

SOLD: THE HUMAN AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF TRAFFICKING WOMEN AND GIRLS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATION
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ON

August 2018

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Abstract

In November 2017, the stories of women and girls who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation from West Bengal, India were recorded and the role that education and vocational training plays in societal reintegration post-trafficking was examined.

Data reveals that poverty paired with a lack of access to education make individuals vulnerable to human trafficking. All participants in the study came from low socio-economic backgrounds where necessities were lacking; further, most did not complete elementary school. The study results also indicate that girls are at-risk of being trafficked simply because they are a girl. Finally, the data shows the positive impact of post-trafficking supports which result in necessary jobs leading to self-independence and advocacy.

Anti-poverty initiatives and education are needed to fight trafficking through raising awareness, changing mindsets, and empowering women and girls. Stories from India can help inform practices to support women and girls who have been trafficked globally.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the freedom fighters - the women and girls who shared their stories with me. Their lived experiences informed this study and I am grateful to them for entrusting them to me. This thesis belongs to them and it is for them. I have been inspired by the words they told me, and I hope that through retelling their experiences, you will also be inspired.

Acknowledgement

I would like to extend my gratitude and acknowledge the many individuals in Canada and India who have helped and supported me throughout this study.

Firstly, thanks be to God for putting the issue of human trafficking on my heart, for perfectly orchestrating the research arrangements, for answering many prayer requests and for bringing the people into my life who were needed to make this research journey possible. I am humbled by his mercy and goodness to me.

Thanks to my husband, Aaron Beerman for his ongoing support and prayers, and for encouraging me to embark on this journey. Thanks to my parents, John and Marilyn Gray, for always being my biggest fans and for teaching me the importance of helping others.

Thanks to Angela Turner for inspiring me to begin this work and to Pam Cope for her advice, wisdom and prayers. My siblings Sam, Josh, Caleb, Jenna, Becky, Shanlee, Lauren; my in-laws Tim and Tanya Beerman; friends Sarah, Allie, Laura, Michelle, Amanda; my co-workers Ijade, Meysam, Krisha, Laksh, Lindsay and the many individuals in my church community and beyond— I thank you all for your encouragement and support.

To Professors DesaiTrilokekar and Diplo - my thesis committee members: thank you for your thoughtful feedback and constructive questions. You helped me see things from a new perspective and provided me with invaluable insight.

To Dr. Dlamini – my thesis supervisor: As a white woman engaging in cross-cultural research, you have shown me patience, grace and have shaped my thinking profoundly. Your feedback is above and beyond any input I have ever received. Your time and expertise are

deeply appreciated, and I am blessed to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from you.

The translators, business owners, organizations, staff members at (Pseudo named) Aditi, and front-line workers all played important roles in creating this thesis. My gratitude goes to Michelle, Anette, Binati and Tapan for translation and to Sharon, Sunanya, Rinku, Priya, Souvik, Cornelius and Sarah for sharing knowledge of human trafficking and for connecting me with others working in the field.

Thank you Smita Singh, Director of Justice Initiatives, Mahima India, Kolkata for your knowledge, support and making the interviews with the women at Mahima Home possible. Thanks to Cornelius for organizing the interviews in Basirhat and the NGO staff at (Pseudo named) The Andanda Institute.

To Austin and Julie Triplett – my dear friends and roommates in Kolkata: Thank you for welcoming me with open arms during my fieldwork, for your incredible hospitality, friendship, and encouragement. I am grateful for your generosity and the ways in which you helped me navigate a new culture.

To Gus Peters - my local contact in India: Thank you for guiding and supporting me throughout the development of my proposal and the duration of my fieldwork. I am indebted to you and your family for your generosity of time, hospitality and care. Thank you for arranging interviews and facilitating connections between myself and front-line workers in Kolkata, for sharing your vast knowledge of human trafficking, and for your continual wisdom and encouragement. This research would not have been possible without you.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Study Purpose and Rationale	2
The Study	5
Culture and Society: A Prelude on Findings.....	6
Summary of Chapters	9
Chapter 2: Background	11
Human Trafficking.....	11
Human Trafficking in Canada	13
Human Trafficking in India	13
Chapter 3: Methodology	16
Methodological Framework.....	16
Researcher Positioning.....	18
Methodology- Steps	20
Participant Overview	23
Interview Space, Language and Power	24
Mahima Home	24
The Andanda Institute.....	27
Methodological Challenges and Triumphs	29
Cross-Cultural Implications: Service Learning	30
Cross-Cultural Implications: Expectations	33
Interview Process:	34
Translation	44
Methodology: Future Considerations	47
Chapter 4: Freedom Fighters	49
Terminology.....	50
Meet the Freedom Fighters	51
Participant 1: Pallavi [New Leaves].	51

Participant 2: Unnati [Progress].....	53
Participant 3: Nabhitha [Fearless].....	55
Participant 4: Mousumi [Season].....	56
Participant 5: Reena [Gem].....	58
Participant 6: Hasina [Beautiful].	59
Participant 7: Laboni [Grace].....	60
Participant 8: Moumita[Love].....	62
Participant 9: Nadia [Beginning].	63
Participant 10: Lucia [Light of India].	64
Participant 11: Jayan [Victory].	66
Participant 12: Jyothi [Light of Sun].	71
Closing Thoughts	73
Chapter 5: Risk Factors.....	74
Poverty	74
Findings.....	75
Poverty and Child Labour.....	76
Poverty and Child Marriage.....	78
Poverty, Job Opportunity and Recruitment.	79
Gender Inequality.....	80
Findings.....	80
Reena’s Story.	89
Gender and Sexual Exploitation.	90
Chapter 6: Access to Education and Vocational Training	92
Pre-Trafficking: Access to Education.....	92
Pre-Trafficking: Life Skills.....	94
Awareness and Prevention.....	96
Post-Trafficking: Education and Vocational Training.....	98
Importance of Education.....	99
Challenges.....	101
Life Skills and Vocational Training.....	105
True “Wonder Women”.	108
Chapter 7: Success Support Systems	112

Role of Family	113
Housing for Trafficked Women and Girls: Mahima Home.....	114
Support.....	119
Physical Needs.....	120
Counselling.....	121
Freedom Businesses.....	124
What is a Freedom Business?	125
Support Systems: Empowerment and Independence	133
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	135
Summary of Findings.....	135
Canadian Context.....	136
Risk Factors.....	138
Awareness and Prevention.....	140
Post-Trafficking: Training and Education.....	141
Rehabilitation and Reintegration.....	142
Suggestions for future research.....	145
Post-Script.....	150
References	151

Chapter 1: Introduction

How much is your freedom worth? Could you put a price tag on it? What about your sister, daughter mother or friend? Could you assign a dollar amount to their lives? People are not commodities to be bought and sold yet; there are more people in forced labour today than any time in human history.

My mother's best friend was sold into sex trafficking in Ontario, Canada when she was eleven years old. They reconnected a few years ago and after hearing her story, I was motivated to learn more about this injustice, to get involved and find ways to support anti-human trafficking initiatives. I was shocked and completely unaware that sex trafficking happens in Canada. In addition to the shock and feeling of disbelief, I felt compelled to do something. Consequently, I became involved in a local anti-human trafficking task force that raises awareness and financial support for a future safe house in York Region, Canada and a home in Kolkata, India.

Through my role as a committee member on this task force, I have had to educate myself about the exploitation of children and women around the world, including in Canada and India. I learnt that India was providing critical post-trauma support and educational resources to women who have been exploited through sex trafficking. Further investigation about both Canadian and Indian anti-trafficking initiatives revealed that post-trafficking programs in India were more developed and well-known to the public, however, such programs are less prevalent within Canada. I hypothesize that because in India human trafficking is prevalent and openly spoken about – both in the media and in schools – developing resources that are equally openly discussed and well known, becomes possible.

For example, there is a place called Mahima Home in Kolkata, which has established safe havens for women and girls who have been trafficked. The girls receive medical care, food, clothes, counselling, legal support, education, vocational training, and job placement at Freedom Businesses¹. Shelters like this are scarcely found in Canada and Freedom Businesses are almost non-existent. Through conducting research in India, I encouraged the women and girls² who had been trafficked to tell me about themselves, and from their stories, I looked at the vulnerabilities that make an individual susceptible to exploitation, as well as the cultural and societal norms that further increase the likelihood of girls becoming trafficked. I also used their stories to examine the role of educational resources, training and supports that are needed for women who have been exploited. During the research study, I worked alongside a NGO that focuses on community development in villages on the outskirts of Kolkata. This cross-cultural service learning, shaped me and helped me to more sensitively engage with participants in the study.

Trafficking exploits and undervalues women and girls across borders; both developing and developed nations are affected. The stories of women who have been exploited in India can help inform practices to support women and girls who have been trafficked in other contexts such as in Canada.

Study Purpose and Rationale

“There are, shockingly, more people in slavery today than at any time in human history” (Hogenboom, 2012). This slavery includes the trafficking of persons for sex, labour and organs. “In UNODC's Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, sexual exploitation was noted as by far the most commonly identified form of human trafficking (79%) followed by forced labour

¹ A business that exists to fight against human trafficking and commercial exploitation” (Freedom Business Alliance, n.d.).

² The term ‘women’ and ‘girls’ are used broadly in this thesis to refer to individuals who have reached puberty or not. Most participants were trafficked at an age when they cannot be considered to be a woman by any standard, thus, the term ‘girls’ is also used.

(18%)” (Teixeira, 2018). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately twenty-one million people, three out of every one thousand people worldwide, are individuals who have been trafficked (2012). Human trafficking takes place in every country in the world; it is a human rights issue and it needs to be stopped. Sex trafficking is a gender inequality issue. This is reflected by statistics that indicate that because of systemic issues, including violence against women and lack of gender parity, ninety-eight percent of people who are trafficked are women and girls (Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2014b, p. 28). Sex trafficking involves the coercion of women and children.

There is an inadequacy of comprehensive and reliable data on human trafficking because it is influenced by the very nature of trafficking; secrecy and danger (UNESCO, 2007, p. 33). According to Mr. Costa, the former Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, there is a knowledge crisis and both governments and social scientists need to commit to improving information-gathering and information-sharing on human trafficking (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009, p. 7). He pleads with governments and academics to work together with UNODC to generate statistical evidence, noting this as an imperative to combatting the issue (2009, p. 7). There is a lack of empirical research and long-term studies on human trafficking, and analyses on prevention and rehabilitation policies and programmes are needed (World Health Organization, 2012). There is a significant need for accurate data on human trafficking and more diverse research on this issue.

This study helps address the gaps in research by examining the reasons for trafficking, the experiences of those women who have previously been trafficked, as well as through hearing and sharing women’s ideas about what they consider to be preventative and community integration needs and strategies post-trafficking. This research sheds light on the practices that

India has employed to support the reintegration of women and girls who have been exploited through human trafficking. It shares lessons and practices that could be considered within the Canadian context. The focus of the study is on trafficked persons, specifically women and girls.

The following questions framed my research:

- Who are the women and girls who have been trafficked?
- To what extent did education play a role in an individual's vulnerability as a trafficked person?
- How do social issues like gender-based violence and gender inequalities impact the trafficking of women and girls in India?
- What resources are needed to help with community reintegration and post-trauma healing for women who escape exploitation?
- What role does vocational training play in their post-trauma healing and reintegration into society?

The focal point of the study was influenced by conversations I had with an Indian man, Dr. Gus Peters, who is a part of many anti-human trafficking initiatives and works full-time in Kolkata, India. We had previously met at an anti-trafficking event in Barrie, Ontario in 2015. Through our discussions it became clear that researching the impact of vocational training for people who have been trafficked was of critical importance. He provided invaluable support during the data collection process through connecting me with local businesses, shelters and contacts that support women who have been trafficked. His support led me to interviewing women who had been trafficked who were residing in a shelter home and women who used services at a non-governmental organization (NGO) in a rural community. In addition, Dr. Peters helped me navigate the culture and provided me with continual advice during my study. In 2016

he completed his PhD dissertation on prevention and intervention initiatives that can help combat human trafficking in India. Dr. Peters is an incredible source of knowledge and provided me with the tools and support needed to make this research study possible.

The Study

Twelve women and girls participated in this research study. An overview of the participants is provided in Chapter 3 and a profile on each participant is shared in Chapter 4. It is certain that nine out of the twelve girls who participated in the study were exploited through commercial sex trafficking. Participant #5 was not trafficked, but her story was included to help better understand the inequality between men and women within society. It is also unclear if participant #6 and #8 were trafficked based on their interview responses. However, participant #6 was physically abused within a domestic servitude situation³ (sometimes considered another form of trafficking) and informs discussion on violence against women. It is likely that participant #8 was trafficked for sex, although due to the restrictions regarding the types of questions the researcher was permitted to ask this participant (see Chapter 3), it cannot be certain. The gaps within participants' stories are discussed in Chapter 4. The limitations of this study will be examined in Chapter 3. Overall, data in the study revealed that low socioeconomic background in addition to a low level of education, are risk factors that make an individual vulnerable to become trafficked. All women and girls came from poor families and felt responsibility to support their families financially. Furthermore, all of the nine women who were trafficked had less than grade nine education at the time they were trafficked. In addition, all

³ “Domestic workers living in domestic servitude frequently experience physical, psychological and sometimes sexual abuse within their employer’s household. Working conditions are also exploitative as those who receive a salary are paid below the minimum wage, frequently work without contracts, and are often required to work 16 to 18 hour days without being allocated sufficient hours of rest.” (OHCHR, 2010).

participants were women and girls. Poverty, lack of access to education and “being a girl” make individuals vulnerable to trafficking.

Post-trafficking, women and girls expressed that networks of support helped enable them to live somewhat independently and facilitated their reintegration into society. These supports include extensive trafficking-specific resources such as: housing, life skills training, education, vocational training, counselling, community building, and job placement. Women who received these supports were inspired to contribute to society through championing change. They share their trafficking stories with others and pursue careers that are exemplary and motivate other women and girls. They are also vocal about their desire to ensure that no other women go through the experiences of trauma and degradation that they faced.

Culture and Society: A Prelude on Findings

Through examining the data presented in this research, questions are raised regarding the choices that women are able or unable to make within the context of their communities and culture. In what ways do community practices located within a patriarchal culture reinforce gender inequalities when girls do not question their position? Women and girls in the study felt responsibility to support their families. As will be shown later, data in the study suggests that women’s view of the world was shaped by the influences of male hegemony and other practices of symbolic domination; therefore, their sense of responsibility to others often overshadowed responsibility to themselves. How does one balance living harmoniously with others and ensuring one’s individual needs are met? In a sense, the stories of the participants revealed an over-emphasis of the South African philosophy of “Ubuntu” “...a capacity in South African culture that expresses compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring” (Lefa, 2015, p. 4).

Ubuntu is often seen in relation to Ujamaa, coined by Tanzania's first president, Julius Nyerere, which is "usually translated as 'familyhood,' a form of African socialism that blended broadly conceived socialist principles with a distinctly 'communitarian' understanding of African societies, and a strong commitment to egalitarian societies" (Jennings, 2017). Similar to Ujamaa's "familyhood", in Ubuntu, a person exists because of others; therefore, the "self" comes secondary to the "whole" humanity – and in the case of my participants, the "whole" is the same as the "family".

My findings facilitate questions about how women live their lives through philosophies such as the above, and whether they are able to enact, question, or even redefine what that philosophy means in their everyday lives. How does this doctrine, of learning to live with one another interdependently, implicate individuals? What does African humanism look like in practice? Responsibility for others can and does collide with individual rights and needs. "There is a tension between individual human rights and societal basic rights and interests...In Ubuntu culture every human being is entitled to all basic human rights. However, there is a very deep implied understanding that personal human rights are subordinate to, and dependent on, the basic communitarian interests and wellbeing" (Chuwa, 2016, p. 34). More questions are left for me to consider regarding the lived realities of women who might be influenced by philosophies similar to Ubuntu and Ujamaa. Is it possible that some of its implication impacts women more than men? The women and girls I spoke with in India embodied the notion of helping others, especially family. In some instances, women and girls in the study were pushed away (and some were sold) by their families, yet, post-trafficking, participants desired to support them, return home and be interconnected. How do women see their own humanity within the broader scale of community and family? Is it a possibility that in taking care of family the self may be the least in

the hierarchy of needs? The study also revealed that for those women who could not return home, community was identified as an integral piece of reintegration. Is there a way for women to connect to one another, as well to create humanism through strangers? My study raises questions about the way that gender struggles are fought, globally. Feminist-based movements take different shapes that are influenced not just by class but also by race, geography and importantly, local philosophies of existence. Philosophies of existence as understood in India, are, however, beyond the scope of my study⁴. These questions raised from the study remain unanswered and could be explored in future research.

Additional to the philosophies in question, at the core of India are remnants of the British colonial system that facilitated obedience and stomped resistance and civil disobedience. The decisions that women make, and their desires are shaped by the British colonial system that seized India for almost 100 years (Kaul, 2011). Under colonialism, imposed authoritative figures were respected and in India, they still are today. For instance, one of the participants, Lucia, who had learnt to obey people in positions of authority, was sold by her dance instructor. She trusted him as her teacher and respected his request for her to travel to a nearby place with him. Her dance teacher abused this power and exploited her. In addition to the abuse of power, I also observed a repurposing of the culture of respect (Oloya, 2015). Children are taught to respect elders, obey their parents and listen to authority figures. An emphasis was placed on this culture of respect, where parents forced children to be of economic service to the home. Children were also forced to take-up adult-like responsibilities much earlier in life. In other words, children in these situations do not question family duties and fulfill them obediently. In my study, Unnati

⁴ In this thesis I draw on these African philosophies because of the preliminary service learning work I conducted in South Africa with a population of similar socio-economic backgrounds as in West Bengal. I recognize the limits of cross-cultural generalizations; broader generalization requires a broader base of data for analysis; however, I am cognizant that the lessons documented in this study can inform beyond the boundaries of their origin.

demonstrates this because she tells a story of being pulled out of school at the age of six to work in a garment factory. Similarly, Laboni is sent as a child to a local municipality to sell soap; acting as the only provider for the home. Girls are being used to improve social livelihood. Participants' stories revealed that the colonial-inherited system of blind obedience coupled with the repurposing of culture discussed above, subjugate women and children to unjust circumstances which can then lead to the violation of human rights. The patriarchal residue left by Britain must be exposed; a decolonizing of education, civil society and social structures is needed.

Originally, I went to India to look at education and its role in reintegrating women and girls who had been trafficked; however, it became clear during the study that societal structures and cultural practices make answering my research questions much more complex. Gendered ways of knowing and living still need to be redressed. Education does have an important role, however, many questions which pointed to the complexity of human trafficking arose during the research. Are the choices of women and girls limited by where they situate the 'self' in the hierarchy of needs in their understanding of the world around them? How can women and girls pursue possibilities outside of the parameters created by beliefs about gender ideals that impose limitations and state a defined role for women? Do women and girls realize that their personhood exists, has value and matters? Consciousness building needs to take place in addition to access to education. Interlocking concepts of culture and society came to be fundamental to understanding human trafficking in this research.

Summary of Chapters

This thesis includes eight chapters. The first two chapters introduce the research study purpose, offer a general overview of human trafficking globally, as well as examine the issue of

human trafficking in Canada and India. Chapter 3 presents the methodological framework and researcher positioning. An overview of the participants is provided, in addition to a discussion on the methodological challenges and triumphs that the researcher faced. “Freedom Fighters”, the fourth chapter, shares the stories of the women and girls who participated in the study. Chapter 5 explores factors that make an individual vulnerable to human trafficking including socioeconomic status and gender. In Chapter 6, the interconnectedness of socioeconomic barriers, gender and low-levels of education is further explored. The chapter includes suggestions for furthering access to education as an important prevention strategy and raising awareness. The second part of the chapter emphasizes the significance of education and vocational training post-trafficking. Chapter 7 discusses the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and girls who have been trafficked. “Successful Support Systems” reviews the types of supports and tools needed to help women heal post-trauma and enable them to participate in society as independent and empowered citizens including the roles of families, support staff, counselling and safe houses in reintegration. In this chapter, Freedom Businesses are suggested as a long-term reintegration strategy to support people who have been trafficked through providing community, supports and an income. The final chapter provides a summary of recommendations and proposes areas in need of future research and data collection. The conclusion includes the researcher’s personal reflection on the issue of human trafficking. Unconventionally, rather than presenting a single chapter with all theories used in this study, framing theories are presented within chapters, analysing the data and presenting findings.

Chapter 2: Background

Literature on human trafficking globally, in Canada and in India highlights the importance of this research study. Articles, books and reports on human trafficking demonstrate the need to combat the issue from many fronts, yet, interdisciplinary research on human trafficking is lacking and more accurate data is needed. This chapter presents an overview of human trafficking globally. Additional literature and secondary research are presented throughout this chapter to support the data that is presented.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is often referred to as modern day slavery. Most people in the North American context believe slavery was abolished years ago but in fact, there are more people in forced labour today than any time before. Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in the world. “Transnational criminals have been major beneficiaries of globalization. Human smuggling and trafficking have been among the fastest growing forms of transnational crime because current world conditions have created increased demand and supply” (Shelley, 2010, p. 2). These current world conditions include more connectedness and easier access to services through globalization.

Social media, the Internet and the rise of pornography contribute to an increase in human trafficking. The University of New England reports that one out of twenty men in the United States have bought sex online (Ahmad, n.d.). It is also reported that 73% of women who were trafficked were advertised online (n.d.). A professor of sociology and women’s studies at Wheelock College in Boston, Massachusetts, self-identified radical feminist, and a leading anti-porn scholar, Gail Dines argues that “the dominant images and stories disseminated by the multibillion-dollar pornography industry promotes and legitimizes a gender system that

undermines equality and encourages violence against women” (Gail Dines, 2009) which includes commercial sexual exploitation. The perpetual sexualization of girls in society is contributing to the growth of human trafficking. “The sexualization of girls may not only reflect sexist attitudes, a societal tolerance of sexual violence, and the exploitation of girls and women but may also contribute to these phenomena” (American Psychological Association, 2007, p. 2). Media also shapes the way girls understand their role in society. “Frequent exposure to media images that sexualize girls and women may affect how girls conceptualize femininity and sexuality, leading them to accept more constrained and stereotypical notions about gender roles and sexual roles (i.e., that women are sexual objects)” (American Psychological Association, 2007, 2007, p. 26). Gender inequalities are at the root of human trafficking. Sexual exploitation is another manifestation of patriarchy where men control and have power over women through trafficking. The buyers also reproduce inequalities through viewing women as a commodity and sexual object that can be purchased for their pleasure.

Human trafficking is a lucrative business. It’s a multi-billion-dollar industry (Braun, 2017). The number of convictions of human trafficking is low. Women are often coerced into trafficking and are emotionally attached to their trafficker. Fear, intimidation, love, confusion, deception and other emotions can interfere with prosecution and the criminal justice system because the trafficked person is needed to testify, relive their trauma, and confront their abuser (who may be a family member, husband, partner or friend). The psychological effects of trafficking can result in Stockholm Syndrome⁵. The lure of quick financial gain, coupled with a low conviction rate, are push factors for the increase in number of trafficked persons around the

⁵ Stockholm Syndrome is a “psychological response wherein a captive begins to identify closely with his or her captors, as well as with their agenda and demands” (Lambert, L. (2017, November 09). Stockholm syndrome. Retrieved April 06, 2018, from <https://www.britannica.com/science/Stockholm-syndrome>)

world. Due to the hidden and secretive nature of sexual exploitation, the true scale of the issue is unknown. “The question of the magnitude of the trafficking problem - that is, how many victims there are - is hotly debated as there is no methodologically sound available estimate” (Teixeira, 2018).

Human Trafficking in Canada

The trafficking of persons is a growing problem in Canada. Over ninety percent of people who are trafficked in Canada are from within Canada’s borders (‘Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2014b, p. 12). The most common recruitment age in Canada is thirteen or fourteen years old (2014b, p. 24). As already noted, my mother’s best friend ran away from her home in Eastern Ontario at the age of eleven. A rural family took care of her for a few months after which, they sold her to a sex trafficker. Fifty years ago, young girls were sold for sexual exploitation in Canada. Today, the issue is not only ongoing but also growing. The Canadian Government defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/ or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in order to exploit that person, typically through sexual exploitation or forced labour” (Government of Canada, 2012, p. 4). A National Action Plan was established in 2012 on human trafficking in Canada. The concluding chapter of this paper examines the vulnerabilities that make an individual prone to human trafficking in the Canadian context. The conclusion also examines existing Canadian education and training supports post-trafficking, shelter homes and Freedom Businesses. Recommendations for how Canada should approach the trafficking of persons within its borders are presented.

Human Trafficking in India

Human trafficking in India is growing exponentially. “According to the Walk Free Foundation Global Slavery Index 2014, India is home to an estimated 14 million victims of

human trafficking, including victims of sex trafficking, bonded labour, child labour, domestic servitude and forced marriage” (Vidushy, 2016, p. 168). Human trafficking has increased by fifty-nine percent from 2010 to 2014 (Vidushy, 2016, p. 170). It is against the law to traffic a man, woman, or child in India. “Under the new section 370 of the Indian Penal Code, trafficking of persons for ‘physical exploitation or any form of sexual exploitation, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude and the forced removal of organs’ is prohibited” (Vidushy, 2016, p. 168). However, this law is rarely enforced and as a result, the crime continues to grow drastically. “Constitutions of India guarantee the equal rights of men and women, but they are often merely rhetoric when it comes to the question of practical implementation” (Vidushy, 2016, p. 171). Further, very few criminals are convicted for exploiting others through human trafficking. “A few dozen criminals are convicted each year, but these numbers are deeply inadequate relative to the over two hundred thousand sex slaves in India. It is difficult to comprehend the absence of proactive measures...to liberate the country’s sex slaves when it is so easy to walk into brothels...and find them” (Kara, 2017, p. 79).

The eastern state of Western Bengal, where Kolkata is situated, is home to the highest number of trafficked children and women (Bhalla, 2017) and Kolkata is well known for the sex trafficking of women and children (Shamim, 2010, p. 48). Vimal Vidusy notes preventative measures in his article *Human Trafficking In India: An Analysis* (2016), which includes “Developing programmes that offer livelihood options and include basic education, literacy, communication and other skills, and reduce barriers to entrepreneurship” (p. 170). In addition, supports are needed to help individuals who have exited the trade from being re-trafficked.

“The major problem...faced by the poor families in India is the members' limited ability to communicate outside their place of residence. Many of them are illiterate—cannot read

or write. So they depend on others for sending letters or making a phone call to their relatives. Often the guardians of law do not support the victims. It has often been alleged that police harass the victims more than those who have committed the crime. All these limitations not only make the socially and economically deprived sections of society vulnerable to trafficking, but also explain why re-trafficking is so rampant in our society.” (Vidushy, 2016, p. 169).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework and process as well as the researcher's positioning. It provides an overview of the study participants and provides a process overview of each interview that was conducted. It also explores the study's methodological challenges and triumphs and includes an analysis of cross-cultural service learning and expectations. The interview process including planning, consent, research questions, conflict of interest, translation and physical environment, are presented to better understand the research process and help prepare future students who are engaging in cross-cultural research.

Methodological Framework

Narrative inquiry was the lens through which I collected the stories of women who had been trafficked and through which I hoped to share their experiences authentically. Anderson (1997) defines narrative inquiry as “a form of discourse, the discursive way in which we organize, account for, give meaning to, and understand, that is, give structure and coherence to, the circumstances and events in our lives, to the fragments of our experiences, and to our self-identities, for and with ourselves and others” (p. 212). In other words, “Narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1). The narrative is a methodology that has helped me understand the relationship between human trafficking, socio-economic barriers, gender and education. Through hearing, recording and analyzing the stories of research participants in Kolkata, India it also revealed the kinds of supports systems that are successful post-trafficking. Interview questions were framed in a way that allowed participants to share their experiences of injustice and exploitation.

The participants in the study have lived through traumatic life circumstances. According to Wells 2011, “Storytelling is central to recovery from many of life’s afflictions” (p. 11). This narrative lens provided an opportunity for individuals who have been trafficked to recount their past, which could serve as an important step for them in the recovering process. N., Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2009) note that “the recovery from trauma begins with the finding of words and of a story about what happened; ‘translating’ trauma into the structure of a language and a narrative is a way of bringing order and coherence into the chaotic experience” (p. 15). Further, in the chapter, “Self: Narrative, Identity, and Agency”, Anderson (1997) highlights that narrative can be the source of transformation (p. 213). This role of the narrative was affirmed by participant #5 in her interview. She shared, “I was scared about this interview. I was thinking, ‘what will they ask?’ But now I am feeling good. It was good. Nothing was there to feel bad or emotional. Nothing like that happened. I feel good.” The participant felt a positive emotional response after the completion of the interview. In addition, narrative inquiry was used with the intention that the telling of these stories may have facilitated a healing process for the participants involved; it was used because of its potential to provide teaching tools to raise awareness and make positive changes. “...In the context of research, what makes [stories] noteworthy is their educational value. Unlike many of the stories we meet elsewhere, those we read and hear in the teaching and learning context are usually intended to help us learn – either directly about the subject matter of instruction or, alternatively, about the strengths or shortcomings of the teaching itself. This fundamental link of narrative with teaching and learning as human activities directly points to its value as an educational research tool” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 15). This research, conducted through the lens of narrative inquiry, has implications for teaching and learning as the stories can help identify important lessons to

consider in the field of education. Further, this learning is important in the context of this study because, as it will be shown later, women are typically at the receiving end of the violence that often necessitates healing, stories of learning and strength. In this instance, I agree with Dlamini's assertion of the responsibility of scholars to focus on a gender-based lens in inquiry. She notes, "When we as women intellectuals begin to invest meaning in women's silence, their narrations of remembered violence are transformed to a level through which we, together with other women, can engage in a process of sharing the strategies of coping and tools of reinventing within the unjust world we daily occupy" (Dlamini, 2006 p. 41). In summary, narrative inquiry allowed me to gain deeper understanding to answer the proposed research questions through hearing the participants' life stories. Furthermore, narrative inquiry was crucial to meet one of the intended goals of the research, which is to use the data as an educational tool to raise awareness, to provide resources for skills training and possibly provide lessons for Canada in this area.

Researcher Positioning

As a researcher and an outsider to Kolkata, I had to be aware of how my identity as a white, Christian, woman from a western country and culture influences my perspectives on community, social and economic life because "'race', ethnicity, and religious affiliation...can also set limits and pose problems...the ethnicity and religious affiliation of the ethnographer can be an important factor in the establishment of field relations" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 75). In preparation for this research project, I had to think critically about the ways in which religion influences my motivations as a researcher. Christian values and beliefs are an integral part of who I am. It is not possible to separate a core aspect of self while in the role of researcher, however, one can be cognisant of and attentive to biases that could influence the research

process. I had to ensure that my belief system was not projected to participants and I had to continually examine how my motivation was linked to my faith. This was a difficult task and continues to be an ongoing struggle. In a culture where the Christian faith is becoming taboo in secular circles, how do I demonstrate that I can, and I am engaging in respectful research? How do I reconcile that my motivation to learn from, empower and help others derives from following the example of Jesus Christ? From my perspective, this motivation helps rather than hinders ethical research. Yet, following Dlamini 2012, I continue to ask if it is possible to maintain one's beliefs without engaging in colonial practices. This is especially important in a context like India, where Britain imposed laws, remodelled education, and promoted conversion to Christianity through colonial rule (Marshall, 2011). Post-colonial rule, India is still affected by the many negative ramifications of colonialism. "...directly ruled areas lag behind the availability of public goods such as schools, health facilities, and roads in the postcolonial period, with adverse consequences for development outcomes such as poverty and infant mortality rates" (Iyer, 2010, p. 709).

The article "What Does a Decolonizing/Decentralizing Methodology in Examining Sexual Lives Entail?" highlights the importance of "identifying practices of domination and subordination..." (Dlamini et al., 2012, p. 67) that could undermine the integrity of a research project. My position as a researcher and white woman was taken into account before, during and after conducting my research. Recognizing the ways in which my upbringing, worldview, culture and education could implicate the research process was essential throughout fieldwork and data analysis to discover meanings that are mutual and to prepare to respectfully engage in research. "Decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the

underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices” (Smith, 2012, p. 20). Readings on human trafficking were supplemented with post-colonial theory to evaluate my intentions and myself as a researcher.

Methodology- Steps

The study was conducted in Kolkata, India at a shelter home, Mahima Home, and at a NGO in Basirhat entitled, the Andanda Institute⁶. Mahima has four different shelters. Two are for women and girls who have been trafficked. One is for women over the age of eighteen and the other is for minors. The other two shelters are preventative and house children whose mothers are trafficked. All of the shelters provide food, clothing, legal support, housing, access to education, funds for books, counselling, personal hygiene, medical care and arrange special outings. The Andanda Institute provides services to women and girls in the community. It helps individuals who have been trafficked file a court case if desired, provides counselling support, and helps raise awareness through sharing information within local schools. The institute also provides women and girls with support through helping them find and apply for grants that enable them to continue their studies, tutoring and financial assistance for books.

Twelve qualitative interviews were conducted and where possible, the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Two of the twelve participants requested that their interviews not be audio recorded. The notes for one of these interviews were hand-written and the other interview was recorded through typing notes on a laptop computer. Nonverbal communication and features of speech, as well as perceptions of the interview process were recorded through field notes during the interviews.

⁶ Pseudonym has been used for this NGO.

The owners of local organizations and people who support women who were formerly trafficked were also interviewed about the resources needed to help with community reintegration and post-trauma healing. Through these interactions, the importance of Freedom Businesses⁷ as a platform for supporting and educating women who have been trafficked became evident (see Chapter 8). The individuals were asked about education and human trafficking, and about the role of skills development and vocational training in reintegration.

In addition to the qualitative interviews, an in-depth literature review on human trafficking was conducted. The literature review included articles, chapters, journals, textbooks and reports. The texts focused on the themes of social class, gender equity, colonization, and access to education to better understand the risks associated with human trafficking. Literature on human trafficking globally as well as within Canada and India was examined. This literature review provides important background information to contextualize this study.

Recruiting Participants

Participants were recruited using the snow-ball technique, which “consists of identifying respondents who are then used to refer researchers on to other respondents” (Atkinson and Flint, 2001, p. 1). This sampling technique is beneficial for qualitative research studies and particularly, when the nature of research involves marginalized or stigmatized groups of individuals such as sex workers (Atkinson and Flint, 2001, p.2).

Initially, an Indian contact arranged for a meeting between myself and the Director of Justice Initiatives, Mahima India, who then gave permission for the women in the adult shelter home to participate in the study, upon their consent. A second meeting was held between myself,

⁷ “A business that exists to fight against human trafficking and commercial exploitation” (Freedom Business Alliance, n.d.)

the Director of Justice Initiatives, the Director of the shelter home, and the women in the home who had been trafficked. We introduced ourselves, discussed the purpose of the study, as well as the consent and interview process. This meeting was facilitated in Bengali by the Director of Justice Initiatives, Mahima. After this meeting, one of the women residing in the shelter home offered to show me the home and its premises. She showed me her bedroom and a photo of her with her a sister. One of the women showed me some of the items she had made through sewing. These informal interactions helped create comradery between the participants and myself. Eight women in this shelter home chose to participate in the study. Three different women helped with translation during the interviews. The interviews took place over the course of three days. The three interviews that were conducted on the first day were translated by the Director of the shelter home and a Care Taker. The translation for interviews #4-6 was supported by a Counsellor. Interviews #7 and #8 were translated by the Care Taker that assisted on the first day of interviews.

The second set of interviews took place in Basirhat, a two-hour train ride outside of Kolkata. A local Indian contact connected me with a front-line worker who is responsible for tracking down traffickers, prosecuting them through the court system, and rescuing women. The front-like worker arranged for five interviews with individuals who had been trafficked and were receiving support and services from Andanda Institute. One of the participants withdrew from the study due to illness. Facilitated through Bengali, which was immediately translated to me into English, four interviews were completed at this location. The translator was a man who I had met through service learning with a NGO in Kolkata. He had accompanied me to the interview site for safety. The women staff who worked at Andanda did not speak English well enough to provide translation services, so he was asked to help with the interviews by the front-line worker.

Participant Overview

#	Location of interview	Birthplace	Age	Education Level	Trafficker	Age Trafficked	Trafficked Location
1	Mahima	Bagnar, West Bengal	18	Class 4	Unknown	Unknown	Kolkata
2	Mahima	Bangladesh	Unknown ⁸	1.5 years (Class 1 to first semester of Class 2)	Friend of a co-worker. Co-worker is female. Friend of co-worker is male.	She arrived at Mahima on May 4, 2016.	Kolkata
3	Mahima	South 24 Parganas, West Bengal	20	Class 5	Stranger. (Searching for work) Female trafficker.	Unknown	Kolkata
4	Mahima	Mumbai	20	Started school at age of 18	Unknown	Prior to age 15. She arrived at Mahima June 23, 2017.	Unknown
5	Mahima	Kolkata	24	Currently in College	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Mahima	South 24 Praganas, West Bengal	21	Class 4	Women. Domestic Servitude	Arrived at Mahima April 31, 2010. Trafficked 14 and under.	Delhi
7	Mahima	Kolkata	18	4	Potentially Husband (married at age 12)	She arrived in Mahima March 2016 from another home. Trafficked 17 and under.	Sonagachi, Kolkata

⁸ The participant does not know her date of birth

8	Mahima ⁹	<i>Kolkata</i>	19 ¹⁰	Left school in Grade 2	Unsure	Arrived at Mahima in 2012 from All Bengal Home.	Unsure
9	Andanda	<i>Patricata Village</i>	21	Grade 5	Husband	Between 14-15	Mumbai
10 ¹¹	Andanda	<i>West Bengal</i>	14	Currently in Grade 9	Dance Teacher (male)	13	Bahart (another state)
11	Andanda	Basirhat	16	Currently in Grade 9	Stranger (women) School friends may have been involved in trafficking	14	Kolkata
12	Andanda	<i>Viamnnagar</i>	22	Currently studying at College	Relative	14	Unknown

Interview Space, Language and Power

Mahima Home

Interview #1.

The first interview took place in a small meeting room. The interview was recorded through hand-written notes, which set limitations to the interview process, as it was more difficult to observe behaviour and think of follow-up questions as I was transcribing in real-time. Two different women took turns translating. One of these women was the Director of the adult shelter home and the other was a Care Taker. Sometimes both of the women were in the room, and at other times only one of the women was in the room.

⁹ There is no clear data that I found as to whether or not participant was trafficked.

¹⁰ I am still not convinced that this is her “true” age but given that she lives in adult after-care home (intended for girls over the age of 18) and wanted to participate, I went ahead with the interview. Within the interview, the participant’s age changed multiple times and her year of birth also changed.

¹¹ Participant was trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation where she was forced to dance in bars against her will.

Interview #2 and #3.

Interviews #2 and #3 took place in an office. The Director of the home asked the questions. The Care Taker was also in the interview room. Both the Director and the Care Taker of the home had a relationship with the participants outside of the interviews. They knew personal information about the participants, including their trauma stories. In addition, the women in the interview room had a role of authority, which may have impacted the participant's responses to the questions. During the interviews, the Director would occasionally gesture to stop the participant from responding in an effort to shorten the interview process. I knew this was the reason because several times the translator said to me "What she is saying is too long." The concept of story-telling and sharing as much or as little as a participant desired was compromised as the translator exerted their authority during the interview process. This type of challenge was difficult to mitigate and is discussed further in methodological challenges and triumphs.

After the first three interviews, I was concerned with the clarity of the consent process and how much the participants understood about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of the interviews. The participants were given an overview of the study and the consent process but since all was explained through a translator, I could not be sure of the information they were provided. In addition, since the consent process had been translated by an authority figure within the home, thus I was concerned about any potential undue influence. Upon arriving to the home on the second day, I asked the translator if she could verify that the women who had participated in the first three interviews understood the consent process and that they would like their interview to be included in the study.¹² The translator confirmed that they were explained everything during their interview and consented to participate.

¹² To the best of my knowledge, given the language barriers, all interviews conducted were done with trust and followed ethical protocols and considerations.

Interview #4-6.

Interviews #4, #5 and #6 took place in the small meeting room. The translator was a Counsellor at the home. She had only visited the home once prior to my arrival; thus, she had a more distant relationship from the participants in comparison to the relationship between the translators and participants in interviews #1-#3, which likely reduced any undue influence on the interview process such as power or conflict of interest. The Counsellor allowed me to go through the consent process in detail with each participant where she provided ongoing translation. In addition, the Counsellor used a number of gestures, verbal cues and facial expressions during the interview to make the participants feel safe, understood and comforted. Comparatively, this helped create a more conversational atmosphere and allowed the interview process to be conducted less formally.

Interview #7-8.

Interviews #7 and #8 were conducted in an office. The Care Taker of the home supported translation. The seventh interview was recorded through typing on my personal laptop. I could understand in Bengali that the translator gave the participant a choice of how the interview was recorded: audio recording or note-taking. The participant was asked whether she preferred to be audio recorded or to have notes taken. The participant articulated that she preferred note-taking and offered her consent. Typing the interview allowed me to observe and transcribe simultaneously and helped me consider follow-up questions more readily. The participant had a doctor's appointment and as a result, the end of the interview was rushed. The eighth and final interview at Mahima home was audio recorded and consent and translation were conducted in similar ways to participant #7.

The Andanda Institute

Before beginning interviews at the Andanda Institute, I met with two of their female staff members, the man who was my front-line contact in Basirhat, and my translator¹³ to prepare for the interviews and explain the consent process. During this meeting, I was advised that one of the women had to stay in the interview room in case the participants needed support. They were both administrative workers, so I did not see a conflict of interest at the time. However, as the interviews proceeded it began to be difficult to control who was in the interview room as colleagues of the administrative staff would enter the space to bring chai and biscuits, check their charging cell-phone or ask questions. There were a number of interferences with the interview process, which will be discussed below.

Interview #9.

The ninth interview included the participant, two women from the local NGO, the translator and myself. When the interview began, I noticed that the NGO staff were taking notes. Neither spoke English, which made it difficult to communicate the research ethic protocols to them. Through the translator, I asked them why they were taking notes. They indicated that they needed to take notes because they did not have the participant's case on file yet. The participant appeared to be okay with this and in addition, she was in a lot of distress when she arrived, so she was in need of their support. Due to these reasons, I did not press the matter any further and made the choice of proceeding with the interview. During the interview, one of the women frequently interjected and asked questions. Dialogue in Bengali was not always translated to English, which was frustrating at times for me as a researcher, however; in reflecting, it is possible that these women who were taking the time and notes in order to gain more information

¹³ The man who translated the interviews at Andanda was an acquaintance I had met through service learning with a NGO in Kolkata. He accompanied me to the interviews as a safety precaution and was asked by the front-line worker in Basirhat to provide translation.

about the participant, might have been conscious of the limits of having her re-tell her story to them at a later stage, thus, to avoid this, they observed my interview with her.

Interview #10.

Interview #10 began with the participant, two of the NGO staff (both women), the translator and I in the interview room. Part way through the interview, one of the women left. Afterwards, a front-line worker came into the interview room and interrupted the process. He interjected himself into the dialogue, sat at the table where we were conducting the interview and began to tell me information about the participant and her story. This front-line worker had been involved in her investigation and helped rescue the participant. After a few minutes, I explained to the front-line worker that it was important for the participant to share her story from her perspective and I invited him to share his story with me after the interview had concluded. He seemed okay with this suggestion and left the room after this conversation. In this particular case, I determined that this interruption was too big of a risk and I foresaw that it could have a negative impact on the participant's ability to speak freely. I successfully interjected in an effort to protect the participant and the interview process. The interview finished with the participant, one of the NGO women staff members, the translator and myself.

Interview #11.

During interview #11, a male social worker was present. He had entered the interview room to sign the consent form as a guardian of the participant because she was under the age of 18. The participant asked the man to leave the room a quarter of the way through the interview process because she did not feel comfortable with him present while responding to one of the questions framed around gender inequality. Even though I am grateful that she felt confident to interject in the process to ensure she felt secure, I feel that I failed in my role as a researcher. What if she did not ask the male to leave the room? Would the interview have been

compromised and responses influenced by the closeness of their relationship? How could I have respectfully enforced research ethic procedures more carefully? Is it possible to be assertive in a foreign culture as an outsider without reinforcing patriarchal and colonial ideas? These are some questions that arise from this example.

Interview #12.

Interview #12 included the participant, one staff member from the NGO, the translator and myself. After approximately one hour had passed, we were informed that the interview had to be completed in five minutes in order for the translator and myself to catch the final train back into Kolkata. As a result, the interview ended abruptly and some of the interview questions were not asked. The participant indicated her disappointment that she did not have more time for the interview.

Methodological Challenges and Triumphs

Conducting research involves planning; there must be a level of certainty prior to fieldwork in order to write a proposal and complete the research ethics process. But does the planning required accurately capture what takes place on the ground? Can it? Are student researchers prepared for the unexpected and are they adequately informed about ways to respond to interruptions in the data collection process? This section of methodology is an attempt to capture challenges and triumphs of transferring the research plan into action. Reflecting on methodology can bring forward important insights in order to help other researchers mitigate risks and in addition, consider more thoughtfully the practices that the West has to implement in order to ensure research is ethical. Put differently, through examining both the difficulties and successes in a cross-cultural setting, the intended goal is that this will contribute to knowledge and help prepare new researchers who feel inadequately prepared to engage in such a task.

Cross-Cultural Implications: Service Learning

As a foreigner in India, my research entailed recognizing my position as a researcher and possible research implications, understanding Eastern cultural practices, and submitting to other ways of knowing. One way in which this was accomplished during this study was through service learning with a NGO in Kolkata. Service learning is a powerful tool that can build students who have the ability to empathize with others. In order to have education that does not merely cross borders but constructs bridges, educational professionals that are involved in research need immersive experience in “other” cultures. “Educative service learning experiences will increase knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity” for students who are working with diverse groups of people (Bringle 112). Cross-cultural immersive experience is an essential component to decolonizing one’s mind. Experiential education has the ability to create caring global citizens who empathize with others. Researchers who submit to local knowledge¹⁴, ways of understanding and local cultural practices will develop stronger and more sustainable relationships with the people they are working with. Service learning was beneficial to this research study and the work that I did in India, but it also had its limitations.

There are several research studies that have been conducted and inform the outcomes of service learning programs. These include: academic performance, civic engagement, skill development and competencies, workplace experience, understanding of non-profit management and governance, and career development (Gemmell et al. 5). According to this research, the benefit for students goes beyond their performance and abilities. Service learning can have an effect on students’ character. “Some service learning experiences, especially those involving face-to-face interactions, are likely to have an effect on empathy” (Bringle 90). Service learning

¹⁴ Acknowledge the legitimacy of the beliefs that are not one’s own

provides an opportunity for students to better understand the life circumstances and challenges experienced by other people. Specifically, being immersed in a foreign culture exposes students to new ways of thinking and challenges their preconceived notions through the interactions and learnings from working alongside people in an unfamiliar setting. Service-learning encourages researchers and students to work alongside, learn from and empower communities. Regardless of benefits, it must also be noted that service learning can be harmful and reinforce colonial ideologies. “Marc Epprecht’s...examination of work-study abroad courses...challenges the rigour of these programs, particularly in terms of addressing ethical issues around who gains and who loses. His findings suggest that IDS¹⁵ work-study abroad programs may do more harm than good for both Canadians and the partners in less developed countries if the profit flows only or predominantly north-ward” (Epprecht and Tiessen, 4). Service learning must be accompanied with education and an understanding of decolonizing methodologies.

During the research trip to India, I spent every day working alongside and supporting a NGO in Kolkata. This NGO supports community development in five locations; four of which are villages on the outskirts of the city. Community development includes: health, education, food and nutrition, recreation and spiritual well-being. Child sponsorship helps provide the basic necessities for children in these villages, including food, clothing and education. The women are provided with training, such as sewing, and the NGO is helping the women begin a business. The NGO provides crucial social services that fulfill the needs of the community. It has helped enhance the quality of life for people who reside in these communities. On my second day in India, I helped with the distribution of blankets in one of the villages. In the evening, I observed a nutrition distribution to the women in a different village. Afterwards, I participated in an

¹⁵ International Development Studies

evening class for high school students where they created skits in groups that emphasized the concept of forgiveness and equality. This type of daily activity became a regular part of my stay in India. From attending a local church on Sunday mornings, to participating in community development initiatives, to working in an office among local Indians, I was immersed in the culture. Each day I observed the behaviour of others, interactions between people and paid close attention to societal norms such as the role of women and men. Each day, my daily experiences would challenge my assumed constraints and shape my thoughts and behaviour. Through service learning, I was able to better understand and submit to the culture. I could question the way I understood the world and ask how it is I came to believe and see things the way that I did. Service learning enabled me to learn in an intimate way and allowed my thoughts to be moulded and transformed on a daily basis.

In addition, service learning developed empathy in me as a researcher, which is key to relating to research participants and listening to their experiences authentically. For example, through working in the office most days, I came to learn that one of the girls in the village we frequently visited had almost been trafficked. A month earlier, she had been drugged by a stranger and woke up on a train. Fortunately, she escaped and was brought to a police station where she was reunited with her family. The next time I saw this ten-year-old girl, she beamed at me with a bright smile and greeted me with a local handshake. We interacted with one another in the best way we knew how, which meant communicating with my limited Bengali vocabulary and the English words she had rehearsed at school. Knowing this girl's story and the vulnerability she and the other young women in her community face evoked empathy in me. I would have never had this encounter or gained this knowledge without engaging in community development activities. Service learning shaped me through impactful interactions like this,

which allowed me to better understand my participants in order to conduct research respectfully. It helped lessen the gap between textbook knowledge and real-life experiences; through observation and community service I gained empathy.

Building sensitivity in researchers coupled with decolonizing one's mind is of vital importance. I continue to check my motivations for engaging in cross-cultural research. I can never stop questioning my intentions. Researching cross-cultural communities needs to be conducted through grass root models where the local community's voice is not only heard but the rudder of any research initiative. Service learning coupled with literature and decolonizing methodologies, shapes researchers to more sensitively engage with their research subjects. The role of the outsider, researching an unfamiliar culture or setting, is to work alongside the local people, support them when asked, and commit to maintaining a long-term partnership to create sustainable change.

Cross-Cultural Implications: Expectations

Researching in an unfamiliar environment can result in divergences of expectations. My understanding of planning and processes was continually at odds with the culture in which I was immersed. As I embarked on my research, it became clear that the West's understanding of ethical research practices was sometimes misaligned with Eastern cultures. Decolonizing of the mind included how I responded to situations when faced with diverse cultural norms and outcomes that were different than what is expected by my university. How do you engage in research respectfully when the protocols you are required to follow jeopardize the authenticity of interactions and impose on the foreign culture itself? Choices had to be made. Decision-making and exercising judgment became a crucial part of the data collection process.

Interview Process:***Planning***

On the ground in India, the planning of research data collection was unexpected and full of uncertainty. I was continually challenged to be flexible and to let go of my Western scheduling agenda. Decolonizing the mind included unpacking my way of understanding how meetings, visits and interviews would be scheduled. I had anticipated conducting one interview per day over a number of days. During my first visit to Mahima, I was asked to conduct 3 interviews in a row. While visiting Basirhat, I was scheduled to conduct 5 interviews within one day; four hours of which were needed to travel to and from Kolkata by train. Planning the interviews was challenging because I was dependent on my local contacts. I had to trust them...trust their process; and, knowing that my entire fieldwork was dependent on their support. I was not in control nor was I in any position to have control over the scheduling situation. This frightening but important reflection is central to understanding the importance of building authentic relationships with locals, rooted in decolonizing methods, and the notion of the outsider submitting to another culture in order to engage in meaningful cross-cultural research process. In addition, this lack of control was combined with a feeling of being a burden to my local contacts, which was paralleled by another feeling of a need for support. I felt vulnerable and powerless because I was completely dependent on others. I could not travel to field sites alone for safety reasons. On my own, I did not have the connections needed to find and invite women who had been trafficked. I did not know the language; therefore, I depended on translation. I had to daily surrender my expectations and my understanding of how to plan, schedule and conduct interviews. The result of this process was far more than rewarding. I had set out with a goal of conducting 6 interviews. By the end of my research trip, I had conducted double the anticipated number. Furthermore, through service learning, dialogue, and experience,

I acquired more than I could have ever imagined. As indicated in my acknowledgements, I am indebted to the many local Indians who gave up their time in order to support this research and guide me as an outsider in their home country.

Consent

Informed consent is required to ensure that the participant is fully informed and has the ability to demonstrate their autonomy. According to the Government of Canada, “the term ‘consent’ means ‘free, informed and ongoing consent’” (2018). Here, I do not want to question the importance of consent but to question the way in which consent is obtained, how the West defines who is in a position to give consent and who is not, and implications conducting research in ‘other’ cultures. The process of consent needs to be re-examined through the lens of cross-cultural research, in order to respectfully engage with participants on their terms, not ours.

I spent time discussing the interview format and consent process with my local contact in India. During the first week of my research trip, he recommended that I forgo the formal consent process. He advised that it would invoke fear in the participants due to the formality and documentation involved. I felt bound by the research ethics protocols and made the decision to move forward with the consent process as planned.

When translating the consent process to the participants, it was not possible for me to ensure that every section was accurately conveyed to the participants. Since there are at least 22 languages spoken in India, the consent form could not be translated into the participants’ native language before the trip, as it was unclear what language the participants would be speaking. In a foreign country, some sections of the ethics form seemed irrelevant, such as the contact

information of my university, or contact information for local supports¹⁶ when the location of the interview was in a rehabilitation shelter home or in a NGO with social workers present. The length and wordiness of both the oral consent scripts and written consent script seemed overbearing. Both the translators and participants appeared to be disenchanted with the consent process and unclear why such detailed consent was required. The consent process is regarded as a highly valued and an important step within research ethics procedures in North America. When describing its importance in the best way I knew how, it did not seem to resonate or be appropriate within the cultural context. From a Western perspective, verbal consent is seen as a last resort. But when signing documents invokes fear or misunderstanding with participants, is this the best option? When working within an oral culture, where consent, story-telling and trust is shared through speaking would a conversation about consent be the most appropriate? How can the consent process be respectful and protect the participant, without awkwardly clashing with a foreign culture? "...obtaining informed consent is important, but our experience in this study suggests that the actual process as defined by the various organizations can lead to difficulties that promote mistrust. The formal processes that have been mandated to protect human subjects under all circumstances may, in fact, create barriers to research in cross-cultural settings and may discourage participation unless sufficient attention is given to ensuring that both translations and cross-cultural communications are effective" (McCabe et al, 2005, p. 303). Alternative approaches to obtaining consent must be considered to reduce barriers to research yet, protect participants by following an ethical protocol.

¹⁶ The local supports that would have been provided include the name and contact information of counselling agencies in Kolkata.

Other challenges arose from the consent process. When researching in cross-cultural contexts, we must challenge the way that the West defines childhood and the rights of children. This definition does not align with the lived realities of participants and is nonsensical to foreign communities like those I spent time in during my visit to India. Many individuals are unaware of their birth dates. Four out of the twelve participants interviewed did not know their birth dates. Age is not a matter of fact in many cases. I was never confident that a participant was over the age of eighteen. Does ethically responsible research require that I ask women who believe they are twenty-one but unsure of their date of birth, to get a guardian to sign on their behalf? In the context of the interviews I conducted, this would have seemed unfamiliar, offensive and would have led to mistrust. Due to these risks, I did not pursue additional means of consent when birth dates were unknown. Again, this calls into question the age at which consent is obtained and how it is documented.

In addition, I had planned to interview participants over the age of eighteen in order to circumvent the complexities of researching minors. Due to circumstance outside of my control, I was placed in a situation where I had to decide whether to proceed with an interview or not because the girl sitting in-front of me was a minor. During the interviews at the NGO in Bashirat, two of the participants were minors (14 and 16 years of age). I was not aware that they were minors until the interview process had already begun and they shared their dates of birth. These two girls had travelled a long way to participate and were keen to share their story. The women at the NGO directed me that social workers could sign as their guardian. In reflecting on this suggestion, I recalled that some of the participant's families are not aware that the girls were trafficked, so the social worker often takes on the role of guardianship. Based on this knowledge, that the girls had willingly travelled to the location to participate and that social workers were

often given authority within the cultural setting, I proceeded with the interview after the social worker signed the consent form. I am confident with this decision and still believe I made a correct judgment in this situation and therefore have included these interviews in my analysis. However, this does call into question how Canada views the age of consent, and the ability for children to provide consent for themselves. After all, post-experiences of trafficking, how can we actually say that these girls are “children” or “under age”? Furthermore, children in India are often given independence, begin working at a young age to help support the family, travel alone and have adult-like responsibilities. 47% of girls in India are married before the age of eighteen, which is Canada’s suggested age of consent. (Brides, n.d.). Are these girls’ experiences not adult-like? Are they not in a position to choose autonomously to share their stories and participate in research when they have lived in a world where they are just as grown up today as they will be in their future?

There is a need to add sensitive cultural approaches to research ethics processes where consent is viewed through the perspective of the participants and where power relations are aligned with the dynamics of a foreign community. But how can a researcher anticipate these cultural nuances without being first immersed in the culture in which they hope to conduct their study? It is most likely true that they cannot do this accurately or in a way that reflects decolonizing methodologies, without being shaped by the culture in which the participants of study are from. An approach that involves building a proposal from the ground-up and uses grassroots approaches from the onset, including the research objectives and questions, could be used to help mitigate these issues in the future. Research ethics would still need to be revisited and considered from the lens of a diametrically opposed culture to which the review board exists.

It is possible that the structure that is in place to protect participants and create means of respectfully engaging in research is in direct contrast to another's way of knowing and existing.¹⁷

Research Questions

At Mahima Home, I was restricted from asking certain interview questions. In particular, I was told not to ask the participants any questions related to their trauma-story. I was advised that if participants chose to share their story without being specifically prompted, then that was permitted. One of the research questions, *how did you arrive at Mahima Home?* often resulted in the women sharing some of the details of their trafficking experience with me. This question acted as a substitute for questions that I could not ask. Due to the request not to inquire about the participant's trafficking stories, I never asked any follow-up questions or questions of clarification related to their trauma. I did not want to cross any of the boundaries requested by the home administrator and, as a result, I was unsure of how to respond to the participants when stories related to trauma were shared. This often led to awkward transitions and created an interview and response scenario opposed to dialogue. I felt restricted in my ability to show empathy and uncertain of when to respond with words of affirmation or simply ask the next question. It was an ongoing continual struggle that I did not master. Language barriers were also a factor, but this will be explored further under translation.

Research questions did not always translate well into the cultural context and led to confusion. Questions that often resulted in confusion or responses that lacked resemblance to the intent of the question included:

- i. What is the most important lesson you have learned in life?

¹⁷ The protocols for researching indigenous communities may be more culturally sensitive.

- ii. Do you remember what the role of your mother was in your home growing up? What was your role as a daughter?
- iii. What did you think about the things you and other girls did for the home when you were growing up? Did you think they were fair/unfair?
- iv. How do men make you feel?

The question, “What is the most important lesson you have learned in life?” could have led to confusion or an unexpected response for multiple reasons. First, this is an abstract question. The majority of research participants had a low level of education. Thinking and reflecting critically are taught skills and may have not yet been acquired by the participants. Secondly, participants may have not been able to understand that the intent of the question was an open-ended reflexive question on life in general and therefore, responded in alignment with the previous questions that were specifically related to schooling and education.

The questions, “Do you remember what the role of your mother was in your home growing up? What was your role as a daughter?” often required follow-up and re-explanation including examples of what a response may include. One hypothesis for this outcome is that the question may have seemed stupid to the participants, as the answer is an obvious one, culturally speaking. Responsibilities and roles for women and girls do not vary significantly within the cultural context of India. Women provide domestic help including cooking, cleaning and caring for the family. Occasionally, women work outside the home and help support the family through finances, but this is typically the man’s primary role. Specifically naming the responsibilities of a woman may have been as strange as asking a Canadian to explain how they dress in the winter. The answer is obvious, so why is it being asked?

Similarly, the questions: “What did you think about the things you and other girls did for the home when you were growing up? Did you think they were fair/unfair?” also led to confusion or unexpected responses. As a result, I had to consider, is the concept of fairness attributed to the roles of women in Indian society? Would one even consider questioning why they are responsible for certain tasks and not others? What assumptions is this question making about the participants’ understanding of societal issues? What bias does the question present in the way it is framed? Was I expecting the participants to say it was unfair based on Western views of a women’s role in the home and the perception of domestic work as limiting? For an Indian woman, perhaps asking if the responsibilities in the home were fair or unfair is like asking a Canadian if it is fair or unfair to wear coats in the winter. It is not a fair or unfair matter to be considered or questioned: it is a way of life.

Lastly, the question “How do men make you feel?” did not translate in a way that made sense to participants. The women in the study would laugh at this question and provide gestures or responses to the translator that made it clear to me that this was a strange question to be asked. After the first three interviews, I consulted with the translator to discuss how to make this question clearer for the participants. She suggested that we change it to, “when you hear the word ‘man’ what is the first thing you think of?” We implemented this change for the remaining nine interviews and the awkward confusion subsided. The word “feel” did not translate with the intended meaning that it had in English.

How can interview questions be worded and framed in a way that reflects the culture and experiences of the participants? What can the researcher do to circumvent these methodological challenges? Collaboration and grassroot methodologies, beginning at the research proposal stage,

are required to truly create a model of research that is reflective of the participant's needs, culture and ways of knowing.

Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

Conflicts of interest in the research process were difficult to avoid and navigate. This had an impact on issues related to confidentiality. In India, dialogue is often facilitated in groups of people. As a stranger to the participants, it would be appropriate for another woman to be a part of the dialogue who is not the translator.

On the first day of interviews, a Care Taker and the Director of the home were present in addition to myself. The Director of the home translated interviews two and three. Occasionally the Care Taker would support translation. This was a less than ideal situation as only the one woman had signed the confidentiality agreement as the translator. However, I did not feel I could interject and request one of the women leave for multiple reasons; it was their space, they were supporting the translation, and they were newly acquainted with me. Interjecting would have jeopardized my trust-relationship with them, which was crucial for me to continue conducting interviews in the home over multiple days.

During the second day of interviews, a friend whom I had met during my stay in Kolkata accompanied me to the site. I had built enough rapport with her to explain the confidentiality nature of the process and I asked her to please wait outside of the interview room. I was able to comfortably and successfully maintain the confidentiality of the process and not create a conflict of interest by having another person in the interview process. This was only successful because of the following conditions: I had built a rapport with the individual and I felt that I could make the request without demonstrating power or authority, and she was a Westerner who was familiar with the consent process.

The interviews that took place in the NGO in Bashirat presented similar challenges. I tried to circumvent the confidentiality and conflict of interest issues that arose at Mahima, by being proactive and meeting with all of the staff to explain the interview and consent process. However, what unfolded did not reflect our discussion. Multiple people were present in each interview. The two women were required as a support system for the participants and their English was not strong enough to provide the translation. I had never visited the space before and everyone except the translator was unknown to me. I did not feel as though I had the authority to request any changes to the process or that I could ask anyone to leave without being ignorant or offensive. On one occasion, I did ask a man to leave the room as they were speaking on behalf of the participant and I made the judgement that their position of power was too influential and if I did not interject, that their interference would negatively impact the interviewee's participation.

Interruptions were also a normal part of the interview process. From answering telephones to closing windows, to doors bells ringing and guests being attended to, to being served chai and biscuits, the interview process was never a seamless one. I had to embrace these interruptions and be flexible in my approach to interviewing. Serving chai while a participant was sharing their trauma story with me made me feel uncomfortable and concerns of confidentiality spun through my mind, but were I in a position to ask the stranger giving me tea to leave the room? Would I have been culturally sensitive if I had done that? The participants never appeared to be bothered by the interruptions; so, is this a cultural norm that I am negatively reacting to? And if yes, is going with the flow appropriate? Is the stranger serving chai going to exploit any information that they might have overheard or are they not paying attention to the dialogue? How do you make the best judgement in foreign, unforeseen circumstances where you are an outsider? How do you respect the Western research ethic protocols without reinforcing colonial

ideas of domination and subordination through using my white power and privilege to enforce certain interview protocols? These are difficult questions that I am continuing to think about and understand how to navigate. This complexity of engaging in cross-cultural research is not easy to address.

Translation

The language barrier between the participants and myself as a researcher was a significant challenge. A translator was required in all twelve interviews. I knew enough Bengali to introduce myself and greet the participant. Some of the participants knew a few words in English. Language is key to communication and I was dependent on using translators to connect with my participants. This distance from the participant created a lack of authenticity in our interactions during the interviews. I could not react to the participant's stories in real-time. I could not provide feedback through facial expressions and utterances during their responses as I did not know what they were saying. Occasionally, the translators provided feedback to the participants which led to a dialogue opposed to a set of interview questions however; I never felt that I could respond to the participants as empathetically or authentically as desired. By the time the response was translated to me, there was already a distance from the participant themselves as the story was being shared by a third party. In addition, often I was trying to piece together the translator's responses which made it difficult for me to fully comprehend what was being said and hindered me from intuitively knowing how to react and respond. In revisiting the audio and transcriptions, I can be perceived as apathetic or perhaps even disengaged from what it being shared. The difficulty is trying to articulate the disconnect and confusion I experienced as a researcher in trying to make sense of the process, the information that was being shared, what I needed to say or ask in response and trying to determine how to do this in a genuine way. I still feel an ongoing sense of regret that I could not provide words of affirmation or emotionally

respond to the participants; but perhaps this is not my role as a researcher. And perhaps this is why deciding to have women stay within the interview room, who were known to the participants and spoke their language, was in fact the right decision regardless of confidentiality or conflict of interest concerns.

Four different people helped provide translation over the course of the twelve interviews. In an ideal scenario, the same person would have assisted with all of the interviews for consistency. At Mahima Home, the staff provided translation as they were known to the organization and provided a level of security to the participants. An outside translator would have most likely not been permitted in the home. In addition, I followed the guidance and direction of the local people and was agreeable to their suggestion of having their staff translate for me for the reasons mentioned above. Interviews #8-#12 took place in a different village through another organization, so it would not have been possible for one of the Mahima staff to support the additional interviews. This impacted my research findings as each of the translators created a different type of atmosphere through their body language and communication style. Therefore, it can be assumed that participants felt more comfortable and open to sharing with some of the translators versus others. In addition, whether the translators were known to the participant or not, could have impacted the interviews. Lastly, the translators' knowledge of both Bengali and English varied which sometimes resulted in communication challenges with either the participant or myself as the researcher.

The translator that supported interviews #9-#12 allowed the participants to share their stories freely. He frequently asked follow-up questions, without my direction, which helped create a true dialogue with the participant. The translator was a male. At first, this was concerning because the women and girls were being asked questions about their traumatic life

experiences in addition to, their views on the roles of men and women. A male translator could have created a power relationship and prevented the participants from speaking freely. However, the gender of the translator did not seem to have impacted the interview process negatively, and in comparison to the other interviews, it may have helped create more authentic responses due to the distance of the translator from the participants as they did not have many commonalities and were unknown to one another. Interestingly, this translator had difficulty communicating with participant #9. This translator is from an upper caste and highly educated. During the interview I made a hypothesis that the disconnect between the participant and translator may be a result of the way language is used within different communities in India¹⁸. My language-based hypothesis might hold true when reflecting that in some instances, after the translator spoke, one of the NGO staff who was present would often re-translate, which made it possible for the participant to understand and respond.

Physical and Environmental Constraints

Conducting research in a cross-cultural context also influenced my ability to perceive, listen, engage and record data. There were a number of environmental factors that challenged me as the interviewer. For example, during interviews #9-#12, noise from the street often prevented me from hearing clearly. This also became evident when transcribing the audio. Some of the content is inaudible due to the level of external noise. This impacted my ability to follow, interpret and respond to participants. Similarly, personal comforts and my physical state was a factor in my ability to actively engage in the interview process. Heat, hunger and occasionally, fatigue, prevented me from being one-hundred percent present in all of the interviews. For

¹⁸ Since I knew the translator for interviews #9-#12 outside of the research study, I had learned from others that he speaks a dialect used within an upper caste. I was told that he uses Bengali words that are not used in everyday communication. This information was provided to me by local Indians and peers who were studying language with him.

example, I took hand-written notes in one of the interviews that capture the difficulty I was having focusing due to my exhaustion. I recall feeling guilty in that moment for my lack of ability to stay attentive.

Time was an ongoing constraint in the interview process. I felt restricted to certain time allocations during the interviews which hindered me from allowing interviews to diverge too far from the interview questions. There were often pressures to be timely, whether real or perceived. At Mahima Home, I understood that the staff in the facility wanted as many interviews done in one day as possible. As a result, some participants were rushed through their responses and I felt uncomfortable asking follow-up questions as it would prolong the interview. In addition, I had to be accompanied by someone to and from the home. My accompaniment would either pick me up at a set time or wait for me. Both created pressure to complete interviews in a timely fashion. At the NGO in Basirhat, participants were waiting for their interview for hours in a waiting room. I was concerned for them and felt guilty for taking a long time with some of the participants as it impacted those who were waiting. This time constraint concern influenced the way I conducted interviews.

Methodology: Future Considerations

My study is an example of the limits of engaging in research for the mere purpose of getting a degree. The existing process forces students to engage in certain kinds of research methodologies because of time constraints. For example, it is not possible to travel overseas, live among, and work with local people in a foreign culture to derive research questions in developing a proposal, within a one-year graduate program. This study points to the untidiness of methodology, no matter how structured it is; that is, regardless of careful planning and ground preparations, surprises happen, which results in a messiness that is typically not at the forefront

of methodology courses. There is a need to examine the application of methodologies and to find ways to support students to engage in sustainable and grassroots approaches. To date, I still struggle to answer the question: what kind of methodologies are particularly sensitive to engage in research that promotes sustainable, equitable, and decolonized practices?

Chapter 4: Freedom Fighters

This chapter introduces the reader to each of the women and girls who participated in this research study through retelling their stories. Through this chapter I hope to show the personhood of each of the participants. Their trafficking experience together with the traumatizing and torturous situations that were imposed on them is a part of their life but does not define it. They are unique individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences. Their stories are important and need to be told. Pallavi, Unnati, Nabhitha, Mousumi, Reena, Hasina, Laboni, Moumita, Nadia, Lucia, Jayan and Jyothi have made an indelible mark on my life and I hope they do the same to the reader.

The chapter will begin with a discussion on terminology. Next, in a novel style, each of the participants' stories will be told. The stories were compiled using purposive "text mining"¹⁹. That is, transcripts were reviewed and examined for statements that provided background information about the participants, showed perceptions of gender, highlighted social circumstances such as quality of life, and provided information about their level of education. In addition, information about their trafficking experience, post-trauma supports and their goals for the future was analyzed. Pseudonyms are used throughout the chapter, which I selected based on their Hindi or Bengali meaning. These pseudonyms are also symbolic of the participants' personality, demeanour, perspectives, and aspirations; as well, they reflect the lessons that I, as a researcher learnt from and about each participant. As noted in methodology, I was restricted from asking specific questions regarding the participant's trauma stories in 8 of the 12 interviews, consequently, sometimes there are information gaps about participants' trafficking

¹⁹ "Text mining seeks to extract useful information from data sources through the identification and exploration of interesting patterns...in the unstructured textual data in the documents in these collections" (Feldman, 2007).

situations. At the end of some of the stories, I identify and discuss what I perceived to be these gaps. Yet, not all gaps and questions are a result of omitted information; therefore, I invite the reader to ask questions of these participants while keeping in mind that, as Walter Benjamin once stated, there are no original stories - every story is a retelling of something that has already been told through one's mind or in the experience itself.

Terminology

A lot of thought has been given regarding how to discuss women who have been formerly trafficked. The participants I spoke to were called victims by the staff at the local NGOs I visited. The Freedom Businesses also referred to these women as victims. In the Canadian context, the word survivor is most readily used when mentioning an individual who has gone through a traumatic experience. But words are limiting, and labels tend to exclude. When does someone stop being defined by a word? We need to pause and consider: perhaps the participants do not want to be called victims. And perhaps the participants do not want to be called survivors. As Charlotte Shane writes in her essay *Live Through This*, "...we forever wear the badge of 'survivor' (so much more 'empowering' than the word *victim*) because we are forever changed by this assault."

In reflecting on this predicament of naming, and in discussing it with others, the word overcomer surfaced. These women have not only been victim to, survived but have overcome their struggles. But when you examine the underlying principle of all of these words, they still confine the participants to a word that limits the scope of their life to a single event and disallow for their individuality and diverse experiences to be expressed. This is where the predicament lies: how do we discuss research participants respectfully but also present data and research in a way that meaningfully communicates to others? If the "buzz word" in the Canadian context

(where I want this research to be impactful and useful) is “survivor” – what do I do about the predicament of naming? To choose a word to brand the participants or to not choose a word...By not using a word, the participants’ stories might not be as readily accessed because it is not clear to society who they are. By using a word, the data may be more sought after, but are the participants being reflected respectfully in the dialogue? For this reason, I have chosen to not use one of the commonly words (victim, survivor or overcomer). The participants are women who have commonly experienced the traumatic event of trafficking, who may or may not, feel reflected in the word victim, survivor or overcomer.

A freedom business I visited, The Loyal Workshop, uses the term “freedom fighter”. The women must choose to fight for their freedom on a daily basis; therefore, this term resonated with me and became my favourite of all others that I have in my disposal. “Freedom fighter” is less experience-bound and is applicable to people of different backgrounds and practices. To some degree, it can be said that as human beings, we all are fighting for our freedom; that is, we pursue freedom of thought, expression, religion and so on. We seek freedom through the fight for social justice, equality and inclusion. For instance, the #metoo movement is fighting for freedom from patriarchal society; advocates and politicians are fighting for freedom of unjust policies; and men, women and children alike are fighting for freedom for mental health. Life requires that we fight for freedom.

Meet the Freedom Fighters

Participant 1: Pallavi [New Leaves].

My name is Pallavi and I am eighteen years old. I was born in Bagnan²⁰, West Bengal.

My father used to work in a hotel and I used to live with mother and grandmother...But I don't

²⁰ Locations may not be spelt accurately as they were determined through the researcher's interpretation of the audio recordings of the interviews.

really consider my father to be a part of my family. I feel that since I'm a girl, he doesn't like me. If I was a boy, he would have loved me and liked me. My father always wanted a son. My mother gave birth to three daughters consecutively, one after the other. He used to hit mother. He would abuse her and ill-treat her. Two years ago, mother gave birth to a son and now he doesn't hurt her anymore. My family owns a house. We don't rent a house - we own it. But I haven't been home since I was twelve years old.

One day, while visiting my aunt, she got upset with me because I didn't cook one day. She said to me, "Since you do nothing at home, I'll give you nothing to eat." She continued to say many hurtful things to me. I threatened my aunt and told her that I would go back and see my mother and father. I left her house and I went to Hola Station. A man came up to me and he asked me my name and where I was going. I answered his questions and then he said to me, "Let's go and I'll give you some food to eat." In this conversation, I showed some smartness. I told him to go away or that I would call the police. He left me alone and then another man came up to me and asked me questions about myself and offered me something to eat. I decided to go with him and we crossed a river to Kolkata on a boat. He brought me to a red-light²¹ area. At the time, I didn't know that it was a red-light area. He said to me, "If anyone asks you what you are doing here, you must tell them that you are a maid." After that, I overheard this man talking to someone and he said that I am a small girl. A woman approached me and told me that I was in a place called Sonagachi and that girls are sold here for sex. I got scared and screamed. People came to me, asked me questions and then they took me and the two men to the police station. The police interrogated me, and I stood before the judge. Afterwards, I stayed at a Welfare Shelter and then I was brought to Mahima Home.

²¹ A red light district "is an area in a city in which many brothels and commercial sex-based activities are located" (Definition, n.d.).

I got married in August 2017. I'm pregnant and will be a mother soon. I'm currently completing grade ten and I hope to finish my education. In the future, I want to be a great mother.

Discussion.

In reflecting on Pallavi's story, I wondered why the police asked her to stand in front of a judge if nothing happened to her other than she decided to go with a man and ended up in the red-light area. This led me to believe that the 'second' man that appears in the story, even if she did not end up being trafficked, may have raped her. It could also be considered that she omitted part of her story between the time she found out where she was and when people came to her and asked her questions. These could be separate events although they appear as one in her account.

Participant 2: Unnati [Progress].

I'm Unnati from Bangladesh. I'm not sure when I was born. I finished school at the end of my first semester in grade two. My father worked as a rickshaw puller and my mother used to make food and sell it in the market. We lived in a home that consisted of one cemented room with a tin roof. We could not afford to eat any meat, so most meals included rice, dahl and vegetables. My parents argued a lot over finances when I was growing up. Our family has a lot of loans that we need to repay.

I started working at a clothing factory when I was six years old. While working, I met a girl named Banhi [fire]. One day, I decided to share my family situation with Banhi. This co-worker told me about an opportunity that she was aware of that could help me make a lot of money to support my family. I could repay our loans very quickly. At the beauty parlours in India, I could earn twenty thousand rupees per month. Banhi had gone to India to work in a beauty parlour and then after working there for some time, she returned home to Bangladesh. She offered to introduce me to a boy that takes girls to India for work and then brings them back

to Bangladesh when the work is complete. She told me not to worry about passports and Visas; this boy would work everything out. I contacted this boy, Javan [deceiver], and I met him face to face. The day that I met him, he brought me to his house in Jessore and we stayed overnight there. Early in the morning after breakfast, Javan brought me to the Bangladesh border by bike and then we crossed a small stream by foot. Next, he brought me to Banga Railway Station and then to the red-light district in Kolkata.

When we arrived, it was dark outside. I could see women standing along the road in skimpy clothes and I got a sense of what was happening. I said to Javan, "I will not work. I will not work. I want to go back home...please take me back home." He replied, "Don't shout. We are not going to put you on the street like these other women. Let's go inside and I will explain everything to you." Reluctantly, I went inside, and we entered a room. Javan told me that I had to work in the flesh trade; I had no choice.

I was in the red-light area for two months and then an incident happened where I was brought to the hospital. I saw this as an opportunity to flight for my freedom and I ran away. I sought refuge in a club and I told the club members what had happened to me. They took me to the local police station. I gave a statement to the police and then I had to go back to the brothel they had kept me in and identify who had trafficked me. They arrested everyone involved and then I was taken to court.

I arrived here at Mahima Home on May 2, 2016. I've been training and receiving a stipend for my work. I have been able to send money back to my family and help them repay their loans. I've also learned how to make bags through my training. Soon, I will return to my family in Bangladesh...I really miss them. I hope to start a clothing business one day.

Discussion.

Through interacting with front line staff who support women who have been trafficked, I learnt that children and women are used to “recruit” others. Trust is more readily established in these situations, which makes it easier to traffic an individual. It is possible that Banhi never went to India but was telling a believable story to convince Unnati to go to India for work. Why did Banhi not tell Unnati directly what this ‘work’ at a beauty parlour involved? Was she aware that Javan was planning to exploit Unnati sexually? This story also causes me to question the age of her friend. As a six-year old working in an adult workplace (a garment factory) it is possible that her friend was a teenager or adult.

Participant 3: Nabhitha [Fearless].

I’m Nabhitha and I’m twenty years old. I was born in Parmati Gram, West Bengal. I studied until grade five. Growing up, my parents, sister and I lived in a mud house made of bamboo, bricks and it had a tin roof. My mom made jewellery and my father used to work in the fields.

When my father passed away, I went out to look for a job. I left my village and I went to Kolkata. I met a girl named Kapata [trickery] who told me she knows a woman that is hiring a housemaid and she gave me her contact information. I phoned the lady, whose name is Sosanamulaka [exploitive] and I told her about my interest in the position. She invited me to come to her house and when I arrived, I asked her for a drink of water because I was very thirsty. After drinking the glass of water, I became unconscious. I regained consciousness the next day, with no clothes on my body. I had been used.

Sosanamulaka told me that I have to do this kind of work and that if I will not do it, then she will go back to my village, spoil my name and kill my mother and sister. So, I was forced to work in the flesh trade. Whenever I went out somewhere, there was someone always watching

me. One day, I was rescued by the Kolkata police. They brought me to an after-care facility and then I transferred to a different home. Then again, I transferred to another shelter, this time to Mahima Home.

Mahima Home has helped me in my education and has supported me in many ways. They have even my sister here in the preventative home so that she can be safe, and she can study and continue her education, just like me. And in the future, I want to get a good job...I don't need a lot of money. I would be happy with any income.

Discussion.

It was difficult to identify the amount of time that Nabhitha was forced to work in the 'flesh trade'. Since I was not allowed to ask any questions related to the participants' trauma stories for interviews #1-#8, I was reluctant to ask any clarifying questions when the women shared pieces of their trauma story with me, as I did not want to cross any boundaries. With this being said, through the story Nabhitha tells, it is possible that she was sexually exploited for at least a year.

Participant 4: Mousumi [Season].

Amar naam Mousumi. I was born in Mumbai. I just celebrated my twentieth birthday. When I was young, my family was very poor. My father was a carpenter, but his work didn't help our family financially. Some days we didn't have anything to eat so we had to borrow from our neighbours. We had a rental home but because my father didn't have a stable income, we had to move a lot. Sometimes where we lived was cold. Sometimes it was bad. It's hard to remember a lot about my home because I haven't been there for fifteen years...

My mom didn't like me very much, so I spent most of my time with my father. I used to like to imitate my father's actions when he was woodworking. My father was worried that one day I may end up like him. I'm still not sure why my mom never liked me...she always used to

hurt me. She beat me. She never let me go to school. My other siblings got to go to school, but not me. I have three sisters and one brother.

There is one incident, which I think has destroyed my life. I was kidnapped and handed over to a guy who used to torture me. Then he sent me to the red-light area where I was forced to be a prostitute. This was really painful for me. These experiences always haunt me; they can't be erased from my memory. Sometimes, I feel really heavy. It's painful for me because I didn't want to get involved in this; I was forced to do it against my will. I think that this is the most painful experience for any girl.

My journey has been really long; I lost my family. I have no family. I even lost my surname. But when I came here to Mahima Home I got a lot of support. People have encouraged me and helped me. And now I think that I lost my family because I had to gain all this. I am learning how to stitch, and I am completing a beautician course. My father wanted this for me: that one day I would do something. Whenever I feel discouraged, people in the home remind me about this. They say to me, "Don't you want to fulfill your father's dream?" Then I feel courageous. I have learned a lot from this home. Sometimes I feel sad. Sometimes I feel like I have nobody. But then I remember that there is a lot of support and people who care for me. When I finish the beautician course, I hope that I can teach others one day the skills that I have learned and fulfill my father's dream. I pray to God that I will be able to meet him again one day.

Discussion.

Although it is very unclear why the mother did not like her daughter, there are several hypotheses that we can confer. Given the number of unreported sexual abuse cases, it is possible that Mousumi was a product of 'rape' or unplanned pregnancy that the mother saw as marking the end of her freedom. Perhaps, the father was aware of the transference of ill feelings by the mother to the daughter – and that is why he protected her somehow. This participant continually

talked about her father in an admiring way. I never heard any of the other participant's talk about a male figure this way throughout the twelve interviews.

It is unknown exactly how many years Mousumi was forced to work in the 'flesh trade'. Based on calculations using the information provided during the interview, it is possible that Mousumi was trafficked for thirteen years of her life. Mousumi said that she has not been home for fifteen years and she is 20 years old now. She has been in school since the age of eighteen and she arrived at Mahima in 2017. During her interview, she shared that she stayed in many other shelter homes before Mahima. This led me to believe that she was rescued or escaped and found safety in a shelter in 2015, as that would correlate with her timing of when she restarted her education. In addition, Mousumi shared: "At the age of the 15 I loved somebody for the first time, but that boy didn't know about my past. So, one day I told him that I am from the red-light area and all, but after listening the boy said that he would call me later and after that, he never called so it was very painful for me and I started hating all men... After that there was one boy, I was staying in the red-light area then, there was somebody who used to love me, and he used to take care of me." This is an excerpt from her transcription. Based on this information, it can be assumed that Mousumi was trafficked from the time she was kidnapped at five years of age until the age of eighteen. These stories she is recollecting took place at the age of fifteen and onwards.

Participant 5: Reena [Gem].²²

My name is Reena! I am twenty-four and I was born here in Kolkata. I am from a very poor family. I lived with my parents and my brother. My father left us when I was really young. I never received any love from my father.... I don't like men very much. I don't like my father very much. My mom had a job, but I don't like talking about it. We rented our home and my

²² Reena's experiences of sexual awareness are linked to her mother's work in the 'flesh trade'. Mahima Home also works as a preventative space and provides shelter for girls who are at high-risk of becoming trafficked.

grandma used to take care of me when mom was away for work. We had a social worker visit our house twice a week. Even if my mom was doing bad things, she never wanted my brother and me to do bad things. Sometimes she asked us to help with chores but never any bad things. My mother could have also easily had us do bad things because my father left us, but she didn't do that.

When I was seven years old I was sent to a hostel. My brother was also sent to an all-boys hostel. My mother sent us to a hostel to ensure that we had a good life. He was six years old. I was permitted to see my mom once a month and I could call her weekly. I got to see my brother every Sunday at church. The staff in the hostel used to say to me, "You can do anything, even if you're a girl you can do anything and everything." I've completed grade twelve and now I'm studying in order to complete a degree in nursing. I am staying at Mahima Home while I complete my degree.

Participant 6: Hasina [Beautiful].

My name is Hasina and I am twenty-one years old. I was born in South 24 Praganas in the District of West Bengal. My father is a farmer and my mother is a housewife. My house was made of mud until recently. We have a big home because I have so many siblings; eleven in fact. I'm the eighth child. We had a pond, so we would eat fish every day with our rice. I studied until grade four. For financial reasons, I had to stop studying. I was upset because everybody was studying, and I wasn't.

I decided to run away from home to find work and earn money because it would benefit both my family and me. Through an office, I found work in a home as someone's servant. The lady I worked for treated me very badly. I was physically beaten. One day, I decided to run away from this home and I called the police several times. A man told me that the police will take money and put me back in the home where I was working. So, he asked me to come with him

and told me that he would help me find new work. I thought to myself, if I go with him, the same situation will happen all over again. So, I fled that place and ran to a park. I found a group of women who helped me and called the police.

I stayed in a home in Dehli for one month and seventeen days and then I spent a year in a different home in Kolkata. I arrived at this home seven years ago. I'm still continuing my education and I hope that one day I will be a teacher.

Participant 7: Laboni [Grace].

I got married six years ago; I was twelve years old at that time. I don't remember a lot about my childhood. But growing up, my father used to drink a lot of alcohol. He didn't work; he would just stay at home. My father wouldn't let my mom work outside because women are not meant to work outside, they are meant to cook and stay inside. We lived in a muddy house. If someone was to come and lean on it, the house would fall down. During the monsoon season, the rain came inside our home. Sometimes we didn't have food to eat. Whenever there were festivities in the community, I would see children wearing new clothing. I would say to my mother, "See all of the children are getting new clothes but we don't even have food to eat." But my mother used to love us so much. She loved her children so much. She told me that she would buy these things for me. But we never used to get new clothes. When I was growing up I realized that my mother didn't have money, so she could not afford new clothes or food to eat.

I used to go to the midday meal school and I finished grade four. Me and the girls in the village used to make scrub²³. My parents would send me to the Gram (a type of municipality) and I would earn some money through selling this scrub. I always dreamed of making enough

²³ Based on the interview, the dialogue led me to believe that scrub referred to soap. I tried to verify this predication with a local contact from India, but they were uncertain.

money to buy a nice sari for my mother. The money I earned was not a lot, but it was enough to survive...

One day, my father said to my mother, “Laboni is growing up now. I think it is time to give her away to be married. The children do not have good food to eat so it is better that they get married.” My mother wasn’t working, and my father wasn’t working. Our family had no source of income. If I get married, then I can stay with in-laws and I won’t have to suffer. My mother thought that this was the best thing for me; once I’m married then I will be happy. But after I was married, my family stopped loving me. I tried to come back to their home and they told me, “You shouldn’t come here again and again. Go, stay with your in-laws.” My mom didn’t treat me well on those visits. “Laboni! You’re not supposed to stay here, you’re married now. The people in the village will not say good things if you stay here.” One day, she didn’t give me food to eat because she wanted me to leave. Even my siblings, my younger sister and brother, did not treat me well when I returned home. Everyone hated me once I got married.

I got rescued from Sonagachi, the largest red-light district in Kolkata by the police and an organization called International Justice Mission (IJM). I’ve been in this home, Mahima Home, for almost two years. I was in another shelter before this one. Ever since I arrived at this home, I have been working at Touch Nature, a freedom business where soaps are made. I remember thinking at first that I won’t be able to do this. But my friends in the home encouraged me and said if all the girls are doing this, why can’t you? The staff at this home and the staff at Touch Nature have helped me a lot. Now, I send money back to my parents and they have been able to make a beautiful house. I want to open a business one day. I have learned a lot and now I am ready to teach others. I think it is important for you to know that I love my parents and siblings very much.

Discussion.

It is unclear, based on the information provided in the interview, how Laboni ended up in the ‘flesh trade’. She may have been trafficked by her in-laws or she may have been trafficked through her husband once she was married. There are gaps in my understanding of the full story because I could not ask the participant trafficking-specific questions.

Participant 8: Moumita[Love].

My name is Moumita and I am nineteen years old. I grew up here in Kolkata. I’ve been in Mahima for the last six years of my life. I didn’t like playing as a child, but I used to enjoy watching other children play. My father worked for a rice company and my mother was a housewife. My uncle used to love me like his own child and he was a part of our family. I have four siblings; three older sisters and a younger brother. When I was young, our home was a cemented house with two rooms. Now we have a home with only one room. I decided to leave school after grade 1 because I did not like it. At this time, my mother went to her brother’s house and I went with her. In this new community, there was a Muslim school for small girls that I attended where I learned about religion.

In 2011, on a Wednesday, there was an incident, so I went to the police station. I was placed in a home for one year before I transferred here. I don’t have a big dream for my future. I desire a simple life. I want to continue studying and when I’m finished, I would like to get a good job. I would love a job in hotel management. If I can’t get a job, then I will get married, because one day a girl has to get married, right?

Discussion.

Moumita shared that there was an incident that took place in 2011 but she did not share what the incident was. It is unclear what happened in Moumita’s life between the time she attended the Muslim school and when there was an incident that brought her to the police station.

I was asked not to inquire about the participant's trauma story, so it was impossible to probe when the participants provided me with concealed statements like this. However, there are external pieces to her story that can help better understand how and why she needs to live in a protected environment. A front-line worker at Mahima told me that women reside in the shelter on average for two years. Moumita has been staying at Mahima Home for the past six years. This means that her home situation is not safe for her to return to and that she perhaps faces more barriers than others to live independently. On two different occasions, two local contacts in India shared that girls within Muslim upbringings specifically, are frequently trafficked by their family members²⁴. It could be suggested that Moumita was being trafficked by her mother's brother whom they went to live with when she was a child. The incident may have been a police raid or rescue, which brought her out of her trafficking situation and into the care of a shelter home.

Participant 9: Nadia [Beginning].

My name is Nadia. I'm around twenty-one years of age. My house growing up was made of straw. My father used to make bamboo houses to earn money. My mom was a maid. She would travel all the way to Kolkata from our village to work in different homes. I have two sisters and two brothers; I am the youngest child in the family. I am really loved by my mom and dad, still to this day, just like when I was young. I went to school until grade five. I come from a big family, so my father and mother could not support me in my studies even though they were trying their hardest to take care of us. Each and every parent wants to see their daughter married off to another family where she will belong for the rest of their life. This was their plan for me.

I got married when I was fourteen years old. Within five minutes of our marriage, my husband beat me²⁵. Then he told me that we needed to go to Mumbai to work and earn money.

²⁴ There is the possibility of religious bias in these assertions.

²⁵ The use of memory was used to recall that the participant's husband beat her because of unclear audio.

He threatened me and said if you don't come with me then I will get mad at you again. I told him, "If that is what makes you happy, it will make me happy too." So, I chose to go with him to Mumbai to work as a maid, just like my mother. Before we left, I found out that I was pregnant. My husband said to me, "You know...we can come back from Mumbai with child, but we cannot go there while you are pregnant, so we have to abort the child." After fifteen or twenty days, he took me to the doctor and I aborted the baby. Then he took me to Mumbai. When we arrived, my husband handed me to another guy who handed me to someone else. I was tortured physically and mentally. I lived with my husband as he sold me to other men. We stayed in a red-light area. I told my husband that we could not go on like this because it was dishonest. I asked him to please take me back home. He said to me that we would only stay for one year and then we could go back home. I was forced to handle customers and I was sexually harassed. I was threatened; if I did not do what they wanted then I was beaten.

After a year and a half, in 2013, I was rescued and put in a safety home in Pune. My family was contacted, and I was brought back to them. The truth about my trafficking story was never shared with them. But because of tragedy that I faced, I have had to come back to my family. I have faced a lot of evils. Tragically, my one-year old son passed away last month. He drowned in a pond. My home: my family, my mom, and my brothers; they are the ones who really keep me safe and I feel safe with them. And because my parents are really good and they are really caring, I'm staying with them now. They always stood by me. I hope to remarry and then have a family; I think that would bring joy to my darkened life.

Participant 10: Lucia [Light of India].

Amar naam Lucia! I am fourteen and I am in grade nine. I was born in Nazrat, South 21, West Bengal. My parents are so beautiful; they love me a lot because I am the youngest child. I have three older sisters. We are constructing a building to live in. My father works in a brick kiln

and my mother is a house wife. Sometimes I help my mother by fetching water or cutting up vegetables.

I was a good dancer and I participated in dance class. My family really liked that I was a good dancer and all of the people in my locality also enjoyed my dancing. My favourite style of dance was hip hop. But I was mistreated by my dance teacher. He would touch me where I knew I shouldn't be touched. One day after dance class, he took me to a place called Iowa by bus and then also a train. He told me to stand and wait in a dark place. All of a sudden, someone came from behind me and put a handkerchief in front of my face. I fell unconscious. When I came back to consciousness, I found that everything was different. People were speaking a different language. I came to know that I was in Bihar, another state in India. There were a lot of young boys and girls around me. I said to them, "This is not my home. Where am I?" One of the children replied, "You have been sold." I asked the children, "How will I get back home?" Another said, "There is no escape. You won't be able to go back home." I began crying and I started to scream saying "I want to go back home!" The girls and boys would yell and scream back at me.

We stayed in a hall. The boys and girls were kept separate. There were between 80 and 90 of us in total. There were about 20 boys and the rest of us were girls. We weren't given good food to eat. We would receive two meals a day; maybe once in the morning and another meal at night. Other days, we would be given one meal for the whole day. Whenever I asked for food, I got beaten up. The girls were sent to dance during the festivity time and men would watch us. If we were found with a phone in our hands, we would get beaten. If one of us tried to escape, we would get beaten.

While I was there, I was finding a way out and then I came to know that somebody was looking for me to take me back home. The man and woman in control of all of the boys and girls decided to take me to another place. I overheard them saying, “If we take Lucia to a place close to Kolkata, the people looking for her will not be able to know where she is.” So, they moved me to my dance teacher’s mother’s house in Kolkata. That evening at three in the morning, I was rescued by the police. They took me to the police station where I was questioned. A legal procedure was taken and then they sent me back home to my parents. I don’t like dancing anymore.

I am a member of a committee in my community now where I help raise awareness about trafficking. My family really supports me. I’m continuing my studies and I want to be a doctor one day. I see a lot of people suffering from diseases. I can serve the community and other people by being a doctor. I could also prevent people from getting diseases, including myself!

Participant 11: Jayan [Victory].

I’m Jayan! I was born in Basirhat on May 1, 2001. I am currently in grade nine. I have three brothers and one sister. We all live together in a small home that is made of fenced walls and a tiled roof. My father is a rickshaw puller and he runs our family on this income. Chicken is my favourite food to eat. Growing up, I wasn’t able to leave my house and I wasn’t allowed to talk to other people in my neighborhood. My parents let me leave the house two or three times a year. Other than this, they would only let me leave the house to go to school. My mom has had two operations, so she is not able to do many of the household chores anymore. She has become very weak. I have to help with cooking and cleaning. I also go to the field and help sow seeds.

During the festivity of Eid, I saw some of my friends passing by in our neighbourhood and I asked them where they were going. Since, I had been confined in my home for such a long

time I desired to go out and see the world. I felt like going with them. So, I joined two of my friends and they took me to a certain point and then they asked me to stand and wait. The place they took me was unknown to me. It was the first time that I had been there in my life. While I was waiting, it started drizzling. It was getting dark outside and I started to wonder... What I should do? How will I get back home? My parents don't know where I am... I didn't know what to do so I started to cry. All of a sudden, a girl with her face covered came to me and asked me, "What happened to you? Where are you going to go?" I told her that I didn't know this place and she put her hand on my shoulder. At that instant, I got a strange smell from the handkerchief that the girl was holding in her hand. It smelt really sweet. It was strange to me, especially because I had been confined for a long time and I wasn't allowed to go out. Then she put her hand with the cloth over my face and I became unconscious. I remained unconscious for three days.

When I awoke, I saw two girls; one of them was the woman I had seen outside. The moment I regained consciousness I asked them, "Where am I? Who are you? What day is it today?" The girl who took me, her name was Chēlēdharā [kidnapper]. She told me I had to cook for them. The other woman said to me, "Turn on the gas oven. Get up and cook." I said to them, "I can't do this. I've never done this in my life. I'm sorry but I can't do it. I just know how to make fire with wood." And the moment that I said "I can't" they banged my head on the wall. They held me by the top of my hair and brought me down to where the gas oven was and forcibly asked me to cook. I didn't want to do it, but I was intimidated... I was kidnapped. I wanted to save my life, so I forced myself to learn how to light up the gas oven and cook. That was my only last option; I had to learn and save myself. I stayed with these women for six days. Afterwards, Chēlēdharā received money from a stranger and then she disappeared.

I was sold to a bar in Kolkata where I was forced to dance. At the beginning I wasn't scared. I couldn't dance the way that they wanted me to, so I sat in the corner of the room. But because I didn't want to dance, they scratched me on my wrist. My captors said "If you don't dance, we will kill you by cutting the veins of your wrist. We will put nails into your veins so that you die. We want to see you killed." There was only one option for me to survive which was to dance the way that they wanted me to. I thought that if I did this, then maybe I will be able to get back home one day.

I was tossed from side to side, from place to place, from one person to another. I think about my own freedom...and I was really somebody that was forced to do anything, reluctantly. People came to me drunk, and they just did things the way they wanted. It was inhuman torture to me. I told them that I was willing to dance for them, so they could earn money. I was willing to dance with short dresses on...but when they wanted me to go to some room in the bar, where men came and sexually assaulted me...

I stayed with a girl named Madyapa [Alcoholic]. She was a drunk. I would dance all through the night and then when I would get back to the place we were staying Madyapa made me cook. She tried tempting me by saying, "If you're willing to dance, you can make a killing and live a happy life, a comfy life." She cut my hair short to make me look more like a dancer. Then she covered my face and put me in cab with sunglasses on so that people could not recognize me.

On the 14th of August, the day before the Day of Independence, I was told that I had been sold to Mumbai. I expressed my reluctance to be moved so they did not feed me for two days. One of my duties in Madyapa's home was to wash utensils. One day, the water stopped running. Madyapa told me to go out of the apartment and open the tap to see what was wrong. When she

was walking down the stairs, I saw the guy who I was sold to approaching and I wanted to flee. I ran out into the crowd to see if there was a way out. I was running back and forth down an alley. I was unfamiliar with the streets and I couldn't find my way out. I thought to myself, "I'm going to be caught by them and I will be trapped again." By some miracle, I made it out and I just ran and ran and ran out those small, narrow alleyways. I didn't know where to go next, so I asked a group of people where I was, and they told me that I was in Kolkata. And then I opened my heart out and told them my story; everything that had happened to me. And then I ran for one hour and a half. I was exhausted. I felt like I was almost dead. It was God and his mercy that gave me strength. Then, I arrived in Matiemgram and I didn't understand the language the people there were speaking. They were talking in Hindi. I found a shopkeeper who spoke some Bengali and he offered me a hundred dollars to help me save my life. He spoke to a rickshaw puller in Hindi on her behalf and he asked him to take her to a nearby police station. The rickshaw puller didn't want to put himself into trouble because if he took her to the police station, then they would ask him questions. He could get trapped and lose his job...so the rickshaw puller left me in the middle of a street that had three crossroads. I ran again from that place. As I was fleeing, I found a clock and saw that it was one o'clock and I began to weep bitterly. Two girls and three boys were nearby and one of the girls looked at me. The girl got the boys attention, but they didn't care much about me because they were also scared and were thinking, "What if the police catch us?" But the girl felt like she should do something because I was crying so bitterly, and I was in a helpless situation. This girl insisted and said to her friends, "We must help this helpless girl, because she has lost her home." So, these children called the police.

I was taken into police custody where they asked me for my name and took my photo. They gave me food to eat and conducted a medical test. My family had filed a report that I had

gone missing to the police. They tried to identify if I was the girl who had gone missing. A lady constable said, “Sir, she has a freckle here and here, and so does the missing girl.” The lady recognized me. They contacted the police station in my community but there was an explosive accident that day so there was no one there to respond to them. When they were finally able to get in contact with the police in my community, a lady constable came to get me with one of my older brothers.

My family was almost bankrupt because they had faith in soothsayers. They spent a lot of money trying to find me to bring me back home. A man at the police station felt compassionate towards me. He thought of me as his own daughter, so he offered me 1800 rupees to spend on my way back home. I had to go to court to continue with the legal procedure, but my father believed that if we continued with the case, the traffickers would find a way to get me back. He might lose me again. So, we withdrew the file. We did not have the courage to continue with the case at the time. But now, with all my bullets and courage I want to continue with the case because I want to get the culprits punished. I don’t want the things that have happened to me to happen to other girls.

I’m not physically doing well. I was forced to take medicines when I was trafficked which damaged my lungs. I also suffer from seizures now and shortness of breath. Breathing is difficult for me. I cannot travel very far by walking and I cannot ride a bicycle anymore which makes it a really big problem for me. One day at school, I fell unconscious while sitting on a ledge and I was taken to the hospital. The doctors cannot figure out what the real issue with my lungs is. At school, people make fun of me. They say “you got lost recently, right? And now you’re back. What happened to you? Come, take us to the place that you went to...” I’ve already switched schools once this year because of the teasing. I have to bear this at my new school too.

Now, I stay inside the classroom. Going through this right now is a painful part of life. My mom doesn't love me as much as she used to before.

This NGO has brought light to a captive like me. The social workers help me and they are helping me continue my studies. The entire staff is like a Banyan tree. They are helping me in many different ways just like a Banyan tree has its root in different ways out of which it gets nourishment to stand tall. When I'm done my studies and I'm grown up, I want to get a good job where I can make money, support myself, and support helpless girls like me. I want to work at a business where I can help girls who are from broken and impoverished families, where parents cannot afford to support their daughters.

Participant 12: Jyothi [Light of Sun].

Amar naam Jyothi! I am twenty-two years old and I was born in Viamnagar. The floor of our house was mud and the roof was tiled. I have one brother and two sisters. For work, my mom and dad would carry mud in baskets when a pond needed to be excavated. Whenever a pond needs excavation, women are employed as workers as part of a government project.

My mom is not an educated person but she really values education; she felt that it was the most important part of one's life, so she made sure that I went to school. My mom was protective of me and always did her best for me. She is the best mom in the world to me. We had hard times as a family. We would struggle to have three meals a day, but she always ensured that I was well fed. Other children don't have the kind of love that I've received from my mom. She didn't have a lot of money for the family, but the love and affection I received from her means so much to me. I wouldn't be where I am today without her.

I was fourteen when I was trafficked in Mumbai. One of my relatives sold me. I was confined in a hotel. I tried my hardest to get out. I kept in touch with one guy named Sāhasī

[Brave] who was working in a company. I shared what had happened to me with him and he hid me in a storage room within the building of the company that he was working for. He helped me contact my family and then my dad contacted this NGO. They filed a First Information Report (FIR) and then my family travelled all the way to Haraw and brought me back home. When I got back home, a medical test was done and then I stayed at my parent's house. The villagers started to make fun of me. The locals would not receive me back into the community; they wanted to throw me out. They beat me. My parents were also beaten by the community. My parents had said, "She's our blood and you won't be able to feel the pain of losing a child. We understand, and we can feel this because she is part of our family." And because of me being trafficked, my parents were mocked and harassed. Whenever my father went into the marketplace, he was mentally tortured.

Society looks at me this way: since I am a girl that was trafficked, I have lost everything, even my life. I have lost my image, all my dignity in the sight of others. But, if something like this were to happen to a boy, he loses nothing. For a girl, this is a big issue: our past, [which was forced on us], is a disgraceful thing. People believe that I should be confined within the four walls of my home. But I am going out and talking to higher officials and discussing my views and opinions. I've been told, "Why are you and how are you doing all of this? You don't have any rights as a human. You don't have any rights as a human. You were mistreated, so you shouldn't be doing this." This is how people look at me. But now I feel like I can go wherever as a person with dignity and honour and also rights, goes.

I am currently studying in Basirhat College and completing an Arts degree. The subjects I am studying are political science, history and Bengali. I have found that because I am getting educated, it is helping me and also helping others. I have the most education in my family so this

is quite an achievement for my parents. After I was rescued, my classmates would make fun of me. I was really reluctant to continue my studies. This NGO and my family encouraged me to study and have supported me. My family would have never been able to afford my education; this NGO has helped enable me to continue studying.

I received counselling after I was trafficked. I was broken and shattered. Now I go out and counsel other girls. I help facilitate training sessions in schools on awareness for girls including: how does trafficking happen, why does trafficking happen and what they should do as girls while they are growing up. The sessions are for girls in grade nine to twelve. We also explain the laws in the constitution where women have their own rights. In West Bengal, girls are being trafficked. Through these sessions we can help prepare ourselves and reach other girls in the community. After I graduate from College, I want to apply for government jobs.

Closing Thoughts

Each of the stories presented in this chapter reveal and conceal information about women and girls who have been trafficked. The gaps in the stories are important: they reveal the participants ability to choose to disclose or not to. The participants assert control through telling the parts of their story that they wanted to; they had freedom in our conversation. Another possible explanation of these gaps is that the women and girls in the study might have “blocked out” some of the missing information because of trauma. As freedom fighters, their fight has been learning to live without the memory of the details of their trauma. Their stories help shed light on how gender, education, poverty intersect with human trafficking. They provoke a deeper understanding of the pain and emotional trials experienced by individuals who have been trafficked. There is insight on how to move forward post-trauma and how women and girls are learning to live with their past instead of in it.

Chapter 5: Risk Factors

Data in the study shows two main factors that make girls vulnerable to trafficking: (i) poverty and (ii) gender inequity. The vulnerabilities that make an individual susceptible to human trafficking will be examined through looking at participant's stories. Afterwards, Reena's story; a young woman who was 'rescued' from poverty and sent to live in an all-girls protective environment, will be presented to illustrate the possibilities and positive male –female relations that can emerge when girls are not put in vulnerable economic and violent positions.

Poverty

The theoretical lens through which I conducted my research analysis was informed by theories that examine how social class, gender equity and education are conditions through which individuals can be subjected to more or less risk in regard to human trafficking. The interconnectedness of social position, gender parity and access to education helped me better understand the context in which a girl may be more susceptible to coercion and exploitation. I also used the notion of stories and remembering in analyzing what the participants chose to tell me as a researcher – and how their memory is shaped by the present circumstances of a desire to “be” in the present and live with and not in the past – (Simon, 2000, cited in Dlamini, 2006) in relation to their past experiences of working in the “flesh trade”.

Critical theory identifies the ways in which social class and education have shaped the participant's stories and experiences before, during and after their exploitation. “...critical theory grapples with issues of power, justice, and moral action and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, gender and sexuality, ideologies, discourses, religion, education, and other social dynamics construct the social systems that shape our consciousness” (Steinburg & Kincheloe, 2010, p. 143). This lens is useful in order to examine issues of power relations in India as a result of the economy and traditions, which produced, for example, the caste system; as well a critical

theory lens is helpful in examining the influence of gender and/or religion on individuals who are trafficked. Critical theory complements feminist theory and is well-suited for the narrative inquiry approach that was used to undertake this research project. This theory helped me to sensitively engage with the participants and the analysis of their stories.

Findings.

Out of the twelve participants interviewed, all come from poor families; that is, families who lived in less than desirable housing, had little or nothing to eat and had to chose between sending kids to school or having them work in order to contribute to the survival of the family. The following excerpts highlight the lack of food and impoverished conditions of the participant's families:

Mousumi

“When I was young I was from a very poor family. My father was a carpenter, but it didn't help to better the financial status of our family...Sometimes we didn't have something to eat so we would borrow from our neighbours.”

Laboni

“And sometimes we didn't even have food to eat. When it was time for festivals I would see the other children wearing new clothing and all; but we never used to get... I would say, ‘See the other children they are getting new dresses, but we aren't – we don't even have good food to eat.’”

Unnati

“Since childhood, we lived in a rented house. We did not have a house of our own, we always rented.²⁶ It's a cemented room. One cemented room. The roof is made of tin.”

²⁶ In Indian culture, there is value placed on owning a home versus renting. It is not the same as in Western culture where renting a home is not shunned.

“We used to eat rice, dahl and vegetables. We did not eat any meat because we couldn’t afford it.”

Jyothi

“We had hard times in our family, I mean, we were struggling to have 3 square meals a day, but my mom ensured that we’d be well-fed.”

Nabhita

“We lived in a mud house...A mud house with bamboo and with brick. The roof was made of tin. My mother used to make jewelry with sequins and my father used to work in the fields.”

Nadia

“When I was young, I lived in a house cast with straw. My father used to make mud houses.”

Poverty and Child Labour.

As a result of poor economic conditions, five of the twelve participants started to work to supplement their families’ income. Laboni worked as a child to provide income for her family. Her parents were unemployed, so she went to the local municipality to make and sell soap. “Back home. I used to make scrub with girls in the village. And after making it, I was sent to the Gram where I could make more money. It was not a lot, but enough to survive.” Child labour is deemed unjust in the Global North however; Laboni’s story reveals that the necessity to sustain life within family trumps ideas about justice: what is fair or unfair within a household. When I asked Laboni if she thought the responsibilities she undertook in the home were fair she responded:

“It’s fair because in the village some people don’t have things to do...they don’t have work to do. This is fair because if I made one or two soaps I could make money. It also helps my family. My role was to study, earn money, help my parents and look after them. I used to think that because there was no income at all its better if I go earn some money

because my mom used to borrow money from other people because we had no good food to eat. If I go work for even 100 rupees²⁷ it would be better.”

The need to eat for the family to survive resulted in the perspective that it was fair for Laboni to work even though she was a child. Laboni’s family was in dire need of a sustainable income, in addition to immediate finances to care for their needs. Poverty made Laboni vulnerable to trafficking because she could be easily ‘recruited’ by a trafficker due to her impoverished living conditions and could be more readily lured into false opportunities and exploited. Further, Laboni only went to school until grade four. Also, as the discussion on education and trafficking will show, since Laboni was hindered from completing her studies because of socioeconomic barriers, her vulnerability to become trafficked was increased. As Shelley notes in her book *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*, girls are pulled out of school to support their families. They are needed to make an income even though they had a lack of skill and education, which makes them more susceptible to human trafficking (Shelley, 2010, p. 17). Put differently, lack of education is a direct consequent of poverty, which then makes children vulnerable to trafficking as they are put in situations where they can be easily exploited. Hasina, one of the participants in the study, attended school until grade four. Due to financial issues she had to stop studying. She explained, “I did not feel good about this because everybody is studying and I’m not.” Since Hasina could not continue her studies, she thought that she could earn money through working which would benefit both herself and her family. Hasina said, “I ran away from home to work.” Hasina found work in a woman’s home where she was physically abused. Poverty, plus her low level of education increased her vulnerability to be trafficked and/or physically abused.

²⁷ 100 Rupees is equivalent to less than \$2 (CAD)

Nadia, studied until grade five and when asked why she stopped attending school she replied, “Because I come from a very big family and my father could not also support me in my studies. And my mom could not help either, even though she was trying her hardest to provide for the family. So, I had to stop my studies, unfortunately.” Unnati completed grade one. When she was in grade two, after she completed the exam at the end of the first term, she started working in a garment factory. At the age of six, Unnati found employment in order to help pay off family loans. Financial barriers prevented Laboni, Nadia, Hasina and Unnati from continuing their education, thus, making them vulnerable to trafficking. Laboni, Nadia and Unnati were all sexually exploited, and Hasina was physically abused.

Poverty and Child Marriage.

From a Western perspective, responsibilities within the family and some of the choices made by parents in the participants’ stories would seem unjust. Child marriage is inconceivable to a North American. Among the participants in this study, any choices that were made for the purpose of survival or tasks such as household chores that benefited the family were always seen as fair. Because of socioeconomic barriers, child marriage is conceived as an option. As a result of poverty, children are vulnerable to be trafficked through marriage. Two of the participants in the study were married when they were children. Laboni stated, “My father said that since I’m growing up, it was time for me to be given away for marriage. We did not have good food to eat so it was better for them to give me to be married.” Laboni’s family was struggling to survive; therefore, her in-laws were positioned as potential caregivers, thus reducing the number of children her parents would have to care for. “My mother knew the condition of the home. She wasn’t working, and father wasn’t working. [There was] no income. If I get married, then I can stay with in-laws and then I won’t have to suffer. My mother knows that there is no food to eat, clothes – She thought this was best for me. Once I am married, she thought I would be happy.”

Both parents understood the depravity of their situation and believed that marriage would provide an opportunity for their daughter to exit poverty, however; it inadvertently resulted in her being trafficked through sexual exploitation.

Poverty, Job Opportunity and Recruitment.

Poverty put girls in situations where they were easily attracted to ‘possibilities’ that would give them jobs where they could make more money and help their families. As well, traffickers are aware of children who are coming from poor families; therefore, they have multiple strategies that they use to attract them to the so-called job opportunities. The stories of ‘recruitment’ of Lucia, Unnati and Nabhitha illustrate this phenomenon.

Lucia was in school when she was taken by her dance teacher to be trafficked. Her teacher, the trafficker, targets children who come from poor families. Unnati worked in a garment factory when she was six years old. She told a colleague that she was poor and that her family needed to pay off loans. This colleague then told Unnati of a place where she herself went and made money; Unnati was lured with the prospect of financial opportunity and a way to help unburden the debt weighing on her family. Nabhitha left her village to find work after her father passed away to help support her family. A woman gave her information regarding a potential job cleaning houses. The contact who this woman provided, drugged and raped Nabhitha, then forced her into the ‘flesh trade’.

The traffickers in each of these situations exploited these girls because they were poor. Lucia’s family’s lack of access to resources as a result of poverty and, Unnati and Nabhitha’s families’ need for an income made them vulnerable to be trafficked. They were targets for manipulation and exploitation.

Gender Inequality

Human trafficking is a gender issue. Analyzing the research data through feminist theory helped identify the broader issues of marginalization of women in Indian society that contributes to human trafficking. As Kirthi Jayakumar writes, "...patriarchy is a sword that hangs on the woman's head, because anything that assaults their virginity... assaults the honour of their family. This patriarchy enforces a brutish mentality that if she is raped, if that honour is violated, she has nothing left to live for...The abuse of women in India is an everyday affair, really. And this is not a reflection of the mere extent depravity, but a transgression of the standards of decency and an exposition of the failure of governance in keeping violence against women in check" (Jayakumar, 2016). In order to draw themes from the research data and provide recommendations for supporting women who have been trafficked, feminist theory was used. "Feminist hopes for challenging unjust power relations entail curiosity about the nature of the social world, and a desire to explain similarities in gendered social existence as well as differences" (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002, p. 2). The participant's stories reveal that gender inequalities and human trafficking are interconnected.

Findings.

Power and Gender Roles.

Data in the study highlights the imbalanced power relationship between women and men. Patriarchal systems are reproduced through the lived experiences of the participants. "India, a country with rigid social roles, is likely to be composed of individuals that have very specific expectations that differ by gender. Women are expected to produce and raise children, while men are expected to be effective providers" (Sastry, 1999, p. 139). Domestic work is culturally viewed as most appropriate for women. Participants shared how their mothers and female siblings help with the household affairs and are limited to domestic work. Also, within the

participant's stories, there are a number of decisions made by men which brought about inequitable experiences for girls.

Laboni's father is an alcoholic. Both of her parents are unemployed. Laboni shares, "He [her father] himself didn't used to work and he also didn't let my mother work. Women aren't meant to work outside; they are meant to cook and stay inside." This statement demonstrates the dominant role men play in the family unit and the subordinate role of women. Laboni's mother did not work because her father did not let her. It was not the result of her mother's choice or unemployment. It was the man in the household that made the decision. Further, Laboni's response highlights that women have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Even though Laboni's parents were struggling to put food on the table, her mom could not seek employment because it was outside of the role assigned to her because she is a woman. An Indian woman in the book *Women, Culture, and Development* shares a similar story:

"I may die, but still I cannot go out. If there's something in the house, we eat. Otherwise, we go to sleep.' So Metha Bai, a young widow with two young children in Rajasthan, India, described her plight as a member of a caste whose women are traditionally prohibited from working outside the home--even when, as here, survival itself is at issue. If she stays at home, she and her children may die shortly. If she attempts to go out, her in-laws will beat her and abuse her children. In this case, as in very many others throughout the world, cultural traditions pose obstacles to women's health and flourishing" (Nussbaum and Glover, 1995, p.1)

Both Metha Bai and Laboni's stories demonstrate that there is a link between women, employment and the well-being of their families. "...Employment outside the home has a close

relationship to health and nutrition...And if we now turn, in fact, to the very basic issue of health and survival, we find compelling evidence of discrimination against females in many nations of the world. It appears that when equal nutrition and health care are present, women live on average slightly longer than men, even allowing for a modest level of maternal mortality” (Nussbaum and Glover, 1995, p. 3). Gender inequality is rooted in societal constructs, cultural norms and traditions that withhold women from reaching their potential as members of society.

Men make decisions about where their wife can work and the type of job she should do. As exemplified by Nadia’s story, her husband forced her to abort her child and then trafficked her for sex in a foreign city.

“After I got married to my husband, within five minutes of my marriage, he beat me and said that we had to move to Mumbai. Both of us would work and earn some money. Little life, happy wife...When I asked him why he said ‘if you don’t come with me to Mumbai then I will have to get mad again’...In the meantime, I found that I was pregnant, so I told him ‘See? I’m carrying.’ And he said, ‘We can come back from Mumbai with a child, but we cannot go to that place while you’re pregnant, so we have to abort the child.’ Within 15-20 days I was taken to the doctor. I had to abort the baby I was carrying and then I was taken to Mumbai. My husband handed me to another guy and that guy handed me to another guy. That’s when I started feeling tortured physically and mentally. I told my husband that we should not go on like this because it was dishonest and to go back home. He said in response, ‘we will only stay for about one year and then we will go back to our hometown.’”

Nadia’s husband exercised power and control in their relationship. He made all of the decisions and Nadia did not have the freedom to exercise choice. The study revealed that other decisions

were made by men at the expense of women and girls, such as, selling girls for marriage when they were still children. As observed in Laboni's story in the discussion on poverty, her father was the one to decide that it was time for her to be married. Men demonstrate power and control over their family. In particular, women have limited choice and are subject to the decisions of their father's and husbands. The women who participated in the study faced gender inequities which made them vulnerable to trafficking.

Women as Caretakers.

The role of a house wife is described as a caretaker by participants in the study. It is equated with responsibility and love. Participants often emphasized the role of women in the home. Frequently, mothers were cast in the light of female heroines. As Laboni states, "My mother used to love us kids and she used to say she would buy me [new clothes] ...My mother was responsible and caring. She was always worried about me when I was growing up." The contribution that the mothers of the participants made in their lives was acknowledged and held at a high-esteem by Nabhitha, Mousumi, Reena, Laboni, Moumita, Nadia, Lucia and Jyothi.

The women and girls often demonstrated pride when talking about the sacrifices and provision of their mothers. For example, one of the participants, Jyothi, was moved to tears when expressing the gratitude she felt towards her mother. In addition, some of the women and girls in the study hoped to be mothers and have a family. For them, this was an important and noteworthy aspiration.

The view of women in society in the West between 1890-1920 echoed these sentiments (Not Just a Housewife, n.d). "...Women's lives focused upon domestic production, childbirth and childcare, family relationships and other 'female' tasks... Even unmarried and married women who worked outside the home usually found their employment opportunities limited by their

gender” (Riley, 1989, p.2). But since then, some Western perspectives have emerged that look down on women as house wives and refer to it as an archaic patriarchal role. As Simone de Beauvoir states: “No woman should be authorized to stay at home to raise her children. Society should be totally different. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is that choice, too many women will make that one. It is a way of forcing women in a certain direction” (Friedan, 1998, p. 397). However, through this study it was evident that the participants celebrated their mothers in their role as caretakers. This concept is supported by feminist theory. “Over the last quarter of a century, many feminist thinkers have reflected on the fact that women are society’s primary caregivers worldwide. Women, far more than men, rear children, tend to the needs of the infirm, and take care of the elderly...care-focused feminists regard women’s capacities for care as a human strength rather than a human weakness” (Tong, 2008, p.149). Woman as “caregiver” is not necessarily a submissive quality. When I asked one of the participants, Hasina, if it was fair or unfair that she and other women were responsible for household work she responded, “When it’s a choice then it’s right, it’s okay. But when someone is forcing you to do all these things it’s not right.” Hasina’s response highlights the idea that choice is empowering and is a way through which women can assert their independence. Choice is powerful.

When discussing power and authority in gender roles, it is important to consider what are the objective and subjective forms of power. Are the women truly empowered in their role? “Bartky noted that many wives find the experience of caring for their husbands empowering. The better caregiver a wife is, the more she may regard herself as the pillar without whom her husband would crumble. But, cautioned Bartky, subjective feelings of empowerment are not the same as the objective reality of actually having power” (Tong, 2008, p. 160 quoting Bartky, 1990). The

women and girls in the study may or may not have had objective power in their roles in the home. I would like to infer, however, that the belief that they did hold power even if subjective, helped them be resilient in their various life experiences. This resilience translated to living through being trafficked and now in the present, the women desire to work towards creating a better future for all.

Culture and Shame.

Women in the study often felt shame due to cultural norms. Traditions can confine women to certain belief systems, which result in social stigma and isolation. As Laboni shares:

“When I got married, I used to come back home. [My parents would say to me], ‘you shouldn’t come here again and again you should stay with your in-laws.’ When I returned home, my mom did not behave good to me. My mother would tell me that I wasn’t supposed to stay with them because I was married. One day, my mother didn’t give me food to eat because she wanted me to go back to my in-law’s place. And my mother used to say that the village people know you’re already married so you need to stay with your in-laws because you are married they will not say good things. And my siblings also were not treating me well. So, I felt that everyone hates me and no one likes me, after I got married.”

Laboni’s desire to return home to visit was shameful and culturally taboo and as a result she faced rejection and ridicule from her family. Out of the twelve women participants, six²⁸ expressed shame because of having to be forced to work in the ‘flesh trade’. 9 out of the 12

²⁸ This is hard to quantify per se. The number could be higher or lower depending on how we view how the participants expressed their ideas. For example, being made fun of at school could be considered as feeling shame post-trafficking. In other contexts, the participants expressed not feeling accepted by family members; one participant said that she was no longer accepted after she was married but one can infer that it was actually because she was trafficked.

participants were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, which is the epitome of cultural shame towards the exploited. David Gilmore writes:

Sexuality is a form of social power. . . . Women themselves are often non-productive materially—ideally they are 'excluded' from nondomestic work,...Rather, they carry an immaterial or conceptual resource, their chastity, arbitrarily elevated to central position as an exchange value. . . . Female modesty is metamorphosed, almost in the manner of a fetish, into a pseudocommodity, or more accurately, a capital good. . . . The masculine experience of sexuality becomes broadened conceptually to encompass a triad involving two men or groups of men and a woman, who is reduced to an intermediating object. Female sexuality becomes objectified, not only a libidinal goal in itself, but a contentious and arbitrating social index for masculine reputation (1987, pp. 4-5).

This excerpt emphasizes how modesty and chastity are held as important virtues for women. It further reinforces gender inequalities and the idea that women are subordinate to men and must conform to their ideals. Sex trafficking, fuelled by predominately male buyers, subject women for the sole purpose of satisfying a fleshly desire. In the process, they strip the girl or young women they purchased of their “honour”. They are used in ways that society shuns; shame becomes the end product when they successfully fight for their freedom. This inward shame, felt by the women and girls who are sold, is amplified by the disgust and disregard members of society show towards them after they exit or are rescued from the trade.

In addition to Laboni, Jyothi’s story shows how the culture-induced shame permeates her life and the life of her family members who continue to be forced into silence and subordination. Jyothi reflected on her experience and theorized about how sex trafficking in society is conceptualized and the ramification for girls who have been trafficked.

“This is how society looks at me, looks at any girl when she’s brought back after she has been trafficked; they look at her as if she has lost everything, even her life. And she has lost her image, and all her dignity in the sight of anyone who can see. But if something like that happens to a boy, he loses nothing. But to a girl it’s a big issue. It’s a disgraceful thing. Once you are trafficked, it’s like you’ve lost everything, even your self-image. Society tells me I should stay confined within four walls. But now, I go out of my home and I speak with higher officials where I share my views and opinions. They say, ‘What the heck? How are you doing all of this? You have no rights as a human. You have lost everything. You were mistreated so you don’t have any rights as a human being so you shouldn’t be able to do this.’”

Society marks Jyothi’s life with shame and she is reduced to be nothing else but the experience that was forced upon her. She is degraded to the point where she is considered to not even have value as a human being. The view that women are less than human has existed for centuries. “The thesis that woman is of an inferior clay and therefore socially and legally negligible, was exploded long ago” (Bay, 1934, p. 156). Even though the inferior positioning of women was challenged long ago, some societies still struggle to acknowledge and live by the values of gender parity. In Jyothi’s experience, her womanhood became less than human when she was sexually exploited.

Jyothi’s family also experience shame as a result of her trafficking story.

“When I was brought back to my village after I was rescued, the locals said that they would not receive me back into the community, they threw me out. They said that I should no longer be a part of the village community. I was beaten, and my parents were also beaten by the community. My parents said, ‘She’s our blood. You do not know the

pain of losing a child. We understand, we can feel this loss, because she is our blood.’

This is how my parents received me back. And because of me being trafficked, my parents had to bear a lot of fun that they made of me. I mean, whenever my father used to go to the marketplace and places like that, all of them were mentally tortured.”

Jyothi’s shame spread to her family; they had to bear the weight of the cultural taboo sex work in which their daughter and sister was forced to do. If Jyothi were a boy would the same kind of shame mark her family?

Physical and Emotional Abuse

Participants in the study frequently felt negative emotions when asked what they think about when they hear the word “man”. Fear, anger, irritation, intimidation and hatred were some of the words participants used to express their feelings. Laboni expressed, “After hearing the word man, I don’t feel good. I feel that if someone falls in love with me, a man, then I feel that after I marry that man he will hit me, not treat me well – all those things.” Of the twelve participants interviewed four stated that they have never felt safe with a man; three participants felt safe with their immediate family members including father, brothers and husband; one participant felt safe with extended family members; and one participant felt safe with a friend’s uncle. The remaining two participants did not answer this question. These findings are not surprising because at least nine of the participants had experienced physical or emotional violence from men. In addition, violence against women is an ongoing concern. “Violence against women is a deeply entrenched problem in most societies because attitudes and practices that support violence are institutionalized in custom and law at all levels of society—marriage and the family, home, community and state...The perpetration of violence against women and the inadequacy of responses to it are a direct result of women’s lower social and economic status...” (Johnson et al. 2008, p. 3). Women are abused physically and emotionally.

A women's body as a physical commodity is a theme echoed by the participants in the study. Women were used and abused; the majority of the perpetrators were men. Physical and emotional abuse stories that took place both inside and outside of their trafficking experiences were shared. "When I was back home in the village, there was one guy. He was a good-looking man. He asked me, 'do you like me? Do you love me?'" And I said, 'how do I know if I love you?' After two or three days we started talking and we were kind of in a relationship. After that, this guy started touching me – not in a good way. I didn't like the actions he was taking. With men I feel fear, hesitation and awkwardness." Laboni's account demonstrates the ongoing violence that women face throughout their lives and the societal constructs that allow injustices against women to continue. It evokes questions regarding the perception of women and assumed constraints that reinforce gender inequities within society.

Reena's Story.

Reena's story can help us to better understand the societal constructs in India that further the gap of equality between men and women. In contrast to other participants, Reena had never been physically abused by a man. She did not learn gender roles in the traditional sense, meaning she did not grow-up in family setting where she learned and observed the roles of women and men within a household. Her father left her home when she was very young, and her mother sent her to a hostel at the age of six. Reena's mother was a sex worker and thus, her story helps better understand sex trafficking as pertains to this research. I asked Reena if she could tell me a story of a time where she was not treated well because she was a girl or a woman. Reena replied:

"Nothing like this has ever happened to me because I was in a girl's hostel from the beginning and we were provided everything. We were motivated because the caretakers used to say, 'you can do anything, even if you're a girl. You can do anything and everything.' So, I never had any such bad experiences and all, as all other women face."

Reena grew up in a protective environment until grade twelve. Whenever she left the hostel, she would travel by car. Now she is also residing in a protective environment under the shelter of Mahima Home. She is completing a degree in nursing and has not been marked by the same kinds of gender inequalities that the other participants experienced. Reena has not been the victim of sexual violence, was raised with empowering ideology about the capacity of women and was given the tools to complete primary, secondary and now post-secondary schooling. Because of her education, it is safe to speculate that upon completion of her studies, Reena may be able to live independently and earn enough money to take care of herself and her family.

Gender and Sexual Exploitation.

The biggest risk factor when discussing what make an individual vulnerable to trafficking is being a girl (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2014b, p. 27). Most perpetrators in sex trafficking are men. Most people who are trafficked for sexual exploitation are women and girls. According to the 2016 UNODC Global report on Trafficking in Persons report, ninety-six percent of people who are trafficked for sexual exploitation are females.

Out of the nine women and girls who were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation in the study, the gender of four of the traffickers is unknown and the gender of five of the traffickers is known. Two of the participants were trafficked by women. Three of the participants were trafficked by men. One participant was deceived by a woman but was actually trafficked by a man. The number of women involved in the commercial sexual exploitation of other women is increasing. "Being of the same gender can...enhance trust. Data from court cases indicate that women are commonly involved in the trafficking of women and girls, in particular...While traffickers are overwhelmingly male, women comprise a relatively large share of convicted offenders, compared to most other crimes...Court cases and other qualitative data indicate that women are often used to recruit other women" (UNODC, 2016, p.7). This is a bitter fact.

Women are often forced to recruit other women by their ‘John’; the person that was formerly trafficking them. Alternatively, women get involved in trafficking others because they are no longer in demand in the sex trade due to their age and have no other options. Men are still often in control of these exploitative situations. They are manipulating the same women and girls but in a different form. Instead of selling them for sex, the women and girls are used to coerce other girls into the trade. This emphasizes the harsh reality and nature of trafficking. It is a trap ensnared by a life of dependence on a male pimp who seeks power and control over women and girls lives from beginning to end.²⁹ As will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7, education and vocational training, rehabilitation shelters and Freedom Businesses prevent women and girls from being further exploited through trafficking others after they are no longer able to continue in sex work due to age or ill-health.

To conclude, gender is also important when understanding this issue from the perspective of demand. Gender analysis allows us to ask questions such as: who is buying sex from young girls and women? Given the prevalence of gender inequity, is it possible to stop demand in order to reduce the number of girls and women being trafficked? Education can change mindsets and attitudes towards gender; it can help reconstruct ideas of domination and subordination that are fuelling the growth of this human rights issue, but it can also help perpetuate it. The importance of education in preventing trafficking and post-trafficking will be explored in the next chapter.

²⁹ This information is shared based on conversations with people who work in the field. In addition, during my testimony to the Federal Government a former trafficker also shared that girls are used by Johns to recruit other girls.

Chapter 6: Access to Education and Vocational Training

In this chapter, access to education and its relationship to the issue of human trafficking will be outlined. It will look at the interconnectedness of socio-economic barriers, access to education, as well as the role gender plays in accessing and continuing schooling. In addition to removing poverty (as discussed in Chapter 5), creating access to education reduces vulnerabilities that make an individual susceptible to being trafficked. In addition, this chapter will look at the importance of education and outline how early years of education, including developing life skills, contribute to the study participants' present success. Next, awareness and prevention through education will be explored to emphasize the significance of creating access to knowledge at various stages of life to prevent the trafficking of persons.

This chapter also focuses on the role of education and vocational training post-trafficking. Data in this study revealed that education and vocational training empowered women and girls. As a result of education, the participants hoped to contribute to society in a myriad of ways including helping other women who have also been trafficked. It played an important role in a woman's ability to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society post-trafficking.

Pre-Trafficking: Access to Education

Literature indicates that one of the five main risk factors that make an individual vulnerable to human trafficking is low level of education (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2014b, p. 28). "...lack of access to education, little investment in education for girls, and often a strong preference given to the education of male children over female. All these conditions are conducive to trafficking" (Shelley, 2010, p. 158). There are direct parallels between access to education and individuals who are trafficked. In the 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report entitled *Gender Review: Creating Sustainable Futures for All*, it was noted that in South Asia there are still gender parity issues in regard to access to education at the primary level,

which is mostly at the expense of girls (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 14). “The majority of out-of-school children are girls, while two-thirds of youth and adults with low levels of literacy in the world are women” (UNESCO2015, p. 43). This disparity can also be seen within human trafficking. According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), women and girls account for seventy-five percent of human trafficking, including both labour and sexual trafficking (UNODC, 2012, p. 57).

Gender and access to education as risk factors to human trafficking were also confirmed through this research study. Within the study, 8 of the 12 participants had a grade five level of education or less before they escaped or were rescued from their trafficking situation, and/or arrived at Mahima Home. Out of the participants who had a higher level of education than grade five, two of the participants were enrolled in College; one of these two participants was not trafficked. The other two participants had already been trafficked and rescued; presently they attend high school and are completing grade nine. There was a participant who did not receive any education before she was trafficked. There are a number of reasons why the participants did not continue in their education while growing up, most of which were socioeconomic and are discussed in Chapter five.

Providing access to education at the forefront, before trafficking takes place, could prevent women and girls from being trafficked by reducing vulnerabilities and helping to break the cycle of poverty. When an individual is educated, it provides them with more possibilities. In addition, information provided through education can help raise awareness. Critical theory can help address these complexities. “...Certain individuals, families and communities are marginalised and potentially made poorer by a lack of access to education. There are structural barriers that result from a lack of resources for neighbourhoods and for individuals and families

that live in those neighbourhoods” (Raffo et al., 2007, 32). There are often more challenges to access education in rural communities, including villages on the outskirts of major cities. The marginalization of certain individuals, families and communities is intensified in India through the caste system where social status is strictly defined. Raffo et al. explains that “this lack of resources is linked to unemployment or poorly paid employment and is exacerbated by the poor infrastructures of health, housing and transport in such neighbourhoods. This perspective is suggestive of the need for educational intervention strategies to deal with barriers to educational access, aspiration, progression and opportunities for lifelong learning” (2007, 32). An integrative approach to creating opportunities to access education is needed that considers both the obstacles of getting children to school, retention of lower-income families’ children in school, and opportunities for employment in order to enable parents to be able to afford to keep their children in school.

Poverty is a barrier to girls completing and having access to forms of education that informs them of their value and rights; thus making them vulnerable to trafficking. “Put simply, the poorer a child’s family is, the less well they are likely to do in the education system” (Raffo et al., 2007, p.1). Due to lack of education, financial needs, and unemployment women and girls can also be re-trafficked after they are rescued.

Pre-Trafficking: Life Skills.

Access to education allowed the participants to develop life skills that enabled them to be more successful in society post-trafficking. The focus of this discussion is the life skills the women and girls developed through schooling before they were exploited through trafficking. “In the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), life skills are defined as ‘skills or abilities individuals need in order to achieve success in life, within the context of their socio-cultural milieu, through adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of environments’” (Binkley, Sternberg,

Jones & Nohara, 1999 cited in Rychen & Salganik, 2003 p. 53). As the following quotes indicate, prior to being trafficked, communication (both verbal and written) was a skill obtained during early levels of education that benefited the participants.

Unnati.

“One year of education helped me because I can understand the Bengali alphabet and I can write my name at least.”

Nabhitha.

“I studied until grade 5. I learned basic information in school like, what to do when you get lost; basic things you have to know. And how to respect your elders. These are the thing I learned in school.”

Laboni.

“I studied until grade 4 which helped me to speak good in Bengali and it also helps me to communicate with people, because in my village language was not so good. I have also learned discipline. The teacher encouraged me by saying, ‘now you are in class four you have to speak in a good way.’”

Nadia.

“Education helped me to some extent. If I see language written in the language that I have studied, I can at least read and see and understand what it says. It helps me in my day to day life. Even if there is something written on a vehicle, I can read it and understand, and then I can just get back home easily. So, it helps me a lot in that way.”

Education at any level has the power to equip individuals to participate more actively in society. As Unnati shares, even though she only obtained 1.5 years of education, she was grateful to be able to read the alphabet and write her name; an important life skill. Education empowers.

Participants noted that education helped them know how to use language more effectively, navigate their day-to-day lives and communicate with others.

Awareness and Prevention

Creating access to knowledge through raising awareness can help prevent human trafficking. “Knowledge is power, and education is the fundamental precondition for political development, democracy and social justice” (Schaeffer, n.d.). Through helping leaders, men, women and children alike understand human trafficking, vulnerabilities will be reduced.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights fact sheet on *Human Rights and Human Trafficking* (2014, p. 43), it has been identified that public awareness needs to be raised globally on the unlawful nature and effects of child trafficking and exploitation. “Although public awareness of, and concern over the trafficking of women and children (and irregular migration in general) has never been greater among governments, international agencies and NGOs, the knowledge base is still relatively weak. After almost a decade of attention, research on trafficking for sexual exploitation has not moved much beyond mapping the problem, and reviews of legal frameworks and policy responses. Despite repeated calls in international documents, including from the European Union and Council of Europe, the vast majority of states are still unable to provide reliable data as to the number of cases, the victims and their characteristics and the perpetrators” (Shelley, 2010, p. 216). Educating the public through schooling, community groups and government campaigns is necessary in order to eradicate the issue of human trafficking.

Societies and cultures with lower literacy and educational attainment levels are at a higher risk of human trafficking. In Central and West Africa, “The majority of trafficked children come from polygamous, large and poorly educated families where the children have limited (if any) opportunities for training and education” (Touzenis, 2010, p. 19). The promise that education

offers to families in poorer neighbourhoods is often manipulated by traffickers to lure innocent individuals into the trade. “Parents, who may not even be able to feed their children, are often willing to ‘give’ them to traffickers who promise to provide the child with a job, an education or training” (Touzenis, 2010, p. 19). As observed in this research study, two of the participants were given away for marriage because their parents could not provide basic necessities for them, such as food. It is known that in at least one of these situations, the husband trafficked the young girl after they were married. Villages in India on the outskirts of the major cities are particularly vulnerable to this type of exploitation. In response, a number of prevention and awareness initiatives are taking place through Mahima Home, Andanda and other NGOs within these communities to inform girls about the tactics traffickers use to lure individuals into the trade and to advise parents about the types of false job opportunities that may be promised to them for their daughters.

In many parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia, girls and women can only obtain employment in sectors where they are vulnerable to labour and sexual exploitation (Shelley, 2010, p. 54). In some countries, families view the sexual exploitation of girls as an economic opportunity and cultural perceptions of women exist that allow for exploitation. By providing access to knowledge, particularly to communities with low literacy rates; ideas about gender equality and human trafficking can begin to shape attitudes and cultural beliefs that enable this issue not only to exist but are contributing to its growth.

In India, I was told of a trafficking story that mirrors these same concerns. There was a family where a mother and father were charged for trafficking their daughter. After the charges were laid, the girl eventually married and had her own family. Then, one day her brother came to see her and re-trafficked her. Beliefs regarding the value of women need to be challenged.

Poverty, gender inequality and lack of access to education make girls vulnerable to human trafficking. Anti-poverty initiatives are needed to reduce the socioeconomic barriers that keep girls out of school and increase their likelihood of becoming trafficked. Societal and cultural norms that degrade women need to be challenged. Education is a weapon against trafficking. It is a tool that can be used to raise awareness, change mindsets and reduce vulnerabilities to stop human trafficking.

Post-Trafficking: Education and Vocational Training

The global education principle of lifelong learning is important when considering the rehabilitation of individuals who have been trafficked. “Education and lifelong learning – broadly defined to include formal, non-formal and informal learning – play a vital role in achieving gender equality” (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 12) and in providing opportunities in order to successfully rehabilitate and reintegrate trafficked people back into society. Also, education is important in the healing process, plus, it helps women who have been trafficked avoid returning to their previous situation of exploitation through providing pathways to an alternate lifestyle.

People who are trafficked are often coerced or forced into the trade at a young age, which results in major gaps in their life skills and education. Almost half of individuals who have been trafficked have not completed high school (“Sex Trafficking”, 2015). Research indicates the need for educational programs. It emphasizes education for children who have been rescued from trafficking because “trafficked children are deprived of the opportunity of obtaining an education at a crucial age and they suffer psychological scars that may never heal and may prevent them from functioning in society as they mature” (Shelley, 2010, p. 60). Specific educational programming for children who have been trafficked is critical in order to help them develop cognitively, recover from traumatic experiences and return to a sense of “normality” (Touzenis,

2010, p. 77). Further, education and training empower individuals who have been trafficked and it helps address negative self-esteem issues and lack of self-confidence. “Careful repatriation and reintegration programs are critical in enabling victims of trafficking to regain control over their lives. Measures must include.... access to job training as well as further educational opportunities for work that is actually available in the country of origin” (United States, 2004, p. 32). Through providing training that equips women with skills, it gives them the opportunity to choose how to move forward in life and gain a sense of independence.

In addition to research studies, there exist testimonies from “freedom fighters” attesting to the role education played in their lives post-trafficking. In the Canadian Women’s Foundation report, Laurie McKenzie shares how “Ndinawe” (a transitional home for youth that partnered with Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba) impacted her life after she had been trafficked. Laurie was given the opportunity to get a college education as a child and youth worker. She notes that everyone in the classroom had street experience, which allowed her to feel a sense of belonging and the teachings helped her heal (Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2014a, p. 19). Creating a learning environment that is trauma informed and includes people with shared life experience is of critical importance for women who have been trafficked. As will be demonstrated below, data from my study supports this position.

Importance of Education.

Completing education post-trafficking was important for participants in the study.

Mahima and Andanda both help facilitate enrolment in school, support the cost of books and guide the “freedom fighters” in their studies. Vocational training was provided to the participants at Mahima. Education created opportunity: whether obtaining a job or raising their future children in a more informed way, the participants saw the value in their education. As Pallavi shared, “Education is important in life. I am still continuing my education. I am learning life

skills to move ahead in my life and I am trying to apply them. I have learned different life skills in Mahima which is helping me deal with day to day life.” Education provides a way forward for the women and girls.

Data in the study also shows that for the participants, education led to independence and empowerment. It resembled hope and the prospect of a better future. As Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Ratcliffe, 2017). Education also helped the participants navigate day-to-day life through acquiring various skills. The participants expressed the importance of education in various ways. The following interview excerpts highlight a sense of independence, hope, respect and empowerment that the participants felt because of access to education:

Reena.

“There a lot many people who don’t get permission to go to school and study. I am lucky that God has provided this to me. And by using my education, I can go far in life. I can earn my livelihood through nursing. There is no one to provide me with the necessities of life. There is no one to protect me. So, it is important for me that I can be self-dependent through this [education].”

Lucia.

“The most important thing in my life is my studies, my academics. There is nothing else more important than my studies. The one and only most important thing is my studies...If I study hard, I can see my future as bright. I can go far in life. And also, I will be able to communicate with others. It will help me in my future.”

Jayan.

“Education is something that helps me see what is white and what is black. It helps me to see the things of the world in different ways. And also, it helps me in my walk in life. I will be able to

talk to people when I've grown up. I will be able to get a job, a very good job. And also, I will be able to raise up my kids if I'm educated."

Jyothi.

"In my daily walk, what I find is that education plays a very significant role in my life. Wherever I go, it's an indispensable part of my life, education, so it's very very important..."

"The most important part of my life is education. I find that education is playing a very important role in my life where I have honour in the eyes of society everywhere I go, as well as in my family."

"Education has really broadened my mind where I am able to think profoundly. I am able to think and express myself in different ways."

These participant's reflections reveal that through education, women and girls can acquire the necessary tools needed to participate in society in diverse ways.

Challenges.

There are challenges to continuing education after being trafficked. The following interview excerpts illustrate multiple barriers to education for women who have been trafficked including: age, educational setting, health complications, social isolation, bullying, shame and living with trauma. Trauma has been linked to unemployment and other socioeconomic barriers that prevent individuals from accessing education.

Mousumi did not go to school when she was growing up. The first time she entered school was at the age of eighteen. "I had a lot of problems because Bengali is not my language, and I had to read in Bengali. I didn't know Bengali words and the letters, so I faced a lot of problems. I got admitted to school just one week before the annual exam. This was very stressful for me. Then afterwards, I was directly admitted to class eight. I was the oldest one in the class.

It didn't feel good because everyone was younger than me in the school. I faced a lot of difficulties there.”

In additions to her age, the environment was not conducive to Mousumi's learning because her peers did not have shared life experience. She was isolated as a mature student, which increased her difficulty in the classroom. Mousumi's school experience demonstrates the need to consider education programming and schooling specific for women and girls who have been trafficked.

At an event focused on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women the keynote speaker, Maya Chacaby (March 2018), echoed the need and importance of school programming. She had been trafficked in Canada as a child. The institutional schooling set up through colonial structures and a building full of students and teachers without any shared life experience made it an unwelcoming and unsafe space, which she did not desire to be a part of. Similar to my study participants, Chacaby suggests that structures of learning should be programmed in ways that ensure women and girls are given the tools and support needed to be successful in their schooling post-trafficking. Suggestions brought forward by women with lived experience are required to build educational supports that are truly reflective of the needs of individuals who have been trafficked.

Despite the challenges Mousumi faced, she also shared how schooling helped her. “Now I can read in Bengali...I stopped going to school after that but now I am working and can read there...The teachers at Khushi Designs have encouraged me a lot. They are helping me. Sometimes, they manage my time by talking to the boss to ensure that I have time to read. They say, ‘if you don't read now you can't talk later. [Reading] will help you.’ They are very important to me.” Khushi Designs is finding a way for Mousumi to learn integral educational

skills such as reading while she trains and works. Even though she stopped attending formal schooling, Mousumi has a group of individuals supporting her in the workplace, who encourage her and ensure that she continues to learn.

Similarly, Jayan encountered difficulties post-trafficking in completing her education. Both health and social stigma make school difficult every day. “[When I was trafficked] I was forced to take drugs which damaged my lungs. It causes problems to my body...And because of this I need to take a puffer. Breathing is difficult. I can’t travel long if I stand. And I can’t ride a bicycle...I lost consciousness and fell off a ledge at school and then I was taken to a hospital.” Traffickers use drugs to subdue their victims³⁰. Additionally, young girls are often given steroids to change their appearance to make them look more mature. As a result, when a girl is rescued, it is difficult to determine their age. An osteoporosis test is taken which can determine the girl’s age (plus or minus two years). If a girl is determined to be a minor, a trafficker can be sentenced to seven years in prison. If a woman is over the age of eighteen, traffickers are often not persecuted in India. Due to the drugs given to Jayan, going to school is a struggle. At the time of the interview, she was battling severe health complications.

In addition to this health struggle, Jayan is ostracized at school. “Friends at school make fun of me saying, ‘you got lost recently...and then you came back, what’s wrong with that? Will you please tell us what happened to you? Come...take us to the place where you went to!’ This is how they make fun of me. I was taken out of school and now I’m at a new school, but my friends there do the same thing. I have to bear all of this. And because of this, I just stay inside the classroom. This is another painful part of life.” Jayan has to relive her trauma through the continual probing and questioning of her peers; also, shame and pain are barriers to her learning,

³⁰ The information on drugs and sentencing of traffickers was provided by a local contact in India.

which have implications for how she learns to live in the past rather than with it. Another participant, Jyothi expressed that she was also made fun of by her classmates when she returned to school. As a result, she was reluctant to continue her studies after she was rescued but was able to continue because of the support Andanda and her family provided. These examples demonstrate that both bullying, and shame are barriers to women and girls completing education post-trafficking. They point to the need for resources that are specifically designed for individuals with lived experience.

Long-term exposure to violence or traumatic events (such as trafficking) can result in lower grades and are linked to other socioeconomic challenges such as poverty and unemployment (How Does Trauma, n.d.). The trauma that an individual who has been trafficked has experienced needs to be considered in relationship to their education. Re-enrolling them into a public school may not be the best option. Further, a study conducted in Norway examined the impact violence, sexual abuse and bullying had on academic performance. The findings in the Norwegian study show that violence and sexual abuse correlated with lower grades. There was also a relationship between bullying and academics, however, teacher support resulted in better grades (Violence, Bullying and Academic Achievement, 2013). Another study that took place in the United States found that bullying was linked to lower academic achievement (Crist, 2017). Women and girls who were trafficked experience trauma. Social isolation and bullying within the schooling context can recreate traumatic circumstances and can impede an individual's healing process. In India, there is a program in place where individuals who were formerly trafficked can complete their academics at home with the support of a tutor. There is a mechanism in-place for the individual to complete examinations in order to receive their

diploma³¹. This is a useful alternative, particularly for women who would be considered to be mature students. However, this substitute form of obtaining education does not provide the women and girls with community. Rather, it further isolates them from broader society. Therefore, as will be presented in Chapter 8, providing community and support are integral components of reintegration.

Life Skills and Vocational Training.

Life skills and vocational training are different forms of ‘education’ that are relevant to the participants’ circumstances. Both life skills and vocational training are alternatives to formal schooling and address the needs of girls-turned-women in meaningful ways – taking into consideration their ages, experiences of trauma and the need for reintegration. This study shows that life skill training post-trafficking is also critically important to the successful reintegration of participants. Vocational training is important for women and girls who have been trafficked. It equips them for employment and helps them prepare for their future. Like education, it empowers women and helps them become independent. Life skills and vocational training are two themes echoed by participants in the study.

UNESCO affirms “Life skills-based education (LSBE)...can contribute to gender equity in teaching and learning. It can enhance the value of traditional subjects, such as literacy and numeracy, as well as address topics of increasing relevance to young people, including gender, equality, human rights, HIV/AIDS and sustainable development” (p.1, 2008). Life Skills inform trafficked women of their value, rights and provides them with the knowledge needed to take control of their lives, make decisions and act independently. *Human Trafficking: A Feminist Perspective* (Kingshott, 2016) also emphasizes the importance of empowering women as a

³¹ Information provided by local contact in India.

means to equality. “How do you change embedded cultural practices such as patriarchy and the denial of women equal rights? The answer must be education and assistance to instil human rights into the very fabric of the culture regardless of historical political, religious or ethnic underpinnings. The answer has to be to empower women and elevate their status to that equal of their male counterparts” (p. 13, 2016).

In efforts to empower, Mahima Home teaches women and girls a variety of life skills. Pallavi expressed that at Mahima she has learned what the necessary life skills are to be a human being. Nabhitha learned how to stay safe and what to do if she is ever in trouble or in danger. She shared, “I am happy that my sister is also here so whatever I have learned she will also be able to learn so that we can protect ourselves.” Life skills are also taught to women who have been trafficked in Freedom Businesses (see Chapter 9). At the Loyal Workshop, women are taught how to use an ATM, basic budgeting skills, how to write their name and how to find an apartment. These various skills empower the women to become independent and function in society.

Nabhitha has received various vocational training including computer training and dancing. She feels that it will help in her future. “It is important for me because whatever I have learned I can somehow teach other girls. I have learned dancing, so I can teach it also.” She also mentioned that computer training will help in future interviews because she has basic knowledge about computers. Pallavi also learned computer skills and she received a tailoring certificate. She believes that the vocational training she has completed may help her in her future. As she stated, “training gives me options.”

Mousumi also expressed that she has options as a result of the training. “I am very hopeful about all of this [training] because I can apply it in the future anywhere. I can make

bags...I have already learned how to make different types of bags. Even if I can't finish the beautician course, I will have an alternative for stitching and making bags. So, I have alternatives.” Vocational training empowers women and girls. The training programs Mousumi was enrolled in at Khushi Designs gave her the tools and guidance she needed to succeed. “At first I found it [stitching] very difficult and I was scared about it. Because the program required cutting and measuring...I don't know any math, multiplication and all. So, I was scared about how I would be able to do all these things. But when I started, I found it easy. Just measure it and cut it. So now I'm happy with it...I am making myself independent and I'm getting support from here.” Mousumi overcame her doubts and inhibitions about her own abilities. Through developing skills in the training programs, she was able to gain confidence in herself and feel a sense of independence.

Training empowers women to support others. Unnati mentioned that she is receiving a stipend while she is training. “I can send money back to my family. So, it [the training] has helped me in repaying the [my family] loans. And I have also learned to make bags, so in the future, it can help me. It [the training] has benefited me a lot. In the future, I want to have my own business making Indian attire.” Unnati is able to help support her family while she is training. The stipend is a powerful resource for these women. Money provided to the girls in the home, together with education, presents women and girls the possibility of meaningful future economic livelihoods. Furthermore, training has helped Unnati start her own business. She is empowered to provide for her family and achieve personal goals. Moreover, each time I visited Mahima Home, Unnati would show me one of the products she had made. From bags to dresses, Unnati was proud and confident in her work as a result of the skills she had acquired through

training. Through vocational training, women are empowered to make decisions, support others and set goals for their future.

Vocational training and life skills allow women and girls to be independent. For example, Nabhitha has obtained skills that will allow her to better care for herself. “I don’t think I will be able to make other people’s clothes, but I think I can make my own clothes which will help me in the future.” Hasina echoed this sentiment. “I have received a lot of training. When the girls leave this [Mahima] home, they are able to take care of themselves.” Moumita felt that training would allow the women in the home to do tasks in the future more independently. “I’ve done computer training so in the future, if by luck I have to sit in front of a computer, then I will have it easy, no? [If I get] to work in front of a computer, I won’t need the help of others. It’s better that we learn [these skills] now so that it will be easier for us in the future.” Similarly, Laboni attends training at Touch Nature, where soaps are made, and is becoming more independent. “It was very important to me because I like to learn new things. And I want to open a business one day...I am growing up and now I can go to work alone and come back alone.” The training program at Touch Nature is helping Laboni become more confident. She has future aspirations and is gaining the skills necessary to achieve her dreams. Life skills and vocational training create independent women who feel confident. It prepares them to enter the workforce through providing them with employable skills. It gives them the tools to help them provide for themselves and take care of themselves.

True “Wonder Women”.

Through training and education, many of the women expressed a desire to help others. Two of the participants were championing change by sharing their story with politicians or at conferences. Women and girls were going into schools and communities and educating women

and girls about human trafficking. Other participants were hoping to make a difference through their future occupation. Here are a few of the ways that the participants in the study were true Wonder Women; role models that other girls can look to as individuals who challenge the patriarchal system that has oppressed them and who are speaking out against this injustice (either literally or through their acts of resilience).

Lucia wants to be a medical doctor when she is finished her study. “I see a lot of people suffering from many diseases and I can serve the community and people by being a doctor.” Jayan hopes to get a good job one day where she will be able to support herself and also support “the helpless girls like me”. She wants to start a business that engages girls. “My intent would be to help the helpless girls, the girls who are from broken families; those whose parents can’t afford to support their daughters. They are the ones who I’d like to support.”

Laboni shared that the training program at Touch Nature has helped her learn how to pack soaps in a way that is presentable. “I have learned a lot and now I can do better. I am ready to teach others also to do the same.” Laboni hopes to begin her own soap business where she can teach others to obtain the same skills she acquired through the training program. She hopes to use her education to empower others.

Nadia is helping with an anti-trafficking awareness program for women that includes information on health. “We are taking a stand. And now we’re coming out of our shells.” She is using her traumatic experience to shed light on the issue of human trafficking in her community. She is helping prevent other women from being trafficked. Nadia is empowering other women through providing them with knowledge about health.

Jyothi is a part of a counselling committee. “And just like the way the uncles [social workers] who counselled me when I was depressed...broken...shattered...I go out to counsel other girls as a counselor.” Jyothi is helping support other girls and can relate to them through her lived experience. Jyothi also gets trained about trafficking and women’s rights through Andanda. “I feel like in West Bengal, there is a certain rate of girls being trafficked, where I’m able to be a part of the trainings that Andanda organizes where we can prepare ourselves and also reach the other girls in the community.” Jyothi shares with girls in her community how trafficking happens and why it happens. She goes in the high schools and leads a training session in classes for students who are in grade 9-12, as well as those who have completed their schooling. She also gives women information about the constitution and laws that explain women’s rights. Jyothi speaks to government officials about her trafficking experience. In addition, she shared her trauma story at an awareness program conference in a central part of India where both girls and boys were in attendance. “I had the courage to stand...I shared all the things that we do in and through this NGO and what problems we really face in our day to day life as girls.” Jyothi is speaking out against the injustices that she has faced and has been empowered through the training and support she has received at Andanda to help other girls and make a difference in society.

Through formal schooling, skills development and vocational training, societal norms can be broken, and gender constraints can be challenged. These forms of education provide individuals who were trafficked with the necessary tools required to participate in society in diverse ways. Education provides women and girls with choice. Participants revealed that through education, they can choose to break free from gender normative outcomes such as

motherhood or house wife responsibilities, and they can choose careers such as nursing or being a doctor. It gives them the power to choose to be both or one or the other.

Chapter 7: Success Support Systems

“This entire team of workers, this office and other organizations they’re like a big Banyan tree to me. They’re helping me in different ways as Banyan tree has its root in different ways out of which it gets nourishment to stand tall. So, these organizations they are supporting me as a big Banyan tree...They are so helpful to me.” – Jayan

This chapter examines successful support systems that enable women and girls to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society after being trafficked. First, the chapter explores the role of family in supporting women and girls by examining Jyothi’s story. Next, Nabhitha’s story is used as a prototype to demonstrate the holistic care and support system Mahima Home provides women who have been trafficked; a noteworthy example that can help inform practices. The chapter also presents the importance of caring for physical and emotional needs of women who have been trafficked such as the role of counselling services in the process of rehabilitation. A successful support system empowers women and girls to live somewhat independently and supports their reintegration into society post-trafficking.

There is lack of documentation on rehabilitation and community integration post-trafficking (Shigekane 2007, p. 114). Support systems for people who have been trafficked have looked to theory that exists for other groups who have been impacted by various forms of trauma such as domestic violence, torture, and wars leading to displacement and the creation of refugees (2007, p. 115). “Although intuition may lead us to believe that trafficking survivors do share experiences common with other traumatized individuals and require similar assistance, solid research is lacking” (Shigekane, 2007, pg. 115). The rehabilitation of women who have been trafficked needs to include educational practices that involve counselling to address the psychological effects of sex trafficking and victimization, as well as, vocational training (Sikka, 2013, p. 27). The stories of women and girls presented in this study will help support research in this area. All participants in the study received some type of post-trafficking support. Where

possible, general theory on trauma and recovery is used to support the evidence presented from this study.

Role of Family

Jyothi's story shows that family plays an important role in reintegrating women who have been trafficked. Jyothi's story is remarkable. She was trafficked, ostracized and beaten by her village community when she returned home, yet she pursued and continued her studies at the post-secondary level. The village community beat her family because they welcomed her home after she was trafficked. Her family was ridiculed and harassed, yet they were loyal and supportive to Jyothi. The support Jyothi received from her family post-trafficking was vital to her reintegration success. Her story is in line with literature stating, "Effective parenting linked to notions of the educational aspiration of parents, educational support and stimulation for young people in the home, secure and stable home environments and participation within school is central to young people's educational success" (Raffo et al., 2007, ix). Jyothi's family supported and acknowledged the importance of education. Her mother held a high regard for education which was then passed on to Jyothi:

"So maybe my mom is not an educated person, but she really valued education. And she feels like education is the most important part of one's life. So, she made sure that I am educated. And in terms of food she made sure like I was well fed. And also, she was protective to me, in all the days of her life. And she did her best for me..."

Jyothi acknowledged that without the love, support, protection and care her mom provided to her that she would not be where she is today. In addition to completing studies in higher-education, Jyothi is also raising awareness on human trafficking in her community and

sharing her story with influential people such as government officials. She is making a difference in the world through confidently fighting against the injustices that once bound her.

Housing for Trafficked Women and Girls: Mahima Home

“Mahima is the best and there is no other home like Mahima” – Nabhitha

Extensive holistic long-term reintegration strategies for women who have been trafficked are integral. An interview with Hormachae helps explain the state of a woman or girl once they have exited their trafficking situation: "Imagine, young girls, some of them just teenagers, being plucked out of the only society that they know, that of the perpetrator. They don't even know how to buy things at the store, they haven't even walked around the block" (Shigekane, 2007, pg. 121 quoting Interview with Nancy Hormachae, Attorney, 2003). After escaping or being rescued, women who have been trafficked have gaps in knowledge and life skills which include self-care, managing finances, transportation, writing a resume and independent living amongst other things. At a conference on human trafficking in Barrie, Ontario one of the presenters shared that “trauma is trauma” and as a result, their shelter treats all women the same. Trauma may be trauma, but trafficking creates a very distinct form of trauma: women often feel bonded to their trafficker because of Stockholm Syndrome³². In addition, there is societal stigma and shame due to the nature of the work they were forced to participate in. The women desire a material lifestyle that was attainable through the high-price prostitution pays that is not readily available in a post-trafficking context. The women are vulnerable to become re-trafficked due to underlying beliefs about themselves, finances and psychological bondage. The complexities of human trafficking result in the need for complex-care.

³² Stockholm Syndrome is a “psychological response wherein a captive begins to identify closely with his or her captors, as well as with their agenda and demands” (Lambert, L. (2017, November 09). Stockholm syndrome. Retrieved April 06, 2018, from <https://www.britannica.com/science/Stockholm-syndrome>)

I conducted 8 out of the 12 interviews at a NGO entitled Mahima Home. Mahima has four different homes related to human trafficking. At two of the homes, the women and girls receive medical care, food, clothes, counselling, life skills, education, vocational training, and job placement through Mahima's partnerships with Freedom Businesses. One of the homes is for women over the age of eighteen and the other is for minors. The other two homes are for children, often children of sex workers, which were established as a prevention tool to ensure they are not trafficked for sexual exploitation. There are extensive reintegration strategies including home visits³³, follow-up mechanisms and flexible timelines. The participants in the study identified that the home empowered them to be independent and helped them prepare for their futures.

The services and care Mahima Home provides to women and girls helps restore them, assists with healing and supports their reintegration. Using Nabhitha's stories as an example, it will be clear that shelter homes like Mahima Home, offer a protective caring environment that enables women to thrive after they have been trafficked.

After Nabhitha was rescued she was sent to Sukanya Home. Next, she was moved to Sanlaap, another shelter home for women who have been trafficked. Then she arrived at Mahima Home. "I am very happy to be a part of Mahima. I am enrolled in school. I have taken various trainings like computer, tailoring and dancing. We were taken to Nepal as well! I am very happy in Mahima Home. I also visit my family. I stay with them for a few days and then I come back to Mahima. And I am happy that my sister is also in Mahima Home...whatever I have learned she will be able to learn and [she can] protect herself." Nabhitha highlights various ways that

³³ Staff at Mahima Home will visit the women and girls' family homes to assess whether or not it is safe for them to leave the shelter and return to their parents/husband/in-laws etc. Some of the women could visit their families for one or two weeks at a time, and others were planning to return home permanently in 2018.

Mahima is supporting her. She is able to continue her education and develop new skills. Through Mahima, Nabhitha is able to maintain a relationship with her family without being in an unsafe situation. Her younger sister resides in a prevention home to ensure that she does not become trafficked. This provides Nabhitha with an opportunity to stay close with her sister but also peace of mind knowing that she is in a protected, caring environment. The first day I visited the home, Nabhitha gave me a tour. One of the things she showed me was a photo of her with her sister. Through Mahima, her relationship with her sister is not only being maintained but growing as they are able to continue to grow-up and build their lives together in a safe environment.

Nabhitha also shared that she has been given the opportunity to participate in new experiences such as going to Nepal. Other participants in the study also noted how special and significant these new experiences were for them. “My favourite memory is when we go out together for treats and outings, with all of the aunties and uncles³⁴...when we spend time together. Also, the aunties surprise us with disco parties! And during those times that aunties don’t stay as aunties, they become like us girls. They have fun and enjoy.”

Nabhitha expresses that community is important and that sharing life with others is enjoyable and helps create a sense of belonging. Nabhitha’s example also highlights the healthy relationships that are established in Mahima. The authority figures within the home create a relationship with the girls where trust and love can be established. This is balanced with discipline and accountability. “My least favourite memory is when we get scolding. When we do something wrong we get scolding. I am the naughtiest among everyone...[One time] I didn’t wash my clothes and I stopped for three days. So, auntie got angry and did not give me clothes

³⁴ Term of respect for anyone elder to the participant or in a position of authority such as support workers, house moms etc.

for one day.” The participants underscored a parent-like relationship between themselves and the house moms. This form of care allows the women to “differentiate...what is good and what is bad” as Moumita expressed. Other participants shared that they learned how to behave properly through the guidance they received at Mahima Home. There are healthy, loving relationships that provide the women with support. In the book *Treating complex traumatic stress disorders: an evidence-based guide* counselling practices emphasizes the importance of trusting relationships in the healing and restoration of people post-trauma. “Relational safety supports the client in learning new skills, especially new ways of coping. As the possibility of the safety and trustworthiness of others in the world is incorporated by the client, there is less need for dissociation and other defensive operations to self-regulate” (Courtois and Ford, 2009, p. 190).

Nabhitha continued to emphasize and share the supportive network built for the women residing in Mahima, “I receive a lot of support from my aunties. Though we make mistakes...I do feel that I belong over here. When the aunties also scold us, they think of us as their own child and scold us like that. We get shouting from them when we make a mistake but only a parent can correct a child. So, I belong over here...and I get really angry when somebody says, any girl or any staff say any bad thing about Mahima. Mahima means so much to me and I cannot bear to hear any rubbish from people.”

Trusting relationships exist between the staff at Mahima and the participants. The women staying at the shelter home also build relationships with one another. “I have made good relationships in [Mahima] Home. And I have a good relationship with the aunties and I share with the aunties certain things which I don’t think I would be able to share in my own family. I have made great friends also. Though we have fights, with so many girls staying in a house there is definitely going to be fights...but we support each other, help each other, and we trust each

other. And whenever someone is in trouble we forget all the fights and stuff and help each other.”

Yet, not all shelter homes for women who have been trafficked offer the same type of care and support needed for successful rehabilitation and reintegration. Nabhita had experience staying in other homes, such as government homes³⁵, as did other participants.

“I’ve stayed in two other home as well, government homes, but I feel that Mahima Home is the best...I never imagined in my life that I would receive so much gifts and stuff which I have received from Mahima...The big difference [between the government shelter homes and Mahima Home] is that when the girls are rescued from the brothels or the red-light area they are dumped in the government shelter homes. They are dumped over there. And then the aunties don’t speak to them. It’s like a jail. What are their passions? What are their interests? They do not connect them with their families...So I stayed over there so I experienced all this stuff. And in Mahima Home, when a girl comes over here then the aunties continuously for three days they speak with their client. What are their wants, what are their wishes, what are their plans? They consult the client and ask them. And even for Bangladeshi clients, the government shelter homes don’t connect with their family, and they don’t pass along the message that they safe or they are doing good. But in this home the aunties connect the girls, the Bangladeshi clients and international clients, with their families and conduct home visits and keep them in contact with the girls. So that’s the difference. And aunties are always there to speak with us.

Unlike in the government shelter homes they don’t speak to us...They just behave badly

³⁵ Locals in India that I spoke with who were a part of anti-human trafficking initiatives shared concerns with government housing, corruption and the safety of women and girls brought to those homes.

with us. With Mahima Home, the aunties provide us with so many things from hair clips to your toe nail polish. I feel like Mahima is a five-star hotel and I am very grateful for that.”

Nabhitha is thankful for the correction the aunties provide her with because she knows that it is in her best interest. She has an affinity for the home and the people who are supporting her daily. Nabitha reiterates one thing over and over again in her interview: Mahima Home provides genuine care. From understanding the girl’s interests and passions, to meeting their physical needs, to connecting them with their families, the women are treated as every human being wants to be treated; with dignity, respect and with love. Through this type of care, the women thrive. They can complete their education with the support of an accountable and supportive network of women. The women receive training through programs tailored towards their needs and that are trauma-informed. They can heal in a home where other women have shared life experiences and create new happy memories through embarking on outings and participating in activities; a true sense of community and belonging. Mahima Home fosters an environment conducive to building positive and healthy relationships. There is a family-like unit that is formed within the home. At Mahima, women learn what a relationship is and how it should function through experiencing authentic loving relationships with staff and women with lived experience. Once reintegrated, this will potentially transpire into healthy family and friend relationships.

Support

The participants in the study shared the many ways supports have helped them post-trafficking. Holistic support systems included both symbolic and material resources. Symbolic resources included: education, vocational and life skills training, self-growth programs,

counselling, therapy, healthy relationships, community building, legal support, spiritual care and language classes. Material resources included: housing, food, clothing, outing/new experiences and job placement. As observed in Chapter 6, the financial support the women received from their training programs, jobs or shelter homes was another tool that empowered them and helped them become independent.

Physical Needs.

The research study shows that caring for the physical needs of women who have been trafficked helps support them post-trafficking. It allows the women to focus on education and training in order to support their rehabilitation and reintegration. Unnati explained, “After coming to Mahima, I am very happy...I get good clothes, good food to eat; which I never used to get.” Unnati’s basic needs are met at Mahima Home. Moumita also shared that provision for physical needs is important. She illustrates this through contrasting her experience staying at a government home with her experience at Mahima. “I like Mahima very much compared to All Bengal Home. Everything was good there also but there was less care about girls. They didn’t used to care about girls. But after coming to Mahima, I like everything about Mahima, the good food, the dresses we used to get. And all these things.” Care and support includes food and clothing. In addition, physical needs include the tools needed to be successful in education. “Mahima is helping me because I’m getting to go to school and [helping me get] the books...that we have to buy. If I was back at home then I would have needed money, but they are helping me a lot because it costs a lot to buy books. And also, if the festival comes we get to wear new clothes. If I was back home, then I would have not got this chance to buy all these things.” Moumita is able to continue her education because of the support she is provided by Mahima including cost of books, food and clothing.

Like Mahima, the Andanda Institute helps provide for women and girls' physical needs as it pertains to education. Jayan shared the importance of the staff member's support at Andanda in enabling her to continue her schooling. The government in West Bengal launched a program which provides a stipend to girls to continue their studies up until College. The staff at Andanda helped Jayan obtain this funding to support her education. They also helped her gain admission into school, buy books and study materials. Supporting the physical needs of women who have been trafficked helps them rehabilitate and supports their reintegration.

Counselling.

Counselling provides healing and restoration for women who have been trafficked.

“Almost all anti-trafficking advocates agree upon the importance of psychological care for survivors of trafficking” (Shigekane, 2007, p. 121). Unnati shared that, “in the future what will help me is the counselling that I have received.” Nadia is receiving counselling from three people at Andanda. She noted that these counsellors not only counsel her but stand by her. Nadia feels supported by them. “Before I was intimidated and fearful. As I started coming to them, they would unburden me and also encourage me, so that I don't remain fearful, as I would have been before.” The professional help Nadia receives, helps her to unpack the trauma she has experienced and facilitates healing. Jayan shared that the staff and social workers at Andanda stand by her and are a great help to her. As a result of the counselling Jyothi has received, she is now able to support other women. “And just the way the uncles³⁶ who counselled me when I was depressed...broken and shattered...I go out to counsel others girl as a counselor.” This example reveals the psychological trauma Jyothi experienced as a result of being trafficked. “Studies on the psychological impact of trafficking reveal that some survivors experience symptoms of long-

³⁶ Social Workers

term psychological trauma” this includes: self-harm, suicidal attempts, depression, paranoia, and insomnia (Shigekane, 2007, p. 118). A longitudinal study was conducted in Moldova in 2007-2008 to assess the psychological effects of trafficking by completing a mental health diagnosis at the crisis intervention stage and 6-12 months later during the reintegration stage. The evidence showed that it is likely that trafficked women (specifically who were trafficked in a foreign country and then return to their home country) will experience ongoing psychological distress. The research study recommends that “Women found to have co-morbid PTSD or other forms of anxiety and depression immediately post-return should be offered evidenced-based mental health treatment for at least the standard 12-month period of rehabilitation” (Ostrovski, 2011).

Psychological care is imperative to a women’s ability to become independent and reintegrate successfully post-trafficking. Another 2006 study discovered that trauma symptoms are linked to career development. “The present results suggest that PTSD symptoms may negatively relate to an individual's ability to develop, retain, or produce desired career thoughts and behaviors. Individuals who have experienced, or are currently experiencing, recalled trauma symptoms may have difficulty developing an effective work personality, coherent vocational identity, and effective career thoughts” (Strauser et al. 2006, p. 356). A long-term approach to supporting women who have been trafficked must include counselling. Psychological trauma can impede a woman from reintegration. Without professional care, vocational training and education cannot be utilized to their potential, as the women who have been trafficked may be restrained from achieving their aspirations due to underlying trauma.

As a researcher and as an individual, one experience convinced me of the absolute necessity of ongoing professional care and support for women who have been trafficked. To illustrate the impact on those who do not receive professional counselling post-trafficking, I will

use Nadia's story. I arrived in Basirhat by train from Kolkata and then continued by an auto to get to a small building with two rooms which was the operating space for Andanda. After meeting with the NGO staff and reviewing the interview process, Nadia arrived. While her story is narrated in "Freedom Fighters" as participant #8, it is important to recapture it here to illustrate the importance of emotional professional care. Nadia arrived looking emotionally distraught; consequently, I left the room we were sitting in and waited in the lobby with a few others. In another room, two of the female staff members consoled her. I am sharing this to try and convey the pain Nadia expressed so openly and how instantaneously it was felt and shared by others. One month prior to the interview (November 2017), she had lost her one-year old son who had drowned in a pond. The day of the interview was the first time she had access to support or care since the tragic accident.

Nadia has lived through many traumatic circumstances. She was married at the age of fourteen. Shortly afterwards, she became pregnant. Her husband forced her to have an abortion, unknowingly to her, because he wanted to exploit her for sex. Afterwards, her husband took her to Mumbai and trafficked her for about a year and a half. She lived with her husband while he trafficked her. Now, her young son heartbreakingly died. Any one of these tragic experiences would cause psychological trauma. At age twenty-one, Nadia has been the victim of many injustices. To get to Andanda, Nadia must cross two rivers, take a bus and take a train. She is hours away from their services and support. She is not receiving life skills and /or vocational training that other study participants could access due to the distance between her home and the

organization. Her hope for the future is to remarry and sadly, given the realities of her culture³⁷, this will be very unlikely.

Throughout Nadia's interview, she displayed ongoing signs of discomfort and vulnerability. As a researcher, I felt uncomfortable conducting the interview given her state of mind but was encouraged to keep going. From my perspective, it seemed as though this was the first time she was sharing her story; reliving her trauma while disclosing her scarred past with me. At Mahima Home, I never encountered participants who were in a state similar to what Nadia exhibited. In fact, participants spoke about their trauma stories as if it was something far from them that they had overcome and something that they have learned how to live with. I fear for Nadia and what the future holds for her. The contrast in the behaviour of the participants made clear to me that the holistic support system Mahima provides women who are trafficked is of vital importance. In addition, it underscored the necessity of post-trafficking psychological support and trauma-informed care.

Freedom Businesses

This section addresses the limitation of education and training without a long-term strategy for employment and reintegration. It proposes Freedom Businesses as an ideal platform to support women and girls post-trafficking. Four businesses located in India are reviewed to better understand the concept of Freedom Businesses and are used to illustrate the supportive network established for women.

³⁷ Women who have been trafficked are stigmatized in society. Sex work is frowned upon and the idealized notion of the importance of marrying a virgin is upheld.

The rehabilitation of women who have been trafficked is very complicated. In some trafficking situations, women can make a lot of money³⁸ or experience material wealth. When they are rescued, there is usually not a mechanism for them to make a similar amount of money. For example, a young American friend of mine who was the director of a Safe House in the United States, met women who expressed the need to maintain the same lifestyle that they had when they were being trafficked: frequent manicures, new clothes monthly, hair treatment and other pampering needs. In Kolkata, if a company offers a woman \$100 a month as a stipend for attending training classes, and they can make \$4000 in a month through their trafficker, they will often do both. In addition, women who leave the trade often have large debts to pay to their trafficker. Often the madams are women who were formerly trafficked and no longer are making a large profit because they have aged. There is no opportunity for them to work outside of the trade, so they find another way to work within it³⁹. Education and training, although empowering, without a platform is limiting. Many women are re-trafficked or are recruited to help traffic other women.

What is a Freedom Business?

Freedom Businesses provide dignified employment for women who have been trafficked. This concept is comparable to a social enterprise. It is defined as: “A business that exists to fight against human trafficking and commercial exploitation” (Freedom Business Alliance, n.d.). Freedom Businesses give women the opportunity to choose how they want to participate in

³⁸ Women and girls who are trafficked are sometimes permitted to keep some of the money for themselves and are often provided material goods from traffickers. A local contact in India shared that there is a rise of middle-class Indian girls who are being trafficked in order to use funds to help pay for post-secondary education. The “game” in this scenario is more psychological than physical where the girls live at home and visit the red-light area occasionally; freedom and autonomy to exit this situation is what constitutes as trafficking.

³⁹ Insights from local contacts in India who work in anti-trafficking initiatives and owners of NGOs.

society. “Freedom...also lies in the way we remake dignity for those whose experiences have been diminished and distorted...” (Dlamini, 2006, p. 42).

Freedom Businesses provide women with the community and support needed to transition into society including, women with shared life experience and counsellors. They give women an alternative to sexual exploitation and provide them with a means of independent living through earning an income. “An economic problem needs an economic solution...Its time for business to profit FOR people, rather than from them” (Freedom Business Alliance, 2016). Additionally, some Freedom Businesses help prevent the trafficking of persons through employing women in high-risk areas or the adult children of sex workers. Freedom Businesses include anything from apparel to cafés, to jewelry or handcrafted goods. Shrishti, Freeset, Love Calcutta Arts and the Loyal Workshop are examples of four Freedom Businesses I visited in India. At some of two of these businesses, formal interviews were conducted with the owners (Love Calcutta Arts and the Loyal Workshop). Information was gathered from the other two businesses through fieldnotes and observations during visits and tours of the various work spaces. These specific Freedom Businesses are not linked to Mahima or Andanda however; Mahima has partnerships with other Freedom Businesses where the women can leave the shelter and work during the day. None of the twelve participants I interviewed worked at these businesses. Arrangements were made by my local contact on the ground in India to visit each of the four businesses and learn about their reintegration efforts. Freedom Businesses are a successful model of community reintegration post-trafficking.

Shrishti.

Shrishti is a vocational training centre and stitching business for women in Basirhat. A two-hour train ride from Kolkata, the centre provides employment for 9-10 women. The centre

currently employs nine women. The tenth woman, a victim of domestic violence, has left the centre for some time but the management team is leaving the spot open for her in case she returns. Shrishti is a business that is sustained by two major exporters: a woman in the United States and a man from Denmark. The women in the centre make products such as bags and make-up cases, which are stamped with the logos and prints of the American company, Giselle Meza, and the Denmark company, Prop Play. The company is sustained through the products that are exported from the country. The centre is also exploring making reusable hygiene products to be exported and sold in Australia.

The centre was developed as a prevention strategy against the trafficking of women in the community because it is a “hot-spot” for trafficking in the region. They have found it difficult to employ women who are rescued from trafficking because of how far they are located outside of the city. As a result, the centres primary function is preventative. Shrishti hopes to train four women in 2018. The training program is nine months in duration and provides women with the skills needed to stitch. The building where the women work is two stories. The walls are purple and pink with marble flooring. There is an abundance of natural light and there is a working toilet for the women to use. The managers believe that good working conditions for women include the physical environment.

When we arrived at the vocational training centre, we sat on the floor in a small room with all of the women who are currently employed, and we were introduced to everyone. Afterwards, the women went to work, and I was given chai. One of the women I met at Shrishti had difficulty sewing when she first arrived and as a result, the other women wanted her to leave the centre because it was impacting their collective productivity. The manager told me that this woman had really progressed in her work and while we were chatting, she entered the room and

showed us her work with pride; she was able to make the bag correctly. This woman invited me to sit beside her and she showed me how to make a bag. She would turn and smile every time that she showed me something new. As a result of the training centre, she had mastered new skills and developed confidence. Now, she was willing and eager to share her knowledge with others.

Freeset.

To get to Freeset, I walked through a narrow alley and turned into a dimly light garage-like space. A woman welcomed and hugged me as I entered. I proceeded into a room with cement floors and took a seat on a ledge. Within minutes, hundreds of women were packed into the space. A few children and men were also present. The people took off their shoes and sat on the floor. The owner of the NGO welcomed everyone which was followed by group singing. The highest number of white people I had seen since arriving in India were within this space. I was given a tour of the building with American tourists. There are daily visitors at Freeset.

The tour guide gave an overview of what Freeset is and how it started. A couple from New Zealand came to Kolkata to work with the poor and were living in an apartment. They soon realized that their new home was situated in the middle of Sonagachi, the biggest red-light district in India. They wanted to provide an opportunity for women to have dignified employment and thus, Freeset was established.

Women cannot work in the sex trade and at Freeset simultaneously. All of the women who are employed at Freeset were previously sex workers. At Freeset, there is a childcare space on the first floor for women who have children. In addition, children that are over the age of six years old are sent to a government school or boarding school. 250 women are currently employed by Freeset. The women are from the ages of 18-60+. The women are paid monthly,

and their pay is not dependent on their productivity. When someone new starts working, they are trained for three months. Depending on their skills, they are assigned to a particular unit after the training period. There is design work, quality check, tailoring, silk screening and braiding. It is a huge operation. During the tour, many of the women working in the space expressed joy and were interested in interacting with us. An elderly lady was braiding a bracelet out of leftover fabric on the floor in a hallway. She took my hand and tied it to my arm and gave it to me. She asked me my name in Bengali and we communicated briefly the best we could despite the language barrier.

There were also a number of men who worked in Freeset. The one man we met in the design studio told us that his mom works at Freeset which is how he got connected with the Freedom Business. On the first floor, there was a group of social workers. There are four social workers available for the women to receive counselling.

We walked to a second building which is on the corner of the road that leads into Sonagachi. It is currently under renovation, but the second floor is being used for sewing. The building will be used as a bigger daycare space for children and they hope to build a café in the future to create more employment opportunities for women.

Love Calcutta Arts.

Love Calcutta Arts (LCA) is a training and vocational facility for a group of women. It is tucked away down narrow alley ways, near one of India's biggest red-light areas. It employs thirty women who were formerly trafficked. The women are taught how to create all of the products, but they are assigned to an area where their skills are most refined. LCA makes greeting cards, keepsake boxes, journals and blankets made from recycled saris. They also do laundry for hospitals. They have a partnership with Freeset and Sari Bari.

The Director of LCA, Dr. Priya Mishra, was pivotal in the establishment of Freeset. She is a medical doctor that arrived in the Sonagachi area in 1995 to run an HIV intervention program for an NGO. During this time, she met a 17-year-old girl who was working in the sex trade. When the Director of LCA asked her why she did not leave the trade, the young girl responded, “What else do you have to offer me?” This challenged Priya and she began exploring ways to provide an alternative for women who were forced to work in the sex trade. From selling soaps door-to-door to creating electronics, she experimented with multiple business ideas before helping develop Freeset. “We call ourselves freedom business because we are trying to create an alternative for the women of sex trade so that they can come out of it...there is something to offer. You don’t have to sell yourself. Here’s a choice for you to make.” The Director of LCA learned that many of the women within the sex trade did not have an alternate option and many were there by force. An occupation is freedom and thus, Freeset and LCA were established and hundreds of women have sought employment to date.

The Loyal Workshop.

I got out of the taxi and saw a group of five white people across the road waiving at me. I walked towards them and they asked me if I was also waiting for Sarah, which in fact I was. Paul and Sarah Beisly, originally from New Zealand, are the founders of the Loyal Workshop. It took them eight years to start the business. Sarah completed a degree in business and felt disconnected with her peers because they were looking for quick cash and money did not motivate her. She wanted to find a way to use business for social justice.

The Loyal Workshop is located in a red-light area that has 1000-1500 trafficked women. Sarah spent a lot of time surveying the brothels and getting to know the community before the business was established. She focused on building trust and relationships. While visiting the

brothels, many of the women asked her for a job because they wanted out of the trade. Whoever has authority over the woman (trafficker, husband etc.) has to give the woman permission to work for Loyal before the Loyal Workshop will provide them with employment. The women are interviewed and one of the main criteria is that they are ready to fight for their freedom. The business owners try to encourage the girls to stay in their apartment, if possible, in order to prevent another girl from being trafficked in that space. There is a motto emphasized in the working environment: “my life has value; your life has value.” Dignified employment is the Loyal Workshop’s objective.

Sarah met us, and we followed her through a number of narrow roads that twisted and turned. We arrived and crammed inside a small office with two chairs. Sarah had bright eyes and a smile that radiated joy. She demonstrated gentleness in her interactions with others and her love for the Bengali people was evident. She speaks the local language fluently. Next, we travelled to a room where the etching of leather takes place through a machine, which is operated by a male staff member. Male staff members who are hired to support the business are selected through a two-stage interview process and then they also visit the candidate’s homes before they are hired. The business owners pay attention to how the men interact with the women in their life such as their mother, grandmother and sisters. They also include questions about equality in the interview process so that they are sure the candidate is supportive of an equal work place.

We went up two flights of stairs and joined a group of women within a small space. One of the ladies showed us the passport cover she was making and the other women showed us their wallets. Each woman in the business gets a book that lists all of the training she has received. One check mark shows the first level completion and a second checkmark is given once they have mastered the skill. The book also includes their name, freedom birthday, favourite colour

and favourite food. There was a lady to my right that chatted with me briefly in Bengali and she showed me the item she had in her box, which she shared with pride and joy. We went to the next room and a social worker described some of the support services that the Loyal Workshop provides to the women. We went back down to a small room that is used for educational classes. There are hand-drawn, child-like pictures covering the walls. The pictures were drawn by each woman in the business and under each picture there is some information that the women wrote themselves. Sarah shared with me the importance of these drawings. “For our ladies, the learning is part of their healing... These are some of the first drawing they did. The first class we get them to draw what freedom means to them and I see some of them are so afraid of it. And we’re just like ‘You can do it! Just try anything!’ There’s a lack of confidence... And for them to connect with their lost childhood – for them to start to draw... like these are children’s pictures, right? The minute I look at these I think of their lost childhood. And them regaining their lost childhood. So, its so healing for them to be like ‘Oh yeah, I did do this when I was a kid. I actually really like this... Give me that colour.’ And they start to get into it. It’s so healing for them, incredibly healing.”

There is a 6-month training program, consisting of forty classes, when women first join the business. After they complete the program, there is a big celebration and each woman is presented with a certificate. The women have “freedom birthdays” as most of them do not know their real date of birth. The freedom birthday marks the day that they joined Loyal and are free from sexual exploitation. The women are paid by salary and they receive a bonus during Puja, a Hindu holiday. All of the employees are given the same wage. The women receive counselling, therapy, English, Bengali and mathematics education. They are also taught life skills including how to use an ATM, budgeting and how to find an apartment. The women make each product

start to finish. Training the women to be artisans is very important. All of the women who are employed by the Loyal Workshop have their name etched in the products. They feel pride and confidence when they see their finished product; especially when they learn how much people purchase their item for. Products are exported to Canada, US, New Zealand and Australia. The women make wallets, belts, bags and bracelets. The Loyal Workshop is currently admitting it's third cohort of women.

There is a 'replicate' vision at the Loyal Workshop. Part of the success of reintegrating women through education and employment at this Freedom Business is that the workplace feels like family. Sarah shared that once the business stops feeling like a family, it will be time to "plant" a new business in a different location. This business would operate like Loyal Workshop but be supported by additional management staff. The vision to replicate ensures that post-trafficking, women are supported through a family-like environment where they feel valued and known. Instead of growing into a large company/factory where an individual's needs could be missed, replicating the business into smaller factions helps promote the well-being of each woman.

Support Systems: Empowerment and Independence

Successful support systems empower women and help them become independent.

"Mahima is making girls independent," said Mousumi. "It is helping me become independent. Mahima is helping me prepare for my future and whatever I want to do in my life, it will help me to do that. It is safe for me to fulfill my dreams. Mahima is so supporting of study and work... everything! It is very helpful and good for my life." The support system at Mahima is empowering Mousumi. She feels confident and prepared to reach the goals she has set for her life and succeed. The new experiences and outings created by Mahima are also empowering her,

as well as other women in the home. “I was staying in Mumbai with the girls from Mahima Home at a camp. This is the best memory because we did difficult things. We had to climb a wall and ring a bell. It was very difficult and I was very scared about it. I told them, ‘No. I can’t do this.’ But at last, I ended up doing it...I was able to do it. I did it. I also rode a boat and swam in water. I was very scared at first but at last, I was able to do it. This was very good for me.”

Healthy challenges and opportunities for self-growth; Mahima is giving women the opportunity to build confidence in themselves and grow as individuals.

Jayan articulates how a successful support system empowers women who have been trafficked in a poetic and thought-provoking way. Her word choice creates a visual depiction of restoration. “Are you familiar with the Banyan tree? The Banyan tree grows so big...This entire team of workers, this office and other organizations, they’re like a big Banyan tree to me. They are helping me in different ways as Banyan tree has its root in different ways out of which it gets nourishment to stand tall. So, these organizations, they are supporting me as a big Banyan tree. They are so helpful to me.” She goes on to explain what this support looks like: “The uncles and the sisters here are helping me, supporting me in every way possible. But at the same time, I am growing up and completing my studies. I want to find a good job so that I will be able to manage myself and also support other girls.” Jayan has dreams for her future and the support she is receiving from Andanda is enabling her to stand tall; on her own as an independent young woman who hopes to sustain herself one day. Successful support systems empower women who have been trafficked and lead them to independent living. These supports need to be administrated with care, love, respect, and trust.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Summary of Findings

My research study in India revealed that low levels of education plus poverty increase the vulnerabilities of individuals becoming trafficked; also, it revealed that education and economic revitalization could play vital roles in combatting human trafficking. Most participants in my study who were trafficked did not finish elementary education⁴⁰. All came from impoverished families and felt the responsibility to contribute to their families' economic health. My data also revealed that after escaping or being rescued, education and vocational training empowered women to live somewhat independently⁴¹ and to reintegrate into society.

My research also uncovered some other unfortunate realities for women. For instance, local contacts in India revealed that many women and girls do not have the option of returning home after they have been trafficked due to cultural shame and stigma or concerns for safety and well-being. My research further revealed that housing, coupled with counselling supports, vocational training and job placement, enabled women who were trafficked to fight for their freedom. In addition to shelter homes, Freedom Businesses are a platform that can be used to provide women with the financial stability, community and support needed as a long-term re-integration strategy. Shelters and housing supports are needed to reintegrate women safely back into society post-trafficking.

I return to the story that prompted me to this investigation. This is the story in which, through my mother's best friend, I incidentally discovered about human trafficking in Canada. Since hearing her story, the following things have happened: I have informed myself about the

⁴⁰ One participant was not trafficked and her story is used to provide alternative possible pathways for girls.

⁴¹ Participants in the study were still 'dependent' on Mahima or Andanda for socioeconomic and psychological resources and some were not fully reintegrated into society during the time of the study. However, women and girls were gaining financial independence through jobs that they acquired through training and education. In addition, the support systems enabled the participants to learn how to live with their past and hold aspirations for their future.

state of human trafficking in Canada and elsewhere; I have involved myself in local anti- human trafficking initiatives; and, through this research, I have gone to a developing country, where trafficking is growing exponentially, to learn about practices and support systems that empower those who had been trafficked to participate as active members of society. Here, for me, the south has informed the north – especially about rehabilitation and reintegration. Below I discuss the south-north lessons about human trafficking and I focus my discussion in the Canadian context. First, I review the risk factors that make an individual vulnerable to sexual exploitation in Canada, and then I list post-trafficking educational and vocational training initiatives that are underway. Rehabilitation and reintegration efforts are also explored. Finally, I do a preliminary analysis of Freedom Businesses in Canada, which reveals the need for enhanced efforts and strategies to support women and girls who have been exploited.

Canadian Context

Canada prides itself on being a nation that celebrates gender equality and women's rights. Yet, the Canadian Women's Foundation website lists a number of shocking statistics that emphasize the need to address sexism and advocate for the rights of women and girls in Canada:

- Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16;
- 67% of Canadians say they know a woman who has experienced physical or sexual abuse;
- Approximately every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner.

Further, Canada is not immune to human trafficking and systematic injustices like gender inequality that contribute to the growth of this human right's issue. Like elsewhere, in Canada,

the majority of perpetrators of sex trafficking are men and the majority of people who are trafficked are women. Eighty-three percent of persons accused of human trafficking in Canada between 2009 and 2014 were male (Karam, 2016, p. 4). Ninety-three percent of police-reported trafficked persons during this same period of time were female (2016, p. 3). This is not a coincidence but is the residual effect of patriarchal systems that disempower women.

As a developed nation, education can play an important role in combatting human trafficking in Canada on a number of fronts. First, curriculum in school can be designed to inform and empower girls to understand their value and worth. There is need to educate students from an early age about gender equality; as well, girls need to understand their rights from an early age. Second, curriculum in school needs to educate boys to respect and understand the value of girls. As UNECO emphasizes in its training manual on gender sensitivity:

“The concept of gender sensitivity has been developed as a way to reduce barriers to personal and economic development created by sexism. Gender sensitivity helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of sex. Gender sensitivity is not about pitting women against men. On the contrary, education that is gender sensitive benefits members of both sexes. It helps them determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations. Gender awareness requires not only intellectual effort but also sensitivity and open-mindedness. It opens up the widest possible range of life options for both women and men” (2004, p. vii).

Third, both boys and girls need to be taught about sex trafficking. Girls as young as nine years old are being trafficked in Canada, which means that there is need to reach the next generation before they are in grade four. A strategic approach to education ought to be considered nationwide to ensure all young people are reached as an integral preventative measure.

Risk Factors.

Access to Education.

Lack of access to education is a risk factor for Canadian women and girls in relation to human trafficking. Typically, Canadians do not consider literacy to be an issue as the country boasts a 97% literacy rate according to the Globe and Mail. However, access to education needs to be questioned and questions about who makes up the 3% of the illiterate and why need to be addressed. In addition, "...there is a debate about what that measure [of literacy] really means. Ideas about literacy have shifted, and while measures once focused on a person's ability to decipher characters and read text, the bar has been raised to consider economic productivity" (Global rate of adult literacy, 2017).

Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately represented in the sex trade in Canada. "In an extensive research report conducted over the period of two years and involving some 181 participants in the sex trade in Vancouver, 31.1% of the women participating indicated they were Aboriginal (Cler-Cunningham & Christensen, 2001, p. iv)" (Native Women's Association, 2014, p. 8). The lack of sufficient education in many Indigenous communities results in limited opportunities (Sikka, 2009, p. 13). Indigenous youth from remote areas come to urban centers because they may not have access or only limited access to education in their own community (2009). "Secondary school data (2004-2009) identifies the rate of First Nation graduation at approximately 36% compared to the Canadian graduation rate of 72%" (Chiefs Assembly on Education, 2012, p. 2). Due to a lack of employment-related skills and lack of experience within an urban area, girls are susceptible to human trafficking (Oxman-Martinez, Lacroix and Hanley, 2005, p. 11). The extensive amount of sexual abuse to Indigenous young girls also increases their vulnerability of being trafficked (Shelley, 2010, p. 231). Educational opportunities and access to education need to be expanded and significantly improved in order to ensure that the Canadian

Indigenous population can fully access and exercise their right to education. Access to education also includes ensuring the curriculum taught in schools is relevant and appropriate for the students. “Decolonizing perspectives rooted in Indigenous knowledges are one way to bring about greater success for Aboriginal students while preserving cultural identities and Indigenous languages” (Munro et al., 2013, p. 319).

Socioeconomic Barriers.

In addition to education, socioeconomic barriers also exist in Canada, which increases the vulnerability of an individual to become trafficked. A discussion paper on *Literacy and Poverty* by Frontier College notes that there are as many as 4.3 million people in Canada who are living with poverty (n.d., p. 1). The correlation between poverty and access to post-secondary education has been established. Strikingly, “Only 4% of First Nations people on reserve, and 8% in total, have a university degree, compared to 23% of the Canadian population” (Chiefs Assembly on Education, 2012, p. 3). More mechanisms are needed to ensure that all Canadian populations are represented in higher-learning. Through furthering access to ‘powerful’ forms of education, trafficking can be combatted.

Post-secondary education is quickly becoming the new standard of education in Canada but that is not without its challenge. “Higher education has not only become increasingly central to individual and societal wealth and quality of life, it has also become more expensive” (Bergen and Parker, 2009, p. 17). The debt accumulated by higher education costs can increase the likelihood of trafficking. For example, I heard a woman who had been trafficked speak at an event in Barrie, Ontario in June 2017. She had been enrolled in the medical school at the University of Western Ontario. To help cover the costs of tuition, she began working as a bartender. She was later coerced into stripping and was eventually trafficked by her boyfriend for sexual exploitation. Financial barriers are a risk factor within the Canadian setting and

consideration ought to be given to how to mitigate this risk to reduce vulnerabilities and prevent trafficking.

Awareness and Prevention.

In Canada, there is lack of awareness of the human trafficking that is taking place within the country and most people fail to understand that it is a domestic issue as much as it is a global issue. For example, a report that was issued in British Columbia found that human trafficking is not well understood within the BC and Canadian public (British Columbia Ministry of Justice, 2013, p. 8). One of the main pillars within British Columbia's action plan to combat human trafficking for 2013-2016 included training and education. There was a call for more public awareness and educational campaigns on human trafficking, specifically for vulnerable populations such as youth, temporary foreign workers and Indigenous communities (British Columbia Ministry of Justice, 2013, p. 13). In June 2016, Ontario announced that it would invest up to seventy-two million dollars in an anti-human trafficking strategy, which includes an area focused on increasing awareness and coordination (Ontario Taking Steps, 2016). Steps are being taken to address human trafficking awareness at the official provincial level, but the general public has still not been sufficiently reached.

Canada was among one of the first countries to implement the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Government of Canada, 2012, p. 5). A national document that derived from this protocol is *The Government of Canada's National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking*, which was launched by the Federal government in 2012. The action plan's proposed prevention strategy includes; promoting training for front-line service providers, supporting and developing new human trafficking awareness campaigns within Canada, aiding communities identify people and places most at risk, distributing awareness materials at Canadian embassies and high

commissions abroad, and strengthening Child Protection Systems within the Canadian International Development Agency's programs targeting children and youth. Anecdotally, it appears that even though a significant amount of time and resources were invested into implementing this strategy, general awareness is still low. Through various anti-trafficking events I have organized, as well as, through discussions with colleagues and peers, people are mystified when hearing the realities of human trafficking in Canada. There are no statistics available to affirm this assertion and research needs to be conducted to test the impact that the Federal Government's strategy has had on influencing human trafficking and how widely understood this issue is within Canada. Governments, community groups and schools need to raise awareness on human trafficking in order to help educate the general public.

Post-Trafficking: Training and Education.

There are training programs that have been established through NGOs in Canada to support women and girls who have been trafficked; however, these programs are often unknown. I would like to highlight two existing efforts followed by recommendations on how access to such resources could be enhanced.

Deborah's Gate, a NGO in British Columbia provides a Culinary Arts Program where participants receive certification from a Red Seal Chef. This helps individuals who have been trafficked prepare for future work in the food and service industry (Anti-Human Trafficking Programs, 2018). Deborah's Gate, located in British Columbia, also offers an employment preparedness program entitled "Refresh: Barista Employment Training Program." The program is focused on helping people who have been trafficked build soft skills, "...such as customer service, employment rights, understanding and preventing harassment and bullying, scheduling & time management, resume and interview skills, along with the tangible barista skills of foodsafe, WHIMIS, beverage crafting and baking" (Anti-Human Trafficking Programs, 2018).

A relationship has been established with a café called JJBean where participants in the program also complete a one-week volunteer practicum. They also offer a robust life skills program.

SafeHope Homes, a relatively new NGO in Ajax, Ontario, has a Learning Centre where women who have been trafficked can obtain the skills and support they need post-trafficking (SafeHope Home, n.d.). Participants attend day-time programming for nine to twelve months. The first half of the day focuses on reintegration and preparing people who have been trafficked for employment. This includes computer training, financial literacy and academics. Participants receive financial compensation for the morning programming. The afternoon is focused on recovery including counselling, personal development and outings.

Training programs, such as the ones noted above, need to be amplified across Canada and promoted through a variety of mediums. Online training programs could help further access to skills development for women and girls who have been trafficked in urban and rural settings. More attention needs to be paid to what happens to individuals after they complete these programs, the success of the training and if it supports their reintegration into society (or not). Canada needs a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of current offerings to support women who have been trafficked to identify gaps and strengthen post-trafficking resources. In addition, facilities for mature students who are seeking completion of their studies post-trauma need to be constructed.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration.

One of the lessons that I learnt from India is the importance of housing that is tailored for women who have been trafficked, provides holistic care, and facilitates reintegration. I also learned the importance of having housing for women who have been trafficked located outside of traditional shelters and in an undisclosed area, with curfews and regulatory staff to help prevent

re-trafficking and for general security. This security is important because, a pimp can make up to \$1000 a day from the exploitation of these women (The Trafficked, 2017); therefore, they have a lucrative motivation to bring women back into the trade. “Although trafficking survivors and domestic violence survivors can share shelter space, distinct shelter plans and services that are appropriate for trafficking survivors must be developed...Domestic violence shelters should evaluate their ability to provide security for trafficking survivors, particularly when the trafficker is part of an extensive and well-financed network” (Shigekane, 2007, p. 129). Within the realms of a traditional women’s shelter, women can continue to be trafficked while staying in the shelter or she can become re-trafficked. Existing housing supports need to be evaluated to ensure that they are providing the specific care, security and resources that are required to support women who were trafficked.

Another lesson I learnt from India that is relevant to Canada is the importance of long-term housing and reintegration strategies. The average housing program in Canada offers facilities for six months to one year. Mahima Home in India typically houses women for two years, but their timeline is flexible. One of the women in my study has been at Mahima for eight years, for example. Before leaving the shelter, Mahima conducts “home visits” where trained staff goes to the woman or girl’s family and community to assess if it would be safe for her to return home. If it is not safe and the woman is ready to leave Mahima, the staff help her find an apartment. They have a follow-up structure in place where they check-in with each of these women to ensure their ongoing success even after they have left the care of the home. More housing with long-term reintegration strategies such as these are needed in Canada. In addition, sustainable funding for housing is needed to develop and enhance existing efforts for women who have been trafficked.

Shelters that foster reintegration for trafficked women are beginning to emerge in Canada. These include: Beauty for Ashes Transformation House in Arthur, Ontario, and, Rogers Home, which was established in 2016 by Covenant House Toronto. The SA Foundation in British Columbia has been housing sexually exploited women and their children since 1989. It's longstanding efforts to fight human trafficking are an anomaly in the Canadian context. They provide 3-7 years of support for youth, women and their children who have been trafficked. Reintegration strategies include a job preparedness program and long term financial sustainability. One of the most interesting aspects of this program model is that they have established a "replicate" service for Canadians, and people around the world, where the organization walks alongside others to guide them in the implementation of their program model in other contexts. A recent example of this is a home called SafeHope Homes in Ajax, Ontario, which was launched in May 2017. Other housing supports are emerging, but careful attention needs to be paid in regard to program and support effectiveness in addition to, their success in reintegrating women into society and their ability to reduce re-trafficking.

The research study in India revealed that Freedom Businesses facilitate sustainable reintegration for women who have been trafficked. Through a preliminary environmental scan, I have only been able to find one Freedom Business in Canada. A Canadian initiative by Huronia Transition Homes entitled Operation Grow was launched in January 2017. The program is focused around growing and selling produce (Our newest program, 2017). There is a need for Canada to explore implementing Freedom Businesses across Canada, as well as to amplify existing efforts. Freedom Businesses provide a sustainable reintegration strategy for women who have been trafficked to receive ongoing support and employment. They provide a community of women with shared life experiences who they can relate to and walk alongside. Freedom

Businesses in Canada could include restaurants, retail, cafés, jewelry and handicrafts. It could be possible that other forms of Freedom Businesses exist but may be called something different. Perhaps, this shows the limits of the ‘welfare state’ where people are given resources without looking at their state of being.

Suggestions for future research

There is a significant need for accurate data on human trafficking and more diverse research on this issue. How can we address the issue if we do not fully understand its processes? We need to look at human trafficking from an interdisciplinary lens to address its complexities. The academic community needs to support research and create evidence-informed approaches. We need to analyse existing efforts to determine gaps, program effectiveness & funding needs. Researchers, educators, data analysts and scholars need to work together to combat this issue and help end this injustice. There are many questions that need to be addressed both in Canada and globally:

- How many women are actually being trafficked in Canada? We currently do not know.
- How can developed countries like Canada, where sex trafficking is growing rapidly, better ensure its social service systems such as foster care and group homes, are better protecting and preparing girls to reduce their likelihood of being trafficked?
- What educational and employment mechanisms can be strengthened within Indigenous communities in Canada to reduce vulnerabilities among Canadian women?
- What is the best avenue to reach young people and educate them about human trafficking in Canada? If the average age of a trafficked girl is 13 or 14 years old, what is the best way to educate them as a preventative measure?

- Post-trafficking: On average, it takes a woman 7-10 times to leave her trafficking situation in Canada. How can this number be reduced?
- In Canada, there are those who say trafficking is a myth and believe it is a discussion that demonizes prostitution and women. How do we better understand the definition of prostitution versus trafficking in order to work together?
- What Freedom Businesses would work best in the Canadian context?
- What is the relationship between colonialism and human trafficking? Is there a parallel between the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in Canada who are trafficked and colonialism?
- Who are the traffickers?
- Who are the buyers (and sellers)?
- Can we reduce demand of sexual services provided through trafficking in an effort to reduce the number of girls being trafficked? Law must be considered in this regard – if prostitution is legalized, the demand increases which therefore results in the need for a higher number of women and increases trafficking (Brock, 2013).
- Who are the trafficked women? How did they come about being trafficked? What would have prevented them from being trafficked?
- How are we teaching young women and girls to understand their value and worth? Media is telling them they are sexual objects and pop culture condones sex trafficking in some cases. How are we responding to these messages? If girls better understood their value and worth, their risk of being trafficked would decrease.
- Pornography is linked to the increase in sex trafficking. What ways is society addressing the ramifications of pornography on young boys (and girls)? Where are they learning

healthy sexual behaviour? How are we addressing this type of objectification of women and addiction crisis in our society?

- How can we educate our hotel owners, front-line workers, first responders, health care professionals and on-route service providers etc. to better detect human trafficking? How do we equip individuals to be active bystanders?
- Post-trafficking: what types of resources are successful (long-term) in supporting women who have been exploited beyond what is represented in this data? What do they need?
- Post-trafficking: How are women made aware of these existing services? How do they find them?
- How can developed countries come alongside developing countries to support economic revitalization efforts to prevent the exploitation of impoverished girls?
- What philosophies of existence can best answer questions regarding the relationship between culture and human trafficking?
- Is literacy education the appropriate direction for fighting injustices or should a more modern vocational approach be undertaken?
- How are north-south relations implicated in this issue?
- Could specific national and regional contexts shed further light on understanding this issue as both a national and global phenomenon?
- What issues of gender parity surface across cultures and contexts-where and how do they differ, if they do?
- How can countries more effectively collaborate to end this injustice?

These many questions remain unanswered by solid research.

Academia needs to fill the gap to create evidence-informed approaches to end human trafficking and to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. In Canada, data collection can be strengthened through a number of ways. Statistics Canada has already affirmed that they will be adding a question in relation to human trafficking on their survey on residential survey for victims of abuse in Spring 2018. They will collect information from shelters to ask for the number of residents seeking shelter for human trafficking and the results will be released in Spring 2019 (Human Trafficking in Canada, 2018). This is a positive step; however much more work needs to be done. I propose that a Human Trafficking Research Centre should be established at a reputable and leading Canadian academic institution where scholars can collaborate and develop an approach to fight human trafficking through an interdisciplinary lens: youth homelessness, psychology, counselling, economic, law, feminist theorists, international development, education etc. From movement therapy to Indigenous issues to gender based-violence scholars, a research centre would render the possibility of creating an effective qualitative and quantitative analysis of human trafficking in Canada. The Cambridge Centre for Applied Research in Human Trafficking was established in 2007. Institutions can become an extended hub of the centre's work (About: Cambridge Centre, n.d.). In addition, the University of Denver has a Human Trafficking Centre. Recently, an alliance was formed between the University of Nipissing, Amelia Rising Sexual Assault Centre of Nipissing, the Union of Ontario Indians, and the AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area entitled the Northeastern Ontario Research Alliance on Human Trafficking to investigate sexual exploitation (NORHAT, 2018). The goals of this alliance include: “[understanding] patterns of trafficking in Northeastern Ontario; [identifying] service gaps and barriers for persons who have been trafficked; and [recommending] social policy measures for the prevention of sex trafficking” (2018). These

efforts are commendable and need to be further enhanced in the national Canadian context to combat human trafficking.

Globally, if data is collected that addresses the questions listed above, it could be used to help analyze the type of educational system, anti-poverty initiatives, awareness strategies, preventative measures and reintegration methods that are needed in order to eradicate human trafficking as well as it could inform supports for women and girls who have been trafficked. Research needs to be conducted on these topics across and within diverse nations in order to develop comparative data to reduce risks and vulnerabilities of trafficked persons. Accurate data will help inform policies and curriculum that has the potential to influence the minds of future generations towards positive change.

As a result of globalization and a more interconnected world, the demand for sexual services has increased resulting in a growing number of trafficked persons. The current Executive Director of UNODC, Yury Fedetov, said in the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* that, “human trafficking is a widespread crime in the early 21st century, it cannot be allowed to continue into the 22nd century (1).” Although globalization is a contributing factor to the growth in the trafficking of persons, globalization also provides individuals from both the Global North and Global South with the opportunity to work together in new and innovative ways, *sans frontières*, to end human trafficking. There is much work to be done to eradicate the trafficking of persons; researchers, educators, data analysts and scholars need to step up to the plate and begin to tackle this issue with integrity.

Post-Script

In my methodology section, I positioned myself as a researcher within the study and outlined how my beliefs, upbringing, and worldview shape me as an individual. Beyond what is presented in this thesis, I have reflected on how my positionality has been impacted by this study. I am left with philosophical and moral questions to consider. Similar to the women in my study, philosophical, religious and moral questions help me live my life everyday; and make it difficult to change my world-view even if it presents embodied limits of judgements of self and others. I continue to ask the question; how does an individual learn to see other people for their value and worth? Using my Christian beliefs (and acknowledging its limits), I ask the question, is it possible to love other human beings selflessly? And, if we loved our neighbour as our self, would we be able to sell an eleven-year-old child for sex? If we saw material wealth as a fleeting ambition would we aspire to commodify human beings to have success financially? If we could see ourselves in others would we stop the injustice of human trafficking and other society evils? As the Ubuntu philosophy emphasizes, it is important to create a world where we see the humanity in others, learn to live together, find ways and implement solutions to remedy global injustices.

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