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Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Sex Trafficking in the Media: A Content Analysis

by

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Thesis

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Abstract

The following analysis focuses on the issues of sexual assault, domestic violence, and sex trafficking in media portrayals. A content analysis was done on six film releases, two for each of the topics. Prevalence of myths, stereotypes, victim portrayal, perpetrator portrayal, and final outcomes/consequences were reviewed within each of the films, along with overall themes present. The content analysis results found that some myths are present and vary by category. The most common theme in the movies was the ineptitude of the criminal justice system to successfully intervene and aid victims. Another commonly occurring theme was that victims must escape their abusers individually, without the aid of social services or the criminal justice system.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the inception of the cinema and visual media, scholars and politicians have held the view that media can and does influence reality. Particularly, violence in the media influences violence in reality. During the Nixon administration the Surgeon General issued a report that seemed to provide scientific evidence that violence in the mass media resulted in raised violence in society (Rothman, 2001). The report stated that violent media desensitizes audiences, making them more prone to committing violent acts.

Scholars, of course, set out to disprove such evidence. Howitt and Cumberbatch (1975) found this evidence to be unfounded and more of an assumption than statistical evidence. Their conclusions were much different than those of the Surgeon General's report: they found that media violence has no effect on societal violence, and such media portrayals of violence may even decrease the amount of actual violence (Howitt and Cumberbatch, 1975).

Historically, American media outlets have been plagued by accusations of detriment to society. In the early 20th century, all the nickelodeons in New York City were shut down by the mayor, citing that such amusements degraded the morality of citizens (Rothman, 2001). Even the U.S. Supreme Court agreed that films had the power to create evil, due in part to their exhibition and attractiveness. Such critiques of media have remained, with new accusations being introduced as the medium evolves and becomes more popular. The most recent debate seems to revolve around the intense violence portrayed in video games and whether this violence begets violent actions in American teenagers.

This cannot be more evident than in the recent examples of violent attacks in public schools. Starting with the Columbine incident in 1997, news channels reported the incident as it unfolded twenty-four hours a day for weeks. Between 1996 and 2006, just over 100 incidences

of school homicide occurred, with nearly every one of them garnering some form of attention from the national media (CDC, 2008).

With the media in frenzy, it seemed America's youth was on a downward spiral of bullying and homicidal violence. However, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) (2008), less than 1% of all homicides or suicides of school-aged youth occurred on school grounds. Also, in the ten-year period from 1996 to 2006, about 116 youths were killed on school grounds. The media were helpful in skewing such facts. Even though America is a less violent place than ten, twenty, or a hundred years ago, Americans believe that violence is a growing problem with no end in sight (Rothman, 2001).

Violence depicted in media is increasing in occurrence and severity as time goes on. The violence seen in today's media is much more gruesome than the violence depicted several decades ago (Hiltbrand, 2007). But why would graphic content continue to increase in vulgarity and frequency? One theory is that networks and media moguls are competing with each other to deliver more sensational television and film to an ultra-desensitized audience (Hiltbrand, 2007). Moreover, violence seems to be heavily tolerated within American culture in particular. Melissa Caldwell, director of research for the Parents Television Council, points out that the FCC (Federal Communication Commission) currently has no jurisdiction over violent content. However, the watchdog group does aggressively police sexual content in the media (Hiltbrand, 2007).

It is with this in mind that I turn to the media for studying attitudes and perceptions of violence against women. What is reality for victims of such atrocities and what is seen in the media are often two different things. While it does not seem that media causes such crimes, the influence on beliefs and attitudes can and often are reflected in media portrayals. If nothing else,

media have the ability to reflect the larger attitudes of society when it comes to gender roles and female victimization in the form of domestic violence, rape, and sex trafficking.

While domestic violence is not talked about frequently in the media, how media outlets communicate stereotypes and attitudes about the issue can certainly impact how the issue is addressed and treated. Several films and television shows portray domestic violence situations but do not call them such. This is imperative to understanding the dynamics of domestic violence. Many women being controlled and subordinated do not think they fit the “image” of a domestic violence victim. The media are among the primary perpetrators of images and myths of domestic violence.

Sexual assault can be seen more within media outlets, as entire movies are made centered on an act of rape or sexual assault. *The Accused* is perhaps one of the most famous depictions of rape and the consequences for victims in the criminal justice system at that time. Recent years are no different, with many films being produced focusing on rape and the consequences for victims and their families. Many of these are made-for-TV movies, with Hollywood not tackling the issue as of late. This will undoubtedly have consequences for the image of rape victims.

Film portrayal of victims, fictional or not, can give information on how victims are treated in reality and also how attitudes about prostitutes and human rights violations are formed. The consequences of treating a sex trafficking victim as a prostitute is that prostitution is illegal in the United States and in many other countries. The term “prostitute” denotes a woman as a criminal, whether she was forced into the situation or not. This research will attempt to analyze and explain, within a context, the possible consequences of victims after an intervention. One of the possible consequences that will be addressed is whether their victimization is only furthered by intervention, such as, if the victim is arrested for prostitution and jailed or deported.

Media representations of violence against women, or violence by women, have been studied by scholars for several years. The inception of Battered Woman Syndrome and its use as a legal defense has most recently drawn attention to the topic of how violence against women begets violence by women. Noh et al. (2010) used newspaper reporting's of homicides by women against an intimate to determine how these media outlets give an account of such incidences and whether the women perpetrators were seen as mad, bad, or reasonable human beings.

Noh and colleagues (2010) argue that certain stereotypes of battered women, some of which are disseminated by the media, can affect how they are treated by the criminal justice system and by other social service agencies. Such treatment is a result of the expectations that are held about the behavior of battered women. Noh et al. (2010) also argue that secondary claims makers, such as newspapers, have more influence over what details of the situation are accepted as truth than primary claims makers (the battered woman).

Noh et al. (2010) mention the feminist jurisprudence model for explaining women who kill their abusers, which argues that Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS) portrays the woman as someone incapable of reason or rationality. For use in their study, the argument is made that BWS defense is not a justification due to the fact that many women turn to homicide as a rationally chosen option. Gender role expectations and media representations insist that domestic violence is a personal problem that a woman has to solve on her own (Noh et al., 2010). However, many women cannot simply "escape" their batterer by themselves. With the complications of finance, children, and the very real threat of retaliatory violence, it could be argued that an abused woman may view killing the abuser as the only realistic way to end the violence.

The results of the study indicated that the medicalized understanding of women who kill their abusers was the most frequently used justification, occurring in about 39% of the articles. This would indicate that these news sources understood female homicide perpetrators as insane or suffering from a mental illness, such as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) or BWS. The rationality model was the second most prevalent explanation, present in about 30% of news articles. This model postulates that women who kill abusive men “get away with it,” or choose to kill for vengeance rather than self-defense (Noh et al., 2010).

As these researchers have shown, gender stereotypes and perceived gender roles have an impact on how violence against and by women is treated. The mass media have a role in such perceptions of how a woman is battered and also how a woman reacts to being battered. The expectations generated and reflected in the media lend themselves to shaping attitudes of victimization and how violence against women is defined and ultimately treated in society and the criminal justice system.

Research Question

The research question that will be posed is: How are the issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking portrayed in popular movies? How does this compare with findings from scholarly research and organizations that advocate for survivors? How are perpetrators portrayed, and how are victims characterized? Do dominant themes include blame or shame to the victim, and how are advocacy groups introduced (if at all)?

The Problem

This research is necessary in order to understand these issues in context, as well as the appropriate course of action. While there are currently several organizations whose goal is to intervene and support victims, these phenomenon still affect women and girls worldwide.

Statistically, one in three women will find herself a victim of domestic violence and/or sexual assault in her lifetime (oneinthreewomen.com).

Domestic abuse encompasses an array of controlling, subordinating behaviors. According to DomesticViolence.org (2009), the definition of domestic violence (abuse) is any act or behavior used by a person in a relationship to control, subordinate, or enslave the other person. This can include physical abuse; however, many times it includes emotional, psychological, and financial abuse.

The Domestic Violence Project of Duluth, Minnesota, created a wheel that outlines the different tactics and behaviors abusers use to control their victims. These include using coercion or threats, emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation, using children, financial abuse, using male privilege, and denying/blaming the victim. This is contrary to the “typical” image of domestic abuse, which stipulates that one is a victim of abuse only when he or she is physically assaulted. Our criminal justice system works in a similar way, only being able to prosecute domestic violence cases when physical harm or the threat of physical harm is present. All other forms of abuse are not currently considered in violation of the law.

Several myths are also widely accepted about the issue of domestic violence. Many people believe that domestic abuse does not occur where they live, which research has shown to be contrary for years ([domestic violence.org](http://domesticviolence.org), 2009). Domestic abuse is also not believed to occur in upper class communities; it is a problem experienced by lower class individuals. However, the

Michigan State Police reported over 5,000 domestic violence victims in Oakland County (one of the wealthier counties in Michigan) in 1998 alone (domestic violence.org, 2009).

Historically, domestic abuse was thought to occur behind closed doors and should be handled as such. The issue is not viewed to be as widespread, and many believe they are not affected by abuse. The one-in-three statistics prove otherwise. So many women are abused in this country (and in the world) that almost certainly every person knows someone affected by domestic abuse and/or sexual assault.

Perhaps the most devastating myths have to do with blaming the victim. The question almost always arises about what the woman did to provoke her attacker. Certain dynamics of domestic abuse are still poorly understood, including why the victim does not just leave her abuser. Leaving is often very complicated for the victim, and this is a very dangerous time for her. The victim is most likely to be abused when she tries to leave, which could even result in murder (United States Department of Justice, National Crime Victim Survey, 1995). Until these myths and dynamics are understood, domestic abuse will continue to affect one in three women worldwide.

Sexual assault victims share many of the same myths domestic abuse victims face. However, there are several important implications to remember. Rape and sexual assault are the most underreported crimes (RAINN.org, 2009), due to certain stigmas. Victim blaming is rampant when talking about rape victims. How the victim dressed, where she was when she was raped, what time it was when she was raped, and even the victims' sexual history are used to justify the act and blame the victim for her circumstances.

These myths and attitudes have several important consequences. As reported by RAINN.org (2009), only about six percent of rape perpetrators will ever spend a day in jail.

Seventy-five percent of victims know their perpetrator (RAINN.org, 2009), and as a result may be even more reluctant to report the crime or pursue charges, due to devastating social implications. With one in six women being victimized sexually, this problem, like domestic violence, is widespread and affects nearly everyone.

Sexual assault has many serious consequences for victims as well. Apart from experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is difficult to treat, victims also experience a wide variety of physical and psychological symptoms. These include, but are not limited to, eating disorders, sleep disorders, substance abuse, self-mutilation, depression, suicide, pregnancy, STDs, and Stockholm Syndrome (RAINN.org, 2009). Clearly the attitudes and implications of rape and sexual assault affect the victim, as well as the victim's family and friends, with devastating consequences.

While the exact numbers as to how many women are victims of trafficking are hard to measure, Farr (2005) reports the following information on how many women have been trafficked out of their home countries for the purpose of sex work:

- 100,000 to 200,000 Thai women prostituting in other countries
- 50,000 women from the Dominican Republic prostituting abroad
- 14,000 Albanian women prostituting in various European nations
- 35, 000 women trafficked out of Columbia for sexual exploitation every year
- 25,000 women trafficked out of Bangladesh each year (Farr, 2005)

Furthermore, the number of victims trafficked is continually increasing. Because the sex industry demands youth and since many women can become diseased, there is no shortage of prostitution job openings. Farr (2005) also reports on how the sex trafficking industry is expanding:

- Albanian sex workers in Italy increased from 8,000 in 1998 to 20,000 in 2000.
- The trafficking of Thai women into South Africa for sex work increased by a factor of ten between 1997 and 2000.
- An estimated 25,000 were prostituting in the Dominican Republic in 1986, by 1996 that number had doubled to nearly 50,000.

Clearly, as these statistics suggest, sex trafficking is an ever-growing problem. With globalization increasing our mobility and communication, the sex industry is growing as well. The demand for prostitutes is increasing, and there seems to be a never-ending supply of vulnerable victims. As long as sex trafficking remains a lucrative business, these numbers have nowhere to go but up.

The way in which victims of sex trafficking are intervened upon has a direct impact on the overall sex trafficking industry. In many instances when criminal justice agencies perform a raid on a brothel suspected of employing trafficked women, the victims are jailed for prostitution or illegal immigration and either imprisoned or deported. If the victims are deported back to their home countries, they leave their bondage debt unsettled. Many traffickers used bondage debt as a way of controlling their victims. If a victim leaves without fulfilling her debt, the trafficker's organization will more than likely track her or her family down and demand payment. When the family cannot pay, the victim will either be forced back into prostitution or her family members (sisters, cousins, etc.) will have to pay her debt. Now, since the victim had to be trafficked out of her country twice, the debt bondage will increase twofold.

It is in this way that intervention can be a catalyst for exacerbating the consequences victims face. For this reason, and others, it is imperative to understand how the media and the general public view the victimhood of trafficked women so as to not further the harms caused.

Criminal justice policies, as well as international law, must be sensitive to the needs of a victim and causes of their victimhood. Unless these facets are understood, proper intervention and services cannot be rendered.

Media and Gender Violence

According to Berns (2004), the media has a massive influence over perceptions of social problems, including domestic abuse. However, it is not just the journalist who chooses what stories are run and which are passed over. Berns argues that entertainment and ratings are prized over integrity in media journalism; outlining four key guidelines for reporting social problems in the media, focusing on magazine content (Berns, 2004). Berns (2004) discovered these four guidelines for reporting domestic violence after interviewing several editors of women's magazines. The first key feature is to be service oriented; that is, the editors felt it was their mission to provide services and tools to their readers. The second guideline is to provide empowerment to readers. They do this by use of the third guideline, keeping it personal. These editors tried to keep their stories to one individual victim's story instead of providing commentary on more complex social issues. This is important for the last guideline, which is to provide an uplifting or hopeful ending. Berns (2004) argues that these are the key ways in which women's magazines frame abusive situations as empowering and "inspirational." With the emphasis in modern media being entertainment, stories about prolonged and ongoing turmoil and abuse are "depressing." Berns argues that the inspirational magazine articles are more attractive and marketable, even if they only report on anecdotal cases that have uplifting and positive endings (Berns, 2004).

Berns (2004) also discusses men's magazines, as they often contain political articles that help to shape how domestic violence is portrayed in the media. She argues that even magazines such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* can send strong political messages. While the main attraction to such magazines is pornographic pictures of women, these pictures serve to subsidize the political views of the editors. In essence, editors of such magazines do not have to worry about taking on a controversial view on a particular topic because people will still buy the magazine for the nude pictures.

These male-oriented magazines wish to reframe how domestic abuse is seen and defined, using an antifeminist model to achieve this. While reviewing several men's and political magazines, Berns (2004) found the articles were against the battered women movement. This movement, which began in the 1970s, emphasizes three key features of domestic abuse. First, victims should not be held responsible for the abuse they endure. Second, abuse is primarily a problem of males abusing females. And last, abuse is an innate feature of patriarchy that serves to further discriminate against women.

In order to reframe domestic abuse to be more "pro-male," Berns (2004) identified five commonalities she found in her study of men's magazines. She included articles on domestic violence she found in *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *National Review*, *The New Republic*, and *Reason* magazines. Of these articles, many were written in the mid 1990s. This is most likely due to the O. J. Simpson trial that was going on at the time, which turned attention to domestic violence, racism, and the legal system as a whole.

The content observed in these articles is quite disturbing. First, these articles wish to reframe the problem to take the issue of gender out of the equation entirely. They stated that domestic violence is a "human issue," not a gendered issue. They do this by emphasizing female

incidences of abuse to make it seem as if men and women abuse at the same rates (Berns, 2004). Such articles may include several personal stories about incidences where females perpetrated violence, but male perpetrated abuse is left entirely out of the discussion.

A second common feature of these magazine articles is that they blame the victim for their treatment. The responsibility of abuse lies with the female victim, not with the male perpetrator. These articles argued that at the very least the abused and the abuser are in a consensual relationship, and the victim does receive some kind of emotional gratification from the union. The editors of such magazines stated that female victims are assumed to be angelic bystanders, and their abusers cavemen-like brutes. What these same editors ignore is that while a victim may not be “innocent,” as they define it, no act or behavior on the part of the victim justifies abuse.

The third and fourth commonalities are similar to one another. The third feature was a critique of how female violence is tolerated within society, while male violence is condemned. This is tied to the fourth feature: men are often discriminated against in the legal system in domestic violence cases. The antifeminist message of these articles suggests that women should be held accountable for their abuse of men. These articles also state that men will go to great lengths to avoid admitting their abuse because of their socialization. While this may be true, these same articles also ignore that men are very rarely held accountable for their abuse of women in society, as well as in the legal system (Berns, 2004).

Since the problem of domestic violence is so badly skewed to incriminate men, as the antifeminist model in these articles would argue, surely female abuse activists and advocates are to blame for such a misconception. This is the final feature observed: battering advocates are to blame for the currently perceived social problem of “domestic violence.” These individuals and

groups are chastised for being anti-male, because that they also emphasize male abuse and ignore female abusers. As stated before, the attitude these men's magazine articles convey is that if only men are treated and held responsible for domestic violence, only half the problem will be solved (Berns, 2004).

Another example using print media sources was conducted by Herren and Messing (2009). They used newspaper sources found in the Lexus-Nexus database to analyze domestic homicide reports. They chose to focus primarily on reports involving multiple fatalities, as they wished to analyze the problem as mass murder. Their sample generated 78 reports, of which 71 were committed by male perpetrators. As this is typical of such cases, for the purposes of their research they focused on the 71 cases that involved male killers.

The analysis revealed heavy use of police sources, which can be problematic. This is especially true in cases where there are no living witnesses or unusual circumstances. In these cases, police accounts are taken as gospel with no other sources being used. In one report of a murder that occurred almost immediately after the perpetrator was released from jail, police sources deflected the notion that this case was a lapse in social controls.

Another piece of information revealed by the research is that some of the reports tended to support one side of the case or the other, either the prosecution or the defense. Very few reports appeared "neutral." Reporters especially tended to discredit the prosecution when the victim was of foreign status, as was the case of a Philippine mail-order bride who was murdered by her husband after she alleged abuse on his part. However, many cases did chastise the defense and support the victims, especially in cases where one or more of the victims were children.

Most startling, only about a quarter of the cases used alternative sources such as advocates or violence professionals. However, reports that did include these sources had relevant

information. Advocates and professionals felt that domestic violence can be predicted to some extent, and threats of violence are usually carried out. These sources also point out that domestic violence can occur in any relationship, even in families who outwardly appear to be “perfect.” Moreover, courts and police tend to ignore or downplay the seriousness of domestic violence. Whereas police sources report that offenders “snap” and become violent, advocates take the opposite view, reporting that perpetrators often plan their violence with careful choosing of methods. Advocates will also point out that victims are never to blame, and discrediting of victims in court takes away from holding abusers accountable (Herren and Messing, 2009).

Heron and Messing (2009) contend that many times newspaper reports are the only story thousands of readers have on a particular incident, especially in the case of spree or mass domestic murder, where the incident may end with the perpetrator committing suicide. Little investigation is done after this point, with print news being the only printed records. Moreover, with many citizens asking why a particular event occurred, newspaper reports are their only answers. The authors argue that sources other than advocates and professionals tend to blame victims or use point-the-finger tactics, and education about such consequences may serve to curb such victim blame in the future (Herron and Messing, 2009).

However, media handling of violence against women can be analyzed in a non-Western context as well. In 2009 Khondaker and Barlow also used print media to establish how such violence is constructed in India, specifically Bangladesh. The scholars took interest in this region because of their use of Purdah, a conservative form of patriarchy that most domestic violence there is attributed to. Complicating matters in the region is police corruption, with survey data showing that only 2% of women who seek help for their abuse go to authorities (Khondaker and Barlow, 2009).

Using a daily English-language newspaper publication in Bangladesh, the researchers analyzed news reports of domestic violence, paying attention to how the victims and perpetrators were treated. They found that many murders and even some rapes were dowry-related, or the murders were for some kind of financial means. Even though the use of dowries is prohibited by law throughout India, the practice is still used behind closed doors. If a bride's family is unable or unwilling to pay dowry demands, a husband may murder his wife, remarry, and seek additional dowries (Khondaker and Barlow).

As for arrests and punishments, these were almost nonexistent due to the extent of corruption of authorities in Bangladesh. However, of the cases that were pursued by the state, more than 90% of perpetrators received death or life in prison as a sentence. But victims are punished frequently as well. While not punished by authorities, Purdah states that victims are blamed for crimes done to them. Women bear the burden of shame and humiliation for being raped and abused, with some choosing to commit suicide in order to restore honor to their families (Khondake and Barlow, 2009).

Cuklanz (2000) reports in her book, *Rape on Primetime* (2000), that sexual assault has been dealt with very delicately in the mass media. This is not because our world is desensitized to the issue, but rather because media outlets wish to seem non-threatening in the issues they deal with. Cuklanz (2000) used over 100 dramatic U.S. television episodes from 1976-1990 to analyze the pace, manner, and treatment of the issues of rape and rape reform. She chose these years specifically because the rape movement was most active and most effective during these years.

Benedict and Cuklanz, in a 1992 study and a 1996 study, found that mainstream newspaper articles, television, and films often dramatized rape cases and did not adequately

discuss feminist-based understandings of the phenomenon. They also found that movies, especially made-for-television movies, were more successful in portraying feminist perspectives as well as portraying the victims sympathetically. Feminist perspectives were considered those that were more progressive in that they did not adhere to “traditional” female stereotypes, which define a female role as one that encompasses child raising and staying inside the home.

While these problems persist, media representations can often skew the reality or lessen the consequences. In addition, the media may even be biased against women in their portrayals of females as manipulative, sex-hungry, or even as deserving of violence. Many media forms sexually objectify women, lessening them to only their sexual organs. These media interpretations can make it seem a woman’s worth is not in her intellect or intelligence, but in her genitals.

Certain consequences of such media representations can further complicate how women view and understand their treatment. The attitude that “she deserves it,” or that such treatment is the norm, can prevent a victim from seeking services. The services, when sought, can be altered by such views as well. The way police and social service agencies react or provide aid to such victims can certainly be shaped and altered by unfavorable depictions seen in media outlets (Farr, 2005).

Methodology

Content analysis has been widely used since the 1940s. This research method generally entails an analysis of words or concepts within printed text, where a researcher pulls out meanings of these concepts and applies them to the writer, the reader, or even the culture and time in which a text was written. Content analysis has evolved into the modern world as well,

being a tool many media and communication scholars use in order to analyze visual media, such as film, television, or sometimes radio (Kirppendorf, 2004).

Content analysis has evolved in an additional manner as well. Historically, content analysis included a count of words or sentences in a particular body of text. Obviously in evaluating visual media this is not as practical; as an alternative researchers pull out recurring themes or images instead of recurring groups of words. This has allowed the methodology to be used in a myriad of ways. Content analysis has been used to detect propaganda, reveal communication differences, and describe attitude and behavior responses to social issues (Kirppendorf, 2004).

Such research will use content analysis to identify and analyze images and concepts within film media with recurring themes of violence against women. What is communicated through these films is key in understanding how attitudes are reflected or even shaped through film. Since violence against women is an international problem, films from international production studios may also be included, giving substance to analysis of how different cultures communicate on this particular issue, as well as what future path could be evident.

Most likely there are going to be many of the domestic violence and sexual assault myths present in the analysis of popular media, in both television and film portrayals which may present a distorted image of victims, including how a woman is blamed for her own victimization. While the victim is blamed, the perpetrator is not questioned and most likely does not receive any type of punishment for his actions.

The consequences I will be looking for in the film are any social consequences or retaliation the perpetrator might experience. Also considered will be: whether the criminal justice

system becomes involved, and if the perpetrator was prosecuted and convicted. If this is so, I will also discuss what his sentence was.

I will also look at the ease of escape for the victim. As discussed, the most dangerous time in an abused woman's life is when she tries to leave her batterer. How does the film portray this, or is it not mentioned at all? Analysis of support systems the victim uses in order to escape and move on will also be discussed. As self-definition aids in motivation to escape, there will also be a discussion on any scenes where the victim realizes that she is being abused and what she realizes she needs to do to address the issue.

Based on this review, my research will generally inquire about the following topics:

- What myths are present in the film?
- Is the victim blamed for her treatment?
- How is the perpetrator portrayed (negatively, positively) and does he suffer any consequences for his actions?
- How is the victim blamed for her treatment?
- Does the victim leave her situation? Was it "easy" for her?
- Does the film show how the victim overcomes being abused?
- If so, how does she deal with the consequences of abuse, and what were some consequences she endured?

Popular media film portrayals of trafficking victims will differ from documentaries based on sex trafficking victims. Popular media forms tend to exaggerate or glamorize real-life events, sometimes to the point of pure fiction. I expect to find that documentary accounts of sex trafficking incidences to be more accurate in their portrayals and facts than the popular media films.

Movie Choice Justifications

The movies chosen for analysis reflect current trends in popular media. Most of the films were produced and released after the year 2000, with the exception of *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), *Mother's Revenge* (1993) and *Fear* (1996). This was done to achieve an accurate perception of where these concepts are in today's media. Many films prior to the 1980s have themes of domestic violence and rape; however, these portrayals are that of a normative concept of these phenomena.

Films have changed their handling of such issues since the women's movement in the 1980s. This era of feminism further advocated for women's rights in politics, reproductive choice, equal pay, and so forth. Objectives also included bringing domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment to the forefront. Prior to this movement, little was done about such issues and women were expected to endure such treatment, with severe punishments to those who would not. Popular media at the time reflected this, which is a primary reason why such films were not included.

Enough (2002) and *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991) were films that continually came up with internet searches, Google and IMDB.com using the search criteria "domestic violence." Several other titles did come up, but domestic violence was only mentioned or portrayed briefly and not a central theme. Both films include "A list" stars who draw attention, so such film portrayals of violence against women would be seen by a vast audience.

Rape and sexual assault films were much harder to come by. With the exception of such films as *The Accused* (1988), Hollywood seems hesitant to confront this issue. I was able to find several films produced by the *Lifetime* network, a basic cable network oriented around women's issues with women as a target audience. Many of the synopsis of these films depicted rape

victims seeking revenge for their treatment, which prompted me to select one of these films entitled *A Mother's Revenge* (1993).

A second film for this section was harder to come by. Not wanting to include two films from the Lifetime network, internet searches brought my attention to another film from the 1990s, *Fear* (1996). Marketed as a thriller, *Fear* contains direct themes of rape and dating violence. Such controversial films will more than likely bring a unique perspective to an analysis on rape in the media.

For the sex trafficking film choices, *Holly* (2007) and *Trade* (2006) also came up frequently in the same searches as the previous films mentioned, with reviews being favorable to the relevant content. They also include well-known actors as main characters, even though *Holly* was produced as an independent film and *Trade* didn't necessarily draw large numbers to the box office.

There were a decent number of films that used the theme of sex trafficking; however, many of them were documentaries. Some 10-12 films were more mainstream films, meaning they were produced by a major Hollywood studio and the plot line mainly fictional. These movies even included more popular titles, such as *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005), which is a fictional account of a woman who was sold into prostitution in Japan at a young age when she was orphaned a few years prior to World War II. These trends solidify the fact that violence against women is an issue seen in the media for a number of years, and sex trafficking is a more current trending topic within the world of popular media.

Chapter 2: Domestic Violence and the Media

As the following chapters on sexual assault will identify, certain myths surround the concepts of abuse and domestic violence. Victim blame, guilt, shame, and ease of escape are just to name a few. Lundy Bancroft (2002) further outlines such myths surrounding domestic violence. In his substantial book, *Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*, Bancroft (2002) identifies 17 myths associated with abusers:

1. The abuser was abused as a child.
2. The abuser's previous partners hurt them.
3. An abuser torments the one he/she loves most.
4. An abuser holds in his/her feelings.
5. Abusers often have aggressive personalities.
6. Abusers lose control.
7. Abusers suffer from too much anger.
8. The abuser is mentally ill.
9. Male abusers hate women.
10. Abusers are afraid of intimacy and abandonment.
11. Abusers have low self-esteem.
12. Abusers have a stressful work life.
13. Abusers have poor communication skills.
14. There are as many abusive men as there are abusive women.
15. Abuse is just as bad for the perpetrator as it is the victim.
16. The abuser is a victim of racism or other prejudice.
17. The abuser is dependent on alcohol or drugs.

Through his experience and case studies, Bancroft (2002) was able to debunk these myths. There is no substantial evidence to suggest child abuse causes domestic abuse, or that mental illness or substance dependence are a cause of domestic abuse. Bancroft (2002) stipulates that many of these myths are used as justifications or excuses as to why the abusers should not be held accountable for their own actions. The reality is that abusers are very much in control of their behaviors, and there is no justification for the systematic control and subjugation of a partner (Bancroft, 2002).

Bancroft further argues for a substantive program for abusers that entails confrontation of the attitudes that contribute to their abusive behaviors. He employs a 52-week group and individual therapy program to break down an abuser's patterns so that non-abusive attitudes may be introduced. However, even Bancroft will admit there is a long road to achieve an abuse-free world in which the larger social conditions must be altered as well as individual attitudes (Bancroft, 2002).

Hollywood has produced several films on the topic of domestic violence. One of the most recent films depicting this type of violence is *Enough* (2002) starring Jennifer Lopez. Another film that tells the story of an abused woman is *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991). I will analyze these film portrayals, as well as discuss the dynamics of domestic abuse within the context of the film. I will do this by answering some key questions:

- What D.V. myths are present in the film?
- Is the victim blamed for her treatment?
- How is the perpetrator portrayed (negatively, positively), and does he suffer any consequences for his actions?
- Do other characters in the film blame the victim or the perpetrator?

- Does the victim leave her situation? Was it “easy” for her?
- Does the film show how the victim overcomes being abused?
- If so, how does she deal with the consequences of abuse, and what were some consequences she endured?

Analysis

Many scholarly articles exist that attempt to analyze gender and gender role portrayal in the media. One such article, by Capecchi and Demaria (1997), used European news broadcasts to develop a sense of what roles women play within popular news media and how female gender roles are constructed.

While Capecchi and Demaria (1997) found that there are about as many female correspondents as male correspondents (in number), the jobs female journalists are given are starkly different from their male colleagues. Female correspondents are mostly involved in “infotainment” or “entertainment” reporting and are very rarely ever seen as “experts.” Furthermore, the programs that use female reporters deal with domestic or “private” matters and almost exclusively air on the weekends as opposed to during the week. When female interviewers or interviewees are being used as “expert” on a given subject, many times their answers were not taken seriously or believed. Consequently, male experts were asked to “clarify” an answer or statement given by a female expert (Capecchi and Demaria, 1997).

Much can be understood by how violent women are depicted in the media as well. Morrissey (2006) argues that extremely violent women, while uncommon, are judged not only for their brutality but for their violation of female gender roles as well (Morrissey, 2006). She analyzed the case and media coverage of Karla Homolka, who was tried and convicted of raping

and killing several women with the aid of her then-husband, Paul Bernardo. Karla, being tried first, had the luxury of telling journalists and the Canadian court her side of the story before Bernardo. Having turned herself in, she depicted herself as a battered woman who was as much a victim of Paul as the girls they murdered. Due to this, she received a much more lenient sentence than her former husband (Morrissey, 2006).

However, video tapes surfaced during Bernardo's trial that painted a different picture. Karla was videotaped laughing, fully engaging, and enjoying the rapes and assaults she participated in. The level of violence she engaged in, willingly as it seemed, was unprecedented on the part of a woman. While men have been documented to be extremely violent and aggressive in this manner, Homolka was chastised for being a sexual sadist. More media attention was given to her character, with Bernardo being almost entirely ignored in the press (Morrissey, 2006).

The public's fascination with Homolka had as much to do with her gender as it did with her crimes. Women were not supposed to engage in such horror, let alone enjoy such devious acts. Homolka did not seem to embody the typical gender roles of a young woman and a young wife. Because of this, she was condemned by the public more vehemently than her companion, who was just as involved in the crimes (Morrissey, 2006).

This is important in understanding the plight of female victims as it pertains to sexual assault and violence. When violence is perpetrated by women, it is very poorly understood as it does not keep with the passive, nurturing stereotype of the gender. Much female violence is justified as revenge for suffering violence themselves, and some might say women routinely are treated much more leniently by the criminal justice system. These gender differences in punishments almost certainly are present when discussing female victimhood in the media.

For the purposes of this research, I will be following the model that Ross and Rothe use in their article “Lights, Camera, State Crime” (2007). Their argument is that simply discussing and talking about atrocious state crimes does not convey the detrimental consequences such crimes produce. However, using media portrayals of state crimes can better convey a message of how serious these crimes and their consequences really are, and therefore more effective measures can be introduced to intervene and prevent such crimes. Rothe and Ross (2007) emailed surveys to 15 colleagues who teach state crime in their classes. The surveys asked teachers primarily what type of materials they require students to be familiar with when learning about state crime. They then sent follow-up surveys to these same people in order to compile a list of films that illustrate such state crimes.

They then assessed each movie according to eight key issues:

- What type of film
- When the film was produced
- Where the film was set
- What decade the film was set
- The type of state crime portrayed
- What portion of the film dealt with state crime
- What type of control the film depicted
- Were there any other dominant themes within the film.

From these key issues, Rothe and Ross (2007) were able to identify that Hollywood film and documentaries had stark differences in their portrayals of state crime. Documentaries had very little to no other dominant themes within the film, with 80%-100% of the film time being devoted to the particular state crime addressed. However, Hollywood film tended to have other

dominant themes that included love, money, fear, and death, with only 20%-70% of the film time being devoted to state crime. Their findings suggest that a better understanding of state crimes comes from media portrayals and visual tools, as opposed to discussions or seminars.

Synopsis: *Sleeping with the Enemy*

With the post-feminist era success of such movies as *The Accused* (1988), Hollywood began to produce films that dealt with violence against women in a feminist context. *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), starring Julia Roberts, is the story of a how an abuse victim escapes from her incredibly violent husband. The film opens to a sad-looking woman collecting clams on the beaches of Cape Cod. After a well-dressed man appears, the audience learns the two have some sort of relationship. The exact nature of the relationship is not immediately identified as marriage, as the two seem to have no happy feelings for one another. The woman, Laura, never smiles or shows any sort of joyful emotion toward him. The man, Martin, seems to be more authoritative, like a drill sergeant.

The two have little to no chemistry together as they dress for a neighbor's cocktail party. Politely, Martin comments that he thought Laura would wear her black dress to the party instead of the white one she had on. Without thinking twice, Laura quickly changes. When the two returns, Martin turns on classical music and surprises Laura with love-making, even though it does not seem that Laura has much choice.

The viewer quickly learns more of the pair's strange relationship when, the next morning, Martin corrects Laura on how to properly hang the hand towels in the bathroom. As he explains how he would like it done, he seems more like her father or an employer than her husband. He

also needs the cans in the cupboards to be facing the same way, and Laura furiously corrects this before she can disappoint him again.

In a scene where Martin is introducing himself to a new neighbor, the neighbor comments on how beautiful their house is. The neighbor then offers for Martin and his wife to accompany him on an evening cruise on his boat, which Martin accepts despite the comments he makes about how Laura hates to sail due to her inability to swim.

Martin's true violence is shown when he immediately confronts Laura upon his return to the house, accusing her of allowing their new neighbor into their home. Laura explains she has never met him, and Martin responds by punching her in the temple. The blow knocks Laura to the ground, where he kicks her and yells at her to stop crying.

Martin then leaves to do some shopping, and leaves his wife to clean herself up after the attack. He apologizes when he comes back, bringing her flowers and some lingerie. He again forces himself on her sexually, and this time Laura seems to be in tremendous pain. Being informed that she is going to sail with the neighbor, Laura begins to plan how to escape the prison she is in. When a storm comes upon them and a sail breaks away, Laura finds her opportunity and jumps overboard. With the sail reattached, Martin realizes that Laura has fallen overboard. They search for her, but have no luck in the dark. Even the coast guard is unable to find her; they only come upon her empty life vest.

Thinking his wife is dead, Martin holds a funeral. In his grief he does not know that secretly Laura has been taking swimming lessons and made her escape that night by purposely jumping off the boat. While Martin is looking for her in the water, she swims back to their home, retrieves the money and clothes she has hidden, and boards a bus out of town. With her old life fading behind her, she tells a stranger on the bus how she was "visiting a friend" who was

trapped in an abusive marriage for three years. She tells the woman how happy they once were, but after the honeymoon everything changed and her husband became controlling and violent.

Settling in Iowa to start her new life, Laura (now calling herself Sarah) forges a friendship with her neighbor, a drama teacher named Ben. The first few meetings of the pair are tentative, as Laura (Sarah) has intense fear of having any type of relationship with a man. She also takes extreme precautions in her home, locking every door and being careful not to come out of the house she rents too frequently. When Ben offers to help her apply for a job at the college library, she questions his motives. She doesn't seem to understand why anyone would want to help her, for any other reason than to control her.

While Laura (Sarah) initially avoids Ben and shrugs off his offers to befriend her, she eventually agrees to spend some time with him. This is the first time the audience sees any kind of joy in her, as she and Ben dance and sing in the college auditorium while trying on the silly costumes stored there. While perhaps finding happiness in a new life, Laura (Sarah) does not know that a friend in her swimming class in Cape Cod has unwittingly informed her husband, while conveying her condolences, that she had been taking the class. Suspecting that Laura may have faked her death to escape him, Martin dedicates his time and money in finding her once and for all.

During his investigation into Laura's whereabouts, he goes to the nursing home where Laura's blind, wheelchair-bound mother is living. After finding out from one of the home's directors that Laura removed her mother several months earlier, he is even more certain that Laura is still alive somewhere. He bribes some local detectives into finding where the mother is residing, which turns out to be another nursing home in Iowa not far from where Laura is currently living.

Martin again bribes one of the nurses at the home to inform him whenever Laura's mother has a visitor. Laura, donning a disguise as a young man, does visit her mother not too long after Martin arrived in town. Knowing that the "young man" has to be Laura, he interrogates her mother into telling him where she is. Pretending to be a police officer trying to help Laura against her abusive husband, the mother tells him the limited information she knows, that Laura has befriended her neighbor who is a drama teacher at the local college.

While Martin searches for her, Laura and Ben's relationship turns more romantic. After spending time together one night, Ben kisses Laura (Sarah). After a moment or so, she yells at him to get off of her. This incident prompts Laura (Sarah) to tell Ben the reason she avoided him before and why she doesn't want to become romantically involved with him. Now knowing of her violent and abusive past, Ben becomes patient and seems satisfied with the status of their friendship.

Armed with a gun, Martin finds one of the drama teachers at the college and puts a gun to his head. However, he has fingered the wrong teacher. After the teacher insists he has no idea what Martin is talking about and he is actually a homosexual, Martin threatens him with death if he tells the police. Martin eventually finds Ben and follows him to a carnival where he is meeting Laura (Sarah). Martin's resolve to punish Laura and Ben intensifies when he sees the two together, having fun at the carnival.

In the film's intense climax, Martin hides in Laura's house. He rearranges her cupboards in an attempt to toy with her psychologically. When she discovers this, she immediately knows he is in the house. The same classical music that Martin played while assaulting her begins to play in the house, and Martin emerges from the shadows with a gun. Telling Laura that he will never allow her to live without him, he forces her to dance with him.

Gathering her strength, Laura knees him in the groin. He drops the gun, and she grabs it. With the tables turned, Martin continues to verbally abuse her. Laura picks up the phone and calls the police, but only tells them that she has just shot and killed an intruder. She then pulls the trigger three times, and Martin eventually falls to the floor. As Laura leans over him, distraught over what has occurred, Martin reaches up and grabs her again before finally succumbing to his injuries. The film ends with Laura and Ben embracing, seemingly free of Laura's captor.

Content Analysis: *Sleeping with the Enemy*

The overarching theme of this film is romance and love. The antagonist of this film is undoubtedly Martin, whose psychotic need to control Laura is evident throughout. On the other side of this violence is Ben, who seems to be a genuine love interest of the main character. Many scenes within the film showcase the realities of abusive relationships, especially when Martin is acting as if he is Laura's father instead of her partner. He knows what is best for Laura better than she does, which is a common attitude of abusive men (Bancroft, 2002).

Much of this film is devoted to the theme of domestic violence, most notably the difficulty faced when a woman tries to leave her abuser. The characters in this film are an individual, fictional case, as many aspects of their storyline are not typical. Issues of PTSD are also brought up and are reflected in Laura's intense paranoia of strangers and fear of entering into relationships with men. Of course, the end of the film leaves the viewer with a sense that Laura has finally escaped her past and can move forward. To the contrary, the reality of many abused women is that years of hard work will have to be done in order to stabilize these emotions.

However, the characters in the film and the overall feeling of the film do not blame the victim for her treatment. The few characters who are aware of Laura's past experience being abused, Ben and the woman on the bus, do not judge Laura herself for the abuse. The woman on the bus refers to her as brave, even though Laura thinks of herself as a coward for running away.

On the other hand, Laura does not inform many other subsidiary characters of her treatment. She does not seek counseling or medical services, nor does she make any attempt to contact the police. No advocacy sources are used; Laura is portrayed as somewhat of an island. In the end, she is the only one who liberates her from her oppressor. This is truly an atypical situation; many abuse victims need outside help to leave their situations. While many of these victims feel that the criminal justice system is unable to help them, family, friends, and social services are pivotal to aiding victims in their escape.

The film also reflects some of the consequences Laura faces for having endured violence for a period of time in her life. She is distrustful of men, she is "jumpy," she is suspicious of her surroundings and always takes copious precautions, and she disguises herself as a male so that she can visit her elderly mother safely. It isn't until she is in her new environment for several weeks that she is finally able to breathe a sigh of relief and maybe begin to enjoy herself. The film ends without answering any questions as to further consequences she faces. The audience believes that her suffering will finally end, now that her husband has been killed.

While the film dramatizes the victim's escape from her abuser, it was by no means easy for her. It required strategic planning and perseverance, which is often the recommendation for victims who wish to escape abuse. While, hopefully, no domestic violence advocate would encourage a woman to fake her own death, safety planning and strategy is essential to aiding a woman in leaving an abusive situation (Bancroft, 2002).

What are difficult about addressing domestic violence in reality are the conflicting ideologies as to what abuse actually is. The criminal justice definition of domestic violence refers to physical violence or the threat of physical violence. How controlling behaviors, along with verbal and psychological abuse, fit into the concept is unclear. Many victims are simply unaware of the actual problem of domestic violence, or what behaviors are defined as abusive. In the film, Laura seems to become aware of how desperate her situation is after a particularly violent attack where Martin strikes her in the head and kicks her while she cries on the floor.

However, the film alludes to the fact that Laura may have planned her escape from several months. Later on in the movie, it is revealed that Laura removed her mother from a local nursing home and lied to her husband about it. While the film does not elaborate further as to how, after three years, Laura finally knew that her treatment was inappropriate, it is clear that at some point she may not have viewed her treatment as wrong.

As for the abuser, his consequences are much more black and white. He suffers the ultimate consequence, a brutal death at the hands of his victim. This could reflect some of the feelings of many victims, that only with their abuser's death will they ever truly be free of the treatment. The criminal justice system is never used, except for when Laura reports the crime herself. While the film does not portray any legal consequences for Laura, it could be assumed that police believed her when she says she shot an intruder and no charges were brought against her.

While many realities of an abuse victim are present in the film, several myths are also present. In the end, Laura is able to get out of her abusive situation by herself. While an empowering thought, many women are simply unable to untangle themselves alone. This myth reinforces that domestic violence is a private problem, to be dealt with privately.

Synopsis: *Enough*

In a more recent depiction of domestic violence in the media, *Enough* (2002) is the story of a working-class woman who finds herself in an abusive marriage. While working as a waitress, Slim (Jennifer Lopez) becomes romantically involved with a man (Mitch) after he defends her against a particularly creepy diner customer. They are married and quickly decide to have a family. After buying their dream house, the couple welcomes a daughter. With their dreams realized, the family seems to be leading a storybook life.

After discovering that her husband has been having multiple affairs, Slim confronts Mitch, which results in the first incident of physical violence. Mitch insists that he is a man and his needs are to be sexually involved with multiple women. He also states that since he is the sole financial provider, he can make the rules of the house and punish those who do not comply. He heads off to see his girlfriend, but not after insinuating that he won't allow Slim to live without him.

Slim reaches out to several women in her life, her mother-in-law and her best friend. Her mother-in-law only asks her what she did to set him off. Her best friend tells her to go to the police, but Slim refuses, stating that she won't put her daughter's (Gracie) father in jail. The pair then agrees that the best thing to do is to collect Gracie and leave the situation. But before she has the opportunity, Mitch finds out that Slim told his mother about the abuse. He tells her things can and will only get worse, so she should keep their private matters private.

Slim does, in fact, go to the police to file a complaint. An officer informs her that if there is evidence of abuse, which would be the bruise on her face, her husband will be arrested. After finding out that bail is relatively low and he would just come after her again, even more upset with her, she leaves the station without filing any complaints.

How dangerous Mitch really is becomes evident that evening when Slim attempts to escape with her daughter. With her friends waiting in a van outside, Mitch catches her when she tries to go out the front door. Kicking her until she is unconscious, Slim's friends hear the commotion inside and break in to help. However, they do not know Mitch is armed with a gun. However, when Gracie awakens they use her to be able to escape safely.

With Mitch freezing all access to any money Slim may have, she is only able to afford a room in a cheap motel. Mitch is quickly able to find her because she attempted to use her credit cards, and Slim and Gracie again must make a quick escape when Mitch tries to break into their room. Enlisting the help of two long-time family friends, they are able to board a plane to Seattle and stay with an old college friend, Joe.

However, Mitch quickly catches up with them once again. Hired thugs in the guise of FBI agents investigating the kidnapping of Gracie enter the apartment they are hiding out in. Gracie and Slim again escape detection by way of a clever hiding space. This time, young Gracie begins to see the danger they are in. After a threatening phone call from Mitch, the pair goes on the run again.

With Mitch catching up with her at every turn, Slim must turn to someone Mitch is unaware of. She goes to her biological father, who has not seen her since she was an infant. Denying that she is, in fact, his daughter, he sends her away empty handed. Not wanting to traumatize Gracie by going to a domestic violence shelter, she uses what little money and connections she has to stay where she can and alter her appearance. She also applies for a birth certificate in the name of a deceased woman in order to change her identity.

Mitch's thugs find out that Slim tried to contact her biological father, and they interrogate him as well. After learning the true reason Slim contacted him, her father (Jupiter) finds a way to

send her money. She uses the money to rent a house and enroll Gracie in school. Their good luck is short lived; a lawyer contacts Slim and informs her that Mitch is using his connections in the police force to file a custody suit. Scared by the phone call, Slim allows Gracie to speak to her father via a pay phone. Mitch has the phone call traced, and again orders his thugs to hunt her down.

Slim makes a critical error in allowing Joe to visit them, not knowing that Mitch's thugs is watching her. Now knowing where Slim and Gracie are living, Mitch breaks into their house early in the morning. When he attacks Slim once again, Gracie witnesses the entire event and attempts to intervene. This distraction is enough to allow Slim to land a couple blows to Mitch, which then allows Slim and Gracie to escape. But the thugs are standing by, and a high-speed chase ensues.

Being able to outrun the thugs, Slim goes to a lawyer to seek legal help against her husband. However, he only tells her that all is lost due to the fact that Slim never went to the police to report the prior incidents. With a custody court date looming, Slim decides to take steps so that she is able to physically confront Mitch. With Gracie now nearly fully informed and affected by the situation at hand, her mother decides to leave her with her best friend in a safe location. Using the money from Jupiter, she hires a trainer to help her physically be able to defend herself.

With the help of an undercover female police officer to distract Mitch's thugs, Slim breaks into the apartment that Mitch is staying in. She finds him in bed sleeping, with another woman of course. She lays low until the morning when the woman leaves, and sets her plan into motion. First, she cuts the phone wire which also disables his security alarm. She then hides all

the sharp kitchen utensils that could be used as weapons against her. Finally, she is able to find and hide both of his personal firearms.

Upon his return, Slim shows herself and informs him that she wishes to fight. Mitch refuses, saying it would not be “fair.” After physically provoking him, a lengthy physical fight ensues. During the course of the attack, Slim informs Mitch that she intends to kill him and that she has planted evidence to make it look like self-defense. When she has her chance, she backs down. This allows Mitch enough time to land a final blow with a lamp. With Slim on the floor, he goes to kick her while she’s down. She grabs his foot, gets up, and kicks him over a railing where he falls into his glass table. With Mitch now dead or extremely incapacitated, the police arrive at the scene. Later, Slim collects her daughter and they move on with their lives.

Content Analysis: Enough

Unlike the previous film, *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), Slim was blamed for her treatment by at least one character in the film. When she goes to her mother-in-law for support after the first episode of violence, she asks Slim what she did to provoke her son into beating her. It is common for victims and their friends and family to ask what they did wrong or to internalize some type of initial guilt. Of course, no behavior is a justification for domestic violence.

The perpetrator in this film, Mitch, is portrayed positively at first. He is Slim’s “conquering hero” when he comes to her aid when a creepy diner customer hits on her. Mitch, being a wealthier individual, finds a way to buy the house Slim is in love with even though it is not for sale. This initial aggressive nature seems romantic and ideal, until later when his aggressive, overly masculine traits are used against Slim and her child.

Later, Mitch is portrayed to be a psychotic, overly physical ape-like individual. He has very sexist ideas of the male and female roles. He verbalizes to his wife that she must obey him and accept that he is a male who must look outside their marriage for sexual satisfaction. After his first attack on Slim, he tells her that abuse and infidelity are simply the price she must pay to live the lavish lifestyle he provides for her. In the end, he also suffers the ultimate consequence. While not implicitly stated, Mitch seems to die in the end at the hands of Slim.

While it was certainly not easy for Slim and her child to leave their abusive situation, Slim does recognize almost immediately that abuse and infidelity are intolerable in a marriage. When talking to Mitch only results in more physical retaliation, she decides she must leave. The leaving itself is intensely difficult for her, as Mitch catches her on her way out the door and beats her again. Even after they are able to leave the house, the majority of the film is dedicated to Slim and Gracie attempting to elude Mitch in a series of elaborate, heart-pounding scenes.

Slim, like Laura in the previous film, suffers some serious consequences as a result of her severe abuse. She alters her appearance, changes her identity, and moves frequently in order to ensure that she is safe. She is frequently paranoid, installing locks and barricades in her homes. There is also a scene where Slim has a nightmare in which Mitch breaks into her house. Of course, these excessive precautions are completely justified as Mitch finds and attacks her again and again.

Slim is able to rid herself of the abuse and paranoia only by confronting Mitch, which more than likely resulted in his death. Of course, the death or imprisonment of an abuser does not always rid the victim of consequences and paranoia. With the prevalence of abuse so widespread, there is always present the threat that another man will come into the victim's life and abuse her. Men themselves become suspect, and many years of counseling and therapy may

be necessary to put a victim's mind more at ease. However, this film depicts that the victims of abuse are able to completely overcome their history of abuse by ridding themselves of the abuser.

The criminal justice system is involved in this film but is not shown to be effective. When Slim initially goes to the police, she is not convinced that they can keep her or her daughter safe. Because she did not go through with filing reports of abuse, she is never able to use the criminal justice system. On the contrary, Mitch employs the family court system to make it seem that Slim is an unfit parent so he may take custody of Gracie. With no documentation of Mitch's attacks and the justice system seemingly on his side, Slim is further pushed to physically confront Mitch.

Another important theme arises here, that of Slim's self-reliance. She pushes herself to become stronger physically, as she knows this is what it will take to defeat her ex-husband. While money and other material resources are imperative to her survival, she comes to realize she must rely on her physical strength as a means to an end. Slim had tried many methods to dissuade her husband, an effort to tire him out perhaps. However, in the end she learns he will not tire of chasing her and her only option to truly break free is to fight back.

Similarities and Differences between *Enough* and *Sleeping with the Enemy*

There are some similarities and stark differences between the two film portrayals. The two films are similar in that both women are able to overcome their circumstances on their own. Laura was much more so on her own; she leaves her home and fights back against her husband alone. Slim employs the help and resources of the people in her life, such as her best friend, biological father, and two family friends. Without these supports and resources, Slim would not

have been able to train and move as frequently. However, in the end it was only Slim who was able to physically confront Mitch and free herself of his abuse. Neither movie used social agencies or shelters. In fact, *Enough* even stated that such agencies couldn't keep her safe and would traumatize her daughter.

While both movies reflect the myth that domestic violence is a private matter that a victim needs to liberate herself from, some important aspects of abuse were present in both films as well. Many realities of the criminal justice system were present within the film *Enough*, which reflected the limited involvement the justice system has in domestic violence situations.

Enough also introduced the complication of young children in abusive households. While Gracie seemed to be the motivation for Slim to leave, many times children are the motivations for women to stay and endure abuse. If the man is the only financial provider, money becomes a complication for a female who wishes to leave. Child care and appropriate shelter for children may also become obstacles.

Both films also represented upper class families. Abuse certainly does happen in upper class communities, but Hollywood does not seem interested in middle or working class representations of domestic violence. This class level was also pivotal to the plot line of both films. If neither abuser had seemingly unlimited access to funds, it would prove much more difficult to hunt down and torment their victims. Of course, money is frequently a barrier to women leaving violence. As women are frequently the sole care-givers of children, they may not be able to work or have access to funds. Not wanting to leave children with an abuser, a victim sometimes must make a difficult choice as to whether or not she is able to take her children with her when seeking help.

Both films, being made in a post-feminist era, are representations of a very real problem within society that plagues men and women. Even though several domestic violence myths are used, realities of abuse are also present. While the overall content of the film may not give viewers a realistic sense of what it is to endure abuse, the problem is conveyed successfully. If nothing else, films such as these may stimulate conversation about domestic violence.

Chapter 3: Sexual Assault in the Media

Definitions of sexual assault can vary greatly, depending on the nation or even city doing the defining of the act. In London, for example, rape is defined as the forcible penetration of the mouth, vagina, or anus by a penis (Welch and Mason, 2007). Much like the American definition, this leaves out the possibility of a female perpetrator. While the presence, statistically, of female rape perpetrators are very rare, there still undoubtedly exists the presence and experience of rape by a female.

In a similar vein, oral penetration or penetration by objects were also left out of the definition of rape and sexual assault for some years (Welch and Mason, 2007). It was not until more recent times that the definitions were expanded to include these types of assault. Yet another shortfall of sexual assault definitions is whether or not the victim resisted. Older definitions of rape contended that the victim had to resist, physically in most cases (Choudhary et al. 2011). This does not allow for rape in situations of threat of force or threat of harm to someone else unless the victim complies.

Another poorly understood concept related to rape and sexual assault is male sexual assault. While rape in general is a severely underreported crime, male sexual assault is reported far less frequently (Choudhary et al. 2011). The sexual assault of males share some characteristics with that of rape of females, most notably that young males (much like young females) are victimized the most. As found by Choudhary et al. (2011), young males were also more likely to report their assault than older demographics.

The researchers also estimated that males experience sexual assault and unwanted sexual activity at much higher rates than many crime statistics report. They estimated as many as 3 million males experience rape or forced penetration or fondling at some point in their lives, and

another 975,000 experiencing unwanted or unsolicited sexual activity in their lifetimes (Choudhary et al. 2011).

While discussing rape and sexual assault, it is important to also understand the subtopic of drug-facilitated sexual assault. This type of sexual assault can be defined as the forced sexual activity of an individual who is unconscious or incapacitated mentally (Butler and Welch, 2009). These can be broken up into two forms of drug-facilitated sexual assault, “proactive” and “opportunistic.” The “proactive” type denotes a perpetrator who drugs his or her victim with an intoxicant, GHB or the “date rape” drug being the favorite. The “opportunistic” type takes advantage of a incapacitated individual who has voluntarily ingested drugs or alcohol (Butler and Welch, 2009).

This type of sexual assault should be looked at carefully, as Butler and Welch (2009) also found that nearly 20% of sexual assault victims fit the criteria for drug-facilitated sexual assault. This relates to the researcher’s overall findings that which alcohol and drug use is often present with occurrences of rape. As reported in their study, it is important that clinicians dealing with assault victims be sensitive to the use of drugs or alcohol by the victim as to not entertain notions that blame the victim, such as they “brought the act on themselves” by being intoxicated (Butler and Welch, 2009).

Consequences of rape and sexual assault are far-reaching. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, causing lasting physical and psychological disorders, is common among survivors. Clark et al (2011) found in a study of 183 adolescents with alcohol dependency that they were 18-21 times more likely to have suffered sexual assault. Females in the study were more likely than males to have endured sexual assault, while male substance abusers were more likely to have experienced physical violence at some point in their lives. The overall conclusion of the

study was that life traumas, including sexual assault, were strongly associated with substance dependency later in life (Clark et al. 2011).

What that study concludes is very important in understanding the consequences for rape victims. Physical wounds can heal, given enough time, but psychological consequences are complex and can occur much later after the assault. These occurrences can complicate the life of the victim and ultimately result in lasting effects to the victim along with their family and friends.

Some strides have been made in interpersonal violence studies in the way of predicting prolonged Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by looking at another disorder, Acute Stress Disorder. A study done by Elklit and Christianson (2011) found that victims of rape showed symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder when they were initially examined shortly after the rape trauma. These symptoms were later found to be able to predict symptoms of PTSD in the same victims (Elklit and Christianson, 2011). However, only about two thirds of the cases were able to show results in the way. Due to this, the researchers suggest there may be a better way in which to predict prolonged effects of PTSD than examining symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder (Elklit and Christianson, 2011).

Violence committed by rape and sexual assault victims as linked to their trauma is yet another consequence of such trauma. As found by Flemke (2009), women who had experienced rage against an intimate partner were found to also have experienced sexual assault in their past. These episodes of rage were characterized by symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder having stemmed from their prior experiences (Flemke, 2009). Triggers for the subjects rage were found to include the perception of a threat, a threat to loved ones, and current emotional abuse

(Flemke, 2009). This contributes another negative consequence of experiencing sexual assault, the cycle of violence continuing by the perpetration of violence by the original victim of assault.

This may beg the question of how the criminal justice system involved in the initial rape reports and how the system ultimately affects the victims' plight. One study done by Maddox et al. (2011) investigated how the police specifically affected whether the victim would go forward with a court case, and also how symptoms of PTSD were affected by the intervention. Of the subjects studied, a positive police experience increased the likelihood that the victim would pursue a court case. However, a negative intervention experience increased the victim's feelings of self-blame, shame, and PTSD severity (Maddox et al. 2011). This puts an important perspective on the role of police in sexual assault cases. How the police officer relates to the victim can be a determining factor between the victim using the system further to prosecute, or feeling more blamed and shamed for their situation. Maddox et al. 2011 suggest police may require additional training specifically on the intervention of rape victims.

Sexual assault can have lasting consequences, which can be complicated with certain social groups. For example, sexual assault in the military is a complex issue. It is estimated that even fewer sexual assault incidences are reported among military personnel (Collins, 2010). Even more alarming is that of the cases that are reported, many times little is done to intervene or provide consequences to the perpetrator. As Collins (2010) found in her case study, sexual assault within the military can often be a function of the overall attitude and acceptance of sexism and an "us against them" mentality. As she recounts the story of one victim who was raped repeatedly by a non-commissioned officer in her unit in the Army, it becomes clear that the other men on the base chose to ignore the officer's behavior. As the victim tries to confide in

the other women on the base, it becomes evident that these other women share her fears and are also being abused (Collins, 2010).

Collins (2010) goes on to illustrate that these issues of sexual assault are complex on military bases that offer little to no resources or compassion for women who experience abuse. The overall culture of the military can also affect how victims view their own assaults (Bell and Reardon, 2011). Prevalent pro-male attitudes and patriarchal values heavily influence how victims see their own treatment and, ultimately, what recourses they pursue.

Similar prolonged consequences can be seen with female military rape victims as with their civilian counterparts. As found by Frayne et al. (2003), the same effects of rape victimization were found in female military veterans who experienced sexual assault. The researchers found that in their sample there was a higher prevalence of problem alcohol use, smoking, obesity, and a sedentary lifestyle among victims of sexual assault. Frayne et al (2003) went on to conclude that this population could suffer higher occurrences of stroke and heart disease as well.

Rape myths are an important aspect of understanding the social and personal implications of sexual assault. Even police officers are not immune from committing such acts, in fact, some research will imply that the culture of policing often contributes more to rape myths to justify sexual assault committed by officers (Eschholtz and Vaughn, 2001). One particular study, by Eschholtz and Vaughn (2001), suggests that police officers, particularly in jails and prisons, use rape myths and gender stereotypes to justify their actions against inmates. Constitutional amendments have been used to sue such organizational structures that violate women, in particular the eighth amendment. This amendment protects prisoners against cruel and unusual punishment, an argument usually upheld in the court systems when victimized inmates try to sue

their perpetrators. This, many times, is the only recourse as the criminal justice system is often reluctant to prosecute “one of their own” criminally (Eschholz and Vaughn, 2001).

But how does training of police officers affect their treatment of sexual assault cases and victims? In a study done by Sleath and Bull (2011), responses were collected from 123 police officers regarding their attitudes of victim and perpetrator blame, rape myth acceptance, and gender roles. From this sample it was found that victim blame was heavily predicted by rape myth acceptance. However, the researchers found little difference between trained officers and untrained officers when it came to victim blame. Alternately, training did seem to affect officers attitudes of perpetrator blame, as trained officers were more likely to have those attitudes if they had specialized training in sexual assault (Sleath and Bull, 2011). The researchers did not discuss at length the type and duration of the “specialized training”; therefore, the content of such training could be altered in order to lessen attitudes of victim blame among police officers.

A common misconception regarding sexual assault lies in the relationship the victim often shares with the assailant. It was not until the late 1980s that spousal rape was even mentioned in law (RAINN, 2011). Many times victims often know their rapists, either intimately or casually. This myth creates many complications in fully understanding the trauma a victim experiences. Because a victim may know her or his rapist, often the public will assume the victim somehow contributed to the poor treatment (Carpenito, 1999). More importantly, victims are even more unwilling to call police or to seek outside help as they do not wish to get a “friend” into hot water. Even more startling is that the victims often do not associate what has happened to them as assault. Surely a friend cannot truly harm another friend, even if they were forced to perform sexual acts without consent. The misconception that rape is often committed

by a stranger has dangerous implications for agencies who attempt to mitigate and aid those who experience such trauma (Carpenito, 1999).

Since rape is often committed by the acquaintances of the victim, the question for the courts is not who committed rape, but was it rape that was committed against an individual. A study done by McGregor et al. (2002) an attempt was made to discover whether forensic medical findings correlated to police report filing and court convictions in sexual assault cases. Clinicians collected evidence of sperm and DNA, along with genital and other physical injury data. Controlling for demographic information, the researchers were able to merge findings in order to calculate relevance to police and court outcomes. The conclusion of the study was that physical injury correlated stronger to report filing and ultimate court convictions than did DNA or sperm evidence (McGregor et al. 2002). These findings are consistent with what was stated previously, that the question for the courts is not whether a sexual act has been committed but whether that sexual act was forced.

In a similar vein, SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners) are another line of defense in the medical field for sexual assault survivors. These nurses are specially trained to collect forensic evidence of sexual assault from victims, usually in association with a sexual assault advocacy group. However, these two groups often experience their own conflicts within while obtaining their stated goals of advocating and supporting assault victims. In a study done by Cole (2007), the specific conflicts experienced within the SANE and sexual assault advocacy groups were explored. Cole (2007) conducted randomized telephone interviews with 231 SANE clinics, of which nearly two thirds of participants reported having conflicts with sexual assault advocacy groups.

Much of these conflicts centered on boundaries and specific roles of each group. More specifically, the SANE clinicians reported that conflicts of professional autonomy, control, and turf issues were the most common (Cole, 2007). These findings beg the conclusion that many SANE clinicians and advocacy groups may be too preoccupied with role confusion, which may result in neglect or mismanagement of assault victims. This study speaks to the separate but equally important roles of medical and social service personnel in the advocacy of sexual assault victims. No one role is more important than the next; however, but both parties must work together without conflict to successfully serve the needs of survivors of sexual assault.

Myths surrounding male rape can be understood as linked to similar myths surrounding female rape. Many victims of male rape experience the same issues as female rape victims, including depression, loss of self-esteem, loss of sexual identity, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Davies et al. 2012). Moreover, some studies have shown that male rape victims are seen as more to blame than female rape victims when they do not fight back against their attacker (Davies and Rogers, 2006). The perception seems to be that men have more physical strength and aggressive attitudes; therefore, they are seen as “less masculine” when they fail to fight an attacker (Davies et al. 2012).

Myths are also prevalent among vulnerable individuals, such as those who suffer from mental impairments or disability. It is speculated that such vulnerability could be a factor in being a victim of sexual assault, as such individual’s mental impairments could make them a target or simply less able to protect themselves (Creighton and Jones, 2011). In a retrospective analysis study, Creighton and Jones (2011) analyzed the psychiatric history of 269 adults who had visited the Lancashire Sexual Assault and Forensic Examination Center between April 1, 2010, and March 31, 2011.

Of these 269 adults, disorders such as depression, anxiety, and bi-polar disorder were seen in 48% of cases. Nearly 3% of cases had severe mental disorders, including psychosis and schizophrenia. Self-harm had been reported in 29% of cases, and 23% reported having attempted suicide at least once in their lifetime (Creighton and Jones, 2011). These data give evidence to the theory that the mental disorders suffered by these victims could very well have played a part in their victimization. How victims with diagnosed mental disorders experience such assault only complicates matters further. Such findings should be integrated into specialized training so that psychological disorders can be better understood in the context of sexual assault.

Nurses and medical personnel are often not the first person an assault victim comes into contact with after they have been victimized. Many times a social worker is called in before a medical professional, except in cases where the victim may suffer severe or life-threatening injuries. When a victim first arrives at a clinic or hospital, a social worker may speak to him or her first. It is for this reason that social workers tasked with this mission should be well versed and experienced in how to handle such incidences (Murphy et al, 2011).

Since social workers play such a large role in the overall experience of a sexual assault victim, Murphy et al (2011) analyzed the response of such professionals from meeting the victim to the possible involvement of the criminal justice system to ultimately the healing process. Of the victims they surveyed, it is not surprising that over 70% knew their assailants. This is important when dealing with a survivor's sense of security, because if the perpetrator is known to the victim it can alter her sense of safety and determine who she can turn to for love and support (Murphy et al. 2011).

Contrary to media portrayals, sexual assault victims rarely experience severe physical trauma. This can further impact the victim's emotional distress, as they may feel they could have

physically stopped their attacker or they may feel that, since there is no physical trauma, no rape happened at all. These characteristics are just some of the important concepts for social workers to understand in their interactions with rape victims. Social workers and advocacy groups are often the first and/or only source of education and advocacy for victims, which makes them an important body in dispelling myths, self-blame, and feelings of guilt for the victim and enables them to begin a healing process (Murphy et al. 2011).

Sexual assault, like domestic violence, has been used against women throughout history in order to subjugate them. There are a number of similarities in the research of domestic violence and sexual assault, with sexual abuse being present in many cases of domestic violence (Barnett et al. 2005). However, one of the main differences between sexual assault and domestic violence is that much less is known about rape or sexual abuse. This more than likely is attributed to the fact that sexual violence remains a severe cultural taboo, with many victims again being raped by assailants they know personally. For these reasons, victims are reluctant to come forward and speak of their victimization, which results in much less information being known about the exact scope and consequences of sexual assault (Barnett et al. 2005).

Jennifer Rosen (2004) successfully conveys the consequences of social-accepted sexual assault in the following:

“As a woman in America, I will never know what it’s like to walk down the street alone without fear. Without looking over my shoulder. Without being aware of my physical vulnerability. Without a gnawing feeling deep down in my gut that I could be on the receiving end of some man’s power-tripping display of wounded masculinity. I will never know what it’s like to have friends, to have lovers, who weren’t brutally raped. Ripped from innocence at the hands of a man. At the hands of a society with little concern for their young lives. Their visions of themselves and their concepts of self-worth. A society that degrades women, terrorizes their bodies, and does so under the guise of the freest democracy in the world. I will never know what it’s like to drive down the road, flip through a magazine, channel surf after a hard day’s work, and not be bombarded by

images telling me I am not enough. Not thin enough. Not pretty enough. Not worthy enough. Not *woman* enough.”

Data Collection

I will analyze films based on incidences of sexual assault and rape in a similar way. However, due to its specific dynamics, the question of justice is more pertinent in media portrayals of sexual assault. Self-defense justifications are often portrayed in these films, with the victim even murdering her perpetrator in order to escape her victimization. Because of the different myths surrounding the issue, consequences and punishments vary greatly. Very few rapists are punished by the criminal justice system. As stated previously, only about 6% of rapists ever serve a jail sentence (RAINN, 2009). This is important to observe, since it contributes to victims feeling as if they have no one to help them and the system abandoned them.

I will use the answers to the following questions in my analysis:

- What myths are present surrounding the situation?
- What themes and issues are brought forth from the film?
- Was the victim blamed? If so, what myths were used to justify the rape?
- Did the victim (or family members or friends) retaliate against the perpetrator?
- Did the retaliation end in murder? How was this justified to the victim?
- Was the criminal justice system involved? In what ways, and what was the results (jail, probation, prosecution, etc.)?

Synopsis: *A Mother's Revenge*

With Hollywood's reluctance to produce films based on rape, Lifetime Movie Network does provide a few films on the issue. *A Mother's Revenge* (1993) is one such film. Wendy is a school-aged girl living in the suburbs with her middle-class family. An over-achiever in school, the unthinkable happens one afternoon when she stays late at school to finish a science project. The school janitor, who has been watching Wendy almost since she arrived at school, preys on the stranded girl.

When Wendy is nowhere to be found, her family calls the police to aid them. Meanwhile, Wendy's rapist (Frank) enjoys dinner with his mother just after committing the horrendous act. Panic stricken, the family waits at home for Wendy to return. When a detective arrives at their home, he informs the family that Wendy has been raped, beaten, and is in critical condition at a local hospital.

While the family waits for Wendy's condition to improve, Carol (Wendy's mother) receives a phone call at their home from the attacker. He threatens to hurt Wendy again if she talks to the police. Frightened, Carol hides a gun in her purse. She then calls and begs the police to find the culprit before he can get to Wendy again. The next day, police gain enough evidence to arrest Frank for the rape and assault.

With former convictions of molestation and forensic evidence found in his car, the police inform the family they are optimistic about prosecuting the janitor. Meanwhile, Wendy regains consciousness and begins her slow recovery. However, Frank's mother has hired a top defense lawyer for her son. When his lawyer explains away the forensic evidence, and when his mother lies under oath that he was home when Wendy was abducted, the judge dismisses the case. As Frank laughs about the dismissal, Carol grabs the gun from her purse and shoots him several times in open court.

Carol is arrested and faces trial for the shooting. With the media in frenzy, the family now must focus on Carol's defense. Remarkably, Wendy comes out of her coma but is unable to speak of the incident. Ironically, Carol asks Frank's defense lawyer to represent her at the trial. Unable to oblige due to the fact that her client is still alive, Carol confronts the attorney and tells her how disgusted she is by her defense of Frank. Carol also begs Frank's mother to recant her testimony, but she only informs Carol that Frank has died. It seems that Carol will now face murder charges for shooting her daughter's rapist.

With her family falling apart, riddled with guilt and shame, Carol focuses all her attention on her daughter's recovery. In the meantime, the public and the media are divided on Carol's guilt. Some believe she is completely justified, while others believe she is no better than the rapist. Wendy finally begins to talk about the incident, but only says she doesn't want to see her mother go to prison.

Conflicted over what Carol said to her, the defense lawyer agrees to take Carol's case stating that she, as a mother, understands why Carol shot Frank. However, the family continues to be torn. The oldest daughter, Jill, believes she has been neglected and blamed by her mother. As the family continues to live in turmoil, Carol's trial looms nearer.

At the trial, Carol recounts her story and tells of the intense hatred she felt for Frank. She claims she "snapped" when she heard that he would go free and saw him laughing. Her psychiatrists support her claim, testifying that Carol was in a dissociative state when she shot Frank. The prosecution rests after telling the jury that Carol is not justified in what she did, and should be convicted. The jury agrees, and Carol is found guilty of manslaughter. The family commits to staying together through Carol's time in prison, and the judge reduces her sentence to

three years. He also allows Carol to have weekend visits with her family so she can aid Wendy in her recovery.

Content Analysis: *A Mother's Revenge*

The dominant theme in the film is motherhood, and the trials and tribulations families face in crisis. The film depicts several motherly characters, each of whom lends a unique perspective. The main character, Carol, is the mother of a rape victim who must somehow find closure for her family. She does this through shooting the perpetrator out of frustration when the legal system let's them down. Carol seemingly feels justified in her actions, as she never expresses remorse or guilt for causing the death of a human being.

Another mother character in the film, the lawyer, is conflicted. While she did represent Frank and achieve a dismissal for him, she also defends Carol at her trial. Her perspective is unique, as her views change through the film. She is committed to defending every person to the best of her abilities, which she does for Frank. For Carol, she seems to have let herself down. It seems she regrets helping Frank keep his freedom, and she also regrets not being able to win Carol's freedom.

Frank's mother is also committed to her child, so much so that she lies under oath for him. In the end, she does recant her testimony at Carol's sentencing. Stating that, as a mother, she was compelled to do everything she could for her son, she now understands that she stood in the way of justice.

The myths present in the film depart from what was expected, as the main focus of the film was not the rape victim so much as her family, specifically her mother. This film relies heavily on the theme of revenge, which is what the main character exacts on the perpetrator

despite the consequences to herself or her family. Instead of accepting the findings of the court of law, the victim defies the verdict.

Victim blame was not as evident in the film; the main victim was portrayed as an innocent bystander who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Instead, the perpetrator was blamed as a monster who preyed on the weak in a place where they felt safe (at school).

The criminal justice system is involved heavily in this film; however, it is portrayed as a flawed system with several loop holes that aid the guilty. The perpetrator in this film, was let off with leniency instead of punished for his crimes. The communication from the criminal justice system to the victim seemed to be that there would be no punishment for the defendant, and therefore he would be free to sexually assault young girls again and again.

As a consequence of the perceived ineptitude of the criminal justice system to properly punish the culprit, the victim's mother takes matters into her own hands. She decides to retaliate, resulting in the death of the rapist. This is heavily justified as the main character is portrayed as a mother protecting her children, and the children of others, from an evil rapist who would prey on them.

Synopsis: *Fear*

Like many of the films that contain issues of rape and violence, *Fear* (1998) fits into the thriller genre. Nicole (Reese Witherspoon) is a teenager living with her father, stepmother, and stepbrother in a small town. Much like many teenagers, Nicole ignores rules and, as a result, has strained relationships with her parents. Instead of going to school one morning, she goes to a pool hall with friends. There she meets David, a good-looking young man who seems sensitive and mysterious. After only a few dates, David expresses an interest in meeting Nicole's family.

Upon introductions, David is polite and seems to fit into Nicole's world nicely. As their relationship progresses, Nicole falls for the handsome young man.

Things take an unexpected turn when David shows up at the school Nicole attends and savagely attacks a male friend she is walking with. When Nicole tries to intervene, David hits her as well. Angry and upset with David's actions, Nicole resolves to never see him again. However, David soon apologizes and asks Nicole to meet him after school. When she does not show up to forgive him, David's anger intensifies.

Nicole's relationship with her family becomes more strained when they learn about the incident with David. Nicole's father tells her she is being immature and irresponsible for dating someone who would abuse her, but Nicole resolves to deal with the situation herself.

David then shows up while Nicole is having a few friends over, and begs her to forgive him. He claims he is sorry, and he didn't know the boy she was walking with was her friend. He also claims that his intense love for her drove him to do it. Nicole forgives him, and invites him to stay. When her father comes home and sees her with David, he is prompted to do a background check on the young man. He finds out that he had a troubled childhood, and virtually no adult record. This worries him, and decides to discuss the situation with David.

However, the tables are turned when David attempts to blackmail Nicole's father, which results in both parties physically threatening each other. David then fakes some bruises on his chest, and tells Nicole that her father beat him up. Disgusted with her father's behavior, Nicole falls more in love with David. Happy about her choice to disobey her father and continue seeing David, Nicole walks out to stay the night with David. However, upon arrival at his house, she witnesses David raping a friend of hers, Margo.

The next day, while eating lunch at school, David comes to sit with her. Nicole screams at him to leave her alone, and that she never wants to see him again. That evening, Margo pays Nicole a visit. Angry at her friend for her perceived betrayal, Nicole sends her away. While Margo is driving home, David catches up and threatens to hurt her if she doesn't tell Nicole it was all a lie. Afterwards, David visits Nicole at home in an attempt to apologize. However, her father sends him away and forbids him from ever coming back. In a rage, David carves "Nicole 4 eva" on his chest with a razor.

Nicole now thinks that David will leave the family alone, especially since her father told school security about the incidences. On the contrary, David is following Nicole to school every day. On one of these occasions, David follows one of Nicole's male friends home. After an intense chase scene, David catches up to him and breaks his neck. David also goes to her father's workplace and vandalizes his car.

Meanwhile, David corners Nicole at school while she is in the bathroom. Paralyzed with fear, Nicole is unable to run from him. He tells her that no one will ever be able to keep her from him. Nicole's father surely tries, he finds out where David is living and pays him a visit. David is not home, but Nicole's father finds his room and subsequently, stumbles upon how sick David truly is. He keeps a shrine to Nicole in his room, filled with her pictures, underwear, and stolen jewelry. He also notices that David and his roommates are heavily into drugs and trafficking. Nicole's father leaves, but not before trashing the entire house. He also attempts to call the police, but they don't think there is enough evidence to make an arrest.

After finding their house ransacked, David and his friends decide to exact their revenge. They cut the phone lines and ambush the house, threatening Nicole and her family. Barricading themselves in the house, the family tries to keep David and his friends from getting in. Nicole

cleverly uses the lights in her room to alert the security building of their situation. Upon arrival of security, David's friends seemingly run off.

Thinking that security has successfully scared them away, Nicole's father goes outside. However, the hoodlums have not run off. They shoot the security officer and take the father as a hostage. Nicole's stepmother lets them into the house in an attempt to save her husband, and the group handcuffs both parents. From upstairs, Nicole sees what is going on and sends her stepbrother outside to get his mother's car phone. He is successful, and calls 911. He also grabs the handcuff keys from the security car.

Upstairs, Nicole begs David not to shoot her father. He tells her this is the only way they can be together. Meanwhile, Nicole's brother and stepmother unshackle her father, and a brawl ensues. Nicole stabs David in the back with a sharp implement she found in her room, and her father eventually is able to throw him out of the second story window where David falls to his death.

Content Analysis: *Fear*

As a thriller, this film's dominant themes are family and suspense. In the end, when David and his friends descend on the family, they are able to work together to overpower them. Suspense punctuated the film, with several chase scenes. The audience is also left guessing what the outcome for the family will be, especially when David seems to have the upper hand.

Another important theme brought forth in this particular film was that of stalking. Stalking is closely linked with domestic abuse and sexual assault, with many victims of either having also experienced stalking. According to the National Institute of Justice (2011), one in every six women has experienced stalking at some point in their lifetime. Nearly two-thirds of stalking victims were stalked by an intimate partner or someone they knew (National Institute of

Justice, 2011). This mirrors the statistics for sexual assault, as many victims of rape know their rapists.

Furthermore, a study in 2001 (National Institute of Justice) found that of 1,785 alleged stalking reports the victims were less likely to report physical or mental injury. Even more alarming, in only 285 of the reports did the victims use the term “stalking” to describe the behavior. This could insinuate that stalking is not seen by victims as alarming or threatening behavior that could lead to physical harm (National Institute of Justice, 2011).

The main theme brought forth from the film was not rape, but dating violence in general. However, rape and sexual assault were integral to David’s terrorism of Nicole and her family. Not only did he manipulate and coerce Nicole into sleeping with him, David also physically forces her friend Margo to have sex with him. In this way, he was able to sexually control Nicole as well. It was very apparent that he believed to be in control of her sexuality, and he was the only one with sexual rights to her.

Victim blame was also apparent in several instances in the film. After the first incidence of violence, Nicole’s father blames Nicole by telling her she is being irresponsible by dating this young man. Nicole later blames her friend Margo for sleeping with David, even though it is clear that Margo was forced.

Retaliation was also an important feature of the film. Nicole did not retaliate against the perpetrators, despite being the main victim. However, her father did retaliate on several occasions on Nicole’s behalf. After confronting David, which resulted in both parties resorting to physical threats, Nicole’s father does background checks on David and eventually vandalizes his home. In the end, it is Nicole’s father that pushes David out the window which results in his death.

Since the perpetrator did die at the end of the film, the act is heavily justified. David had been terrorizing and using violence against the family for some time, and attempted to kill Nicole's father by putting a gun to his head. In addition, it is understood that David will never leave the family alone as long as he lives. The police did not seem to be able to help; therefore David's death would be the only way to keep the family safe.

The criminal justice system was involved in the film, but was not able to help effectively. Nicole's father contacts the police after learning of David's obsession with his daughter, but they only tell him that there is not enough evidence. This is when Nicole's father resolves to take matters into his own hands.

When David and his friends surround and trap the family in their home, they make a desperate attempt to contact security and the police. However, the authorities were not the entities that resolved the situation. The security guard is shot and left for dead, and the police do not show up until it is too late. The only role the authorities played seemed to be the clean-up of the crime scene.

This film encapsulated many of the themes involved in violence against women. Physical violence, sexual control, and coercion were all present. However, the film was considered a thriller so the perpetrator was portrayed to be a violent psychopath. While the film did contain some pertinent information as to what the reality is for women trapped in violent relationships, in the end many of the myths discussed above were also present. This can have implications for media outlets and their effect on viewer attitudes as it pertains to rape and sexual assault.

Chapter 4: Sex Trafficking in the Media

The overall phenomenon of sex trafficking is poorly understood and has only recently received media attention. Because there is less public awareness of this phenomenon, this chapter will start with a more extensive overview of the problem before discussing the movies.

Statistics given on the number of victims, or where victims are operating, results from statistics on prostitutes working in a given area. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, trafficking of humans in and out of a particular country is rarely recorded. Traffickers routinely obtain forged documents, or bribe border officials. Due to this, there are very little national or government records of who is trafficked in or out of a given country.

Secondly, because of the extreme violence many victims suffer they are reluctant to go to authorities even in the event that they escape or are rescued. This is also a reason why victims do not want to talk to researchers or social service workers. They not only fear retribution on the part of their trafficker, but also consequences of going to authorities. These consequences include deportation, being arrested, or being imprisoned. Many times when a victim is deported they are almost immediately recycled back into sex work and victimization.

The third reason has to do with cultural consequences. Many of the victims lie about their experiences, in fear that they will be stigmatized or ridiculed. Many of the cultures that supply victims place value in a woman's purity and virginity. Once these attributes are gone the woman can be seen as worthless or damaged. There is a good possibility she will never marry, and become a burden on her family. It is for this reason that many victims are not able or willing to return to their country of origin and fear deportation.

Debate has persisted on the effects of sexual assault and the sex trade. Several research studies claim to show that sexual assault in childhood can contribute to involvement in the sex trade later in life (Gorkoff and Runner, 2003). However, any direct correlation is merely

speculation. Other researchers, such as Vanwesenbeeck (2001), found that much of the time young girls enter into the sex trade out of economic need.

Today many young girls “willingly” chose to enter prostitution or are coerced into the lifestyle by economic need. What seems to be common for these groups of youths is neglect, drug abuse, and violence (physical and sexual) in their past. Where these youths cross paths with prostitution is when the child welfare system fails to intervene or provide adequate alternatives (Gorkoff and Runner, 2003). Many young girls simply are not aware of some of the social service options available to them, and opt to run away and live on the streets. Prostitution can become an empowering lifestyle in a sense, as it allows these young girls to have some self-sufficiency (Gorkoff and Runner, 2003).

As the average age of a sex worker is becoming lower and lower, a research group in Canada called the Girl Child Project set out to hear the voices of the children exploited by prostitution. Of the girls interviewed by the project, over one third of them entered prostitution between the ages of 11 and 13 (Gorkoff and Runner, 2003).

The project, through interviews, found important causes and/or motivations for entering prostitution. Imagery and self-definition were pivotal in decision making for many of the women. However, there were two distinct motivations. Some of the women interviewed cited that they had nothing to lose by going into prostitution, as they had already hit rock bottom in their lives in some other way. Whether through drug abuse or losing custody of children, these women cited that they had lost all self-respect and went searching for the easiest way in which to earn a living.

On the other side, many women interviewed stated that the lifestyle of a prostitute seemed “glamorous.” They witnessed women wearing designer shoes and clothing and thought

prostitution would afford them easy access to luxuries. However, the “glitzy” imagery wears away quickly. One woman reported that she had become dissociated from her own body, and eventually her mind as well from the violence she endured. But, with no education or work experience, she feared life without the safety net of the sex trade (Gorkoff and Runner, 2003).

However, there have been several literature pieces aimed at explaining and providing possible solutions to sex trafficking. Cameron and Newman (2008) provide several structural components that drive the sex trafficking industry. One of these components is poverty. Faced with extreme poverty, living on less than \$1 a day, women in underdeveloped nations seek to migrate to find better jobs and opportunities in wealthier nations. Education and work is scarce in their home countries, which can make women and girls more vulnerable to potentially being trafficked. When wealthier lifestyles from abroad are apparent to these women and girls, relative deprivation can develop (Cameron and Newman, 2008). These women can develop a longing for that type of lifestyle, or any lifestyle other than the impoverished one they are living. These impoverished conditions are, in part, what provides such a high supply for traffickers.

Another condition that Cameron and Newman identify is the effects of globalization. As industries look for cheaper labor in other nations, border policies simply do not allow for the legitimate flow of this labor. This creates conditions that are highly exploitative. In areas where prostitution is illegal or only partly decriminalized, this opens up a market where organized crime can make huge profits. With the ease in communication and travel, traffickers have no trouble moving women and girls from place to place to fill the demand of the industry.

These industries are also heavily gendered (Cameron and Newman, 2008). In many industries the labor of men is valued over a women's, making it much easier for a man to find legitimate work both at home and abroad. Men also enjoy more legitimate migration than

women. Because of gendered industries women must turn to illegitimate means of work and migration in order to make ends meet.

As a response to the ever increasing problem of sex trafficking, several nations and NGO groups have taken up the task of presenting possible solutions. However, there are serious problems with the manner in which governments approach the problem. Currently in European and Western destination countries trafficking in humans is treated as an immigration issue, not a human rights issue (Konrad, 2008). As a consequence, victims are treated more as criminals, being arrested for prostitution or deported as illegal immigrants. These policies and practices clearly serve the interest of the state. Illegal immigrants are seen as a threat to natural citizens, with little notice of the victimizations these women and children face in their destination country.

Southeastern Asian nations experience some of the same problems as European nations. These countries also aim to solve the sex trafficking problem within the interests of the state. Victims in this region are more often treated as criminals and jailed or deported, not provided with victim services. Due to this, continued victimization is a serious problem.

Another problem this region faces is lack of cooperation between supply and destination nations. Too often governments are tolerant or even provide policies that support the trafficking of women and children for sex work. In Japan, for example, trafficking women for the purpose of entertainment work has long been considered a veiled form of sex trafficking (Asis, 2008). Japan has agreements with the Philippines to recruit “entertainers” legally. This agreement does not provide these workers with any type of state protection. Thailand was a major supply nation for prostitutes in Japan; however, this trend lessened once the economy in Thailand started to improve (Asis, 2008).

The United States experiences its own problems combating the issue. The U.S. is the second largest destination country for trafficking victims, with Germany being the first. Even with over 250 brothels identified to have employed trafficking victims (Farr, 2005); the U.S. has yet to adopt successful anti-trafficking legislation. Much of this has to do with how the U.S. defines “sex trafficking.” The term “human smuggling” has been used to describe victims; however, this term denotes consent on the part of the victims. To address this, the U.S. has adopted a typology of severe forms of trafficking in humans. This typology includes sex trafficking, but debates remain over what really defines a person trafficked into the country for the purposes of forced sex work (Wheaton and Schauer, 2006).

Conservative estimates state that somewhere around 18,000 people are trafficked into the United States annually, with over 95% of them being women (Schauer and Wheaton, 2006). Currently more than 100,000 women and children are being kept as slaves in the United States as well. These numbers continually grow as the marginalization of women and children continue to grow. In fact, Schauer and Wheaton (2006) expect human trafficking to surpass drug trafficking as the number one international crime within the next ten years.

Several organizations have been based in the United States that intend to provide solutions for trafficking victims. One such project, Angela’s House, was founded by a group of women including Atlanta’s first woman elected to Fulton County’s Board of Commissioners Nancy Boxill (Richardson and Boxill, 2007). The women recognized that current legislation could not address the problem wholly nor could it account for the needs of victims. Most legislation, such as the Victims Protection Act, only grants services to victims who assist the prosecution in pursuing charges against the traffickers. “Customers” or “Johns” are rarely sought for prosecution, and the VPA has mostly not been used for domestic victims of trafficking. The

Welfare and Juvenile Justice systems are tasked with addressing the problem and needs of domestic victims of child sexual exploitation (Richards and Boxill, 2007).

Angela's House took notice of several pieces of legislation coming out of Canada that provide funding for safe-houses that specialize in protection of child prostitutes within communities. Other legislation in Canada allows social service agencies to seek services for victims without the consent of a parent. Traffickers and "customers" are also heavily punished under the same laws.

The coalition used research on certain risk factors to determine the type of length of services rendered to victims of child sexual exploitation. Of the specific risks, girls who do not feel safe in their homes and/or community seemed to have the greatest risk of isolation and vulnerability to trafficking. Attention-seeking behaviors were also seen as risk factors, such as poor family relationships and disruptive discipline, which could lead to early sexual behavior (Richards and Baxill, 2007). Several other risk factors were taken into consideration, such as early sexual abuse and poor school performance.

Many victims of child sexual exploitation also are repeat runaways, and may come to use sex for money, shelter, food, or drugs. "Survival sex" often leads to involvement with organized prostitution and exploitation (Richards and Baxill, 2007). Using data from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Fulton County the Atlanta Coalition found that the "typical" risk factors did not paint the entire picture. Exploited children in Atlanta came from various types of families and backgrounds. There were also varieties of school performances and emotional health, which the risk factors described above would not account for.

Angela's House was founded using the four C's: conditions, commitment, competence, and contribution. The twelve original founders were all found to have strong commitment to the

community, with superior competence as well. Each woman contributed extensively to the issue of child sexual exploitation, with one of the most significant contributions coming from Stephanie Davis, founder of the Atlanta Women's Foundation (Richards and Boxill, 2007).

In addition, Angela's House was founded on the Ten C's of Diversity Awareness and Social Change (DeRosa and Johnson, 2002) which include color, class, culture, context, and character for diversity awareness, and confidence, courage, commitment, conflict, and community for social change. These models were important for implementing social change in Atlanta in particular, which has unique characteristics that make it attractive to sexual traffickers. As a hub of transportation, Atlanta provides quick passage in and out of the city along with a steady stream of "Johns" that travel through the city frequently. Atlanta also has a variety of strip clubs that operate legally throughout the city. Many victims coming into Angela's House reported that they were recruited into prostitution from such establishments (Richards and Boxill, 2007).

Atlanta also has a unique perspective on challenges to sexism and racism, with women controlling their own wealth or the wealth of their family. Many women from Atlanta have raised to senior levels of management in corporations, as well as been elected or appointed to influential positions in government. Atlanta is also home to two nationally ranked women's colleges, Spelman College and Agnes Scott College (Richards and Boxill, 2007). These influences and characteristics make Atlanta not only a prime hub for child exploitation, but also an interesting influence in the solution to such problems.

The Coalition to End Adolescent Sexual Exploitation (CEASE) was formed to provide solutions to a problem that became evident as early as the 1990s. Georgia's juvenile courts had started hearing cases about very young girls (as young as nine) seemingly committing juvenile

offenses, especially in the realm of prostitution. Quickly light was shed on the circumstances, that these “criminal” girls were actually being bought, sold, tortured, and forced to prostitute themselves on the streets (Richards and Boxill, 2007). While the discussion on such cases had begun, scarce resources and public attitudes would not yet allow for action.

Quickly over thirty such cases a month were being heard in Atlanta area courts, which alerted several criminal justice officials who wished to address the rash of exploitation cases. However, judges and officials found that appropriate solutions to these cases simply did not exist. Their choices were between finding the girls guilty and sentencing them to detention, or acquitting them and sending them back to the streets. Treatment programs and facilities did not exist at the time. To this end, the founding group of women decided to address the problem, gather data, and find an adequate solution (Richards and Boxill, 2007).

Strategizing with leaders of other women’s organizations and utilizing what resources were available, the founding members of Angela’s House were able to name the specific problem, define risk factors and the population affected, and provide solutions. By using public awareness and legislation, the coalition continues its work to prevent and treat thousands of exploited girls still working the streets of Atlanta (Richards and Boxill, 2007).

Another organization, The Polaris Project, started in Rhode Island, goes directly to the street to reach out to sex workers and offer services. Currently that project has over 1,000 members and supporters (Farr, 2008). One of the most publicized organizations to take on sex trafficking is the International Justice Mission. Founded in 1997 by Gary Haugen, the IJM intends to rescue victims of sex trafficking and prosecute traffickers with help from local authorities. Immediately after its founding, IJM took on a research project that studied 65 organizations that employed over 40,000 relief and development workers and missionaries. That

study found that nearly all of these workers had witnessed or experienced abuses by authorities and criminal justice networks. This is where IJM decided to step in and provide “much needed justice” (IJM, 2009).

However, IJM has many of the same problems the European Union and the United States has with their approaches to sex trafficking. While IJM takes an individual approach and does not discriminate against the women it helps, IJM also intervenes without thinking about the consequences. For example, in March of 2005 a highly media covered raid was carried out on a brothel in a rural area of Cambodia. Immediately following the raid, the number of child sex workers was dramatically reduced in the area. However, less than a year after the raid the number of child sex workers in the area had risen. This time the number was 50% more than the original number of trafficking victims before the raid (The Nation, 2009). Several victims interviewed stated that after the raid they had been jailed for a period of time, where they again suffered abuse at the hands of the local authorities. They were then deported, only to return to a home that did not want them. Faced with little hope of reintegration or options, some victims voluntarily returned to the sex industry. However, some of those who were able to go home again did not stay. Before too long the debt bondage collectors came calling, taking not only the original victim but the victim's other female family members. This is most likely what caused the rise in child prostitution after the raid.

Currently research content is heavily focused on victims, with much effort and thought being put into understanding their plight and best remedies for the issue. However, a small amount of literature does exist on the motivations and behaviors of traffickers. Troshynski and Blank (2007) were such researchers who used open ended interviewing techniques to get inside the minds of sex traffickers. They sought to understand not only their motivations, but also the

opinions they held on those they enslaved (Troshynski and Blank, 2007). Without any previous research to use as a guide, the interviews were mostly exploratory in nature with the implicit purpose of developing theory based on observations.

Without knowing the inner workings of those who contribute and sustain the sex trafficking industry, little can be done to address the problem. It is speculated that greed, power, and money are the primary motivations for individuals who traffic. However, there is little statistical or research based evidence to support these claims (Troshynski and Blank, 2007). Sex trafficking is multi-dimensional, and therefore understanding the perceptions of those involved can give enough information to dismantle the intricate business.

By interviewing traffickers with qualitative techniques the holes in the research may start to be filled in. The research team wished to develop a typology of traffickers which took into account their past experiences as well as their lived experiences within the sex industry. Attitudes on prostitution and violence against women were also looked at critically (Troshynski and Blank, 2007).

The questions asked centered around how the perpetrators made sense of their position within trafficking of women for prostitution. Explanations as to their original and sustained motivations for the practice then evolved, along with their social and economic justifications for their involvement. The role of money was also imperative to discuss, due to the stereotype of the “greedy criminal” (Troshynski and Blank, 2007).

When wishing to observe the underground world of criminal enterprises several moral and ethical issues arise. Firstly, the research team needed an initial contact that would act as a gatekeeper to allow them to be acquainted with traffickers. For Troshynski and Blank (2007) a gatekeeper emerged quite suddenly. A nightclub worker overheard discussion of their research

and commented in passing that he knew of some men who trafficked for some extra cash. This man created access for the research team to discover the operations of a trafficking business first hand (Troshynski and Blank, 2007).

Interviews were conducted over a period of three months, and occurred sporadically and in numerous locations. In order for the research subjects to feel comfortable the interviewers had to remain neutral, friendly, and agreeable (Troshynski and Blank, 2007). Due to snowball type research and rigid privacy measures, the quantitative data collected was very limited in its scope. However, many themes and information did emerge from the open ended conversations had with the traffickers.

Trafficking victims are too often treated as criminals, not victims of exploitation and abuse. It is this practice that directly causes the prolonged victimization and recycling of victims into prostitution. Some of the current resolutions only contribute more to a victims suffering, not intervene upon it. Until the states' interests are set aside and proper practices are put in place to reintegrate and rehabilitate victims, the cycle of victimization and the sex trafficking industry as a whole will only gain momentum.

Debate rages over not only the definition of what sex trafficking is, but also what consent victims have over the process. Many women willingly leave their origin country with a trafficker; perhaps many even know that migration is illegal. Debate is raised over the conditions for "employment" and how much and what type of coercion is used to entice unwitting victims (Bell, 2001). It could even be argued that the sex industry exists on a continuum, with consensual prostitution on one end and forced sex work on the other. One nuance is certain, attitudes and perceptions on the sex industry and the issue of consent are heavily weighted by media content of such issues.

Bell (2001) takes an altogether different approach to the nuances of trafficking. While many other scholars advocate for rehabilitation or tough punishments for traffickers, Bell (2001) encourages the use of “financial weapons” (such as money laundering or taxation) to combat the problem. Bell (2001) asserts that since the motivation for trafficking women for sex work is due to its lucrative nature, this issue could be looked at from a financial crime perspective. Women are often drawn to recruiters for the purpose of securing well-paying jobs, another matter involving economics and financials (Bell, 2001).

Auctions, reminiscent of the African slave trade, are also features of sex trafficking. In 1997 in Italy, for example, a gang was found to be auctioning young women to the highest bidder. The young girls were stripped half naked and sold for the average price of \$1,000. Bell (2001) also identifies three categories of groups that profit from sex trafficking. These small, medium, or large groups are often classified by the scale of the operation. Small groups traffic one or two girls at a time, while a larger group can traffic many women simultaneously, and usually forces them to work in their own brothels or clubs. Large-scale trafficking rings bring in the most profit, as they do not act as middle-men or sell their victims to third parties (Bell, 2001).

One of the prime features of sex trafficking, that makes it appealing to global criminals, is that the cost of initial investment is much lower than that of trafficking drugs or arms. Many times the profits made from such illegal activity go to funding various other forms of crime. For example, money earned will frequently go to the bribing of police or other entities in order for operations to stay in business (Bell, 2001).

Bell (2001) also points out that conventions against sex trafficking go back to the 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others. This convention stated that immigration for the purpose of forced

prostitution was harmful to the individual and to the community (Bell, 2001). This was just the first in a string of UN Conventions that wished to address the issue. However, while these pieces of legislation raise awareness they do little for the policing or monitoring of such crime. Many jurisdictions are reluctant to sign such legislation, despite the fact that the Financial Action Task Force has called out several of these nations. The FATF has also created the “40 Recommendations on Money Laundering” that has proven successful (Bell, 2001).

Since trafficking in women is done for profit, it can then be argued that somehow eliminating this profitability may be the avenue for which the crime can be deterred. However, simply arresting and convicting perpetrators does not achieve this goal. Only the tools provided by a financial crime perspective have hope of eliminating the profitability of such crimes. The four tools provided by the perspective are confiscation orders following conviction, money-laundering legislation, civil forfeiture procedures, and taxation legislation (Bell, 2001).

Several cases tried in the UK have used Confiscation Orders, with heavy fines being paid by offenders after conviction. One defendant, who was estimated to have made nearly \$3 million in profits from 32 brothels in less than three years, was ordered to pay nearly \$1 million to satisfy a Confiscation Order (Bell, 2001). These types of fines may be able to hurt the wallets of traffickers enough to deter and adequately punish offenders. However, many times fines are only a fraction of what is made by traffickers and paying such fines amounts only to the “cost of doing business.”

Money laundering is a part of nearly any illegal enterprise, with prostitution being no different. While many laws against money laundering were created for the purpose of convicting drug traffickers, several cases have been tried against sex traffickers as well. Several defendants in the United States suspected of running illegal prostitution rings were convicted of money

laundering and sentenced to prison, along with having to pay large fines (Bell, 2001). Since legislation does not currently exist making trafficking for the purpose of forced prostitution illegal in and of itself, money laundering legislation can be used for the purpose of prosecuting offenders of such crimes.

The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act secure Civil Forfeiture as a means to confiscate property acquired from the forced sexual slavery of women and girls. Several cases in Florida have used such provisions to prosecute individuals thought to run an underground prostitution ring, which used illegal immigrants. Theoretically, victims of sex trafficking could also sue their perpetrators for damages suffered from their treatment. These statues are another potential avenue for dismantling small and large scale sex trafficking organizations (Bell, 2001).

Much like the case of Al Capone, taxation legislation may also be used against traffickers. In both Ireland and Canada offenders have been tried for tax evasion in relation to prostitution revenues. Taxation comes across areas of weakness where police and tax authorities are unable to adequately exchange information and evidence. Multi-agency task forces may be the solution to such problems (Bell, 2001).

The issue of migration for the purposes of forced prostitution is definitely widespread, and compels the attention of individuals across many disciplines. The medical field also takes a keen interest in sex trafficking, as victims very frequently need long-term medical and psychiatric care. This is compounded by the fact that many victims of sex trafficking are very young girls, many as young as nine or ten years old.

McCain and Garrity (2010) argue that awareness on the part of nurses is important in order to recognize and address the issue, much like the medical community does for domestic

violence or rape victims. With victims of trafficking being widespread throughout the United States, many of whom require medical attention at some point in time, medical professionals can and should be educated to the implications of such an issue (McCain and Garrity, 2010).

With the highly secret nature of the industry, law enforcement and even advocacy groups are not aware of victims. This makes data on how widespread the issue really is speculative at best. This is where the medical community can step in and help identify victims. This measure is imperative, especially due to rough numbers indicating that the online sex advertising revenues to be over \$3.6 million in 2010 (McCain and Garrity, 2010).

Perhaps this is the reason in 2008 the American Nurses Association (ANA) approved a measure to address the issue of human trafficking. The measure indicates the crucial role of nurses in identifying, intervening, and advocating for victims. Identifying victims is especially important, as nurses are sometimes the first outside individuals victims come into contact with. Much like with domestic violence and sexual assault, there are certain warning signs that may aid nurses in identifying victims of trafficking (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Possible Warning Signs for Sex Trafficking Victimization

Homelessness	Frequent running away
Presence of an older boyfriend or large age disparity in intimate relationships.	Travel with older males who are not a guardian.
Signs of violence and/or psychological trauma.	Sexually Transmitted Diseases, pregnancy, or abortions.
Masking charges, such as truancy, or other criminal behavior.	Substance abuse.
History of family violence.	History of child sexual abuse.
Younger than 18 with prior involvement in prostitution.	Access to material things they cannot afford.

More importantly, screening questions should be used that include certain indicators of being involved in forced prostitution (see table 4.2). Since laws vary from state to state, nurses should also be aware of any local jurisdiction and its laws sanctioning sex trafficking. Such laws on truancy and runaways also differ, which is important when understanding exactly what activities should be reported to authorities (McCain and Garrity, 2010).

Table 4.2 Possible Screening Questions for Sex Trafficking Victims

Where do you eat and sleep?	What are your living/working conditions like?
Can you come and go as you wish?	Has anyone ever physically harmed you, or threatened to harm you?
Do you have to ask permission for physical necessities, including food, shelter, sleep, or health care?	Are you allowed to speak with people outside of your home?
Are you or have you been forced to perform sexual acts?	Have you or your family ever been threatened if you do not perform sexual acts?

Nurses can attend to the immediate and long-term care needs of victims. These young girls most likely did not have regular access to medical care and therefore will need basic physical exams, along with treatment for any injuries or trauma they have experienced. Treatment for depression and suicide is pivotal, as victims experience severe forms of psychological distress, sometimes for many years after being freed from their captors. Overall, in order to combat sex trafficking, nearly all areas of society must be involved with the liberation and rehabilitation for victims. Nurses and medical professionals play an important role, as their initial recognition and intervention can determine the difference between addressing the problem or remaining blind to it (McCain and Garrity, 2010).

Data Collection

I will include film portrayals of sex traffickers and victims. I will use two films, one Hollywood production and one independent film, *Holly* (2004) and *Trade* (2005). *Holly* (2004) is an independently produced film that draws on the reality of trafficking for sex work. *Trade* (2005) is a Hollywood production that focuses around fictional characters and draws on more dramatic themes commonly found in Hollywood features. I will attempt to uncover the themes discussed above, with the following questions:

- How many times is the sex workers in the film referred to as “prostitutes,” or any other demeaning term?
- How many times is the sex workers referred to as victims?
- Are the men seeking sexual services portrayed positively?
- Are the women giving sexual services portrayed positively? Is the main character in the film portrayed to have special characteristics that separate her from the other sex workers in the movie?
- Is the resolution for victims positive?
- Did the traffickers within the film have a positive resolution?

These categories are based on the definitions of “positive” and “negative” portrayal. In this case, a “positive portrayal” will denote whether the victim's story was told at all, for example, how she became a prostitute and what led up to her captivity. Positivity will also be shown by what happens to the victim after an intervention, whether she received social and psychological services as opposed to deportation or imprisonment. “Negative portrayal” will denote the victim as “liking” sex work, or providing sexual services as a choice on her part. Coercion and exploitation will be left out of the victim's story, with most of the blame for her

situation being put on her. Consequences of intervention in a “negative portrayal” will mostly be deportation, imprisonment, or both.

I will use the answers to the questions to analyze the differences and similarities between victims portrayed in Hollywood film against the portrayals in documentaries. This will add the analysis of how different media outlets portray victims and offenders of sex trafficking, and how the images of victims and offenders are understood by the viewing audience.

Synopsis: *Trade*

Similar to what Roth and Ross (2007) observed, the Hollywood production film *Trade* (2007) had several dominant themes within the movie. In fact, several subplots were apparently tied to the larger plot. The implications of state crime were discussed, but the other dominant themes of family devotion, fear, money, and death were heavily saturated throughout the film.

The film opens to a small village outside of Mexico City, where a girl named Adriana is celebrating her thirteenth birthday. Her devoted brother Jorge (Cesar Ramos) gets her a bicycle, which their mother forbids Adriana from riding suspecting it was stolen. Their mother’s intuition proves correct; Jorge makes a living robbing American tourists in Mexico City.

When Adriana goes out to ride the bike anyway while her mother is sleeping, she is chased by traffickers and kidnapped. After Jorge discovers another neighborhood child riding his sister’s bike, he believes he knows what happened to Adriana and begins his quest to rescue her.

The audience is then introduced to Veronika, who was trafficked to Mexico under the false assumption that she would be taken to America to find domestic work. Upon arriving in Mexico City, the traffickers take her and another victim’s passports and tell them what really is expected. Veronika’s companion tries to run, but is hit by a truck before she can escape.

What is a very frequently typical with sex trafficking is the systematic rape and brutal assaults victims experience almost immediately. While Adriana and several other victims look on, a trafficker rapes and assaults Veronika in an attempt to instill fear and extract control. This tactic seems to work for the young girls who witness the attack; however as is seen later Veronika is not so easily broken.

Meanwhile, Jorge attempts to go to the local government for help finding his sister. The officials there tell him there is nothing they can do since traffickers routinely take their victims illegally into America where they have no authority. However, Jorge does leave with the knowledge that traffickers have been known to take victims into New Jersey for online auctions where they can be “bought” outright by American men.

The star of the film, Kevin Kline, plays a detective named Ray Sheriden who is privately investigating the possible kidnapping of his illegitimate daughter. His investigation leads him to the temporary house Adriana and Veronika were being kept in before their transport to America, which is also where Jorge is looking for his sister. After hiding in the trunk of Ray’s car in order to get across the border, Ray discovers Jorge and, after hearing his story, agrees to help.

On their way to New Jersey, several subplots are developed. Jorge learns of Roy’s illegitimate daughter who was born while Ray was having an extramarital affair. The girl’s mother, a severe drug addict, was thought to have taken the child over the border into Mexico. Upon her death, American investigators contact Ray to inform him they suspect his daughter had been sold by her mother into sexual slavery.

Ray and Jorge also learn imperative facts in regard to Adriana along the way. While stopping for food at a truck stop, Jorge recognizes a young boy with an older man he thinks was also trafficked along with his sister. He runs the man and child down, and Ray proceeds to

interrogate them. Ray learns the man “purchased” the boy on a website, and gives him the password and web address. This is how Ray and Jorge later are able to find where in New Jersey Adriana is being held.

Along their journey to New Jersey, Adriana, Veronika, and the other victims are forced to trudge through a shallow part of the Rio Grand to cross into America. Almost instantly, they are arrested and detained. While they are there, Veronika tries to inform a guard that she was forcibly taken across the border, but the guard doesn’t believe her story and ignores her.

The next day they are taken back into Mexico, but promptly cross the border again. This time, they are successful and meet up with another trafficker that will take them the rest of the way to New Jersey. But, this does not occur before the traffickers have the opportunity to again exploit their victims. They take pictures of the youngest girls, including Adriana, dressed in suggestive clothes that later are used on the auction website. At yet another location, men pay \$80 to take a girl into a field for twenty minutes and force her to perform sex acts.

Adriana, being a virgin, is left feeling dirty and “impure,” which leads her to think she may never be able to go back to her life in Mexico with her mother. Fearing her mother will disown her, she further succumbs to the traffickers and the life they are forcing on her.

Veronika attempts to alleviate some of Adriana’s fears, and they are able to attempt escape while the traffickers stop to use the restroom. Escaping long enough to use a pay phone, Veronika calls her mother who is caring for her infant child and learns the same people who escorted her to Mexico have come back and tricked her mother into giving them the child. While on the phone, the traffickers catch up and capture them once more. However, not knowing what has become of her son, Veronika jumps to her own death off of a ravine.

Now without any companionship, Adriana is fearful and held in a house in New Jersey to wait who will “buy” her. Even though Ray has tried to involve the police to help him track down the offenders, they again offer no help. Jurisdiction constraints prohibit them from taking action.

With no help from the local authorities, Ray empties his savings account and helps Jorge win the auction of his sister. They are told to bring the money to an empty parking lot, where a trafficker is waiting to take Ray to the house Adriana is kept at. When he arrives, he finds a young woman with intense green eyes who is one of the main leaders of the trafficking ring. She is his daughter, who becomes a trafficker after being sold into it herself.

However, he cannot digest the information at the time. He must focus on trying to get Adriana out of the house. However, the woman suspects that something is not right about Ray and insists that he takes Adriana’s virginity before leaving with her. She even states she wants to “see blood on the sheets.” Not knowing what to do, Adriana takes the situation into her own hands, so to speak, and cuts herself and smears it on the bed. Satisfied, the mistress allows them to leave.

In the dramatic climax of the film, Jorge jumps from the bushes and beats the male trafficker with a tire iron as they exit the house. At that moment, multiple police officers storm the house and arrest the mistress and male trafficker. Jorge and Adriana are taken back to Mexico, where Adriana is embraced by her mother. Ray returns to his wife, accepting what has happened to his daughter.

Content Analysis: *Trade*

Similar to Roth and Ross’s (2007) findings, this Hollywood film has several dominant themes other than the depiction of trafficking. The theme of death is punctuated throughout the

film, which can be seen in the scene where a trafficking victim is hit by a truck during an escape attempt, and again with the suicide of Veronika. While these scenes give depth to the trauma experienced by the victims, they are certainly not a typical or realistic feature of the state crime of trafficking.

Fear is a prominent fixture of this phenomenon, and it too is another dominant theme in the film. With regards to the scene where Adriana and other victims witness the rape of Veronika, they are subordinated by just witnessing the event. The fear of this treatment aides the abductors in controlling the victims. However, the opposite effect is seen in Veronika. She perceives this to be the worst treatment she could endure, and no longer fears what the traffickers might do to her. As a result, she “acts out” in the film in order to protect the younger girls and draw the violence onto her.

Family devotion is central to this plot line. Without the intense love Jorge has for his sister, he may have given up hope of finding her at any number of the road blocks he encounters. Similarly, the compassion Ray feels for the circumstances of his daughter leads him to spend extensive time and money to find her. These family bonds continuously motivate the main characters from the beginning. Jorge cannot live with himself knowing what is to happen to his sister, and this intense devotion is what touches Ray and encourages him to aid Jorge in his desire to rescue his sister. While many families of trafficked victims do feel this type of devotion, lack of knowledge, legal aide, and resource constraints lead many people to give up the search for their kidnapped children. However, more frequently family members have the wool pulled over their eyes and do not know what has become of their family members.

Of course money is what drives many industries, with sex trafficking being no different. Monetary resources are yet another dominant theme within this film. Conflict and problem

solving arises between the storyline of the traffickers, who have money, and the main characters, who lack money. In the end, money is what allows Ray and Jorge to find Adriana and “buy” her from her captors. Many families, in reality, find themselves without tens of thousands of dollars needed in order to appease traffickers and buy victims out of their bondage debt.

Trade did contain important information on the aspects of the sex trade, and the characters were portrayed to a certain degree of accuracy in relation to actual victims. At no time during the film were the victims referred to as prostitutes, not even by their traffickers. However, the victims were called “bitch” and told “good dog” quite frequently. While demeaning terms were used by the enemy traffickers toward the victims, overall the young girls in the film were portrayed as sympathetic victims of an abhorrent crime.

This film did give limited time to the men who seek out these types of “services.” In regards to the man who “bought” the young boy, he was roughed up during his interrogation. This type of treatment could be seen as deserved, since the man was seen negatively, as a pedophile. The rest of the “clients” seeking sexual services from young girls were also portrayed negatively, as perverted men seeking to have sex with children.

As with many other Hollywood films, the main victims in the film did have some unique characteristics that would set them apart from fellow victims. Adriana had the virtue of a tenacious brother who would stop at nothing to find her, and stumbled upon some luck in meeting Ray along the way. Veronika was unique in her selfless and mothering nature. Her tough exterior allowed her to stand up to, and even attempt escape from, her captors. This fiery, tough personality also allowed her to endure almost constant assaults so that the younger girls would not have to.

In this story, the results for the victims were mixed. There was a happy ending for Adriana, who is reunited with her brother and an ecstatic mother. However, Veronika's story ended in her taking her own life at the knowledge that her previous life and her son are gone forever. While Hollywood movies tend to not want to end on a depressing note and give audiences an uplifting ending, it is important to acknowledge that what happened to Veronika is closest to what eventually happens to many trafficking victims. While they may not take their own lives, they too often die at the hands of their captors or from disease they've contracted from forced sex acts.

The film did not conclude what actually did happen to the individuals who physically traffic the girls across international and state lines; however the masterminds behind the trafficking rings did seem to have a negative consequence. During the climactic scenes toward the end of the film, not only was the young girl rescued by her brother and the retired officer but the traffickers (including the female leader) were arrested. This would be the only consequence shown, as prosecution and sentencing or other social consequences for the traffickers was never depicted.

Synopsis: *Holly*

The film *Holly* (2007) gave its own unique perspective. Unlike *Trade*, *Holly* was produced as an independent film. Set in Cambodia, *Holly* opens with a scene of a young girl who is running from two men. Eventually they catch her and deliver her to a woman, who the audience quickly learns is not her mother. Furious at Holly for running away (again), the woman slaps her and drags her by her hair to a room where she locks her in and informs Holly she will not be eating dinner. Sad, alone, and hungry Holly falls asleep.

With pictures of half naked (or completely naked) young girls lining the walls, one can only assume that Holly is residing in one of Cambodia's many brothels. Young women "work" the street in front of the brothel nightly, hoping to make enough money to satisfy their mistress. Holly, being a virgin, has only escaped this nightly ritual because the mistress has been unsuccessfully trying to sell Holly's virginity. While Holly escapes being raped (for now), she is forced to serve as a maid in the house, catering to the "profitable" girls.

Patrick, played by Ron Livingston, is an American residing in Cambodia who makes a living fencing stolen artifacts. A degenerate gambler and drinker, he finds his way into Holly's life by chance when his motorcycle breaks down. Forced to wait two days while a mechanic fixes it, he must stay at the brothel. However, even though offered several times, he declines the company of the women who live there.

He becomes friendly with Holly when he witnesses her trying to pick berries from a tree that is obviously beyond her reach. He offers to help, but Holly stubbornly refuses and insists she can do it herself. Patrick, quite stubborn himself, helps her pick the berries anyway. Afterwards, Patrick takes Holly for a ride on his motorcycle where they bond further. Unfortunately, upon their return Holly is accused of trying to run away again and is subsequently beaten. Shortly after, her mistress sells her to another brothel because she is too much "trouble."

While on the journey to her new destination, Holly successfully runs away and finds herself alone and without means to sustain herself. She picks through garbage piles to find anything she can use to buy food. A police officer notices that she is not from that particular village, and offers to buy her dinner. After this, he offers to give her a ride wherever she is trying to go. However, he drives her to another brothel and sells her again for \$200. This is where Holly's "luck" ends; she is raped that evening by a much older man for \$300.

Patrick learns of Holly's escape when he goes to her former employers looking for her. Distraught over where she might be, he meets a young woman while drinking in a bar. She is an advocate against child prostitution and works in a shelter set up to help girls like Holly who were trafficked into the sex trade. She informs Patrick of the nature of her work, and gives him valuable information on how he may be able to help Holly.

Now obsessed with helping Holly get out of her situation, Patrick is finally able to hunt down which brothel is keeping her. When the pair meets again, Holly has changed. While only twelve years old, she is dressed provocatively and made to wear make up. Her demeanor has much changed as well; she is silent and seems to have submitted to a life of abuse and rape.

Patrick "buys" her for the night, trying desperately to tell her that she does not deserve such treatment. He convinces her to leave the brothel, a very risky endeavor. The brothel mistress and her thugs know that Holly is with Patrick, which likely will result in Patrick's death if they are caught.

Patrick takes Holly to the shelter he learned about from the advocate, who take Holly in and assure her that she is safe. However, the shelter employees tell Patrick that it takes years to rehabilitate a trafficking victim. In order for Holly to begin to heal, every part of her previous life must be removed. This, of course, means removing Patrick from her life as well.

When Holly learns they have sent Patrick away and told him never to return, she distrusts the organization even further and resolves to run away to find Patrick. She finds him in a bar, obviously drunk, where he picks a fight with a man who expressed to Patrick that he was the one who took Holly's virginity. The film ends with Patrick being arrested, while Holly looks on.

Content Analysis: Holly

This film rarely used terms such as “prostitute,” instead referring to the sex workers as “girls.” The film, in an attempt to be authentic, does not use extensive English dialogue. The English spoken by the native actors is broken and very basic, which may be one reason why such demeaning language was not used as much.

The girls are referred to as victims and treated as such in the scenes with the shelter, and when Patrick meets one of the shelter workers in a bar. These characters in the film give valuable knowledge on the reality of the sex trade. While discussing her work at the bar, the advocate informs Patrick of the enormous amount of resources it takes to rehabilitate victims. With the girls being as young as nine or ten years old, they are provided with education and a safe environment for many years after they are freed from slavery. And, even if all 60,000 prostitutes in Cambodia could be “bought” and freed, she tells Patrick that within months the number of prostitutes would climb to 120,000 and their prices would be much higher.

Also included in their dialogue are jurisdictional issues that hinder efforts to curb sex trafficking. Being from Vietnam, Holly will most likely never be able to go home due to border conflicts. Patrick then asks what would be required to take Holly to America and seek refuge for her there. Again, the United States does not allow adoption from that area of Cambodia specifically due to that men will try to “adopt” such young girls and keep them as sex slaves. Left with no other choice, Patrick must leave Holly at the shelter and never see her again.

The men in the film who seek out these sexual services are not portrayed positively. In one scene, while Patrick is still staying at the brothel and eating in their small café, he encounters a European man who frequently enjoys the company of the girls. Thinking they have something in common, the man strikes up a conversation with Patrick. Patrick becomes offended, being

mistaken for someone who purchases sex with children, and tells the stranger that he does not “have sex with little girls, you sick fuck.”

When an advocate comes to the brothel to convince the mistress that some of her “employees” are too young, she slaps Patrick in the face as he is walking by. Patrick is mistaken for someone who enjoys sex with children several times in the film. One particular scene depicts Patrick eating with Holly in a public area right before he convinces her to escape, when one of the boys she picked garbage with spits in Patrick’s face and dumps Holly’s soup down the front of her shirt. Clearly, those not involved with the sex trade see it as immoral and not to be tolerated. However, the girls are frequently condemned along with the men.

Much like the movie *Trade*, Holly has some special characteristics that set her apart from the other victims. She is very stubborn, never wanting to do what she is told. She rebels against the treatment she is forced to endure, knowing that she deserves better. Only for a few minutes of the movie does she seem to submit to the lifestyle of a prostitute, and Patrick quickly finds her and snaps her out of it. This is not typical of very many victims of trafficking. After suffering so much abuse, many succumb to the control of their captors and the life of forced sex. Some identify so much so with their abusers that they then continue to work the streets, even becoming mistresses or managers of brothels themselves.

The resolve at the end for both Holly and her traffickers was abstract. It seemed as if nothing happened to those who raped Holly or abducted her, which is typical. What happens to Holly is left unknown, for the audience to figure out for themselves. Does she stay on the streets and make her way back into prostitution? Does she finally escape the sex trade to be rehabilitated? And what becomes of Patrick? Is he convicted and sentenced to prison? These questions are never answered.

Chapter 5: Conclusions for the Future of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Sex Trafficking in a Global Society

While research on media, especially violence in the media, is not a new topic it is still an endeavor worth putting effort into. Media has enormous influence in the everyday lives of individuals throughout the world, and no doubt has some level of influence on them. This is the end to which research such as this is needed. Issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking have consequences not only for the individual suffering from such abuse, but the entire population of people who live in a world where this form of treatment is not only tolerated, but even expected.

The new information this analysis yielded had to do with the evolution of these issues, as is reflected in film. Prior the 1990s feminist movement, films such as the ones analyzed here mostly did not exist. Even more evolutionary are the more modern films dealing with sex trafficking. While these movies certainly use Hollywood themes and dramatizations, the messages are nonetheless somewhere on the right track. Abusers are portrayed as negative individuals who deserve punishment, while the victims are mostly not blamed for their horrific treatment. Perhaps the only element missing from these films is proper intervention methods, as many of the films depict the women or their families aiding them in their escape from their captors.

In addition, this analysis raised some interesting questions for further study. Where will the future of such cinema head? Will future movies on the subject show more social advocacy and intervention groups and their role in the rehabilitation process? Is the rehabilitation process not “dramatic” enough for Hollywood films? While the rehabilitation process for victims of violence is long and arduous, Hollywood has yet to focus on these processes. It may even be

assumed that if films do undertake such an endeavor, these themes will be wildly exaggerated and nowhere near the reality.

Limitations

Domestic violence and abuse has a vast array of research to support it, however the phenomenon varies greatly. While the goals and consequences of abuse are similar across victims and circumstances, how actions are defined as abusive poses a problem. According to Bancroft (2002), victims have the authority to define their situations as abusive. He urges women who find themselves in such conditions to trust their instincts. If they feel they are being abused, coerced, or controlled in any way they most likely are (Bancroft, 2002).

This poses unique difficulties for a researcher. Denial among victims is quite common, with many not recognizing their partner's behavior as abusive. Societal myths play an important role in this, as they can work to skew the perception of abuse. Bancroft (2002), and many others who work with abuse victims, defines abuse as any behavior that serves to control or subordinate another. This definition is painfully vague for a researcher, but important when working with abuse survivors. This makes "domestic abuse" a unique term to define. Without concrete definitions to work with, any content analysis in this field will be limited.

Many other definitions tend to be specific, including the legal definition of rape in United States legislation. Legislation defines rape as the forcible sexual relations with a person against their will. This definition has been the subject of scrutiny since the major feminist movements of the 1970s through the 1990s, as former definitions of sexual assault and rape maintained that victims were women. This, of course, raises implications as to how male rape is defined. Due to this the definitions have been changed to include rape of any gender, but the key feature remains

sexual relations by force. Scrutiny continues as to what “force” is defined as, specifically if threat of force is admissible (legal-dictionary.freeditonary.com, 2012).

The definitions of rape and sexual assault have similar complications. The FBI, and other criminal justice jurisdiction, defines rape only as the forcible penetration of a female. This definition does not provide for the fact that males are also raped, or forcibly penetrated (www.fbi.gov, 2011). However, rape and sexual assault pose their own distinct problems, namely, with the concept of consent.

Legally, the absence of objection to sexual acts does not constitute rape or assault. But, many victims do not verbally object to sexual acts because of their fear of the attacker. Perpetrators often use threats to harm the victim, or their loved ones, to extract compliance. Stereotypes and myths also aid the perpetrator in gaining control of the victim, many times victims will not recognize and report the assault due to their fear that they will be blamed or unfairly labeled. This is one of the prime reasons why rape and sexual assault are one of the most under reported crimes (www.fbi.gov, 2011).

Since sex trafficking combines the concepts of rape and abuse, its definitional problems are similar. Because there is no internationally recognized definition for what sex trafficking actually is, research will be limited. Without a solid understanding of the phenomenon, proper interventions and analysis cannot be executed. The limitations of my research will be similar to the limitations found in many of the studies on sex trafficking currently. Due to lack of cooperation between nations on the subject accurate measurements of the size and scope of the problem cannot be obtained. Conflict over whether sex trafficking is a serious social problem continue, with a general lack of importance being put on it. State interests still circumvent human rights issues in that illegal migration is more detrimental to the state, but forced prostitution is

more detrimental to the individual. Due to these continuing attitudes, funding and appreciation of the problem has yet to come full circle.

With the nature of illegal immigration and the violence that is associated with forced prostitution this limits the ability of researchers to get a full understanding of the problem. Victims very rarely come forward, and when they do they tend to hide important facts in order to protect themselves and their families. Due to the social ramifications of the phenomenon, social research is very limited to the information they can obtain from victims, human rights groups, and offenders. My research will also fall victim to this limitation, with media portrayals of the phenomenon being based largely on hear-say and fabricated victim accounts. In conjunction, the media tends to glamorize and exaggerate stories almost to the point of fabrication in order to create a “sensational” news story. Many times media portrayals are not indicative of general attitudes about a subject.

Applications

The purpose of my research is to help aid in an understanding of not only how the media portrays victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and ultimately, sex trafficking, but also to aid in an understanding of the consequences of all three phenomenon on a larger scale. Serious implications can amount from improper application of interventions that only further victimize. An understanding of how women and their sexuality are thought of socially can help in the planning and implementation of educational programs and intervention groups. Social conditions, cultural background, and current state interests are all important aspects of the puzzle that must be understood in order to be able to curb the problem.

In a globalizing world the media is a major source for the dissemination of information. Portrayals of abuse, rape, and sexual slavery in the media are important to understand if we are

ever to understand the implications of such phenomenon. I hope that the information I uncover will aid in the understanding of how victims are treated within the media, in order to understand what interests are being served by their victimhood. A state need vs. human rights is a powerful issue that deserves understanding for our globalizing world to progress.

In reviewing the research, a recurring theme of the films reviewed was that the criminal justice system is ill equipped to aid the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking. With the films depicting domestic violence, the victims are seen as individuals who tried to use the criminal justice system and it failed them. Instead, these women must overcome the hurdles in front of them on their own. In the conclusions of both *Enough* and *Sleeping with the Enemy*, both abusers perish at the hands of their victims before any criminal justice intervention.

The same can be concluded from the films about sexual assault. In both films, any police or security personnel fail to protect the victims or their families. In a similar vein, the victims must then defend and overcome their attackers on their own without the help of police. Security guards in *Fear* are easily overcome by the attackers, and police response time to distress calls is inadequate. The same is evident in *A Mother's Revenge*, where the court systems fail to give jail time to a rapist.

The films surrounding the theme of sex trafficking have a similar theme, but is portrayed differently. In the film *Holly*, the police are just as corrupt and benefit from the sex trade as the traffickers themselves. *Trade*, as a Hollywood production, takes a different route. The main character that saves the day in the end is part of law enforcement, but is operating mostly outside his jurisdiction in order to help the enslaved girls.

The most dominant theme in all films is family, which is apparent in all the films in some form. In the domestic violence films, mother-daughter relationships are shown as a central motivation. In *Sleeping with the Enemy*, the main character has a very close relationship with her mother that, in the end, compromises her safety. *Enough* focuses around a mother trying tirelessly to escape her abusive husband not entirely for herself, but for her young daughter as well.

The same theme of family is seen in the sexual assault films. In one the main motivation for revenge on the mother's part was her devotion to her daughter, in the other the entire family is victimized by the attackers and must come together to overcome them.

Again, the sex trafficking films exhibit the theme of family in an alternate way. While the characters in *Holly* are not related, control is exerted over the victim by threatening to go after her family. The same is done in *Trade*, one of the main characters is kept subordinate by threatening to harm her young son.

In conclusion, the myths present in these media portrayals show that outside agencies, especially the criminal justice system, is incompetent and cannot help victims of such crimes. In reality, exposed by the literature on the subject of such victimization, it is that much harder for a victim to overcome her circumstances entirely on her own. Outside agencies, such as social services or organizations designed to aid and give resources to victims are imperative to empowering victims to get out of their abusive situations. With sex trafficking victims, these same organizations are important in the rehabilitation of women and girls to not only get out of their enslavement, but also to rehabilitate them back into society.

Overall, many films portray the victims as strong, self-sufficient women who do not deserve their treatment. The women are shown to overcome their fears and say "no" to their

attackers, therefore screaming that they will not sit quiet and endure the abuse. This message is important, as it empowers viewers and audiences to know that to abuse, enslave, or sexually assault anyone is an unacceptable practice and should be combated vehemently.

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