

Human Trafficking Heroes and Villains: Representing the Problem in Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaigns

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Erin O'Brien

Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Abstract

Since the declaration by the United Nations that awareness raising should be a key part of efforts to combat human trafficking, government and non-government organizations have produced numerous public awareness campaigns designed to capture the public's attention and sympathy. These campaigns represent the 'problem' of trafficking in specific ways, creating heroes and villains by placing the blame for trafficking on some, whilst obscuring the responsibility of others. This article adopts Bacchi's 'what is the problem represented to be?' framework for examining the politicization of problem representation in 18 anti-trafficking awareness campaigns. It is argued that these campaigns construct a narrow understanding of the problem through the depiction of 'ideal offenders'. In particular, a strong focus on the demand for commercial sex as causative of human trafficking serves to obscure the problematic role of consumerism in a wide range of industries, and perpetuates an understanding of trafficking that fails to draw a necessary distinction between the demand for labour, and the demand for 'exploitable' labour. This problem representation also obscures the role governments in destination countries may play in causing trafficking through imposing restrictive migration regimes that render migrants vulnerable to traffickers.

Keywords

Consumerism, forced labour, human trafficking, migration, prostitution, sex trafficking, sex work

Corresponding author:

Erin O'Brien, School of Justice, Faculty of Law, Queensland University of Technology, Level 5, X Block, Brisbane, Queensland 4000, Australia.

Email: erin.obrien@qut.edu.au

Introduction

In recent decades, many nations have introduced policy designed to combat human trafficking, driven by a vocal social movement calling for an end to this 'modern form of slavery'. In most developed economies, particularly across Europe as well as North America, Australia and New Zealand, trafficking legislation is now in place, but anti-trafficking activists continue their efforts to raise awareness among the general population and to shape evolving policy. These awareness-raising efforts disseminate information about the victims of trafficking, the causes of trafficking, possible solutions to trafficking, and, very occasionally, trafficking offenders. Andrijasevic and Anderson (2009), Hoyle et al. (2011) and O'Brien (2013) have previously identified the dangers of anti-trafficking campaigns representing only a specific victim narrative, where some victims believe they cannot access victim services unless they fit the dominant idea of a 'pure victim' (Hoyle et al., 2011: 32). The depiction of the trafficking offender has received comparatively little attention, though also plays a key role in the construction of the problem of trafficking in public narratives. This article thus examines the impact of depictions of the trafficking offender in the representation of the human trafficking problem.

The construction of the 'problem' of trafficking is a key factor in the development of responses to human trafficking at both the national and international level. Kingdon (2003) argues that 'problem recognition' is the first step in policymaking and plays a vital role in setting the agenda for which policy proposals are likely to be adopted by legislators. Victims' stories have played a central role in creating a narrative of trafficking that informs policy and contributes to the recognition of the problem, with individual victim narratives often establishing the guiding definitions of social problems (Jones and McBeth, 2010; Nowlin, 2011). Boswell (2011) has previously examined the importance of narratives in the development of migration policy, identifying the aspects of narrative necessary for achieving problem recognition. According to Boswell, narratives first attempt to define the scale and scope of a problem. Second, they make assertions about the causes of the problem. Third, they imply that certain policy interventions are likely to address the problem (Boswell, 2011: 4–5). Awareness campaigns and materials are a key source of trafficking narratives in the form of victims' stories, key facts and proposed solutions. Whilst the trafficking narrative presented in these materials often lacks complexity due to the limitations of specific media formats (leaflets, posters and billboards), it nonetheless aims for a problem of trafficking to be recognized not only by decision-makers but also the general public.

Whilst much of the research on constructions of human trafficking have focused on policy documents from governments and non-government organizations (NGOs), there is a growing interest in the role trafficking awareness campaigns play in contributing to public understandings of human trafficking. It is important to examine awareness campaigns first because of the audience they are created for. Awareness campaigns are designed to elicit a response, either from members of the public or policymakers. This response may be to donate money, sign a petition and lobby government. It is also the aim of these campaigns to influence legislation and policy responses to human

trafficking. The audience for these campaigns is thus extremely wide in scope, and whilst some campaigns may target a specific audience (e.g. legislators), as a collective whole these awareness campaigns aim to shape the wider public's understanding of the problem of human trafficking. Due to the potential power of these campaigns in shaping wider public understanding, it is important to analyse the message they are disseminating. It is also important to examine awareness campaigns because of their specific form within the discourse. They typically disseminate a snapshot of human trafficking, which is restricted due to the limitations of specific media formats (leaflets, posters and short video clips). In creating this snapshot, the architects of awareness campaigns are engaged in a process of distilling human trafficking down to its most compelling image or story. In this process, they make key choices about what aspects of the crime will be portrayed, and what victims' stories will be told. However, it is the stories that remain untold, the choices not made and the spaces between the narratives that can communicate so much to audiences about human trafficking.

The representation of the problem of trafficking through awareness campaigns is intended to define a problem, and imply causes of and solutions to human trafficking. However, choices made in what aspects of the crime are portrayed, and those left unaddressed, result in the politicization of the problem. Bacchi (2007) argues that in order to achieve ethical policymaking, it is necessary to scrutinize 'what the problem is represented to be' not only to understand what is positioned as the problem but also what aspects of the issue are overlooked and excluded. What aspects of the situation remain unproblematized due to key choices made in the representation of 'the problem'? Bacchi's framework for policymaking demands greater reflection on the assumptions that underpin the representation of a problem; who is to blame, who benefits and who is harmed according to specific representations of the problem and the dissemination of problem representation 'as an exercise of power' (Bacchi, 2007: 14). The proliferation of awareness campaigns and materials within the anti-trafficking movement is one form of dissemination of problem representation, exercising power over public understandings of human trafficking. Bacchi's approach has primarily been utilized in scrutinizing public policy proposals, however, it also has utility as a tool to examine problem representation in wider policy discourse (Bacchi, 2012b: 23) occurring before, during and even after the implementation of public policy. Contestation surrounding policymaking does not cease following the implementation of legislation (Miller, 2012: 2). Analysing awareness campaigns through the lens of Bacchi's framework allows for a unique examination of the ongoing construction of human trafficking through these campaigns that are primarily interested in not only what is depicted but what is overlooked.

This article examines the awareness-raising efforts of 18 anti-trafficking organizations and coalitions in order to understand the implicit assumptions about the causes of trafficking that underpin recent campaigns.¹ The materials analysed include campaigns from Europe, North America and Australia, as well as multi-country campaigns including the Blue Blindfold Campaign (disseminated in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Canada), the United Nation's 'Blue Heart' Campaign and the Body Shop's 'Stop' Campaign. These campaigns represent a mix of government, non-government and corporate campaigns, reflecting a diversity of actors in the anti-trafficking movement.

Significant thematic similarities are present in the diverse campaigns, resulting in the construction of a typical trafficking offender. The analysis of the campaigns consisted of identifying both implicit and explicit representations of the problem of trafficking including the depiction of trafficking offenders, references to causes of human trafficking and references to possible solutions to combat trafficking. Key commonalities across the campaigns were observed, indicating the construction of a dominant representation of the problem of trafficking. Alternative, or contradictory, representations were also considered.

This article explores the construction of the problem of trafficking through these awareness campaigns and materials, in order to explore some of the assumptions that underpin the representation of the problem of trafficking. Specifically, this article examines the depiction of the trafficking offender, building on previous work analysing the depiction of trafficking victims within awareness campaigns. It is argued that the narrow construction of the ‘trafficking offender’ establishes a very limited scope of blame for the crime of trafficking, absolving others of responsibility. The target audiences for the campaigns are positioned as a solution to, not potential cause of, the crime of trafficking, whilst governments escape criticism for establishing restrictive migration regimes that entrench the vulnerability of migrant workers and perpetuate trafficking. First, this article will identify how the problem of trafficking is represented within these awareness campaigns. Specifically, it will describe how trafficking offenders are depicted in these campaigns, thus exploring who, or what, is constructed as the problematic actor in cases of human trafficking. Second, this article poses Bacchi’s key questions for understanding the politicization of problem representation, in order to identify those who may benefit from dominant constructions of the trafficking problem. In particular, this article identifies an emerging trend towards ethical consumerism, and explores the role of governments in mirroring the messages of anti-trafficking awareness campaigns, perpetuating a representation of the problem that absolves policymakers from responsibility for human trafficking.

The Trafficking Offender in Awareness Campaigns

The stories of human trafficking that are most familiar to the general public centre around a young female victim, kidnapped or duped into forced prostitution. Awareness-raising materials in the anti-trafficking movement contribute to this central narrative, with a focus predominantly on female victims, trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation (O’Brien, 2013). This construction fits Christie’s anatomy of an ‘ideal victim’ – one who is powerless, blameless and sympathetic (Christie, 1986: 19–21). Christie’s characterization of the ideal offender is also consistent with the representation of the trafficking offender – one who is unknown to the victim, socially undesirable and not themselves a victim (Christie, 1986: 25).

Despite research exploring other factors contributing to trafficking, such as the role of restrictive migration regimes (Chacon, 2006; Sullivan, 2008), and the lack of education and opportunities in source countries (Chuang, 2006), the majority of research has focused on the image of the trafficking offender as the organized crime syndicate, or the man who pays for sex. For example, many researchers position organized crime

syndicates as the trafficking offender (Aronowitz, 2001; Brown, 2011; Korsell et al., 2011), drawing parallels between the trafficking of drugs and the functioning of other illegal markets and organized crime activity. Other research apportioning blame for the crime of trafficking points the finger at men who buy sex. Hughes (2002, 2004) argues that men who purchase commercial sex fuel the demand for trafficking victims and thus should be made 'personally responsible and accountable for their behaviour that contributes to the sex trade' (2002). Farley (2003, 2006) also argues that the demand for commercial sex, and tolerance of commercial sex industries by governments, is the cause of trafficking. Farley and Hughes both view commercial prostitution as the central problem in trafficking, largely ignoring other industries in which trafficking occurs.

In anti-trafficking awareness campaigns and materials, pictorial depictions of the offender are extremely rare. The only campaign to include an image of a possible offender is the Euro 08 campaign developed prior to the European Soccer Cup in 2008, designed to inform spectators and participants of the possibility that commercial sexual services might involve women who have been 'exploited or trafficked'. This campaign includes the image of a man holding up an auction paddle, presumably bidding on a victim to be 'bought'. Whilst offenders are rarely depicted, or even discussed, the campaign materials nonetheless imply who is to 'blame' for the exploitation of the trafficking victim.

Offenders are primarily constructed through the 'stories' of trafficking victims disseminated in awareness-raising materials. The Blue Heart Campaign, established by the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking, includes a factsheet with three stories of trafficking (www.unodc.org/blueheart). Two stories are told of young women, 'Maria' and 'Adenike', who are offered jobs in other industries, waitressing and hairdressing, respectively, before being forced to work in prostitution. A third story presented by the Blue Heart Campaign highlights the experiences of male victims of trafficking. The depiction of male victims within awareness campaign materials is extremely rare, with most campaigns focusing on female victims and typically discussing male victims only when they are very young boys. This story, however, offers an insight into victimization experienced by male victims in an industry other than the sex industry. It tells the story of Peter and Kevin, who were duped by a 'construction manager' into working on a building site in exploitative conditions. In materials disseminated by the Salvation Army (www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/anti-trafficking), the story of 'Danya' tells of a girl forced into domestic servitude and sexual abuse by her uncle, whilst the story of 'Rachel' describes a young woman forced into prostitution, controlled by a pimp. In 'The Truth Isn't Sexy' Campaign (thetruthisn'tsexy.com/campaign), endorsed by the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre and Crime Stoppers, the story is told of a girl abducted from Albania and forced into prostitution.

All of these stories focus on the journey and experiences of the trafficking victims but also contribute to building an understanding of the offenders in trafficking. With the exception of the story of Peter and Kevin, the villains of these stories are not just the people who recruited and transported these women but also the pimps, brothel managers and sexual abusers. They are never extensively discussed in the materials, rather they appear

in the shadows of the narrative, leaving it to the audience to draw conclusions about the actions and motivations of these offenders. The absence, in this case, of intentional or strategic framing of a specific offender does not mean that these campaigns fail to convey any information about who is to blame for human trafficking. Bacchi's approach for analysing problem representation goes beyond examining framing to consider the importance of the implied, as well as the explicit, and scrutinize the 'assumptions and preconceptions' behind the construction of the problem in policy debate (Bacchi, 2007: 17). Whilst there is no clear placement of blame articulated in these campaigns, in presenting information to audiences about the victims of human trafficking, an impression is also created about the villains.

Stone (2002) argues that the creation of heroes and villains in narratives contributes significantly to the construction of social problems. The purpose of these campaigns and materials is to bring attention, compassion and resources to the plight of trafficking victims, so it is not surprising and certainly understandable that the complexity and diversity of offenders in trafficking is not well represented. However, despite an explicit focus on the victims, a 'villain' is certainly implied through the persistent focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation, which dominates the majority of these awareness-raising efforts. Of the 18 campaigns examined, 5 focus almost exclusively on trafficking for sexual exploitation. Ireland's 'Turn off the Red Light' Campaign lobbies explicitly for the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services, saying 'We believe that the most effective solution is to tackle the demand for paid sex that fuels trafficking' (www.turnofftheredlight.ie Fact Sheet). A belief in a nexus between demand for sexual services and increased trafficking also underpins the Euro 08 campaign that aims to reduce demand for sexual services among spectators at the 2008 European Soccer Cup in Austria and Switzerland. The Purple Teardrop Campaign, run by non-government organization NGO Sorooptimist International, focuses exclusively on 'women and children trafficked for prostitution' (www.purpleteardrop.org.uk), whilst the Truth Isn't Sexy Campaign also only brings attention to trafficking for sexual exploitation. The Body Shop Campaign, created in association with Child Wise, does not explicitly state that it is focused on sex trafficking only, but does ask customers to sign a petition calling for government action to stop women and children being 'tricked into trafficking for sexual exploitation' (www.thebodyshop.com.au/stop).

The other campaigns incorporate some discussion of trafficking for other purposes including forced marriage, domestic servitude, construction, garment work, manufacturing or agriculture, however, trafficking for sexual exploitation receives the overwhelming majority of attention. It is addressed in all of the campaigns, is clearly prioritized in the majority of the campaigns' imagery and stories, and is the only form of trafficking to receive exclusive attention from five campaigns. This focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation is misrepresentative of current estimates concerning the proportion of people trafficked for different forms of labour. Data from the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Counter Trafficking Module Database indicate that approximately 27% of assisted victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, as opposed to 53% of victims trafficked for other forms of labour² (IOM, 2012: 21).

The persistent focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation by awareness campaigns contributes to a representation of the problem in which prostitution and trafficking are inextricably linked. Those to blame for this problem, the trafficking offenders who contribute to the victimization of women and children, are thus assumed to be not only the 'traffickers' who recruit, transport and coerce women, but also the brothel owners, and pimps, as well as the 'johns' who demand sexual services. The shadowy image of the trafficking offender comes into sharp relief in this construction, in which an already socially undesirable figure is characterized as a central part of the trafficking chain. This is not surprising, as it acts as confirmation of many of the assumptions that the campaigns' audience may already hold. Bacchi argues that much policymaking occurs without an examination of the 'assumptions and deep-seated conceptual logics' behind policy proposals (Bacchi, 2012b: 22). In the depiction of trafficking offenders as the john who buys sex, awareness campaigns rely on the premise that the purchase of sexual services is wrong, reflecting long-held cultural attitudes towards sexual behaviour. The demand for commercial sex, whilst legal in many jurisdictions, is nonetheless socially marginalized. Agustin describes social responses to prostitution as a twin reaction of 'resigned tolerance and moral revulsion' (Agustin, 2007), in which the sex industry is sometimes tolerated, but rarely accepted. Men's demand for commercial sexual services is often demonized, as evidenced through the introduction of 'johns schools' designed to 're-educate' men on the evils of the sex industry and reduce demand for prostitution (Bernstein, 2005: 103) and the increasing popularity among policymakers of the 'Nordic model' of criminalizing the buyers of sex (Topping, 2013). Even where commercial sex is legalized or decriminalized, legislators do not accept demand for commercial sex as legitimate consumer behaviour (Carpenter, 2000: 98), but instead assume that for men, sex is a biological or 'irrepressible' need (Sullivan, 1997: 194). In representing the problem of trafficking as one caused, at least in part, by men who buy sex, the blame is placed on a group whose consumer activity is already socially condemned, regardless of whether or not it is legal.

This construction of the problem of trafficking as one centred on the purchaser of sexual services is further reinforced by the explicit declaration that demand for commercial sex must be abolished in order to combat trafficking. This is particularly evident in the materials from the Salvation Army as well as two campaigns in Ireland. The Turn off the Red Light Campaign calls for the abolition of prostitution as a preventative measure against trafficking, arguing that 'Countries like the Netherlands that legalized prostitution have had an explosion in organized crime, prostitution and trafficking' (www.turnofftheredlight.ie), whilst the Immigrant Council of Ireland (a coalition member in the Turn off the Red Light Campaign) also makes this argument in their materials. All three campaigns clearly position the buyers of sexual services as key offenders in the trafficking chain, representing the problem as one intrinsically linked to the sex industry itself.

Demand as The Problem

Explicit characterizations of the offender may be largely absent from awareness-raising materials, however the focus on the sex industry within the campaigns, and the singling out of the demand for sexual services, contributes not only to the construction of the

offender in trafficking discourse but also the construction of the central problem of trafficking. As highlighted above, demand for sexual services is frequently problematized in human trafficking discourse and research. The positioning of consumers of commercial sex as fuelling trafficking is a result of deeply embedded ideological assumptions about the legitimacy of prostitution.

'Addressing demand' for trafficked labour was one of the recommendations contained within the United Nations' Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Trafficking (OHCHR, 2002), released following the establishment of the *United Nation's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* (2000), however anti-trafficking activists with competing ideological perspectives on prostitution have interpreted this recommendation in different ways. Marshall (2012) argues that at the time there was consensus support for demand to be acknowledged by the United Nations as a root cause of trafficking, but that this has since been interpreted by anti-prostitution activists as a condemnation of demand for paid sex in general rather than a demand for trafficked labour (Marshall, 2012: 5). Anti-prostitution activists have frequently argued that in order for trafficking to be combated, prostitution must be abolished (Jeffreys, 2008; Raymond, 1995). Within the anti-trafficking movement, this anti-prostitution ideology is most often represented by faith-based organizations, some feminist groups, and several secular NGOs who also subscribe to the abolitionist perspective, particularly in the United States of America.³ Organizations with anti-prostitution platforms draw from varied and often conflicting ideologies including the belief that prostitution is a form of oppression against women, or that prostitution is a rejection of traditional sexual relationships that should occur only within a committed, monogamous relationship. These groups share a belief that the demand for sexual services fuels an increase in human trafficking, which is reflected in several anti-trafficking awareness campaigns. For example, a fact sheet from the Turn off the Red Light Campaign declares, 'We believe that the most effective solution is to tackle the demand for paid sex that fuels prostitution and trafficking'. This position is supported in the awareness materials released by the Immigrant Council of Ireland. These campaigns from Ireland are a prime example of the positioning of men who buy sex as primarily to blame for the trafficking of women and children.

Through a focus on demand for paid sex as the cause of trafficking, the problem is clearly constructed not as one of demand for trafficked labour, but demand for sexual labour per se. No differentiation is made between trafficked and non-trafficked labour. This failure to differentiate between migrant sex work and sex trafficking is a common feature in trafficking discourse, also rooted in the ideological belief that all prostitution is coercive and a form of oppression of women. Anti-prostitution activists believe that there is no distinction between free and forced prostitution, arguing that sex work can never be consented to (Barry, 1995; Farley, 2004; Jeffreys, 1997; Raymond, 2004). However, many sex worker organizations express frustration at the refusal by some in the anti-trafficking movement to differentiate between migrant sex work and trafficking (Doezema, 2002; Kempadoo, 2005: 149–158). The construction of the problem of trafficking as rooted in demand for sexual services, rather than demand for trafficked sex, is contrary to current research. A study for the IOM concluded that it was possible to distinguish the demand for sexual services from the demand for trafficked sex. The study

found that clients were more likely to demand sex workers who they perceived as being 'free' and voluntarily choosing to work in the sex industry (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson, 2003: 23).

Interestingly, the Purple Teardrop Campaign by Soroptimist International does make a distinction between commercial sex and forced commercial sex by directing one awareness campaign at men who buy sex. The text on one poster reads, 'It is against the law to have sex with anyone who has been duped, coerced, or forced against their will. If you have doubts and a conscience, call Crimestoppers'. In this poster, the demand for sex is not necessarily condemned, however men as consumers of sex are encouraged to look for signs of trafficking, and act to stop it. Whilst this campaign does imply a distinction between commercial sex and trafficked sex, the persistent actions of this and other campaigns in singling out men who buy sex as consumers creating a demand which fuels trafficking highlights an apportioning of blame that draws attention away from other industries in which trafficking occurs.

Who Else is to Blame?

The anti-trafficking movement, in the creation of these awareness materials, and in the perpetuation of a narrow depiction of the trafficking offender, represents a problem that places the blame on some, whilst overlooking others. Adopting Bacchi's approach for revealing the politics behind problem representation has a strong focus on exploring not only the underpinning assumptions but also what knowledge is produced and what the outcomes are of this problem representation (Bacchi, 2012b: 21). Specifically, identifying the placement of blame, whether it be on groups or individuals, demonstrates the politicization at play in problem representation. Bacchi's approach asks:

Who is likely to benefit from this representation of the "problem"? Who is likely to be harmed? Identify who is held responsible for the "problem" and how this attribution of responsibility affects both those targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to "blame". (Bacchi, 2007: 14)

In utilizing Bacchi's framework for considering not just what is represented as the problem, but what is not, it becomes apparent that the construction of the offender in trafficking awareness campaigns and materials overlooks key factors in human trafficking, including the role of consumers in other industries, and the role of governments in establishing restrictive migration regimes.

Consumerism Beyond the Sex Industry

The showcase status that is granted to trafficking for sexual exploitation through the exclusive focus of some awareness campaigns, and priority of place in others, minimizes the importance of trafficking for other forms of labour. The effect of this is to legitimize and naturalize some power arrangements, whilst delegitimizing others. The coercive power of the man who buys sex, over women forced or coerced into selling sex, is clearly identified and condemned in much anti-trafficking awareness material. However, other

capitalist exploitation structures such as the demand for cheap goods and services, and the differential wages paid to migrant versus 'local' workers are largely invisible in the representation of the trafficking problem. The two assumptions underpinning this representation are firstly a condemnation of men who buy sex (as discussed earlier), and secondly an acceptance of a consumer-driven market in other industries where cheap goods and labour are not only common, but expected. The fact that the sex industry is illegal in many countries does not diminish the fact that exploitation occurs in a wide range of both legal and illegal industries. But where the consumers of sex are demonized as to blame for trafficking into the sex industry, consumers in other industries are mostly absent from the problem representation.

Many legal industries rely on immigrant and child labour in which coercion and exploitation frequently feature. However, these industries do not receive the same sort of public scrutiny as that applied to the sex industry through anti-trafficking awareness campaigns. For example, in a story of trafficking told as part of the Blue Heart Campaign, 'Kevin and Peter' were forced into exploitative labour by a man named 'Edgar', who transported them to different locations to work on construction sites and 'doing stonework on private houses'. In the story, Edgar is clearly constructed as the villain, with no mention of the owners of the houses, or whether or not they knew that they were paying for forced labour services. It could be argued that this form of consumerism is not on the same interpersonal level as that of a man paying a pimp for sex with a trafficked woman. The degrees of separation between the forced labour and end user are, perhaps, greater, yet not dissimilar. In drawing comparisons between a woman selling sexual services and a woman taking money for other 'bodily services' including a factory worker, a domestic worker, a nightclub singer, and a professor of philosophy, Nussbaum argues that the 'genuinely problematic elements' within prostitution are also to be found in many other industries (1998: 701). Through a discussion of the working conditions, degree of autonomy, health risks and level of social stigma workers face in their differing occupations, Nussbaum demonstrates that prostitution is not necessarily a unique form of work. The use of force and fraud to procure that work is, of course, highly problematic, though not unique to the sex industry. The demand for a cheap good or service, alongside the willingness of traffickers to use exploited labour, fuels trafficking in many industries. Yet whilst the consumers of sexual services are criticized, the customer in other industries avoids condemnation.

In urging an ethical approach to problem representation, Bacchi asks, 'Who is likely to benefit from this representation of the "problem"?' (Bacchi, 2007: 14). In this case, the representation of trafficking offenders as those involved in recruitment, or those who purchase sex, benefits a much broader range of consumers who are largely absolved of any responsibility for trafficking. If those to blame are the organized crime gangs and the socially undesirable johns, then there is no real need to scrutinize our own place in the trafficking chain. Indeed, the call to action of many of these campaigns positions people in trafficking destination countries as potential heroes. Far from the villainous consumers of sexual services, we are asked to help 'save' victims by looking for signs of trafficking. The Blue Blindfold Campaign, Rescue and Restore Campaign, Soroptimist International Purple Teardrop Campaign and Canadian Royal Mounted Police Campaign all ask for people to be on the lookout for 'signs' of trafficking and inform authorities. This

approach has been criticized for fuelling anti-migration sentiment (Nieuwenhuys and Pecoud, 2007) but also rests on the assumption that the average person is only a solution to, not also a cause of, trafficking.

There are some notable exceptions to this dominant construction and representation of the problem. The 'Not for Sale' Campaign in Australia calls for responses to human trafficking to centre around ethical consumerism – a greater awareness and consideration of the source and journey of goods and services demanded and consumed. World Vision Australia's 'Don't Trade Lives' Campaign asks people to consider 'the story behind the purchase' in many industries. Ethical consumerism is also the driving force behind the work of a website established in 2011 – www.slaveryfootprint.org. The homepage for this site poses the provocative question 'How many slaves work for you?' Visitors to the site can complete a survey encouraging them to consider that slave labour may have been used in the production of an extremely wide range of consumer goods. An App is also available as part of this campaign, which measures your 'slavery footprint'. The focus on ethical consumerism in these campaigns offers an alternative representation of the problem, whereby it is not just those who transport, recruit or exploit the labour of people, but also those who consume the resulting goods and services, who are to blame for the crime of trafficking.

These alternative representations of the problem are not without their own potentially politicizing effects, where some benefit and others are harmed. This could include harms associated with a refusal from consumers to purchase many foreign-made goods, or the reluctance of businesses to employ migrant, or foreign, labour. This representation of the consumer as the problem is also, whilst wider than traditional representations focusing only on the consumer within the sex industry, still narrow in its focus. Shields (2011) argues that governments have little incentive to enforce labour laws, or enact new protections for workers, and thus it is left to consumers to incentivize companies to adopt ethical practices (2011, 188). Anti-trafficking awareness campaigns that focus on ethical consumerism as a solution appear to recognize this limitation, and thus predominantly direct their call to action to the individual consumer.

Government Complicity in Destination Countries

Even when the representation of the trafficking problem takes account of demand for goods and services in a range of industries, the construction of the trafficking offender still benefits some who should perhaps be blamed. If the focus is on the trafficker who recruits, transports and exploits victims, or on the consumer of goods and services resulting from forced labour, the role of governments in causing trafficking is obscured from view. Instead, the focus on trafficking as a form of organized crime fuels a border security response in which the transfer of people is perceived as bound up with drugs, guns and terrorism (Green, 2006: 162). This further legitimizes the role of governments as the ultimate arbiter of who can enter countries, deciding who belongs and who doesn't (Weber, 2013: 347). Bacchi urges a questioning of deep-seated assumptions concerning the role of governments as problem solvers rather than problem producers (Bacchi, 2007: 16). When posing Bacchi's question of 'who is to blame' in the representation of the trafficking problem, it is certainly not governments that are cast as the villains.

The representation of the problem of trafficking through the awareness campaigns discussed above emphasizes the role of greedy and unethical individuals, or inequalities in source countries, as key causes of human trafficking. This representation of the problem as unrelated to developed countries' migration systems is reinforced through statements from governments about human trafficking. In this, governments not only benefit from the representation of the problem in ways that emphasize individual responsibility over structural problems, they also play an active role in reinforcing an understanding that absolves them of responsibility.

Government statements from Australia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and Ireland tend to mirror the message of the awareness campaigns in identifying the causes of trafficking. In releasing statements about the causes of, and solutions to, trafficking, governments take an active role in perpetuating a very specific representation of the problem. Consistently, these statements indicate that the causes of trafficking are rooted in issues in source countries. For example, a fact sheet released in 2013 by the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons declares that people are made vulnerable to forced labour due to 'high rates of unemployment, poverty, crime, discrimination, corruption, political conflict, or even cultural acceptance of the practice' (U.S. State Department, 2013b) Canada's National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking declares that 'A set of interrelated "push" and "pull" factors contribute to human trafficking. "Push" factors include extreme poverty, unemployment, lack of education, inadequate social programs, gender-based inequality, corruption, war and conflict situations, and political unrest in countries of origin' (Government of Canada, 2012: 6).

Some governments, in declaring problems in source countries to be at least one of the causes of trafficking, do acknowledge that they have a role to play in helping to address these issues. For example, in a 2010 ministerial statement, the Australian Minister for Home Affairs and Justice, Brendan O'Connor, declared that:

Australia will provide approximately A\$4.3 billion in official development assistance to help reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. The aid program addresses violence against women and children, and includes a number of activities to help combat people trafficking and labour exploitation at the regional level. (O'Connor, 2010: 5)

This declaration of assistance to address the root causes of trafficking in source countries is some acknowledgement that destination countries have a role to play in preventing trafficking. However, the language of assistance clearly positions them in the role of powerful saviour rather than recognizing any impact that developed economies may have in causing or perpetuating systems of global inequality.

Another cause of trafficking commonly cited by these governments is demand, again mirroring the message of awareness campaigns. Statements from government agencies in the United Kingdom and Ireland clearly condemn demand for commercial sex as a cause of trafficking. The National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking of Human Beings in Ireland declares that:

the demand for women and children for sexual exploitation is a strong pull factor in the illegal sex trade and its customers are (even if unwittingly) fuelling the exploitation of

vulnerable people and helping to grow the profits of unscrupulous criminals including organised criminal gangs. (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2009: 53)

The UK Government's strategy to combat human trafficking identifies 'Tackling Demand' as a key aspect of efforts to combat trafficking, arguing that 'a key element in disrupting the market for trafficking and reducing its profitability is tackling demand by targeting those that pay for sexual services from trafficked women' (U.K. Home Office, 2011: 23). Notably, these statements do appear to distinguish between trafficked labour and non-trafficked labour, but whilst the Irish strategy talks predominantly of demand for commercial sex, the UK strategy talks about demand for cheap or exploitable labour in a variety of industries. The strategy states that:

We must also tackle the demand for inexpensive, unprotected and often illegal labour. It is vital that we work to build an environment where this kind of labour is neither desired nor readily available. There is a growing awareness among consumers of the harm caused by unethical business practices. (U.K. Home Office, 2011: 23)

Statements from other governments also touch on the demand for cheap and exploitable labour (in industries other than the sex industry) as a cause of trafficking, reflecting the trend towards recognizing ethical consumerism as a way to combat trafficking. In particular, the Australian Government announced a new Anti-Slavery Government Initiative in 2013 which involved new procurement rules for the Federal Government as a buyer to 'ensure that procurement arrangements adequately identify slavery as an important issue when considering the ethical behaviour of suppliers' (O'Connor, 2010: 6). This is a clearer indication of the ways in which governments may contribute to causing human trafficking but is limited to the role of government as consumer, not policymaker.

The Australian and US Government statements do not entirely overlook the complexities of migration and people movement as a cause of trafficking. Both indicate that people are rendered more vulnerable to trafficking due to their status as illegal migrants. For example, the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking highlights a series of ways in which workers can be exploited due to unregulated labour sectors, noting that whilst 'abuse of contracts and hazardous conditions of employment for migrant laborers do not necessarily constitute human trafficking', it does 'contribute to a situation of debt bondage' (U.S. State Department, 2013b). The Australian Government also considers the precarious situation of migrants, noting that a common tactic of coercion common among traffickers is the 'manipulation of tenuous or illegal migration situations' (O'Connor, 2010: 6). Whilst the US statement contemplates some changes to labour laws and 'recruitment programs' to ensure better worker protection (U.S. State Department, 2013a), the Australian Government appears to shirk the responsibility for this problem entirely. Brendan O'Connor MP declares that the 'tenuous or illegal migration systems' and other methods of coercion of trafficking victims, 'poses challenges for jurors. It also poses challenges for individuals and organizations in the community to understand and recognize possible indicators of trafficking' (O'Connor, 2010: 6). As the architect of migration regimes, guest worker visa schemes, and migration enforcement mechanisms,

shouldn't the manipulation of migration status as a tactic of coercion also pose problems for the Australian Government in the making of policy?

Despite some efforts by governments to address the root causes of trafficking in source countries, and to consider how demand for exploitable labour could be minimized, governments reinforce the impression created by awareness campaigns that they are only a solution to the problem of trafficking. Fitzgerald (2012) argues that in some cases this is an intentional strategy used to justify stricter border controls. This goes beyond exposing the assumptions underpinning policy, as Bacchi urges, and moves closer to the realm of intentional manipulation or framing. In examining the UK Government's framing of trafficking victims, Fitzgerald argues that, 'its discursive reliance upon the image of modern-day slavery as a crime that has its origins "out there" ... helps the government to justify extraterritorial border and immigration control' (Fitzgerald, 2012: 233). Anderson and Andrijašević (2008) also argue that governments construct trafficking as a depoliticized issue in an attempt to 'avert attention from the role of the state in creating the conditions in which exploitation occurs' (Anderson and Andrijašević, 2008: 138).

By depicting trafficking as caused by problems in source countries, or an exploitative sex industry, or greedy traffickers, or unethical consumers, trafficking awareness campaigns draw a circle around human trafficking as a distinct and unique problem, separate from other migration dilemmas and policy issues. This is contrary to a significant body of research demonstrating that trafficking is intrinsically linked to a wider scope of illegal, or irregular, migration (Kelly, 2002; Piper, 2005). Webb and Burrows (2009) suggest that human trafficking can be viewed on a continuum of irregular migration on which people may begin their journey as a smuggled person, and end it as a trafficked person. In asking Bacchi's questions of who benefits and who is harmed by a particular representation of a problem, it is governments who benefit from the current construction of trafficking in awareness campaigns. They benefit by appearing compassionate to the plight of trafficking victims, putting funding and programs towards victim services and the prevention of this crime, whilst at the same time having no impetus to recognize that a lack of avenues for people to legally migrate for work may well have led to people's exploitation in the first place.

This is a clear example of problem representation overlooking structural factors, and instead emphasizing individual responsibility. Individual 'responsibilization' (Bacchi, 2009: 118, 2012a: 5) drives policy concerning both trafficking victims, and irregular migrants, though in differing ways. In trafficking discourse, it is the greedy trafficker at fault, whereas in migration debates, it is the people smugglers who are demonized. In some instances, governments also engage in language that demonizes and delegitimizes irregular migrants as making individual choices for personal gain, rather than seeking asylum to flee persecution (Every and Augoustinos 2007; Grewcock 2009; Rowe and O'Brien, 2014). This is distinct to the compassionate way in which victims of human trafficking are described. Whilst irregular migrants are characterized as having engaged in active choices to travel to seek asylum, and thus individually responsible for their situation (including their exploitation at the hands of people smugglers), trafficking victims are portrayed as lacking in choice altogether. The consistent message, however, is that it is the decisions of individuals, not the structures created by governments, that

render people vulnerable and cause significant suffering. When there is acknowledgement of wider forces at play in people movement, those forces are typically depicted as externally located, caused by poverty or oppressive governments. This is certainly consistent with developed nations' legislative approach to migration more generally.

Governments are thus clearly complicit in a representation of the problem of trafficking that suits their interests. They are able to take on the role of hero, acting to combat this crime, without considering their role in creating the conditions that lead to human trafficking. But are they also complicit in the crime of trafficking itself? In attempting to clarify the difference between 'crimes of commission and crimes of omission' by the state, Kauzlarich et al. (2003) establish 'a complicity continuum' of state crime that aids in understanding the extent of government complicity in human trafficking. The governments of source countries are frequently criticized for failing to prevent human trafficking, either through corruption or inaction. However, the inaction of destination countries can also contribute to human trafficking, through a failure to provide appropriate avenues through which people can migrate for work. On the 'complicity continuum', this type of inaction could be classified as an implicit act of omission, in which the state allows 'institutions and actors to remain inequitable, harmful, and marginalizing' (Kauzlarich et al., 2003: 250). Governments have previously been accused of negligence for failing to prevent violence against women (Caulfield and Wonders, 1993: 80–81) but could also be considered negligent in this area of human trafficking. Whilst governments in destination countries may not necessarily have a legal, or constitutional, duty to migrants to create lawful avenues for travelling for work, there is little doubt that facilitating such systems would be one strategy to address the problem of human trafficking.

In all of the nations where the awareness campaigns considered in this study are released, governments have been active in establishing anti-trafficking legislation and programs designed to prevent this problem. But the call to action of these awareness campaigns, and the programs pursued by governments, continue to locate the problem of trafficking as external to developed nations. There is no acknowledgement of the vulnerability that restrictive migration regimes create, or consideration of how governments in destination countries could actively prevent trafficking through the improvement of migration systems.

Conclusion

Anti-trafficking awareness campaigns represent the problem of trafficking in very specific ways, through the stories they tell and the facts they disseminate. Bacchi's framework for scrutinizing the political impacts behind the representation of the problem demands that we ask 'who is to blame?' This article sought to answer that question by examining the depiction of trafficking offenders in 18 anti-trafficking awareness campaigns. It argued that the narrow depiction of trafficking offenders perpetuates a representation of the trafficking problem that obscures key causes of human trafficking and fails to adequately apportion blame. In the construction of the trafficking offender as either the organized crime gang, or the man who buys sex, demand for commercial sex services was positioned by many of the campaigns as the leading cause of sex trafficking.

In this positioning, there was rarely a differentiation made between consumers of trafficked sex, as opposed to consumers of commercial sex per se, implying that all men who pay for sex contribute to the trafficking of women and children. This representation of the problem rests heavily on the assumption that paying for sexual services is wrong. In contrast, consumers in industries other than the sex industry were largely absent from the apportioning of blame in these awareness-raising efforts. In any case, it is unlikely that a similar blanket accusation would be levelled at all consumers of goods and services in industries where trafficking occurs, as it would contradict cultural preconceptions about the legitimacy of capitalist enterprise.

In answering the question of who is represented as to blame for trafficking, those who benefit from this representation can be more clearly understood. In asking target audiences to look for signs of trafficking, many of the campaigns positioned the general public as potential saviours of trafficking victims, completely absolving them of responsibility for causing trafficking in the first place. Campaigns urging ethical consumerism were notable exceptions to this characterization, and offer an alternative, and more complex, representation of the problem of trafficking.

Others who benefit from the representation of the problem of trafficking dominant in the campaigns analysed are governments imposing increasingly restrictive migration regimes, which limit opportunities for people to migrate for work legally and safely. Far from viewing trafficking on a continuum, by placing the blame for trafficking in the hands of organized crime syndicates or consumers, governments are cast as heroes offering compassion and support, rather than villains instituting laws that perpetuate a market for people smugglers and traffickers. This individual responsabilization of the problem overlooks the causative role of structural factors such as restrictive migration regimes. As such, governments appear to ignore their own complicity in causing the problem of trafficking, and actively engage in perpetuating a representation of the problem through statements about the causes of trafficking that focus on the problem 'out there', thus obscuring their role in rendering irregular migrants vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers.

In examining the representation of the problem of trafficking, the depiction of who is to blame reflects a limited understanding of the trafficking offender and entrenches a benefit structure in which key causes of trafficking are overlooked. To answer the question of 'who is harmed' by this problem representation, more work is required to consider the full impact of the narrative of trafficking established by these awareness campaigns. Alongside the victims of trafficking who do not fit the idea of the pure victim depicted by awareness campaigns (Hoyle et al., 2011), those harmed are likely to be those who still have no legal avenues to migrate for work and those whose forced labour is still exploited in legal industries that avoid scrutiny by consumers.

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Notes

1. Awareness-raising materials analysed from Blue Blindfold (www.blueblindfold.co.uk); Blue Hearts (www.unodc.org/blueheart); Soroptomists' Purple Teardrop Campaign (www.purpleteardrop.org.uk); Body Shop's 'Stop' Campaign (www.thebodyshop.com.au/stop); Rescue and Restore (www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking); The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) (endslaveryandtrafficking.org); Hidden in Plain Sight (www.dhs.gov/files/programs/humantrafficking); Salvation Army International (www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/antitrafficking); Anti-Slavery, Australia (www.antislavery.org.au); Not for Sale, Australia (www.notforsalecampaign.org/australia/); World Vision Australia's Don't Trade Lives Campaign (www.worldvision.com.au/act/donttradelives); Slavery Footprint (www.slaveryfootprint.com); Euro 08 (www.frauenhandeleuro08.ch/en/spot); EU Anti-Trafficking Day (ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking); The Truth Isn't Sexy Campaign (thetruthisntsexy.com/campaign); Immigration Council of Ireland (www.immigrantcouncil.ie/campaigns/combating-trafficking-and-exploitation-in-the-sex-industry); Royal Canadian Mounted Police 'I'm not for Sale' (www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/qc/pub/traite-trafficking/traite-trafficking-eng.htm) and Turn off the Red Light Campaign (www.turnofftheredlight.ie).
2. This figure should be read as indicative only. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) report acknowledges that there are limitations to the data presented in this report, most notably that this reflects only IOM-assisted cases. It should be further noted that much quantitative data on human trafficking are unreliable and do not necessarily present the full picture of the phenomenon. Many cases of trafficking remain hidden, and differences in definitions of the crime of trafficking in legislation across many jurisdictions can undermine the validity of data collected.
3. See Chuang (2010) for a detailed explanation of competing ideological positions within the anti-trafficking movement in the United States.

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