Trafficking in Human Beings: Made and Cut to Measure? Anti-trafficking docufictions and the production of anti-trafficking truths

Abstract

This paper responds to Gozdziak's (2015: 30) call to explore how the knowledge that informs public debates about human trafficking is generated. Media imagery and narratives play a significant role in constructing both knowledge and ignorance. This paper reflects on the construction of such knowledge by analysing how anti-trafficking docufiction videos from the Unchosen competition dramatize trafficking. We draw on Goffman's (1974) work on frames to analyse how these videos present a simplified interpretation of reality, where certain constructed aspects of trafficking and exploitation are represented by video-makers as illustrating the general. In doing so, we highlight how anti-trafficking docufictions help efface everyday exploitation. The paper contributes both to the empirical research on the construction of knowledge about trafficking, and to critical conceptual work on (anti)trafficking, exploitation and ignorance. It is part of a broader project of challenging exceptionalising and individualising representations of human trafficking – aiming to engage better with the everyday exploitation.

Keywords

Introduction

This article responds to a Gozdziak's (2015: 30) call to explore how the knowledge that informs public debates about human trafficking is generated: 'Where does this knowledge come from and how is it used?' We build on our argument for

agnotological discussion of anti-trafficking discourses: looking at the interplay between ignorance/power as well as that between knowledge/power (Mendel and Sharapov, 2016). We examine representations of human trafficking in what we term anti-trafficking 'docufictions' – a blend of documentary and fiction, with attendant claims to authenticity – from Unchosen, an organisation that uses 'short films to tell people about Modern Slavery' (Unchosen, 2016). These docufictions use framing devices to re-configure and reduce the complexity of human trafficking by relying on fictive and imagined events presented as real (Goffman, 1974).

Docufictions have played a prominent role in the construction of (anti)trafficking knowledge and ignorance and, as such, there is a need for research to reflect on them in more depth. This article contributes to the debates about the construction of (anti)trafficking knowledge by drawing, methodologically, on theories of framing and, conceptually, agnotology. We add to the literature on media representations of trafficking by applying these theories of framing to the topic of docufictions. By adding to critiques of how an individualising focus can efface structural issues, we continue to develop an agnotological approach to the representations of human trafficking. While we reflect briefly on the positive potential of docufictions, our focus remains on practising criticism in the Foucauldian sense of 'making facile gestures difficult' (Foucault, 1988: 155). We achieve this by engaging with the published research on the social construction of trafficking, media narratives of trafficking, and documentaries, docudramas and docufictions. We then draw on this work, alongside research on media frames, to analyse the videos from the 2013 Unchosen competition.

'Unchosen' and 'Using the power of film to fight modern slavery'
Our case study is the 2013 films from the 'Modern Slavery' film competition, organised

by the UK-based charity Unchosen. Unchosen (2016) describes itself as an organisation that uses 'the power of film to fight modern slavery' based on the premise that '[f]ilm is a powerful tool that can explain modern slavery in ways that words cannot'. There is a broad coalition of funders behind and partners with the competition (going beyond single-purpose anti-trafficking organisations), showing its prominence within the non-governmental sector and its links with government bodies[i]. Analysing the entirety of the 2013 competition gave us a broad overview of a set of docufictions whilst maintaining a manageable, clearly delimited sample. These videos have been influential - used in 'awareness raising' and in training practitioners - and are a useful illustrative sample of some important aspects of how anti-trafficking organisations and actors use visual media in the construction of trafficking.

Our discussion is based on the Nichols's (2010: xiii) call for further discussion of the blurred line between fiction and documentary, and of the use of various techniques to 'to give the impression of authenticity to what has actually been fabricated or constructed'. This task becomes especially important when one considers the social construction of trafficking. As O'Connell Davidson (2015: 154) notes, '[s]ince 'trafficking' does not exist as a prior, objective category, to state 'this is a case of trafficking' is not of the same order as stating, 'it is raining,' or 'the sun is setting,' but more like stating, 'I believe this to be very wrong.' A range of studies highlight the contested nature of trafficking as a continuum of categories imagined by different political actors for different purposes and with varying consequences for a wide range of people, including 'illegal migrants', sex workers, and workers in informal sectors and in precarious and (more or less) exploitative jobs (see, for example, Doezema (2010), Andrijasevic and Mai (2016), O'Connell Anderson (2017). Analysing docufictions is an important contribution to this literature because of their role in the contested social

construction of trafficking, and in building particular types of ignorance which we discuss below.

Constructing trafficking

Since 1990s, international media interest in human trafficking has been shaped by the competing ideological agendas of anti-trafficking 'stakeholders' – from global actors, such as the US Department of State and its 'Trafficking in Persons' Reports, to a plethora of non-governmental organizations working 'on the ground' on behalf of the poor and responding to scandal-hungry media outlets. Within the context of the 'Western' English-language media, the human trafficking narrative underwent a series of transformations[ii]: from 'Natasha trade', to human trafficking as a security threat, 'modern-day slavery' and, recently, to a new spiral of media narratives of smugglers, traffickers, 'illegal immigrants', asylum seekers and 'terrorists' attempting to 'sneak into the EU' (see, for example, UK Daily Mail, 2016). There is an increasing volume of visual material including posters and videos, which, according to Galusca (2012: 13), have 'purport[ed] to expose the 'plight of trafficking' by producing a series of human trafficking 'truths' located 'at the intersection of documentary, detective fiction, and eroticism'.

There are distinct similarities with the booming production of 'poverty porn' television documentaries. For Jensen (2014) it 'is through the explosion of 'poverty porn' that welfare discourses of political elites have become translated into authoritarian vocabularies'. Analogously, new authoritarian vocabularies (around, for example, responses to migration or sex work) are built up through what one might view as a 'trafficking porn' industry run in the name of anti-trafficking.[iii]

In some ways, the type of trafficking docufictions analysed here offer fewer positive possibilities than 'poverty porn' documentaries. The 'characters' in 'poverty porn' can sometimes become part of public discourses in surprising ways: for example, Allen et al. (2014) find that 'White Dee emerged as a paradoxical figure of revulsion, fascination, nostalgia and hope' in ways which, while problematic, 'open up spaces for discussion of the gendered impacts of austerity'. However, the docufiction format does not allow the characters - played by actors - to do the same.

In this context, the role of state and non-governmental actors is important. Dragiewicz (2015b) highlights the role of various interest groups in institutionalising a range of competing understandings of human trafficking. Such discussions have taken many forms: from pronouncements by 'concerned' politicians and a growing number of anti-trafficking 'experts', to celebrity advocates, charities working 'on the ground,' and the increasing number of video-productions on social networking and video-sharing platforms. The latter include Facebook, Youtube and Vimeo where, as Nichols (2010: 2) comments, 'mock-, quasi-, semi-, pseudo- and bona fide documentaries…proliferate.' Dragiewicz (2015a: 1) notes that '…the caricatures of traffickers and trafficking victims...feature…prominently in media coverage and policy debates'. Another poorly researched development is the recent increase in the number of anti-trafficking apps, usually developed by consortia of faith-based organisations, tech giants, and government surveillance agencies intending but failing to amass and use 'big data analytics to predict and prevent the growth of international trafficking chains' (Stop the Traffik, 2016).[iv]

Sharapov's (2016) analysis of public understanding of human trafficking in three European countries identifies that video-productions and the Internet are key sources informing public understanding of human trafficking seen, by the majority, as an issue

of criminality and 'illegal' migration that does not affect their everyday lives. The representation of suffering Others is an important aspect of the docufictions we analyse, so it will be helpful to engage with the literature on this. Orgad's (2012: 41) review of how media representations shape the way we see our own and other people's lives notes that the individuals' capacity 'to imagine relies on a repertoire of symbolic resources (representations) available to be drawn upon'. She suggests that media representations make the absent present by connecting the viewer with the distant Others 'who the viewer will likely never meet' (Orgad, 2012: 1). Joye (2015: 689) considers how media can domesticate distant suffering – and make suffering in the global South appear closer to viewers in the global North – in part by 'familarizing the unfamiliar'. However, the docufictions we analyse serve, if anything, to make nearby suffering appear more distant – making familiar, everyday suffering and exploitation appear exceptional and, thus, more distant from 'normal' everyday lives. Writing about the role of the media in moral education, Chouliaraki (2008: 832) argues that 'the media do not simply address a pre-existing audience that awaits to engage in social action, but that they have the power to constitute this audience as a body of action in the process of narrating and visualizing distant events'. The docufictions analysed here do attempt to construct an audience (although it is not always clear what this is).

Chouliaraki (2008:832) argues that '[j]ust as with Athenian spectacles, still today media spectacles moralize their audiences by habituation, by systematically promoting ethical values and cultivating dispositions to action, what Aristotle calls virtues, through the repetitive use of stories on the misfortunes of the human condition.' However, a lot of media discussion of trafficking – including many of these docufictions – lacks a meaningful call for response and does not seem likely to cultivate a

disposition to any significant action. Instead, what we see is more like a process of raising awareness through spectacle with the only call to action being one to raise awareness; there is no apparent way out of this loop. While one may hope for a type of witnessing where, in Kyriakidou's (2015:207) terms, 'knowing about the pain of others implies...complicity in their suffering and the moral obligation to act for its alleviation', the only opportunity for acting here appears to lie in raising more awareness that makes yet more people complicit while not helping the suffering Other.

One of the things that Boltanski (1999: 5) finds striking about 'politics of pity [is] the urgency of the action needing to be taken to bring an end to the suffering invoked always prevails over considerations of justice'. In many representations of trafficking the urgency of the suffering pictured might seem to push beyond considerations of justice but it does so in a way that largely does not call for productive action and is limited to 'awareness raising'. In contrast to the repression or pushing aside of information that Cohen (2001) describes as 'states of denial', it is through continual presentation and re-presentation of information in a never-ending loop of 'awareness raising' that an ethical response to the suffering of exploited or trafficked others is always deferred.

While there is a great deal of media coverage of and policy interest in human trafficking – alongside a great deal of 'awareness raising' activity – this does not generally lead to enhanced knowledge about trafficking or more evidence-informed policy. On the contrary, Mendel and Sharapov (2016) show that this process is better viewed agnotologically: as the construction of particular types of ignorance about trafficking. In this context, ignorance is not simply a passive absence - a lack of knowledge - but it becomes important to ask why we don't know what we don't know,

to ask how ignorance is actively constructed. As researchers such as Stel (2016) showed in the context of evictions in South Lebanon's Palestinian gatherings, and as Proctor (2008) showed in the example of tobacco industry practices, it is important to research the very active processes through which ignorance is constructed. We interpret aspects of these docufictions as part of this agnotology. Gross and McGoey (2015) argue that some previous studies of ignorance 'tend to ignore alternative ways of viewing the world by implying that an emphasis on uncertainty is somehow 'anti-science'. However, the agnotology we develop here emphasises the value of uncertainty: we acknowledge (Mendel and Sharapov, 2016) that considerable uncertainty remains about trafficking and about political responses to trafficking. With this in mind, it is important to move beyond ignorance to engage with this uncertainty, and the risks and opportunities it brings. The docufictions' focus on individualising explanations and exceptionalising representations of trafficking helps to efface structural causes of exploitation, and the ways in which labour exploitation is part of everyday life within capitalism; it thus helps to construct particular types of ignorance. With this in mind, this article is part of a broader project of challenging exceptionalising and individualising representations of human trafficking – to engage better with everyday exploitation.

Media narratives of trafficking and anti-trafficking
Media narratives play a significant role in understandings of human trafficking, and it is important to critically engage with them. This section outlines some particularly relevant research on the media construction of human trafficking in order to

contextualise our own discussion of the meanings and effects of anti-trafficking docufictions.

Over recent years, more work has critically engaged with the dominant media representations of human trafficking. The 2016 issue of Anti-Trafficking Review - dedicated to trafficking representations - critically engages with (anti)trafficking images and narratives embedded in a range of genres including journalistic reporting, film, public service announcements, and awareness-raising campaigns. It suggests an emergence of an all-together new genre - 'melomentary' – which repositions and reinterprets limited empirical evidence on the scale and nature of trafficking into a 'strategically predetermined plot line…reify[ing] women as innocent victims and men as evil villains' (Andrijasevic & Mai, 2016: 4). Such critical accounts have both informed and drew upon research which highlights the discursive nature of human trafficking and argues that human trafficking remains epiphenomenal to broader structural factors rather than being an objective phenomenon. Kempadoo (2015) identifies three prominent campaigns that dominate anti-trafficking debates internationally: modern anti-slavery, abolitionist feminism, and celebrity humanitarianism. These campaigns remain gendered, classed and racialized and serve 'as the 'dumping ground' for a range of Western fantasies:

> where Indian brothels, Bangladeshi factories, Nigerian slums, Polish truck-
> stops, or Thai massage parlours are raided by anti-slavers, abolitionist
> feminists, and celebrities for suffering bodies that can be captured,
> rehabilitated and returned home (preferably accompanied by a photo shoot
> with brown or black children, or tweets during a raid). (2015: 13)

Soderlund (2011), in her analysis of the journalistic 'exposé' of human trafficking - the one accompanied by photoshoots and tweets - suggests that the meaning and

knowledge created and disseminated by journalists 'are not just a matter of personal opinion and are not mere semantic distinctions but have broad policy implications and…become the hinge on which legal definitions turn' (2011: 206). She draws attention to a 'rhetoric of revelation' where a relatively small number of individualised narratives of sexual abuse and violation – reported by journalists for mass consumption - can 'metonymically stand in for the alleged millions of victims of sex trafficking worldwide' (Soderlund, 2011: 201).

Similarly, in interrogating the impact of such specific representations within the context of the US investigative journalism, Galusca (2012) reviews how knowledge is produced within the context of journalistic discourses and practices, and highlights the role of 'specific visual tropes and narrative genres', including 'melodramatic visual exposés and hidden camera recordings of women in brothels'. Within such contexts, subjective choices made by journalists (choices which bear deep marks of gender, skin-colour and nationality) transform a single event of their choosing into 'a true and authentic story and, finally, into a form of expertise' (Galusca, 2012: 4) endowing such disparate events with 'meaningful coherence and sociopolitical significance'. The 'belief in the truth of journalistic discourses' in which reported stories attain the quality of 'unmediated replica of reality' (Galusca, 2012: 8) allows for a specific regime of expertise and control over 'Others', which is deployed to certain effects.

In her analysis of one of the most prominent anti-trafficking feature films - Lilya 4-Ever - Suchland (2013) highlights how the film, based on a fictitious story, reduces the issue of human trafficking to a highly individualized cautionary tale of sexual exploitation and 'illegal' migration set within the context of 'voyeurism of post-socialist abjection'. Kempadoo (2015: 16) notes in this regard how the individualization of trafficking 'enables claims that the problem can be found in a wide range of incidences,

situations, and conditions…and causes for the problem are no longer relevant.' In a similar fashion, Stiles (2012), in her rhetorical analysis of sex trafficking public service announcements, suggests that the shock appeal often embedded within anti-trafficking campaigns delivers a decontextualized message, which shocks, hits and stuns rather than suggests a solution or encourages the audience to act.

The development and the formalisation of such individualising anti-trafficking discourse have been running parallel to another key socio-economic and political phenomenon – the global ascendance of the 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2004), which has condemned hundreds of millions of people globally to abject poverty. However, the continued focus of the anti-trafficking media discourse on ideal 'victims' and 'criminals' (Christie 1986) removes human trafficking from questions of increasingly unequal relations of power, control and domination. This discourse should be viewed as a key element of ignorance production, where ignorance itself becomes productive by informing the development and delivery of policies (see Mendel and Sharapov, 2016; Kempadoo, 2016). Our focus on ignorance embedded within another media genre – anti-trafficking docufictions – builds on the work discussed above and highlights the role of media imagery and narratives in forging individual perceptions of complex social phenomena in general and of human trafficking in particular.

Documentaries, docudramas, docufictions: telling the 'truth'?
Mast (2009) comments on the inherent conceptual ambiguity of the 'hybrid' categories of 'docufiction', 'reality television', 'docudrama' and 'mockumentary'. Our analysis is informed by Mast's suggestion to approach these categories as 'open concepts' in uncovering the processes of meaning-making. Documentaries, according to Hoffer and Nelson (1999: 65), whilst always remaining subjective, claim to depict 'individuals and

events as they actually occurred in real, nonmediated time and space'. They suggest, Nichols (1994: 1) argues, 'fullness and completion, knowledge and fact'. Even though documentaries may rely on documents and facts, they always interpret them and therefore cannot be viewed as documents themselves. Our analysis of how human trafficking is imagined within the context of the 'new' media draws upon the social constructivist critique of human trafficking and the complexity of power relations inherent in defining what human trafficking is and how to counteract it. In discussing the social construction of trafficking for sexual exploitation Weitzer (2007), for example, suggests that social conditions are transformed into 'problems' when claims, which may not reflect actual social arrangements, are made and maintained by interested parties. Within this context, documentary films become, according to Nichols (1991: 10) 'part and parcel of the discursive formations, the language games, and rhetorical stratagems by and through which pleasure and power, ideologies and Utopias, subjects and subjectivities receive tangible representation'.

In responding to Weitzer's (2007) call to explore the impact of anti-trafficking moral crusades on public perceptions of social problems, we approach Unchosen videos as an element of the dominant yet 'incomplete, ambiguous and contradictory' anti-trafficking discourse (see Kempadoo, 2015), which produce a social reality experienced by viewers as 'solid and real' (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 1). Docudramas 'draw much of their plot structure and character depiction from actual events' (Nichols, 2010: 145) and 'may provide realism' (Nichols, 1993: 174), even though 'real life' events are re-created and re-structured', opening up space for 'potential abuse' (Hoffer and Nelson, 1999: 71).

The videos we analyse bear hallmarks of docudramas as defined by Nelson and Hoffer (1999) and Nichols (1993). However, to highlight the contested nature of depicting

'real life' events and the interpretation that goes into these videos we replace 'drama' with 'fiction'. Our decision to describe these videos as anti-trafficking docufictions reflects their apparent purpose to dramatize (in a particular fashion) *certain* elements of a *certain* interpretation and/or recollection of a single discrete event, and to produce a fictitious interpretation of reality where *the particular* is constructed and represented by video-makers as an illustration of more *general* 'truths'. Docufictions do not merely construct free-floating representations: they join 'other discourses (of law, family, education, economics, politics, state, and nation) in the actual construction of social reality' (Nichols, 1991: 10). In the context of trafficking, they are part of what Thakor and boyd (2013: 284) describe as a counternetwork of anti-trafficking activity and organisations. The role of the anti-trafficking docufictions in projecting and reinforcing ideas about racialized, ethnicized and gendered victimhood reveals the nature of the dominant anti-trafficking narrative, where human trafficking is represented as 'heightened, telescoped, dramatized, reconstructed, fetishized, miniaturized, or otherwise modified' (Nichols, 1991: 113). By 'telling the truth', anti-trafficking docufictions construct and reinforce ignorance. The methodology used here aims to engage with such constructions.

Methodology

Goffman's (1974) idea of 'frames' as 'schematas of interpretation' informed much framing research. We draw here on Schon and Rein's (1996) critical approach and recent research on media representations of poverty by Lepianka (2015), who relies on frames as conceptual tools used by media, policy-makers and members of the general public. Lepianka (2015: 1002) suggests that 'journalists inevitably 'frame' the presented reality in order to simplify it and make it accessible to a broad audience,

[while] the audience uses frames to give meaning and structure to the incoming information'.

The distinction between thematic and episodic frames proposed by Iyengar (1994) is also important. Writing about television news, Iyengar (1994: 14) argues that the 'episodic news frame takes the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances…The thematic frame, by contract, places public issues in some more general or abstract context'. Lepianka (2015) distinguished between thematic and episodic frames for envisaging poverty:

> In the thematic frame, poverty is treated as a social phenomenon and/or collective experience, and described by the means of statistics and/or factual information as to its scale, depth and/or (in)adequacy of social policy. In the episodic frame…poverty is individualized…the thematic frame typically fails to provide causal interpretations of poverty or to relate adequately to its correlates and consequences. (2015: 1002)

A similar process of framing can also be seen in the Unchosen docufictions. As Mendel and Sharapov (2016: 666) argue, discussions of trafficking tend to focus on the intermediate level of analysis in a way that 'reduce[s] the scope of discussions to securing national borders and 'clamping down' on trafficking as organised crime…and to providing limited support to narrowly defined 'victims' of human trafficking'. There are also micro-level analyses that 'present individual acts of criminality and victimhood as true representations of human trafficking' (ibid.) This is echoed in the framing of these docufictions through episodic frames that focus on individual victimhood and wrongdoing alongside thematic frames that focus on the intermediate level of analysis in such a way that they fail to consider causal, systemic and other macro-level factors. Drawing on work on framing is a productive way to explore individualising

constructions of (anti)trafficking and to contribute to broader conceptual debates about trafficking and exploitation.

We rely on qualitative analysis to study the processes of framing in these docufictions by following Rose (2001: 137) in thinking 'of visuality as a sort of discourse…A specific visuality will make certain things visible in particular ways, and other things unseeable'. We used a discourse analysis to explore how both language and images in these docufictions 'construct specific views of the social world' (Rose, 2001: 140). We looked at both 'strategies of persuasion', and the links between the videos and 'more socially constituted forms of discursive power' (Rose, 2001: 140-1). Following an agnotological approach, we focussed on the role of these strategies in constructing ignorance. Both authors watched and coded these videos independently; we coded the key themes arising from them twice to reflect on how the videos might be interpreted differently on a second viewing.

We follow Lepianka's (2015) approach by identifying the presence or absence of particular reasoning devices such as attributions of blame or suggestions on countering trafficking. We also explore the use of framing devices including the choice of words, camera angles and movements. In describing the docufictions, we provide a summary of the problem definition, diagnosis and solution, the role of the frame's key subject, and framing devices for each of the identified frames. We recognize that 'the process of framing is frustratingly subjective and therefore difficult to map out and measure' (Nisbet, 2009: 45), but such subjective analysis can nonetheless be illuminating.

Ten videos were presented as the 2013 Unchosen selection; there were eight plot-lines overall, since two stories - of a Vietnamese boy trafficked into forced criminality, and of a girl trafficked from Africa into domestic servitude in the UK - each served as the basis for two videos. Our analysis identified three episodic frames, reflecting some of

the key policy and media representations of human trafficking (Sharapov, 2017), and focusing on victims (the sympathetic frame), criminals (the negative frame), and rescuers (the charitable frame).

Table 1 Unchosen Videos hosted and watched on VIMEO[v]

Video	Type of trafficking	Protagonists
Let's talk about sex	Sexual exploitation, young women, girls	Anja (Let's talk about sex) and Katerina (Katerina) - young victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, escaping poverty in their home countries, wanting to be a nanny but deceived and forced into sexual exploitation
Katerina		
I Want to Be	Sexual exploitation, girls	Rose – sexually exploited and representing other girls not shown in this video but whose voices and plans for bright future serve as a background to the pictures of Rose's sexual abuse
Safina		Safina – a girl from Gambia trafficked for sexual exploitation
Rose	Grooming, sexual exploitation, girls	Rose – a child, groomed and coerced into sexual activity
My Name is Georgina	Domestic servitude, girls	Georgina – a girl trafficked from Africa into domestic servitude in a UK household
Georgina		

Silent gardener Untold	Forced criminality, boys	Hung - a boy from Vietnam trafficked for forced labour in a cannabis factory
Nicu		Nicu – a child trafficked from his home country and forced to commit petty crime in the UK

While these docufictions are focussed on a public of some sort, it is hard to discern what public or publics are the target here: for example, whether they are aimed at professionals or at concerned members of the general public. As with much 'awareness raising' around trafficking, it is unclear who is being targeted or what the goals are (see Kempadoo, 2016). With this in mind, looking at how trafficking is framed in these docufictions and the potential implications of this, rather than audience research, is an appropriate initial step with this type of material.

The form of our analysis has been influenced by the repetitive nature of these docufictions: in part because of the Unchosen's decision to ask filmmakers to focus on a small selection of stories, and in part because of the foci (for example, around certain types of victims and perpetrators) chosen by the filmmakers, the same themes arise again and again. As such, our analysis looks at the different ways in which these repetitive themes are framed; we then reflect on the broader implications of this for understanding anti-trafficking and for understanding of the associated ignorance.

The Sympathetic/ 'Ideal Victim' Frame

Problem definition. The 2013 selection of Unchosen videos portrays a very specific picture of trafficking as involving mostly trafficking for sexual exploitation of young women or girls from Eastern European or African countries, from poor backgrounds, driven into traffickers' hands by desire to help their economically struggling families. There appears to be little difference between trafficking for sexual exploitation and grooming ('Rose'), with the latter affecting UK-born girls. Unsuspecting girls from Africa can also be trafficked for domestic servitude, whilst boys from impoverished backgrounds are trafficked from other 'developing' countries, driven into their traffickers' hands by desire to help impoverished families back home. Boys are forced into criminal activities, such as stealing mobile phones or cultivating cannabis.

The Ideal Victim frame, in echoing Christie's (1986) definition of the 'ideal victim'[vi], highlights the fate of the most vulnerable, 'genuine' victims of trafficking. Victims' immense suffering, inflicted by traffickers and other men is revealed through the use of framing devices, described below, as a way to invoke viewers' unconditional sympathy and pity. Other ways of controlling and exploiting various groups of migrant and non-migrant workers – both in the UK and in geographically remote export-processing zones – are removed from the sphere of the viewers' moral concern.

Diagnosis and solution. All videos provide background information to explain individual predicaments and to demonstrate victims' ill-treatment. There are, however, no attempts to identify responsibility more broadly: in all videos, human trafficking is treated as a stand-alone misfortune, linked to personal predicaments of victims, inhuman traffickers and exploiters, and, in some videos, to the lack of awareness among 'frontline' professionals. The videos offer no solutions as to how to solve the problem apart from some allusions to victims' rescue, although rescuers themselves do not feature prominently. Some calls for change or for support are

made: 'It isn't fair. Stop sexual exploitation' ('Rose'), 'Put a stop to 21st century slavery. Please support' ('Georgina'). However, it is doubtful whether such 'awareness' could lead to any useful action.

Role of Victims: The victims' portrayal in these videos reflects the dominant approach to understanding their role in the trafficking process – innocent, life-loving, naïve and unsuspecting prey for criminals. Human trafficking, in this context, remains a 'crime committed by ideal offenders against idealized victims' (Wilson and O'Brien 2016). Focussing many of the videos on child victims avoids complex questions of coercion, fraud, vulnerability and abuse of power which apply in situations of adults' trafficking but remain irrelevant within the context of the Palermo protocol's (2000) definition of human trafficking when child trafficking and/or exploitation is involved. Three sexual exploitation plot-lines, including a case of 'domestic' grooming, suggest that victims have been 'rescued' and offered 'help'; two other sexual exploitation story lines offer no positive endings. The domestic servitude storyline portrays a victim escaping her exploiters, whilst the videos of trafficking for forced criminality leave their protagonists in an unfortunate limbo: Nicu in the streets of the city, continuing to commit crimes, and Hung, released from unjust detention, disappearing in the streets.

The representation of victims' agency vis-à-vis situations of trafficking reflects the dominant dualistic policy and media representations of a passive victim vs. 'entrepreneurial' and 'risk-taking' 'illegal' immigrant, overlooking multiple locations where continuums of movement (regular-irregularised), labour (free-forced), and agency (enslaved-free) intersect. The complexity of these issues appears to have been 'resolved' by film-makers' focus on children and young people, legally devoid of any agency within the (much criticized) context of 'globalised childhood' (Okyere and Howard, 2015). This effacing of complexity – and failure to engage with the broader

structural issues that make people vulnerable – helps to construct ignorance around trafficking and exploitation.

Framing devices. A range of framing devices are deployed by video-makers to activate specific mental shortcuts, values and emotions in viewers, including camera framing, different types of camera shots, angles, cutaways, video filters, dramatic music, animation, and visual metaphors. These techniques are deployed to achieve two purposes: make imagined and played out events appear authentic and real; and to highlight the dramatic nature of victims' circumstances. For example, 'Let's talk about sex' begins with a camera shot of an interview set, with the two protagonists having their makeup refreshed. It remains unclear whether they are a real 'victim' and a real 'client', since such a two-stage setup (preparation for the interview and the interviews themselves) adds 'realism' even though, as we discover at the end, 'the film is based on the testimonies of real people'. 'Silent gardener' relies on a 'walking cameraman' effect as if immersing the viewer into the midst of a real-time police operation – the cameraman approaches the door, bursts it open and reveals illegal cannabis cultivation. 'Georgina' includes a narrative by a blonde girl, who tells the story of Georgina's ordeal and who, the viewer may assume, herself took part in Georgina's rescue. The camera focused on the girl's tense hands, giving an impression that talking about Georgina's ordeal was not easy.

The reliance on long shots makes characters look 'vulnerable, isolated or insignificant' (Barrance, 2015), with close-ups deployed to tell the most disturbing part of the story to elevate impact and to convey 'a really strong emotion like sadness' (Barrance, 2015). Experiencing moral compassion at a distance can depend, as Hoijer (2004) argues, on ideal victim images of innocence, suffering and helplessness. This may explain a conspicuous absence of adult male victims of trafficking from the

competition videos: a 'man in his prime', Hoijer (2004) argues, may not be 'worthy of our compassion since we do not regard him as helpless and innocent enough'. Within the context of these docufictions 'normal' men cannot be exploited enough to elevate their 'ideal victim' status to that of an apparently-helpless and abused young woman or a child. For example, an almost-still close up of Rose is shot at a high angle to make her look insignificant and almost swallowed up by the setting in which abuse occurs. 'Nicu' starts with a high angle close-up of Nicu staring at the camera, which then transports us to what looks like a council estate on a bleak day, where his life of forced criminality unfolds.

One of the most striking visual metaphors includes a scene in 'Katerina', in which Katerina – a victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation – juggles a hula-hoop with heart-piercing music in the background. She then throws her hula-hoop at a white man, who represents a criminal/client. As the music intensifies, he throws this hula-hoop back at Katerina revealing that each hula-hoop represents a sexual act forced upon her. A stack of hula-hoops is then shown lying on the floor, which Katerina picks up and attempts to manage but, unable to do so, falls on the floor as dramatic music reaches its crescendo. Another less dramatic metaphor is a cage with birds, which Georgina comes across during her walks in the park, suggesting a cage of domestic servitude. The audio and video materials suggesting victims' innocence (wheat fields, kites flying in blue skies, and young girls' voices discussing the future they want) are juxtaposed with gloomy pictures of victims' day-to-day reality.

The Negative / Criminal frame

Problem definition. The Negative/Criminal frame focuses on traffickers (all men in the reviewed videos), people who rely on victims' services (all men in cases of sexual

exploitation, a couple - a man and a woman - in the case of domestic servitude, and all men forcing children into criminal activities), indifferent parents (allowing their daughter to 'slip off' and be groomed into sexual exploitation), unaware and indifferent 'frontline' professionals, along with a reference to those who use illegal drugs which are (sometimes) produced by trafficked labour. These broad group of criminals, clients/users and officials do not feature as main characters in any of the videos apart from 'Let's Talk About Sex', where client Ian is explaining his reasons for relying on sex purchased via newspaper advertisements. Other male clients are only mentioned in this video by Anja: some are 'very rough', others are 'angry' requesting Anja 'pretend [she] enjoys herself'. Ian's character is further developed when he reveals that for women who sell sex it is about 'making the money', whilst for him it is about 'filling sexual and emotional void'. All people within this frame look 'normal', including Ian, a couple who exploit Georgina, and 'frontline' professionals – anyone, these videos suggest, can be a victim, and anyone can be a criminal. 'Modern slavery is closer than you think' echoes the UK Government awareness campaign (2014), which relies on some of the reviewed videos to assemble a video-montage of 'truths' about 'modern-day slavery'.

Diagnosis and solution. There is no straightforward diagnosis in this frame. Although conflating trafficking for sexual exploitation with sex work, the videos do not make a direct call for sex work to be banned. Equally, no suggestion is put forward to protect the rights of sex workers or improve working conditions in relevant economic sectors. No solutions are offered within the context of the domestic servitude case, apart from an implied suggestion that members of the public need to be vigilant when they come across distressed young girls. The only time members of the public are directly implicated is the case of Hung, where a direct question is put to those viewers who

may consume cannabis: 'You might smoke it…but have you ever questioned where it comes from?' The narrowing down of human trafficking to particularized and individualized instances of sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, cannabis cultivation and petty theft associates human trafficking with 'deviance' and removes it from the sphere of moral and social responsibility of 'normal' viewers. The videos also remove trafficking from the broader structural context. While this shifting between an 'ideal victim' and the attribution of deviance/criminality to victims may appear contradictory, such contradiction is productively playing out in current policy: for example, Musto (2016: chapter 5) describes how, in a US context, people are both treated as 'victims' of trafficking while also being criminalised (through, for example, being left with criminal records for what they did while they were being exploited). 'Silent Gardener' includes a recommendation to train 'frontline workers such as police and social workers' to 'identify the signs of trafficking'. The recommendation is not directed at anyone in particular so it becomes almost impossible to assess the role the viewers are allocated. While there is considerable public debate about some broader systemic changes which might affect the situations presented in the videos (for example, reform of laws relating to sex work or recreational drugs), such discussions do not feature in the videos, and such systemic issues are effaced.

Role of Criminals. Even though six out of eight plot-lines show no faces of traffickers or of men who rely on services provided by sexually exploited women, the blame and responsibility for the acts of trafficking are attributed directly to traffickers and people relying on services provided by trafficked children and women. The complexity of cases of human trafficking, in which former victims of human trafficking, family members or friends may act as traffickers (UNGIFT, 2008) is erased in favour of an image of male, white, middle-aged traffickers/clients, or ordinary-looking family couples.

Framing devices. This frame is distinctive in that the objectification of traffickers and clients through the collective gaze of 'concerned' viewers is reinforced by de-individualising and muting them within the context of almost-voyeuristic abjection. Apart from Ian in 'Let's Talk About Sex', who appears to represent a typical 'punter' (which negates his individual identity), all other traffickers, men who pay for sex, and criminals – whether represented as 'real people' ('Safina', 'I Want to Be', 'Silent Gardener', 'My Name is Georgina', 'Nicu') or, metaphorically as hula-hoops (Katerina), animated snakes or wolfs ('Georgina') – are nameless and, in most cases, faceless. The individualised ordeal of victims is counterpoised with the collective image of a male abuser.

This framing of the problem and solution (or lack of any clear solution) in terms of individual wrong-doers is another instance of ignorance production. A focus on individual wrong-doers makes it harder to see, for example, how the demand for cheap consumer goods and services also creates a demand for exploited labour; or how states' punitive immigration and drug policies render people vulnerable to exploitation and create illegal markets in which exploitation can more easily take place.

The Rescue / Charitable Frame

Problem Definition. This frame suggests that if any positive ending is to be achieved, victims need to be 'rescued'.

Diagnosis and solution. The concepts of 'help' and 'rescue' within this context remain monological, teleological and extremely elastic. The stories of victims' rescue suggest a one-directional, future-facing journey towards a better life as if broader problems which underpin the complexity of individual decisions to migrate disappear once the

victim is taken by an anti-trafficking 'humanitarian' to a 'safe place'. It is monological since it claims to be true for all victims: rescuers and humanitarians appear as moralising agents in the act of charity, with viewers positioned to take a similar moralistic stance. It is teleological in that it is aimed at a known outcome – always more 'humanitarian' rescue work, which appears to displace discussions of sustainable economic development (see Kempadoo, 2015). It is elastic in that the end point is always just on the edge of the horizon – if viewers can join and support rescuers in their hard work, the eradication of trafficking is near but never comes. Once again, ignorance is constructed here through a focus on individual rescue rather than the structural causes of exploitation.

Role of Rescuers. In videos where salvation and rescue are part of the plot, rescuers appear mostly in the background (apart from the case of domestic servitude), their presence asserted by 'victims' confirming they are now in a 'safe place'.

Framing devices. The videos which resolve the individuals' trafficking with an act of rescue rely on two representational devices for rescue workers: metaphorical and 'real' people (i.e. actors). In 'Katerina', for example, the metaphor of light, a flower vase next to the window, and someone bringing Katerina a cup of tea is accompanied by a screen caption that Katerina 'survived and got help'. In 'Georgina', rescuers are represented by a cartoon character fending off snakes and wolfs, and offering a helping hand. In 'My name is Georgina', a girl, who helped Georgina to escape, suggests that keeping birds in a cage in the park was not fair, and asks Georgina if they should free them.

Summary of frames. Three episodic frames were identified: two prominent (criminals and victims), and one less prominent (rescuers). These frames reflect dominant anti-trafficking discourses with 'criminals' and 'victims' both omnipresent yet somehow

distant from the everyday life. 'Rescue' is a possibility, yet it remains unclear what this entails, what it offers to 'victims', and how exactly this might happen. The reviewed docufictions fail to pay adequate attention to broader systemic aspects of trafficking and exploitation, or to draw on robust research on individual experiences of trafficking. They can thus be seen as part of the construction of ignorance about trafficking.

Conclusions

The dramatization and fictionalisation of human trafficking in these docufictions is achieved through drawing attention to varying degrees of physical and mental hardship. Hardships are represented as extraordinary and isolated rather than the everyday reality of the increasing number of 'Others' exploited due to an increasing reliance on mobile yet disempowered labour. Such 'extraordinariness' distracts attention from rhetorical strategies employed and stylistic choices made by video-makers to present these subjective interpretations as evidence of the bigger reality 'out there'. The closeness of the docufictions to the 'historical reality' - elevated by the use of 'real life' stories and data - and therefore their legitimacy can be powerful within a context where the 'true' scale of the problem can never be known, and 'real' victims or criminals cannot be easily interviewed or filmed. This reconstruction of 'reality' is presented as almost the only way to tell the 'truth' – by superimposing and reconstructing 'true' stories upon actors.

However, despite such pretensions of objectivity, these strategies also help to manufacture ignorance about the much more everyday exploitation that Mendel and Sharapov (2016) discuss as part of labour within neoliberalism. For example, a focus on the use of trafficked labour to enable 'deviant' behaviour such as recreational drug use

might help efface the 'normal' use of exploited labour in order to provide affordable consumer goods. Writing about domestic sex trafficking in the US, Musto (2016: xvi) provocatively suggests that 'neoliberalism, or…the carcereal protectionist cures it authorizes, is the biggest pimp daddy of them all'. In future research, there is a real need for work that focuses more on the systematic context of exploitation: to move beyond the focus on individuals in order to engage with neoliberal governmentalities. In media, such as these docufictions, a focus on individuals makes it harder to engage with how neoliberalism – and associated governmentalities – might be the biggest exploiter.

Anti-trafficking docufictions offer their viewers a number of scripts about the trafficked and trafficking Others – who remain, as the UK Government warns us, 'closer than you think', yet removed from the 'normal' everyday. Such discourses situate the 'Other' beyond our understanding and, by offering a static picture of suffering, abuse and humanitarian rescue, deny 'dialogue, interaction or change' (Orgad, 2012: 54). In the process, a series of moralised judgements are imposed upon the 'Others'. The construction of the 'particular' (individual stories of suffering and rescue) as a representative illustration for the 'general' (the 'modern day slavery') rests on the process of individualization, where an individual, her suffering, trauma and rescue are represented as the primary framework for making sense of human trafficking generally. Orgad (2012: 79) comments that such representational regimes remain 'conjoined with and supported by the reign of consumerism, neo-liberal ideology and therapeutic discourse'. The humanitarian vision of rescue and the moralising of Otherness are superimposed on those '…nominated to stand as victims. It suffices to see them, nameless but not faceless, desperate and without dignity, aware but silenced' (Nichols, 1991: 12).

Mendel and Sharapov (2016: 679) argue that 'as well as following Foucault…to consider the interplay between knowledge and power…researchers working on trafficking and exploitation should also consider the important and productive interplay between ignorance and power'. In the context of docufictions, this ignorance/power relationship is important and productive. For Orgad (2012: 25) '[p]ower relations are encoded in media representations, and media representations in turn produce and reproduce power relations by constructing knowledge, values, conceptions and beliefs'. One should also be aware of the ignorance certain power relations construct and of the way such ignorance becomes productive. Ignorance, values and beliefs are mobilised by 'stakeholders' to establish and maintain relations of domination through 'common sense' taken-for-granted and self-evident truths, which are often accepted uncritically. For Zerubavel (2015: 70-71), 'by figuratively spotlighting certain issues and events while downplaying or even completely ignoring others [the mass media]…play a critical role in both the production and maintenance of our collective blind spots'.

This paper illustrates how the aspiration to 'educate' the general public about human trafficking, or to 'raise awareness', might actually diffuse any impetus for effective political engagement, by replacing this with an episodic engagement with docufictions. With this in mind, there is a need for tools and approaches which can effectively stimulate new ways of thinking about the personal relevance of what is constructed to be a remote and personally irrelevant problem. In doing so, we agree with Nisbet (2009: 44) that recognising links between the individual's everyday, values and social problems is 'by no means a magical key to catalyzing action, but it is a first step'. Although we are critical of anti-trafficking docufictions, there is more positive potential in this type of media. While we welcome moves to challenge exploitation, there is a

need for 'catalyzing action' that goes beyond representations of human trafficking, 'victims', and 'perpetrators' as extraordinary. Instead, political communication and engagement should foreground the role of exploitation in everyday life. To echo Musto (2016: xvi), if neoliberalism is at the centre of exploitative labour practices, it should be neoliberalism and associated governmentalities – rather than individual exploiters pimps or criminals – that are centred in anti-exploitation and anti-trafficking activism. While docufictions such as those analysed here can help to normalise everyday exploitation, their very efficacy in doing so should also make us consider their potential for challenging this. Additionally, it may be that – rather than developing 'educational' and 'awareness raising' materials – saying *less* about human trafficking and more about other political struggles could be a more effective approach.

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Endnotes

[i] Including the UK's Gangmaster's Licensing Authority, National Crime Agency - see http://unchosen.org.uk/about/partnersfunders/

[ii] For further discussion of these transformations see, for example, a collection of contributions in the Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking (2017) or the special issue (2017, issue 9) of the Anti-Trafficking Review 'The Lessons of History'.

[iii] Yick and Shapira (2010: 113) suggest that there may be an increased focus on sex trafficking in YouTube videos because this is potentially "more titillating than other types of trafficking".

[iv] See Mendel and Sharapov (in preparation) for further analysis of the anti-trafficking app boom

[v] www.vimeo.com/unchosen

[vi] See also Hoijer's (2004) discussion of the 'ideal victims' within the context of the 'global compassion' discourse.