking, exploitation and slavery. However, the debate between abolitionists and those who support sex work as work is as heated now as it was during the late Nineteenth Century, as both sides try to influence the Australian Government's position on the sex industry and human trafficking. The Government has moved from a whole of government response to a whole of community approach to tackle this issue.

I also examine the role played by Australia as a Middle Power in the region, leading a number of programs in neighbouring nations where human trafficking is a major concern. These efforts help to maintain stability in the region by providing funding, knowledge, and training where required.

The narratives of human trafficking in the sex industry today may be couched in human rights, however the moral panic surrounding violations of women still reflect a lack of understanding of the issues faced by sex workers and the reasons they either choose or are forced to migrate for work. Human trafficking certainly does occur, but the situation in Australia does not appear to be one requiring large scale migration management or victim rescue on our shores. Government policies relating to human trafficking in the sex industry deal with women being brought to Australia; exploitation of those already here, if not labelled as victims of trafficking is more difficult to deal with.

In this chapter I have looked at the official Australian Government response to human trafficking and the sex industry as well as some of the groups that have tried to influence policy makers. In the next chapter, I focus on an international non-government organisation which took anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution messages into Australian homes in an attempt to influence public opinion and to raise funds for their cause.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESCUE: A CONTESTED NARRATIVE

The Rescue Industry, like the war on terrorism, relies on an image of the barbaric Other. (Agustin, 2012b)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on some of the other influences on Australia's framing of human trafficking and the Australian sex industry, through a case analysis of the Salvation Army. Through analysis of a mix of text based information from public discourses and original material sourced from my ethnographic observations, I discuss this non-government organisation (NGO), which widely distributed its anti-prostitution and anti-trafficking messages into Australian homes during two of its annual fundraising campaigns. This analysis particularly responds to research questions 2 and 3, which build from an exploration of who speaks for and about migrant sex workers in Australia, to ask:

1. What effect does this have on shaping public opinion about the industry?
2. How does this impact upon those who work in the Australian sex industry?

To answer these questions, I look at how narratives are constructed and used, at first to justify and then to sustain the actions of charitable organisations, where evidence is read and portrayed in different ways to suit a purpose and a predicted audience. While contesting these narratives has seen the demise of small groups[11], larger institutions, especially those with power both garnered from and backed up by a long history of involvement in good works, are able to weather such criticism. This was a key finding from the data I collected. I demonstrate this through a case study of two campaigns run by the Salvation Army against sex trafficking and prostitution in Australia during 2009 and again in 2016.

I have chosen this non-government organisation for a number of reasons. Their

[11] The Grey Man Charity and Somaly Mam Foundation are two organisations which have folded following criticism of their actions. (see Murdoch, 2012; Murdoch, 2014; Schule, 2012)

annual fundraising campaigns and use of the media brings the Salvation Army into Australian homes, thus raising awareness of the messages this organisation wants to share, giving nationwide coverage to their cause. Secondly, my personal involvement allowed me to conduct ethnographic research during the Salvation Army campaigns.

The Salvation Army is well-known throughout the Western world for its charitable works where its mission is to *meet human needs in His name without discrimination* (Salvation Army, 2009). I was a member of the Australian national sex worker organisation Scarlet Alliance in 2016 when Salvation Army Australia used images and words in their annual fundraising campaign which were offensive to sex workers and the sex industry. This was evidenced by my ethnographic research at the time, as well as being documented in public discourse (Sainty, 2016; Trask, 2016). This was not the first time sex workers had been targeted by the Salvation Army, resulting in the national sex worker organisation Scarlet Alliance again objecting to the campaign (ABC News, 2009; The Sydney Morning Herald, 2009).

The grand narrative of any organisation takes different forms as required, being composed of a collection of all the small stories along the way. Maintaining this grand narrative through the careful construction of information released into the public domain is what gives an organisation its strength. The use of websites and advertising campaigns to disseminate information allows for some blurring of the evidence, but removing false material from a website or apologising for misleading information used in advertising campaigns does not make that false material disappear completely, as shown in this case study. Opinions may have already been formed about the subject by members of the general public, based on the information they have seen.

5.2 Context

5.2.1 Non-government organisations (NGOs) and mission statements

It is not possible for states to perform all of the good works and acts of charity necessary within their borders. In response to this, there are a number of internationally and nationally recognised NGOs and charity organisations in existence providing many of the important services to those sectors not fully served by government funding (Al-Nwaisir, 2012; Banks et al, 2015, p708; Tortajada, 2016,

pp271-272). The grand narrative which constructs the moral, social, and political position of these institutions is written and perpetuated to assure society that they are fulfilling the goals of their mission statements, using their expertise and finances to help people in need, by rescuing victims of war, crime, and violence who are not able to help themselves. The general populace tends to accept that these organisations are performing vital functions, and the money raised through grants, bequests, and donations is being used appropriately, until they see evidence to the contrary (Morpus, 2017). Even then, the history of an organisation may be enough to sustain its existence following questionable practices, as has occurred in the fight against human trafficking in the sex industry. Particular narratives may have been used for their effect, not necessarily as a true representation of fact, as I will demonstrate through the key findings in this case study.

Policies and plans of action are formulated by organisations to address the issue of rescuing victims of human trafficking, where this forms part of their mission statements or goals. I have looked at the goals or mission statements of several anti-trafficking NGOs including the Salvation Army, the Grey Man, the Coalition Against Trafficking Women (CATW), Project Respect, Men Against Prostitution and Trafficking (MenAPAT), the Women's Support Project, the Rescue Foundation, and Free the Slaves. I have also examined a body of literature on the subject of human trafficking and its effect on the sex industry.

Non-government organisations must construct narratives to encourage public interest in the cause they are championing, especially where donations are sought to provide funding for the good works being done, in accordance with their mission statements (Ackerman, 2016). These narratives may also influence policy makers as they seek to find evidence to support decisions being made, both at a national and international level (Tortajada, 2016, pp266-267). Through selected releases of evidence to the media, as well as advertising campaigns often featuring horrific pictures and stories, concerned NGOs and charity groups are able to appeal to certain norms and values inherent in Western society to support the role of the rescue narrative as part of their mission to save those who may appear unable to help themselves (Mohanty, 1988; Connelly, 2015, p155; O'Brien, 2019). However, in the case of the sex industry these graphic images and stories can skew opinion towards the idea that all aspects of it

involve coercion and violence, thus requiring the rescue of all sex workers. Raising these issues in the media can be a powerful tool if handled to the organisation's advantage (Vance, 2012; Borer, 2015; Connelly, 2015). The power of a message can be heightened for an audience where they have no direct experience or other knowledge of an issue, while it can decrease with direct experience (Happer and Philo, 2013).

A narrative is not always constructed in isolation; the target audience is considered, at times more so than those about whom the narrative is written. According to O'Brien (2019), narrative is only as powerful as the audience allows it to be, written to align with the cultural assumptions of that intended audience. This seems to be the case with organisations operating under a rescue narrative, where the perceived victims are rarely, if ever, consulted as to their needs (Agustin, 2007, p192; Vance, 2012, Scarlet Alliance, 2014b). The rescuers decide what is necessary for those seen as victims, acting as benevolent redeemers. This is reflected in the following case study, where I show how narrative is constructed and used to influence public opinion under the auspices of raising funds and public awareness.

5.3 Case study – The Salvation Army

5.3.1 Mission statement and position on human trafficking

The Salvation Army was founded in London in 1865. It is an international Christian organisation which, according to its website, is active in over 125 nations, working *where the need is greatest, guided by faith in God and love for all people* (www.salvationarmy.org). According to its mission statement:

> *Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in His name without discrimination.* (www.salvos.org.au)

The overarching narrative constructed to give the moral, social, and political position of this organisation serves to convince the reader its expertise and finances are being used to help people in need, rescuing victims without discrimination who are not able to help themselves (Halliday, 2016). Through its website and the way operations are spoken of, the Salvation Army can give the impression that it is operating worldwide, claiming to be active in or have a presence in a number of countries, although this may be limited to nations where they are readily recognised and accepted, especially with the organisation being grounded in the Christian faith. The narrative of such

organisations encourages us to believe without question they are fulfilling the goals of their mission statements. A long history of helping others and their easily recognisable uniforms helps position the Salvation Army as an organisation that can be trusted and relied upon in a crisis. However, the Salvation Army does not always read a situation correctly, as indicated by the problems which occurred during some of its fundraising campaigns in Australia. My wider reading found similar issues with their 2009 campaign in Canada prior to the 2010 Winter Olympics[12]. In this case study, I show how the powerful rescue narrative of the Salvation Army, while grounded in the gravitas of the heinous crime of human trafficking in the sex industry, can be contested by those who disagree and feel they are being discriminated against, contrary to the organisation's claim to help without discrimination.

With specific reference to human trafficking, the Salvation Army has a Positional Statement on its website, although this is not listed on its home page and involves some searching to locate, possibly indicating that, although they have a strong position on this important issue, it is not part of their core work. Here I note the wording of this document had not changed when I checked it on the website in September 2020. In the Statement of Position section it says:

> *The Salvation Army is deeply committed to fighting human trafficking however it may be manifested. We seek to exercise care in restoring the freedom and dignity of those affected.* (Salvation Army, 2009)

The Position Statement talks about human trafficking as a *modern-day form of slavery*, and later states that *the exploitation of human beings dehumanises the individuals who are trafficked*. In its 2009 Statement of the Issue, mention is made where *reliable reports show that millions of people around the world are subjected to it* (human trafficking). As with several other organisations doing good works, there seems to be no necessity to verify this type of statement; it is assumed those reading about human trafficking will accept the claim that these reports are reliable, without there being a need to reference the source of this information. The reliable reports mentioned are not referenced. The history and respect an organisation such as the Salvation Army has amongst its followers and a wider audience seems enough for readers to accept statements as fact. Our understanding of the gravity of the

[12] See CBC News (24 September 2009), Davis (2009), Glatz (2010), Hasiuk (2009)

situation, as shaped by the narratives constructed of trafficking and rescue, allows supposed facts to be used without question, and then re-quoted by others. These narratives tend to focus on the horror of the offence of trafficking, especially with regard to the sex industry, rather than on the people who are saved, thus the power of these narratives is sustained by their effect on the audience, rather than by being grounded in evidence. As discussed by Agustin (2007), by making those who are saved into passive victims, through use of the narrative to portray them in this way, the rescuers appear as the redeemers of these fallen souls.

The Salvation Army frequently uses the term sex trafficking on its website. Other forms of human trafficking do not attract the same attention as trafficking in the sex industry (Schloenhardt et al, 2009; Teshome, 2011; Vance, 2012); an issue virtually guaranteed to elicit both a moral and a financial response from members of the general public opposed to the horrors of women and children being forced against their will into violent acts of prostitution (Scarlet Alliance 2014b; Borer, 2015). The perception that human trafficking involves this type of treatment is shaped by the grand narrative, commonly accepted to be true for all cases, and perpetuated by organisations involved in what Agustin (2007) refers to as the rescue industry. These concerns strike at the heart of a nation, making this an issue of human security. However, when this is extended into removing the rights of women to choose to work in the sex industry, the abuse is continued where agency is removed and one person decides what is best for another (Doezema, 2001; Agustin, 2008; Connelly, 2015).

In the Salvation Army's *Positional Statement on Human Trafficking* (2009), the section on Practical Responses states:

> *Human trafficking flourishes because there is a demand for the services trafficked people are forced to provide. The Salvation Army therefore undertakes education and awareness raising activities so that those who use products or services supplied by trafficked people are confronted with the human misery, suffering and injustice created by their continuing use of these services or products.* (Salvation Army, 2009)

One powerful image used in a campaign can say as much about an organisation's position on a situation as any number of statements. Common perceptions of such a well-known and respected church-based organisation, the Salvation Army, are that if

they have used these images, there must be truth in their message (Halliday, 2016). The status and prestige of the teller gives authority to their story. By showing the horrors of human trafficking and prostitution as they see it (Vance, 2012), the rescue narrative is strengthened and perpetuated by the Salvation Army, as members of the general public accept what is shown to be happening on the basis that such an organisation must be giving an honest representation of the situation. The reputation and history of the Salvation Army gives strength and credibility to its policies, decisions, and ultimately, any narrative it constructs under the premise of education and awareness raising activities.

5.3.2 Knights in shining armour

The image of the rescuer as a knight in shining armour, or in this case, wearing a uniform with strong military overtones, reinforces the discourse that sex workers are unable to save themselves; something which is echoed by other participants in the rescue industry and written about extensively by other authors (Agustin, 2007; Drummond, 2012; Reid, 2012). A uniform, as worn by Salvation Army officers, and even their name, seems to give the impression these people are operating with some authority, power, and knowledge of the situation, thus empowering the narrative. Military overtones strengthen the idea of protecting both the victims and the nation, fighting a war against human trafficking, a war against prostitution, protecting borders from invasion of the "Other" (Agustin, 2012b; Connelly, 2015). A battle is being waged against traffickers, but there is also a battle against the sex industry, as demand for professional sexual services is often blamed for encouraging human trafficking in this industry (Raymond, 2004; Sullivan, 2007; World Vision, 2007).

5.3.3 The story of 'Rick'

In May 2009, the Salvation Army in Sydney enraged people working in the Australian sex industry when they featured posters advertising the story of 'Rick', an alleged male sex worker, who they claimed had left a message asking for help on a computer screen inside the Salvation Army's Oasis outreach van. They then claimed to have used undercover tactics to rescue Rick, take him to the airport and fly him interstate to one of their rehabilitation centres, away from heroin and hustling. The story on the poster said Rick was now living a new life (ABC News, 22 May 2009). These posters were used to advertise the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal; an

annual fundraising campaign where members of the Salvation Army and volunteers conduct a doorknock of homes, seeking donations for their cause. The Salvation Army performs many good works helping people in need. By using the story and image of an alleged drug-taking male sex worker, they reinforced their position on rescuing groups marginalised by society; heroin addicts, homosexuals and prostitutes. Their message identified these groups as passive victims, unable to help themselves and needing to be rescued. Constructing rescue stories veiled in secrecy and danger contributes to the intrigue, increasing the readability and chance of donations as some audiences respond to narrow representations of ideal victims (Vance, 2012). Representatives from Scarlet Alliance, the national sex worker organisation, accused the Salvation Army of capitalising or cashing in on discrimination against sex workers in order to get donations (Sydney Morning Herald, 2009). According to Agustin (2012b), the image of the knight charging in to rescue the innocent victim is as effective now as it was during the white slavery panic of the late Nineteenth Century.

Sex workers in Australia were offended by this advertising campaign, demanding a withdrawal of the advertisement and an apology from the Salvation Army. Elena Jeffreys, who at the time was president of the Australian sex workers association, Scarlet Alliance, told ABC News:

> *"The offensiveness of the ad comes from the stereotypes and stigma it perpetuates. The ad speaks about a male sex worker who is 'saved' by the Salvation Army. The stereotype is simple. Sex workers are victims in an immoral world, the Salvation Army are our liberators. Readers' first thoughts are "Yes a sex worker is saved by a religious charity; all is right with the world".* "(E. Jeffreys, interviewed by ABC News, 2 June 2009)

Agustin (2007) suggests that in Western societies, sex work is generally viewed as something a person is forced into, either by threat or circumstance, and this is used to justify the need to rescue these victims. If even one person is found to be forced into prostitution, the story and the stereotype are perpetuated by organisations involved in the rescue industry, often with the help of the media. Such tales of rescue from horrific circumstances attract people's attention, much more so than accounts of sex workers as contributing members of society. E. Jeffreys continues:

> *"It is always more plausible to understand sex workers as victims than it is to understand us as intelligent, articulate and community-minded."*
> (E. Jeffreys, interviewed by ABC News, 2 June 2009)

Following a constructionist approach, one could argue that the narrative of advertising campaigns is more likely to gain attention if it reinforces existing stereotypes, and it seems inevitable the subject matter of sex workers will invoke images of violence, drugs, trafficking and rescue, rather than those described by Elena Jeffreys. If one adds in the human attraction to urban myth or what Jeffreys referred to in 2011 as 'tragedy porn' where audiences expect to hear sad stories from sex workers, the chances of being seen as anything but victims without a voice are slim (Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2011a). E. Jeffreys adds:

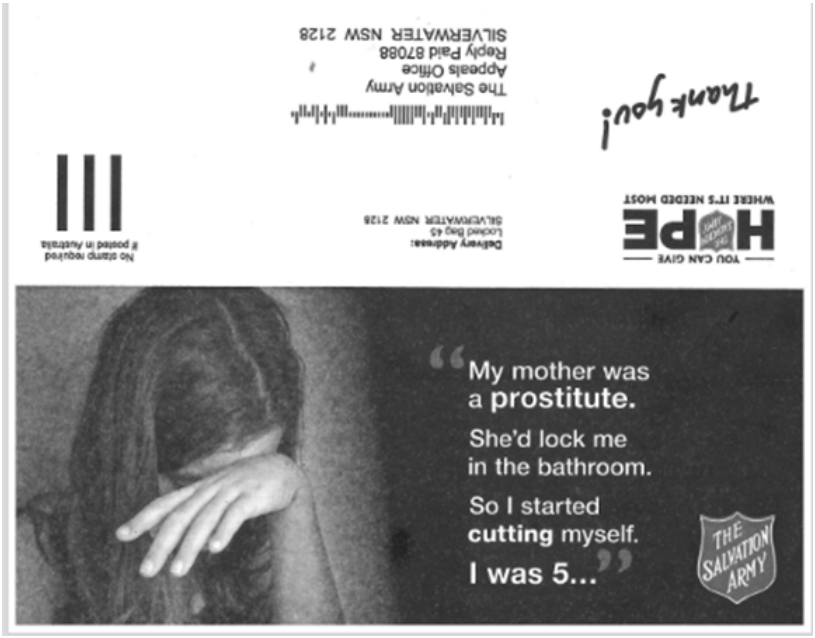
> *"The Salvation Army misread what is acceptable regarding sex workers' portrayal in the media; and they did apologise for it, but it doesn't change the reality that a committee of people in uniform thought societal unease about sex work a worthwhile brand for their charity."* (E. Jeffreys, interviewed by ABC News, 2 June 2009)

Withdrawing an advertisement and apologising to the people who were adversely affected by it does not make up for the fact that the image was used as a marketing and fundraising tool in the first place, thus reinforcing the rescue narrative in the minds of the general populace, and eliciting an emotional response in the form of donations. The Salvation Army's position on sex work, or as they refer to it, prostitution, was made clear as soon as the advertisement was formulated. Once a statement is made or an image shown, it is possible to withdraw it, but the damage is already done.

5.3.4 Her mother was a prostitute

In 2016 the Salvation Army again launched its Red Shield Appeal, the major fundraising campaign run annually by the organisation. This time, the campaign used a combination of tactics; volunteers who doorknocked and asked for donations, along with an envelope with pictures and stories on it which was sent by post to every household in Australia, explaining the Appeal and asking for help. The doorknocking volunteers could also pick up the envelope from the house. The picture on the envelope for the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal in 2016 depicted a young girl with her hand covering her eyes, alongside short, sharp sentences, telling no actual details yet cleverly designed to paint a picture of despair. They are written as prose, perhaps to make it easier to commit to memory, and described a situation no child should have to endure - believable, yet devoid of fact. Here we see a narrative

constructed where the villain is the mother, working as a prostitute.



(The Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal, 2016)

The Salvation Army could have chosen a number of reasons why the mother might lock the child in the bathroom, but they chose to use a stereotype of the prostituted woman, abusing her child through her choice of work, resulting in the child self-harming. The choice of the word 'prostitute' rather than the preferred term 'sex worker,' and further emphasis being placed on this term by 'prostitute' being printed in a larger font and bolder than the other words around it. 'I was 5' also emphasised by being in bold print and larger font, while the word 'cutting' is in bold print only.

These advertising tactics are used to attract attention, to make a point of the tragic circumstances of this young girl's life, and yet there is no evidence that the girl pictured has suffered this fate. The use of bold print and a larger font may make it possible at first glance to believe the young girl herself has been prostituted from the age of five. Regardless, she needed to be rescued and the Salvation Army planned to use the image to elicit donations.

Sex workers in Australia were appalled and distressed by this use of a negative stereotype in an advertising campaign, which implied those sex workers with children were child abusers. According to Cameron Cox, sex worker and CEO of the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) NSW:

> *"This gratuitous slur on all sex workers is based on no evidence and is seen by sex workers as a deliberate attempt by the Salvation Army to capitalise on the stigma and discrimination that sex workers face on a day-to-day basis."*
> (Cameron Cox, quoted in Balakumar, 2016)

The Salvation Army issued an apology where they acknowledged the use of the term 'prostitute' was disrespectful. They also stated:

> *"Our intention was not to further stigmatise sex workers, an already stigmatised community, nor did we intend to discriminate by implying that abuse occurs as a result of a person's occupation."*
> (Quoted in Balakumar, 2016)

Shortly after this advertising campaign was launched, the Salvation Army headquarters in Sydney were defaced with graffiti. A red badge similar to the Army's crest was painted on the front window of the building with the words 'The Stigma Army' and 'Stigma kills'. A spokesperson stated:

> *"The Salvation Army provides its social services to anyone in need, without discrimination. The graffiti from the building has been removed, allowing us to get on with the job with assisting those who need it most – the marginalised and disadvantaged people within our community."*
> (Trask, 2016)

During this campaign I spent time observing and interviewing sex workers, several of whom were parents, taking notes and socialising with them, including at a national forum of sex workers. I observed several sex workers who were angry and sickened by this latest slur on the sex industry by the Salvation Army, an organisation purporting to *meet human needs in His name without discrimination* (www.salvos.org.au). I took part in a workshop at the 2016 national sex worker forum in Adelaide where one of the topics we talked about was this advertising campaign. A feeling of being discriminated against by the Salvation Army because of their chosen profession was voiced by all 15 sex workers in the room. One woman was extremely angry at the slur on sex workers who were also parents, stating that she went to all of her child's soccer games, helped out in the school canteen, and took her child to and from school every day (Name withheld – sex worker, Adelaide, 2016).

As part of my inquiry into this advertising campaign, I spoke to people from ten households among my family and friend groups who had all received the Salvation

Army Red Shield Appeal envelopes. Of these, six people thought it was good that the Salvation Army was focussing on such a terrible situation where some prostitutes could do that to their children, leading to the child self-harming. Four people thought the child was the one who was the sex worker, having been trafficked when five years old (evidence gathered from ethnographic interviews with family, friends, and colleagues, Perth 2016). I used this example in the workshop and found several people had similar experiences where the advertisement had been viewed by their friends in the same way. This reinforced my understanding that members of the wider community have a tendency to believe the worst about the sex industry, equating such images and messages as those depicted in the Salvation Army campaign with their own perception of reality.

By using images, words, and actions designed to incite upset and alarm among the general public, any claim these money-raising campaigns of 2009 and 2016 were not aimed at stopping sex work could not be believed by those who work towards acceptance of the sex industry. It would be difficult for the public, having seen such horrific images, to separate trafficked from non-trafficked or consenting sex workers and to realise this situation is not the norm. It was the consensus of the group at the 2016 national forum that the Salvation Army used such tactics to shock people, reinforcing their narrative that all those who are involved in sex work need to be rescued, and the entire sex industry should be closed down (observations gathered from ethnographic research, Adelaide, 2016).

5.3.5 Prayer Guide for the Victims of Sex Trafficking

According to their *Prayer Guide for the Victims of Sex Trafficking* (Just Salvos, July 2011), the Salvation Army takes the position that the sex industry fuels sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. The agenda here is wider than merely rescuing victims of human trafficking; the apparent reason for their international prayer campaigns. The Prayer Guide calls for followers to pray for the breakdown of the sex industry. This is supported by several unsubstantiated claims, for example:

> *Globally: Today, 27 million people are enslaved in various forms of sexual and labour exploitation, more than at the height of the transatlantic slave trade.* (Just Salvos, July 2011)

Figures such as these sensationalise a situation, with no reference given for this evidence. Indeed, Kara (2009) quotes a figure of 28.4 million sex slaves, again with no justification for how he arrived at this figure. The authority of the Salvation Army, in the eyes of its followers and some members of the wider community, is enough to make this statement credible. According to Reid (2012), organisations working to increase awareness and acceptance of the sex industry find it hard to compete with this when the Salvation Army is part of a recognised narrative working to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Reid (2012) states:

> *When charitable acts harm the lives of the very people they claim to be helping, who is there to make a case for the voiceless?* (Reid, 2012)

While there is no doubt the Salvation Army is involved globally with many good works, their sometimes over-zealous attitude toward rescuing those perceived to be in need can lead to disputes with other organisations working to increase public awareness and acceptance of those who work in the sex industry, often by their own choice, or at least as the better option from a limited choice. The rescue narrative does not allow for cases to be treated on an individual basis, by assessing the specific needs of those labelled as victims. Rather, as stated in the opening section of its *Prayer Guide for the Victims of Sex Trafficking,* under the heading *Important Points* (Just Salvos, July 2011), the Salvation Army quotes some prominent anti-prostitution statements, to justify its call for the end of the sex industry. For example:

> *The existence of prostitution is the only reason sex trafficking exists.*
> (J. Friedlin quoting D. Hughes, in Just Salvos, July 2011).

> *[Sexual] trafficking is simply the global form of prostitution.*
> (M. Farley, p. xvii, in Just Salvos, July 2011).

The readership of the *Prayer Guide* is left in no doubt that, not only does the Salvation Army seek to rescue victims of trafficking; it sees the sex industry as the main cause of this exploitation, and calls for its eradication. Such documents are very powerful in reinforcing the narrative of church-based organisations, using the power of religion to support their agenda and ensuring their followers are given only the accepted version of the evidence used to construct that narrative. This tactic gives just enough 'evidence' to convince readers the information is true by cleverly formulating and supporting a victim narrative alongside the need for rescue.

According to Schloenhardt et al (2009) any figures on the level of trafficking in Australia are estimates, *based on guesswork rather than the result of systematic data collection or comprehensive quantitative research*. Teshome (2011) noted that while *government agencies confine the number to a few hundred, non-government bodies on the other hand, elevate it to thousands*. The 2004 Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee estimated there to be 300 incidents of possible sex trafficking (Teshome, 2011). For the same period, Project Respect, a non-government organisation supporting trafficked women, reported a figure of one thousand (Project Respect, 2008a).

5.3.6 A strong anti-prostitution stance

In its worldwide efforts to counter human trafficking the Salvation Army approaches this issue by taking a strong anti-prostitution stance, using Church doctrine to support its call for an end to the sex industry. In spite of meetings between sex industry support organisations and representatives from the Salvation Army, their campaigns still feature sex workers as victims of human trafficking in need of rescue. Their online campaign for the 2017 International Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking, held on 24 September, featured a short video titled *"Stand Up For Justice - Vangie's Story on Vimeo"* (vimeo.com, 2017). Vangie, a 56 year old woman in Columbus, Ohio claimed to be a victim of human trafficking. At about age 21 she was working when she met up with an old friend who she didn't realise was involved in human trafficking and drug abuse. Vangie started spending time with her and taking drugs. She lost her job and stopped going to college. Her friend's boyfriend said she had to do something to pay for using the drugs he was supplying so she went to a street corner where she 'turned her first trick'. Vangie was still working as a street sex worker when she was rescued by some women from the Salvation Army's Well programme. Vangie says in the video that for those enslaved in a trafficking situation, there is a way out. She is now sober, free and loved.

While Vangie's story is one of a woman turning to sex work to support a drug habit, it's difficult to see this as an example of human trafficking. She says that she bumped into an old friend, started spending time with her and taking drugs. She did not say she was forced to take them, nor was she forced into prostitution. Here again is an instance where the Salvation Army could have chosen many other examples of

human trafficking, yet they have taken a story featuring a woman who turned to prostitution but was rescued by one of their programmes as the lead story in their annual International Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking which featured on its websites around the world, including Australia. The Salvation Army and its supporters who equate prostitution with trafficking will still see this as a victory for their cause. It is for Vangie, because she feels her life is better now.

5.4 Discussion

Through their websites and the way they speak of their operations, NGOs and charity organisations can give the impression they are operating worldwide, claiming to be active in or have a presence in a number of countries. However, this may be limited to nations where the ideals of these specific organisations are acceptable to the government, especially if they are founded in religious doctrine. Declaring a presence in a country is a statement that may not be qualified, with details such as physical addresses of offices and number and role of operatives often difficult to find for some of the smaller charity organisations. This was a key finding from my research of NGO websites. The Salvation Army is one such organisation claiming a presence *in over 125 nations* (www.salvos.org.au). It is interesting that an exact number or list of nations is not given, possibly indicating that the alleged presence is perhaps somewhat tenuous in some countries.

As a large, international organisation, backed by a religious following and government grants, the Salvation Army is able to tackle a number of issues at the one time. Its website is extensive, displaying interests and good works being done on a number of fronts, and although one has to search to find specific topics on the website, there does not appear to be any air of mystery surrounding the operations of the Salvation Army. Prayer Guides are posted on the website to guide its followers in ways acceptable to the doctrine of the Salvation Army, with this being a powerful tool for spreading its message among the faithful.

Through the use of a widely accepted narrative, the Salvation Army were able to gain some credence for their actions when claiming to be working towards rescuing victims of human trafficking in the sex industry. The narratives give just enough detail to satisfy their followers, using melodrama to organise the plot of the story.

Vance (2012) uses the term melomentaries to describe these documentary reports which have a *highly predetermined plot line and limited set of characters (or subject positions), all moving toward a triumphant endpoint that is highly overdetermined* (Vance, 2012, pp204 – 205).

The Salvation Army uses the rescue narrative to justify their actions and to seek donations for, what on the surface appears to be a very worthwhile cause. However, the welfare of those labelled as victims of human trafficking into the sex trade does not feature strongly on the agenda of this organisation. Indeed, Paterson (2009) claims that consulting with sex workers and their support organisations to ascertain whether help is required, and in what form, is not a common occurrence among those working under the rescue narrative. Paterson (2009) continues by asking: *If the welfare of those rescued is what we have at heart, how has this been improved by depriving them of their workplaces*? Loss of income, the stigma attached to being labelled as a victim of human trafficking as well as being labelled a sex worker, fear of arrest or being forced to be witnesses against possible traffickers; my research among sex workers in Australia found that these are just some of the problems faced by many workers who are rescued without their consent from the sex industry. This is also reflected in the literature of sex workers from other locations (Sukpanich, 2007, Agustin, 2008).

By framing all alleged victims of trafficking as passive in their situation, groups aiming to help those in need seldom consider they may be harming the very people they seek to rescue, acting under the Western ideals of redeemer. Connelly (2015, p158) refers to this as a fine line existing between help and hindrance. Even sex industry support groups are not consulted with regard to the needs of those considered to have been trafficked. According to Paterson (2009), anti-trafficking efforts should be community-based, led by people familiar with sex work and other sectors where there is vulnerability to trafficking, such as domestic work, agricultural labour, and service sectors. This approach is more in line with the Australian Government's *National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking and Slavery 2015-19* where a whole of community response to human trafficking and slavery focuses on increasing awareness and education for vulnerable groups, frontline responders, and the general community (Australian Government, 2014, p.2).

The Salvation Army's practice was considered to be far more offensive than suggested by the heading on its website. The *Education and awareness raising activities* used in fundraising campaigns were insulting and offensive to the very people they were trying to help (evidence gathered from this author's ethnographic research and interviews with sex workers, Adelaide 2016). However, when its story was challenged, as happened with the Red Shield Appeal campaigns in Australia of 2009 and 2016, the Salvation Army was able to fall back on its long history of doing good works and continue, relatively unscathed. They acted to save victims from prostitution, which they equate with trafficking, but the general consensus from the Australia sex industry was that the Salvos got it wrong (Balakumar, 2016; Sainty, 2016).

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the rescue narrative has been used to justify the actions of the Salvation Army in Australia funded by donations from the Australian public. However, as some analysts have shown, rescue is an act which empowers those doing the good works, rather than always benefitting those it is supposed to help. Recasting sex workers as active agents rather than passive victims would increase the success of rescue operations, as well as allowing for people who have knowledge of the sex industry to contribute their expertise. Perhaps this would eliminate some of the situations where victims of human trafficking are faced with hardships caused, to some extent, by being rescued.

I have used this case study of the Salvation Army to illustrate some of the influences on Australian society with regard to the issue of human trafficking and the sex industry. By bringing these stories into our households, through envelopes and advertising campaigns calling for donations, this non-government organisation was able to alert the Australian public to its anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution messages, thus helping to shape public opinion about the sex industry. The Salvation Army did not consult with the Australian sex industry to ascertain the best approach for their campaigns, even though they did their fundraising in Australia. It would appear that the voices of sex workers are missing from most of the dominant social constructions about them and of what they do, as other people speak for them and

decide what they need. In the next chapter, I focus on sex worker voices gathered through ethnographic research.

> *"Stop trying to rescue me, I'm fine! I came here from China to do sex work. My body, my choice! Nobody else's business!"* (Mai - Chinese sex worker, Perth 2014)

CHAPTER SIX

HEAR THEIR VOICES: SEX WORKERS IN AUSTRALIA

> *"That Hollywood actress from Les Miserables, Anne Hathaway, she says how bad prostitution is and people listen to her. She played a prostitute in the film and thinks she knows what it's like. Really? I watch movies but it doesn't mean I know what it's like to be a movie star."* (Interview with Mia - sex worker, Perth 2015)

6.1 Introduction

My aim throughout this study has been to explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. Chapter 4 is an historical overview of the influences on Australia's official response to the sex industry and human trafficking. Chapter 5 is a case study of the Salvation Army and its influence on shaping public opinion. In this chapter I examine some of the many voices that play off against each other, be they sex workers, the people who support them or those who vehemently oppose what they prefer to call prostitution. I look at both sides of the story in a nation where sex work is not illegal, and free choice is generally held up as one of the values of Australian society. None of the interviews or stories I quote from gives the whole picture; they cannot. They are vignettes of different people's experiences I gathered through ethnographic interviews, group discussions, attending sex worker meetings and rallies, field observations, and informal chats. The evidence they provide responds to all three research questions:

1. Who speaks for and about migrant sex workers in Australia?
2. What effect does this have on shaping public opinion about the industry?
3. How does this impact upon those who work in the Australian sex industry?

I will first discuss findings on how public opinion is shaped by dominant discourses on prostitution. I will then move on to discussing how public opinion impacts those who work in the sex industry, and finish with a discussion of migrant sex worker advocacy. The impact on those who work in the Australian sex industry features strongly in the evidence presented, which I gathered while working and researching in the Australian sex industry.

6.2 Shaping public opinion

Western beliefs and values have shaped the current culture of Australia, where sex work is generally viewed as something no woman would do by free choice (Raymond, 2003; S. Jeffreys, 2008). The evidence I have gathered suggests that where members of the sex industry are concerned, although human trafficking is indeed an insidious crime, the determination of some groups to abolish all sex work because they claim it causes trafficking is of more immediate and widespread harm. By constructing sex work itself as a public problem, even though those working in the sex industry don't see it as a problem, voices are able to speak for and about sex workers without actually having to listen to the workers themselves. This was discussed by the sex worker support group, Vixen Collective, in their Submission to an Inquiry into Human Trafficking (2016), where they make the following statement:

> *We call on the Federal Government to recognise that on sex workers lives and work, sex workers are the experts. Allowing other organisations and/or people to speak for or over sex workers, silences our voices, disadvantages our community and misinforms government policy. Our sex worker organisations represent us, it is our lived experience, and the evidence that our organisations provide to government that must be recognised.* (Vixen Collective, 2016, p20)

This speaks to the ways that influential public discourses often portray the frightened, drug-addicted sex workers of our imaginations, fuelled by representations in the media, who need to be protected from traffickers, pimps and abusive clients. This is consistent with evidence from my own research, for example:

> *"When it comes to sex work, it would seem people with no experience in the industry are often believed more than those who work in it; a phenomenon for which a parallel is difficult to find. They form opinions of our lives from characters seen on the television or in movies."* (Interview with Alicia - sex worker, Perth 2014)

6.2.1 The influence of the media on public opinion

Media coverage of incidents such as the murder of a sex worker helps to fuel the belief that this is indeed a dangerous form of work, entangled with drugs and crime (Bucci, 2017). Stories of rescue appear in the media, both relating to Australian situations and to the work of Australian charity organisations overseas, and yet very few cases of human trafficking into the Australian sex industry have been prosecuted, with only nine recorded for Australia in 2019 in the annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* (US Department of State, 2020). Media headlines written to give the

impression trafficking victims or underage prostitutes have been found are used to entice readers, yet it is often the case no such evidence exists. For example, in the news article, *"Sexual servitude raids at karaoke bars add sinister edge to worker exploitation."* (Ferguson, 11 December 2015), the story was about worker exploitation in Melbourne and Perth, yet the words 'sexual servitude' were used to grab the attention of the audience. No illegal workers were identified during the raids, and although these were in response to allegations of wage fraud, doubtful contracts, and sexual slavery, it was the latter which was the focus of the headline. In a similar instance, the headline, *"Madam Kim faces jail for laundering money through her ring of illegal sex workers"* (The Age, 11 December 2015) gave the impression sex workers who were in Australia illegally worked at the premises; something one equates with human trafficking. The charges Madame Kim faced were related to being a manager with no licence to run an establishment where sex work takes place, so the headline was inappropriate and misleading.

When the report about raids on Perth karaoke bars was in the news, I was a member of a sex worker support group, and we discussed these incidents.

> *"Again, the headlines single us out, making it look like it's all about us but it isn't. Just the same old story about supposed illegal workers here as sex slaves being exploited. Did they find any? No! Of course they didn't! But a couple of my clients are talking about it and will it affect us. They want to know will police start watching private sex workers."*
> (Interview with Victoria J - migrant sex worker, Perth, 2016)

When McKenzie, et al (2011) reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper alleged links between the Australian sex industry and international crime networks involved in human trafficking, they claimed:

> *The syndicate allegedly convinces Asian women to come to Australia to study. They are then forced to work as sex slaves in brothels.* (McKenzie, et al, 2011)

Although supplied with information, state and local government authorities took no action, thus prompting the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the ABC television programme *Four Corners* to conduct their own investigation into international criminal involvement in human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, where they named and filmed the brothels in question, exposing these workplaces and possibly

putting the sex workers at risk of being identified.[13] The Australian Sex Workers Association, Scarlet Alliance, refers to this type of reporting as hysteria (ABC Radio Australia, 2012).

Rita, a member of a church I was attending, expressed a view which I heard several times throughout this study, that is, girls must be trafficked into the Australian sex industry, giving the reason nobody would do this job unless under duress. We were discussing the aforementioned episode of *Four Corners* several of the congregation had seen.

> *"Well what do you expect them to do if some criminals are forcing them into it? They can't say no even if they wanted to because these Asian girls are brought here to work in the brothels and they can't get away. They're trapped."* (Rita - member of a church discussion group, Perth, 2011)

David, from the same church, added his opinion to the discussion.

> *"The police should raid all of the Perth brothels like the ones in Melbourne and rescue the women kept in them. Why don't they do that? They know where they are from the ads in the papers."* (David - member of a church discussion group, Perth, 2011)

These sentiments from Rita and David, in response to an episode of the popular current affairs program *Four Corners* are examples of the media shaping public opinion.

During an interview in 2012 with a Bishop from the same church, he told me of the work being done by a small organisation, Linda's House of Hope, to rescue women from prostitution in Perth, which he believed had *"many victims of human trafficking and sexual slavery"* (Interview with Bishop H, Perth, 2012). This organisation is supported by donations and its work is promoted through the publications of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in Perth (Phillips, 2008; The Record, 2014). I was unable to secure an interview with anyone from Linda's House of Hope. I was able to find mention of the organisation in the media, online, and in both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church news publications.

[13] A video of reporter Nick McKenzie driving around the streets of Melbourne is available in the article http://www.smh.com.au/national/legal-brothels-linked-to-international-sex-trafficking-rings-20111009-1lfxs.html accessed 19 November 2016.

I met with the Archbishop of the church I was attending when he visited Perth in 2013, and he spoke of the Nordic model as the answer to reducing sex trafficking and ultimately prostitution. We discussed several incidents mentioned in the news and also in the Church publication *Family Voice,* where Asian and Australian women had allegedly been forced into prostitution (www.fava.org.au). When I mentioned migrant sex workers having chosen to come to Australia for work, the Archbishop spoke of these women not having freedom to choose. I asked had he spoken with any migrant sex workers about this, but he said he based his opinions on the work of the Church and on what he had read from the publications of organisations such as Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH), Linda's House of Hope, and Project Respect.

By conducting several interviews, I have noticed that members of anti-prostitution lobby groups tend to focus on facts and figures then use them to fuel support for their cause. *Family Voice Australia: A Christian voice for family, faith and freedom*[14] was shown to me on several occasions by members of one lobby group as a source of the truth about the evils of prostitution, human trafficking, and the benefits of following the Nordic model, where men purchasing sexual services are prosecuted. The alleged facts and figures in these publications were never questioned by the members I spoke with, and they re-quoted these to others in an attempt to gain support for a number of causes. When I questioned the actual source of these figures on women trafficked into prostitution, one interviewee responded, quite emotionally.

> *"This is a Christian publication. It doesn't lie! We know the truth about these sorts of things and it's terrible. So many unfortunate women trafficked into Australia and forced to work as prostitutes. You know … they are constantly being raped and beaten by their pimps. Forced to have abortions as well…. They're murdering unborn babies. It's all connected"* (Excerpt from an interview with G.W. - member of a church-based, anti-prostitution lobby group, Perth, December 2012).

The interviewee's voice was raised during this section of the interview. She became emotional, with tears in her eyes when speaking of the rapes, beatings, and abortions.

[14] This is available in print form, which I was shown, as well as a website.

The views of non-sex workers in this section on the influence of the media on public opinion seem to be formed through reading publications, watching current affairs programs, and reading news articles. It would appear none of the anti-prostitution sentiments were formed after having talked to anyone from the sex industry.

6.2.2 A demand for trafficked women?

In 2008, Project Respect, a feminist support and referral service for women in the sex industry, released a list of reasons on their website stating why there would be a demand for trafficked women in the Australian sex industry (Project Respect, 2008b). Firstly, this NGO determined there was a *"lack of women in Australia who were willing to do prostitution"* thus requiring trafficked women to fill the gaps in the supply and demand chain. This construction of the situation in the Australian sex industry denies the existence of women who are capable of migrating for sex work, labelling them all as victims of human trafficking. Stating there was a *"lack of women in Australia who were willing to do prostitution"* requires supporting evidence, which appears to be missing from Project Respect's list. However, according to Curnow (2012), this and their other claims are re-quoted as fact and used to gain support for other anti-trafficking organisations like ACRATH (Curnow, 2012, p13). Such a racist statement is reminiscent of claims made during the Nineteenth Century, where our 'decent white women' would not become prostitutes, and the white slavery myth grew out of fear and the desire to control the migration of working-class women (see Chapter 4).

The next two factors on their list reflect Project Respect's negative view of the men who purchase sexual services in Australia, stating that customers demand women who are compliant and who they can be violent towards. These claims do not seem to be reflected in sex worker accounts of client behaviour in Australia, either in the literature or among the women I have interviewed or listened to. Here again, there is no evidence given to support these statements, and yet by listing them Project Respect creates a framework which reinforces both the victim narrative of the trafficked sex worker in Australia and sex work as a dangerous occupation. The final claim made by Project Respect is that customers in Australia have *"racialised ideas that certain ethnicities such as Asian women have the above qualities;"* compliant and willing to be subjected to violence. This is one of the many stereotypes Asian

sex workers in Australia wish to overcome, with statements such as *"We are strong and choose when, where and how we work"* (Cross Borders Collective, 2012) and from an interview with a Korean sex worker who works in Brisbane, but was visiting Perth:

> *"Some men I see say I am an exotic flower. They treat me well and anyone who thinks he can get rough … I tell him to leave. The house (brothel) won't allow it and I won't allow it."* (Interview with Ara - Korean sex worker, Perth, 2012)

6.2.3 Over-estimating the problem

Project Respect estimates that around 1,000 women are trafficked to Australia each year. These women are said to be under contract and still paying off a debt (Project Respect, 2008a). While not supported by evidence, this figure of 1,000 women has been re-quoted and used by other agencies such as ACRATH to influence their anti-trafficking policies and actions (ACRATH, 2011; humantrafficking.org, 2015). Over-estimating the number of sex workers trafficked to Australia serves to incite action and look for victims where they may not exist, such as happens when Asian brothels are raided.

> *"If Project Respect or the Salvos turn up at an establishment or event and you don't let them in, they call the police and say you are all trafficked. This doesn't help our relationship with the police."* (Name withheld - Asian sex worker, Melbourne, 2014)

Project Respect is a feminist organisation which aims *to empower women in the sex industry, supporting them in whatever decisions they make* (from an interview with a representative from Project Respect, Melbourne, 2013). However, members of Australia's national sex worker organisation Scarlet Alliance disagree with the actions and findings of Project Respect, seeing them as *a group intent on getting women out of sex work* (from an interview with a representative from Scarlet Alliance, Melbourne, 2013). Their issues with the Salvation Army are discussed in Chapter **5**, escalating with Scarlet Alliance members protesting outside the Sydney headquarters of the Salvation Army in June 2016, where they carried signs declaring "Save us from the Salvos" and "Don't cash in on stigma" (Sainty, 2016). Perhaps in some instances, Project Respect and the Salvos (Salvation Army) feared the workers were victims of human trafficking, being held against their will. However, the evidence I gathered suggests this happens too often as a predictable response when anti-trafficking abolitionist organisations are refused entry to brothels. Initiating

these police raids has a detrimental effect; denying the workers agency, making assumptions about their immigration status, reasons for being involved in the Australian sex industry, and working conditions inside the establishment, largely based on stereotypes and victim narratives constructed around Asian sex workers, as this quote from an interview with a Chinese sex worker illustrates:

> *"We have raid one night with police but all five girls there have working visa. They think we in danger and keep asking. But no problems."* (Interview with Tina - Chinese sex worker, Melbourne, 2013)

Those workers born in Australia of Asian descent are caught up in this *persecution* (term used by some of the sex workers interviewed to describe this type of action) as much as visitors on working visas.

> *"This persecution has got to stop! I was born here. My parents are from Malaysia. I got caught up in a raid because the brothel where I work didn't let the do-gooders in."* (Interview with Lily - sex worker, Sydney, 2015)

This appears as an issue of racism to those workers caught up in the police raids which result from reports lodged by anti-trafficking organisations over-reacting to refusal of entry to a place of work.

In 2015, I spoke with Emily, a 20 year old Australian born sex worker whose parents are Vietnamese. The Sydney brothel she worked in had been raided and any foreign workers had to produce visas.

Angela: *"Tell me what happened, Emily."*
Emily: *"The police came and kind of separated out any foreign girls. I didn't move cos I was born here. But they wanted to see visas, including mine. Well, I haven't got one, have I? I said "I'm Australian.""*
Angela: *"Did they listen to you?"*
Emily: *"One guy smiled … like sarcastic. That made me angry. He told me I had to take proof of residency status to the police station. I said I would take my Australian birth certificate, would that be OK?"*
Angela: *"What was his response?"*
Emily: *"He said "Sorry but well, you look …um…" So I added "Australian?" He smiled."*
(Excerpt from interview with Emily - sex worker, Sydney, 2015)

Emily's beautiful way of handling this situation was due to the fact it was not the first time she had experienced such discrimination because of what she herself calls her 'Asian face'. Working in the Australian sex industry, her looks mark her as a possible victim of human trafficking or an illegal immigrant; something which Emily

believes would not happen in most other lines of employment. This becomes an issue of race constructing Asian migrant sex workers, or anyone who looks like a migrant sex worker, as victims of human trafficking.

6.3 A global workforce

The labour force of today is globalising, with many people migrating for work, taking advantage of opportunities they hope to find in destination countries. People who move from developed world nations to settle in other lands are often referred to as ex-patriots or expats, while those who re-settle from the developing world are known as migrants; a division based on race and skin colour (Koutonin, 2015). This division of terms reflects a gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', even though migration for work and/or a change of lifestyle are the primary motivation for both groups, migrants and expats. As a destination country, Australia is seen as an attractive option for overseas workers, with its generally high standard of living, favourable climate, stable political situation, and relatively crime free and safe communities. A good exchange rate, better working conditions, the possibility of more work available than in home countries, as well as the draw of travel and experiencing life overseas are all factors that may influence a person's decision to migrate for work, regardless of their skill level or economic status. Migrant sex workers are no different, with their patterns of migration for personal betterment corresponding to general migration practices.

> *Every year about 400,000 Australians visit my country. 280,000 Aussie men and 120,000 Aussie women come looking for adventure, to study, visit friends, find cheap shopping, or do business. Many work illegally, like teaching English, or doing computer work, import, export, translation. Many also overstay their visa, and worry about the police catching them. And every year about 76,000 Thai people visit Australia. Around 40,000 Thai men and 36,000 Thai women come looking for adventure, to study, visit family or to do business. Like the Australians I know, some will work illegally as farm workers, domestic workers, cleaners, sex workers, cooks, or masseuses. Some will also overstay their visa, and worry about the police catching them. Same-same, but different?* (Pornpit Puckmai, a Thai background sex worker, quoted in E. Jeffreys, 2009).

Pornpit Puckmai sums up the situation by using the phrase "*Same-same, but different?"* implying that although visitors to both countries sometimes work illegally or overstay their visas, they are viewed differently.

There is a vast informal economic sector in most destination countries, with some migrants finding work for cash in labour intensive seasonal jobs such as fruit picking, farm work, or domestic work. These business ventures are unregulated and uncontrolled, yet they do not elicit the same interest as the sex industry. Here I note a media report in 2015 on migrant workers being underpaid and mistreated in other Australian industries such as agricultural and factory work triggered discussion on this subject. Labour hire firms were accused of 'skimming off' (keeping) part of the wages paid to them by employers. The Government responded by announcing it would examine the payslips of working holiday visa holders, aiming to stop workers from being exploited, while the Opposition contacted the Fair Work Ombudsman asking for an interim report (Conifer, 2015). However, these workers were not immediately labelled as victims of human trafficking. The same response is not possible for migrant sex workers; nobody offers to examine their payslips, and the Opposition does not jump in quickly to suggest involving the Fair Work Ombudsman. Examining rates of pay and workplace practices appear to be of secondary concern to the Government, with moral issues about prostitution taking precedence over conditions of employment. As stated by Agustin (2007) in her work on the rescue industry where she discusses migrant sex work:

> *The association with sex overwhelmingly affects how migrants are treated, excluding them as travellers and workers, and constructing them as passive objects forced to work and travel in ways they never wanted.* (Agustin, 2007, p11)

This prevailing narrative fuels responses in Australia where migrant sex workers from developing nations are too easily labelled as victims of human trafficking, while those who visit from developed, Western nations and work in the sex industry are generally thought of as being on holiday. They are referred to as touring girls by both themselves and others in the sex industry, and do not seem to be considered as victims of human trafficking by the authorities. Neither do they tend to attract the attention of abolitionists searching for victims of trafficking to rescue (information gained from interviews conducted with sex workers, between 2011 and 2016).

> *"Rescue me? From what? Some of the dickheads I have to put up with? Yeah, they can rescue me from them. Seriously though, I advertise that I'm here touring from New Zealand for a few weeks only. Nobody ever says I've been trafficked."* (Interview with Miss Victoria - sex worker from New Zealand, Perth, 2012)

6.3.1 Same, same; but different

Here I examine the stories told to me by two sex workers, as an illustration of how stereotypes can affect the treatment a person receives from groups purporting to help sex workers and also from their friends. Anna and Bridget are both here from overseas and they know each other through an industry support group for sex workers in Perth, where they meet socially about once a month.

I interviewed Bridget, a 32 year old Irish sex worker, in Perth in 2013. She said,

"Was I forced into sex work? Did I have a choice? Who really has a choice about anything they do in life?"

Bridget got into sex work in Ireland where she had a job as a bank teller, but wanted to leave because they had just had another bank robbery and it all felt too dangerous. So she went into sex work because it seemed like a safer option (she laughed at this). A few of her girlfriends in Ireland and then Australia knew but they were OK with it.

"*Now, in all the time I have worked in the Australian sex industry while at uni and then when I qualified as a nurse, nobody ever referred to me as a migrant sex worker. It sounds bad and I don't mean it to, but nobody tries to rescue me or suggest I'm a trafficking victim because … well, I'm not Asian. How racist is that?"*

"I don't mean I want to be rescued … What I'm trying to get at is they assume I'm OK, but an Asian migrant sex worker should be pitied, is frightened, can't speak for herself, and must need rescuing."
(Excerpts from interview with Bridget - Irish sex worker, Perth, 2013)

I also interviewed Anna, a 27 year old, Korean student and sex worker, in Perth in 2013.

"I came here from Korea two years ago to study Mathematics at the university. I have a scholarship and can legally work up to eight hours a week in a paid job. Rent and food are expensive. I got a job as a sex worker because my friend was doing it too and she earned good money and had fun. Better than a job in a shop or restaurant."

"People think Asian girls are treated badly in brothels, but I work in an Asian brothel, and everything is good."

"I told an Australian friend I worked as a sex worker, but she was the wrong friend to tell. She started crying and begged me to stop. Then she gave me information from a group who rescue victims of human trafficking in the sex industry. She wouldn't listen when I said I wasn't trafficked. I chose to work in the brothel."

"Be careful who you tell because not all friends can accept what you do."
(Excerpts from interview with Anna - Korean sex worker, Perth, 2013)

Anna's friend kept phoning and insisting she could get her out of the place. Then she came with a man from her church to see Anna at home. It took a long time to get them to leave Anna alone and this woman doesn't talk to Anna anymore.

6.3.2 Comparison of these two cases

Here we have two women, both migrants to Australia: Bridget who worked in the sex industry before coming to Australia, seeing it as a safer option than the work she had been doing; and Anna who entered the industry after arriving and deciding it would be a good way to make some money. Both women worked in the sex industry to support themselves while studying at Australian universities. Bridget often advertised as "Touring Western Australia from Ireland".

These women had very different experiences when they told friends about their involvement in the sex industry. Whereas Bridget's friends were happy as long as they thought their friend was being sensible and staying safe, Anna's friend and the man from church seemed to assume she had fallen under the influence of human traffickers. The image of the Asian victim of human trafficking into the sex industry has been utilised by popular media and anti-trafficking activists so frequently it has turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Victims of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry are expected to be Asian, therefore Asian migrant sex workers in Australia are expected to be victims of human trafficking. There is, of course, no evidence to support this hypothesis, and yet it is the underlying premise for much of the discrimination against Asian migrant sex workers, or at the very least the moral panic and rescue attempts foisted upon them by well-meaning citizens such as Anna's friend.

6.4 We speak but you don't listen: migrant sex workers

> *"Do I think sex work makes me empowered? Does working in an office make you feel empowered?"* (Interview with L.J. - sex worker, Melbourne 2014)

This issue of empowerment is spoken of as an important factor for sex workers, and yet it is not a person's occupation which empowers them. Rather, empowerment is the process whereby the capacity to make choices and convert them into outcomes is

increased. The empowerment of sex workers results from allowing their voices to be heard regarding decisions affecting their lives, and by affording them the freedom to choose to work in the sex industry. Specifically, migrant sex workers want to speak for themselves. Token consultation with them is not enough; they want to drive policy and be active in law reform processes. However, this is hindered by the preconceived ideas surrounding the image of an Asian sex worker who has come to Australia to work. Interviews I conducted with Asian migrant sex workers between 2011 and 2016 revealed many disappointments about the way they are treated and viewed in Australia.

> *"They always every time want to speak for me, not ask me!" "They tell me clients treat Asian women bad."* and *"They produce bad stories of what they think sex workers do."* (Quotes from three interviews, Perth 2014)

These women do not fit the image of a frightened victim of trafficking, unable to speak for themselves. The fact that English is not their first language does not mean they are unable to converse in English, and it's possible that many of them would be able to control negotiations between sex worker and client, regardless of any perceived language barrier.

> *"My English not good but I learn quick, words I need for job. Work with men I talk and improve English. Not just sex whole time, some talk. Good things, sport, food, travel."* (Interview with Ruby - Chinese sex worker, Sydney 2015)

The following comment from the Prostitutes Collective of Victoria (1994) refers to interviewing migrant sex workers:

> *Don't be patronising. There's a good chance that the other person is smarter, quicker, more experienced in survival, more successful and, sometimes, more informed than you are.* (Prostitutes Collective of Victoria, 1994, p47)

You can get bored in any job; sex work is no different. The following was told to me by a Thai sex worker in Melbourne 2014 when I asked her why she had come to Australia.

> *"I got bored with my job in Thailand tourist area of Phuket. Always the same. Tourist guys you see once then they go. I wanted to come to Australia to get different type of clients. Not so many tourists. Now I have regular clients who always see me. Sex is the same so the job is the same. But I feel good cos some men want to see me again and again."* (Interview with Som - Thai sex worker, Melbourne, 2014)

When I asked why she had chosen Australia specifically, Som said her friend had

come here first then told her to come. This woman had chosen to come to Australia for better work opportunities and experiences. This is no different from those who migrate for other occupations, not seeking to change jobs but hoping a change of scenery would be good. The prevailing narrative is one of women migrating to improve their economic situation, while seeking better working conditions, and perhaps the adventure of living and working overseas. However, the construction of migrating for work in the Australian sex industry as a situation of human trafficking denies these women a voice, under the racist assumption they are unable to speak for themselves.

A key finding from my discussions, observations, and interviews was that migrant sex workers in Australia do not need to be rescued; rather they want to be listened to as an important part of the sex worker rights movement. This would prevent anti-prostitution abolitionists using the commonly perceived plight of migrant sex workers to legitimise their anti-trafficking initiatives. The following quote from an interview with Carrie, a Chinese sex worker who had been in Australia for about four years, illustrates how people can construct an image based on their own set of values and beliefs.

> *"Some people want to 'rescue' me but can't cope with the reality. They see things from their point of view. If I don't want to be saved by them, they say I must be scared of someone."* (Interview with Carrie - Chinese sex worker, Perth, 2014)

Asian sex workers in Australia want to be supported, not saved. They are generally able to make their own choices so want to be allowed to do so. In September 2015, Jules Kim, a prominent member of Scarlet Alliance and, from January 2016, the new CEO of this organisation, gave a presentation at the *'Damned Whores and God's Police – 40 Years on'* conference in Sydney Australia, where she stated:

> *"Today, we whores are still damned by powerful and pervasive stereotypes. But unlike the whores of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, we have the reverse issue, that is, the stereotypes refuse to recognise our ability to have chosen our work. This holds particularly true for sex workers who are Asian women or migrants. For us the idea that we could have possibly made a choice to sex work cannot be conceived. Instead, we are seen as forced, tricked, coerced, victims of our circumstances or trafficked sex slaves."* (Kim, 2015)

Kim goes on to explain that she is not denying the existence of trafficking or

exploitation in the Australian sex industry. She points out that this is connected to good and bad working conditions and employers, as can be found in many other occupations. The small number of cases of trafficking relating to the sex industry, 14 since 2004, did not fit the stereotype of trickery and deception; rather they involved labour exploitation (Kim, 2015). However, where migration and sex work come into the equation, the trafficking framework is used to assess the situation and wrongfully label incidents of labour exploitation as human trafficking. This incites anti-prostitution abolitionist activism in response to a situation which has been misrepresented. Kim (2015) further states:

> *"We are indeed damned, but we are damned by the stereotypes not by our work. We are whores and we are proud to be whores."*[15] (Kim, 2015)

6.4.1 One narrative, two perspectives

The following interview illustrates a case where the details of a migrant sex worker's story were not listened to by a well-meaning citizen wanting to help her.

I met Nancy, a 58 year old member of a Christian group helping unmarried mothers, in 2016. A friend had told her about my research into human trafficking in the Australian sex industry. She wanted to speak to me about a young woman she knew from Thailand who was pregnant and had apparently escaped from a Perth brothel. I asked could I meet the woman in question and was initially told no; however this did eventually happen. Nancy met me in a park where we could sit and watch her two grandchildren play. She asked about my research, wanting to know why I was looking into human trafficking and had I met and helped a lot of victims. I told her my research was looking at policies and discussing things in general with people; that no, I hadn't met or helped a lot of trafficking victims as that was not the aim of my research. After about ten minutes we were joined by Ratana, a 26 year old Thai woman who was about six months pregnant.

Nancy: *"Ratana, tell Angela how you got trafficked to Australia."*
Ratana: *"A man brought me here."*
Nancy: *"Did you know him?"*
Ratana: *"He know my family."*
Nancy: *"She was trafficked. Tricked. It's terrible."*
Angela: *"Can we go back a bit. Tell me about your life in Thailand."*

[15] Sex worker is the preferred terminology used by sex workers. Whore is a term used within their own community, but it is not acceptable for others to use the term in referring to sex workers. (See Kim, 2015)

Ratana: *"I work in village but move to tourist bar area. More money"*
Angela: *"What work did you do in the bar?"*
Ratana: *"Serve drinks at first. But more money if I have drinks, spend time with tourist men. Some offer money if I have sex."*
Angela: *"Did you like your job?"*
Ratana: *"I like some of it. Like any job. Some day good, some not so good. When tired or maybe customer not so nice. But same in shop or restaurant. No different."*
Nancy: *"It must be different. These men wanted you to sleep with them. They are just creeps!"*
Angela: *"Ratana, tell us, were you free to leave the bar if you wanted to?"*
Ratana: *"Yes, but I want to work, earn some good money. Then travel. My cousin, she want to go to Australia so I want to go too. We plan together. Work in Australia for a while. Sex worker earn big money there."*
Angela: *"Did someone help you with travel plans?"*
Ratana: *"Yes, a man my family know help us buy tickets, get visas. We ask him. He come with us cos he have business in Australia."*
Angela: *"What sort of business does he have?"*
Ratana: *"He help students and workers come to Australia and other countries."*
Nancy: *"So, he is a trafficker? Did you pay him for this service?"*
Ratana: *"We pay him a small fee, but everything in life cost something. Nothing for nothing. He introduce us to nice place to work here. We do sex work but I get pregnant. Stupid. Condom break. But I want to keep baby so lady I work for help me. Then I meet Nancy."*
(Excerpt from interview with Ratana - Thai sex worker, and Nancy, her supporter, Perth, 2016)

Nancy insisted Ratana and her cousin had been trafficked from Thailand to Australia by a man known to them, even though it appears they approached him for help with visas and purchasing tickets. They did pay a fee, but as Ratana says "*Nothing for nothing*". Cases like this will never be clear cut; they depend on how a person constructs their view of the situation. To Nancy, a woman who approaches this from an anti-prostitution activist perspective, anyone encouraging another person to work in the sex industry, regardless of prior knowledge or consent, is at fault. Nancy considered that the two women involved in this were forced to participate in sex work out of the necessity to earn more money.

> *"What choice did they have? They needed the money. Those poor girls were forced to have sex with those men in the bars if they wanted to earn enough money to help their families, travel, have a decent lifestyle. Then they were brought to Perth by that man and had to do it again."*
> (Interview with Nancy - member of a Christian group helping unmarried mothers, Perth, 2016)

However, the sex worker I spoke with did not appear to be of the same opinion as

Nancy. She chose to move from her village to where there were opportunities to work in the tourist industry then decided to take advantage of the better paid positions in the bar. Nancy spoke of Ratana as a victim of trafficking who ended up in Australia pregnant because of sex work, whereas Ratana told a story of choosing to come to Australia to work in the sex industry, accidentally getting pregnant. One narrative, two perspectives; but whose voice speaks the loudest? It depends who is listening.

6.4.2 Don't tell me I am a prisoner

I interviewed Lamai, a 29 year old migrant sex worker from Thailand, in 2013. She had been living and working in Perth, Western Australia for about two years.

Lamai: *"One guy book me. He want to just talk, no sex. He ask me who force me to do sex work. Did someone threaten me, my family in Thailand? I tell him no, all fine. But he give me a phone number if I need to be rescued."*
Angela: *"Did you see him again?"*
Lamai: *"I saw him in a coffee shop. He came right up to me, call me by my work name not Lamai, and say he can help me escape prostitution if they keep me prisoner. I'm in a coffee shop! Do I look like a prisoner? But he gave me a paper from some group he was with who rescue Asian girls like me. Like what? I throw it away!"* (Lamai's tone was angry at this point.) *"I meet some weird people in this job. That's OK. But don't tell me I am a prisoner! My life, my mind, I decide!"*
(Excerpt from interview with Lamai - Thai sex worker, Perth, 2013)

The interview continued with discussion of Lamai's life in Thailand and her plans to visit other cities in Australia. She was able to save money while working in Australia as well as send some money home to help support her family. Lamai appeared happy with her choice to be a migrant sex worker and was quite adamant she did not need to be rescued.

> *"I like this job. I have money and feel safe where I work. Maybe I can do some study for a business course. Some girls here study at work. So when they go home, they have choices."*

(Excerpt from interview with Lamai - Thai sex worker, Perth, 2013)

Lamai's words illustrate how a little knowledge of human trafficking in the sex industry can cause someone to assume all Asian sex workers are being held prisoner and exploited. The incident in the coffee shop was upsetting and threatening for Lamai because she did not like being approached by a client who used her work

name and spoke of prostitution in a place she frequented for relaxation. She said the man was disrespectful and she objected to being 'outed' and labelled in a public place. The man in question probably did not realise the effect his approach would have on Lamai; however, good deeds done with the best intentions can still backfire if the actions are not thought through.

According to Pearson (2007):

> *Government attention to trafficking, as far as sex workers are concerned, has meant increased immigration raids on brothels, harassment of Asian sex workers in particular and disruption of their work. Three sex worker organisations providing outreach to migrant sex workers stated that non-trafficked migrant sex workers working legally in Australia have been wrongly detained in raids at workplaces under the suspicion that they are trafficked. Sex workers who are Australian citizens of Asian descent have also been subjected to increased harassment.* (Pearson, 2007, p52)

A decade later, the above quote continues to be echoed in the sentiments of the sex workers I regularly speak with and the organisations which support them. For example,

> *"Sometimes women from one of the rescue mobs come. They offer us food vouchers, phone charge cards, movie tickets if we talk to them. I look Asian because my Dad is Vietnamese, so they always talk to me. They always want to rescue me from sex work and give me information about trafficking."* (Interview with Ash - sex worker, Perth, 2016)

The anti-trafficking response in Australia and the media hysteria fuelled by this has resulted in legislation being introduced which is detrimental to sex workers. According to sex worker activist Jules Kim (2012):

> *Although trafficking is not the experience for most people working in the Australian sex industry, ill-informed and speculative perceptions about trafficking are frequently used as an excuse to increase regulation and criminalisation of the sex industry.* (Kim, 2012)

6.5 We know what we want

Several of the sex workers I interviewed shared the view that some members of society feel the need to examine the lives and work of sex workers in a way that does not appear to happen for other occupations.

> *"What makes me an unhappy hooker is when other people bring my happiness/unhappiness into conversations about my work, and my right to choose what I do for work."* (Interview with Trisha - sex worker, Perth, 2016)

Jane Green, a prominent member of Vixen Collective which is an organisation in Victoria, Australia, for sex workers run by sex workers, stated the following when interviewed at a Forum on Regulating Sex Work in Western Australia.

> *"I used to be an accountant. No one ever asked me about my level of choice or enjoyment in that particular career as that would be patently absurd!"* (Jane Green - sex worker, speaking at a forum in Perth, 2015)

It could be said that many occupations have their dangers; one has to be careful while working, remain alert and take precautionary measures. However, sex work seems to be the only occupation abolitionists want to criminalise using worker safety as their main argument. In defence of the sex industry, Elena Jeffreys from Scarlet Alliance states in an article,

> *"We want the feminist movement to stop punishing us for our strengths, stop rewarding us for our pain, stop gaining privilege on the back of our needs, and to listen when we speak."* (E. Jeffreys, 2011)

Empowerment, happiness, freedom of choice, safety; these are concepts about which much has been discussed and written in relation to sex workers, while other industries may not have received this attention. The release of the book, *Prostitution Narratives: Stories of Survival in the Sex Trade* (2016) supports this. The editors of *Prostitution Narratives* claim their book provides the vehicle through which women who were abused in prostitution can speak out; that there is an imbalance in the narratives told in the mainstream media about prostitution, portraying it as like any other job. They also claimed that sex worker activists attended launches of the book and harassed speakers (Davoren, 2016). Norma and Tankard Reist (2016) state:

> *In compiling the book, we aim to redress the imbalance in mainstream publishing on the subject of prostitution so that the voices of those who have survived this reality can at last be heard.* (Norma and Tankard Reist (eds.), 2016, p4)

However, it would seem those who are pro sex work are also of the opinion there is an imbalance in mainstream media. They could use the same phrase '*so that the voices of those who have survived this reality can at last be heard'* to describe situations where sex workers are denied the opportunity to speak unless they are providing the appropriate stereotypical tales of violence and misfortune, sometimes referred to as tragedy porn (E. Jeffreys, 2011).

Janice Raymond, a prominent member of the international Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), referred to *Prostitution Narratives* as *an antidote to the hollow cant that prostitution is inevitable, a choice, and just a job like any other* (Spinifex Press Reviews, 2016). The book being reviewed is a collection of stories where women from around the world describe their experiences in the sex industry. They have been gathered together because they share a sameness; a view of the sex industry, which is disturbing, violent, and brutal. Prominent abolitionist activist Melissa Farley (2016) provided the following review:

> *These survivors of prostitution are the leading edge of the abolitionist movement; their voices are the bedrock on which our movement is built. Like slave narratives, prostitution survivors' truths are compelling, revealing, and deeply disturbing.* (Melissa Farley, Spinifex Press Reviews, 2016)

With reviews from two of the world's leading anti-prostitution activists, this collection of accounts is being hailed as the real story of prostitution. This one volume may supersede any number of accounts written by sex workers who claim to enjoy, not be damaged, or even be indifferent about their work. This is because it is easier for people to accept the notion of violence and abuse in the sex industry than it is to see it in any other light, and while not denying these shocking events do sometimes occur, they are not necessarily the norm.

The picture presented by popular media is one of violence, drugs, and abuse, where foreign workers have been trafficked into the industry. Such incidents are seldom linked to other occupations, according to Karina, a sex worker from Brisbane:

> *"They watch too much TV. People who judge what we do think it's all like in those cop shows where the victim is always a hooker, never a shop assistant. I quit my first job as a teenager on a checkout cos too many customers were rude and one guy twisted my arm, threatened me with a knife and stole money from the cash drawer."* (Interview with Karina - sex worker in Brisbane and Perth, 2015)

According to Joudo Larsen and Renshaw (2012, p4), incidents where workers are recruited and brought to Australia on Temporary Work (Skilled) visas have at times resulted in exploitation. This exploitation exists on a continuum in the workplace, with some migrants experiencing minor violations of their rights, while others become victims of severe exploitation which may lead to trafficking-like conditions.

There is evidence that nurses, chefs, cooks, meat workers, domestic workers, agricultural and factory workers have been victims of workplace exploitation (David, 2010), and yet it is the act of selling and purchasing a sexual service which dooms the sex industry to moral and value judgements. According to Elena Jeffreys, the 2012 president of the Australian sex workers association, Scarlet Alliance, the Australian Federal Police found 147 sex workers working in trafficking-like conditions in the period from 2003 – 2012. This included those who had consented to poor working conditions. Jeffreys stated *"This is not about force, and this is not about slavery. This is about work conditions."* She indicated that with over 20,000 sex workers working in Australia at any one time, *"147 in 10 years is an issue, but not an everyday issue."* (Elena Jeffreys, from an interview on ABC Radio Australia, 2012). However, frequent claims of the difficulty in researching trafficking, particularly within the sex industry where people do not step forward readily to be counted, have led to a gross over-estimation on the size and nature of trafficking in the Australian sex industry (Kim & Jeffreys, 2013, p65).

Workers in industries have been organising into groups and collectives, speaking up for their rights for over 250 years (Wilhoit, 2005). However, when sex worker organisations do step forward, they risk being labelled as not a true representation of sex workers. Arguments are put forward claiming these organisations don't know about the 'real issues' faced by sex workers.

> *"Anti sex work groups regularly portray sex worker organisations as run by those in positions of privilege, or as "industry lobby groups". This is a blatant lie designed to silence sex workers and their representative organisations."* (Jane Green - sex worker, speaking at a forum in Perth, 2015)

6.5.1 The right to choose

Public discussions on sex work often take on a mantle of feminist ideology, conflated with human trafficking, yet not always involving the very people who should be at the forefront of every discussion concerning their welfare, workplaces, and legislation which will affect their livelihood and safety; sex workers themselves. "*Nothing About Us Without US*" is the catchcry of several sex worker organisations (ICRSE, 2015), and although borrowed from disability rights groups from the 1980s, this slogan captures the feelings of sex worker organisations around the world as they protest for their right to speak, but more importantly, to be listened to and heard.

> *"Often when discussing sex worker rights, things can become really heated. For us, this is because it is our lives and livelihoods that are on the line and at the end of the day, a simple truth remains, changing the law does not actually affect politicians, or even former sex workers, it affects those of us currently working in the industry today."* (Excerpt from a speech by Rebecca - sex worker, Perth 2015)

Cameron Cox, the CEO of the Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP) in Sydney spoke out regarding students, particularly overseas students, turning to sex work to pay fees and support themselves. He commented:

> *"We see this as more a good thing. Whereas most people see it as 'oh, that's terrible, they have to go and do sex work'. They don't have to do sex work. They could get a job at McDonald's, or stacking shelves at Woolworths, any job that overly didn't interfere with their studying. And one of the jobs that doesn't interfere with studying and gives you a good income is sex work."* (Cameron Cox, Sydney, 2016)

Judgements are often made from outside looking in. Cox spoke out for the group, clearly explaining that it's a matter of choice and of perspective. As an example of this, in 2016 I interviewed Brooke, a 29 year old Chinese woman studying at an Australian university who does private escort work. Brooke said she was a little shocked when she went out with friends and saw girls in nightclubs go home with men they had only just met.

Brooke: *"I'm doing a degree at uni and escort work gives me time to study. I can choose when I work."*
Angela: *"Have you been doing escort work for long?"*
Brooke: *"I started six months ago when I quit my job as a waitress. The pay is better, the hours are better. There's no comparison."*
Angela: *"How did you get into escort work?"*
Brooke: *"I needed a job and looked in the paper. I saw the sex work ads. Read some of them and thought, why not? The girls on Saturday night were giving it away for free. At least I might get paid for it."*

Later in the interview,

Brooke: *"Now I have time to go to classes, study and work when I want to. My choice! And I don't sleep around like those girls in the nightclubs!"*
Angela: *"So, you see what you do as different?"*
Brooke: *"Of course. Mine is a business transaction. Two people choose to do something intimate, then leave."*
Angela: *"Do any of your friends know?"*
Brooke: *"I've got a couple of ex-friends who thought it was wrong that I was a sex worker. They said I didn't respect myself or my body.* (She laughed) *I spent a lot of time talking to them about their nightclub habits."*
Angela *"What do your clients think? Have you ever talked about this with them?*

Brooke *"Sure, it's not all sex. Some want to talk as well. They hate going to clubs and bars. Want to pay someone like me because it's better. They know what they will get – not someone too drunk or who wants a boyfriend."*
Angela *"Do you ever see clients again?"*
Brooke *"Some I see only once and some more times"*

(Excerpt from interview with Brooke - Chinese sex worker, Perth, 2013)

Brooke's view on sex work treats it as a job; a view shared by all of the sex workers I have worked with, spoken with, and listened to at forums over the years of this research. While comparing herself with girls '*sleeping around*' and '*giving it away for free*' Brooke told me of the respect she has for herself in her chosen line of work, contrary to the views of her ex-friends.

6.5.2 Consenting adults

I met Geoff, a 68 year old member of a lobby group against prostitution, while I was on holiday in Adelaide in 2016. He was introduced to me through a friend from church. I have included excerpts from our discussion because of his views on consenting adults.

> *"Consenting adults can do whatever they want with and to each other, without interference from the Government, church groups, and other do-gooders."* (Interview with Geoff - member of an anti-prostitution lobby group, Adelaide, 2016)

This was Geoff's opening statement when I interviewed him regarding his views on sex work, sex workers and human trafficking. When I asked him to clarify what he meant by consenting adults and how this related to the sex industry, he went on to add that in some instances consent could not be freely given. Geoff said that with prostitution women go into it precisely because their choices are limited, therefore their consent is compromised.

> *"My book group studied a new book, Prostitution Narratives - Stories of Survival in the Sex Trade, and it has really got me thinking about how real is it when women say they choose to work in prostitution?"* (Interview with Geoff, Adelaide 2016)

This becomes an issue of who can consent and who cannot; a paternalistic viewpoint that denies agency to sex workers by assuming they are unable to make decisions for themselves, putting them in a position similar to a child or person of diminished mental capability. In the case of a migrant sex worker, the possibility of being a

victim of human trafficking adds to this assumption. Accounts in *Prostitution Narratives* (2016) support these beliefs with stories of prostitution involving abuse, control, and violence. However, even the title of this book is offensive to sex workers, as Jules Kim, CEO of Scarlet Alliance, explains:

> *"'Prostitute' is synonymous with the idea that one is selling oneself. And that's definitely not the case for sex work. We sell a service – we don't sell ourselves." Jules Kim, CEO of sex worker's association Scarlet Alliance, said."* (Quoted in Cooper, 2016)

A woman consents to sex with a client who is paying her, but according to Geoff, sex isn't just a service you can sell, which is contrary to what the sex workers I have spoken with believe. Geoff stated,

"If sex is just a service then why is rape such a terrible crime, causing so much mental trauma to the victim? Surely sex is more than just a service? It involves body and mind." (Interview with Geoff, Adelaide 2016)

Geoff wanted to see the Nordic model introduced so that clients of prostitutes would be criminalised. The anti-prostitution lobby group he belonged to also supported this method to control the sex industry and prevent human trafficking in Australia. However, this model is not endorsed by sex workers, both in Australia and internationally, who believe it will be detrimental to their safety and will not stop human trafficking. Rather, evidence shows that the rights, health, and safety of sex workers are best supported by decriminalisation of the sex industry (Jones, 2018). According to Chateauvert (2014), when sex workers are profiled as victims of human trafficking, they are less likely to report crimes of violence to the police, thus making them more vulnerable.

Human trafficking is a heinous crime, against the tenets of any civilised society. This remains an undisputed fact, regardless of which side of the trafficking debate one takes. When viewed in its entirety, trafficking is migration gone wrong, where existing legal frameworks are not able to ensure the safety of women migrating for employment. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitation of various kinds, including sexual exploitation.

> *Based on a binary of rights, this debate posits that the rights of sex workers threaten the rights of women and girls who are victims of or are vulnerable to trafficking. It seems to be saying, therefore, that for the rights of the latter to be upheld the rights of the former need to necessarily be sacrificed.* (Mishra, 2016)

As discussed by Mishra (2016), the basic human rights in the debate about trafficking are that sex workers want their right to life and liberty preserved, as well as their right to work. Anti-trafficking activists want to see the rights of women and girls to live their lives free from slavery and torture preserved. The elements being examined are a woman's identity, her agency, her voice, and her sexuality. Those wanting to abolish all forms of sex work claim it is damaging to women, denying sex workers are able to freely consent to acts of prostitution. Abolitionists also claim sex work leads to human trafficking because of the demand created by men who want to pay for women to service their desires. Remove the demand and trafficking will diminish. Sex workers and their supporters see their work as just that; a form of employment they have chosen.

> *"As a sex worker I have made a decision to offer certain services in return for a certain amount of payment. Some people may claim I can't consent, but I can. I understand consent, and I can consent to work. Some so called "feminists" don't even understand the basics of consent and think it's okay to draw their own interpretations from my life without my consent, to decide what they think looks like consent for me WITHOUT MY CONSENT! The hypocrisy makes me an unhappy hooker."* (Name withheld - sex worker from Melbourne during a discussion, Adelaide, 2016)

6.6 Migrant sex worker advocacy

Migrant sex workers in Australia want to be given the same opportunities as other workers, regardless of their migrant status, ethnicity, or choice of occupation. Scarlet Alliance has been running a Migration Project since 2009, initially supported by Federal Government funding, with multilingual officers working to translate information for migrant sex workers into Thai, Chinese, and Korean. State-based sex worker organisations such as Magenta in Western Australia have also recruited culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Thai, Korean, and Chinese speaking peer educators to assist sex workers, as well as sourcing sex worker friendly immigration agents to help answer questions regarding visas, residency, and any other issues connected with being able to live and work in Australia as a migrant sex worker (www.scarletalliance.org.au).

However, engaging in advocacy is not easy for many migrant sex workers, regardless of programmes and initiatives which may be set up to facilitate such participation. According to a representative from a migrant sex worker group who gave a

presentation to a group of sex workers at a forum in Adelaide in 2016, acts of advocacy or activism mean confrontation in many Asian countries. She went on to say that when coupled with a fear of the authorities, this leads to a natural aversion to any sort of activity likely to draw unwanted attention or involve conflict (name withheld, Adelaide, 2016). We form our opinions based on past experiences; migrant sex workers are no different, basing their views on understandings constructed from what they perceive to be true. It may be difficult to convince someone that advocating for a cause in Australia is safe if they have seen or heard evidence to the contrary in their own country, where activists are persecuted.

Regardless of how globalised the world may seem in the Twenty-First Century, Asian women live different lifestyles and think in distinctively different ways from Western women, according to several migrant Asian women living in Australia who concurred with this statement at the migrant sex worker presentation I attended in Adelaide in 2016. They do not like to volunteer themselves as speakers.

> *"I need to trust before I speak out. If I look bad with wrong ideas, I feel bad. So sometimes I don't say what I think. Just think it."*
> (Interview with Jia - Chinese sex worker, Melbourne, 2014)

When faced with a crisis, they fear more trouble will follow if they speak out, believing in fatalism; whatever has to happen will happen anyway, regardless of what they do now or what decisions they make. These cultural attributes make advocacy difficult enough to accept, without the added stigma of being a sex worker. However, providing situations where migrant sex worker voices can be heard is important if the Australian Government wishes to tackle the problem of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry by listening to the people who are directly affected by any actions taken to deal with this transnational crime (information gained from ethnographic observations and discussions at a migrant sex worker presentation, Adelaide 2016). Federal Government grants have provided some of the funding for the Scarlet Alliance Migration Project.

During an interview I conducted in 2012 with two representatives from Scarlet Alliance, we discussed the raid and rescue approach being undertaken in response to reports of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry. Police raids were on establishments largely staffed by Asian sex workers, where migrant sex workers

were labelled as possible victims of trafficking. They felt public opinion was swayed by any media coverage written to give the impression that raids uncovered victims of human trafficking in the sex industry.

I asked how the organisation was responding to this. I was told that migrant sex workers in the Scarlet Alliance Migration Project had been working to formulate a better approach, advocating for the Australian Government to consider their needs. These included: providing visa options so they did not have to make false claims on visa applications or enter into a contract with someone else and incur a debt; and having visa application forms and legal information translated into their own languages.

Migrant sex workers can get caught up in the media hype surrounding raids and rescue, where working in the sex industry without the correct visa is conflated into an instance of trafficking. As an example of this, I met Jenny, a migrant sex worker and student from South Korea, in 2013. She had some concerns about working in a brothel while in Australia on an international student visa because sex work was illegal in her home country. Jenny was particularly worried about being arrested for prostitution and sent back to South Korea because she had heard the Government there was jailing sex workers upon their return home. Jenny was unsure of the law in Australia. Could she work without a specific work visa? Would she be labelled as trafficked even though she made her own choices?

> *"I do two shifts a week at a house* (brothel) *cos it's better than working long hours in a supermarket. But if the police come? I'm on a student visa. Can I do sex work? Nobody is forcing me to do it. But do I get deported?"*
> (Interview with Jenny - international student and sex worker, Perth, 2013)

I gave Jenny the contact details for the Migrant Sex Worker Project at Scarlet Alliance hoping she would speak to one of their outreach officers. I also gave her contact details for Magenta, the Perth-based sex worker support organisation, and Project Respect, explaining their mission statement as well.

As yet, there is not a legitimate visa category for sex workers, resulting in false statements of actual work intentions in Australia. Campaigners for the addition of 'sex worker' as an accepted occupation on the visa application allege it would *"strike at the heart of trafficking from South-East Asia"* by removing the fear of discovery

associated with false claims on legal documents, while those against this idea fear such a visa category would contribute to exploitation (Bell, 2011). This latter claim would imply a person could enter Australia on a working visa stating the occupation as sex worker, yet still be exploited once working; surely a situation conceivable in any field of employment. Through decriminalisation, it is possible for those who work in the Australian sex industry to have their voices heard if exploited, in the same way as workers in other occupations, as illustrated by the following quote from Stardust, a sex worker, quoted in Halpin (2014):

> *"Where sex work is decriminalised, if I experience a crime at work, I can go to the police,"* says Stardust. *"If I experience bad working conditions, I can go to Fair Work Australia."* (Halpin, 2014)

In an interview with a representative from the Department of the Fair Work Ombudsman in Melbourne, July 2012, I discussed issues of worker exploitation in the sex industry. While it would be possible for cases to be reported, at the time of our meeting, none had been presented.

6.7 Interviews with clients

While working and researching in the Australian sex industry, I was in a privileged position to be able to interview men who use the services of sex workers; my own clients and several who saw other women and agreed to speak with me. These are a group of people not openly consulted in government research or asked for their opinions during discussions regarding prostitution, with the stigma attached possibly preventing someone openly admitting they use the services of a sex worker. I believe clients have a unique perspective of the sex industry and are a valuable source of information, although their opinions are not easily accessed. In the next section, I include excerpts from two client interviews specifically related to possible cases of trafficking.

6.8 Trafficked or migrating for work

The Pilbara is a region of Western Australia approximately 1,500 km north of Perth rich in mineral deposits where there are several mine sites. Characteristically, these are largely staffed by fly in/fly out (FIFO) workers who work long shifts in harsh conditions, where temperatures can reach over 40 degrees Celsius in summer. In 2013 I interviewed Kevin, a client of mine. Kevin is an Australian man who worked

as a bus driver on a Chinese owned mine (name withheld) in the region. Here is part of the interview:

Angela: *"Do many Australians work on site?"*
Kevin: *"Yep. Aussies have the contract for cleaning and the catering. A lot of the blokes on the mine come from Perth, over Eastern States. Some from New Zealand. But a lot from China too. FIFO workers on 457 visas."*
Angela: *"Does everyone socialise after the shifts?"*
Kevin: *"Most people socialise together a bit to unwind."*
Angela: *You mentioned earlier about special provisions for the Chinese guys. What's provided for them?"*
Kevin: *"The Company owns or long term leases two houses in Karratha*[16] *next door to each other. They fly in Chinese girls to service the Chinese miners only."*
Angela: *"I get the idea. Do you know if the girls stay in Australia for very long?"*
Kevin: *"I asked a guy that when I drove them back to the mine in the bus. Did he see the same girl? He said no. Different girls every two weeks. They come for holiday time."*
Angela: *"But, can the girls go out?"*
Kevin: *"They can't go out by themselves. They have a male chaperone with them."*
Angela: *"Do you take the Chinese guys anywhere else?"*
Kevin: *No. I think that bugs me. They spend no money on any local industry here … not even on sex!!!"* (He laughed)
(Excerpt from interview with Kevin – a client, Perth, 2013)

Here is a case where one has to ask, is this human trafficking into the sex industry? According to strict definitions of the Trafficking Protocol the very acts of recruitment, transportation, and transfer for the purposes of prostitution may constitute human trafficking if there has been any threat, use of force, deception or other abuse of power, regardless of whether consent has been given to knowingly work in the sex industry. One would have to investigate and determine the exact circumstances under which these women had been contracted to work for two weeks at a time in these establishments, their working conditions, rates of pay, what types of visas they held, and whether they felt threatened (something not always easy to establish) before calling this a case of sex trafficking. It is this type of misinterpretation of the Trafficking Protocol which can result in migrant sex workers being labelled as victims of trafficking. Or are these Chinese sex workers coming to Australia for a short stay to work in a company brothel, providing services to men

[16] Karratha is a town in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

who perhaps don't speak much English and may prefer the companionship of women they can converse with?

In 2014, Brian, another client of mine, told me why he would not visit any of *"those Asian girls in the paper."*

> *"A family friend, Pete, is in his 60s, is Australian, and works as a painter. His wife is in her 40s, is Chinese, and doesn't work. They live in a really good suburb south of the river and both drive expensive cars. Their lifestyle is above what I would expect from a painter's income, so I mentioned to Pete one day that he must've won money on lotto sometime. He openly told me that his wife often travels to Hong Kong and brings girls into WA as 'students', but these girls never attend uni, they work in the sex industry. The girls know the deal when they travel to WA. Pete goes to Thailand on a golf and sex holiday while his wife goes to Hong Kong to do these deals."*
> (Excerpt from interview with Brian – a client, Perth, 2014)

Brian told me he would not visit any Asian girls on principle, because he disagreed with the way the girls came to Australia, using our system to get in on student visas. He wouldn't mind if they were students working in the sex industry to support themselves while studying, but he was told these girls never went near any classes. I told Brian that what these friends of his were doing might be an isolated case of bringing girls into Western Australia, but Brian said his friend Pete had told him it was a common way to make money. It was easy for his wife because she "knew the ropes". It wasn't trafficking in Pete's eyes; just providing workers for a demand in Australia.

Again, a case of overseas sex workers being recruited to work in the Australian sex industry. Some money must change hands in these transactions to make them viable for the recruiters, and the women do make false claims on their visa applications, thus leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. However, with no provision for the category of sex worker on visa applications, any paperwork for immigration is going to involve false claims. What would need to be investigated are the conditions of work, living arrangements, freedom upon arrival in Australia, and general wellbeing of the women involved before they are seen as either migrant sex workers or victims of human trafficking. What does appear alarming is the comment that recruiting sex workers from Hong Kong was a common way to earn money, particularly if you "knew the ropes".

6.9 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have used evidence gathered from ethnographic research, centred on interviews and participant observations, and supported by the literature, to illustrate how public opinion regarding human trafficking in the Australian sex industry has been shaped by influences outside of that industry, rather than by the sex workers themselves. Abolitionist activists and the media have been able to influence members of the general public by publishing what has been referred to as tragedy porn, in an attempt to spread anti-trafficking messages, which are often linked with anti-prostitution sentiments. By constructing sex work itself as a public problem, even though those working in the sex industry don't see it as a problem, voices are able to speak for and about sex workers without actually having to listen to the workers themselves, deeming them too damaged to make decisions about their own lives. When the issue of being a migrant sex worker is added into the equation, the narrative becomes one of victim and rescue as human trafficking is suspected; no woman being thought of as able to freely choose sex work as an occupation. Contrary to this, one of the comments on a poster titled "We don't cross borders, borders cross us" produced by migrant sex workers in Sydney, 2012, states:

> *Choosing to travel and sex work gives us freedom, your racism and stereotypes confine us.* (Cross Borders Collective, 2012)

This sentiment was a common thread through the interviews conducted with migrant sex workers, and it resonates with issues of race and gender being central to the construction of migrant sex work as human trafficking.

This chapter has also highlighted how sex workers and more specifically, Asian migrant sex workers, believe they provide the key to addressing the issue of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry because they know first-hand what impacts on them, while they strive to be accepted as a legitimate, knowledgeable voice. The following statement by a migrant sex worker at a presentation which I attended sums up the strength these women have and the desire they have to make a difference.

> *If migrant sex workers believe we have power, our positive self-image will let others know they need to respect us.*
> (Migrant sex worker, from a discussion group, Adelaide, 2016)

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The presentation of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry is constructed from different perspectives, depending on the source of the information and the intended audience. Each voice has its own relative strength and power, and I have presented findings from evidence gathered after consulting a variety of sources, some perhaps more reliable than others, and yet to those who speak, the resulting narratives are justified and exact. In this thesis, I have chosen to examine these voices using the tenets of constructionism, given this approach to the study of International Relations allows for an in-depth analysis of how a narrative is shaped and changed by the actors on both sides of an argument. These voices do not necessarily listen to each other; rather they take note of what is said so it can be countered. While not an uncommon practice, there are also other occasions where voices are prevented from being heard at all. I have used examples from the resulting narratives to show how human trafficking in the Australian sex industry has been constructed as a public problem, also looking at who considers it to be a problem, and who is talked about rather than being allowed to speak.

I have provided an historical overview of Australia's official stance on human trafficking in the sex industry since white settlement, looking at issues of race, immigration, and the government-sanctioned movement of women for sex work. I have also discussed how the Australian Government formulates policies and procedures in line with contemporary international agreements such as the United Nations Trafficking Protocol. Australia, seen as a Middle Power, takes a leading role in several anti-trafficking initiatives in the region, where many of its neighbours are classified as Tier 2 or Tier 3 on the annual United States Trafficking in Persons Report (US Department of State, 2016).

I have then analysed a number of voices from both sides of the debate on human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, drawing on text- based discourses and interviews gathered over an extended period of time while working in the industry.

This gave me access to people and places other researchers may not have been able to reach. None of the accounts I have given or transcripts and quotes I have used give the whole picture of the Australian sex industry; they cannot. These are glimpses of the situation as seen through the eyes of several people who either work in the industry or have had contact with it in some way. Their reporting of experiences is either personal or based on the experiences of people known to them. Some experiences are positive, some negative, depending on the circumstances and the topics being discussed. I believe I have listened to and heard all opinions equally.

In this concluding chapter I revisit my original research questions, drawing together the main findings and discussing their implications for understanding the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. I then comment on this work as a contribution to the fields of International Relations and Sociology and suggest future directions for research.

7.2 Research Question 1: Who speaks for and about migrant sex workers in Australia?

My analysis of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry has revealed a situation of conflicting, often asymmetrical dialogues reflecting opinions from groups with differing agendas. On one side of the argument are the sex workers and industry support groups promoting sex work as work; on the other, anti-prostitution organisations helping women to get out of the sex industry or speaking against it with the ultimate aim of abolishing prostitution altogether. Migrant sex workers in Australia appear to have been caught up in a situation where they are labelled as victims of human trafficking who need to be rescued, and when seen as victims, they are a group deemed to be unable to speak for themselves. This appears to have historical connections to the Victorian era, where saving women, who may or may not have wanted to be rescued from prostitution, was seen as a noble pursuit by feminist and church-based rescue organisations in the Nineteenth Century (Agustin, 2007; Doezema, 1999; Jordan, 2007). As I discussed in Chapter 2, middle class women in Nineteenth Century England saw a need to step into the role of the *feminist "helper"* to save those less fortunate than themselves (Agustin, 2007). This was in response to the moral panic regarding white slavery as fear escalated for the virtue of young women venturing abroad.

Sex workers, including those who are in Australia as migrants working in the industry, want to be able to speak for themselves on issues affecting their lives. This was apparent as I examined the different narratives created to explain the nature and extent of human trafficking as seen by interested parties, questioning why they were constructed and noting whose voices were raised and whose were silenced by these constructions. Across the evidence I had gathered, and my own experience, this kind of sentiment is reflected in the following excerpt from an interview I conducted with a Perth-based sex worker.

> *"When it comes to sex work, it would seem people with no experience in the industry are often believed more than those who work in it; … Surely, we are the experts about our own lives? So often it's the outsiders who are believed, listened to, not us. People talk about us, around us, but rarely to us. In fact, maybe they should be quiet and let us speak."* (Interview with Alicia - sex worker, Perth 2014)

The Australian Government provided initial funding for the Migration Project, run by the national sex worker support organisation Scarlet Alliance, so that migrant sex workers could campaign for their rights, with information being translated into Thai, Chinese, and Korean. However, my evidence revealed that migrant sex workers did not find it easy to engage in advocacy. The majority of migrant sex workers I spoke with did not want to attract the attention of the authorities or appear in the media at protest rallies. Some were unsure of the legality of working in the sex industry in Australia. In spite of this apparent reluctance to speak out in public, my research showed a clear picture of migrant sex workers not wanting other people to speak about them as if they had no voice, or to label them as victims of human trafficking. This can be seen in the following excerpt from an interview with a sex worker in Perth:

> *"My body, my choice. Nobody forcing me to do anything! I saved to buy a ticket and visa for Australia and come here to work. I work in a good place, with good people. No bad clients, nothing bad happen to me so why do people want to rescue me? I want people to stop talking for me. Stop trying to rescue me and send me back!"* (Interview with Carrie - Chinese sex worker, Perth, 2014)

Also, from one of Carrie's clients, giving another view from inside the sex industry:

> *"I've seen a few Asian sex workers over the last couple of years. Some don't speak much English, but they are keen to learn and ask how to say things. I*

> *go to different brothels and also see private girls. I think if they were in trouble, they would find a way to tell a client."* (Interview with Michael – one of Carrie's clients, Perth, 2014)

While sex workers' voices are often silenced, there is also no space in public forums for the voices of their clients, other than on internet chat lines discussing and rating the services provided by specific sex workers and establishments. This is largely because the stigma attached to using the services of a sex worker acts as a deterrent to clients coming forward and openly expressing opinions on issues related to the sex industry. As mentioned in Chapter 1, almost one in six (15.6%) Australian men have used professional sexual services (Rissel, et al, 2003; Magnanti, 2014), yet this is a group not likely to discuss their experiences in public, particularly if it is in opposition to abolitionist activist views or whether a prostituted woman can truly have freedom of choice.

7.3 Research Question 2: What effect does this have on shaping public opinion about the industry?

A news report of an incident in Perth (2015), describes a patient being treated in the Emergency Department of the Royal Perth Hospital, beaten and bruised after being attacked by a client who refused to pay for a service. This service was provided to the client by a person whose migrant status and limited level of English still made the terms of the transaction quite clear to both parties, according to the report. A victim of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry? No; this was a taxi driver assaulted by a client who refused to pay the fare (9news.com.au, 2015). While this news story tells of a violent act which occurred in society, it was not followed by cries for the removal of taxi driving as an occupation or the criminalisation of people who use taxis. Taxi driving is not seen as an immoral act; no judgement is made on either the service provider or the client unless a crime is committed - as was the case in this violent attack.

However, at the same time, advocates of the Nordic model were campaigning for the criminalisation of those who use the services of sex workers, under the premise of protecting service providers from such acts of violence, as well as from the crime of human trafficking to cater for demand (Koloff, 2015). My research shows that by constructing sex work as a public problem, even though those working in the sex

industry may not see it as a problem, voices are able to speak for and about sex workers without actually having to listen to the workers themselves. This situation is particularly noticeable when Asian migrant sex workers are labelled as victims of human trafficking, constructing this as an issue of race and gender.

The case study of the Australian branch of the Salvation Army, outlined in Chapter 5, shows how a non-government organisation can bring its anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution messages into households via annual fundraising campaigns. The images and words used in the material distributed to promote these campaigns were offensive to sex workers and the sex industry. This was evidenced by my ethnographic research at the time, as well as being documented in public discourse (Sainty, 2016; Trask, 2016). The material was subsequently removed, and the Salvation Army apologised for any distress caused; however, the offending leaflets were already in many Australian households, spreading a negative image of the sex industry.

Throughout this thesis I have used evidence gathered from interviews and participant observations, supported by text-based discourses, to illustrate how public opinion regarding human trafficking in the Australian sex industry has been shaped by influences external to the industry. Agencies putting forward the fight against human trafficking into the public arena, along with the media who pick up on the ideas spoken of by these agencies, may be responsible for distorting understandings of the issue and the efforts needed to tackle it (Guinn, 2008, p121). Under- or over-estimating the extent of the problem, and using broad labels such as sexual slavery to encompass a wide range of offences such as debt bondage, forced marriage, prostitution, trafficking, incest, and domestic violence, contribute to shaping public opinion regarding the sex industry (see Barry (1979) for accounts of this).

7.4 Research Question 3: How does this impact upon those who work in the Australian sex industry?

My research has enabled me to hear the voices of local and migrant sex workers in Australia, as well as some who have also worked overseas. While I have not specifically sought out trafficked women, I have met a wide variety of people working in the sex industry for many different reasons. They all have a story to tell;

though, contrary to popular belief, not all are tragic or even exotic. Some are simply mundane tales of women earning a living doing something that pays the bills. Many women, both Australian and non-Australian, choose to work in this field, managing their own business affairs, bookings, and the resulting finances. They choose their hours of work, and whether or not they will see a particular client. However, these are not the stories constructed about sex work by anti-prostitution activists, who tend to link female prostitution with lack of choice, abuse, and human trafficking. As outlined in Chapter 6, among the sex workers I spoke with as part of my study there was a clear divide between the experiences of Anglo-European and Asian migrant sex workers, with the former reporting that they are never considered to have been trafficked, while the latter often are. This brings the question of race into the issue of whether a sex worker from overseas is labelled as a migrant or a victim of human trafficking.

A key finding from my research, gathered during discussions, observations, and interviews was that migrant sex workers in Australia do not need to be rescued; rather they want to be listened to either as an important part of the sex worker rights movement, or simply in their working life as part of the Australian sex industry. In their eyes, this would prevent anti-prostitution abolitionists from using the commonly perceived plight of migrant sex workers to legitimise their anti-trafficking initiatives by labelling these workers as victims of human trafficking.

According to sex worker activists, the anti-trafficking response in Australia and the media hysteria fuelled by this has resulted in legislation which is detrimental to sex workers (E. Jeffreys, 2009; Kim, 2012). Calls for increased regulation and attempts to criminalise sex work can only be seen as detrimental by those who work in this industry. However, where sex workers are concerned, they are often told they are not able to represent or speak for themselves, with their organisations and activists being treated differently from others; not being seen as a true representation of their own industry (Green, 2015).

7.5 Discussion

Australia is not immune to the problems of human trafficking, being seen as a destination country, hence the Australian Government is working on both domestic

and international fronts to combat this form of transnational crime and to aid its victims. In this dissertation, I have analysed the social construction of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry by considering the response to this problem from both government and non-government agencies, exploring how they define and incorporate international concerns about this activity into the Australian arena. My focus is on how the interested parties construct their knowledge of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry then apply this to their policies and practices. In order to realise this, I have identified the issues in Australia, as they are understood by those involved with framing the international dimension of the sex industry. This leads to an examination of how the parties with an interest in constructing the Australian sex industry relate to international concerns such as transnational crime, human trafficking, and the violation of human rights, as raised by globally recognised institutions such as the United Nations, World Vision, Amnesty International, the International Organisation of Migration, and the governments of other nations, particularly those in our vicinity. I have looked at how international concerns regarding human trafficking in the global sex industry are re-framed as a domestic problem by the Australian Federal Government, then analysed the understandings of representatives of the main interest groups who deal with this issue in Australia. I have adopted a constructionist approach to do this, using the narratives to show how the trafficking of women in the sex industry is shaped, discussed, and acted upon, both internationally and in Australia.

This thesis shows how an issue can be constructed and treated as a problem from the way narrative is presented, regardless of whether or not the people directly involved view their situation in this light. In the creation of a public problem this appears to be immaterial; as long as others think there is an issue to be dealt with, the onus seems to be on the apparent victims to prove it does not exist. In my extensive experience both working and researching in the sex industry, this certainly appears to be the case with human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, where migrant sex workers are often incorrectly labelled as victims of this heinous transnational crime.

Demonstrating hard evidence of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry appears to be of less importance than the way this problem is spoken about and whose voice is speaking, with opinions often shaped by media influence. Mainstream

media provides coverage of alleged incidents of human trafficking in Australia, often linked to the sex industry via the headlines. Further reading of the narrative often reveals either a tenuous link between migrant sex workers with the possibility of trafficking, later found to be non-existent, or workers being exploited in other industries. However, it is these claims written in the headlines of human trafficking linked to the sex industry that initiate a response from the reader.

This is perhaps, the perfect media issue; it will always exist. Prostitution is known as the oldest profession, and while it may be necessary to rescue some individuals who are found to be victims of trafficking, there will always be more people entering the sex industry to take their place, regardless of whether it is criminalised and in spite of any moral judgements made by the general populace. After all, it is members of that general populace who utilise the services offered by sex workers; some 15.6% of men, if research is to be believed (Rissel, et al, 2003; Magnanti, 2014). It is also a perfect problem for organisations involved in anti-trafficking and the rescue industry because, again, it will never disappear; there will always someone else to rescue from the eternal loop of supply and demand for prostitution. Human trafficking is an international crime; a moral problem related to purity, danger, and innocent victims in need of rescue. We construct our world according to our beliefs and values which are influenced, in turn, by the world around us. If we perceive something to be a problem, it will become a problem for us, especially if this is reinforced by the media. This is why it is important for migrant sex workers to be allowed to take ownership of their situation and have a voice on the subject of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, clearly outlining the difference between forced prostitution and migration for sex work, where their freedom of choice to work in the sex industry is paramount.

As my research confirms, Australia is seen as a lucrative nation; one where migrant sex workers can come to work in a safe, clean environment and earn more money than they would in their home country (see Chapter 6 for examples of this). There are situations of worker exploitation, debts to be paid off, and issues where not having a good command of English can lead to workers being misled about the legal status of them being in Australia. However, as I have discussed (see Chapter 4), these situations are not unique to the sex industry, with raids on other industries employing

migrant workers and backpackers coming under scrutiny from Immigration and the Fair Work Ombudsman. The media headlines in these instances tend to feature slavery rather than human trafficking, with a focus on worker exploitation instead of prostitution, which although bad, does not elicit the same response. How this concern is understood seems to be the driving factor behind policies and procedures constructed by both government departments and non-government organisations, as I have outlined in Chapter 4.

7.6 Implications

In this dissertation I have shown that human trafficking in the sex industry is not a new problem; it has waxed and waned as an international issue since the Nineteenth Century, when the movement of working-class women first became a matter of some concern to members of society in Victorian England. The direction of the movement has changed, with Nineteenth Century fears being for Western women getting caught up in the white slave trade, while modern concerns are often for women from developing nations being trafficked to Western markets. This leads to a situation where harmful ideologies of race and gender are influencing the construction of migrant sex work as human trafficking; with the result that human trafficking in the Australian sex industry is seen as a public problem.

Sex industry support organisations suggest human trafficking in their industry is not a prevalent problem in Australia, and that the majority of sex workers from overseas choose to migrate for work. Worker exploitation can occur in any industry, with the sex industry being no different. While other nations have higher figures for the prosecution of traffickers and may see this as a serious problem, Australia's situation is unusual because no shared land borders, strict border controls, and a history of restrictions on immigration make it difficult to bring people into the country illegally. However, the conflation of anti-trafficking activism with anti-prostitution sentiments has led to the assumption that a large number of migrant workers in the Australian sex industry must be an indication of human trafficking, with the commonly held view that no woman could freely choose to work as a prostitute tending to cloud perceptions of working in this industry. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the introduction of this dissertation, Perth is one of the world's most multicultural cities, with other cities in Australia also scoring a high ranking in this area. A sex industry with many

workers either born overseas or visiting for a while is indicative of both Australia's multicultural background and the increasing globalisation of work.

I have examined the Australian Government's response to human trafficking in the sex industry, considering how policies and procedures have been adapted to conform to the requirements of international conventions. As a signatory to the United Nations Trafficking Protocol, the Australian Government is committed to prosecute those found guilty of this crime and to assist victims of trafficking. After signing the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in 2003, the Australian Government formulated a whole of government action plan in 2004, the *Commonwealth Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons*. However, by disseminating the responsibilities so widely, no department actually owned the problem. The goals and actions of this plan are now considered to be part of business as usual for all Australian Government departments dealing with aspects of human trafficking. The new *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-19* was launched in December 2014 where the strategic aims were set down as a whole of community response to human trafficking, on both a national and international level. Methods for measuring the effectiveness of this new plan are included in the body of its text.

It is expected this move to a whole of community response will bring distinct advantages by combining the strengths and resources from a broad base of stakeholders to work toward solutions to problems affecting society. By including people directly affected by an issue, it is reasoned they will help to construct responses more suited to the values and demographics of those concerned. However, the construction of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry remains a problem where judgements are racialised and often made based on attitudes toward prostitution. It remains to be seen whether migrant sex workers feature as a dominant voice as the *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-19* continues to be acted upon. In Australia, trafficking is a crime, sex work is not, yet, as my research shows, it is still discursively constructed as something steeped in moral judgements as to whether a woman can ever really make a free choice to work in this industry.

7.7 Contribution to International Relations

As an island nation, Australia's issue with human trafficking is somewhat different from that of many other nations which have been labelled as destination countries, and yet it is spoken of in similar terms: as a problem of border security, illegal migration, and the exploitation of people for profit. This issue requires a less traditional method for state-to-state relations than that provided by realist or liberalist theories of International Relations, both of which place more value on the good of the state than that of the individual. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, these traditional approaches have their strengths; however, in dealing with an issue such as human trafficking in the sex industry, where there appears to be no clear-cut problem and solution, social constructionism provides a way of understanding the dynamics of power at play between actors. A constructionist approach to the analysis of non-traditional security issues and the way narrative is shaped around them allows for a better understanding of the nuances of the language chosen during discussions, the choice of people to represent organisations, and the images used to portray events being discussed. I have adopted this approach throughout my research by drawing evidence from a wide range of sources, both text-based and ethnographic, and combining thematic and case analysis of evidence from a wide range of industry, media and activist sources.

My research contributes to the body of knowledge in International Relations by extending the traditional focus on state-to-state security issues to include the field of human security, specifically the security of migrant workers. The exploitation of foreign workers needs to be addressed as we consider a global labour force in several industries. I have approached this topic through the sex industry; however, the mining industry, fishing, agriculture, and domestic help are other fields where labourers move around the world and may be vulnerable to poor working conditions, incorrect rates of pay, long working hours, sexual harassment, physical and verbal abuse, and lack of freedom to come and go from their place of lodging or workplace. The sex industry is unique in that there is no central body governing award wages or hourly rates, the average number of hours per week a person should work, conditions of work, superannuation, sick pay, or providing somewhere a client who is dissatisfied can lodge a complaint. Whereas the Fair Work Ombudsman can be contacted for issues dealing with other forms of labour, my contact with this Federal

Government department revealed that sex workers did not make complaints regarding unfair rates of pay or working conditions. Thus, focussing on the security of migrant sex workers becomes an issue which gets caught up in anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution rhetoric rather than remaining as a study of the security of workers, which, I would argue, it should be.

I also make a contribution to International Relations by providing an insight into the movement of women to work in the sex industry, linking this to historical policies and procedures, both in Australia and internationally. This appears to be an industry where many people make an assumption about the women working in it, based on little or no real contact with sex workers. I do not presume that my limited knowledge and experience tells the full story either; however, I have found there to be as many stories as there are sex workers. By this, I mean we cannot assume that one tragic story paints the picture for the whole industry. There have been many volumes written condemning the sex industry and the men who use the services of prostituted women, based on tragic tales told by anti-prostitution activists. In my research I interviewed women who did sex work as a job, as well as drawing from my own lived experience as a sex worker. I found reports in the literature from sex workers and support organisations in Australia and also in developing nations where sex workers were being abused by anti-trafficking practices and activists, their voices silenced as they tried to tell their own stories instead of having narratives created about them. For example, in Chapter 2, while discussing the Rescue Industry, I refer to the Empower Foundation, which represents and supports sex workers in Thailand. A spokesperson for this organisation reports:

> *"We have now reached a point in history where there are more women in the Thai sex industry who are being abused by anti-trafficking practices than there are women being exploited by traffickers."* (Murdoch, 2012)

This dissertation contributes to International Relations by expanding upon the more traditional approach to the sex industry, taking away the tragedy porn and looking at women working and making the best of their situations, combined with a study of the movement of women for work. I show the world through their eyes, not just as others see it for them, allowing their voices to challenge dominant society narratives of sex work and sex workers as victims. Being able to do this as an insider has given me a perspective quite different from that of a non-sex worker researcher looking in.

My research in International Relations brings together material in a study of how an international issue is constructed as a public problem in one specific nation, rather than simply accepting it is a problem of the same magnitude in every part of the world. In undertaking this thesis I have learned the importance of listening to different sides of an argument to construct a fuller picture, bringing marginalised groups to the centre of discussions about them, rather than assuming they are damaged and silencing their voices. While not denying the existence of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, it appears to have been constructed as a far greater problem than those of us working in this industry have witnessed.

7.8 Limitations and recommendations

A major challenge and limitation of this research has been to examine a humanitarian issue occurring in an industry which is surrounded by moral concerns and judgements, both for those who work in that industry and for its clients. It would appear many people would still rather construct their evidence about the Australian sex industry, and sex workers in general, from images and limited knowledge gained via the media, and socio-historical attitudes to the place of sex work in society, than by asking those who work in the industry. Even when the voices of sex workers are heard, they are disregarded unless they fit the expected story. For example, a noted anti-prostitution and anti-trafficking activist, when told a sex worker had only ever had good or neutral experiences with her clients replied, *"She just hasn't had a bad experience yet."*(Quote from an interview with a prominent researcher and representative of CATWA, Melbourne, July 2013 - see Chapter 4).

One of the limitations of this study is that I have not been able to directly recruit trafficked women, but could only rely on accounts of trafficking from advocacy groups, rights groups, and government publications. However, my aim was to explore the Australian sex industry and the way that ideologies of race and gender construct migrant sex work as human trafficking. I did not specifically search for victims of human trafficking because my focus was on migrant sex workers, although there was the possibility of meeting some trafficked women at Project Respect (see Chapter 3) and through incidental meetings such as with Nancy and Ratana, who I was told had been trafficked (see Chapter 6).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the sex industry is not a homogenous workforce; services are offered by women, men, transgender, and transsexuals, with each group having different experiences. I chose to specifically limit my research to the experiences of women migrating for sex work, thus locating this dissertation within studies of female prostitution and the history of the movement of women for work, both forced and by choice. Human trafficking, as it has been defined by international protocols, includes several forms of labour exploitation; however it is the illicit movement of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation which has caused the greatest concern from activists and attracted the most media attention, shaping this issue as a public problem at various times since white settlement in Australia.

As a party to the United Nations Trafficking Protocol (2000), the Australian Government is committed to the prosecution of perpetrators involved in this transnational crime, and to assisting victims of trafficking (see Chapter 1). As a Middle Power in the region, the Government is also involved in a number of cooperative anti-trafficking programs to reduce opportunities and incentives for human trafficking in the ASEAN region (see Chapter 4). My research is of use to the Australian Government in reframing how they approach sex work and trafficking, both nationally and in the ASEAN region, because I show how migrant sex workers, specifically those from Southeast Asia, are labelled and treated as victims of trafficking based on race and gender, rather than on evidence.

I would like to see groups working to rescue victims of human trafficking in the sex industry, anti-prostitution abolitionists, and members of the general public have a better understanding of the lived experience of sex workers. Reliable information cannot be gained via popular media, television crime shows, or preconceived ideas shaped by what a person may or may not do themselves, based on their own beliefs and values. It is by listening to the voices of sex workers that one can gain a better understanding of their lived experience and incorporate this information into dominant society narratives of sex work. I recommend people listen to the voices of those who know what happens inside their part of the sex industry; that is, the workers themselves. My research aims to make a contribution to this by providing evidence from first-hand accounts of migrant sex workers.

7.9 Future directions

Research in the sex industry still tends to rely heavily on quantitative analysis, focussing on the physical and mental health of sex workers, reports of violence against them, sexual assaults, and interactions with the police. This was revealed during my preliminary and subsequent library and internet searches for information (for example see Quadara 2008; Selvey, et al, 2017). There is still a need for the opinions of sex workers to be heard, for them to be more involved in the research, and to own the stories written about them. For example, as Selvey et al (2017) found, recruiting sex workers as peer researchers encouraged others to participate in a study where surveys had to be filled out. The sex worker support organisation Scarlet Alliance also supports research being done by sex workers rather than outsiders (E. Jeffreys, 2010).

I believe there are gaps in the research of specific sections in this industry; areas not always showing the negative side of sex work. For example, Australian activist and sex worker Rachel Wotton specialises in working with clients with a disability. Her work has been the subject of a documentary, *Scarlet Road* (2011) and she has run workshops to train others in her area of expertise. A study on the success or failure of her work and how it is viewed by the general populace could prove interesting and beneficial to governmental agencies supporting people with disabilities. Another area of sex work I am interested in researching, based on some preliminary discussions with clients, is the loneliness experienced by fly in/ fly out workers in Australia and the difficulties they experience with finding a partner, resulting in them forming "relationships" with particular sex workers.

Another section of the sex industry which is often misunderstood is the area of BDSM/Bondage and Discipline. I have conducted some preliminary research in this area; however, the scholarly literature tends to focus on sexual deviance rather than the many reasons why this is a popular choice for some clients. The success of the *Shades of Grey* novels and films portraying a BDSM relationship has brought this into popular media. However, I believe researching this section of the Australian sex industry from the inside would produce a different perspective, particularly if the voices of clients were to be included.

There are many different areas of the sex industry that would benefit from insider research; not for any voyeuristic reasons but in an attempt to influence public opinion. Sex workers are people earning a living who have chosen their line of work for as many different reasons as anyone chooses a job. If a person has been trafficked into the sex industry and a crime has been committed, then they need help and the criminals should be prosecuted. However, labelling migrant sex workers as victims simply because *"they must all be trafficked because nobody would choose to do that job"* (see Chapter 1), becomes an issue of ideologies of sex, race and gender affecting the way a person is judged. My research has aimed to unpack and understand the ways that some of these ideologies mediate institutional, policy and media discourses on sex work and human trafficking and I believe there is still more work to be done to advance the field.

Appendix A

Curtin University of Technology

Department of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

My name is Angela Wilson. I am currently working on my Doctor of Philosophy by research at Curtin University of Technology.

Purpose of Research

My topic is: Constructions of Human Trafficking in the Australian Sex Industry: an International Relations Perspective.

Human trafficking in the sex industry is an international problem, and Australia is not immune to its effects. This has led to the Government working on both domestic and international fronts to combat this transnational crime and to aid its victims. In this dissertation, I will analyse the social construction of human trafficking in the Australian sex industry, focussing on how it is dealt with and its impact, rather than looking directly at the victims of trafficking. I will analyse the response from both government and non-government agencies, and explore how they define and deal with international concerns about this activity.

Consent to Participate

- The interview will take approximately one hour, and your participation is voluntary.
- You have the right to withdraw at any stage without it affecting you in any way.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form so that I can use the information gathered in the interview.
- The interview may be taped so that I can concentrate on what you are saying and write it up afterwards.
- Your privacy will be respected at all times. Any information that may identify you will be kept separately from the transcript of your interview.
- All personal information, interviews and tapes will be kept in locked storage at Curtin University of Technology for five years, and then reviewed.
- For further information, please contact A/Prof. Philip Moore on 9266 7483 or p.moore@curtin.edu.au

This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval number HR183/2011). The Committee is comprised of members of the public, lawyers, doctors and pastoral carers. Its main role is to protect participants. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth 6845 or by telephoning (08) 9266 2784 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au

Appendix B

Consent Form

Research Topic

Constructions of Human Trafficking in the Australian Sex Industry: an International Relations Perspective.

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet.
- I agree to participate in this research but understand that I can withdraw at any time without problem.
- I understand that all information provided is confidential. No identifying information will be used, and my responses will be stored securely for five years, and then reviewed. Information gathered for this project will be destroyed when it no longer serves the research objectives.

Name _____ Signature_____

Date _____

Investigator _____ Signature_____

This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval number HR183/2011). The Committee is comprised of members of the public, lawyers, doctors and pastoral carers. Its main role is to protect participants. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth 6845 or by telephoning (08) 9266 2784 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au

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