

FRAMING THE ISSUE: HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING  
THROUGH THE LENS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS AS  
MAINSTREAM MEDIA CONSUMERS

by

KELSEY FUSON

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Advertising  
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College  
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Bachelor of Arts

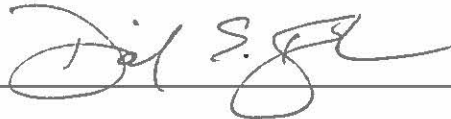
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## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

**Kelsey Fuson for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
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**Title: Framing the Issue in Oregon: Human Sex Trafficking through the Lens of College  
Students as Media Consumers**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_



**David Koranda**

News organizations and other mainstream media play an influential role in molding public perceptions of provocative topics, including human rights issues. This thesis explores the portrayal of human sex trafficking in Oregon through mainstream media and its affects on the way college students perceive the issue. According to Youth Ending Slavery (YES,) Portland, Oregon has the highest number of strip clubs per capita in the United States. This relates to the high frequency of trafficking cases in Portland because many of these strip clubs act as hubs for sex trafficking and other related illegal activity.<sup>1</sup> This, among other key factors, has allowed for the human sex trafficking climate in Portland to grow and continually thrive.

Through research on where college students obtain their news as well as an in-depth frame analysis of how such news sources discuss human sex trafficking, I will identify key benefits and misrepresentations that provide information regarding the current climate of human sex trafficking, both in Oregon and the United States as a whole. I will examine the framework directly designed around trafficking through work

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<sup>1</sup> "Portland." Youth Ending Slavery (YES). Web. 18 May 2016.

completed by Mojca Pajnik as well as Barbara Friedman, Anna Johnston, and Autumn Shafer and apply it to articles released through social media, smartphone apps, and Oregon university publications. The purpose of this thesis is to uncover the recent developments in how the media outline human sex trafficking, particularly in regards to cases in Oregon and how that may affect college students who are exposed to such representations of the issue.

## **Acknowledgements**

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I would like to thank my parents, Jack and Evie. I am so lucky to have such incredibly supportive and inspirational parents who push me to be the best version of myself and who provided me with the gift of an education. Words cannot express my gratitude I have for their love, generosity, and encouragement. Additionally, I would like to thank my siblings, Lindsay and Scott, for being the most inspirational dream chasers I know. Watching both of them earn the privilege of doing what they love every single day has taught me that hard work and dedication are key in having the chance to do something I am equally passionate about.

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Lastly, I would like to thank anyone who has taken the time to read this. Human sex trafficking is a tragic crisis that is sweeping our nation and because of misinformation spreading throughout the media, it remains misunderstood and widely unacknowledged. This is something that is incredibly important to me and I hope after reading this, it becomes important to you too!

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## Introduction

A quick Google search of “human sex trafficking in Portland, Oregon” fetches article upon article of news stories formatted nearly identically: A pattern of females falling victim to the deception of trafficking offenders becomes extensively normal. Naïve, vulnerable women who are dependent on strong, male figures become targeted by an independent, single male and led through his puzzle of trafficking traps. Scattered throughout reputable news sources like CNN and the New York Times live reports like this that may begin shaping the general public’s definition of human sex trafficking. Without doubt, situations identical to this happen, but there is much more complexity and depth to the crisis that is human sex trafficking in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Many Americans are heavily reliant on mainstream media as their primary source of news and information.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this research, I define “mainstream media” as mass media that influences large numbers of people and often reflects and molds current public opinion. In fact, according to a study done by the American Press Institute, 88% of Americans are dependent on obtaining news directly from news organizations. This includes newspapers, TV newscasts, and websites among others.<sup>4</sup> Further, with the new age of mobile technology comes the privilege of constant

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<sup>2</sup> O'Brien, E. "Human Trafficking Heroes and Villains: Representing the Problem in Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaigns." *Social & Legal Studies* 25, no. 2 (2015): 205-24. doi:10.1177/0964663915593410.

<sup>3</sup> Hirschman, Elizabeth C., and Craig J. Thompson. "Why Media Matter: Toward a Richer Understanding of Consumers' Relationships with Advertising and Mass Media." *Journal of Advertising* 26, no. 1 (1997): 43-60. doi:10.1080/00913367.1997.10673517.

<sup>4</sup> "How Millennials Use and Control Social Media." American Press Institute RSS. March 16, 2015. Accessed May 16, 2016. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/millennials-social-media/>.



access to news sources. Journalists are able to frame stories in order to draw certain reactions or capture the attention of specific audiences through their use of language, framing strategies, and context. The Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute, researched media consumer patterns of the Millennial generation, identified as adults age 18-34, and revealed the way this generation obtains its news, silencing the idea that this generation's understanding of the news is "passive and incidental." The research states, "This generation tends not to consume news in discrete sessions or by going directly to news providers. Instead, news and information are woven into an often continuous but mindful way that Millennials connect to the world generally, which mixes news with social connection, problem solving, social action, and entertainment."<sup>5</sup> With the help of technological advances that have allowed for both hard and soft news to be constantly available at one's fingertips, Millennials are now able to digest news in a way that is anything but passive or incidental. For the purpose of this research, I look specifically at college students, using millennial statistics when necessary and applicable.

Through my primary and secondary research, I would like to answer the following questions: (a) How is the mainstream media talking about human sex trafficking, both in Oregon and the United States as a whole?; (b) What statistical information is currently available through governmental or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that is easily accessible to both media content developers (i.e.,

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<sup>5</sup> "How Millennials Use and Control Social Media." American Press Institute RSS. March 16, 2015. Accessed May 16, 2016. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/millennials-social-media/>.

journalists) as well as Millennial mainstream media consumers?; (c) How can the media better inform consumers without resorting to overgeneralizing or stereotyping?

I will at statistics and numbers from both Oregon and the United States to create a comparison, delve into articles posted from 2014-present to analyze context, rhetoric and language, and explore the issue through framing theory.

**\*\*Disclaimer:** This purpose of this thesis is not to find a solution for the end to human sex trafficking, but rather to analyze the conversation surrounding the issue. This distinction is important because as an undergraduate student, I am not qualified to develop sweeping solutions, but I can educate others on the implications news media have when discussing human sex trafficking and determine effective strategies to inform college student media consumers to encourage educated activism.

## Background on Human Sex Trafficking

It is nearly impossible to pinpoint the origin of sex trafficking in the westernized world due to its longstanding existence. But laws prohibiting aspects of commercialized sex in the United States are about 100 years old.<sup>6</sup> It is important to define human sex trafficking and note the distinct difference between sex trafficking and other types of trafficking. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the term “trafficking” refers to:

“...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”<sup>7</sup>

Human trafficking can involve any type of labor or industry, including anything from factory work, farming, or commercial sex. As stated by Shared Hope International, human sex trafficking “occurs when someone uses force, fraud or coercion to cause a commercial sex act with an adult or causes a minor to commit a commercial sex act.”<sup>8</sup> Sex trafficking is also often described as a form of modern day slavery. Due to this depiction, there is often a misconception surrounding the difference between sex workers (also referred to as prostitutes) and sex trafficking

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<sup>6</sup> "When Prostitution Wasn't a Crime: The Fascinating History of Sex Work in America." Altnet. February 18, 2013. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.altnet.org/news-amp-politics/when-prostitution-wasnt-crime-fascinating-history-sex-work-america>.

<sup>7</sup> "United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime." What Is Human Trafficking? Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>.

<sup>8</sup> "What Is Sex Trafficking? - Shared Hope International." Shared Hope International. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://sharedhope.org/the-problem/what-is-sex-trafficking/>.

victims. While the lines between prostitution and sex slavery can often be blurred and many campaigns work toward eradicating both sex trafficking and prostitution as two equally criminal acts, there is an important distinction—sex trafficking is always a form of forced coercion while prostitution can be a choice, but not always is. This can often be pushed aside when reaching out to sex workers and framing their lifestyle as forced, not chosen. Mojca Pajnik highlights this in *Media Framing of Trafficking*, stating,

“Such framings of trafficking fail to reflect the complexity of the experiences of people who have undertaken to leave their homes to pursue a better life. By assuming that women are all victims, the media as a public discourse shaping representations of trafficking do not encompass reasons for migration by women that resist dominant representations.”<sup>9</sup>

This frame casts all women who partake in sex work as submissive to an overarching masculine character, overgeneralizing the complexities that make up the choice to partake in sex work.

This study explores articles published from 2014-present to identify language and rhetoric patterns commonly used to describe sex trafficking in Oregon, specifically looking at which characters are discussed, where the blame is placed, and how the victim is portrayed. I chose this timeframe because it allows me to compare the most recent statistics with patterns in mainstream media that college students are exposed to on a daily basis. By doing so, I have the opportunity to separate articles based on their underlying intended purpose. I also examine these articles using a framing analysis previously developed by Pajnik. Frame analysis is defined as a “a concept that is

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<sup>9</sup> Pajnik, Mojca. "Media Framing of Trafficking." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12, no. 1 (2010): 45-64. doi:10.1080/14616740903429114.

underpinned by the idea that people must somehow classify their experience if they are to grasp its significance and communicate the experience to others.”<sup>10</sup> Further, I look at the reports from the position of a mainstream media consumer to analyze how different storytelling tactics might provoke varying reactions.

### **Human Sex Trafficking in Oregon**

According to Youth Ending Slavery (YES,) Portland has the largest number of strip clubs per capita in the United States. This relates to the high frequency of trafficking cases in Portland because many of these strip clubs act as hubs for sex trafficking and other related illegal activity. Further, the large number of strip clubs also suggests that there is a market to maintain business for the various strip club locations. Lastly, because Portland is one of the major cities along the I-5 corridor, linking other large cities together, it can often pose as a pit stop for traffickers.<sup>11</sup>

A 2013 study on human sex trafficking in the Portland Metro Area conducted by Portland State states, “Given the covert nature of crimes perpetrated against [Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)] victims, cases are widely underreported... Collecting standardized data for victims is also difficult due to the highly sensitive nature of the information, as well as the perceived danger that may result from disclosure.”<sup>12</sup> That said, it is important to note the nature of collecting such data. One can assume that several cases remain unreported.

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<sup>10</sup> "Social Research Glossary." Social Research Glossary. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/socialresearch/frameanalysis.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> "Portland." Youth Ending Slavery (YES). Web. 18 May 2016.

<sup>12</sup> "Portland." Youth Ending Slavery (YES). Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.youthendingslavery.org/portland.html>.

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is an organization dedicated to serving the victims and survivors of human trafficking and providing the public with resources and information on trafficking activity. In a study done in 2014, the NHTRC looked toward information related to calls brought in on its hotline. In 2014, NHTRC received 289 calls in Oregon, which is the 19th highest call volume out of all 50 states. This number was comparable to states of similar population size. The study looks at data on call sources, location, reason for contacting the NHTRC, and victim demographics.

Because these numbers are based on just one hotline, it is again important to note that many cases are undocumented by the NHTRC. The organization notes, “The following statistics are based solely on substantive calls about human trafficking and issues related to human trafficking made to the NHTRC... Substantive calls exclude hang-ups, missed calls, wrong numbers, and calls in which the caller’s reason for calling is unknown.”<sup>13</sup> The NHTRC received 289 substantive calls in Oregon within the 2014 timeframe. Of the 56 human trafficking cases reported through these calls, 45 cases were categorized as sex trafficking. Other categories recorded included “Labor Trafficking,” “Trafficking Type Not Specified,” and “Sex and Labor.” The hotline was used primarily for reporting trafficking tips, and the most common caller was identified as a community member, followed by a victim of trafficking. At first glance, these numbers can suggest that the number of cases may be grossly underreported. For a state of more than three million people, based on how the media portrays the issue with such

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<sup>13</sup> "NHTRC 2014 Oregon State Report." National Human Trafficking Resource Center. March 31, 2015. Accessed February 8, 2016. <https://traffickingresourcecenter.org/resources/nhtrc-2014-oregon-state-report>.

height and severity, one can assume the underground nature of the human sex trafficking system causes a significant underrepresentation of the problem. Such underreporting could be problematic for media trying to cover the issue.

## **Media Consumer Patterns Among Millennials**

### **Background Statistics on Demographic of College Students**

In a survey done by the National Center for Education Statistics on college attendance, some 20.2 million students were expected to attend American colleges and universities in fall 2015. Of that group, 7.0 million students were to attend 2-year institutions and 13.2 million were expected to attend 4-year institutions.<sup>14</sup> The latest Census Bureau data shows that the total U.S population is 321,481,820. Therefore, 6.28% of U.S citizens were enrolled in 2- or 4-year institutions in 2015. A Census Bureau survey completed in 2014 showed that 3.97 million people live in Oregon. Of the group of Oregon residents, 244,016, or an estimated 6.15%, attend an undergraduate institution.<sup>15</sup>

Given the similar percentage results (within 0.14% of each other) among college students in the United States and college students in Oregon, the results from nationwide studies are presumed to apply generally to Oregon as well.

Additionally, due to the large number of studies conducted on media consumer patterns of Millennials, some research discussed within this thesis covers statistics from the Millennial generation as a whole rather than just college students specifically. Because college students are within the Millennial generation, they follow similar consumer patterns and are a part of Millennial statistics and research.

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<sup>14</sup> "Back to School Statistics." Fast Facts. 2015. Accessed May 30, 2016. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>.

<sup>15</sup> "Easy Stats." Easy Stats. Accessed May 30, 2016. <http://www.census.gov/easystats/>.



## **The Relationship between College Students and the News**

Traditional news and media outlets are continually looking toward college-aged students to predict and mold their up and coming content production. These new tactics are meant to keep up with demand for news catered toward the newest educated generation.<sup>16</sup> In *Students and Social News: How College Students Share News Through Social Media*, Dana Rosengard, Mary Tucker-McLaughlin and Tim Brown research and discuss how college students interact with media. The study surveyed a total of 417 students from three different universities: two large public universities in the southeast and one mid-sized private university in the northeast. The study notes that while the convenience sample was not randomly generated, the demographic numbers are comparably consistent with recent data regarding college education in the United States.

The survey asked a series of questions relating to how students interacted with the news, including students' level of care for news in their hometown versus news in their college town, where students learn about their news (i.e, social media, mobile apps, broadcast news, word of mouth, etc.), how students are confirming the validity of their news, and lastly, how students shared their news.

Results showed that 53% of students reported learning about news stories through social media. The next largest category reported was learning news through in-person information, which fell at 20%. Additionally, the study showed that no strong evidence supports mobile devices encouraging students to actively interact with the news at a higher rate than before, but traditional news outlets are molding the way in

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<sup>16</sup> Rosengard, D., M. Tucker-McLaughlin, and T. Brown. "Students and Social News: How College Students Share News Through Social Media." *Electronic News* 8, no. 2 (2014): 120-37. doi:10.1177/1931243114546448.

which they deliver their news to better engage with Millennial audiences. This could be in part due to the fact that Millennials are newest generation to consume news the most and, therefore, news outlets want to develop strong reputations and solid relationships with Millennial consumers. The article states, “First, industry practitioners who are looking for future consumers would do well to focus on individuals in their newsrooms to connect with the audience. Granted, that goes against many notions of the news ‘team’ that have developed over the years.”<sup>17</sup> This “team” discussed refers to news broadcasting organizations forming teams with which audience members can become familiar. Social media allows for people to choose which news they are exposed to and who is relaying such information. The study addresses the point that if students are able to feel they have a relationship with a news “individual,” they are more likely to trust that source and continue obtaining information from them. Examples of news “individuals” could be seen in figures like late night show hosts, well-known YouTube personalities, and individually run Twitter or Instagram accounts. For this reason, this thesis looks toward such news sources to gain insight into how these individuals deliver news through frame analysis.

### **The Relationship Between Millennials and the News**

A separate study conducted by the American Press Institute in conjunction with the Media Insight Project cites Millennials as consuming a combination of news media, including everything from hard news to lifestyle news. Eighty-five percent of

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<sup>17</sup> Rosengard, D., M. Tucker-Mclaughlin, and T. Brown. "Students and Social News: How College Students Share News Through Social Media." *Electronic News* 8, no. 2 (2014): 120-37. doi:10.1177/1931243114546448.

Millennials report that keeping up with the news is at least somewhat important to them, while 69% of the group said that they get their news daily. The study also pointed out that while Millennials might not go to a social media platform solely for news, they are incidentally exposed to the news while visiting different social media websites and therefore have the opportunity to dig deeper, looking toward credible news sources for more information on individual stories. Fifty-seven percent turn to search engines, while only 7% search on Facebook when acquiring additional information.<sup>18</sup>

Aside from the fact that online news and social media are becoming increasingly accessible, it is not the only reason for Millennials straying from traditional news sources like television broadcasting and newspapers. As discussed before, Millennials prefer to customize their news digest based on their interests. Sam, a 19-year-old from San Francisco, noted, “I want the news to find a balance. That’s my most important thing. I don’t want to turn on the news and just see nothing but negativity... I found out the Richmond death rate or homicide rate has been the lowest in many years. I found that out from social media. I don’t find that out from the news.”<sup>19</sup> Through this study, it is evident that Millennials find balance within their news intake necessary in order to maintain a positive outlook. They note that because traditional news outlets avoid positive stories due to content restraints, they can find more positivity on the Internet where there is a constant flow of news and updated data.

Lastly, 94% of Millennials surveyed for this study were reported to own smartphones. This statistic suggests that 94% of Millennials have access to the news at

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<sup>18</sup> "How Millennials Get News." American Press Institute RSS. March 16, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/millennials-news/>.

<sup>19</sup> “How Millennials Get News.”

all times. That said, the study also mentions the usage of smartphone news apps. This is yet another way for Millennials to customize their news based on which news outlets they trust and which news outlets have smartphone apps available. In *Exploring News Apps and Location-Based Services on the Smartphone*, Amy Schmitz Weiss explores the relationship between Millennial news consumers and organizations that provide news through smartphone apps. About 62% of smartphone owners use their device for getting news and 56% seek local news on their smartphones: 77% of that group is between the ages of 18-29.<sup>20</sup> This provides viable evidence that just somewhat under half of college students seek news within their college towns, whether that is through local news outlets or campus news organizations. Weiss states, “The combination of these two services (location and news) might enable a more contextual user experience and make searching for local news much easier for this younger demographic.”<sup>21</sup> Millennials seeking local news are perhaps interested in learning about current events that have or will directly affect them. Therefore, the location-based technology allows for news to follow them based on their whereabouts. Location-based news allows for audiences to contextualize their news among the vast amount of content that bombards social media platforms.

### **The “KONY 2012” Phenomenon**

Another important implication to address is the inherent consequence of news media as a two-way conversation. Online media consumers have the ability to publicly

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<sup>20</sup> Weiss, A. Schmitz. "Exploring News Apps and Location-Based Services on the Smartphone." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (2013): 435-56. doi:10.1177/1077699013493788.

<sup>21</sup> Weiss, A. Schmitz. "Exploring News Apps and Location-Based Services on the Smartphone."

react to articles and converse with other readers with ease. The expansive amount of news that is published online daily allows for all readers, including Millennials, to customize their influx of news articles to their interests. In a 2014 Mintel study, writer Lauren Bonetto notes, “Millennials not only like customization, they expect it. They are more likely to respond to services and apps that allow them to customize what information they receive and how they receive it.”<sup>22</sup> With this expectation, news of Millennial interest circulates quickly, reaching large numbers based on the level of interest followers show.

In March 2012, a short film produced by NGO Invisible Children shared the story of Ugandan warlord, Joseph Kony, who was allegedly using children as soldiers. The video, titled “KONY 2012,” is cited as the most viral videos in history, hitting 100 million views in six days.<sup>23</sup> A New York Times article written just days after the video went viral comments on the disillusion some experienced in supporting the cause.

“And that is when the backlash began. The grounds for objection to the video are many. Some critics begin and end with its deep misrepresentation of the current state of play, including the fact that Mr. Kony has largely been defeated and is in hiding. Others chafe at the implicit ‘white man’s burden’ message of the video – that Western outsiders, and only Western outsiders, can remedy the situation.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lauren Bonetto. "News App Targets Millennials." Mintel Academic. Mintel, 31 Oct. 2014. Web. 21 Apr. 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Harsin, Jayson. "WTF Was Kony 2012? Considerations for Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies (CCCS)." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2-3 (2013): 265-72. doi:10.1080/14791420.2013.806149.

<sup>24</sup> Cohen, Noam. "The Power of Simplicity." The New York Times. March 11, 2012. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/05/business/1-the-power-of-simplicity-541761.html>.

By utilizing a video shared through social media as the driving force of this campaign, Invisible Children was able to successfully convince people of false, outdated information regarding the issue. This becomes problematic when discussing sensitive material or complex issues. Much like criminal warlords, human sex trafficking is a hot-button issue that can invoke people to feel sympathy or even compel readers to take action.

This is where “slacktivism” (also known as “clicktivism”) becomes applicable. Slacktivism is defined as any “action performed via the Internet in support of a political or social cause but regarded as requiring little time or involvement, e.g., signing an online petition or joining a campaign group on a social media website.”<sup>25</sup> This provides a sense of civic engagement for social media users without necessarily effecting any change.

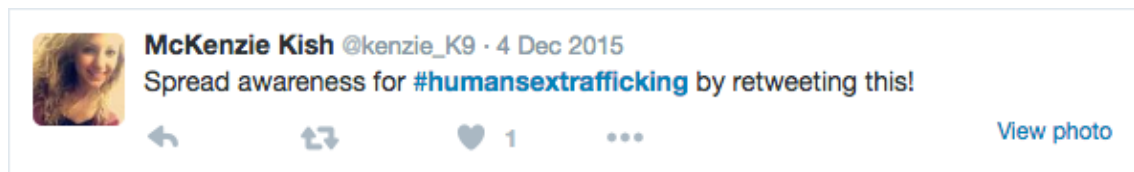


Figure 1: “Slacktivism” Tweet

An example of Slacktivism, a form of activism that takes little to no time to complete and often has little to no effect on the issue.

The combination of a surplus of information circulation on the World Wide Web as well as the innate need for consumers to feel like they have contributed to society is what makes campaigns like “Kony 2012” so successful. The New York Times article states, “We are entering an age when the shallow political power of the public—

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<sup>25</sup> "Definition of Slacktivism in English:." Slacktivism. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/slacktivism>.

including those too young to vote—will increasingly help shape our policy debates. And yes, that is scary to professional foreign policy experts...”<sup>26</sup> The political system of the United States has entered the realm of social media, where messages can be swayed based on viewership and anyone has the tools to report the “news.” As Cohen states, this is a concern for expert foreign policymakers because media that viewers find most captivating or effective is swaying public opinion, including consumers below the voting age. In fact, the KONY 2012 campaign did attract the attention of the U.S. Congress and Obama’s administration, which congratulated the Invisible Children NGO for its ability to raise such vast awareness surrounding the issue.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the video received shares and support from highly followed celebrities, including Oprah and Ryan Seacrest.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 2: Oprah’s Tweet regarding KONY 2012

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<sup>26</sup> Cohen, Noam. "The Power of Simplicity." The New York Times. March 11, 2012. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/05/business/1-the-power-of-simplicity-541761.html>.

<sup>27</sup> "Joseph Kony 2012: Obama Administration Congratulates Success of Campaign." The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, 9 Mar. 2012. Web. 27 Apr. 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Cohen, Noam. "

While the backlash to this campaign revealed many of the videos' faults, such as how it portrayed Uganda's state of unrest about five years in the past or how it failed to note that Kony was actually in hiding, the initial response to the Invisible Children's story was much greater, spreading the outdated information much further than the truth. This can be considered applicable to any social injustice discussed by the news media. The Invisible Children was successful in producing a video that would capture the attention of millions without the confirmation of said news material through other outlets. It is important for news outlets and media producers to release content with the utmost care in terms of sensitivity and understanding of the issue in order to successfully inform readers and avoid misguidance.



## Media Frame Analysis

### Introduction to Media Frame Analysis

In order to look at articles published within the timeframe of my research, I used several strategies to identify what does and does not work in terms of successfully and properly informing mainstream media consumers, specifically college students. One way to do so is through frame analysis. Frame analysis is defined as “a concept that is underpinned by the idea that people must somehow classify their experience if they are to grasp its significance and communicate the experience to others.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, people compare new information or knowledge to past experiences in order to conceptualize and create new understandings. In her article, “Media Framing of Trafficking,” Mojca Pajnik identifies four frames commonly used by journalists to report on human sex trafficking cases. Pajnik states that such frames assist in shaping an “anti-trafficking paradigm” that defines trafficking as “a criminal issue and calls for stricter policing, saving victims, and tightening borders.”<sup>30</sup> This limits the scope and voice in which stories of sex trafficking stories can be told. In identifying these, she also notes that the media should be considered an important actor in the construction of the meaning of trafficking. The frames she discusses are as follows: criminalization, nationalization, victimization, and regularization. While her

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<sup>29</sup> "Social Research Glossary." Social Research Glossary. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/socialresearch/frameanalysis.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Pajnik, Mojca. "Media Framing of Trafficking." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12, no. 1 (2010): 45-64. doi:10.1080/14616740903429114.

research looks specifically at cross-border trafficking cases reported by the Slovenian press, much of her analysis can directly correlate to trafficking cases reported in U.S mainstream media.

### *Criminalization*

Perhaps obvious based on the name, Pajnik's criminalization frame places criminal activity as the foundation for the widespread continuation of trafficking. This typically invokes a problem-solution scheme, urging both governmental groups and NGOs to take action. The call to action often fails to consider the story of the target, ignoring important aspects to the story that might determine the ultimate fate of the trafficked victim. Pajnik notes that such framing,

“...fails to consider what stricter laws might do to the people who are migrating. A lack of information is provided on potential consequences, among them the possibility that border-crossing practices will be pushed even further into the criminal underground, thus potentially producing more exploitation and violence.”<sup>31</sup>

This can be a dangerous way to present information on human sex trafficking, whether it is cross-border or within state lines, to mainstream media consumers. By turning a blind eye to the issues directly correlated with the act of trafficking, the criminalization frame assumes a position that temporarily bandages one issue while potentially causing another to spiral out of control.

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<sup>31</sup> Pajnik, Mojca. "Media Framing of Trafficking." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12, no. 1 (2010): 45-64. doi:10.1080/14616740903429114.

### *Nationalization*

The nationalization frame leads people to believe the government has a tight handle on the issue and that human sex trafficking is a non-issue because it is under constant watch. This allows mainstream media consumers to fall victim to the “ignorance is bliss” scenario. The nationalization frame also gives nations laden with sex trafficking cases a false sense of pride. In previous research conducted, it was very apparent that many of the college students I interviewed had been convinced by the nationalization frame that human sex trafficking was a non-issue in the United States and only affected places far, far away—places like Eastern Europe or third world countries. The nationalization frame allows for many readers to push the issue aside and ignore the crisis at hand.

### *Victimization*

The victimization frame creates a stereotype of women as “a collectivity in terms of their innocence, purity, and inability to take action on their own behalf.”<sup>32</sup> This frame is similar to the criminalization frame in the sense that it sums up human sex trafficking as a very black-and-white issue. The victimization frame pairs naïve, vulnerable women with dark, criminal, and manipulative men. While Pajnik states the real possibility of women being deceived by their traffickers, she explains that there is much more to many trafficking cases. By characterizing an overall generalization of what traffickers and their victims look like, it in turn

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<sup>32</sup> Pajnik, Mojca. "Media Framing of Trafficking." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12, no. 1 (2010): 45-64. doi:10.1080/14616740903429114.

dehumanizes the situation. Each case becomes the same in the eyes of mainstream media consumers and one can no longer differentiate one instance from another.

### *Regularization*

The regularization frame states the problem of trafficking is easily traceable and fixable. Pajnik states,

“Newly adopted laws and signed agreements are projected as necessary policies, regardless of their content, and the idea is promoted that all that is needed is sensitization and training of law enforcement officers in order to address trafficking problems effectively.”<sup>33</sup>

This serves the purpose of legitimizing harsher legal punishments for those who transgress borders or remain within state lines to traffic women, regardless of the particular case.<sup>34</sup> This frame oversimplifies what must be done in order to combat sex trafficking, placing artless solutions on the complex issue.

Frequent mainstream media consumers often make sense of events, particularly those of which they have no personal experience, through media frames. If, for instance, a college student gets her news from the New York Times smartphone app, then the way the Times frames stories on human sex trafficking within the app will quite possibly shape how this particular college student views the issue.

I recognize the fact that perhaps some articles that do not fall into any of the frames. In this case, there is the opportunity to present my own framework. By

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<sup>33</sup> Pajnik, Mojca. "Media Framing of Trafficking." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12, no. 1 (2010): 45-64. doi:10.1080/14616740903429114.

<sup>34</sup> Pajnik, Mojca. "Media Framing of Trafficking."

taking Pajnik's model into consideration, I model my original framing concepts around the predisposition that the article presents, how the information is being shared, and who is writing the article.

### **Additional Content Analysis Strategies**

In addition to Pajnik's frame analysis tool as well as my own generation of framework, I also utilize content analysis strategies presented by other scholars who have conducted similar studies on the media and human trafficking. For example, in the article, "Framing the Problem of Sex Trafficking: Whose problem? What remedy?" Anne Johnston, Barbara Friedman, and Autumn Shafer discuss the issue by looking at which specific points of view or subjects are highlighted within different media. In a *LexisNexis* academic search of 2009 US newspaper articles, the study specifically collected information on commonly used keywords, points of view, and themes. The chart below depicts the findings on subject matter of 282 articles that fit the search criteria.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Johnston, Anne, Barbara Friedman, and Autumn Shafer. "Framing the Problem of Sex Trafficking." *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 3 (2012): 419-36. doi:10.1080/14680777.2012.740492.

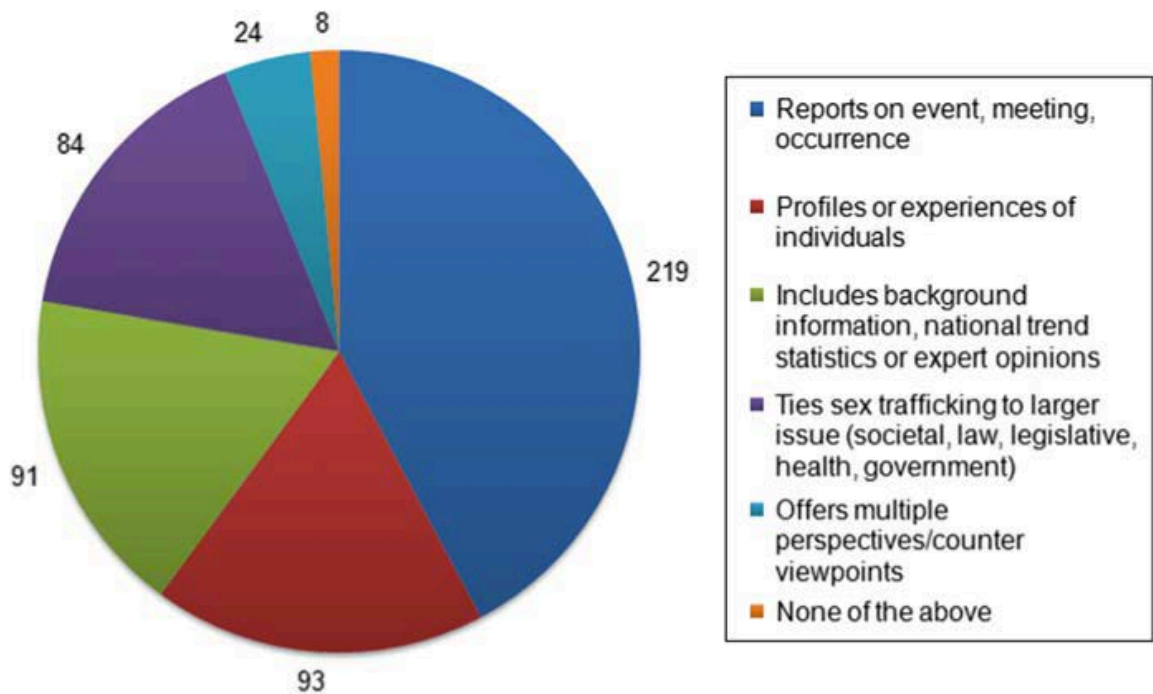


Figure 3: “Framing the Problem of Sex Trafficking: Who’s Problem? What Remedy?”<sup>36</sup>

This chart depicts the results of the study, showing a significantly larger incidence of articles written on events, meetings, and occurrences and far fewer offering multiple perspectives or counter viewpoints.

According to this chart, it is apparent that the majority of articles analyzed reported on specific meetings or occurrences, including situations involving an arrest, a meeting for the passage of legislation, or an event to promote awareness. Stories of individual experiences amounted to less than half of the previously mentioned category (events, meetings, and occurrences) that accounted for the majority of reports.<sup>37</sup> This is yet another way to explore the stories that I find to meet the criteria of my demographic.

<sup>36</sup> Johnston, Anne, Barbara Friedman, and Autumn Shafer. "Framing the Problem of Sex Trafficking." *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 3 (2012): 419-36. doi:10.1080/14680777.2012.740492.

<sup>37</sup> Johnston, Anne, Barbara Friedman, and Autumn Shafer. "Framing the Problem of Sex Trafficking."

## **Mainstream Media Content Analysis**

In order to identify how mainstream media outlets are reaching college students regarding human sex trafficking, I have compiled a combination of articles released from different news outlets and platforms, including social media, smartphone apps, and college news publications from January 1, 2014 to present. This collection is based on the research conducted to identify where Millennials are finding their news. After analyzing each story using elements from Pajnik's frame analysis as well as other analysis tools previously mentioned, I identified any additional framework if necessary and evaluated effective forms of conversation surrounding the issue.

To conduct the research for social media platforms, I used the Facebook and Twitter search engines. I entered different word combinations, such as "Human Sex Trafficking," "Sex Trafficking in Oregon," and "Sex Trafficking in Portland" to collect results that pertained to my targeted demographic. When probing Twitter, I also searched "#HumanSexTrafficking." Once I narrowed down the results, I selected articles based on the level of interaction they had received. I was primarily interested in articles that had been shared by public figures or news organizations. Additionally, articles were only examined if they had been shared or retweeted in order to ensure that multiple consumers were exposed to the content. While I aimed to look for content primarily pertaining to Oregon, I utilized articles from other locations based on relevance to my research.

To analyze articles shared through smartphone apps, I identified the five news organizations that had the highest mobile traffic (unique visits) in 2015. According to Pew Research Center, who identified the "Top 50 Online News Entities of 2015," the

five most visited mobile sites were as follows: (1) Yahoo-ABC News Network with 93,160 unique visits; (2) NBC News Digital with 69,810 unique visits; (3) HUFFINGTONPOST.COM with 67,095 unique visits; (4) CNN Network with 64,632 unique visits; and (5) CBS News with 58,303 unique visits.<sup>38</sup> While this does not directly account for mobile app visits, each of these mobile news organization sites gives visitors the option to be redirected to their mobile app, giving their specific apps more exposure than others and therefore more opportunity for consumers to download. For each of these news organizations, I used their individual search engines to look up “Human Sex Trafficking in Oregon” and “Human Sex Trafficking” and collected articles that were published within the 2014-present timeframe.

Lastly, I researched university publications to account for content produced by students for students. This allows for a more exclusive look at content that college students in Oregon are exposed to. With this part of my research, I make the assumption that if a student is willing to write it, other students are willing to read it. For the purpose of this research, I examined news produced by the following campus news organizations: Emerald Media Group (University of Oregon,) The Daily Barometer (Oregon State University,) The Vanguard (Portland State University,) and The Beacon (University of Portland.) These were each chosen based on their broad coverage of various types of news (i.e. lifestyle, sports, current events, human rights issues, etc.) as well as their relevance to students.

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<sup>38</sup> Shearer, Elisa. "Digital: Top 50 Online News Entities (2015)\*." Pew Research Centers Journalism Project RSS. 2015. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.journalism.org/media-indicators/digital-top-50-online-news-entities-2015/>.



For each of these news media outlets, I provide one to two in-depth analyses of articles within the writing of this thesis that fit my research criteria to identify any notable patterns or trends that represent a larger number of articles from each outlet. With the total data collected and additional articles analyzed, further analysis of trends surrounding the issue of how media discusses human sex trafficking will be conducted to evaluate the results regarding each separate news entity.

### **Social Media Content Analysis**

#### *Facebook*

Facebook's search engine allows for users to see not only things posted by their friends but also material posted by other Facebook users. Upon searching "Human Sex Trafficking," Facebook directed the results to view the "Top Posts." This allows for users to scroll through the posts with the most interactions, including likes, comments, and shares. Additionally, users can see posts that their friends have interacted with. For the purpose of this research, articles shared on Facebook were selected based on their relevance to the target demographic and the number of interactions they received.

The first article offered by the search is titled, "Sex Trafficking Victim Says Police Involved In Human Slave Trade Abused and Threatened Her." It was originally published by Counter Current News on March 29, 2015 and shared by Cop Block, an account that "highlight[s] the double standard that some grant those with badges by pointing to and supporting those harmed."<sup>39</sup> This article discusses one woman's story of being forced into the slave trade at a young age and continually coerced by all dominant

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<sup>39</sup> "CopBlock | Reporting Police Abuse, Brutality, and Corruption." Cop Block. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.copblock.org/>.

figures around her, including the police force. Much of the story is told through the victim's point of view. The writer ends the article with a discussion of what human sex trafficking means as well as a call to action for stricter police force accountability. The opening line of the article states,

“After years of enduring abuse and sexual exploitation in the human sex trafficking trade, Jessa Dillow-Crisp is telling her story. Part of the details of that story implicates many who were sworn to ‘serve and protect’ who were doing anything but that.”<sup>40</sup>

This purpose of this article is to express the implication that police officers are not helping the issue of human sex trafficking but rather hurting it. The writer also outlines simple solutions to the problem, noting what will and will not work. This content directly correlates to Pajnik's “criminalization” frame because it points a finger toward one sole group of perpetrators and applies a simple solution to the complex problem, denying readers multiple points of view. As stated before, the criminalization frame can be dangerous for consumers because its tendency to make a simple call to action underplays the serious complexities of human sex trafficking. One key benefit of the article, though, is that the victim points out the reality of human sex trafficking occurring “right here,” or rather in U.S. towns and cities that Americans may least expect. This strikes out Pajnik's “nationalization” frame.

The next Facebook article selected for analysis is titled “Woman Rescued, 5 Arrested in Suspicion of Human Trafficking.” Shared Hope International, a Christian organization with the mission of abolishing human sex trafficking, shared this article

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<sup>40</sup> "Sex Trafficking Victim Says Police Involved In Human Slave Trade Abused and Threatened Her - Counter Current News." Counter Current News. March 29, 2015. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://countercurrentnews.com/2015/03/trafficking-victim-says-police-were-involved/>.

through its Facebook account.<sup>41</sup> The article, which was originally published by Patch, unravels the rescue story of a 20-year-old female victim of sex trafficking. Her case became known after she became unreachable through social media. She was eventually traced to a sex trafficking operation in Oakland, CA that was suspected to run as far north as Portland, OR.<sup>42</sup>

This article discusses a particular instance of human sex trafficking in a very similar way to how many media outlets discuss any crime. By outlining specific details of the crime, it pinpoints only one type of sex traffickinWhile this may not be necessarily harmful to consumers, it does narrow hog incidence. may perceive that for how such crimes occur. This article fails to mention the back-sw consumerstory of the sex trafficking case and puts the lack of prevention entirely on law enforcement. This article fits into Pajnik’s “criminalization” frame because it places sole ownership of the crime on the offenders and ignores a potential lack of awareness from the victim’s perspective. Ignoring a key perspective of the story results in a failure to recognize prevention measures that can be taken before a case occurs.

PolitiFact, a media group that produces content with the purpose of debunking false information stated by public figures or other media outlets, shared another instance of a human sex trafficking article circulating throughout Facebook. This particular article cites Senator John Cornyn, who stated, “The Super Bowl has ‘one of the highest

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<sup>41</sup> "Shared Hope International | Leaders to End Sex Trafficking." Shared Hope International. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://sharedhope.org/about-us/our-mission-and-values/>.

<sup>42</sup> "Woman Rescued, 5 Arrested in Suspicion of Human Trafficking." Cerritos-Artesia, CA Patch. 2016. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://patch.com/california/cerritos/woman-rescued-5-arrested-suspicion-human-trafficking>.

levels of human sex trafficking activity of any event in the country.”<sup>43</sup> The article sets out to discredit Cornyn’s statement through presenting various forms of evidence. One of the key arguments used compares the sex trafficking climate in two cities that hosted the Super Bowl: metropolitan Phoenix and New York City. This draws the assumption that the criminal climates of the two cities are comparable. This article underplays the severity of human sex trafficking occurring at a higher frequency during massive events in cities, such as the Super Bowl. The article states, “They found some evidence of ‘victim movement and marketing trends that tend to correspond with the build up towards the Super Bowl’ – traffickers responding to the influx of thousands of men with money to spend. But they did not find that the level of activity was necessarily higher than other weeks out of the year.”<sup>44</sup> It seems unwitting to claim that while there is an influx of “thousands of men with money to spend” and more trafficking movement towards large public events, the level of trafficking remains the same. Whether the central argument of this article is true or not, its framing suggests contradictory language and restrained attitude toward the severity of the issue, which evokes similar responses to Pajnik’s nationalization frame. The use of certain verbiage to soften the weight of human sex trafficking allows for consumers to remove themselves from the problem.

Within additional Facebook articles analyzed, I found an apparent pattern among articles aligning with the objectives of the account sharing the content. Facebook

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<sup>43</sup> Carroll, Lauren. "Does Sex Trafficking Increase around the Super Bowl?" @politifact. Accessed May 18, 2016. <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/jan/29/john-cornyn/does-sex-trafficking-increase-around-super-bowl/>.

<sup>44</sup> Carroll, Lauren. "Does Sex Trafficking Increase around the Super Bowl?"

users are often exposed to content that they are likely to agree with based on the accounts that they've previously viewed or "liked." Therefore, Facebook users who are exposed to articles relating to human sex trafficking might often be exposed to content that frames information in a way that placates the consumer.

### *Twitter*

Twitter and Facebook share very similar search engines. When typing in key search words on Twitter, the user can choose from several options to narrow the search, including "Top," "Accounts," "Photos," "Videos," and more. For the purpose of my research, I used the "Top" feature to locate tweets that had more interaction. Additionally, this sorted the tweets based on when they were posted, which allowed me to look at tweets specifically within the 2014-present timeframe. For the Twitter portion of my research, I searched: "Human Sex Trafficking," "Oregon Human Sex Trafficking," and "#HumanSexTrafficking." It is important to note that when using the advanced search feature, searching the hashtag, #HumanSexTrafficking, tweeted in the Portland, OR area came back with zero results.

One of the first search results was tweeted by @BrentKOIN. The account belongs to Brent Weisberg, a reporter for the CBS Portland affiliate news organization, KOIN-TV. Brent has more than 2,500 followers. On April 25, 2014, he shared a video created by the Junior League of Portland with the caption: "Very informative film that exposes the scope of human sex trafficking in Portland, Oregon.

<http://vimeo.com/84125940> via @JLPortlandOR #PDX." The Junior League of Portland is a not-for-profit organization that promotes volunteerism and raises

awareness surrounding the eradication of violence against women and children.<sup>45</sup> This video titled, *Waiting for the Light*, runs for approximately 25 minutes and was originally posted in January 2014. The narrative on the climate of human sex trafficking in Portland, OR takes into consideration many perspectives, including victims, prosecutors, “Johns,” anti-trafficking advocates, etc. Because of this, the video addresses the issues recognized in both Pajnik’s victimization and criminalization frame analyses in the sense that it identifies the problem from an unbiased viewpoint, takes into consideration the perspective of several parties involved, and cites the lack of understanding among Portland dwellers. Further, the video makes clear that human sex trafficking is not a problem only fixable by the government or advocacy groups but instead a problem that must be addressed by all within Portland, not just a select few individuals.<sup>46</sup> For these reasons, this video shared through Twitter does not fit into any of the pre-determined media analysis frames. Rather, the frame of this video addresses multiple perspectives and speaks about the issue in a sensitive and socially conscious manner while still maintaining an objective stance.

In another article shared on Twitter through @FoxNews, Fox, the original publisher of the story, tells the story of the group Talitha Kum, a group of nuns who disguise themselves to enter brothels and purchase victims of human sex trafficking to release them from the trafficking system. Talitha Kum is currently present in 80 countries but the organization has its sights set on expanding to 140 nations. The article

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<sup>45</sup> "Junior League of Portland, OR." Junior League of Portland, OR. 2010. Accessed May 09, 2016. <https://www.juniorleagueofportland.org/>.

<sup>46</sup> *Waiting for the Light*. Produced by Junior League of Portland. Portland, OR: Ibex Communications, 2014.

offers the perspective of the investment banker and chair of those involved in Talitha Kum, John Studzinski, as well as Christina Arnold, the founder and CEO of Prevent Human Trafficking. Arnold sees the group as something that “may do more harm than good.”<sup>47</sup> The author continues to provide quotes and arguments from Arnold that strike down the credibility of Talitha Kum. Regardless of the true effectiveness of Talitha Kum, this article poses as more of an opinion piece through the lens of one perspective. From an analytical point of view, one might guess that Arnold’s views reflect that of Fox News.

Additionally, the article poses the number of trafficked persons by Talitha Kum to be disputed and ultimately suspicious in comparison to the smaller number given by Arnold. The article states,

“There are conflicting figures on the number of people trafficked each year in the world. According to Reuters, Talitha Kum reports that 73 million people, roughly 1 percent of the world’s population, are trafficking in some form – a number Arnold disputes.

According to the International Labor Organization, nearly 21 million people are victims of forced labor... 4.5 million are victims of forced sexual exploitation, according to ILO.”<sup>48</sup>

While the number presented by Talitha Kum is not supported by evidence in this article, it is often widely disputed that the number of victims of human sex trafficking is nearly impossible to estimate due to the underground, black market nature of the crime. This is discussed in further detail under the *Human Sex Trafficking in Oregon* section of this thesis. This particular issue falls under Pajnik’s “regularization” frame because it

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<sup>47</sup> "Nuns Pose as Prostitutes to Rescue Victims of Human Sex Trafficking | Fox News." Fox News. December 02, 2015. Accessed May 09, 2016. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/12/01/nuns-pose-as-prostitutes-to-rescue-victims-human-sex-trafficking.html>.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* "Nuns Pose as Prostitutes to Rescue Victims of Human Sex Trafficking | Fox News."

assumes the issue of sex trafficking is traceable. This Fox article falls victim to the assumption that sex trafficking can be solved through governmental action, which normalizes the distinctive nature of the crime.

### **Smartphone App Content Analysis**

#### *Yahoo-ABC News Network*

Rather than exclusively searching original content produced by the media outlet, the Yahoo-ABC News search engine searches content from anywhere on the Internet, pulling articles from various news platforms.<sup>49</sup> This has both positive and negative implications, as it takes away the ability for consumers to exclusively search Yahoo-ABC articles but also provides far more options when searching specific topics. Additionally, there is an entirely separate site for ABC News. The search engine for ABC News specifically seeks articles originally published by ABC News.<sup>50</sup>

For the purpose of this research, I will not use the Yahoo search engine because it takes into account news outlets that do not fit the criteria for reaching college students. I will, however, use ABC News as a representation for the Yahoo-ABC mobile app because the content is sponsored under the same parent company. Upon searching “human sex trafficking” on the ABC News site, zero results appeared. I then altered my search to “human trafficking” and was met with 290 results. The first several stories linked back to the ABC News homepage or pertained to the issue abroad. The only article that is relevant to my research and within the 2014-present timeframe

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<sup>49</sup> "Yahoo News." Yahoo News. Accessed May 11, 2016. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/>.

<sup>50</sup> ABC News. Accessed May 11, 2016. <http://abcnews.go.com/>.



discussed the issue of human trafficking at the Super Bowl. The article, titled, “Human Trafficking is the Super Bowl of Suffering” was written by Richard Lapchick and originally published by ESPN. This article not only highlights the potential spike in human sex trafficking cases during the Super Bowl, but also during other events that bring large amounts of tourists into a populated city. Lapchick discusses specific incidences of advocacy groups using such events as a platform to spread the word about human sex trafficking in hopes of decreasing the trafficking rate. He also recognizes that there is no hard evidence to prove that there is indeed a spike during such large events, but acknowledges the likelihood given the nature of these gatherings. One important distinction to note is that this article is an opinion piece. Lapchick includes his own thoughts and arguments. He states,

“Human trafficking is one of the most devastating social justice issues of my lifetime. I studied the Atlantic Slave Trade as part of my Ph.D. work in international race relations. During the 260 years of the trade, which represents one of the most horrific periods in world history... there were approximately 24 million human slaves who came from Africa. Although accurate numbers are hard to calculate, it is estimated that today there are between 26 to 28 million human slaves. Modern-day slavery is bigger today than in the entire history of global slavery between 1600 and the end of the Civil War.”<sup>51</sup>

While Lapchick writes in the form of an opinion piece, he does recognize both historical and contemporary implications that come with “modern day slavery.” He notes that it is hard to pinpoint the crime because of its vastness, something that many writers in other articles previously noted have failed to mention. While this article does fail to mention more than the writer’s point of view, he makes it known that the content

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<sup>51</sup> Lapchick, Richard. "Human Trafficking Is the Super Bowl of Suffering." ABC News. February 5, 2016. Accessed May 11, 2016. <http://abcnews.go.com/Sports/human-trafficking-super-bowl-suffering/story?id=36745534>.

is an opinion piece, rather than disguising a certain viewpoint or motive under the mask of an accredited news organization.

Overall, Yahoo-ABC news fails to create and share a sufficient amount of content regarding the issue of human sex trafficking. The few articles that can be found through the two search engines are either created by a different news organization or outdated. With only one article relevant to this thesis, Yahoo-ABC news lacks the content to properly inform its consumers of human sex trafficking, turning a blind eye to the enormity of the issue.

#### *NBC News Digital*

According to the NBC News website, NBC News Digital is “a collection of innovative and powerful news brands that deliver compelling, diverse and visually engaging stories on your platform of choice.”<sup>52</sup> The media conglomerate includes NBCNews.com, msnbc.com, TODAY.com, Nightly News, Meet the Press, Dateline and Breaking News, as well as the existing apps and digital extensions of each respective platform. The NBC News search engine compiles content from each of these platforms, narrowing the search experience to media only produced by NBC-sponsored news groups.

One article, titled “Invisible Boys: Inside the Push to Help Unseen Victims of the Sex Trade” discusses the story of a couple who set out to establish the first “safe house” for boys who are victims of human sex trafficking. Upon learning about the rarity of restorative care for male victims, Chris and Anna Smith were compelled to

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<sup>52</sup> ABC News. Accessed May 11, 2016. <http://abcnews.go.com/>.

shed light on male victimhood while also building a safe place for a demographic that may not have previously been able to seek help. The article states,

“Even for girls, restorative care is hard to find. The Polaris Project, a nonprofit organization based in Washington D.C., estimates that there are only 529 shelter beds in America for victims of human trafficking – those sold for sex or for slavery. But the survey found that only two of those bed were set aside for boys.”<sup>53</sup>

This article points out a side of human sex trafficking that is not frequently discussed.

For this reason, the article avoids stereotyping sex trafficking, which could help mainstream media consumers understand the complexity of the issue. By telling a different side of the issue, it depicts the crisis in a way that allows people to understand the unique value of each and every case of sex trafficking. This article acts as another example that avoids previously discussed frame analysis. Rather, this content discusses the unique nature of each sex trafficking case and speaks about the issue objectively.

Another article analyzed discusses the patterns of personal ads posted in cities hosting large-scale events. Similar to the Super Bowl article posted by ABC, this writer takes a look at the consequences that occur when massive amounts of people are brought into an already highly populated city. The article specifically cites a study done by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University’s Auton Lab. The study examined more than 32 million online personal ads posted around the time of 33 large-scale public events. The writer pays close attention to detail when reporting on the study, gaining insight from multiple sources in order to fully explain the issue of human sex trafficking during large public events to a potentially uninformed consumer. Additionally, the study

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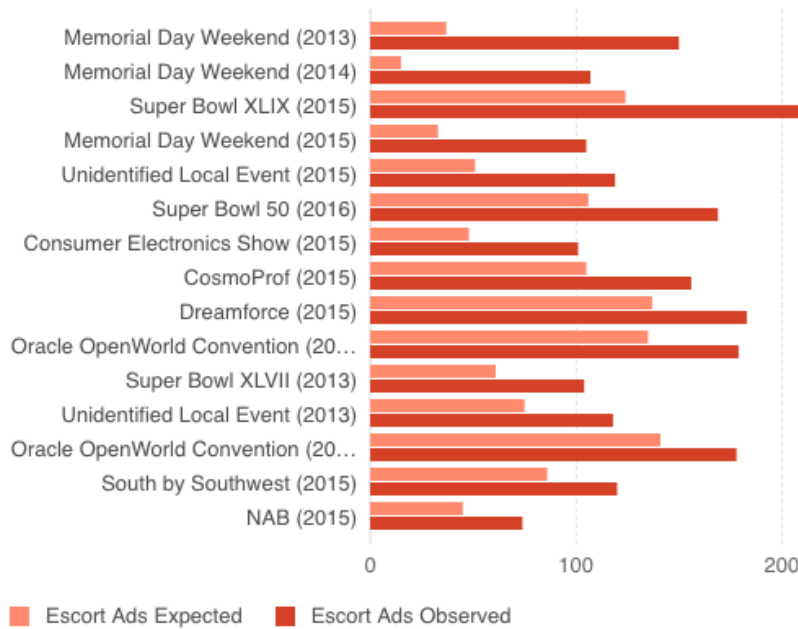
<sup>53</sup> "Invisible Boys: Inside the Push to Help Unseen Victims of the Sex Trade." NBC News. Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/invisible-boys-inside-push-help-unseen-victims-sex-trade-n503921>.

discussed goes into great depth to explain the spike in personal ads used for sex trafficking.<sup>54</sup>

### Major Events and US Sex Trafficking



Chart highlights statistically significant deviations in the amount of sex ads posted to classified websites and the events that may be related. Events ordered by the difference in observed ads to the expected baseline.



Source: Carnegie Mellon University. As of February 15, 2016

Figure 4: Major Events and US Sex Trafficking

This chart is included alongside ample research to explain the spike in sex ads posted around times where cities are unusually populated due to large-scale events, pointing out specific events for comparison.

<sup>54</sup> Saliba, Emmanuelle. "How Big Events Like the Super Bowl Fuel U.S. Sex Trafficking." NBC News. February 16, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/study-takes-new-look-how-big-events-fuel-u-s-n519071>.

By combining the research of the Carnegie Mellon Auton Lab with additional perspectives from multiple sources, this NBC article is successful in properly informing consumers, straying away from Pajnik's frames or other restrictive writing patterns that often appear when discussing the issue.

Overall, NBC news conglomerates were found to talk about human sex trafficking on multiple occasions while providing multiple points of view, in-depth research, and ample resources for consumers to use to further explore the issue. Their dedication to the issue proves to reach beyond the standard of other mainstream media news conglomerates, separating itself as a more accurate source for information on human sex trafficking.

#### *HUFFINGTONPOST.COM*

Searching "Human Sex Trafficking" on Huffington Post resulted in 23 pages of links to related content. Huffington Post acts as the parent company for several offshoots that represent different perspectives for potential consumers. Therefore, when one submits a search to the website, it draws information from all sections, creating a pool of different points of view regarding the same topic.

The article, "Sperm Count: Where Do the Republican Candidates Stand on Sex Trafficking" was initially published through the Comedy section of Huffington Post. It describes the relationship between 2016 Republican presidential candidates and their views (or lack thereof) on human sex trafficking. The writer notes that many have danced around the topic and mockingly sums up the concerns of the candidates to: "But

who is going to supply the prostitutes?”<sup>55</sup> While this article is listed under Huffington Post’s comedy section and does successfully shed light on the issue of Republican candidates ignoring a major human rights issue, it can be argued that applying humor to such a serious and complex topic is dangerous in molding the views of media consumers. The writer continues,

“On the other hand it’s unclear whether the United States itself produces enough domestic sex workers to service the needs of 25-45 demographic which accounts for the good part of the pay-for-sex market. If there’s a scarcity of sex workers, then prices are going to skyrocket to a point where even the modest pleasure of glory hole fellatio is going to be out of reach of many salaried blue collar workers”<sup>56</sup>

The concerns addressed by this writer are far from the concerns that truly address the issue of human sex trafficking. The writer grants the United States “ownership” of the production of human sex trafficking and notes that it may not meet the “needs” of a certain demographic. While the United States should take ownership of the problem, it most definitely should not be noted as the means of production of the crime. The writer turns the issue of human sex trafficking into a suffering business rather than a massive international corruption. While humor can play a role in effectively addressing serious issues in some instances, the use of humor with human sex trafficking as a side issue to the presidential race passes off the severity of the issue.

The second article explored discusses Alexandra Lutnick’s new book, *Domestic Minor Trafficking: Beyond Victims and Villains*. Lutnick explores many of the same concerns discussed in this thesis, noting the substantial misunderstanding among the

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<sup>55</sup> Levy, Francis. "Sperm Count: Where Do the Republican Candidates Stand on Sex Trafficking?" The Huffington Post. April 6, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2016. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/francis-levy/sperm-count-where-do-the-\\_b\\_9623266.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/francis-levy/sperm-count-where-do-the-_b_9623266.html).

<sup>56</sup> Levy, Francis.

general public. In an interview conducted by the writer of the book review, Lutnick states, “I was frustrated by what I was seeing in the media where it was only the story of young girls who were forced to sell sex... Unfortunately, misconceptions dominate the discussion about domestic minor sex trafficking.”<sup>57</sup> Lutnick recognizes the tendency for media consumers to form opinions based solely on what they choose to read. With issues as complex and severe as human sex trafficking, she notes the importance of using a critical mindset when consuming information regarding this issue and others.<sup>58</sup>

Examining other Huffington Post articles, it was clear that each had a slightly different lens depending on which sections the article was written for. While Huffington Post is successful in offering different points of view, a consumer might be inclined to only read articles from a certain section based on their interests. This turns a blind eye to the viewpoints of others and important perspectives that could be offered given a smaller frame of reference. While the second article discussed was successful in properly discussing the issue, straying away from content analysis frames and using supporting research, the first article could be very harmful to someone less familiar with human sex trafficking.

### *CNN Networks*

Most of the stories that appear when using the CNN search engine to search “human sex trafficking” pertain to international trafficking cases. Because CNN is widely regarded as a hub for news on both national occurrences and foreign affairs, this

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<sup>57</sup> Sterry, David Henry. "Everything You Think You Know About Child Sex Trafficking Is Wrong ... Alexandra Lutnick Tells You Why." The Huffington Post. April 26, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2016. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-henry-sterry/everything-you-think-you-\\_1\\_b\\_9772910.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-henry-sterry/everything-you-think-you-_1_b_9772910.html).

<sup>58</sup> Sterry, David Henry.

could mean that the majority of its content regarding human sex trafficking would stray away from cases seen in the U.S. Its website states,

“CNN.com is among the world’s leaders in online news and information delivery. Staffed 24 hours, seven days a week by a dedicated staff in CNN’s world headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and in bureaus worldwide, CNN.com relies heavily on CNN’s global team of almost 5,000 news professionals.”<sup>59</sup>

While this claim is most likely relevant to all major news organizations, including those previously discussed, its stated reliance on a global team makes the large scope of its coverage apparent. An example of this is seen in its article titled, “Nordic Model key to beating exploitation of sex workers.”<sup>60</sup> The article discusses a recent law called the Nordic Model that was passed in France to abolish all exploitation of sex workers. Perhaps obvious through the name, the Nordic Model was designed based on similar laws in Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Northern Ireland. The writer makes a call to action that the U.S should implement and enforce a similar law to eventually eradicate human sex trafficking. The article notes that this model has been effective in diminishing the demand for paid sexual services. Additionally, the writer points out the failure of other models taken on by European countries, including Spain and The Netherlands. She writes,

“The legalizing or decriminalizing of prostitution in The Netherlands and Spain has backfired, proving a disaster for exploited persons and creating new victims. Sex tourists have flocked to The Netherlands, turning brothels there into a powerful industry that faces minimal regulation”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> "About CNN.com." CNN. Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/about>.

<sup>60</sup> Peters, Mary Ann. "Nordic Model Key to Beating Exploitation." CNN. April 18, 2016. Accessed May 14, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/18/opinions/prostitution-nordic-model-peters/index.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Peters, Mary Ann. "Nordic Model Key to Beating Exploitation." CNN. April 18, 2016. Accessed May 14, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/18/opinions/prostitution-nordic-model-peters/index.html>.



While this may be true of The Netherlands and Spain, it ignores the fact that despite regulations, underground brothels and criminal activity are still possible in Nordic countries. Additionally, statistics may show that the Nordic Model has been successful in reducing human sex trafficking activity throughout the places where it has been enforced, but that does not mean it would work everywhere. As with any new regulation or ruling, lawmakers must keep in mind the cultural tendencies, government style, and social structure of a place in order to provide productive solutions. To suggest that the Nordic socialist economy is directly comparable to that of the U.S. capitalist economy ignores the vast differences that the two systems face. The writer must recognize that, while the numbers of reported sex trafficking cases may have decreased since the Nordic Model was enforced, this does not account for the underground cases that make up the vast majority of the issue.

Another article examined discussed the ways in which one could become involved in the movement to end human sex trafficking. The article highlights the CNN Documentary, *Children for Sale: The Fight to End Human Trafficking*. Actress Jada Pinkett Smith worked closely with CNN producers to create content that could shed light on the rampant issue of human trafficking in the U.S. The writer offers examples of various organizations that assist victims in recovering.<sup>62</sup> By providing six different examples of organizations, the writer recognizes that each case is unique and requires different types or levels of care.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the documentary is meant to bring

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<sup>62</sup> "Fight Human Trafficking in America." CNN. Accessed May 15, 2016.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/15/world/iyw-how-to-help-victims-of-human-trafficking/index.html>.

<sup>63</sup> "Fight Human Trafficking in America." CNN. Accessed May 15, 2016.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/15/world/iyw-how-to-help-victims-of-human-trafficking/index.html>.

awareness to sex trafficking happening across the country, not just internationally.

While the article's primary purpose is to draw attention to the new documentary, it also succeeds in discussing how far sweeping the issue is and the necessity for everyone to play a part in spreading awareness.

While CNN's primary focus for human sex trafficking is geared toward international stories, its discussion of the issue is generally framed in a way that is suitable for successfully spreading awareness of the issue. One potential issue that arose was the tendency to apply international policy to that of the U.S. when in reality, all nations function differently. Despite this, CNN holds its part in playing a role in the fight to eradicate human sex trafficking through its commitment to various awareness campaigns as well as its sponsorship of the documentary.

## **University Publications**

### *University of Oregon: Emerald Media Group*

Within the 2014-present timeline, The Emerald Media Group, University of Oregon's bi-weekly news magazine and online publication, has posted two articles regarding human sex trafficking. Both are framed as reports on events, recapping separate functions meant to spread awareness about human sex trafficking. The first article, titled "Panel hosted by Carnegie Global Oregon addresses human sex trafficking," discusses the event in which advocacy leaders joined together to inform guests and answer questions regarding the issue of sex trafficking in California and Oregon. The three panel members discuss their own personal experience relating to

human sex trafficking as well as their individual initiatives to raise awareness and support survivors.<sup>64</sup> The second article promotes the ETH-ICS fashion show, a fundraising event to spread awareness about human sex trafficking in Oregon. ETH-ICS is “a leader in ethical and socially conscious brands in the world” and supports Coalition for Justice, a brand specifically designed to raise money and awareness for the eradication of human sex trafficking.<sup>65</sup> The article includes information regarding event details and where proceeds will be donated.

The Emerald Media Group’s primary issue when discussing human sex trafficking is the limited amount of content pertaining to the issue within the 2014-present timeline. Both articles discuss awareness of events rather than actual cases, avoiding tendencies outlined Pajnik’s problematic frames but providing support for Johnston, Friedman, and Shafer’s point that a vast number of reports only account for planned awareness-raising functions. While these articles promote efforts to support anti-human sex trafficking advocacy events, the imbalance of this frame compared to others could potentially create disregard for the importance of aspects discussed in other credible frames.

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<sup>64</sup> Fleck, Jennifer. "Panel Hosted by Carnegie Global Oregon Addresses Human Sex Trafficking." Emerald Media. May 12, 2015. Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://www.dailyemerald.com/2015/05/12/panel-hosted-by-carnegie-global-oregon-addresses-human-sex-trafficking/>.

<sup>65</sup> Geller, Hailey. "Preview: Fashion Fights Human Sex Trafficking at the Ethics Fashion Show." Emerald Media. May 6, 2015. Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://www.dailyemerald.com/2015/05/06/preview-fashion-fights-human-sex-trafficking-at-the-ethics-fashion-show/>.

*Oregon State University: The Daily Barometer (Orange Media Network)*

Orange Media Network is an organization that combines each Oregon State University student-run news outlet, including a newspaper, a radio station, two magazines, and a television station.<sup>66</sup> The Daily Barometer, Oregon State University's student newspaper, is distributed each weekday during the school year. Within the 2014-present timeline, two articles were relevant to this research. The first discusses an event hosted by the Kappa Delta Chi sorority. After witnessing the perils of human sex trafficking overseas, advocate Amanda Brenneman now feels it is her civic responsibility to inform others of the issue. She reveals some of the often-misunderstood truths of human sex trafficking to narrow the "big picture" crisis for her audiences.<sup>67</sup> This, once again, represents a report of human sex trafficking awareness event. While there is no inherent harm with this frame, it swells the ratio between recognizing human sex trafficking as a local issue through reported firsthand cases versus representing human sex trafficking through awareness events. Reporting on specific cases is important because it allows readers who do not attend the events to acknowledge the severity of the issue. Similarly to The Emerald Media Group, The Daily Barometer's lack of content concerning the issue acts as its biggest downfall in regards to discussing human sex trafficking through student-run media outlets.

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<sup>66</sup> "About Us." - Orange Media Network: Site. Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://www.orangemedianetwork.com/site/about.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Rankine, Ria. "Sorority Hosts Sex Trafficking Talk." The Daily Barometer. May 15, 2014. Accessed May 16, 2016. [http://www.orangemedianetwork.com/daily\\_barometer/news/sorority-hosts-sex-trafficking-talk/article\\_4cdf67a1-8658-5a4c-8b9b-86bad9dfc2f0.html](http://www.orangemedianetwork.com/daily_barometer/news/sorority-hosts-sex-trafficking-talk/article_4cdf67a1-8658-5a4c-8b9b-86bad9dfc2f0.html).

*Portland State University: The Vanguard*

The Vanguard is Portland State's primary student-run news publication. While the work that the Vanguard writers produced is more information and statistic-based in comparison to other student-run publications discussed, I was only able to find one article posted within the 2014-present timeframe. This article, titled "Sex trafficking in Portland: the ugly truths," takes an in-depth and objective look at the climate of human sex trafficking in Portland, noting various reasons for its current state and steps that can be taken to lessen the number of trafficked victims. The article states,

"Unfortunately, Portland's culture of tolerance for unconventional behavior, coupled with the prevalence of strip clubs and sex industries, may encourage the growth and acceptance of sex trafficking of adults and children.

The popular media shields Portland from a more honest vision and understanding of crime and other issues in the city. We rarely ever hear about the disturbingly high numbers of children being exploited and sold, or any other problems with crime, yet we are inundated with images of a city where nothing wrong ever occurs ad nauseam."<sup>68</sup>

The recognition of various factors that foster the unfortunate climate of sex trafficking paired with the irony of Portland's problem-free reputation adds to the success of this article. The writer talks about important issues that often go ignored when discussing factors that some might be uncomfortable with but are ultimately vital to acknowledge when taking steps toward eradicating the issue.

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<sup>68</sup> Sun, Derek. "Sex Trafficking in Portland: The Ugly Truths." Vanguard. February 3, 2014. Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://psuvanguard.com/sex-trafficking-in-portland-the-ugly-truths/>.

After exploring the Vanguard website, it became apparent that the writers of the Vanguard, compared to those of the other university publications examined, are much more likely to discuss large issues that both Portland and the state of Oregon as a whole face. Perhaps living in a city that stands on the frontline of many major issues encourages more related content development. Regardless, much like the other university publications, the Vanguard had very little content directly relating to human sex trafficking within the sought out timeframe.

*University of Portland: The Beacon*

Perhaps not surprising based on the patterns seen by the other university publications, University of Portland's news publication, The Beacon, had only one article related to human sex trafficking. The article, which covers various topics on which University of Portland seniors wrote their theses, describes the work of three students who focused on strategies and implementations of intervention practices in the sex work industry. The writer notes that the ultimate goal of the project is to bring awareness to the issue and provide intervention practices directed toward male perpetrators and clients in order to take the blame off the victims.<sup>69</sup>

The remainder of this article discusses topics unrelated to human sex trafficking. Once again, this article describes an anti-human sex trafficking awareness event rather than the particular issue as it is seen in Oregon.

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<sup>69</sup> Neelon, Emily. "Founder's Day Presentation Cover Sex Work, Inmates in Portland Area Jails, More." The Beacon. April 3, 2014. Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://www.upbeacon.com/2014/04/03/founders-day-presentation-cover-sex-work-inmates-in-portland-area-jails-more/>.

The frame is not harmful, but The Beacon falls short on creating additional content that portrays the issue in Oregon. Prior to this article, the last article published by The Beacon pertaining to the issue of human sex trafficking was in 2011.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> "The Beacon." The Beacon. Accessed May 16, 2016. [http://www.upbeacon.com/?s=human sex trafficking](http://www.upbeacon.com/?s=human+sex+trafficking).

## Conclusion

In a report developed by the Human Trafficking Center (HTC,) the Associate Director of Advocacy outlines ways in which the media should *not* talk about human sex trafficking. The report introduces the strategies with the following statement:

“A great deal of the existing human trafficking content is both inaccurate and irresponsible. This tripe is often excused because it is ‘raising awareness.’ The assumption is that more awareness will lead to more anti-trafficking efforts. While this may be true, it is not always helpful. When misinformed people do make an effort to end human trafficking, they will often support policies and organizations that are ultimately counter-productive to the fight against human trafficking.”<sup>71</sup>

This report notes the importance of talking about human sex trafficking but also recognizes the harm in misrepresenting the issue. With countless different campaign efforts and an even larger number of articles being published on human sex trafficking, it is nearly impossible for a media consumers to identify correct information regarding the issue. The report suggests the following practices and facts for avoiding misrepresentation of the issue:<sup>72</sup>

1. Do not repeat “statistics” without investigating.
2. Not all prostitution is human trafficking.
3. Do not sensationalize or sexualize human trafficking victims and survivors.
4. Do not ignore forced labor.
5. Human trafficking is not something that only happens “over there.”
6. Do not ignore men and boys.

This list takes into account many faults that I came across and discussed through my framing analysis. Each assumption outlined within this list represents a different aspect

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<sup>71</sup> Turner, Ryan Beck. "How Not to Talk About Human Trafficking Home • HTC Blog • How Not to Talk About Human Trafficking." Human Trafficking Center. Accessed May 17, 2016. <http://humantraffickingcenter.org/posts-by-htc-associates/how-not-to-talk-about-human-trafficking/>.

<sup>72</sup> Turner, Ryan Beck.



of human sex trafficking that omits a portion of victims or survivors. When improperly reporting on human sex trafficking by misrepresenting the issue based on this list, news organizations are thereby oversimplifying an issue that, in reality is laden with complexities. To neglect any one of these representations is to disregard the unique nature of each separate sex trafficking case.

After conducting research on news consumption patterns of college students and applying the findings to collect articles from various news organizations and social media platforms, I am able to draw conclusions about mainstream media in relation to college student's understanding of human sex trafficking. Through applying frame theory to each article and examining the effectiveness of the language, accuracy, research, and motive behind the content, the tendencies of news outlets became apparent in regards to discussing human sex trafficking.

It is first important to recognize that writers cannot produce content without framing it. A problem with framing arises when news organizations omit important facts, points of view, or considerations either due to a lack of research and/or understanding of the issue or a need to sensationalize content for more viewership. When writing on the topic of human sex trafficking or any social injustice, the content that the writer produces often aligns with the motivations or purpose of the account or organization sharing the work. This became exceptionally relevant when looking at content shared through social media because more often than not, the account sharing the article has a specific platform and therefore, only shares information that meets the criteria of a particular stance on an issue. With such a massive amount of content being produced on a daily basis through various news sources, many people may make their

news consumption decisions based on information that aligns with their personal values. It was also noted by the Associated Press that college students are more likely to actively seek “good” news due to their sentiment of negativity clogging traditional media outlets and therefore pursue customizable news source through the various media outlets. This suggests that perhaps it is not mainstream media that college students are seeking but rather media that fulfills a more positive influx of news, overlooking content regarding crimes like human sex trafficking.

Additionally, there is an important distinction to be noted in regards to active versus passive social media news consumers. The news shared on social media platforms can come from a multitude of sources, both credible and unreliable. Some news organizations that rely on social media platforms for their readership use “clickbait” to draw in more readers. Clickbait is defined as “content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular webpage.”<sup>73</sup> As proven by the previous research presented on how college students obtain their news, clickbait comes into play when passively seeking news due to ones innate draw to sensationalized content. With this news sharing strategy, campaigns like KONY 2012 are able to reach hundreds of millions of people despite the present value of the story.

Through looking at smartphone apps as a platform, I was able to simultaneously examine how national and international news organizations discuss human sex trafficking. Despite the vast attention and viewership these organizations receive, many

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<sup>73</sup> "Definition of Clickbait in English:." Clickbait: Definition of Clickbait in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US). Accessed May 17, 2016. [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/clickbait](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/clickbait).

lacked content related to human sex trafficking. The articles that did correspond with this research fell short in addressing all points of view necessary or drew assumptions that contradict the list outlined by the HTC. Out of each of the news sources examined, I found NBC Networks to have the most successful media communication regarding the issue due to their dedication to reporting different points of view on the issue.

Additionally, NBC Networks produced content that provided readers with additional credible information to look toward in an effort to encourage readers to continue the education process. CNN also has notable efforts in discussing human trafficking based on the frame analysis but focused most efforts regarding the issue toward international cases. Each of the other news sources suffered similar issues outlined in the HTC list when discussing human sex trafficking.

The overall lack of information regarding human sex trafficking on each of the selected news outlets perpetuates Pajnik's nationalization frame because it allows for consumers to remove themselves from the problem within the country due to the assumption that it only happens overseas. Failing to provide relevant and up-to-date content for viewers pushes human sex trafficking down the chain of social injustices because information is not readily available unless directly sought out.

Similarly, the four Oregon university publications observed held minimal promise to successfully talking about the issue, as each publication had very limited content regarding human sex trafficking. The most common frame in which these universities discussed the issue was through reporting on an anti-trafficking awareness event. While this type of frame is not harmful to readers, it is not helpful in spreading awareness of human sex trafficking beyond specific event details. Portland State

University's newspaper, *The Vanguard*, makes strides in the right direction of informing students on human sex trafficking in Portland but was also culpable of minimal content produced within the 2014-present timeframe.

It is important for college students to have better access to credible and accurate news media regarding human sex trafficking because they are the future of the workforce and have the education and ability to make a difference. Based on my research, relying on a select few individuals involved in anti-trafficking advocacy or policymaking can be detrimental to their efforts to eradicate the issue. Everyone living in a city that is afflicted by human sex trafficking should bear the weight of responsibility to taking steps toward bringing proper awareness to save victims. It all starts with accurate awareness and education. Content that covered the topic of human sex trafficking with in-depth research and with multiple points of view succeeded in writing about the issue objectively, which avoids other problematic framework previously discussed. Because college students rely heavily on mainstream media outlets for their news, news organizations and university publications should prioritize educating students on the truth behind sex trafficking. While the media cannot necessarily directly affect policymaking, it can affect the mindset of news consumers. This can then lead to civic action and engagement and eventually silence the misrepresentations that often litter various forms of media. Effort on behalf of both the mainstream media curators and mainstream media consumers is necessary in order to understand the issue of human sex trafficking in a way that boosts effective action to follow.

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