JOURNAL OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
2016, VOL. 2, NO. 4, 281–296
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2016.1144165

Always Victimizers, Never Victims: Engaging Men and Boys in Human Trafficking Scholarship

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ABSTRACT
Although human trafficking is recognized under international and domestic law to encompass a wide range of sexual and nonsexual forms of forced labor, with available measures applicable to victims of any gender, the sexual exploitation of (heterosexual) females has been set apart as an especially egregious harm. Media and activist campaigns have been instrumental to the narrow framing of human trafficking as female sex trafficking, but this article argues that academic scholarship on trafficking has, as well, reflected and reinforced popular and political narratives of human trafficking. Building on a content analysis of 651 trafficking-related law reviews and peer-reviewed journal articles published between January 2005 and June 2013, this article documents how gender is made visible in the trafficking literature almost exclusively in relation to females, with men most commonly engaged as traffickers and consumers of (coerced) female sexual labor. As a consequence, trafficking scholarship is characterized by significant saturation in some areas and vast gaps in our understanding of the intersecting structural forces that propel individuals to migrate, increase opportunities for exploitation, and leave many victims unprotected by anti-trafficking laws and policies.

KEYWORDS
Gender analysis; men; boys; forced labor; content analysis

Introduction

In July 2006, 113 Polish men were freed from slave labor camps in southern Italy, where they had been lured by the promise of well-paying agricultural jobs. After paying a fee of $190 to travel to Italy, the men were forced to pick fruit and vegetables for 12 hours a day on farms patrolled by armed guards, earned half the legal hourly pay, and lived in squalid, insect-infested quarters, the cost of which was deducted from their paltry wages. Many of the men reported being subject to forced prostitution, rape, or other forms of torture, and at least four workers died in the camps under what Italian authorities have described as “suspicious circumstances” (Kiefer, 2006).

Over the past decade, thousands of children in Ghana, mostly boys, have been sold to fishermen by their impoverished parents, forced to do the dangerous work of untangling nets and bringing in the daily catch while risking drowning and being exposed to bilharzia-infested water (Left, 2007). Malnourished, threatened daily with violence from their masters, unpaid for their labor, and deprived of an education, these boys face futures of poverty and struggle. Just as many of these boys were sold into slavery by family members who had themselves been enslaved, the cycle is likely to be repeated with their own children (Dixon, 2009).

In August 2004, 12 Nepalese men on their way to an American Air Force base in Iraq were kidnapped and executed by Iraqi militants. Initially described as economic migrants who were drawn to Iraq despite the known risks, an investigation by Cam Simpson of the *Chicago Tribune* revealed

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the men had instead been forcibly transported into the country. After paying thousands of dollars in recruitment fees for the opportunity to work in the luxury hotel industry in Jordan, the men discovered shortly before their deaths that they were instead destined for a war zone, where they had been contracted to work for the Houston-based company Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) to provide logistical support for U.S. armed forces (Simpson, 2005).

These are not the typical stories that come to mind when we hear about human trafficking. Media, activist, and academic interest in the topic of trafficking has surged over the past two decades. Hundreds of journal articles and books of fiction and nonfiction have been published on human trafficking themes, and more than 100 related documentary and feature films have been released in the past 10 years. In 2011, CNN launched CNN Freedom Project to bring visibility to modern-day slavery (CNN, 2016), popular television shows such as *CSI, Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, and *NCIS* have centered plotlines on trafficking victims or perpetrators,[1] and Hollywood celebrities have become the public face of anti-trafficking activism (Haynes, 2014). Given the sheer volume of trafficking-related productions in recent years, one would expect that there is little to add to our understanding of human trafficking that has not already been well covered. But only rarely do the experiences of boys and men subject to trafficking feature in news reports, popular plotlines, or activist campaigns. Instead, what we are left with is a distorted picture of victims[2] of trafficking (innocent females duped or abducted into sexual labor) and traffickers (dangerous and greedy male criminals). While serving to invisibilize men and boys as trafficked persons, the dominant image of trafficking also perpetuates stereotypes of females as always-victims and ignores how women, as well, may be beneficiaries of the exploitation of others.

The assumed association between human trafficking and the exploitation of females has a long history. In the late nineteenth century, the fear that white women and girls were being sexually corrupted and forced to engage in “immoral acts” by foreign men generated a frenzy of media activity and gave rise to the first anti-trafficking campaign (Rodríguez Garcia, 2012, p. 98), though many presumed victims chose to migrate abroad with full knowledge they would be engaging in paid sexual labor (Doezema, 2000; Quirk, 2011, pp. 222–223). Even so, an alliance between feminist abolitionists opposed to state regulation of prostitution and social purity crusaders determined to stamp out prostitution altogether produced a series of international agreements that early on served to restrict the accepted meaning of trafficking and who was recognized as potential victims, including the 1910 International Convention for the Suppression of the “White Slave Traffic” and the 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. In more recent decades, the voices that have been the loudest and most impactful on policy responses to contemporary forms of trafficking have been those fixated on the vulnerability of women and girls and the sexual nature of trafficking. During the negotiations to draft the 2000 United Nations (UN) Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), feminists supportive of sex worker rights advocated for a gender-neutral, non-labor-specific international agreement; the title of the protocol signals the extent to which abolitionist feminists who equate prostitution with trafficking successfully framed women and girls as most deserving of attention and protection (Ditmore & Wijiers, 2003, pp. 80–82). Similarly, during the drafting of the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in the United States, Republican evangelicals and feminist abolitionists were successful in singling out female sex trafficking as exemplifying the horrors of modern-day slavery, although lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women were excluded from the circle of concern. Abolitionists did not manage to keep nonsexual forms of trafficking out of the TVPA altogether, but the law leaves little doubt that sex trafficking is considered to be the most common and pernicious form of modern slavery, which has informed U.S. funding priorities and law-enforcement responses to human trafficking ever since.

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[1] See, for example, CSI Episode “The Lost Girls” (Zuicker, Weddle, & Thompson, 2009); Law & Order: Special Victims Unit episode titled “Merchandise” (Wolf & McCreary, 2010); and NCIS episode “Anonymous was a Woman” (Bellisario et al., 2013). Note that all of these episodes focused on the sex trafficking of females.

[2] The language of “victim” has rightly been criticized for obscuring the agency of individuals who have been harmed and defining them by their experience of victimization. I recognize the problems with this term but use it in this article because it is the language that dominates media, government, and academic accounts of human trafficking.

In light of this history, it is not difficult to see why the dominant narrative of trafficking today remains stubbornly focused on (heterosexual) female sex trafficking. Though trafficking is recognized under international and domestic law to encompass a wide range of nonsexual forms of forced labor, with available measures applicable to victims of any gender, sexual exploitation has been set apart as an especially egregious harm that exemplifies the subordinate status of women and girls in the gender order, rendering nonsexual forms of forced labor as more ordinary or benign in comparison. Media and activist campaigns have been instrumental in the framing of human trafficking for political actors and the public. As we celebrate the launch of a peer-reviewed journal devoted to international scholarship on trafficking in persons, however, it is important to acknowledge that academic scholarship on trafficking has, as well, reflected and reinforced popular and political narratives of human trafficking.

With a view toward encouraging scholarship on trafficking that complicates entrenched narratives, moves beyond a preoccupation with sex trafficking, and employs a more dynamic approach to gender, this article begins by addressing the definitional inconsistencies that have contributed to ambiguity over the scope of trafficking and who is granted the status of a trafficked person. I then turn to the findings of a content analysis of law reviews and peer-reviewed journal articles published between January 2005 and June 2013. Although a body of critical scholarship has emerged to challenge the ubiquitous framing of human trafficking as a problem centered on the sexual exploitation of females, this content analysis documents how gender is made visible in the trafficking literature almost exclusively in relation to females, with men most commonly engaged as traffickers and consumers of (coerced) female sexual labor. As a consequence, trafficking scholarship is characterized by significant saturation in some areas and vast gaps in our understanding of the intersecting structural forces that propel individuals to migrate, increase opportunities for exploitation, and leave many victims unprotected by anti-trafficking laws and policies.

Human trafficking and the politics of data

The UN Trafficking Protocol, a supplement to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (2000), established the closest that exists to a consensus definition of trafficking:

> [T]he 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. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (Article 3[a])

Consensus definition notwithstanding, the language of trafficking continues to be employed in inconsistent ways that contribute to confusion over how it differs from other exploitative practices. In its Global Slavery Index 2013, for example, the Australian nongovernmental organization Walk Free Foundation drew a distinction between "human trafficking," "forced labor," and "slavery," while at the same time defining "modern slavery" as encompassing all of these terms. What appears to distinguish trafficking, in this account, is its cross-border nature. Of the 29.8 million people the Walk Free Foundation estimated are currently enslaved globally, human trafficking victims are understood to comprise only a subset of this population (Walk Free Foundation, 2013, pp. 1–2). In contrast, in its 2012 global report on forced labor, the International Labor Organization (ILO) stated that "[h]uman trafficking can also be regarded as forced labor," with its estimate that 20.9 million people are "victims of forced labor globally" capturing "the full realm of human trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation, or what some call 'modern-day slavery'" (International Labor Organization, 2012, p. 13). Similarly, the U.S. Department of State's 2013 "Trafficking in Persons Report" and the 2009 "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons" released by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) used the language of human trafficking interchangeably with "modern slavery" and "forced labor." Trafficking was recognized in these reports to include, but not require, movement, with the UNODC concluding that "most trafficking is national or regional, carried out by people whose nationality is the same as their victims" (UNODC, 2009a; see also U.S. Department of State, 2013). According to this perspective, what distinguishes human trafficking is the relationship between the person subject to force or coercion and the person compelling the performance of work or service, and not the form of labor involved, the legality or illegality of this activity, or whether victims are transported within or across national borders.

Definitional inconsistencies have complicated efforts to draw easy conclusions about the relative prevalence of the various forms of trafficking, and confusion exists even within particular organizations about how statistics on trafficking should be interpreted. In a summary of its 2009 "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons," the UNODC stated that "[a]ccording to the report, the most common form of human trafficking (79%) is sexual exploitation" (UNODC, 2009b, para. 4). But the report itself offered a more nuanced interpretation of its findings: "Sexual exploitation is by far the most commonly *identified* [emphasis added] form of human trafficking (79%), followed by forced labor (18%)"; a cautionary note followed that "this may be the result of statistical bias. By and large the exploitation of women tends to be visible, in city centers, or along highways. Because it is more frequently reported, sexual exploitation has become the most documented type of trafficking, in aggregate. In comparison, other forms of exploitation are under-reported" (UNODC, 2009a, p. 6).

More recent research appears to confirm that nonsexual forms of labor exploitation have been underacknowledged, as have cases of trafficking involving boys and men. In its 2012 report, the ILO found that of the estimated 20.9 million people subject to forced labor at any given time between 2002 and 2011, 68% were subject to forced labor in "economic activities such as agriculture, construction, domestic work and manufacturing," 22% were victims of forced sexual exploitation, and 10% were subject to "state-imposed forms of labor," including forced prison labor (ILO, 2012, p. 13). The ILO also estimated that 11.4 million or 55% of victims of trafficking during this period were women and girls, which means that 9.5 million or 45% of victims were men and boys—hardly an insignificant minority. The rate of adult victimization was nearly three times that of children (74% versus 26%), and a majority of trafficked persons (56%) were "subject to forced labor in their place of origin or residence," while 44% migrated internally or across borders (ILO, 2012, pp. 14–17).

The picture of trafficking that emerges out of the ILO report is far different from that dominating the popular and news media. In her analysis of the role of journalists in constructing trafficking as an "object of human rights and humanitarian intervention," Gretchen Soderlund (2011) acknowledged the "current ubiquity of mass and activist media productions equating trafficking with sexual slavery and identifying women and girls as its primary victims" (p. 194). Girish Gulati's (2011) content analysis of human trafficking-related articles published in *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* between 1980 and 2006 found that media coverage has mirrored officially sanctioned views of trafficking. During the Bush Administration, this contributed to a heavy emphasis being placed on "the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation, while other forms of labor slavery and trafficking involving men were largely ignored" (2011, p. 365). In "Slave Hunters, Brothel Busters, and Feminist Interventions," Roxana Galusca (2012) critiqued the monopoly of journalistic representations of human trafficking in shaping public perceptions and policy decisions and observed that "in their exclusive focus on prostitution at the expense of an approach to the precariousness of migrant labor in general, sensational stories about the trafficking of women have misrepresented the migrational process as a narrative of sexual trauma" (p. 4). The narrow coverage and superficial characterization of human trafficking documented by these scholars, however, is not unique to media productions. As a content analysis of the academic literature reveals, scholars of human trafficking, even when problematizing the wider fascination with extreme stories of female sexual suffering, rarely engage in depth with nonsexual forms of trafficking or cases involving the exploitation of males.

Methodology

Our accumulated knowledge of the social world, including the phenomenon of human trafficking, is invariably informed by the topics or subjects investigators deem worthy of scrutiny. This project has therefore aimed to evaluate how scholars have covered human trafficking to date, with an emphasis on the victim characteristics and forms of trafficking singled out for attention. This has entailed a content analysis of 651 law reviews and peer-reviewed journal articles on human trafficking-related themes published between January 2005 and June 2013. The articles were identified through a search of the Proquest, EBSCO, and Lexis-Nexis databases employing the keywords "human trafficking," "forced labor," "sex trafficking," "modern slavery," "child trafficking," "child soldiers," "domestic servitude," and "debt bondage." Note that articles on organ trafficking were only included in the content analysis if they related to the trafficking of individuals for the purposes of harvesting their organs, rather than the illicit trade in human organs more generally. Similarly, articles on sweatshop labor were only included if the cases examined involved the use of force, coercion, fraud, or deception for the purposes of exploiting labor, rather than the more general problem of exploitative labor practices, such as the payment of poor wages and excessive work hours.

Abstracts proved useful for enabling a preliminary identification of the main themes covered and the targets of analysis in the academic articles, but a review of the full text of each article was then undertaken to definitively establish the primary focus and context of analysis.[3] A database was created to facilitate analysis, with the sources coded according to (a) the primary thematic focus (sex trafficking; forced agricultural labor; forced industrial labor; domestic servitude; child soldiering; forced military contract labor; organ trafficking; and general, in which multiple forms of trafficking were examined or no particular form of trafficking was singled out) and (b) whether the articles focused primarily on males and/or females and adults and/or children (note that none of the articles reviewed focused specifically on the experiences of transgender or transsexual populations). The database also includes a brief summary of the author(s)' findings and notable observations on each text.

Limitations

The content analysis of academic scholarship on trafficking includes all English-language articles identifiable through the ProQuest, EBSCO, and Lexis-Nexis databases published between January 2005 and June 2013. It does not include a review of the many trafficking-related articles published in languages other than English during this period. The articles reviewed are written by authors from around the world, but there is no question that English-language law review and peer-reviewed journal articles are primarily attached to academic institutions and publishing outlets based in the global North, which favors native English speakers and particular modes of research and writing. Funding, time, and language constraints, however, made a global study of the trafficking literature infeasible.

A quantitative analysis of the forms of trafficking and the populations featured in academic scholarship can only offer a blunt picture of what—or *who*—researchers assume to be worthy subjects of analysis; it also does not capture the subtleties of how trafficking experiences, trafficked persons, traffickers, or the societies within which trafficking occurs are represented. For this reason, the analysis relied on a full text reading of each article by a human researcher over a period of 18 months rather than the aid of lexical analysis software, which would have reduced the (inevitably) subjective interpretation of the texts under review. In order to reduce the potential for bias in the coding of the articles, all of the articles were initially coded by a research assistant based on the abstracts, followed by a full text review by the author, and an additional full text review by a second research assistant when the main areas of focus were not easily identifiable.

Objective analysts of trafficking? A review of the academic literature

As noted in Table 1, of the 651 law reviews and peer-reviewed articles analyzed, the largest percentage (46%) focused on sex trafficking themes. These articles mainly focused on various debates surrounding commercial sexual labor, with the exception of four articles that explored the relationship between the

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[3] Articles for which the full text was not accessible through the Occidental College Library or its interlibrary loan service were excluded from the study.

Table 1. Trafficking Forms Highlighted in Academic Articles.

	n	%
Sex trafficking/sexual slavery	299	46
General (no form singled out)	146	22.4
Child soldiering	71	11
Forced labor (general) & sex trafficking	53	8
Nonsexual forced labor (general)	35	5.3
Domestic servitude	17	2.6
Forced fishing & agricultural labor	13	2
Forced labor—industrial	5	0.8
Organ trafficking	4	0.6
Domestic servitude & sex trafficking	3	0.5
Child adoption	3	0.5
Forced prison labor	2	0.3
TOTAL	651	100

mail-order bride industry and the trafficking of females (Constable, 2006, 2012; Jones, 2011; Kim, 2010) and three that examined how forced marriage and sexual slavery within the context of war is being addressed in prosecutions for violations of international humanitarian law (Jorgensen, 2012; Park, 2006; and Slater, 2012).

Seventy-one articles (11%) related to child soldiering, 53 (8%) focused on both nonspecified forced labor and sex trafficking, and a total of 72 (11%) articles dealt with various forms of nonsexual forced labor other than child soldiering, including forced agricultural work, domestic servitude, prison labor, and industrial labor (relating to factory work, work in brick kilns, and mining). Of the remaining articles, 146 (22.4%) explored general themes, most commonly related to the effectiveness of anti-trafficking legal mechanisms at the domestic and international levels (e.g., Feasley, 2013; Seo-Young, 2012), the identification of global dynamics or patterns of trafficking (Elezi, 2011; Gjermeni et al., 2008), the role of health-care professionals, social workers, and service professionals in the identification and assistance of victims (Bennett-Murphy, 2012; Hounmenou, 2012), and the political economy of human trafficking (Eckes, 2011; Wheaton, Schauer, & Galli, 2010). The coding of an article as "general" means either that the author did not mention a single form of trafficking or, conversely, recognized the multiple forms that trafficking takes without delving into a particular form in depth. But a closer examination of these articles reveals that even when the range of trafficking forms was acknowledged, many authors nonetheless emphasized that sex trafficking is most common (e.g., Barrows & Finger, 2008; Scarpa, 2006; Seo-Young, 2012; Stoica, 2011) or highlighted sex trafficking more than other forms (e.g., Grubb & Bennett, 2012; Lee, 2005; Rizer & Glaser, 2011; Robinson 2011), underscoring the greater weight and urgency of sexual forms of exploitation.

In 105 of the articles (16%), the authors made no mention of particular genders or age groups, while 235 articles (36%) acknowledged both male and female trafficked persons (see Table 2 for the characteristics of the subjects of the journal articles by gender and age). But, again, these figures do not fully

Table 2. Characteristics of Academic Articles by Gender/Age.

	n	%
No gender/age singled out	105	16
All genders/ages addressed	54	8.3
Adults (both men/women)	15	2
Children (both boys/girls)	108	17
Adult women	172	26
Girls	36	5.5
Women and girls	83	13
Women and children	58	9
Adult men	1	0.2
Boys	12	2
Men and boys	7	1
Men and children	0	0
TOTAL	651	100

capture the nuances of how the authors approached trafficking. Among the 235 articles that acknowledged both male and female trafficked persons, 108 focused on girls and boys or children more generally, with 54 of these relating to child soldiering (child soldiering is the one area of trafficking where boys are more likely to be featured than girls). In an additional 58 articles, women and children were jointly singled out as the most commonly victimized or vulnerable (e.g., Drumea, 2011; Eckes, 2011; Jac-Kucharski, 2012; Jones, 2012; Nam, 2007). Moreover, even when scholars were not singling out a particular gender or age group, women and girls tended to be explicitly *named* while boys and men were instead *implied* through neutral language such as "child," "victims," "trafficked persons," or "migrants (e.g., Fenwick, 2005; Lebaron & Ayers, 2013; Musto, 2010; Seo-Young, 2012). For example, in their article on "The Flesh Trade in Europe: Trafficking in Women and *Children* [emphasis added] for the Purpose of Commercial Sexual Exploitation," Margaret Melrose and David Barrett (2006) mentioned "girls" 17 times, while failing to acknowledge "boys" even once. In Susan Kang's (2009) comparison between prison labor in the United States and international forced-labor standards, the author stated that 90% of the prison population in the United States is male, but this is the only mention of gender in the entire article; instead, the neutral language of "prisoners" is employed. An article by Siddharth Kara (2011) on the causes of trafficking and the political economy of the trade in humans included four photos, all of which feature boys and men assumed to have been trafficked. But the author never engaged gender in the article itself, and only mentioned in passing that "men, women, and children around the world" are subject to "trafficking and slave-like exploitation" (p. 69).

The articles that did single out a particular gender for attention were heavily female- and sex trafficking focused; 291 articles (45%) centered on women and/or girls. The total number of journal articles that featured adult women far exceeded those focused on minor girls (26% versus 5.5%), a surprising finding given the social construction of girls as most "vulnerable" and at risk of exploitation. In only 20 of the 651 articles (3%) were males the primary focus of the author(s), with more than a third of these devoted to the topic of child soldiering. Adult men were the focus of only one article (Carswell & De Neve, 2013), which examined bonded labor in the agricultural sector and powerloom industry in Tamil Nadu, India.

Delving deeper into the content of the academic articles confirmed that the trafficking of females for sexual purposes is often approached as emblematic of the human trafficking experience. Nonsexual forms of human trafficking tended to be underplayed, quickly glossed over, or entirely ignored in much of the scholarship (e.g., Cho, Dreher, & Neumayer, 2013; Hodge, 2008; Holman, 2008; Leishman, 2007; Lindquist, 2010; Pemberton, 2006), and the language of sex trafficking and human trafficking was often used interchangeably (e.g., Batsyukova, 2007; Bucken-Knapp, Karlsson Shaffer, & Persson Strömbäck, 2012; Di Tommaso, Shima, Strom, & Bettio, 2009; Jones, Engstrom, Hilliard, & Sungakawan, 2011; Post, 2011; Tverdova, 2011).

Scholars frequently emphasized that statistics on human trafficking must be interpreted with caution given the hidden nature of the problem, the reluctance of many survivors to come forward to seek police assistance, and the reliance of researchers on different methods of gathering data (e.g., Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010; Farrell, McDevitt, & Fahy, 2010; Goodey, 2008; Jahic & Fickenauer 2005; Kelly, 2005). Even so, and in spite of more recent studies that have emphasized how trafficking takes multiple forms and affects people of all genders and ages, many authors of the articles under review continued to reference the same U.S. Department of State statistic from the mid-2000s that 80% of those trafficked are women or girls, overwhelmingly for the purposes of sexual exploitation (e.g., Jac-Kucharski, 2012; Muftić & Finn, 2013; Patel, 2013). The repeated reference of this statistic has served to reinforce its legitimacy as well as wider perceptions that men and boys comprise a small minority of cases of human trafficking. Most concerning are academic works that blatantly erase the trafficking experiences of men and boys, such as the claim by Arun Archarya and Jennifer Bryson Clark (2010) that 98% of trafficked laborers are "females of various ages" (p. 415) and Olga Pochagina's assertion that the "percentage of men in illegal human trafficking constitutes no more than 2%" (2007, p. 82). But the more common reference by scholars to how the "majority of victims are women and girls" solidifies perceptions that focusing on females alone is sufficient to understand the trafficking experience (Adams, 2011; Askola, 2007; Cho et al., 2013; Huda, 2006).

In "An Ounce of Prevention," Takiyah Rayshawn McClain described the typical trafficking victim: "They are female, they are from poor families in poor communities and they belong to despised racial and ethnic minorities. They are abused and exploited, and a proportion are locked into sexual slavery precisely, and simply, because they can be: they are society's most vulnerable people" (2007, p. 583). Mondira Dutta (2011) began her article on the "Cultural Dimensions of Human Trafficking in India" by remarking that "[m]ost victims of human trafficking are used for forced labor" but then concluded that "the worst form of trafficking is for sexual exploitation of women and girls" (p. 95). Kim Ahn Duong (2012) observed in "Human Trafficking in a Globalized World" that "women and children shoulder the greatest devastation of human trafficking and are the most vulnerable in the trafficking process" (p. 48). Similarly, in "The Tragedy of Human Trafficking," Nadejda Marinova and Patrick James (2012) justified their focus on sex trafficking because "women are the most vulnerable group" (p. 232). In none of these articles were the authors' observations deemed to require further explanation, nor did the authors acknowledge that equating vulnerability with the female gender denies the agency of women and girls and has long served as a justification for protectionist measures that maintain the gender status quo.

Scholars have increasingly applied a critical lens to media and academic accounts of trafficking, calling attention to the dominant archetypes of trafficking that give prominence to certain experiences while ignoring others and characterizing some victims as more worthy of aid (e.g., Chuang, 2010; Desyllas, 2007; Kempadoo, 2007; Lobasz, 2009; O'Connell Davidson, 2010; Peters, 2013; Schaeffer-Grabiel, 2010). In particular, much of this literature has critiqued the fusing of prostitution and sex trafficking in narratives of human trafficking and the eroticizing, moralizing, and imperialistic impulses that underlie the fixation of activists and policy makers on the sexually exploited bodies of poor "Third World" women and girls. Rutvica Andrijasevic (2007), for example, revealed the stereotypical and voyeuristic representations of femininity that have been employed in the anti-trafficking campaigns produced by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to discourage female migration (pp. 26–27). Maria Alvarez and Edward Alessi (2012) challenged the "meta-narrative that promotes the rhetoric of the victim subject and the moral crusade to rescue victims" and called for an approach to trafficking that focuses on the "structural inequalities that preceded trafficking as well as the push and pull factors that led many trafficked individuals to leave their countries in search of better living and working conditions" (p. 148). Ronald Weitzer (2007) referred to the reliance of anti-trafficking activists on "horror stories," "atrocity tales," and inflated estimates of the scale of trafficking (p. 448). And Breuil, Siegel, Van Reenen, Beijer, and Roos (2011) called out the various role players who have shaped "the truth" of human trafficking "into a comprehensible, acceptable and productive story," including feminist lobbying groups, government agencies, law enforcement, religious groups, and academics (p. 31). It is striking, however, that none of these authors considered how—through authoring yet another scholarly publication that centers on sex trafficking (even when critiquing the preoccupation with forms of sexual exploitation)—they were traversing already well-traveled ground and further solidifying the association between sex trafficking and human trafficking.

Analyzing trafficking through a gender lens

Nearly 20 years ago, Terrell Carver (1996) reminded us of what should be obvious: *Gender is not a Synonym for Woman*. But the framing of trafficking as a gender issue has seldom been accompanied by gender analysis that explores the relational constructedness of masculinities and femininities when grappling with the forces that contribute to the experience, or perpetration, of exploitation and the obstacles that hinder recognition, protection, and redress for abuses suffered. In 44 of the articles, the authors made specific reference to "gender," "gender analysis," or "gender perspective" in their title or abstracts. Among these articles, however, 26 either did not acknowledge men at all or associated them with criminality (as perpetrators or purchasers of female sexual services) and/or emphasized their privileged position in the patriarchal gender order. Thirteen mentioned that boys and men may also be trafficked, but in none of these articles did the authors make this observation a focal point of their analysis. Instead, as exemplified by Gnam (2013), the adoption of a gender lens usually translated into a focus on "the factors that create conditions of vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence" for women and girls (p. 718).

Feminist scholars have amply demonstrated that our understanding of political, socioeconomic, and cultural processes and developments is often incomplete in the absence of gender analysis, which examines how social expectations of what it means to be "men" and "women" affect differences in roles and status, access to opportunities, and control over resources. Feminist writing and advocacy illuminate the myriad ways in which male privilege disadvantages women—including through laws, policies, and norms that infantilize women and refuse them full personhood, make it permissible to deny them equity in the political, corporate, and military spheres, and increase their risks of interpersonal and structural violence. But even as they expose the injustices of the gender hierarchy, many feminists have resisted dichotomous, gendered interpretations of victimhood and agency, through making visible "the actions involved in surviving, coping with and resisting victimization" (Kelly, 2000, p. 46) and revealing both women's capacity for or complicity in violence (Mackenzie, 2012; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007) and men's experiences as victims of violence (Sivakumaran, 2007; Zarkov, 2001). And just as feminist theorizing on the intersectionality of identities destabilizes the ability to speak in any meaningful way about "women" as a coherent group that shares common interests and experiences oppression in the same way (Crenshaw, 1989; Yuval-Davis, 2011), so too does it undermine monolithic ideas of "men."

Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity applies an intersectional lens to the male gender to expose how what is taken to be the masculine ideal in any given society masks the exercise of power not only between men and women but also among men, with race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, location, age and other bases of identity shaping the positionality of *all* genders (Connell, 2005, pp. 76–81). Hegemonic masculinity has been defined by Connell as the model of masculinity in any given society at any given point in time that is most highly valorized, an ideal against which both other forms of masculinity *and* femininity are evaluated. This ideal is accomplished not through overt domination of one group over another; rather, in a Gramscian sense of hegemony, it entails consent and collective participation in the replication of dominant norms, with the ideology of the dominant group so deeply engrained that it goes unquestioned by the masses (Gramsci, 1971). While the patrolling of gender norms may not be accomplished through force, to defy social expectations of what it means to be masculine or feminine brings with it the possibility of marginalization, exclusion, and even violence.

This observation is important for understanding why analyses of trafficking that focus narrowly on women rather than considering the relationality of femininities and masculinities can only offer partial insights into the factors that push some women *and* men to migrate in search of better life opportunities and increases their risks of exploitation. Males, as well as females, encounter gender-based pressures—mediated by structures of race, ethnicity, nationality, and class—that may drive their migration within and across borders and contribute to their concentration in economic sectors where labor abuses have been rife, including construction, mining and logging, fishing, and military contracting. And though existing studies confirm that a majority of individuals trafficked for sexual purposes are women and girls (International Labor Organization, 2012), to mask over men and boys' experiences of sexual exploitation does an injustice to victims/survivors, reinforces the association between "victimhood" and "females" and leaves us with an incomplete understanding of the forces of supply and demand driving sex trafficking.

Scholars of trafficking have increasingly interrogated the gendered essentialism of the victim/perpetrator binary, but this has primarily entailed challenging the erasing of women's agency (e.g., McSherry & Kneebone, 2008; Van Liempt, 2011; Warren, 2012) or acknowledging the limited appearance of men in trafficking narratives as dangerous, usually "non-Western," traffickers who profit from the exploitation of the bodies of women and girls or as consumers sexually benefiting from this exploitation (Andrijasevic, 2007, p. 27; Lobasz, 2009, p. 339). Only rarely have scholars focused explicitly on making males visible as victims/survivors of trafficking (Allais, 2013; Cullen & McSherry, 2009; Dennis, 2008; Miller, 2011; and Steele, 2011) or scrutinized how constructions of masculinity influence the trafficking experiences of men and boys (Mahdavi & Sargent, 2011; and Piper, 2005). For example, Kimberly Williams (2011) analyzed how the U.S. government's enactment of the TVPA in 2000 converged with U.S.–Russia foreign relations at the turn of the new millennium, with Russian sex trafficking victims functioning as symbols of the emasculation and humiliation of Russia, while serving to reaffirm the self-image of the United States as the masculine "hero" (p. 3). Elizabeth Bernstein (2010) engaged the masculinized politics underlying evangelical anti-trafficking interventions in the United States and observed how the white, Christian rescuers of trafficked women have been positioned as "exemplars of a new model of enlightened masculinity" (p. 55). In neither of these articles, however, was the authors' gender analysis extended to consider the potential or actual vulnerability of males to trafficking. Stephanie Limoncelli (2009) adopted an intersectional approach and alerted our attention to the "economic disparities between sending and receiving countries, conflict and militarization, structural adjustment policies, the worldwide growth of informal work, and the dependence of some governments on the remittances of women migrants"—all of which "make different groups of women vulnerable" (p. 266). But by disregarding the ways in which poor men of color in the global South are also adversely affected by conflict and militarization, structural adjustment policies, and the dependence of governments on *their* remittances, she reinforced the assumption that men, in contrast to women, *are* universally benefitting from globalization. Tanja Bastia (2006) lamented the lack of gender analysis in trafficking research and advocated for a "gender-aware" approach that examines the relationship between gender norms and migration flows, and how trafficking policies differently impact women and men (p. 23). But Bastia did not take up her own call to action; instead, her article focused primarily on the reasons that propel women to migrate, how migration policies have gendered consequences for women, and how gender-based inequalities shape women's experiences of trafficking (see also Chuang, 2010; and Lobasz, 2009).

Feminist theorists have led the way in revealing the centrality of gender in the organizing of social life. Feminist activists and scholars have also been instrumental in human trafficking being placed onto the policy agenda and making its way into academic scholarship. This is often singled out as a major factor that has contributed to the narrow focus in much trafficking policy and scholarship on the sexual exploitation of females (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012; Jones, 2010; Uy, 2011). It is worth emphasizing, however, that feminists have also led the way in problematizing the essentialism underlying anti-trafficking discourse (Chacón, 2006; Chapkis, 2003; Doezema, 2010; Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2011). But for some feminists, to consider the relevance of gender relations and gender norms for understanding how and why males as well as females experience trafficking runs the risk of reaffirming men as the primary subject of social scientific inquiry and diminishing the ways in which men as a social group continue to be advantaged relative to women. The attempt by some male scholars to flip the prevailing picture of trafficking by replacing "women as victims" with "men as victims" is indicative of the dangers of engaging men and masculinity in trafficking scholarship. Samuel Vincent Jones (2010), for example, speciously claimed that men "constitute the largest and most vulnerable group of human trafficking victims" (p. 1167). Their invisibility in narratives of trafficking, in Jones's account, is exacerbated by "contemptuous" and "condescending" media depictions that either present men as violent and aggressive or as objects for the sexual gratification of women (Jones, 2010, pp. 1173–1174)—an assertion that disregards the sexualized, stereotypical images of women that pervade the media.

The attempt of isolated scholars who make men visible through inverting victims and erasing female experiences of trafficking should not distract our attention from the value of research focused on trafficked men and boys for expanding our understanding of the dynamics of human trafficking. Gender analysis has proven invaluable for identifying a host of push factors that increase the risks for women and girls of being trafficked, including son preference, gender-based violence, women's displacement from subsistence agriculture with the introduction of cash crops, cultural obligations regarding the duty of single daughters to contribute to the financial welfare of their families, and discriminatory laws that restrict women's ability to migrate through legal, regulated channels. To apply a gender lens to cases of human trafficking involving men and boys—particularly one attentive to the nexus between gender norms and class, ethnicity, nationality, and other bases of identity—offers an opportunity to illuminate every stage of the trafficking process. How do recruiters manipulate gender norms to entrap individuals in exploitative situations? How are idealized notions of femininity and masculinity employed by traffickers to maintain control over trafficked persons, even when opportunities for escape are possible? How does gender influence who is detected by law enforcement and deemed to be an authentic victim deserving of immigration relief and other benefits or the recourse of criminal or civil remedies to achieve justice for harms suffered? A fuller engagement with the complexities of gender will enable researchers of human trafficking to influence the development of laws and policies that are more attentive to the diversity of human trafficking experiences. But it will also require us, as researchers, to confront how gender norms and biases have informed our own interpretations of agency, victimhood, and who we recognize to be worthy subjects of investigation.

Conclusion

The archetype of human trafficking is so deeply embedded that trafficked persons who are not (heterosexual) female victims of sex exploitation are rarely seen, let alone counted. This is particularly true of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, who are so peripheral in media and academic accounts of trafficking as to barely merit a mention, but also of males (of all sexual orientations) whose possible vulnerability to coercion and exploitation seems at odds with our knowledge of the privileged location of men in the global gender order. In the years since the adoption of the UN Protocol, large-scale research studies have estimated that millions of men and boys are entrapped each year in abusive conditions that meet established definitions of trafficking; these studies, however, have done little to disrupt the female-centered image of trafficking or the conflation of trafficking and prostitution. The sensationalism-driven media and the interests of political leaders and activist campaigners are most frequently singled out as the culprits behind the persistence of this image (Chuang, 2010; Gulati, 2011; Zimmerman, 2010). But academic scholarship is similarly shaped by ideology and interests, influencing who scholars recognize as worthy objects of study, why certain forms of trafficking are selectively engaged while others are relegated to the margins or ignored altogether, and the prescriptions for change that are elaborated.

It is not my intent here to argue that sex trafficking is not a serious problem or that researchers of trafficking should replace their focus on women with a focus on men. Rather, common sense tells us that anti-trafficking laws, policies, and campaigns will inevitably remain impoverished if we continue to ignore the estimated 45% of victims/survivors who are not female, and the majority of victims/survivors—both male and female—who are subject to non-sexual forms of labor. It is overdue for the academic community to catch up to the complexities of human trafficking experiences emerging out of more recent global, regional, and comparative studies. To make visible the trafficking of men and boys will help to disrupt the dominant narrative running through the trafficking literature that can see females who are trafficked only as victims, never as agents, and that denies the possibility that males may be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and in need of protection. To fail to broaden our lens, to continue to approach gender analysis as a study of the (heterosexual) female experience, will deprive us of the opportunity to gain insight into how intersecting social hierarchies—of gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation—heighten the risks of trafficking and impede efforts at detection, protection, and prosecution, to the detriment of *all* genders.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Katie Wiese and Anna Misenti for their invaluable research assistance.

Funding

The John Parke Young Endowment at Occidental College provided funding which made this research possible.

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