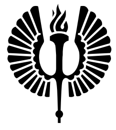 UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Hidden from the outside world

Narratives of the sex trafficking survivors in public media

Sociology
Master's thesis
Faculty of social sciences
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22.3.2023
Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's thesis

Subject: Sociology
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Title: Hidden from the outside world: Narratives of the sex trafficking survivors in public media
Supervisor: Hannu Ruonavaara
Number of pages: 80
Date: 22.3.2023

Sex trafficking is an universally widespread phenomenon that exist in various forms of sex work and sexual exploitation. Different societal conflicts and wars typically proliferate sex trafficking as well as its coverage in media. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is constantly and globally present whether or not it would be a topic in public discussion.

Sex workers have historically been featured as an ordinary part of society, since prostitution is termed the ‘oldest profession on earth’. Globally, over the past few decades, the increased use of information and communication technologies has led to the use of pornography on an endemic scale. However, whilst sexual work is somewhat normalised and widely publicised, there is still a lack of realisation that many sex workers may be victims of human trafficking.

Sex trafficking victims are typically perceived as prostitutes, or in an international context, illegal immigrants. This causes their victim-status to remain unidentified in which case they are often hindered from receiving the help they need. Moreover, prostitution is a highly stigmatised occupation. Victims of sex trafficking therefore typically are stigmatised as prostitutes even though they have entered in the sex trade against their will.

This thesis examines narratives of sex trafficking survivors. The stories are collected from different media where the survivors have given personal accounts of their own experiences. This study combines these stories into a uniform narrative that follows their experiences from childhood to the point of the documentation of their narratives. The research explores how the survivors describe their identities along the timeline of their narratives and reports other people’s perceptions of them as they emerge in their stories. The thesis analyses the stereotypical presumptions of sex trafficking that are based on the survivors’ descriptions as well as on the research about the subject. The concepts of deviance and stigma (Goffman 1963) are used as theoretical concepts in the analysis.

The findings show that the survivors suffer from various forms of trauma that exist in their everyday life even years after escaping from trafficking. Survivors demonstrate various ways of managing the stigma of sex trafficking life imprinted on them. Childhood experiences, such as sexual and mental abuse, had impact on how the survivors explained the causality of being drawn into sex trafficking. The narratives raise issues of familial trafficking and the intersectional problems of being a homosexual, poor and homeless. The stories reveal the importance of early intervention of child abuse, support of underaged homosexuals and the identification of sex trafficking victims.

Key words: sex trafficking, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual violence, trauma, sex work, stigma, deviance

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1 Introduction

Human trafficking is a widely dispersed form of concealed crime that is prevalent in most parts of the world. It is the third most lucrative type of crime after illicit drug and weapon trade, and financial gains of traffickers are estimated to be 130 billion euros annually (Human Rights First 2017; ILO 2022). The risks of trafficking in persons are assessed to be the lowest compared to the majority of other forms of illegal trade whereas the profits are calculated to be substantially high (Jordan et al. 2013). Trafficking is on many occasions interlinked with societal institutions and the corruption within them. Arlacchi (2011, 40-41) argues that criminal networks, as well as ignorance and corruption in different levels of institutional bodies, make the trafficking possible and ongoing. Arlacchi (2011, 39) highlights the prevalence of trafficking during troubled eras:

> The problem (of contemporary slavery) is one of political will, not capability, for the countries of this world have in their disposal numerous instruments that, if their leaders had the courage to use them, could greatly curtail – let's say abolish – the global slave trade.

Trafficking in humans typically increases during societal and humanitarian crises, when it tends to gain the attention of the media. For example, the Arab spring in the 2010s as well as the war that started on February 2022 in Ukraine have contributed to the expansion of the phenomenon (Stolzmann 2017; UNODC 2022b). This type of transnational trafficking generally occurs from low income-level countries to wealthier countries, where the living standards are higher (Cameron & Newman 2008, 24-45). Poverty, unemployment and the disintegration of societal structures create vulnerabilities in certain people's lives that are easily detected by traffickers. Moreover, the repercussions after the acute crises may last for decades or even longer. Regardless of international or national conflicts, human trafficking is nevertheless constantly present in its different forms at a global scale. However, trafficking in humans does not necessarily happen transnationally or even by crossing city borders; it can happen in the victim's home or a nearby hotel (Crawford 2017; Denton 2016, 34; ILO 2022).

Trafficking in persons signifies selling humans, their organs or their work contribution to the buyers who exploit the victims for their own profit. The victims are generally underpaid or do not receive payment for their work at all. Therefore human trafficking is also referred to as modern slavery (Europol 2022; ILO 2022; OHCHR 2022; Srikantiah 2007; Villa 2019). Although trafficking is a form of concealed crime, the victims may also be trafficked in

contexts that are legal (Coppola and Cantwell 2016). This may complicate the identifying of the victims, which is essential in the interventions of helping the trafficking victims.

Trafficking in humans includes several subcategories, but the exploitation of the victim for one's commodity is the main function in all of them. Sex trafficking is the most profitable form of human trafficking (ILO 2017; Woehler & Akers 2022). This is because it contains the specific aim to gain profit for the traffickers and the procurers. One person can be sold for sex several times even in one day, compared to the products that can only be sold once (Woehler & Akers 2022). In comparison, the core purpose of labour trafficking derives from saving expenses rather than explicitly gaining lucrative profit for the traffickers (Human Rights First 2017; ILO 2017).

The definition of sex trafficking includes the issues of both sexual exploitation and human trafficking. The health consequences for the victims are therefore similar to the symptoms of sexual abuse victims. Sexually trafficked individuals commonly suffer from various mental and physical health issues that affect their lives long after the trafficking has ended. Additionally, the life of sex trafficking victims is often connected to criminal activity, which increases the dangers they are compelled to encounter. (Gerassi 2015; Greenbaum, et al. 2018; Hossain et al. 2009; Moore et al. 2020.)

Victims of sex trafficking are often not identified because they are perceived as prostitutes or, for example, illegal immigrants (Cameron & Newman 2008, 6; Konrad 2008, 161-164; Shrikantiah 2007). The criminal labels or other types of social identities, such as that of a school student, may hide underneath the reality that a person is being sex trafficked. In addition, authorities are not always sufficiently trained to recognise the symptoms of sexual human trafficking. In other words, sex trafficking is a form of concealed crime where the traffickers, procurers, customers as well as the victims aim to stay hidden from the law enforcement (Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Europol 2022; Goodey 2008, 424; Weitzer 2015). The secret nature of the phenomenon as well as the difficulties in identifying the victims lead to underreporting of sex trafficking cases.

Sex work in general is a disreputable line of trade and criminalised in numerous countries (Dodsworth 2015, 14; Cameron & Newman 2008, 6). This disreputable profession means that sex workers are commonly stigmatised by the outside society. In essence, stigma is a negative label that other people attach to individuals whom they find socially deviant (Gibbs & Thompson 2017, 277; Goffman 1963; Heatherton et al. 2000). This attitude effects how the

stigmatised perceive themselves and manage their identities (Dovidio et al. 2009; Goffman 1963, 138-139; Lang et al. 2008; Slater & Taylor 2018, 729). Sex workers typically carry the stigma of a whore, which refers to an identity of a 'bad woman' (Pheterson 1993). This stigma does not distinguish the individuals who willingly work in the sex trade and those who are trafficked into it against their consent.

This thesis considers the effects of stigma and deviance in the lives of the sex trafficking survivors. Survivor is a person who is already freed from trafficking life whereas victim refers to a person who is still trafficked. The research examines the biographies of the survivors, and how they identify themselves in their stories. Although this study is written from a sociological perspective, sources from other fields are also included to build a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon. Research about sex trafficking is multidisciplinary, and includes the fields of criminology, psychology, medical and social science research. These different fields of science can broaden the understanding of sex trafficking in its complexity, from individual and grassroots level to policy making and the effect it has on public opinion.

Data for this study was collected from social media, an online magazine, and podcasts. These types of media have a lower threshold for who can be a publisher than the traditional media (Davis 2013; Hill et al. 2013, 1-5), which widens the possibilities for different types of narratives and more diverse topics. The data consists of 14 sex trafficking survivor stories that are gathered from the accounts of anti-trafficking organisations and as well from sources that distribute information about various contemporary issues. Many of the survivors work in anti-trafficking field and their stories have been represented in several media, for example in the Rolling Stone magazine (Pesta 2022). Nevertheless, news commonly includes narration of the reporter, which may bias the original story. Therefore, the collected data was chosen only from the stories that were told in first person by the survivors themselves. All of the survivors live in the U.S., so the context of the data is of a western culture. Online anti-trafficking work has a prevalence of North American organisations and activists, as acknowledged in multiple research studies of the U.S. (Beckman 1993; MacKinnon 2011; Roth 2012a; Srikantiah 2007).

This thesis examines the experiences of the sex trafficking survivors by using narrative analysis. Verbalised stories enable the access to other people's experiences (Saarikoski 2011, 133–133). By using the narrative research method, I explore the meanings in the survivor stories. In the analysis, I will create an integrated narrative of the survivor stories, which proceeds from descriptions of their childhood to the point of the stories' documentation. I will

consider the reasons why the survivors got drawn into the trafficking life based on their biographies. I will look into their identities and research, how they relate to the general assumptions of how stereotypical sex trafficking victims are perceived. I also explore other people's interpretations of the survivors. Social environment may have a crucial effect on the persons' perception of themselves as well as on the course of their life. By analysing the personal stories of the survivors, I will study how they identify themselves before and after trafficking.

2 Trafficking in persons

Trafficking in humans is a global phenomenon that comprises of several subcategories. Its different forms include sex trafficking, forced marriages and labour, organ harvesting, begging, child soldier trafficking, ritual and cult abuse as well as forcing into crime or adoption. (ILO 2017.) According to the United Nations Trafficking Protocol (also referred to as ‘Palermo Protocol’, OHCHR 2000), human trafficking signifies exploiting people with the aim of gaining personal or financial profit of them by the means of fraud, deception, abduction or threat or use of force. Traffickers abuse the victims' vulnerable position in order to induce them into trafficking, or lure them with benefits or payments with which they are able to gain the victims' consent. Eventually traffickers attain a position of power where from they can use control over the victim. (OHCHR 2000.) Trafficking is generally depicted correspondingly in the research literature and reports of various organisations (Crawford 2017; Denton 2016, 34; ILO 2022; Konrad 2008; Reid 2018; Veldhuizen-Ochodničanová et al. 2020; TVPA 2000).

Human trafficking is referred to as modern slavery in several contexts (Europol 2022; ILO 2022; OHCHR 2022; Srikantiah 2007; Villa 2019). This depiction suggests that being enslaved is not merely a historical phenomenon. Slavery is neither anymore cross-racial as it was in the colonial times (Denton 2016), even though the phenomenon includes various intersectional issues. Weitzer (2015) argues that modern slavery must include the attribute of forced labour. He asserts that being exploited and in debt bondage is not a sufficient evidence of enslavement because exploitation can also exist without the dimension of slavery. It is also noteworthy that voluntary labour can sometimes turn into compelled work even though this was not the original intention (Crawford 2017).

Historically, slavery is most often referred to the transatlantic trade that occurred in the colonial times. However, trafficking of white women and girls for prostitution took place in the late 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries. This was designated as ‘white slave traffic’, distinguishing the European and North American traffic to developing countries from the slavery of Africans (Cwikel & Hoban 2005; Roth 2012a, 42–43; Srikantiah 2007). White slave traffic has been accused for being a rather sensationalistic definition, because the victims of sex trafficking at the time were mainly persons of colour (Beckman 1993; Srikantiah 2007). However, the phenomenon gained considerable public attention and

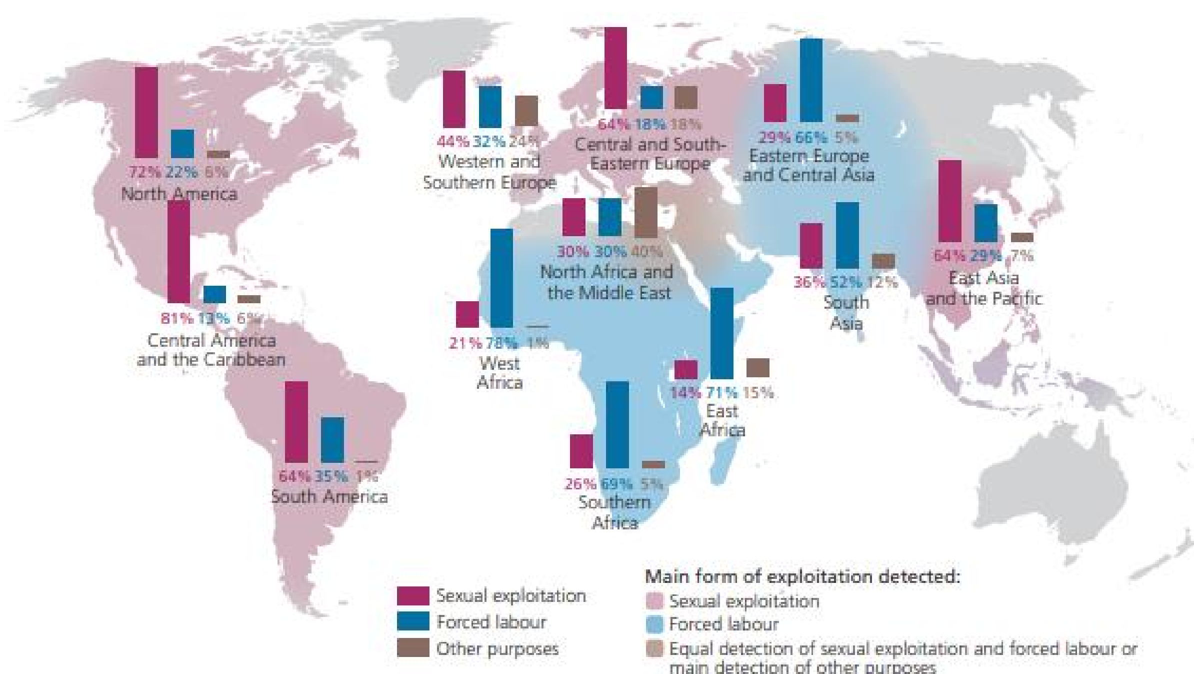
provoked anti-trafficking campaigns in Europe and the U.S., that expressed for their part the intersectional nature of human slavery (ibid.).

Contemporary slavery is still a widely intersectional question, including issues of ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Immigrants, children and people who have poor living conditions are globally at risk for human trafficking whereas girls and women are particularly vulnerable for sex trafficking (Denton 2016; Loyens & Paraciani 2021; Srikantiah 2007). The vulnerability of LGBTQ+ individuals is based on the risk of rejection by their social environment, which may compel them to leave their home at a young age. The majority of the homeless children are LGBTQ+'s, and because of their marginalised position they are frequently subjected to discrimination by the law enforcement or other authorities. (UNODC 2020.) However, being at risk for human trafficking is not an issue of solely being poor, female, or LGBTQ+, but of multiple individual and environmental issues of inequality altogether (Crawford 2017).

Finding accurate data of the true scale of human trafficking is practically impossible because it is by nature a form of concealed crime (Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Europol 2022; Goodey 2008, 424; Weitzer 2015). Most likely the amount of the trafficking victims is much higher than the estimates. According to the statistics gathered by International Labour Organisation (ILO 2017; 2022), the numbers of human trafficking victims have increased from 40,3 million to 50 million between the years 2016 and 2021. The biggest trafficking market financially is estimated to be in Germany and in the United States, the latter being the greatest funder of child pornographic exploitation (Coppola and Cantwell 2016; Reid 2018). Girls and women are typically trafficked in sexual exploitation (ILO 2022; UNODC 2020; 2022a) whereas men and boys are most often trafficked in labour (UNODC 2020; 2022a).

According to United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2020; 2022a), the most common types of trafficking in global scale are sexual exploitation and forced labour. The majority of detected victims in the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific region are women. There are notably fewer detected victims in the Middle East and African countries, where men are the predominant group of the trafficked persons. The countries that have the highest numbers of detected victims are located in North America among with Southern and Western Europe whereas Central America and the Caribbean have the least quantity of the registered victims. (ibid.) The figure below (Map 5) shows only the percentage of these detected victims between continents.

MAP. 5 Shares of detected trafficking victims, by form of exploitation, by subregion of detection, 2018 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

UNODC 2020

Trafficking in persons is sometimes confused with human smuggling, which means consentient, illegal travel from one country to another. The difference between the two definitions is that smuggling ends when the people have arrived at the place of destination whereas trafficking does not. (Konrad 2008, 164-165; Srikantiah 2007, 191-192; UNODC 2016.) UNODC (2016) has also distinguished the terms based on whether the commodity is the service (as in human smuggling) or the person (as in human trafficking). Additionally, human trafficking is not defined only by the travelling from one place to another (Konrad 2008, 164-165; Roth 2012, 97; UNODC 2016). The common conception is that trafficking involves transportation to another country or town, but this does not necessarily have to happen at all (Crawford 2017; Denton 2016, 34; ILO 2021; Konrad 2008, 164-165; Roth 2012, 97; UNODC 2016).

Countries that suffer from absolute poverty and societal instability often have high occurrence of human trafficking, but relative poverty also has its impacts on the phenomenon as it leads people to strive for better living standards (Cameron and Newman 2008, 25; Cwikel and Hoban 2005). The 'push and pull'-factors of immigration cause people to seek for better living conditions from richer countries (pull-factor) at the same time as they are escaping the fragile conditions of their home country (push-factor) (McCabe 2010, 149). International

trafficking typically occurs from the global South to the global North, where the destination countries provide better opportunities and standards for living than the source countries (Crawford 2017; Denton 2016; Shrikantiah 2007). This indicates that the majority of the forced labour trafficking occurs in upper-middle or high-income countries (ILO 2022). Furthermore, globalisation along with the development of technology and increased use of internet have widened the possibilities for trafficking regardless of the national borders (Arlacchi 2011, 39; McCabe 2010).

Although human trafficking is criminal action (Europol 2022; ILO 2022; OHCHR 2022), the trafficked people often work in fields of activity that are legal. They may work for instance as housecleaners, dressmakers or in different types of manufacturing and trade. The victims remain frequently unidentified because outwardly they are perceived as employees in the occupation they operate in (Coppola and Cantwell 2016). On the other hand, the status of a human trafficking victim can also be hidden under criminal appearances such as being a prostitute or an illegal immigrant (Cameron & Newman 2008, 6). If the focus of the state's policy is emphasised on preventing illegal immigration, the trafficking victims are at higher risk of being treated as illegal immigrants. In any case, if the victims are not identified, they are not able to receive the rightful treatment and help to their situation from the authorities (Konrad 2008, 161-164; Shrikantiah 2007).

Even though power positions, poverty, humanitarian crises, as well as globalisation are all factors in human trafficking, the central question is about the supply and demand of cheap labour. Traffickers aim to gain profit for themselves with the lowest possible cost (Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Gupta 2019; Woehler & Akers 2022). The key motivation of human trafficking is therefore commodification of persons (Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Denton 2016; Villa 2019). Traffickers detect ways to influence their victims based on their vulnerabilities in order to exploit them (Denton 2016).

2.1 Ideal victims and delinquent traffickers

Ideal victim of human trafficking is commonly represented as a young female who is a weak, defenseless and passive agent (Shrikarantiah 2007; Wilson and O'Brien 2016). In the study of Shrikarantiah (2007), ‘iconic victim’ was also described as female, who was most often trafficked in the sex industry. This depiction, that is based on the United States Government's Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA 2000), presented ideal victims as blameless and compliant to authorities in the prosecution process. According to Shrikarantiah (2007), this

ideal of a trafficking victim is too narrow and inhibits authorities to see the true spectrum of the victims. Reid (2018) has additionally noted that victim status is more preferably granted to those who are cooperative with the law enforcement. Otherwise sex workers may be criminally punished even though they would in fact be victims of human trafficking. The ideal of a trafficking victim furthermore excludes the possibility that other genders may be trafficked as well, and disregards the reasons why the victims often have criminal backgrounds. (Reid 2018.)

The attitudes towards human trafficking victims were also studied in the research of Loyens & Paraciani (2021), where the researchers interviewed labour inspectors from Belgium and the Netherlands. According to their study, the ideal victim was characteristically a non-native person with weak social connections in the country of residence. Victim status was more doubtlessly yielded to people who were regarded as having no other options than to become involved in human trafficking. The more 'normal' the trafficked people's background was conceived to be, the less they were perceived as victims. Citizenship of an European Union country was considered to diminish the status of being a victim, which demonstrated the significance of nationality and the opportunities it provides to people. (Loyens & Paraciani 2021.)

Whereas the ideal victims have commonly been presented as blameless and passive, the traffickers are characterized as the active parties of transgression. Wilson and O'Brien (2016) analysed TIP-reports (The United States of America's Annual Trafficking in Persons Reports) from between 2001 and 2012, where the offenders were presented as deviant, criminal and mainly unknown to the trafficked persons. Contradictionally, other studies (Cwikel & Hoban 2005; Denton 2016) argue that the traffickers are often familiar to the victims. Especially within immigrant communities the recruiters and their victims commonly come from the same ethnic background (Denton 2016). According to Denton (2016), social networks are integral to traffickers for maintaining their livelihood.

There exists several typologies of how traffickers operate depending on their relationship with the victims. UNODC (2020) has categorised traffickers in separate groups based on whether they work in organised crime or individually. 'Opportunistic traffickers' work either individually, with another trafficker or casually with more than one partner. 'Organised criminal groups' are separated into governance-type activity, where traffickers may operate in diverse areas of crime, and to business-enterprise criminal groups that operate mainly in

human trafficking. (UNODC 2020.) Victim-perpetrator relationships may be complicated, especially if an intimate relationship has been established between them (Reid 2018). For instance, ‘boyfriend-traffickers’ that are also referred to as ‘Romeo-pimps’ may groom the victims by first complimenting them and showing them admiration. Over time they establish a dependable relationship with the victims and slowly isolate them from social support. (Reid 2018.) Traffickers often also utilise technology and social media for ‘hunting’ or ‘fishing’ the victims. Hunting refers to active pursuit of seeking the victims and then isolating them whereas fishing signifies the tactic of waiting the victim to response to their advertisements. (UNODC 2020). Whatever tactics the traffickers use, manipulation and coercion are general elements in their action (Crawford 2017; Denton 2016, 34; ILO 2022; Konrad 2008; Reid 2018; Veldhuizen-Ochodničanová et al. 2020; UNODC 2020; TVPA 2000).

2.2 Sex trafficking

Confusion exists surrounding the definition of sex trafficking in different academic, legal and popular literature settings where sex trafficking and sex work are sometimes used interchangeably (Chapman-Schmidt 2019; Gerassi 2015; Jordan et a. 2013; Reid 2018; Weitzer 2015). For example, in American legal discourse the definitions of sex work and sex trafficking are used synonymously (Chapman-Schmidt 2019). Chapman-Schmidt (2019) suggests that this view of sex trafficking has had tangible outcomes to people working in the sex trade as well as to research about the subject, because in this discourse all sex work is criminalised. In this thesis, sex trafficking signifies human trafficking for sexual exploitation, not sex work in general. This aspect is aligned with the United Nations Trafficking Protocol that is also called the ‘Palermo Protocol’ (OHCHR 2000; see also Chapter 2) where trafficking refers to coercion and deception or is regarded as such when the trafficked person is underaged.

Although sex trafficking is a form of hidden crime and therefore exact information of its prevalence remains unobtainable (Gerassi 2015; Goodey 2008, 424; Macy and Graham 2012), a number of organisations have begun to collate estimated data of it. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO 2017), females comprised of over 99 percent of the sex trafficking victims globally in 2017. Even though the number of detected victims have declined during the Covid -19 pandemic, UNODC (2022a) assessed 64 percent of the total amount of sex trafficking victims to be women and 27 percent underaged girls. Based on the estimates of UNODC (2022s), trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most the prevalent

form of human trafficking in North and Central America and in the Central and South-Eastern Europe. However, when countries are compared with each other, the percentages of Americas and Europe are relationally lower. According to ILO (2017), over 70 percent of sex trafficking victims come from Asian and the Pacific region countries. In Europe and Central Asia the estimates are 14 percent, whereas in Africa the number is 8 per cent. Only 4 percent of the victims are assessed coming from the Americas and even less (1 percent) from the Arab states. (ILO 2017.) Even though calculations of sex trafficking are not reckoned annually, these assessments illustrate the basic trends of the phenomenon.

Estimation is furthermore difficult because in some occasions the victims may be forced to provide sexual services even thought they would have been trafficked initially for some other work, such as domestic labour (Cwikel and Hoban 2005). Additionally, sex trafficking victims attempt to stay unnoticed and hide from the authorities, because prostitution is illegal or strictly regulated in numerous countries. Other criminal activities, like drug traffic, is also often closely linked with prostitution. Therefore the victims avoid the legal sanctions, which in the international settings may even lead to deportation to their home country. (Roth 2012, 287-289.) Commonly authorities also expect the prostitutes to collaborate with them in the criminal investigation instead of acknowledging the possibility that the prostitutes themselves may be victims of crime (Reid 2018; Roth 2012, 287-289). Roth (2012, 287-289) asserts that unidentification of the victims has severe impacts on trafficking policies; when the victims are not registered in the system, policymakers may not believe that human trafficking even is a problem that needs to be solved.

In its complexity, sex trafficking is a topic that includes several factors of inequality at a structural and in individual-level. The most prevalent impacts on sex trafficking include low socioeconomic status of the victims, being of the female gender, a dysfunctional family environment and power positions between ethnicities as well as between adults and children (Crawford 2017; 119-120; Cwikel et al. 2004; Gerassi 2015.) These factors aside, trafficked persons can come from any background and each case is unique (Dalla et al. 2022; Gerassi 2015).

As sex trafficking fundamentally originates from the demand and supply of sex (Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Gerassi 2015), at international scale the principal reason for its occurrence is the victims' need and hope for employment (Crawford 2017). Poverty and nonfunctional societal infrastructures cause people to seek for employment in ways they necessarily would not

pursue, if they would have better opportunities for gaining a sufficient standard of living. Wars and other societal crises most often contribute to sex trafficking as well as to other forms of trafficking in humans. For example, the collapse of the Soviet Union increased trafficking of sex from the former Soviet countries to the West, which has had long-lasting effects on the sex trade in the countries involved (Cwikel et al. 2004; Crawford 2017). Military bases in the conflict areas tend to increase the demand for sexual services for the troops, which commonly augments sex trafficking as well (Cwikel & Hoban 2005).

Sex trafficking is a gendered phenomenon, where females are disproportionately represented as victims (Crawford 2017; Muftic and Finn 2013). Due to the gendered nature of sex trafficking, most of the research on the topic has been conducted on girls and women. However, boys, men and genderqueers are also trafficked in sexual exploitation even though they are marginalised in the trade. (Reid 2018.) Even though the majority of the customers and traffickers are males, more females operate as sex traffickers than in most of other male-dominated criminal spheres (Crawford 2017; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022; Muftic and Finn 2013). Kragten-Heerdnik et al. (2022), discovered in their research based in the Netherlands, that there is a lower threshold for entering into the sex trade for both the trafficker and the trafficked if they already know each other from earlier social contexts. When the social relations have originated this way, trafficking does not usually cross the state borders, but leads to (near-) domestic trafficking that happens in the same or in an adjacent country where the recruitment has occurred. (Kragten-Heerdnik et al 2022.)

The research of Woehler and Akers (2022) discovered that victims of sex trafficking often create traumatic bonds with their traffickers. In traumatic bonding, the mechanisms of the relationship are based on manipulation and other forms of violence by the abusers, who also express strong affection and expressions of 'love' towards their victims. Trafficker’ occasional kindness and positive memories buttress the bond between them, which furthermore influences the victims to stay in the relationship. Victims struggle to make sense of their feelings in a confusing and emotionally altering relationship, in which traumatic bonding is reinforced the more the cycle of violence revolves and strengthens. (Dutton & Painter 1993; Woehler & Akers 2022.)

Often victims of sex trafficking have been exploited as children in various ways. They have typically suffered neglect and sexual or physical abuse because of their caretakers' inability to supervise and attend to them (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Gerassi 2015; Kragten-

Heerdnik et al. 2022). Parents or caretakers of the victims have usually severe difficulties themselves, such as mental illnesses, addictions or experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) that the children have likely witnessed (Gerassi 2015). Being a minor is in itself a risk for trafficking in certain contexts, because children naturally do not have the same capacity to take care of themselves as adults do. In addition to being an underaged person, child sex trafficking indicators include running away from home, homelessness and migration. (Dalla et al. 2022; Gerassi 2015; Macy and Graham 2012; Moore et al. 2020; Reid 2018.) In youth trafficking it is common to be trafficked to the commercial sex industry by kin if there has been former involvement of familial trafficking. Unfunctional detection of child abuse and neglect together with frequent changes of locations are typical risks for youth trafficking especially in the U.S. but are also found globally on some scale. (Dalla et al. 2022; Reid et al. 2015.)

In addition to the consequences of childhood traumatisation itself, previous trauma further intensifies the experience of trafficking (Gerassi 2015). Gerassi (2015) has remarked that post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is both a risk and a consequence for sex trafficking. PTSD is discovered to be prevalent among sex trafficked regardless of culture (Roth 2012a, 23). The victims may also develop complex posttraumatic stress disorder (CPTSD), that in includes alterations in personality, self-perception and social relations in addition to other trauma symptoms (Woehler & Akers 2022). Furthermore, trafficked persons often suffer from depression, anxiety, dissociation and diverse physical symptoms (Gerassi 2015; Gewirtz-Meyrdan & Lahav 2021; Greenbaum, et al. 2018; Hossain et al. 2009; Lyssenko et al. 2018; Moore et al. 2020; Velasco-Barnbancho et al. 2022). Substance abuse is discovered to be rather common among sex trafficking victims in several studies (Gerassi 2015; Greenbaum, et al. 2018; Macy and Graham 2012; Nichols et al. 2022; Reid and Piquero 2014; Reid 2018). Victims may neither have proper access to health care, which for its part exacerbates and prolongs their health issues (Cwikel et al. 2004; Greenbaum et al. 2018).

2.2.1 Sexual violence

Sexual violence is an universal term for any kind of sexual abuse, harassment, or rape. Definitionally, sexual harassment may not always include physical contact whereas rape is undoubtedly a physical form of violence (Cahill 2009, 15). Notwithstanding, non-physical sexual aggression, coercion and manipulation may also have severe impacts on the victims of violence (Quadara 2014).

Sexual violence occurs in intimate partnerships as well as in occasional threatening situations. Additionally, it has historically been used as ‘a weapon of war.’ Women have been forced into prostitution, raped, and sexually enslaved for instance during the world wars, and in the post-Cold war period the in the Yugoslavian and ‘new African’ wars. (Doja 2019; Jørgensen et al. 2020; Stark et al. 2022; Turshen 2019.) In the 2020s, sexual violence is still prevalent in areas suffering from ethnic conflicts, wars and other societal crises.

As sexual violence in general, rape is most often considered a gendered issue where male is the perpetrator and female is the victim (Rich 2014). According to research (Borumandnia et al. 2022; Quadara 2014; White 2014), women and girls are more frequently subjected to sexual violence than men and boys. In feministic literature, rape is regarded as male-dominant behaviour of stereotyped culture of sex roles (Burt 1980; Cahill 2019; Lonsway et al. 2008; McKinnon 2011). Rape myths such as “only bad girls get raped”, “women ask for it”, or “he didn’t mean to” cause the blame of the assault to fall on the victims instead of on the perpetrators (Burt 1980; O’Connor 2022). Studies (Burt 1980; O’Connor 2022; Crowell & Burgess 2014, 58–59; Yapp & Quayle 2018) have discovered that especially men who are violent, sexually aggressive, and have hostile attitudes against women, hold high rape myth acceptance. Furthermore, perpetrators of sexual violence are often ‘hypermasculine’ and have limited skills of expressing emotions. They may also have a history of childhood abuse or neglect. (Crowell & Burgess 1996, 56-63; Quadara 2014.) There is nevertheless evidence that harmful attitudes towards sexual violence can change. For example, experimentations of Linz and Malamuth (1993, 42–44) demonstrated how showing the negative effects of rape to research participants dissolved their rape myths and affected empathy for the victims.

Considering the gendered nature of sexual violence, it is noteworthy to recollect that men can also be the victims whereas women may be the perpetrators. This idea is although still widely considered as a taboo (Turshen 2019; White 2014). Borumandnia et al. (2020) have argued that the culture of male dominance contributes for its part on this outlook. Moreover, sexual violence exists in intimate relationships between LGBTQ+ individuals as well (Messinger 2017). The Canadian study of Morrison et al. (2020) suggests that LGBTQ+ persons are at especially elevated risk of becoming victims of sexual violence. In its various forms, sexual violence seems to always include issues of gender and the dynamics that are interwoven with it.

The impacts of sexual violence include physical and psychological ramifications. Victims may suffer from sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), unwanted pregnancies, and in the prolonged abuse, chronic pains as well as hormonal and gastrointestinal complexes (Crowell & Purgess 1996, 75–77; Stark et al. 2022; White 2014). Women in intimate partnerships most typically also suffer from physical injuries (Crowell & Burgess 1996, 75–77). Forensic and medical examination should be conducted instantaneously after the assault in order to produce evidence of the violent act, because the signs of the abuse may heal within days (White 2014). However, women who are familiar with their perpetrator most likely do not report the abuse to the authorities (Crowell & Burgess 1996, 81). Quadara (2014) has estimated that a considerable number of sexual offenders is never convicted.

Psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and PTSD are common among the victims of sexual violence, as also noted in the chapter 2.2 (Adshead 2014; Crowell & Purgess 1996, 79–84; Stark et al. 2022; White 2014). Moreover, social consequences such as stigmatisation or isolation from a community because of the 'rape stigma', affect the victims' well-being (Bartels et al. 2012; Stark et al. 2022). Although rape stigma is universally existent, it manifests especially in conflict areas and environments with low standards of gender equality (Jewkes et al. 2021). Consistently, females are predominantly victims of conflict-related sexual violence. Because of the fear of stigma, they do not necessary seek help for their symptoms, which again may prolong and deteriorate their health issues. (Bartels et al. 2012; Stark et al. 2022.)

2.2.2 Childhood sexual exploitation

Whereas sexual violence is a generic term for all sexually subjugating behaviour, sexual exploitation concerns particularly children in most of the research literature. One of the major indicators of sex trafficking is previous experience of sexual abuse which is often experienced during childhood (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Gerassi 2015; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022).

In prolonged sexual abuse, victims commonly develop diverse ways to cope their experiences. In the research of Laitinen (2004, 107–117), sexually exploited children described their abuse as a constant and ubiquitous part of life, not as distinguished episodes that are separate from other life events. In other words, the experience of exploitation had become normalised in the children's life. Children do not have the capacity to comprehend what has happened to them and most often survivors of child sexual exploitation (CSE) start speaking about their

experiences only after they have already reached their adulthood. (Laitinen 2004, 28–32; Reid 2010.)

CSE has been a hidden issue throughout the history for various reasons. Most often the victims are instructed by the perpetrators to stay silent about their experiences (Laitinen 2004, 28–32, 107–121; Reid 2010). Children commonly blame themselves from what has happened even though they cannot give a comprehensible consent for sex or inappropriate touching (Crawford 2017; Kring et al. 2010, 402–403). The culture of silence and the shame the children experience may hinder them from telling about their experiences to outsiders (Laitinen 2004, 107–121). Moreover, CSE was not apprehended as a social problem until the 1960's, when healthcare professionals discovered that the symptoms of 'the battered child' develop from the experience of constant violence and exploitation – not merely from occasional accidents (Laitinen 2004, 28–32). Child protection professionals and law enforcement agencies became more aware of the vastness of CSE in the 1980s, and after this realisation children themselves became more included in the investigations of the abuse cases (Alexander et al. 2016, 55; Laitinen 2004, 28–32). Media has for its part raised CSE visible by bringing the incidents of sexual exploitation to the public knowledge. Alongside, it has shaped the common conception of the phenomenon (Laitinen 2004, 29–35).

Depending on the perspective, CSE can be viewed as a sign of dysfunctional family dynamics, a manifestation of patriarchy and its abuse of power or more widely as a social and cultural problem. The individualistic psychological view, which is developed by Freud, explains sexual abuse as something that has occurred in the past and seeks the reasons for the exploitation primarily as originated from the child. Although this aspect has had a substantial impact on bringing incest and sexual abuse to the public knowledge, it has also contributed on the discourse where the victims are considered to be responsible for their abuse. Another theoretical framework is where the offender is pathologised and seen as inherently deviant. This theory justifies the legal sanctions and control over the offender. (Laitinen 2004, 35–46.)

Victims of sexual exploitation are often underaged because of the power dynamics that render possible the physical and mental ascendancy of the perpetrators. Children who are more fragile than the adults, are not in an equal position to defend themselves against the adults and as a consequence, become victimised. 'Love' in this type of a relationship conditional and patriarchal, its prerequisite being the exploitation of the child. (Laitinen 2004, 98; 113–115.) Sometimes abuse may also occur between underaged persons, but in these instances the

perpetrator is usually slightly older than the victim. Most often the perpetrator is a male and has a power position towards the victim based on status or physical power in the relationship. (Kring et al. 2010, 402–403; Laitinen 2004, 17-18; Watts and Zimmerman 2002.)

The dynamics between the victim and the offender are generally complex, partly because the abuser is principally someone close to the child. Authority figures such as supervisors from a hobby or a church have the power position from which they are able to acquire the children's trust. (Kring et al. 2010, 402–403; Laitinen 2004, 17-18; Watts and Zimmerman 2002.) The internet has furthermore augmented the volume of child pornography material as well as the possibilities for pedophiles for seeking connections with the children (Kring et al. 2010, 203).

Even though pedophiles seek their victims from pornographic sites or contexts where they are able to get acquainted with the children, on numerous occasions CSE takes place at home. Children's parents and relatives are often the perpetrators of CSE. (Kring et al. 2010, 402-403; Laitinen 2004, 17-18; Watts and Zimmerman 2002.) Societally home is defined as a place of safety and goodness and therefore associating evil with home contravenes its meaning. The idea that evil happens somewhere far as in another country or vaguely on the internet, connects it easily only to people that are not present in the person's own life sphere. (Laitinen 2004, 17–18.)

People who have suffered CSE generally develop several symptoms that may occur later in life. As in consequences of sexual violence generally (see 2.2.1), various physical and mental health issues are common among CSE victims and survivors (Adshead 2014; Crowell & Purgess 1996, 75–84; Kring et al. 2010, 402–403; Stark et al. 2022; White 2014). The study of Vonderlin et al. (2022) demonstrated that specifically children who have suffered sexual exploitation, neglect, and physical abuse, cope with their experiences by dissociating. In dissociation, an individual detaches themselves from the current time and place and therefore their emotions and thoughts are not integrated to the personal experience (Lyssenko et al. 2018; Velasco-Barbancho et al. 2022).

Even though medical assessment of sexual abuse should be carried out shortly after the sexual act (see 2.2.1), it is most often not possible. However, CSE can be verified by taking into account the child's history and testimony. Multidisciplinary investigation is essential so that the perpetrators could be held responsible for their crime and the children would receive the help and the treatment they need. (Alexander et al. 2016, 107–108.)

3 Social deviance and stigma

Sex work in its various forms is a highly stigmatised source of livelihood (Dodsworth 2015, 14; Pheterson 1993; Rodriguez-Garcia 2018, 91–93). Being a prostitute or a criminal effects how a person is perceived in the surrounding environment as well as how they are aware of themselves. Goffman (1963, 167-174) has observed that the core motivation of deviance research concentrates particularly on social contexts. Socially deviant, such as prostitutes or people battling with severe substance abuse, are most likely to be stigmatised by their social environment (Barmaki 2021; Goffman 1963, 167–174). Sociological research of sex work has furthermore focused on the deviant nature of the occupation (Weitzer 2009). In this thesis, I look at stigma and deviance principally as socially constructed phenomena.

The definitions of deviance and normalcy derive from the values and ideologies that people have internalised (Blumer 2012; Conrad & Schneider 1992, 17–20; Goffman 1963; Heatherton et al. 2000; Prus 1996). A feature or behaviour is deemed deviant when it differs from the common social order and is perceived as violating the prevailing norms. Society and generally practiced norms determine for their part, what is deviant and what is normal. (Barmaki 2021; Franzese 2009, 6–7; Goffman 1963; Parsons 1951, 96–101.) Deviance is therefore not an issue that can be assessed straightforwardly, but is influenced by multiple factors such as social environment and support, societal circumstances and the characteristics of the individual. It is also noteworthy that not all deviance is utterly negative or exclusive; in-group deviants such as 'village idiots' or 'small-town drunks' that are perceived as belonging to a community may even be supported by other community members when needed (Barmaki 2021; Goffman 1963, 167–174; Jones et al. 1984, 5–8; Link & Phelan 2001.)

Deviance can be divided into primary and secondary forms, depending on whether the experience of it is prolonged and internalised or not. In primary deviance, the deviance is only occasional and not internalised whereas in the secondary form the individual has already assimilated the deviation in themselves. (Gibbs & Thompson 2017, 27–28; Lemert 1967, 47–48.) The internalisation in particular, alongside the interaction with the social environment, demands the social role of an individual (Franzese 2009, 71–72; Lemert 1967, 47–48).

Becker (1963, 9) has presented that a deviant individual is a kind of person to whom a label of deviance is successfully attached. The label is fastened to a person by *moral entrepreneurs*,

who have a higher status in power hierarchy than the deviants (Becker 1963). For example, if a poor, brown-skinned single mother could determine a white, rich businessman as deviant, the concept of deviance would be very different. Thus, power positions broadly reveal the values and ideals of the society (Becker 1963; Foucault 2000; Goffman 1963; Lang et al. 2008; Link & Phelan 2001).

According to Becker (1963), behaviour is labelled as deviant depending on the social context. Other people label deviance in relation to what is considered normal. Therefore, he did not regard deviance as a personal attribute, but above all as a label that is created by social groups (*moral entrepreneurs*) that are in a position to decide rules that determine what is deviant or normal. Other people's reactions to a person conduct whether they are labelled as deviant. For example, if nobody would know about a father committing incest, he could continue his life perceived as normal. On the other hand, if the incest would become publicly known in a social group where incest is considered a violation against the child, he would most likely be labelled as deviant.

Social deviance most presumably leads to stigmatisation because of the societal structures, which typically represent middle-class ideals (Barmaki 2021; Goffman 1963, 153; 167–174; Lang et al. 2008). Whereas Goffman's stigma definition focuses on individual experience, *structural stigma* describes the societal factors and policies that effect negatively the stigmatised group' living conditions, such as the Jim Crow laws that discriminated black people in the U.S. in the late 19th century until the 1960s (Hatzenbuehler 2016; Link & Phelan 2001). Structural stigma therefore refers to 'macro-stigmatisation' and is attached to functions of social control.

Social control maintains the prevailing norms and regulations of the society by different practical implementations, such as legislation. After a label of stigma has been attached to a person, the specific types of social control measures can be directed at them (Goffman 1963; Slater & Tyler 2018, 729). The pursuit of the control is to normalise the deviant as a functional unit of the society (Foucault 2000, Lemert 1972, 48–49). The structuralist view looks at social control as a factor that in itself produces deviance. According to this aspect, the boundaries of normalcy exclude the people whose behaviour and social identity deviate from its frames. (Lemert 1972, 48–49.) Therefore, the definition of stigma is included in the thought of social control (Hatzenbuehler 2016; Slater & Tyler 2018, 729).

3.1 Individual stigma

Stigma has historically referred to a physical sign on a human body that marked someone as, for example, a slave or a criminal (Goffman 1963, 11). Later the definition has also indicated holiness of its bearer in Catholicism, even though religious stigma has been medically viewed as a physical disorder. In sociology, stigma signifies any kind of deviant attribute attached to a person that inhibits them to become wholly accepted by the social environment (Gibbs & Thompson 2017, 277; Goffman 1963; Heatherton et al. 2000). Stigma is a social construct that is roughly comprised of some discrepant trait associated to a person, which is acknowledged in the environment and causes an individual to become underappreciated due to that trait (Heatherton et al. 2000).

Goffman (1963, 14) categorised stigma in three different types: *bodily blemishes* such as obesity and physical disabilities, *blemishes of individual character* that refer to, for instance, mental disorders or substance addictions, and lastly *tribal stigma,* which indicates belonging to a religion, race or nation that is considered deviant. The visibility of a stigma affects how the stigmatised experience their life and how they are perceived socially. A stigmatised individual is also able control the information about themselves depending on how perceivable the stigma is. Goffman (1963) made further classifications of a *discredited* and *discreditable* stigma based on whether they can or cannot be outwardly discerned.

Discredited stigma is typically some physical attribute that can be observed by other people. For example, the bodily blemishes mentioned earlier are discredited, because they already have been detected by others. This type of stigma most likely 'blemishes' a person socially. *Discreditable stigma* again is not as public and easily observed, but may gradually become visible. For example, drug abuse of an addict may aggravate over time, which would cause changes in the outward appearance as well as in the behaviour of that individual. The publicity and perceptibility of the stigma effects how natural the communication between the stigmatised and the others is. (Andel et al. 2013; Goffman 1963.) On the other hand, persons with discreditable stigma may not experience relatedness with others as easily as the discredited because they often attempt to hide their stigma. The shame they experience may hinder them to connect with others, even if those others would carry the same stigma (Andel et al. 2013; Dovidio et al. 2009; Lang et al. 2008).

3.2 Stigmatisation process

Stigma is a negative label that gradually becomes normalised the more it is used in interaction between the deviants and their social environment (Franzese 2009, 6; Goffman 1963; Lang 2008). According to Goffman (1963, 12), a person becomes therefore 'tainted'. Normalised constructs are most often readily accepted and thus not criticised (Lang et al. 2008; Lemert 1971, 17–18). Within these power dynamics, stigmatised are classified as inferior to the 'normal' and the 'whole' (Goffman 1963). Nevertheless, not all deviants will ever become stigmatised. Moreover, deviance can also be perceived positively whereas stigma in itself is regarded as a 'blemish' on an individual. (Goffman 1963; Jones et al. 1984, 5–8; Link & Phelan 2001.)

Similarly with the research of primary and secondary deviance (see chapter 4; Gibbs & Thompson 2017, 27-28; Lemert 1967, 47-48), stigma has also been categorised according to the level of its internalisation. In psychology, stigma has been divided into three different groups by the level of internalisation of the stigma and how the environment views the stigmatised. These classifications also reflect the phases of stigmatisation process. *Anticipated* stigma refers to the persons' own prejudices and presumptions of how the environment would perceive them. *Enacted* stigma signifies the discrimination that the stigmatised have already experienced. *Internalised* stigma denotes the shame and inferiority that a person experiences with the 'normal' because of the stigma. The last form incorporates the two previous groups. (Andel et al. 2013; Earnshaw & Chaudoir 2009.)

The internalisation of the stigma is the result of the stigmatisation process (Franzese 2009, 71-72; Goffman 1963; Heatherton et al. 2000; Lemert 1967, 47-48). However, the gradual experience of how one perceives their stigma depends considerably on the living conditions and social support of the stigmatised (Andel ym. 2013; Earnshaw & Chaudoir 2009; Goffman 1963; Lang et al. 2008; Link & Phelan 2001). Additionally, Orne (2013) has argued that Goffman (1963) emphasises excessively the homogeneity of the stigmatised groups. He (Orne 2013) points out that not even all normals share the same conceptions of what is deviant. The values of the society change with the passage of time and different subcultures always vary from the prevailing standards and morals. Therefore stigmatisation occurs in a particular time, space and social context. Moreover, the people with a same stigma are unique individuals with their own, personal biography.

3.3 Social identity

Socialisation refers to the process where a person learns the patterns of social interaction in the environment where they live. Stigmatised individuals construct their social identities through this process of socialisation. Goffman (1963, 45-55) classified different types of socialisation processes that he described as patterns of *moral career.* Firstly he looked at individuals with inborn stigma, such as orphans who learn by socialisation that children ordinarily have parents. Nevertheless, they may develop in their life an understanding of parenthood with the assistance of other adults. In the second example, he (ibid.) examined protectiveness of the family; for example, a child that has a congenital stigma but is raised in an environment where they are treated as whole and normal, may learn the stigma abruptly when they start going to school.

The third pattern concerns individuals who have either been stigmatised later in adult life or understand in their adulthood that they have always carried stigma. Fourth pattern of the moral career surveys the stigmatised who have been raised in an alien community and then have to socialise themselves in a different manner that is acceptable in the new, 'normal', environment. In this example the stigmatised experience uneasiness between the pre- and post-stigma acquaintances and slowly develop a social identity that is distinguished from the former socialisation pattern. (Goffman 1963, 45-55.) However, life circumstances in all respects effect how an individual is socialised, and there can be several other ways of socialisation besides the Goffman's (1963) classifications.

As stigmatised learn the ideals of the society by socialisation, they also become aware of their deviance (Goffman 1963, 101-113; Slater & Tyler 2018). They develop strategies of managing socially with the feelings of shame and alienation that stigma induces (Dovidio et al. 2009; Goffman 1963, 138-139; Lang et al. 2008; Slater & Taylor 2018, 729). Goffman (1963, 101-113) originally presented in his work information control techniques that the stigmatised utilise in social situations. One example of these techniques is 'passing', where they at first observe how other people react to them, and if they ignore the stigma, the stigmatised themselves act like it would not exist (Dovidio et al. 2009; Goffman 1963, 101-113; Slater & Tyler 2018, 729).

In a context where the stigmatised are noticeably different and unknown to others, they encounter more contradiction and are compelled to intensively support their social identity. They might, for instance, joke about the stigma to make the others feel less awkward. In a

familiar environment the stigmatised do not need to utilise these methods of self-representation, and they may feel normal and equal among the others (Dovidio et al. 2009; Goffman 1963, 101-113; Slater & Tyler 2018, 729.) The individuals that possess a culturally or socioeconomically high status in a stigmatised group often become representatives of their community (Goffman 1963, 39-40). In these occasions stigma significantly defines the group-identity of the leaders, whom the members commonly expect loyalty from. If the leaders choose to act against these expectations, they may even be imputed of cowardice. (Goffman 1963, 137-138.) Even though in-groups may demand certain behaviour of its members, they often also provide a 'social home' for the stigmatised, where they are able to be at ease with each other (Andel et al. 2013; Dovidio et al. 2009; Goffman 1963,32).

4 Perceptions on sex work

Throughout history, sex workers have been perceived as a ‘public nuisance’ and a threat to moral conduct (Dodsworth 2015, 14; Newman et al. 1993). Nevertheless, in the Middle Ages prostitution was ostensibly accepted in the biggest cities of Europe so that the ‘decent’ women would not get raped. In the history of China prostitution again was acknowledged as a profession, but prostitutes were markedly less valuated than women with good image. (Rodriguez-Garcia 2018, 91–93.) At the end of the 19th century, overt sexuality was not considered as an attribute of a ‘good’ woman, but was attached to prostitutes (Newman et al. 1993). Even though sex trade may still in public opinion have a reputation of being a morally disapproved occupation, the sex’s workers rights movement has helped different organisations such as ILO and Amnesty to acknowledge prostitution as labour and reduce the stigmatisation of sex workers (Chapman-Schmidt 2019).

Sex workers operate in different lines of prostitution and pornography industry. Prostitution is typically defined as performance of sexual acts in exchange of financial profit. (Newman et al. 1993). Pornography again refers to viewable, ‘erotic representations’ (Long 2012, 55–56; Weinberg et al. 2010). It has a reputation of being obscene and even violent whereas ‘erotica’ is usually conceived to be mutual and pleasurable. Nevertheless, these terms are often used interchangeably. (Dworkin 1981,199–202; Linz & Malamuth 1993, 2–3; Weinberg et al. 2010.) Pornography has become more easily accessible after the 1990's internet revolution (Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Laitinen 2004, 20) and the expansion of free online and amateur pornography (Lewczuk et al. 2021; Owens et al 2012; Weinberg et al. 2010).

Ronald Weitzer (2009) has noted that most of the research about sex work in sociological field has been written about outdoor sex work, referring particularly to street prostitution. Research for policy making is predominantly also focused on street-level sex work (Lister 2018). Indoor sex workers, especially women working as call girls or escorts, have substantially lower risks and higher prices in their occupation than ‘streetwalkers’. Therefore research that has concentrated mainly on street prostitutes does not give a sufficiently comprehensive view on the subject. (Weitzer 2009; Reynolds 2021.) Aligned with Weitzer's (2009) observations, Muftic and Finn (2013) have discovered that street prostitutes report having more health issues and problems with addictions than other sexually exploited women in general. However, in a study concerning call girls (Weitzer 2009), the majority informed that they began sex work in order to maintain a better livelihood or because of the

independency that the work provides. Only a few depicted the reason to be supporting another person, such as a procurer, or their own drug habit.

Benoit et al. (2019) remark that prostitutes are in an especially discriminated status among other low-income occupations. Trades such as restaurant serving, housekeeping and temporary jobs that are common for indigenous and racialised women, also suffer from undervaluation in which patriarchy and racism play a part in. These occupations are nevertheless not as stigmatised and criminalised as the sex trade. Besides the stigmatisation, work in sex trade incudes the risk of confronting violent clients. Rape cases of prostitutes commonly remain unreported or are not taken seriously by the law enforcement authorities. Typically, only underaged people who have clearly visible injuries on their bodies have acquired their complaints through in the court hearings. (Roth 2012, 247.) According to estimates (Weitzer 2009), only a relatively small number of clients may be accountable for the most violence against sex workers.

Wilson and O'Brien (2016) discovered in their study that working in the sex trade is a rational decision for girls and women who come from disadvantaged living conditions. The typical estimated age for girls entering into sex trade is between 14 and 15 years, but the age may vary depending on the gender cultures, level of children’s and women’s rights, and socioeconomic conditions of the society (Chettiar et al. 2010; MacKinnon 2011; Miller et al. 2011). Underaged persons working in sex business often have a background of abuse and neglect (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Franzese 2009, 2017–218; Gerassi 2015; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022). The sex work of teenagers is though referred to as ‘survival sex’ because they are commonly drawn into the occupation due to a lack of better options. (Chettiar et al. 2010; MacKinnon 2011; Miller et al. 2011). Furthermore, the term ‘child prostitute’ has been criticised, because, from the standpoint of human rights, children have the liberty to stay innocent and they are not perceived mature enough for giving meaningful consent for sex (Agustin 2001; Crawford 2017; Kring et al. 2010, 402–403; MacKinnon 2011).

In a global scale, conflicts and changes in societal structures drive people to look for new ways of maintaining their livelihood (Buscher 2009; Marttila 2009). Immigrants may end in sex trade or marrying men with solid economic statuses (Bloch 2017, 115-162; Marttila 2009). The typical conception of ‘exotic being erotic’ interlinks together immigration, prostitution as well as sex trafficking. The demand of exotic women – in other words foreign

women – enhances international sex trafficking amongst other forms of sex trade. (Bloch 2017, 115-162; Cwikel & Hoban 2005.)

4.1 Sex work paradigms

The aspects that are publicly adopted on sex work have an impact on how the prostitutes, as well as their clients, are perceived. As discussed in chapter 2.2, speaking about prostitutes as sex workers, criminals, or victims of exploitation have tangible effects on their treatment. For example, if all sex work is considered to be criminal, then the interventions of law enforcement become the only applicable way of solving the crime (Agustin 2001; Chapman-Schmidt 2019). Moreover, if all prostitution is regarded as sexual abuse, sex buyers would be considered as exploiters and not as clients (Agustin 2001).

Reynolds (2021) argues that the term 'prostitution' itself contributes to the stigmatisation of sex work, which further influences the criminalisation of the sex trade. Additionally, Pheterson (1993) describes the stigma of a whore as related to an identity of a 'bad woman', whereas a male buying sex is defined for his behaviour. The whore stigma therefore refers to the naturality of the dishonoured woman's being (Pheterson 1993). Because of this stigma, sex workers experience condemnation extensively at different levels of the society (Porter & Bonilla 2000).

The perspectives of sex work can roughly be divided into two thought patterns that Weitzer (2009) has defined as the oppression and the empowerment paradigms. In the oppression paradigm, sex workers are perceived as victims of patriarchalism and exploitation whereas empowerment paradigm understands sex work as a liberating form of employment (Roth 2012a, 19–28; Weitzer 2009). The oppression paradigm is based on the position of male sexual dominance, and consequently it comprehends prostitution as gender-based violence against women. The paradigm recognises all sex work as oppressive and therefore does not discern sex trafficking from voluntary sex work. According to this aspect, women are not considered to work in sex trade according to their own, free will, but rather because of the lack of options which is typically due to their socioeconomic status. (MacKinnon 2011; Roth 2012a, 19–28; Weitzer 2009.) This perspective has its roots in the abolitionist movement that pursued to inhibit the practicing of prostitution and regulate brothel keeping at the turn of the 20th century (Roth 2012a, 21).

The oppression perspective is similar to the anti-pornography view that has been endorsed by 'second-wave' feminists as well as conservative Christians. The feminist group regards pornography as an indication of male-subordination and objectification of women whereas conservatives understand it as a source of moral decay. Even though these groups look at pornography from a different angle, they both perceive it as degrading to women. (Dworkin 1981; Linz & Malamuth 1993, 44–55; Long 2012, 13–23; 54-61.)

Unlike the anti-pornography feminism, the new generation of 'third wave' feminism construes pornography as an explorative and empowering means of sexual self expression. From this 'left-liberal' feminist position, women are identified as autonomous agents who possess control over their sexuality. Therefore, sex work is perceived as an occupational choice rather than a form of oppression. (Long 2012, 22–23; 54–61; Weinberg et al. 2010.) The liberal feminist field has supported the sex workers' rights for their economic autonomy and labour rights, as per the empowerment paradigm. Above all, the sex workers themselves have campaigned for prostitution to be acknowledged as a profession, which would reduce the stigmatisation and the marginalisation of the field. (Roth 2012a, 24.)

Adherents of the empowerment paradigm discern voluntary sex work from sex trafficking, as the latter is acknowledged as modern-day slavery or violence against women. This paradigm understands prostitution as an occupation where sex workers should have sufficient labour rights as well as the employees in any other field of activity. The proponents of this perspective emphasise women's freedom of choice of what to do with their bodies, likewise with the liberal feminist field. They highlight their right to earn their income by prostitution and perceive sexual work as empowering. (Long 2012, 54–61; Roth 2012a, 21–29; Weitzer 2009.)

Weitzer (2009) has criticised the theoretical paradigms of sex work research as too one-dimensional. He has suggested to look at sex work from a more comprehensive and multidimensional aspect, as in his 'polymorphous' model that integrates the two dominating paradigms and pursues to include the empirical level studies with the theory. The model takes into account the power and gender relations and heeds the complexity and structures of the sex work field. Accordingly, Crawford (2017) has emphasised the intersectional perspective on sex work as well as on sex trafficking. As stated by Crawford (2017) and Weitzer (2009), it is essential to consider how gender, race, sexuality and socioeconomic status all together contribute to the position of individuals working in sex trade.

4.2 The legislation models of sex work

Policies and statutes are formalised values that both reflect and effect public opinion about the sex trade and the people working within it. Legislation differs from one country to another depending on these predominant values and the defects that need to be addressed in the field of prostitution (Chaudoir et al. 2013, 82; Roth 2012a, 29–30). Nonetheless, the practical implementation of the law is not always perfect and tackling the issues of sex work seems to be rather complex. For example, a moral conception that women are virtuous by nature and do not voluntarily become prostitutes, was prevalent at the turn of the 20th century U.S. In that era, discussion about slavery of white women (see also chapter 2) resulted in a law called 'the Mann Act'. The law was intended to help the victims of sex trafficking, but was practically applied to punish people outside of prostitution who were perceived as sexually immoral. (Beckman 1993; Srikantiah 2007.) The moral atmosphere therefore dominated over the factual legislation. Even though the practices of the law may still have deficiencies, different models of legislation are created in order to tackle the problems of prostitution.

The system of the criminal law offers different measures of social control that can be directed at the offenders of moral conduct (Foucault 2000, Lemert 1972, 48-49). Depending on the jurisdiction, prostitutes are roughly perceived as criminals or sex workers in the society. However, commonly their treatment does not fall straightforwardly into only one category. Roth (2012a, 29–31) has differentiated four legislation types that countries employ in their policies: prohibition, regulation, decriminalisation and abolition with its neo-abolition subcategory. Whereas the oppression and empowerment paradigms (see 4.1) signify the values and opinions regarding sex work, the policy models are tangible strategies implemented in the countries' legislation.

The prohibition strategy aims to criminally punish all parties involving the sex trade. Some of the U.S. states and the Middle East countries utilise this strategy (Roth 2012a, 29–37). In addition, criminalisation of organising and selling sex is a prevalent policy model in several African and Asian countries (NSWP 2021). Secondly, in the regulation model prostitution is tolerated, but controlled by state for the purpose of protecting the order of the society and its citizens' health (Roth 2012a, 29–37). This policy model, which is in some contexts called legalisation, was common in the 19th century Western Europe. It is still implemented in its contemporary forms in some countries, such as in Greece, Austria and in some of the Latin American countries (NSWP 2021; Roth 2012a, 29–37). Thirdly, the decriminalisation

strategy views prostitution as a line of work, similarly with the empowerment paradigm (see 4.1). According to this model, decriminalisation of prostitution would help reduce violence and sexually transmitted diseases in the sex trade. (Roth 2012a, 29–37.) This strategy has been introduced in the Netherlands, Germany, New Zealand, and in some of the Australian states. (Kingston & Thomas 2018; NSWP 2021; Roth 2012a, 29–37.)

Lastly, the abolition model seeks to prohibit the third parties, such as procurers and other intermediaries, from gaining financial profit from the sex workers (Roth 2012a, 29–37). This model perceives prostitutes as victims of male violence and consequently aims to decriminalise the selling of sex. The viewpoint is therefore same as in the oppression paradigm (see 4.1), and its ultimate objective is to abolish sex work (Kingston & Thomas 2018; Roth 2012a, 29–37; Srikantiah 2007, 194–195.) Most of the EU countries and Canada have implemented their prostitution policies according to this view. In addition to criminalising the third parties, the neo-abolitionists aim to also criminalise the sex buyers. This strategy, that is also referred to as the 'Nordic model', is implemented in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and in France. Sweden was the first country that adopted this law enactment in 1999, therefore it is sometimes also referred to as 'the Swedish model'. The legislation in Finland and the UK resembles this model with the exception that sex buying is only criminalised when the seller is procured or trafficked. The abolition model is deemed to improve gender equality and decrease human trafficking. (Kingston & Thomas 2018; Levy & Jakobsson 2013; Roth 2012a, 29–37.)

The most fervent discussion about the sex trade concerns decriminalisation and neo-abolition. The neo-abolitionist field has claimed that decriminalisation normalises prostitution and expands the sex business even further. (Roth 2012a,31-32; 2012b, 253.) The adherents of decriminalisation have again criticised the neo-abolitionists for depicting the sex workers as passive victims instead of seeing them as active, independent agents. (Armstrong & Fraser 2020; Roth 2012a,31-32; 2012b, 253; Srikantiah 2007, 194–195.) Armstrong & Fraser (2020) argue that abolition further increases the stigmatisation of prostitutes, because it perceives all sex work as male dominance that degrades women. Moreover, they suggest that decriminalisation model would reduce particularly structural stigma (see chapter 3). Their study (ibid.) demonstrated that street prostitutes, who work publicly exposed, experienced more internalised stigma. In addition, being of a cisgender, white, and having a middle-class socioeconomic status contributed on negative stigma experiences. The researchers (ibid.)

discussed how the possibility of concealing the status of a prostitute, as in indoor prostitution, would mitigate the internalisation of stigma.

Correspondingly, Gilmour (2020) discovered that the decriminalisation act in New Zealand improved societal attitudes and the police's treatment towards transgender sex workers. Besides their work, transgender prostitutes have commonly experienced stigma also because of their gender. Their stigmatisation is dominant especially in the societal settings where prostitution is criminalised. According to Gilmour (2020), decriminalisation reduced their discrimination as well as their experienced stigma. This legislation strategy also improved the well-being of other prostitutes, and their treatment by the authorities. However, numerous sex workers still abstained themselves from reporting the customers' violent behaviour to the officers because of the prostitute stigma (Healy et al. 2020). Consequently, Lister (2018) has argued that decriminalisation in addition with acknowledging sex work as nondeviant labour would help the workers to safely report about violent behaviour of the customers.

Even though decriminalisation has for the most part had positive effects on the sex workers' conditions, bureaucracy has brought negative impacts on the practical implementations of the law. In the Netherlands, licensed prostitution became tightly regulated and monitored due to decriminalisation policies whereas illicit traffic separated from the legal sector. Even though the licensed sex workers had gained legal labour rights, the criminal sex traffic increased. (Outshoorn 2012; Roth 2012a, 34–37.) Prostitutes reported decrease in their psychological well-being and commented that their treatment by the officials had still not progressed properly (Roth 2012a, 34–37). How the legislation succeeds is therefore not only dependent on the legislation itself, but on its practical implementations and other societal structures as well.

Moreover, the rates of illegal sex traffic seem to be generally higher in the countries where prostitution is legalised. This may nevertheless be due to the legitimacy that encourages the self-reporting of the trafficking cases. Even though trafficking numbers are commonly higher in the countries where prostitution is legal, these societies' law enforcement and jurisdictional systems support the detecting and prosecuting offenders of sex trafficking. Furthermore, the neo-abolitionist Nordic Model that was presumed to decrease sex trafficking, has been criticised for not reducing it as expected. (Kingston & Thomas 2018; Levy & Jakobsson 2013; Roth 2012a, 29–37.)

The critics of abolition have argued that it ignores the people who willingly choose to sell sex. According to research (Kingston & Thomas 2018; Roth 2012a, 33), sex industry has been pushed underground and on the internet in Sweden, France, Norway, and the UK where the Nordic model has been introduced. This has caused sex workers to become more vulnerable for violence and other risks. Although street prostitution has decreased in the Nordic model countries, it has undermined the position of the prostitutes because they have become compelled to accept more customers than before and lower their prices. For instance, in Sweden, prostitutes have been obliged to receive more dangerous clients which has had deteriorating effects on their health (Roth 2012a, 33). The implementation of this neo-abolitionist model has been partial and circumstantial; the law enforcement has mostly utilised the law in order to cleanse the public spaces from prostitution (Levy & Jakobsson 2013; Kingston & Thomas 2018). In France, the Nordic model has furthermore diminished the sex workers' possibility of choosing their customers. This has led to a situation where the prostitutes are obliged to work more on the customers' terms than their own. (Kingston & Thomas 2018.) Nevertheless, because the Nordic model has a reputation of enhancing the equality of the genders among other assumed advantages, it is widely understood as an improvement for prostitution laws. For example, the European Parliament accepted a resolution in 2014, where the members of the European Union were recommended to reassess their prostitution politics by criminalising sex buying (Kingston & Thomas 2018; Rodriguez-Garcia 2018, 96).

Even though some measures have been taken to enhance the treatment of the sex workers, the legal and social penalties often fall on the workers' behalf. The law enforcement authorities generally treat prostitutes as criminals, which reinforces their stigmatisation and hides underneath the possible sex trafficking victim status. (Cameron & Newman 2008, 6.) The history of acknowledging prostitutes as deviant and criminal does not easily evanesce even in the countries where legislation has been implemented in order to tackle their mistreatment. However, the positive findings from New Zealand (Gilmour 2020; Healy et al. 2020) prove that sex workers' conditions may be improved by legislation. Perceiving sex workers as employees of their occupation would enhance their treatment and make the distinction between voluntary and involuntary sex trade even more significant (Benoit et al. 2019; Chapman-Schmidt 2019).

5 Methodology

5.1 Research questions

This study examines the stories of sex trafficking survivors that I have collected from public media. It is fundamental to listen to the survivors' own experiences in order to understand the sex trafficking phenomenon and to be able to adjust trafficking policies properly. As Shrikantiah (2007) has remarked, the domestic policies against human trafficking should be founded on the full scope of actual trafficking stories. In this research, I will study the survivors' biographies, their self-perceptions as well as other people's perceptions of them. I will consider the history of the survivors prior to sex trafficking and analyse, how has their biography influenced their entering into the sex trade. The study will proceed to analysing the identities of the survivors and how they managed them in the trafficking life and after.

The biographical narratives also include descriptions of how other people have perceived the survivors. In this thesis, I will discuss what impacts have those perceptions had on the survivors' lives. The interpretations of other people oftentimes have a tangible influence on a person's social identity (Goffman 1963). Stigma is furthermore a socially constructed label that is associated to a person based on their deviancy or moral questionability (Goffman 1963; Heatherton, Hebl, Hull & Kleck 2000). Stigmatised individuals eventually internalise the stigma in the interaction between them and their social environment (Franzese 2009, 6; Goffman 1963; Lang 2008). Other people therefore have an impact on how the stigmatised experience themselves, whether they would agree or disagree with the definitions attached to them. My presumption is that the survivors have experienced stigmatisation during their life in sex trafficking because of the ill-famed reputation of sex work (Dodsworth 2015, 14; Goffman 1963; Pheterson 1993; Rodriguez-Garcia 2018, 91-93). In this study, I will answer to the following research questions:

1. How has the survivors' biography had an impact on why they got induced into sex trafficking?
2. How do the survivors identify themselves in their biographical narratives in relation to the stereotype of a sex trafficking victim?

Besides the survivors' biography, I will also look at what the stories reveal about their self-concepts. Stereotype of a sex trafficking victim is commonly perceived to be an immigrant or

an individual who has otherwise disadvantaged background. Most often stereotypical victims are regarded as defenseless females, as in the conception of an ideal human trafficking victim (see 2.1). Media tends to accumulate these stereotypes especially during crises and conflicts. Previous research has additionally confirmed that sex trafficking survivors have often suffered childhood traumas such as sexual exploitation, violence, neglect, parents' substance abuse or homelessness (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Dalla et al. 2022; Gerassi 2015; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022; Macy and Graham 2012; Moore et al. 2020; Reid 2018). Moreover, sex trafficking increases during conflicts and is prevalent in areas that suffer from poverty (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Gerassi 2015). However, these attributes do not apply to every trafficking victim (Dalla et al. 2022; Gerassi 2015; Loyens & Paraciani 2021). Even though survivors' experiences may have common elements, every story is unique and marginalised stories exist amongst the more stereotypical narratives (Dalla et al. 2022; Gerassi 2015).

5.2 Public media as a data source

The data of this thesis consists of sex trafficking survivor stories that I have acquired from social media, an online magazine, and podcasts. It includes texts, videos as well as audio broadcasts. In this research, I use the definition 'public media' to cover the variety of the data sources. I have transcribed the material into written text, on which I have based my analysis.

This study looks at the narratives of survivors living in the U.S., who have different cultural layout than, for example, trafficking victims in Africa or South Asia. U.S.A. is a country of individualistic culture that idealises liberty and self-sufficiency (McCabe 2010). The prostitution and trafficking policies also differ between countries, which has an impact on how the victims of trafficking are helped. Furthermore, cultural and societal differences have their influence on how and why people get drawn into trafficking (Cameron and Newman 2008, 25; Cwikel and Hoban 2005). Nevertheless, the consequences of sexual abuse and trafficking are universal for an individual (Adshead 2014; Crawford 2017; Crowell & Purgess 1996, 75–84; Kring et al. 2010, 402-403; Laitinen 2004, 28-32; Roth 2012a, 23; Stark et al. 2022; White 2014). Mechanisms of fraud and coercion are used globally to lure people into trafficking although the way the traffickers implement them may differ depending on the country and the structure of society.

The data of this research is collected from several media formats that all have their own attributes. As Fairclough (1995, 38) has reasoned, print media is not as personal as radio or

television. Watching moving pictures and listening to sounds have a different effect on a person than reading written text. Nevertheless, whatever medium type is used as a channel of communication, the content is always mediated (Fairclough 1995, 36-42). For example, it is a different experience to personally interview someone than to watch an interview via media, such as television.

The main function of the media is to communicate content to audience. Traditionally its purpose has been entertaining and informing (Katz 2019, 2-3), but after the emerge of social media its socializing function has gained increasing importance. In general it contains the potentiality of expanding private issues into public (Fairclough 1995, 36-42). In regard to the data of this thesis, the stories of the survivors were originally their own private experiences but were converted into public by media.

Social media consists of the components of 'social' and a 'medium', the latter referring to texts, pictures, videos and audio recordings via digital media applications and the internet. It has dispersed the traditional lines between the consumer and the producer. What makes media social is a consumer's possibility to become a publisher and the interactivity between all users, consumers and creators alike (Davis 2013; Hill et al. 2013, 1-5). Accordingly, Scott and Jacka (2011, 5) have concluded that social media has enabled the democratisation of publication.

In the collected stories, the sex trafficking survivors have shared their experiences through different media that distributed information about current topics or were involved in anti-trafficking work. Moreover, the narratives were told to an audience in a specific time and place. In another situation the story could have been told differently, even though the experience would have stayed the same.

5.2.1 Collection of the data

I began to collect the data from Instagram, where I already followed several anti-trafficking organisations and individuals who had been sex trafficked. Following mainly English-speaking accounts has directed the collection of the data for its own part. I chose some of the stories from these accounts, and continued to search for sources from other platforms that were linked into these accounts. I also found texts from an online magazine that has an Instagram account.

There exists numerous survivor stories that are told in third person on Instagram, but I did not select texts that were mediated by other parties because it biases the narration and decreases

the space of the survivor's own narrative. Searching for stories that were written in first person was time consuming and occasionally problematic, because sex trafficking is defined divergently in different contexts. In some contexts, the definition of sex trafficking seemed to include all sex work, which differed from the definition of this thesis (see chapters 2 and 2.2). Additionally, some accounts included stories of sexual exploitation without the trafficking dimension, but were incorporated amongst sex trafficking stories. These difficulties in definitions led me to search for data from other media as well.

Eventually, I discovered podcasts also from Spotify where sex trafficking survivors had been interviewed. Depending on the interviewer, some of the questions were open and some more structured. The survivor's will to decide what to tell and what to leave untold also naturally contributed to the substance of the interviews. In the podcasts, as well as in the videos, the survivors had told their stories not only to the interviewers, but also to the 'invisible' public that was not present at the specific time when the recordings were made. Nevertheless, it is presumable that the publicity of the media forms has influenced what the survivors have chosen to speak and how. Moreover, the media administrators may have used their own discretion in editing the stories in a suitable form for distribution. Among other variables, the representation of a participant depended also on the media format. For example, writing allows more time and space for the partaker to contemplate and revisit their thoughts whereas recordings are made immediately. (Fairclough 1995, 36-41.)

The events of the stories have taken place several years ago and all of the survivors were in their adult age at the time of publishing the stories. Some of them had experienced trafficking as children whereas the others were trafficked in their young adulthood. Most of the survivors also reported that they had gone through therapy and told their stories in several contexts before the recordings or posts included in the thesis data. Time and the encounter of past events by speaking about them to other people had given the survivors the possibility to revise their experiences to a ready-narrative form (Freeman 2015, 27-30; Pöysä 2011, 319-320). In reminiscence, some past occurrences may though be forgotten, and others may be told selectively. There also exists a possibility that people are not wholly truthful in their personal accounts. Many of the stories' survivors were nevertheless openly involved in anti-trafficking work, which means that they have exposed their personas and reputation under public criticism. Even though self-narratives should be critically examined, they can give information about issues in a way that other research data is not able to grasp (Teräs 2011, 196).

The data consists of 14 stories that contain 11 female narratives and 3 stories that are told by males. Sex trafficking is a gendered and intersectional issue (Denton 2016; Loyens & Paraciani 2021; Morrison et al. 2020; Srikantiah 2007; UNODC 2020), and most of the research is executed on females (Reid 2018). Nevertheless, LGBTQ+ individuals are assessed to be at a heightened risk for sex trafficking, even though females remain to be the main target for sex traffickers (UNODC 2020). I incorporated stories of male survivors in the data in order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the subject. Two of the three men stated being homosexuals. The majority of the female stories inclined them to be heterosexuals which appeared, for example, from the references to their husbands. Even though some of them would be LGBTQ+ individuals, this did not emerge from the stories.

The survivors came from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Many of them are currently active in anti-trafficking work and their stories can be discovered in several media platforms. The majority of them openly stated that their motive of telling their story was to help other victims of sex trafficking. Some of them shared information about helping resources as well as general information about sex trafficking. Nevertheless, I did not include these parts of the stories in the analysis, because this thesis focuses on the survivors' personal experiences. The stories were published between 2019 and 2022. The posted Instagram stories were published in several parts in the accounts of anti-trafficking organisations. The table (Table 1) below shows the information on the collected data.

Table 1. Survivor stories by media

Name	Podcasts	Texts	Videos
Amanda	The Jordan Harbinger Show		
Airica		lovewhatmatters.com	
Azurdee			Instagram / @reachisf
Brittany		Instagram / @childrescuecoalition	
Elizabeth		lovewhatmatters.com	
Gigi			Instagram / @reachisf
James		Instagram / @polarisproject	
Jerome	Trafficked		
Jose	Trafficked		
Kathy	Consider Before Consuming		
Kelsie			Instagram / @reachisf
Lexie		Instagram / @childrescuecoalition	
Sarah		Instagram / @youth.underground	
Teresa	I did not sign up for this		

5.2.2 Ethics of the data collecting

Gathering the stories from media was ethically the most uncomplicated decision because the survivors had already chosen to tell their stories publicly. Having to experience sex trafficking is generally a traumatising experience (Gerassi 2015; Lyssenko et al. 2018; Woehler & Akers 2022), and therefore the lived stories should be treated discreetly. Selecting the stories of the survivors who already had told their stories in public – many of them several times – takes into consideration the consent of the research subjects as well as their position regarding their well-being. For example, interviewing street prostitutes who work for human traffickers may be dangerous to the interviewee and to the interviewer as well. Therefore, it is

argumentatively preferable to gain information of this subject by listening to the stories of people who have already leaved sex trafficking. Additionally, the survivors have had a sufficient amount of time to distance themselves from their experiences and to observe themselves from an objective point of view. This process can only be possible within an adequate time period. Self-narratives are derived from self-reflection that develops over the course of time (Freeman 2015, 27-30).

I collected the data from sources that were survivor-led, or otherwise non-profit organisations and individuals working to help sex trafficking victims. During the approximately four years I have followed the accounts of sex trafficking survivors and anti-trafficking organisations, I have noted that they share information about the associations whose intentions are not solely based on helping the victim/survivors. Based on these discussions and my own discretion, I excluded those organisations that had a reputation of benefiting from the survivors for their own agenda. However, as a researcher I look at the data as someone who is outside the sex trafficking phenomenon. Living in another country than the research subjects additionally enhances my ‘alien explorer position’, even though I also look at the world from a western person’s viewpoint. Bearing these reasonings in mind, the aim of this thesis is above all to obtain information of an universal subject that concerns people beyond the borders of nations and cultures.

5.3 Narrative analysis

The main focus of narrative research is to examine the meanings of the stories (Riessman 1993). The presumption of this research method is that people naturally organise their personal experiences in narrative forms (Pöysä 2011, 317–321). Studying personal stories can be described as ‘experience-centered narrative research’. Typically people include in their self-narratives the occasions that are most meaningful for them. (Squire 2017.) Stories are temporal in essence, and according to Aristotelian thinking they generally consist of an beginning, a middle and an end (Kleres 2010; Karttunen 2020, 64). Personal narratives are told retrospectively from the position that enables the recollection of memories for creating an unified narrative of the past experiences (Freeman 2015, 27-30). The reminiscence enables the narrator to categorise the personal experiences in a logical order which did not yet exist when the events were occurring (Pöysä 2011, 318–319). People typically pursue to reframe the past occurrences in a concise and understandable form. Squire (2017) has considered how humans seem to have an inborn need for making sense of life by telling personal narratives.

Pöysä (2011, 318–319) has furthermore written about peoples' tendency to create *plots*, where they exclude the contingencies of past experiences as if the story would have always had a logical purpose and direction.

Telling narratives is an interactive process that is situated in a specific time and place. Audience, whether it would be physically present or not, effects the way how the stories are told. In other words, narrative of the same story may be told differently according to whom it is told and in which situation (Riessman 1993, 11). Sclater (2006, 100–103) has raised the question of what lies beyond narrative and discursive choices that people select. She observes self-stories as a 'transitional phenomena', which refers to the complex and processual nature of constructing identities. According to Sclater (2006, 100–103), narratives are not conclusively cemented in only one form, but can be reconstructed in different times and spaces.

Narrative research is founded on the constructivist view of science which presumes that people establish their knowledge on their subjective understanding and previous experiences. In other words, people construct their knowledge and identities, contrary to the objectivist perspective that perceives knowledge as a 'truth' that exists outside the human mind. The constructivist perspective represents epistemological relativism that considers knowing as comparative to time, space, and the position of the observer. (Heikkinen 2018, 176-179.)

In doing narrative analysis, the researcher decides which parts of the story are excluded and included, and consequently creates a meta story of the data (Riessman 1993, 13). Narrative analysing and understanding is therefore interpretative by nature (Freeman 2015, 27-30; Riessman 1993, 13). The narratives of the selves are told from specific perspectives in a particular time and space (Freeman 2015, 27-30; Pöysä 2011, 317-321; Sclater 2006, 100-103). From this aspect, narratives can be studied as representations of the selves (Squire 2017).

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, narrative research examines the meanings that emerge in stories. Meanings in language are conveyed through three functions. The concept of what is said is expressed in *ideational* function. The listeners' and speakers' relationships are depicted by means of *interpersonal* function whereas *textual* function indicates the semantics and structure of the story (Riessman 1993, 21). This thesis focuses on the ideational function. I will analyse the stories as texts, concentrating on *what* is said in the narratives, not on the *how*.

5.4 The analysis of the data

The analysis of this thesis is experience-centered (Squire 2017) and relies on the narration of the sex trafficking survivors. As Saarikoski (2011, 133–133) has observed, inspection of verbalised stories enables the access to other people's experiences. The survivors have disclosed their experiences in a certain way, from which the analysing of the data is dependent upon. Analysing also depends on the researcher’s interpretations (Riessman 1993) that produce the end result of the analysis.

In accordance with Pöysä's (2011, 318-321) contemplations, I have created an integrated plot where I have gathered the ‘core’ excerpts of the themes that are summarised as titles in the analysis. The themes proceed along the chronology of the narratives. The analysis proceeds from the beginning to an open ending, where the survivors have gotten out of sex trafficking even though they still struggle with their traumatic experiences. By open ending I refer to the survivors’ position that is still in motion even though they are not anymore physically trafficked. Sex trafficking life affected substantially on their identities, occupational choices as well as on their health. Therefore their stories have not yet ended.

I created a unified narrative of the 14 sex trafficking survivor stories. Therefore, the analysis can be also defined as a ‘narrative of narratives’. First I categorised parts of the stories under different themes that emerged from the data repeatedly. I created a classification that progressed in time in order to find a narrative frame of a plot (Pöysä 2011, 318-319). During the process of categorisation, I sometimes changed the names of the themes as well as their order. I searched for the core of what the survivors told in different phases of their narratives. After I had classified the themes, I started to write the analysis based on the themes and their chronological order. The chronology refers to the linear movement of time. It can also be utilised as a methodological tool in order to seek for causal relationships in the research (Pöysä 2011, 320-321).

Traffickers’ actions impacted considerably on the survivors’ life occurrences. In the analysis, I examined what kind of methods the traffickers used in their action and how. I define method as a procedure for accomplishing an objective. I also considered, how the survivors explained causality of their experiences and researched into the mechanisms that influenced the causes. I understand mechanisms as probable explanations for causal relationships. Social mechanisms include a set of actions that produce particular outcomes. Typically they can be observed only with some level of probability, as in the research of social life in general (Erola & Räsänen

2014). As narrative research is interpretative by nature (Freeman 2015, 27-30; Riessman 1993, 13), the analysis in this thesis is also founded on my own explications as a researcher. Therefore, I studied the mechanisms and methods as how I observed them appearing in the accounts of the survivors.

In this thesis, I studied how the survivors' experiences effected their identities. I used the term 'affective identity' to describe their own identity that was in touch with their personas and emotions. The theoretical framework was grounded on social deviance and stigma. I focused on how deviant lifestyle and stigma emerged in the stories and how they influenced the self-perception and self-definitions of the survivors. Lastly, I looked at the survivors' experiences from the perspective of their moral career (Goffman 1963), that the stigmatised individuals often create in the management of their identity.

6 The narratives of the sex trafficking survivors

6.1 The survivors’ life before sex trafficking

6.1.1 Methods and mechanisms of control

Although the survivors came from various backgrounds, the common factor in the majority of their stories was childhood abuse or otherwise authoritarian behaviour of their caretakers. Some of them were adopted and exploited by their foster parents even though the families' outward appearances would have not differed from normal, even affluent, family life. As studies have revealed (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Gerassi 2015; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022), violence, child sexual abuse and neglect are typical in sex trafficking survivors' histories. Additionally, Gerassi (2015) has noted that the parents often also have their own complications of substance abuse, violence, and mental illnesses. Aligned with her findings, some of the survivors disclosed their parents' own backgrounds that generally included abuse both in child- and adulthood.

> I was essentially born into a world of dysfunction. My mother was an alcoholic, you know, pregnant at 17. She herself came from an environment where she was raped by her father, physically abused. -- And she continued her drinking, continued going along, and then eventually married a man. And my first memory of as a three-year-old is a sound of this person's fist hitting my mother's face. - Jerome

> My father was extremely abusive growing up. Not so much towards us as kids, umm…mostly my mother, we watched him abuse my mother physically, mentally, verbally. - Jose

Witnessing intimate partner violence (IPV) may inflict a secondary trauma, which means experiencing a horrifying event from a bystander's point of view (Cairns 2007, 190). Observing violence can be a terrorising experience to the witness. The majority of the survivors portrayed their childhood home as unsafe even though their life in school or in other activities would have appeared as outwardly normal. The mechanisms of fear violated the children’s sense of safety and trust at home. Fear created an atmosphere of an anticipation for violent events, whether they were self-experienced or observed. In the stories, these fears were both anticipated and realised. Home was not only pictured as a physical place to live, but was comprised of the people that lived in it. These people had an impact on what the children absorbed from home and how they experienced their closest childhood relationships. As Laitinen (2004, 17-18) has analysed, associating evil with home contradicts it meaning,

because home is societally understood as a place of safety. It is notable, however, that even school or extra-curricular activities were not safe for the children in the cases where their abusers belonged to those communities. Accordingly, research (Kring et al. 2010, 402–403; Laitinen 2004, 17–18; Watts and Zimmerman 2002) has shown that child abusers are predominantly people that are familiar to children.

> -- after about 6 months of my mother dating this man, he began to molest me. Now the way that he kept my silence, like in so many cases, is, he threatened my mothers life. - Jerome

> My cousin was the leader of the gang in our area, so he was feared by many. -- One day, one of his 'guys' molested me. I held it in. Invisible. It happened every time he got a change. - Sarah

The abusers used manipulation and threats as methods to ensure the silence of the children. When Sarah's exploitation was revealed, her gang-leader cousin assaulted the molester while Sarah had to watch. In doing this, he manipulated Sarah to assume that the assault as well as her exploitation was her own fault. According to the story, it was unacceptable for the cousin that everyone knew what 'the guy' had done to Sarah. The problem was not as much the molestation itself than the disclosure of it. Blaming was used as a method of control over Sarah, who internalised the guilt and started to blame herself for what has happened.

According to Sarah's story, the violent occasion affected her subsequent relationships. She had not understood why her cousin was "feared by many" before she had to watch the episode between the cousin and his 'guy'. This was also an example of a secondary trauma. The threat of violence existed in the atmosphere even if it was not explicitly uttered, and was put into practice when needed.

In addition to examining manipulation, threatening, and blaming as methods, they can also be looked at the perspective of mechanisms. The method of threatening worked as a mechanism to keep the children silent and fearful. The blaming caused the children to feel guilty and submissive whereas manipulation in general affected them to believe the narratives of the abusers and to act according to their will. By these methods of control the children learned to stay 'invisible' and quiet.

6.1.2 Misinterpretations and ignorance of the abuse

Survivors described how their problems were invisible to the outside world, and sometimes even to the persons close to them. Even though there would have been signs of abuse, they

were not noted, or they were interpreted as traits of the child's character. For example, Amanda told of an experience at the age of 7 where an older boy that she was attracted to, molested her. They were familiar with each other because the boy's mother gave Amanda piano lessons. However, Amanda's father did not understand that she had experienced something terrible and according to her story, judged her instead of comforting her.

> So when I was brought home by this young man's older brother, 'cos he found me crying in, like, a corner of their house. He carried me home. And my father, not knowing anything that happened, just knowing my annoying personality, was like, 'What did she do this time? What she did, she probably deserved it.' And so, I've just been molested. And now my father is saying I deserved it. - Amanda

The survivors' abuse was hidden because of misinterpretations and ignorance of their social environment. The mechanisms of the relationships between the children and the people in their social circles were based on how the children were perceived earlier in their life. These perceptions effected the other people's interpretations of the survivors later. In the stories where the survivors started to react to their abuse by 'acting out', the symptoms went nonetheless unnoticed, or rather, were not construed as symptoms of abuse. Particularly those survivors whose exploitation took place several decades ago, explained that child sexual abuse was an unknown issue at the time. The lack of information and training were some of the reasons why they did not receive help earlier. Similar findings have been discovered in studies of Alexander et al. (2016, 55) and Laitinen (2004, 28–32). Child sexual exploitation did not gain awareness until the 1980s, when child protection professionals and law enforcement agencies began to realise the full extent of the issue (Alexander et al. 2016, 55; Laitinen 2004, 28–32).

> I was six years old when it (sexual abuse) first started happening to me by my adopted dad. That went on 'till I was about twelve. It separated me in school because I started acting out and those things teachers should notice as signs, but back then – in the 70's, nobody really noticed stuff, or they didn't wanna say anything. I didn't get any help there. - Gigi

The survivors disclosed in their narratives that they would have wished to be seen and heard, but instead were misinterpreted and overlooked. Because of this, the true reasons for their symptomatic behaviour were left unnoticed. Other people's perceptions of the survivors lead to misconceptions of their abuse.

6.1.3 Social norms and the suppression of authentic self

Some of the narratives included descriptions of problematic parenting even though physical violence would have not been existent in the survivors' childhood. According to the stories, the parents did not necessarily understand that their actions or the environment they exposed their children to, were harmful. Nevertheless, the children’s own will and personality was suppressed by the social environment's teaching and understanding of morals. For example, extreme religiosity was described as an element that significantly impacted Amanda's social and personal development.

> The part that made it the scariest was the way that the women were trained to be insanely submissive. Like, you could never say no to any man. -Amanda

Religiousness as well as other moral standards effected how the survivors perceived sexuality. They were either taught very strict norms or otherwise lived in an environment that strongly insinuated what is acceptable in terms of sexuality. According to the stories, this lead the survivors to feel contradiction between their own personal sexuality and the sexuality they were obliged to represent. Those survivors who discovered their homosexuality in childhood or teenage years, hid their sexual inclinations and presented themselves as 'normal' in their social contexts. They also described feeling conflicted with themselves because of the rejection from their social environment. Deviance was experienced in contrast to what was considered normal in their social surroundings, which supported previous studies (Barmaki 2021; Becker 1963; Franzese 2009, 6–7; Goffman 1963; Parsons 1951, 96–101).

> So I constantly had eyes in the back of my head just making sure no-one is behind me watching me. And then I would hide and try to be myself behind closed doors, which was maybe playing with the Barbie doll or dancing and listening to a pop artist like Britney Spears or someone. And just dancing and living my life freely. - Jose

> My solution was to hide my authentic self and try to become the person that others wanted me to be, hoping eventually that the new 'persona' would eventually snuff out the part of me that I was unwilling to accept. - James

Both Jose and James depict experiencing *anticipated stigma* (Andel ym. 2013; Earnshaw & Chaudoir 2009), that refers to the presumption of stigmatisation if the deviant trait would become acknowledged by the social environment. They had not yet expressed their homosexuality to others and were still exploring it, but they anticipated to be rejected if their sexuality would become known. James and Jose described their childhood hometowns as small and conservative. Most often these types of communities are based on similarity of its

members and the norms they comply with. Social and cultural diversity is not as accepted and normal as in bigger cities, where there is more space for a variety of people.

According to Becker (1963), the *moral entrepreneurs* possess the social status from which they are able to determine, what is deviant and what is normal. In the examples of Jose, James, and Amanda, their families and communities played the role of these moral entrepreneurs. Even more comprehensively, the survivors who were exploited in their childhood would most plausibly not had been directed to stay quiet if the abusers would have considered childhood exploitation as normal behaviour in a wider social context. In other words, even the child abusers seemed to have had their own level of understanding about the moral standards of the society and moulded their social behaviour according to it.

The survivors in general had to hide their problems and true selves from the outer world, whether because of violent home conditions or restrictive culture of their community. Even though not all of the survivors had a traumatic childhood, they had other similar experiences. Insecurity of one's self led them to mould themselves into the personas that were acceptable in their social environment. In the narratives, the internalisation of these expectations diminished the feeling of being in touch with one's own persona. All of the survivors did not anticipate to become stigmatised, but for various reasons they were oriented to behave according to other people's expectations rather than from their own personal aspirations.

> I was really just kinda going through high school like a chameleon, I called myself. Whatever people wanted me to be, I just turned into that person. 'Cos I was trying to figure out, like, who I was. And, granted, at 14, 15, 16-year-old, that's the time teens start figuring that out anyway. That's the…exploring. - Kathy

> I wasn't even allowed to make decisions on what I wore, what I ate…so, even when I first moved to California, I had a meltdown going into a grocery store, to buy food, because I didn't know what I liked. I didn't know if I actually wanted peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. - Amanda

Social norms effected the behaviour of the children as well as their abusers. On a wide scale, the norms regulated the conceptions of what is deviant and what is normal in general. Within the survivors' childhood communities, the adults and the community leaders emerged as *moral entrepreneurs* who mediated the social norms to the children and the community members. According to the stories, the children adapted themselves outwardly to fit the social norms of the environment even though they personally felt deviant and insecure of themselves. They acted according to the normalcy even though their inner personas would

have been in contradiction with it. This conflict that resulted in an anticipated stigma and the experience of insecurity, influenced the children to suppress their authentic selves.

6.2 Entrance into the trafficking life

6.2.1 Vulnerabilities prior to trafficking

> I was abused as a child by my family member and that abuse shaped a lot of the decisions that I made as an adult and a young teenager. Just really effected a lot on the information processing that I did. And how I viewed the world. Just with that victimization as a child, it changes kind of whole outlay of where your life can go. - Kelsie

Victimisation signifies the process where an individual is harmed by violent or criminal act and therefore becomes a victim. In the narratives, prior victimisation emerged as one of the vulnerabilities for trafficking. Childhood abuse, absence of a parent as well as disapproved and restricted sexuality contributed to the vulnerability of the survivors.

The survivors who were abused or trafficked during their childhood, were exploited partly because of their age. Being a minor is regarded as a vulnerability for sex trafficking because of the power relations between and adult and a child (OHCHR 2000). Children are yet not capable of the same kind of information processing as adults (Laitinen 2004, 28–32; Reid 2010) and therefore need caretakers to nurture and raise them. They most evidently are not in position to give a consent for any inappropriate touching (Crawford 2017; Kring et al. 2010, 402–403). The narratives disclosed how child traffickers and abusers utilised their age difference, and power position derived from it, for their own advantage. This power position enabled them to build a trustworthy relationship with the children. Children are dependent of the nurture of the adults and have only little options to defend themselves. Therefore the age-related ascendancy worked as a mechanism for the traffickers to enable their child sexual abuse and trafficking.

> -- the truth was that I was being trafficked by, not only family members, but also a man within the community that I had grew up in, who actually knew…was like, very much connected with my family. -- It started when I was really young. I was, say, three. I don't really remember. - Teresa

Besides victimisation, family brokenness and being a minor, sexuality emerged as a vulnerability in the stories of Jose and James. They both left their homes as teenagers because the stigma of a homosexual that they had anticipated, became realised as *internalised stigma* (Andel ym. 2013; Earnshaw & Chaudoir 2009). According to UNODC (2022b), being an

LGBTQ+ individual is a vulnerability for homelessness and human trafficking, because their families may reject them due to their sexuality. The parents and communities of Jose and James expected them to change themselves, but they could not fulfil these requests. The internalisation of the stigma appeared in their narratives as feelings of inferiority and shame that resulted in tangible outcomes in their individual and social lives. James described in his story feeling ashamed and guilty because he could not accept his sexuality, which he was insistently taught to be wrong. As a result, he started using alcohol and withdrew from high school, even though he was a former star pupil. In the narrative of Jose, his father became mentally and physically violent towards him because he could not 'fix' himself. Eventually the father chased Jose out of home.

> -- at the same time I felt comfortable, and I felt stronger being more feminine. But because of that I was constantly picked on. My father was constantly telling me that I couldn't act a certain way and if I acted a certain way, then I would be abused or in trouble. - Jose

Jose and James were expected to represent a different social identity than what they felt was their own. They were stigmatised by their social environment and eventually left their homes because of the stigmatisation. Neither of them had solid social networks in the new cities they moved in. Because of these occurrences, they became vulnerable for sex trafficking. The lack of choices and social support appeared in the narratives generally. Low socioeconomic status as well as non-existent safety net contributed to the survivors' vulnerability.

6.2.2 Exploitation of trust and vulnerabilities

Trust is commonly considered as a positive bond that people seek for in their close relationships. However, in the survivor stories trust was used as a method for trafficking whether the traffickers were employers, boyfriends, relatives, or other acquaintances. Typically, the traffickers are already familiar with their victims from some social contexts (Cwikel & Hoban 2005; Denton 2016), even though the idea of 'stranger danger' still also exists alongside as a stereotype of a human trafficker (Wilson & O'Brien 2016). In the stories where boyfriends were traffickers, they slowly groomed their chosen victims before pulling them into the world of sex trade. The grooming process occurred in a fairly long period of time, where the traffickers got closely acquainted with their victims. They created actual relationships with the groomed and did not reveal their true intentions until the trafficking started.

> So those months of hanging out was really just an assessment. Of like, who is the weakest link in this group. And I just happened to be the weakest link. Even though I came from a great family! I didn't have a father in the home. My other friends did. - Kathy

The operation of the traffickers was consistent with the findings of Reid (2018). Her research observed that especially in intimate victim-perpetrator relationships, the traffickers entice the victims into trafficking by compliments and showing them admiration. These types of relationships may be highly complex, as the trafficked often develop traumatic bonds with their traffickers (Dutton & Painter 1993; Reid 2018; Woehler & Akers 2022).

Survivors illustrated how the traffickers chose their victims among other people based on their vulnerabilities. This did not necessarily always mean that they had a severe trauma, but was presented in a more relational context, for example of who was ‘the weak*est* link’ in a group of friends. The traffickers used detection of vulnerabilities in the social interaction as a method for drawing the victims into trafficking. They utilised their relations for seeking the most suitable victims. As Denton (2016) has discovered, social networks are essential to human traffickers for maintaining their source of income.

The vulnerabilities that the survivors had developed in childhood were realised in the relationships with their traffickers. Amanda's narrative depicted how the well-intentioned pursuit of her parents' religious upbringing eventually resulted in an entirely opposite outcome. The role of a submissive woman did not protect Amanda from sex trafficking, but on the contrary, influenced negatively on the quality of her romantic relationship with a man who eventually became her trafficker. The learned set of norms and behavioural patterns did not keep Amanda away from harmful relationships, but rather made her vulnerable to them.

> I had no idea, NO IDEA, where I was getting into. And it had this underline: people-pleasing, 'do what men tell you even if you don't want to, your feelings don't matter' in those situations. So, by the time I entered into my adult relationship with my trafficker, all those scenarios started playing out. Of…he was telling me to do stuff I didn't want to do, but if I really loved him, this was what I needed to do. And I needed to submit, and I needed to be a good woman. And good woman meant: you just say yes. - Amanda

Even though in the majority of the stories the survivors had become vulnerable for sex trafficking because of their distressing childhood, few of them had caring and solid family backgrounds. In these instances, the vulnerabilities emerged as power positions, such as between an employee and an employer. The traffickers' action often first appeared as nothing out of the ordinary, as in the story of Airica:

> In the beginning, this agency seemed like all the others I had been with for the decades of my life. I had lived in modelling housing before and understood the distressing conditions. But over the course of a couple months, I realised this was anything but a traditional model house and agency. -Airica

The traffickers chose their victims based on their vulnerabilities and incrementally gained their trust. In familial and child sex trafficking, the traffickers were already familiar to the children, so the process of gaining trust occurred along with everyday life or by utilising family relations. Trust was exploited as a method for inducing the victims into sex trafficking. Without the victims' trust the process of entering would most likely have not succeeded. Traffickers detected the victims' vulnerabilities and exploited them in order to establish a relationship where the victims were dependent on them.

6.2.3 The sudden change

After the period where the traffickers discreetly gained the trust of their victims, the actual entrance into the trafficking life was depicted as abrupt and shocking. None of the survivors knew in advance that they would be trafficked. The unpredictability of the start of sex trafficking illustrated the victims' trust that they still maintained for their traffickers at the time. According to the stories, not all traffickers showed any 'red flags' before the beginning of the trafficking. Kathy describes how her boyfriend was a charismatic musician whom her friends also knew. They "had a good time" for approximately a year before the boyfriend asked Kathy to go on a business trip with him regarding the record label that he owned. The entrance into the sex trafficking world was so swift that Kathy did not even realise, what was happening.

> There was no, like, hey, there was no talk, like, “Hey, I'm about to traffic you now!” Or, “You're about to be forced to do these kind of things!” It was like, “Hey, wear this, take this, we're gonna take pictures. Do this, do that.” And it was like an outer body-experience because everything from me, in my perspective, happened so fast, so quickly. -Kathy

In the story of Jose, he describes a somewhat absurd, but simultaneously appalling entrance into the trafficking. After gotten acquainted with an ostensible boyfriend, Jose discovered that he had been tricked into sex trafficking on the pretext that he would be employed as a massage therapist. At first, he thought that the client mistakenly lay on top of the sheet and not under it, which he even found to be hilarious. Aligned with other stories, the example discloses how sudden and unpredictable the enter to the trafficking was.

> And so, I kinda thought it was funny and then Jason walked behind me and closes the door. And when he closed the door and locked it, that is kind of when I was like, “Hold on. Why do you have to lock the door? What's gonna happen from hereon?” And then he begins to take his clothing off. And when he took his clothing off, I already knew. -Jose

Trust enabled the traffickers to manipulate the victims into sex trafficking. When the initiation was carried out, it became difficult for the victims to leave the situation. Jose described running through every option he could think of in his position, but the fear of getting hurt, being sent back home, or getting caught by the law enforcement compelled him to stay. The traffickers victimised the trafficked by taking away any feasible escape possibilities from them. In the story of Kelsie, she describes how the person who she thought was her boyfriend, was taking her out for dinner in a new city. They had been video chatting with each other for approximately four months before Kelsie went to New York to meet her supposed boyfriend.

> And he said, “Put on the nicest outfit that you have and make sure you wear heels.” And I said, “Ok.” So, I got ready. -- When he came back to pick me up, we hopped in a taxi and we drove to this like, kinda scarier part of town, but pretty much all of New York looks like a scary part of town. -- He said, “Yeah, we're gonna go out for dinner, but you gotta get the money first.” …and I'm like, “Wait, hold on.” And he's like, “Yeah, let me see your phone, I'll program in my number in it.” I handed my phone and it's gone. Out the window. That had my driver's license, my debit cards, my only way out of the situation. - Kelsie

The traffickers used deceit as a method for their victims’ acquirement. Deception and fraud are defined as common elements in the research of human traffickers (Crawford 2017; Denton 2016, 34; ILO 2022; Konrad 2008; OHCHR 2000; Reid 2018; Veldhuizen-Ochodničanová et al. 2020; TVPA 2000). Traffickers lured their victims into the life of trafficking pretending they were someone else than they were. The quotation of Kelsie also describes her bafflement of experiencing a new city where she had never been before ("pretty much all of New York looks like a scary part of town"). The survivors explained and interpreted the situations as positively for themselves as possible. When the actual trafficking process was instigated, both Kelsie and Jose used in their stories the phrase "hold on", as if they would have wanted to pause and reconsider the situation. The change in the situation was so sudden and shocking that it seemed difficult for the survivors to comprehend at the moment. After a sufficient amount of time of establishing a trustworthy relationship with their victims, traffickers snared them quickly. In doing this, they utilised time and space for pulling the victims into the trafficking life.

6.3 In the life of sex trafficking

6.3.1 Lifestyle and social identity

The survivors depicted in their stories being socialised to a new a identity after they had entered the life of sex trafficking. They had more than one trafficker in several stories and with the exception of few cases, the traffickers were primarily males. The trafficked were often given new names and were instructed to dress in a certain way. Sex trafficking life was pictured as a separate lifestyle from the normal life that surrounded it. Sometimes the survivors referred to the lifestyle as being in ‘the life’ that had its own rules and mechanisms of action. Survivors explained the separate realities overlapping each other every now and then.

> Like, I was being watched. I was being watched from around the corner or down the street and there were rules. As a ho you're not allowed to walk on the sidewalk. If you walk on the sidewalk a pimp can take you. And you are now his property. Because you broke the rules. They cannot touch you if you are on the street. There's…it's an entirely different world. I hate it because people are like, “Oh, the game, the game…” But I mean, it really is. It's a giant game. - Kelsie

> So yeah, so for those dizzy years I kind of…it felt like, I guess I was living these…two different realities, right? The reality of, I was being presented to people on the outside in the, like, community, but then there's also this dark, lurking other reality that not a lot of people knew about. - Teresa

Being in the life of sex trafficking was pictured as another world that paid very little attention to the trafficked, or merely ignored the possibility of them being victims of human trafficking. Deviant lifestyle was again assessed in comparison to what was defined as normal (see 6.1.3). The survivors described how they sought ways to hide their social identity as sex trafficked in the normal world. In child trafficking stories, the children were guided to act normal in the social surroundings outside trafficking, most probably so that the traffickers would not be exposed.

> So I had, you know, the facade of a normal life. I went to school, and went to home, but, you know, on weekends and holidays we pulled out of school, I was being sexually trafficked. So, this went on, during this whole time, and you know, they maintained this window-dressing that I was a normal child, but I was just a shell of a human being as I was being trafficked. - Jerome

> I lived on the streets and slept in the parking lot of a 24-hour Rite Aid because it was well lit. It felt safe. When the police would come by, I would go inside and pretend I was shopping. - Sarah

Authorities were depicted as mediators of social control that maintained the norms of the normal life (Foucault 2000, Lemert 1972, 48–49). The sex trafficked shuttled between this world and the realm of sex trafficking. Even though they were perceived as two separate dimensions, the rules and norms of the normal world effected how the trafficked were able to maintain their lifestyle. Prostitution is generally deemed as criminal and deviant, and is often interlocked with other crimes, such as drugs trade (Roth 2012, 287–289). Because of the criminal nature of sex work, sex trafficked are not often identified as victims but seen as prostitutes (Reid 2018; Roth 2012, 287–289). Besides sex trafficking, in some of the stories the survivors were also being trafficked in labor and domestic servitude. Accordingly, Cwickel & Hoban (2005) have pointed out that a person may be trafficked in several subcategories of human trafficking at the same time. Therefore all of the features of trafficking may not be directly observed when the identification of the victim is being made.

> My third trafficker was also a gang member, so I was in fear for my life when I was working for him. I would get arrested for his drugs, and I would get out and be in debt with him, which is considered labor trafficking. - Elizabeth

> You know, I have prostitution charges. All my record…that are not accurate as to who I am as a person. - Kelsie

Even though the survivors lived in the life of sex trafficking, they pictured feeling contradicted with the identity of a prostitute, or more widely, a sex trafficked person. In all of the stories the survivors did not choose the lifestyle themselves, but were lured into it by different methods that the traffickers used. The deviant lifestyle affected their self-perception and their prospects for the future.

6.3.2 Stigmatised sex trafficking victims

The survivors related in their narratives how their traffickers, family members and the authorities perceived them. In the stories of James and Jose, they were already stigmatised by their families and childhood communities before trafficking. This eventually led to their self-stigmatisation during the process where the stigma of a homosexual was internalised. The intriguing discovery was that after they had left their homes and become better aware of their sexuality in a different environment, their self-acceptance as homosexuals improved. According to Becker (1963), deviance is a label that is defined in social interaction. Therefore, it is not a personal attribute. The reactions of other people determine who is designated as deviant. In an environment that consisted of a variety of sexualities and ethnicities, Jose and James were not anymore socially deviant.

> And so, moving to this school, I met a whole range of different types of people. Gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, black, white, Asian…you know, you name it. And it kind of opened my eyes into realising that maybe this is ok. Maybe who I am is perfect and I should explore this a little more. - Jose

> He (the trafficker) understood what I was going through and told me that he saw potential in me. He told me about the amazing, glamorous life that he lived – traveling from city to city, attending high-profile gay events, pride parades and exclusive clubs. He was charming and I believed I could trust him. He offered me a solution to my problems. -- Hopeless, I felt I had no other choice. I said yes. - James

Although the stigma of a homosexual mitigated after James and Jose had moved away from their childhood homes, sex trafficking life created other new afflictions to them. Survivors generally described experiences of deviant life and stigmatisation in their stories. Consistent with Goffman's (1963) observations, stigma was depicted as a negative label that was reinforced in the social interaction between the deviants and the people representing normalcy. As in the previous chapter (6.3.1) discussing lifestyle, sex trafficking life was pictured as a parallel realm to the normal world that does not know about its existence. These two worlds were contrasting with each other. Because of the deviance of the sex trafficking lifestyle, the fear of being judged was particularly connected to the normal world.

> It's like walking around with this label that says, 'You don't know what I've been through.' Like, I've been through, you know, I'm dirty, I'm a part of this secret society that no-one knows. And it's like…the fear of being judged. - Kathy

The survivors pictured feelings of dirtiness and worthlessness within the lifestyle of sex trafficking. They depicted experiencing discrepancy between the identity they were given by their traffickers and their own, affective identity. After they had entered sex trafficking life, they were socialised into the identity of a prostitute. The socialisation occurred especially in the stories where the survivors became sex trafficked as teenagers or in their early adulthood. The stigmatisation that derived from this identity and lifestyle, affected the trafficked to feel 'tainted', as Goffman (1963) has termed the stigmatisation experience. Moreover, the survivors were explicitly reminded of the stigma especially by their traffickers.

> He told me every single day, I…he said, "Do you know why I love you? Because you're a dirty whore." And he reminded me every single day that that was all I would ever be. - Kelsie

Kelsie continued to explain in her story, how she felt like she had let her trafficker to control who she was. Because the trafficker saw her as a prostitute, she also started to think herself as such. In other words, the trafficker controlled her social identity. By the process of social

interaction, she eventually internalised the stigma of a whore. The whore stigma is commonly attached to a female who is defined as a ‘bad woman’ with a spoiled identity (Pheterson 1993). According to Pheterson (1993), this stigma is connected to its bearer as if it would be an inherent trait that defines her whole identity. The personal experiences of the survivors demonstrated this presumption to be false, even though other people would have deemed them as internally blemished. The sex trafficking survivors stated being disturbed because of the stigmatisation. After all, they had not chosen the sex trafficking life for themselves.

An interesting detail in Sarah's story was a tangible description about how she experienced the labelling. Historically the stigmatised have been physically marked for example as a sign of belonging to a slave owner (Goffman 1963, 11). Even currently, traffickers use tattooing to mark their victims as a sign of ownership. Nevertheless, in the example of Sarah, the tattooing was pictured as an invisible symbol of an internalised stigma of a sex trafficking victim. The experience also effected how she perceived herself with others.

> I felt like I had ‘victim’ tattooed on my forehead. I felt like everyone that saw me knew. - Sara

The stigma was described as an inner perception of how the survivors defined themselves. Even though they apprised of feelings of impurity, deviance, and inferiority because of the stigma, they described not wanting to wholly accept it as a part of their personality. The stigmatisation was represented as a struggle between the survivors' true, affective identity and the social identity they were given by their traffickers.

6.3.3 The stereotypical sex trafficking narrative

Several survivors recollected that it took a fairly long time before they understood they themselves were being sex trafficked. This was partly due of the discrepancy between their own experiences and the stereotypical sex trafficking narrative. The stereotypical narrative included presumptions of kidnapping, drugging, being locked up or transported to another country. The idea of ‘stranger danger’ (see 6.2.2) was connected to traffickers whereas victims of sex trafficking were conceived as ‘others’, meaning that the survivors had identified themselves to be substantially different than the supposed sex trafficking victims. Trafficking in general was pictured as something that does not occur anywhere near or somewhere that is familiar.

> You hear or read about the worst human trafficking stories in some third world country or happening to a new immigrant in the United States. You couldn't possibly imagine it happening to someone you know or well, you. And why not? Because you are a tall, white girl pursuing your dream career in New York City?
> - Airica

> If you knew me, I'd be the last person you would've expected to be victimised.
> - Brittany

Often people may unnoticedly think that evil only happens somewhere far, as in another country or obscurely on the internet. It may be easier to associate different atrocities to people that are not present in the person's own life sphere, than to acknowledge them happening close by (Laitinen 2004, 17–18). Many of the survivors did not identify themselves as typical victims of sex trafficking. The stereotypical sex trafficking victim emerged in the stories as a poor, non-white person with troubled family background who commonly is an immigrant or a citizen of a third world country. It appeared that people with these types of backgrounds were stigmatised as potential sex trafficking victims in the stories. A few of the stories' survivors were non-white or had poor living conditions before trafficking, but some of them came even from affluent family backgrounds.

Even though studies (Crawford 2017; 119–120; Cwikel et al. 2004; Gerassi 2015) have discovered that socioeconomic inequality considerably incites sex trafficking, one of the leading countries in the child sex trafficking market financially is the U.S. (Coppola & Cantwell 2016; Reid 2018). Child sex trafficking is not necessarily directly connected to socioeconomic differences as much as it is connected to the sexual demand of pedophiles. Lexie tells in her story how she was being sex trafficked between the ages of 10 and 13 by a boy who was in his mid teens. He visited Lexie's home for meals, and she was on the understanding that he was her boyfriend.

> My family's ignorance and relative socioeconomic privilege blinded them to the fact that bad things don't just happen to 'bad families' or to 'poor families.' This was my greatest vulnerability. When they thought I was out riding my bike around the neighbourhood, I was often being raped, filmed, and brutally traumatised.
> - Lexie

Lexie mentions in her story the ignorance and socioeconomic privilege as vulnerabilities for sex trafficking. By stating this, she criticises the typical assumptions of 'poor' or 'bad' family backgrounds as the only vulnerabilities leading to trafficking. Lexie pointed out that being privileged blinded her family from perceiving what was happening to her. The sex trafficking reality was hidden from the normal social environment that her family represented because

their perception of reality excluded the possibility that one of their own could be sex trafficked.

The stereotypical sex trafficking narrative was also criticised in some other stories. Media was presented as a source of information that shaped the survivors' impression about the phenomenon. Azurdee describes in her story about the effects of the news media. She was a victim of familial trafficking in her childhood when human trafficking was not yet a part of common knowledge.

> I was in graduate school and had started my life over before the term 'trafficking' even was in the news. And most trafficking in those cases, it was these big, international rings bringing people in from other countries and hiding them and… to work or…people were grabbing blonde hair, blue eyed teenage girls and shipping them overseas. No-one ever, even still now, hardly ever talks about it's a family member. - Azurdee

Whereas the stories generally described how hidden issue sex trafficking is, familial and child trafficking were conceived as particularly unvoiced phenomena. In the example of Azurdee, the stereotypical sex trafficking narrative was reinforced by the news. This narrative created representations of typical sex trafficking victims, traffickers, and the mechanisms of how the trafficking would occur. Even though this type of trafficking also exists, the dominance of the narrative may inhibit understanding of other types of sex trafficking stories.

Media also effected how the survivors projected their experiences in the life of sex trafficking. In Jose's story, the movie 'Taken' served as a mirror in the process where he analysed the situation that he was in. It appeared that the schemes that media represented, influenced the conceptions of sex trafficking whether they were factual or fictional.

> And I've seen the movie 'Taken' and I've seen what that's all about. And none of this seemed like the same thing in my head at the time. And I'm like, "No-one's drugged me, no-one's tied me down. No-one's taken me across seas, no-one…" I'm just in this room and technically, I guess I could just leave whenever I wanted, but at the same time, like I said, I had no other option. - Jose

The mechanisms of sex trafficking were aligned with the stereotypical narrative in the 'Taken'-movie. Jose explains in his story how he was not tied down, but still lacked any better options for escaping the situation. His captivity was therefore more circumstantial and psychological than physical. He projected his own situation against the stereotypical narrative of physically kidnapped and captivated victims.

The survivors in general compared their own experiences to the stereotypical sex trafficking narrative, and these finding were often contradictory. The stereotypical narrative was most disputed in the stories where the survivors came from wealthy family backgrounds or had suffered familial and child trafficking. Otherwise, the narrative was presented as a reflector to the survivors' own experiences.

6.3.4 Survival mechanisms

The stories pictured the life of sex trafficking as survival. Because the survivors could not escape their situation at the time, they begun to create survival mechanisms in order to endure the pain and unwanted situations that they confronted during trafficking. The typical mindset for them at this stage precluded any other options than obeying their traffickers. The traffickers, however, controlled what their victims could do and when. Teresa depicted being in a survival mode during the time while she was trafficked by her family and community members. Her time and activities were controlled by others and therefore she was constantly moving ahead without the possibility to contemplate what was happening to her.

> 'Cos at the time when you're growing up, it's just chaos, and…you're just trying to survive. You don't really have the time to stop and to really assess your relationships, or like, to look at the dynamics that you're living. - Teresa

Several stories included depictions of traumatic bonding (Dutton & Painter 1993; Woehler & Akers 2022) between the survivors and their traffickers. Traumatic bonding develops in a relationship where the abuser shows strong expressions of 'love' and affection, but in a cyclic nature, also abuses the victim. The positive moments encourage the victim to believe in the relationship, even though the abuse continues. (Dutton & Painter 1993; Woehler & Akers 2022.) Traumatic bonding became a survival mechanism for the trafficked in several narratives.

> Just never mind all the things that he just put me through, he was just like, very attentive, very caring. And, speaking of the psychological bond, the trauma bond, I only wanted to be around him. You know, and so, I was, like, stuck to him like glue. - Kathy

> -- it's as intoxicating and addicting. You literally get addicted to the 'highs and the lows' and when you're at the low, you're like, “Ok, if I can just make it through this, it's gonna get really good after this.” Because that's the pattern they set.
> - Amanda

> And as much as I didn't like having to have sex with these random men the validation that came from handing him the money and saying look what I did, I

> did good, I did what you taught me. It became the survival tactic. That was how I kept going. And he was so proud of me. And it made it ok. - Kelsie

In traumatic bonding as well as in the other life spheres of the survivors, the main survival method was focusing on the good. The survivors described how they battled in their minds between their own morals and dreams and the reality of sex trafficking life. Focusing on the positive helped them cope with the repulsive experiences, but the ‘pattern’ in the trafficking life was that the positive moments typically exchanged into negatives and their future dreams eventually were not realised. Jose disclosed his thought processes, where dreaming of future helped him to survive the unendurable situations. Nevertheless, being in constant survival mode brought detrimental consequences on his well-being.

> And so I leave the room and I feel so filthy after the massage. I feel like this…I knew this was bad, I knew this was wrong, but I also felt like, “Ok, if that's all it was, I think I can do this. I think I'll be ok. And then, as soon as I have enough money, as soon as I get my life together, I'll be independent, and I won't have to do this anymore. I'll be good.” And that wasn't it. -- And I dealt with it in several different ways: the alcohol, the drugs, the partying. - Jose

In several narratives, the survivors revealed how their mind created strategies of survival. Dissociation was the common tactic for coping the horrific circumstances. The mechanism protects the mind from confronting severe, unbearable threat by disconnecting the personal, emotional attachment from the situation (Gewirtz-Meyrdan & Lahav 2021; Lyssenko et al. 2018). Even though dissociation is the mind's way of protecting a person in a threatening situation, survivors reported dissociating even at the times when they were not exposed to danger.

> And because, like, home wasn't safe and school wasn't safe, I didn't really have a safe place to go. I had to be safe in my mind. So I had to dissociate pretty severely. And so…you know, after I was, you know, being sold, and you know, being trafficked, my brain would literally like, close off that experience. -- I would zone out a lot in class. I would switch from, having a like, really meek personality to – just like having these extremes. - Teresa

> Yeah, so you're outside of your body. It's almost like, “This is happening to me in a different time and space and I'm over here observing.” - Amanda

> I wish I could tell you all the details step-by-step of what led to the most horrible moments of my life. But to be honest, there are moments in my past my mind will not let me remember. It is like your mind protects you from events that are too traumatic to relive. That is survival. - Airica

Airica refers to dissociative amnesia, where the mind has closed the events that are too overwhelming to process (Lyssenko et al. 2018; Velasco-Barnbancho et al. 2022). Dissociating created safety for the survivors in the situations where they were threatened and lacked any other possibilities to leave or to feel comfort. The survival mechanisms in general helped them to endure the traumatic life they were in, but in the process of time these tactics began to affect counterproductively on their well-being. The mental struggle they experienced occurred not only during the traumatic episodes, but emerged in other life spheres as well.

6.3.5 The narratives of the perpetrators versus the narratives of the victims

> What made my case unique was the number of adults who knew of my abuse and failed to report it. Shortly after my abuse began, the perpetrator’s wife suspected something inappropriate was happening, but he was able to ease her concerns. Because she failed to tell someone, my abuse continued for several years past its initial discovery. - Brittany

Brittany's trafficker was her youth pastor, who trafficked young girls on school trips and other youth events across the state borders. It can be interpreted from the story, that several adults knew or suspected that something dubious was happening between Brittany and the pastor, but none of them voiced their concerns. Because of this, the trafficking stayed invisible and was enabled to continue. According to Laitinen (2004, 115), the unequal power relationship of an adult abuser and a child render the exploitation possible.

Authorities such as school personnel and health care professionals were depicted in varying ways depending on the situations the survivors were in. Even though they were pictured somewhat positively in several stories, there were numerous incidents where the survivors were left without the help they would have wished for. Several studies (Konrad 2008, 161–163; Reid 2018; Roth 2012, 287–289) have proved the importance of the identification of sex trafficking victims. Identification is imperative so that the victims could have access to the help they need and would not be mislabeled. However, especially in the child trafficking narratives the unequal power position (Laitinen 2004, 115) often resulted in the 'winning' of the trafficker's narrative whereas the victim's narration was silenced.

> Now when I was in the exam room with the doctor, I felt like this was my opportunity to speak out. Trying to escape the hell that I was trapped in. So I whispered into the doctor's ear that these people were hurting me, and I needed help. Well, unbeknownst to me, that the handler of the trafficker that had brought me in the emergency room, had told the doctor that I was attention-seeking, prone to making up wild stories, and accident-prone. So, the doctor ended up telling this person that brought me in what I had said. - Jerome

> When I was 11, I decided to reach out. I was terrified. I wrote a note to my teacher and held it. I held it for days. I was so afraid, but one day I had courage to give it to her. The note said, “Someone is hurting me. I don't want to get pregnant. I need help.” One day as I left the classroom for lunch, I quietly handed it to my teacher. -- When I walked into the office, my dad was sitting there with the principal. He was holding the note. He was furious. He said I was so desperate for attention that I needed to create a scene at school and pull him out of work because I'm selfish and stupid. I was labeled a trouble maker. - Sarah

Sarah described how she was being labeled instead of being seen and heard. The power position between the father and the daughter resulted in the winning of the father's perception of the situation. When Sarah's cousin-trafficker was informed about the incident, he detained Sarah inside for a week and a half and punished her for embarrassing her family. Therefore, the father's attitudes and actions influenced trafficking to continue.

Survivors tried to escape their situations, but often did not succeed at first because of how they were perceived by the outside world. Besides the misinterpretations and ignorance (see also 6.1) of other people, appearances of a normal life contributed to the invisibility of trafficking especially in familial and child sex trafficking stories. As stated in previous chapters (see 6.1.3 and 6.3.1), these stories revealed a double life between the abusive and normal childhood living. Some of the survivors' parents were recognised members of their society, which fostered the expectance of normalcy and excluded the suspicions of anything deviant happening in their family.

> I remember in the sixth grade we had this writing assignment where we had to write a poem. – And my teacher, she pulled me aside, we were coming from recess and she was like, “Hey, this is like, a really dark poem and I really wanna talk to you about it.” And I was like, “Ok, ok…” I don't remember the conversation that we had but in that moment I felt that somebody did see me and cared for me. But unfortunately it just ended up having a meeting with the principal and my mom. So…, so like, again, everybody knew my family and so that chance of…you know, just somebody digging a little deeper was passed by.
> - Teresa

Traffickers did not only manipulate their victims, but did so with the acquaintances in the world outside trafficking as well. They utilised mechanisms of a normal social interaction for their own benefit and created appearances of a normal life while they were simultaneously involved in sex trafficking. Survivors reported of attempts to reach reliable authorities for help, but in the process their narrative of the situation was most often silenced. The stories demonstrated how people typically exclude from their minds the possibility that someone

familiar, or a person with leverage, would commit atrocities such as sex trafficking (Laitinen 2004, 17–18).

The families and the communities protected the perpetrators instead of the victims particularly in child and familial trafficking. Even though the safeguarding of the perpetrators sometimes appeared to be unintentional, it resulted in ignoring the victims' condition. This type of behaviour caused the victims to be seen as deviant although the actual offender of any morals was the abuser. The perpetrators’ power position due to age difference and social status furthermore alleviated the continuing of trafficking.

6.4 Out of the trafficking

6.4.1 Confronting the reality

The stories illustrated that being sex trafficked was a confusing experience in several ways. Even though the survivors generally pictured their experiences as painful and traumatising, they did not necessarily acknowledge that they were being sexually trafficked at the time of trafficking. Those survivors who were trafficked as very young children told how they started to understand the full scale of what had happened to them on the brink of their adulthood. This may partly be due to dissociation that inhibits the memories from eliciting into the conscious mind (Lyssenko et al. 2018; Velasco-Barnbancho et al. 2022). Additionally, trafficking as a phenomenon was not a publicly known issue before the 1980's (Alexander et al. 2016, 55; Laitinen 2004, 28–32).

> I actually didn't realise it until I was in college. So, because I was so young.
> - Teresa

> There were no laws back when I was trafficked. Even whenever I got out, I hadn't heard of any programs. - Azurdee

The survivors did not recognise themselves as sex trafficking victims for several reasons. They interpreted their situations based on their relationships with the traffickers, who commonly had also other roles in their lives, such as that of a boyfriend. The traffickers' operation in multiple roles where traumatic bonding (Dutton & Painter 1993; Woehler & Akers 2022) often was included, added to the confusion of the victims. In addition, the stereotypical sex trafficking narrative (see 6.3) effected how the survivors interpreted their circumstances. These interpretations had influence on how and when they sought to escape from the trafficking life.

> I just thought that I was in a crazy relationship with a guy that had crazy fantasies. I don't know, like, I just thought he liked this kind of stuff. And he was just not…umm, I just didn't think that it was…I didn't think there was a name for it." -Kathy

> There was a name for what I had experienced. I had experienced sex trafficking. For so long I had denied this truth because it didn't fit the narrative that I had been told about sex trafficking. - James

The actualisation of being sex trafficked initiated in many cases a transition in the survivors' life. They used several survival mechanisms to endure the sex trafficking life (see 6.3.4), which sometimes affected them to not fully comprehend the reality that they were in. As discussed in the chapter 6.3.4, the survivors depicted a discrepancy between their own, affective identity and the definitions that were added to them by their traffickers. Amanda explains how her personal identity did not correspond with her being sex trafficked until something very dramatic happened. It appeared that she fought in her mind against that idea so that she could have control over her own identity. She illustrated an episode with her trafficker after she had gotten into a car accident.

> So I pull out my phone and I text my trafficker and I say, "Hey, I was just in a car accident." He says, "Is your face fucked up?" And I'm like, "No" and he says, "Well, you're still fuckable then." -- And so, at that moment it was like, "Oh my God, I'm being sex trafficked!" It was, something isn't right here. This isn't who I want to be. This isn't what I want. And it was like I was coming out of the water. -Amanda

The realisation of being sex trafficked provoked Amanda to plan her way out of the sex trafficking life. She described how she did not want to adopt the social identity of a prostitute, but instead began to construct a life for herself according to her own affective identity and desires. Other survivors related similar experiences of hurtful episodes that started the process of leaving the trafficking life. Jose disclosed in his story how he was raped by a customer in a particularly appalling way whereas Kelsie wished for support from her trafficker after a surgical operation.

> I just remember thinking, "This is not ok. This is not ok. I feel so gross, I feel filthy, I feel disgusting, I feel worthless, I feel…this is nowhere, nowhere in my dreams, in my plans for my future did I ever see this being a part of my life." And it was that moment that I decided I'm gonna leave. - Jose

> I think I was just done. I really thought that the whole three years that we had been through at that point, that he would have respected enough to not make me go out in work after a kidney stone removal. Like, it wasn't…that wasn't the case

> though, he didn't, he didn’t respect me. He didn't care for me. He didn't love me like he said he did. Not, when I was standing in the way of his money. - Kelsie

In the narratives, a shocking and thought-provoking twist aroused them to organise their way out of the trafficking. The contradiction between their actual life and the life they had wished for themselves became clearly apparent by the offensive incidents. However, the survivors confronted the reality they lived in a number of ways. In some of the stories the change was more gradual and subtle.

> I think I started to have my own kind of reality check because I was back in my home town. And I had to see streets and freeways and highways and landmarks that were familiar to me. And they were disrupting my facade. They were disrupting who I had become to trying to protect myself from my reality. - Kathy

Kathy expressed the trafficking life as a 'facade', as if the life would have signified pretending and playing roles. The trafficking life was depicted against the reality that represented the normal, actual life where Kathy used to live. Whether the confronting of the reality was progressive as in Kathy's case or more abrupt as in the previous examples, it was preceded by a process where the trafficked had already contemplated their identities and the inconsistency between their life and dreams.

6.4.2 The end of trafficking

The survivors were eventually able to escape from their circumstances in a variety of ways. Depending on the story, the trafficking lasted from several months to approximately two decades. The unique detail in the stories of child sex trafficking was that it ended when the children reached their puberty. Ultimately, the clientele of child sex trafficking consists of pedophiles (Kring et al. 2010, 402–403; Laitinen 2004, 17–18).

> I was never given the opportunity to escape. Law enforcement never found out. Instead, I was rejected. At age 13, my body changed, and the fantasy was broken. - Lexie

> And it lasted until before I hit puberty, which was around like thirteen, twelve-thirteenish. - Teresa

In the childhood trafficking narratives, the exploitation ceased from the part of their clientele and traffickers. The victims were no longer perceived as profitable commodities because of the changes in their bodies. It is although noteworthy, that each of the survivors whose trafficking ended in puberty, were of female gender. However, in the story of Jerome, child sex trafficking did not end until he attempted suicide at the age of 12 and was taken to a

hospital. After the previous experiences of ignorance by the healthcare professionals, he was at last encountered by a nurse who noticed Jerome' condition.

> So, I woke up in an emergency room to a group of white aid doctors. And a nurse was there, happened to notice that there were very clear signs that I was being abused. So, it was that particular day in my life that I was finally able to escape of being a victim of child sex trafficking. - Jerome

The nurse informed social services and Jerome was removed from his abusive home. The majority of the survivors who were trafficked as children, continued their lives as teenagers in the same social environment as before trafficking.

In most cases the survivors required assistance from other people for the escape from trafficking. Even though hey had the motivation to leave, the unequal power relations (see 6.1.2; 6.2.1), traumatic bonding, traffickers' control, and threat of violence (see 6.3.4) impeded their leaving. Some of the survivors were hospitalised before their escape, which initiated their recovery or prompted their decision to leave. James depicted experiencing psychosis, which despite the hardships it brough to him, also contributed to the final escape from the trafficking life. The burden of trauma had grown overwhelmingly heavy for him, and the effects of his survival mechanisms (see 6.3.4) had began to decrease.

> Eventually, I had a psychotic break. I became a liability, and the men had their key cards to the hotel room changed. They skipped town and I became homeless in California – 3,000 miles away from home. - James

James was eventually found by a stranger who took him to a hospital, where his recovery could begin. Generally the survivors did not have sufficient social support network from their past that could have pulled them out of trafficking. Instead, they contacted National human trafficking hotline or had created new social networks that participated in their escape, as for instance, by giving them accommodation. However, in Kathy's story her social contacts were the main motivation for her withdrawing from the trafficking life. The trafficker was still able to control Kathy because of the traumatic bonding, but with the help of her social circle, she was empowered to observe her situation from a different perspective.

> My identity was stripped away. I just thought, in my mind, that I belonged to him. And so, I would have absolutely gone back, but he underestimated the strength of my support system. So, it was my family, my friends, and those around me, that disrupted his plans. - Kathy

The law enforcement authorities were manifested both as a support and as representatives of social control (Foucault 2000, Lemert 1972, 48–49) in the stories. In accordance with

previous research (Roth 2012, 287–289), the survivors wished for help from these authorities but were simultaneously afraid of possible prostitution or drug dealing charges. They had learned attitudes towards the police in the trafficking life that effected their behaviour. The mechanisms that the traffickers used to control their victims affected them to feel guilt and fear when they were eventually able to expose the traffickers to the police.

> I told the task force who my trafficker was in total fear and felt betrayal because the codes in the streets are you don't snitch! - Elizabeth

Elizabeth was eventually incarcerated for a five-year sentence. In her story, the motivation for a life change was her son whom she wanted to live with. Additionally, she wanted to "break the generational cycle" of manifold forms of violence and substance abuse in her family. The time in prison initiated her recovery and helped her to start a new life.

Whether the survivors received help from other people or were detained by the law enforcement, their own motivation and determination eventually caused them to leave the life of sex trafficking. In some of the narratives, the survivors did not immediately find a safe place to live, and their traffickers were still seeking them. Even though the concrete leaving process was in some cases long-lasting, the survivors were eventually able to start the socialisation into the world without trafficking.

6.4.3 Lifelong journey

During the time of sex trafficking, the survivors' actions as well as their identities were controlled by their traffickers. The escape from trafficking life created possibilities for them to reconstruct their self-identities and learn to live according to their own, personal inclinations. The survivors pictured leaving from trafficking as a lifelong journey, in contradiction to the idea that it would be an one-time event.

> …you know, once you get people out of that physical, that danger, right? Then they can just be normal again! Like, you're free now! You can just live life! But that's not true. Because there is so many things that you have to…like, learn again. You have to learn who you are, again, number one. You have to try to process what the heck just happened to me, right? -- And then you have to figure out how to move in society again. Like, you know, live and adapt to society, your community, your surroundings, what does that even look like? - Kathy

The survivors described the resocialisation back to the normal world as strenuous and challenging. In the stories where they had socialised into a deviant way of living in their childhood because of abuse, belonging to an extreme religious group, or because of childhood

trafficking (see 6.1; 6.2.1), the socialisation process was in accordance with Goffman's (1963,45–55) fourth pattern of moral career. The moral career classifications describe different ways of how the stigmatised construct their social identities and are socialised into the world of normals. In the fourth pattern, stigmatised are socialised from an alien community to the normal world (ibid.). Sex trafficking life represented the alien community in the survivors stories. However, unlike in Goffman's (ibid.) descriptions, several of the survivors were raised in a normal environment before trafficking. In these narratives, they socialised from normal to deviant and back to the normal environment. They expressed how they had to learn to live life *again,* although the life of normalcy was familiar to them from their past.

Despite the childhood background of the survivors, the experience of stigma affected their self-identities even after the trafficking life. Learning to live in the normal world was depicted as a highly profound process where they battled with numerous symptoms of trauma and learned to take care of the basic human needs such as sleeping and eating.

> -- a lot of the trafficking would happen at night time. Specifically during the weekends. And…just ever since I was little it was so hard for me to sleep. Like, I would just stay up or I'd have nightmares…you know, just being plagued with all the trauma, really. And so the first two years was like really learning, learning how to sleep. That it's ok for me to take a nap. To take a break. 'Cos it's like, growing up, we weren't ever really allowed to do that. - Teresa

The power of control that the traffickers had for their victims affected their emotions and holistically on their health, as for example on the functioning of their autonomic nervous system described in the excerpt of Teresa's story. Although survivors had physically escaped the trafficking life, their experiences followed them in their life afterwards. They had suffered trauma which, besides their personal well-being, affected their relationships. According to the research (Gerassi 2015; Gewirtz-Meyrdan & Lahav 2021; Greenbaum, et al. 2018; Hossain et al. 2009; Lyssenko et al. 2018; Moore et al. 2020; Velasco-Barnbancho et al. 2022), victims of sex trafficking typically develop PTSD and CPTSD, depression, anxiety, dissociation and various physical conditions. Additionally, Gerassi (2015) has stated that previous trauma aggravates the sex trafficking experience.

> Little did I know that, when you experience trauma like that, there's a long road ahead of you. And shortly after I began to see signs of PTSD, anxiety, depression.-- I always say, "It was much harder after being trafficked than actually being trafficked." For me, it was. - Jose

> The brain blocks what is too much to process, and sexual exploitation and trafficking as a preteen honestly still is too much to process even now, in my late twenties. - Lexie

> People think that once you're 'rescued' and 'free' you can just pick up the pieces and go about a 'normal' life. I didn't know what a normal life was. I had spent so much time being told what to do and how to feel, so I struggled having healthy, safe, fulfilling relationships with others. - Sarah

Survivors explained how they were striving to establish healthy relationships with others as well as with themselves. Being a human and one's own persona emerged in the stories as a relieving experience after the life where they had been constantly controlled. Survivors expressed in their narratives that they did not want to be merely perceived by their victim or survivors status, but to be recognised as their personal selves. Positive social contacts along with therapy encouraged them to build their individuality in a safe environment.

> My people, and the support people for me, were those people that met me where I was and allowed me to be a human. - Azurdee

> And so, just suddenly kind of matter again…to hear my real name again -- I hadn't mattered up until then. I hadn't been an individual. -Kelsie

> I'm not just a survivor, I'm a person. - Sarah

Survivors started to reframe their identities after trafficking. They had been treated as prostitutes and whores (see 6.3.2) which had affected their perception of themselves. The stories depicted how the survivors accused themselves of the sexual exploitation they had suffered. This evolved emotions of guilt and shame and additionally enhanced the self-stigmatisation of being a prostitute. The accusatory self-perception resembled the Freudian individualistic psychological view (Laitinen 2004, 35–46), where the sexual exploitation of a child is, absurdly, considered to originate from the child's own desires. However, the relief that the survivors described when they learned that being sex trafficked was not their fault, manifested this perspective to be false. Additionally, contemporary human rights and trafficking laws (OHCHR 2000; 2022) oppose the aspect as well.

> I learned about human trafficking and how I was a victim, not a child prostitute. When I found this out, a big burden was lifted off my shoulders. - Elizabeth

> -- a big part of my healing, was, like, "Ok, so it's not just me. I'm not the only one who fell for this. I'm not the only one who believed that these things could be true. I'm not the only one who really believed a whore was all what I was ever going to be. - Kelsie

The stigmatisation that the survivors experienced influenced their occupational choices. The majority of them started to work in anti-trafficking field full time or voluntarily. They stated wanting to help other victims in sex trafficking by sharing their stories as well as by other grassroots-level activity. Some of them had founded their own anti-trafficking organisations and many provided peer-support and information via different media channels. Besides the stigmatisation derived from sex trafficking, the negative experiences because of homosexuality influenced the survivors' career choices.

> But maybe this was my purpose to help others in similar situations. Every gay boy that's out there whose family neglects them and takes them out and says, “Figure it out,” I wanna be able to help those boys. I wanna be able to help the kids that aren't even aware that what's happening to them is trafficking. And how wrong it is. And if you end up in a situation like that, I hope they know what to come after. - Jose

> I founded with a friend of mine a non-profit. We train individuals to recognise trafficking. We're working with kids who have gone through trauma. -- We work on self-esteem, we work on boundaries, just learning how to communicate in a healthy manner. We also teach how they can use their voices. - Azurdee

Previous research (Andel et al. 2013; Dovidio et al. 2009; Goffman 1963, 32) has discovered that stigmatised people often find purpose in helping others with similar stigma. The pathways that the survivors chose were influenced by the stigma as they became advocates and public speakers in the sex trafficking survivors community. In accordance with the research (ibid.), they pursued to provide a 'social home' for the sex trafficking victims as well as to the homosexuals who had suffered rejection and violence because of their sexuality. The responsibilities of the community leaders included caring for the victim/survivors and communicating information about sex trafficking to the general public.

7 Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this thesis was to research the sex trafficking survivors' biographies and their effects on why they were drawn into trafficking. The research examined the identities and biographies in relation to the stereotype of a sex trafficking victim. The perceptions that other people had made of the survivors were also surveyed in the thesis. I studied the data with the aim of finding common themes from the stories and created a unified narrative that progressed in time. My assumption was that the survivors at some part of the sex trafficking life had experienced stigmatisation because sex work in general is a fundamentally stigmatised occupation (Dodsworth 2015, 14; Pheterson 1993; Rodriguez-Garcia 2018, 91-93).

I collected the data from several media forums. Some of the accounts and podcasts were presumably followed by people who are already interested in understanding sex trafficking phenomenon. The others distributed information about various topics. Even though these sources are available on the internet for anyone, people commonly do not search for information about sex trafficking unless they have a particular cause for it. Distributing information to a wider and more diverse public would require, for example, publicity in the news or other large-scale media. Some of the survivors had shared their experiences in these types of media as well, but most often they include a reporter's or other intermediary's narration as well. Even though the administrators of the platforms in the data have effected how the stories are edited, this thesis includes only the stories that the survivors have personally told without any intermediaries.

The narratives I collected for this thesis are told in a specific time and place. Media context was, in other words, part of the survivors' story telling. Stories of 14 U.S. survivors cannot be extrapolated to every sex trafficking survivor globally, but their narratives can give a rather deep insight of the trafficking phenomenon from their viewpoint and social context. Autobiographical narratives are told from memories that are moulded by the narrators and influenced by their attitudes on their lived experiences (Freeman 2015, 27-30; Pöysä 2011, 317–321; Sclater 2006, 100-103; Squire 2017). I also bore in mind that the veracity of the stories should be critically examined, because people may remember the past distortedly or may not always tell the truth. Some facts of the stories may be possible to verify whereas others are not. However, the aim of this thesis was particularly to study the personal stories of the survivors that provide subjective information about their experiences. Examining personal

stories provides information of other people's experiences that is difficult to obtain otherwise (Saarikoski 2011, 133–133).

In their narratives, survivors searched for reasons why they got enticed into sex trafficking. They explained their vulnerabilities based on their childhood experiences, personal needs and traits. Beginning from childhood, the majority of them had suffered sexual and other forms of violence. The homosexuals were abused and rejected by their families and communities particularly because of their sexuality, which affected them to become stigmatised earlier than the other survivors. Homosexuality emerged as a crucial vulnerability in the stories whereas heterosexuality appeared as a norm that did not need to be explicitly uttered. According to research, childhood neglect, sexual exploitation, and violence are common among the sex trafficked (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Gerassi 2015; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022). Moreover, LGBTQ+ individuals are researched to be at considerable risk for sex trafficking and sexual violence (Morrison et al. 2020; UNODC 2020). Thus, the survivors' vulnerabilities were for major part similar to what the studies have discovered. It is however noteworthy that the vulnerabilities were inflicted on them by other people.

However, some of the survivors got drawn into trafficking even without any apparent vulnerability. Especially these narratives highlighted the traffickers' role in the luring process. Traffickers used different methods in order to trap their victims, that included exploitation of the victims' vulnerabilities and trust. Using these methods to gain control over victims is globally typical in human trafficking (Crawford 2017; Denton 2016, 34; ILO 2022; Konrad 2008; Reid 2018; Veldhuizen-Ochodničanová et al. 2020; UNODC 2020; TVPA 2000). Even normal transitions in life, such as being a teenager or a student looking for a job, appeared as vulnerabilities in some stories. Teenagers generally are exploring themselves and are still insecure of their identities whereas receiving a job offer requires trust for the employer. Thinking of human insecurities and vulnerabilities aroused the question of how people with divergent social abilities, such as them with neuroatypical brain structure, may be at substantial risk for exploitation. According to the survivor stories, traffickers utilised trust as if it was a vulnerability even though it is universally human to want to trust another person. Moreover, people who have experienced violence in their childhood, do not necessarily know whom they can trust because they have not experienced trustworthy relationships before. This lead me to consider how vulnerabilities in themselves are not causes for victimisation. Victimisation demands the action of an abuser. Based on the stories, the essential cause for trafficking is the traffickers' activity. Traffickers deliberately detected vulnerabilities and

manipulated their victims to a situation where they became economically and emotionally dependent on the traffickers.

Being an underaged person is categorised as a risk for trafficking, because children are still in need for care and support of their closest adults (OHCHR 2000). In childhood trafficking stories, this vulnerability was exploited. Most of these narratives were also descriptions of familial trafficking. The interaction between the survivors and their social environment was in large part based on the perceptions that the survivors’ familiar people had constructed of them. These perceptions of the children's character in addition to expectations of normalcy caused others to ignore the ongoing abuse in the children’s lives. Even though CSE is contemporarily a rather known issue, it is still a subject that people do not necessary believe as existing in their social circles (Alexander et al. 2016, 55; Laitinen 2004, 17–18; 29–35). Moreover, family members who aim to gain financial profit from sexually trafficking their child is an issue that is not sufficiently discussed. According to the stories, it appeared that people were generally prone to sustain the normal way of living and explain deviance out of their own life circles. This tendency to normalcy effected for its part to the ignorance of the children’s situation. Knowing the normal behaviour patterns in social interaction enabled the traffickers to mask the ongoing exploitation of their victims.

According to research (Barmaki 2021; Becker 1963; Franzese 2009, 6-7; Goffman 1963; Parsons 1951, 96–101), deviance is experienced against the norms of the outside, 'normal' world. Regardless of the age the survivors became trafficked, they pictured sex trafficking life as separate and deviant from the surrounding world. Even though all of the survivors were trafficked in the sex industry against their own will, they factually operated as sex workers and were perceived as ones from the outsider's point of view. However, childhood trafficking stories were an exception because outside the trafficking life the survivors went to school and activities as other normal children. In other words, the lifestyle of sex trafficking depended on which age the survivors were trafficked into it.

Sex trafficking life inflicted stigmatisation on the survivors. Stigma of a prostitute or a whore affected their identity even after they had escaped the sex traffic. The narratives supported previous research (Armstrong & Fraser 2020; Pheterson 1993; Porter & Bonilla 2000), that has found prostitution to be a highly stigmatised line of work. Notwithstanding, stigma that was based on homosexuality, alleviated during the sex trafficking period in the stories of homosexuals. Being a homosexual was not anymore deviant in the sex trafficking life as it

was in their childhood environment. Rather, it became more of a norm. These findings were consistent with the observations of Becker (1963) who considers deviance as relational to social contexts. When the homosexuals still lived in their childhood homes, their social environment represented conservative and heterosexual norms that were opposite to the survivors’ sexual inclinations. In the trafficking life their social environment consisted largely of other homosexuals, which affected to the normalisation of their sexuality. However, life in sex trafficking caused other deleterious issues on their health and well-being.

The stories depicted the life of sex trafficking as a struggle between the survivors' own morals and the life they were obliged to live. They were not clearly either passive victims or active agents, but people who pursued to survive in a confusing situation. The narratives did not therefore support the conception of an ideal victim (Shrikarantiah 2007; Wilson and O'Brien 2016), who is perceived as passive, weak, and defenseless. The relationships with the perpetrators were often complex, whether they were boyfriends, parents or other adults. Especially the narratives where traffickers were the survivors’ boyfriends, described of conflicting emotional life of constant ‘ups’ and ‘downs’. These experiences were part of traumatic bonding (Dutton & Painter 1993; Reid 2018; Woehler & Akers 2022) that the survivors developed in the interaction with their traffickers. It is presumable that at least some of the survivors of child trafficking also experienced traumatic bonding because of the proximity of their relationship with their traffickers, who were their parents or other close adults. However, they did not explicitly refer to this term to depict their trafficker-relationships. Even though there were significant similarities in how the traffickers operated and created bonds with their victims, bonding also depended upon their unique relationship.

Although the psychological and physical symptoms of sexual violence are universal (Roth 2012a, 23), culture purportedly has an impact on how the symptoms are interpreted. The survivors came from different backgrounds and ethnicities but all of them lived in the United States, which is a country of an individualistic culture that expects people to be self-reliant (McCabe 2010). Culture shapes people’s perceptions about themselves, the others, and the ideals of how life should be. For instance, in more collectivist cultures the interpretations of sex trafficking experiences could have been different. The North American survivors were familiar with psychological terms such as dissociation and traumatic bonding, and were able to connect those definitions to their experiences presumably because they had gone through therapy. Resources such as therapy, shelters, and other support, require economic investments which may not be available in socioeconomically poorer countries.

In the narratives, socioeconomic status appeared to be a more substantial reason for trafficking than ethnic background. The poor economic conditions of the survivors were primarily associated to relative poverty or criminal activity. Nevertheless, social status appeared as an even more central cause for sex trafficking. Stories of the homosexuals in particular revealed how detrimental social rejection can be to an individual. This also effected their economic opportunities, that, combined with their rejection experiences, eventually pulled them into the trafficking life. Although ethnicity was not mentioned as a reason why the survivors got drawn into trafficking, they attached it to the stereotyped victims who presupposedly were other than U.S. citizens. Moreover, whiteness was thought of as an assumed protective element from sex trafficking.

Assuming that victims of sex trafficking are generally poor, immigrants, or otherwise disadvantaged, disregards the marginalised trajectories of the victims. However, studies (Crawford 2017; Cwikel et al. 2004; Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Dalla et al. 2022; Gerassi 2015; Gupta 2019; ILO 2017; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022; Macy and Graham 2012; Moore et al. 2020; Reid 2018) support this narrative, and as for numerous sex trafficking victims it is a tangible reality. Dalla et al. (2022) and Gerassi (2015) have, nevertheless, noted that survivors' histories are diverse and unique. Consistent with their statements (ibid.), the data of this thesis also highlighted the diversity of the survivors' biographies that often contradicted the stereotype of a sex trafficking victim. Even though sex trafficking is researched to occur in the U.S. as well as in other western countries (Coppola and Cantwell 2016; McCabe 2010; Reid 2018; UNODC 2020), the stereotype held the assumption of the victims being socioeconomically disadvantaged third world citizens. From a western person's point of view, this may partly be due to the biased thinking which tends to place atrocities far from one's own life sphere (Laitinen 2004, 17-18). Attaching these stereotyped attributes to sex trafficking victims enhances the rigid assumption that sex trafficking does not happen to white, western people. Nevertheless, media has a pivotal role in distributing information of sex trafficking. If people only hear of victims who are transported from other countries, physically captivated, and from poor living conditions, this naturally effects the understanding of what sex trafficking is.

Even the stories' survivors themselves had not considered the possibility of becoming trafficked before their own experiences. They did not fully comprehend that they had actually experienced sex trafficking until they heard stories of other survivors and received information about the subject. Therefore, sharing and researching stories of people who have

personally experienced sex trafficking is essential in understanding the trafficking phenomenon. Personal narratives can also elucidate traffickers' working patterns and the reasons why they have become involved in sex trafficking, because on many occasions the victims know their traffickers quite well (Cwikel & Hoban 2005; Denton 2016; Kragten-Heerdnik et al. 2022; Woehler and Akers 2022).

Besides the cultural and socioeconomic dimensions, gender and sexuality are at the core of the sex trafficking phenomenon. It appears that sexual violence is never free from issues of gender, regardless of who is the victim and who is the perpetrator. Females are the most researched group and the most typical victims of sex trafficking (Borumandnia et al. 2022; Quadara 2014; Reid 2018; White 2014). This has an impact on the perceptions of who can be a sex trafficking victim. Even though sex trafficking is a gendered phenomenon, the stereotypes should not exclude the identification of marginalised victims. All genders may be subjected to sexual violence and trafficking. The report of UNODC (2020) discovered that LGBTQ+ individuals are at risk for becoming homeless because of rejection by their social environment. Homelessness is discovered as a risk particularly for child sex trafficking (Dalla et al. 2022; Gerassi 2015; Macy and Graham 2012; Moore et al. 2020; Reid 2018), and most of the homeless children are LGBTQ+'s (UNODC 2020). Their marginalised position additionally exposes them to other vulnerabilities, such as to discrimination by different authorities (ibid.). These findings were consistent with the stories of two homosexual men, who were compelled to leave their childhood homes as teenagers. Interventions to improve attitudes against LGBTQ+ people could reduce these risks as well as their general well-being.

After the realisation of being sex trafficked, the survivors began to reconstruct their lives and personas. They described the leaving from trafficking as a lifelong journey, in contrast to the idea that it would be an one-time event. Survivors explained how they had to learn to live again with other people as well as with themselves in the society. The stories described how they constructed a moral career (Goffman 1963, 45-55), where they were socialised from an alien community (sex trafficking life) to a world of 'normals'. Stigma directed their occupational choices into helping others with similar experiences. Even though they pursued to encourage and help other sex trafficking victims, they admitted struggling with their own mental and physical symptoms that the sex trafficking life had inflicted on them. Many of the survivors became advocates, activists and public speakers of their community, which is typical for the stigmatised individuals according to the literature (Andel et al. 2013; Dovidio et al. 2009; Goffman 1963, 32).

The narratives manifested the importance of identifying victims of sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation in various social contexts. Identification is crucial in order to help the victims and bring the perpetrators into criminal responsibility (Konrad 2008, 161-163; Reid 2018; Roth 2012, 287-289). Several of the survivors were exploited as children and did not receive help in the situations where it could have been possible. Ineffective detection of CSE is defined as a risk for youth trafficking particularly in the U.S., and to some extent globally (Dalla et al. 2022; Reid et al. 2015). In a number of stories, social service and healthcare professionals nevertheless eventually helped the survivors in their beginning to recovery. Sex trafficking victims often need medical treatment for their various physical and psychological symptoms (Gerassi 2015; Gewirtz-Meyrdan & Lahav 2021; Greenbaum, et al. 2018; Hossain et al. 2009; Lyssenko et al. 2018; Moore et al. 2020; Velasco-Barnbancho et al. 2022). Therefore, training of professionals in healthcare and social affairs to look for early signs of sexual abuse and human trafficking would be pivotal.

Furthermore, distinguishing involuntary sex work from voluntary would be of critical importance in recognising and helping sex trafficking victims. Even though abolitionism pursues to fight sex trafficking, it does not make a distinction between voluntary and compulsory sex work (Kingston & Thomas 2018; MacKinnon 2011; Roth 2012a, 19–28; Roth 2012a, 29–37; Srikantiah 2007, 194–195; Weitzer 2009). It perceives all sex work as exploitation of women, which obscures the line between sex work and sex trafficking. Furthermore, discerning the voluntariness would be central in order to criminally sanction the oppression in the sex trade and improve the rights and benefits of the sex workers (Benoit et al. 2021; Chapman-Schmidt 2019). Thus, the stigmatisation that the prostitutes experience could incrementally diminish. The survivors expressed being relieved when they were able to leave the prostitute stigma in their past. Even though stigma conducted their occupational choices, they did not want to be acknowledged solely as sex trafficking survivors. Although their memories still reminded them of their traumatic past, the survivors pursued to live according to their own personal desires in their life outside sex trafficking.

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