

**Human Trafficking:
An Analysis of Victim Framing**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of Government Honors

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May 2019

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas at Austin (study number 2018-12-0048).

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Dr. Derek Epp for being my thesis advisor. He played a major role in helping me form my research question, develop a workable experiment, and navigate the direction of my data and statistical analyses. I would also like to thank Dr. John McIver for constantly pushing me to do better and explore more options for my survey design, data analysis, and writing. His edits to my countless drafts have pushed me to write more than I ever could have imagined—my thesis would not be the same without his help. I would also like to thank Dr. Bethany Albertson for helping me with draw conclusions from my statistics and helping me conduct a subgroup analysis from my data. Lastly, I would like to thank Dixie Hairston, from the Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault at UT. She played an instrumental role in my project as she read over parts of my thesis and met with me to talk about the issue of domestic human trafficking. Her insight on domestic trafficking, especially as it occurs in Texas, helped me learn how to write about the issue in a more open, accurate, and inclusive way.

I would also like to thank Teri Jansen, Co-Founder and Director of Education & Prevention at Key2Free. Mrs. Jansen helped me realize how important educating others on domestic human trafficking is in Texas. My experience interning for her was transformative in my quest to learn more about how local sex trafficking operates. Her joy and passion in the fight against human trafficking really inspired me to use my skills in the fight as well. She helped open my eyes to the many ways I can fight against this issue through my future career, regardless of what profession I choose. Thank you so much, Teri!

Thank you, Madeline Kronenberg, for affording me the opportunity to work for you as an Editorial Intern for the Dressember Foundation. My experience writing blog posts about human trafficking helped me realize that my passion lies in writing and researching about the trafficking industry in the United States. Your constant support and time spent editing my work helped me better understand the complexities of an industry that I was struggling to understand. Thank you so much for believing in my writing abilities and for encouraging me to continue this line of work after my internship ended.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, James and Susan Beech, for supporting me throughout my academic journey at UT. Without their constant love and support, especially during this past year, writing my thesis would have been extremely difficult. Again, thank you mom and dad for allowing me to be the successful student that I am today!

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Abstract

The following research explores why individuals choose to care about certain U.S. domestic policy issues more than others. Precisely, what factors drive our policy preferences? How does the public's attitudes towards the beneficiaries of legislation affect their desire to support legislation? The case study of domestic human trafficking was used to answer these questions. Moreover, the study explored how the framing of child sex trafficking victims in the United States affects the public's willingness to care about the domestic anti-trafficking cause. In order to test this inquiry, the study used a Qualtrics survey to measure individuals' levels of support, interest, and engagement with the policy issue of domestic human trafficking in the United States. The survey was distributed to a sample size of 776 college students from the University of Texas at Austin. The survey consisted of two manipulations and a control group; the treatments framed victims of human trafficking to be in either 1) the minority community or 2) the majority community in American society. Participants in the control group did not receive a frame of who human trafficking predominantly affects.

The study revealed that those who were in the majority condition did not support human trafficking at a significantly higher level than those who viewed the issue to affect the minority community. However, those who were exposed to a victim frame, regardless of whether it was the minority or the majority frame, expressed significantly higher levels of support for the issue of domestic human trafficking than those who did not (in the control group). These results shed light on an interesting phenomenon; factors like racism, xenophobia, and relatability to the victim population do not substantially affect how much college students care about anti-human trafficking policy. Overall, the perception of *who* human trafficking victims are does not appear to affect public support, interest, or engagement with the issue. Individuals care more about the issue of human trafficking when there is a face attached to the issue, regardless of who the face is. Such results affirm the idea that the public (or at least college students at UT Austin) are not motivated by their attitudes towards who the beneficiaries of legislation are. Rather, they are motivated to support anti-trafficking policy when they are reminded that the issue affects anyone in the United States.

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“Human trafficking is a crime that strikes at the very heart of the American promise: freedom.” –The President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons¹

¹ The President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. (2014). *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017: Coordination, Collaboration, Capacity* (p. 73). Retrieved from Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons website: <https://www.ovc.gov/pubs/FederalHumanTraffickingStrategicPlan.pdf>

Chapter 1: Introduction

Ava's Story

Ava, a thirteen-year-old American teenager, met her first boyfriend at a high school party. He seemed charming, charismatic, and mature—unlike most of the guys she knew. She was entranced by her new, older “boyfriend,” who spoiled her with lavish gifts and compliments. Her boyfriend, Dylan, gave her more attention than she knew what to do with. However, she kept her relationship with him a secret because she was afraid of what others would think. “My friends and family wouldn’t understand our love,” she thought. Dylan was ten years older than her and she knew this was not ideal. However, he made her feel *special* and she did not want to jeopardize their relationship; “Some things are best kept a secret,” he would tell her.

Eventually Ava ran away from home to be with her trafficker, Dylan. She quickly became dependent on him for all of the basic necessities she needed to live; food, clothing, a home, and most importantly, emotional support. She had a deeply-rooted desire to feel loved and her trafficker preyed on this insecurity. Indeed, most traffickers find a way to exploit some sort of vulnerability in their victims’ lives—they are adept at making their victims feel “wanted” through a combination of flattery, manipulation, and lies (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2019). Dylan was skilled at capturing girls’ attention through these coercive tactics—he had won the hearts of many girls like Ava in the past.

Upon arrival to her new “home,” Ava discovered Dylan’s “mansion” to be a one-bedroom apartment that overlooked a street of bars and strip clubs on the poverty-stricken side of town. Dylan left her alone in the apartment for the majority of the day. He would come back at odd hours of the night, leaving her with vague excuses for his absence. “I’m working,” he would

say, “working to pay off the added expense of you living here. Maybe one day, if you’d cooperate, we can have our mansion together.”

A week into her stay at the new apartment, tensions escalated quickly. Her “boyfriend” requested that she start having sex with his friends in order to please him. “You owe me,” he would say. “I pay for your food, clothing, and amenities.” “Stop being so ungrateful.” Ava saw no way out. She had given up everything to be with him. Dylan knew this and he continued to drive a wedge between her and her family, who had no idea where she was. Ava complained to him often; she barely got any sleep and she was living off the remnants of Dylan’s left-over take-out meals. In response to her numerous complaints, he would yell at her, “your parents will never take you back. You’re no good for them anymore.” Ava, who was young and naïve, believed him. She was malnourished and physically beaten, and she had accepted her “new” life.

Ava was raised by an affluent, Caucasian family who lived on the wealthy side of town. She had no reason to run away from her home or become ensnared in the ruthless industry of human trafficking. Yet, Ava is one of the roughly 200,000 to 300,000 estimated American girls who are trafficked each year in the United States (Burkle, 2015; Smith, 2017). The man Ava fell in love with ended up being her trafficker, and for most of her youth, she did not even recognize that she was a victim of sex trafficking. Her trafficker’s professions of love and affection clouded her judgement, prohibiting her from seeing the reality of the situation. Alike Ava, many victims claim to be in love with their traffickers; the emotional coercion involved in the trafficker-victim relationship hinders their ability to view themselves as victims (Nichols, 2016).

Sex trafficking is the second most common form of human trafficking in the United States, behind labor trafficking (Center for Public Policy Studies, 2013). However, it is important to note that there is no “dominant” form of trafficking—human trafficking is a very mobile,

fluid, ever-changing industry. In this industry, anyone can be perpetrator and it can also affect anyone (Melton, 2017). Ava's case signifies the story of a small-town girl who became subjugated to a life of sexual slavery—her case is one of many human trafficking instances. There are a variety of ways that men and women alike can become victims of human trafficking—through unwanted expansions of sexual boundaries, an abuse of power from authority figures, sex work that becomes non-consensual, fraudulent employment opportunities, etc. However, Ava's story² is important to understand because it dispels a variety of stereotypes about human trafficking:

Stereotypes of Human Trafficking Dispelled

- Human trafficking affects the lives of people from **all** socio-economic statuses (it does not primarily affect poorer, less affluent communities).
- Human trafficking does **not** require transportation across state or international borders. It can occur within the comfort of one's home.
- Trafficking victims include **U.S. citizens** (victims are not exclusively international victims who have been trafficked across the U.S. border).
- A victim can be trafficked by **family members**, close **friends**, and aspiring **love interests** (not just strangers).

Smith, A. (2017). Slavery out of the Shadows: Spotlight on Human Trafficking. Retrieved from <https://tyla.org/resource/slavery-out-of-the-shadows/>

Although there is no “dominant” mode of exploitation, a common theme exists among all trafficking cases. Victims become trafficked largely because their trafficker attempts to fill a

² Ava's story illustrates the process of “grooming” by traffickers. Grooming is a process in which traffickers lure their “victims away from their homes or to gain the trust and dependency of young victims,” like Ava (U.S. Department of State, 2008, p. 4). Please see the cited reference (U.S. Department of State, 2008, p. 4-5) for more information on how traffickers manipulate native-born girls like Ava into the human trafficking industry.

void in their lives. Whether it be providing their victims with emotional and/or romantic support, job security, or the promise of a “better life,” traffickers frequently prey on common insecurities (Nichols, 2016; Melton, 2017; Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2019).

The founding fathers of the United States avidly promoted the preservation of basic human rights. They wanted all American citizens to “live freely under a government that would respect and protect human rights” as extolled in the country’s founding documents (Condé and Gelsinger, 2017, p. 3). However, Ava’s story illuminates a disturbing reality for Americans—that slavery³, one of the most flagrant human rights violations, did not die with the enactment of the 13th Amendment. Most Americans do not realize that slavery’s modern-day form, human trafficking, is thriving inside U.S. borders and that it can affect the average American (Sharapov 3). In fact, numerous estimates posit that human trafficking victims are most frequently native-born U.S. citizens as opposed to international victims (Nichols, 2016; Raymond and Hughes, 2001). Melissa Snow, a child trafficking specialist for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, surmises that “we have plenty of vulnerable women and children within [U.S.] communities unfortunately; this is who traffickers are targeting. Why would they focus overseas when they can spend a lot less money, time, and effort reaching into our communities?” (Mapp, 2015, p. 3)

Despite what many people believe, human trafficking *is* a domestic issue that occurs in the United States. Kirsta Melton, the lead prosecutor of the Human Trafficking and Transnational/Organized Crime Section for Texas Office of the Attorney General, argues that

³ This paper will use the term “human trafficking” throughout the rest of the paper (instead of referring to modern-day slavery). The term “slavery” was used to juxtapose the bondage of the Atlantic Slave Trade to United States’ current problem of sexual and labor trafficking. Using slavery receives criticism by advocates and scholars since it equates modern-day trafficking to an outdated form of “slavery” (Dottridge, 2017).

“trafficking cannot be dismissed solely as an international problem, or something that occurs, 'elsewhere' and to 'others.' It is critical to note that all fifty states have reported trafficking cases to the National Human Trafficking Hotline run by Polaris” (2017). Polaris⁴ is responsible for running the only nation-wide system of reporting for human trafficking in the United States, the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTRC). The NHTRC has reported a 259% increase in the number of calls reported to the hotline since 2008; they conclude that the human trafficking industry is growing in the United States (Nichols, 2016). Researchers attribute this growth to increasing demand for cheap labor and the proliferation of online sex tourism (Shelley, 2010). This demand is coming from citizens within American borders, those who wish to engage in illicit means of sex or cheap labor.

Although both labor trafficking and sex trafficking are the most common forms of human trafficking, a vast majority of female victims are trafficked for reasons of sexual exploitation rather than labor exploitation (Belles, 2015). Although a precise gender breakdown of victims is not known for each type of trafficking, researchers tend to emphasize the effects of sex trafficking on women. Thus, most of the estimates conducted on victims of human trafficking conclude that sex trafficking affects more women than labor trafficking does. However, such findings cannot be confirmed. The prevalence of human trafficking is often underestimated and under-reported⁵, making it difficult for any organization to generate “accurate” estimates (Brennan, 2005; Ray, 2011; Sharapov, 2014). However, the United States bears the notorious title of the “second largest destination and market...for women and children trafficked for sexual

⁴ Polaris is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization that works to combat and prevent modern-day slavery and human trafficking.

⁵ See Chapter 2, Section 1, “The Difficulty of Illuminating an Invisible, Underground Industry” for more information on why most human trafficking estimates are not accurate.

exploitation,” right behind Germany (Ray, 2011, p. 214). Ergo, trafficking for sexual exploitation receives the most attention in mainstream American society—both politicians and the media fixate on the issue of sex trafficking rather than labor trafficking (Mapp, 2016). Accordingly, this study will focus specifically on sex trafficking even though the umbrella term, “human trafficking,” will be used very frequently, as it is cited in the literature. The purpose in doing this is to discuss the broad effects of human trafficking as an industry (in Chapters 1 and 2 and in the conclusion in Chapter 6). However, the scope of the study was narrowed to portray child victims of domestic sex trafficking (see Chapter 3, “The Study,” p. 36, for more details). In addition, the term “domestic trafficking” will be used frequently. Domestic trafficking refers to trafficking that occurs inside of the United States, despite whether or not its victims were born inside of the United States.⁶

Public Attitudes: A Roadblock in the Anti-Human Trafficking Fight

Americans, for the most part, agree that human trafficking is an issue that should be fought against (Peters, 2015). Yet, anti-human trafficking policies are commonly underfunded, under-supported, and are often bolstered in theory but not in reality⁷. Rather, politicians are quick to join the fight against the “anti-trafficking crusade” by offering their verbal support. However, political support for anti-human trafficking policy quickly fades when other, more “mainstream” issues appear on the policy agenda (such as health care, immigration, taxes, etc.).

⁶ Victims who are trafficked across the border and into the United States are still victims of domestic trafficking since their trafficking occurs inside U.S. borders (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

⁷ Although victim services in the United States need more government funding to survive, the President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons recognizes that the federal government’s strategy to fight domestic trafficking should be “realistic, action-oriented, capable of being implemented given current funding constraints, and user friendly” (The President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2014, p. 9).

As researchers Bunting and Quirk (2017) conclude in their study, *Contemporary Slavery as More Than Rhetorical Strategy? The Politics and Ideology of a New Political Cause*:

“Governments and other actors have been rhetorically proclaiming their official commitment to the anti-slavery cause since the nineteenth century, yet their substantive policies and practices have routinely pulled in quite different directions. This divide between rhetoric and substance is once again common to human rights activism more generally. Protecting human rights can frequently be costly and challenging, and relevant actors routinely lack the capacity or political will to follow through on their rhetorical and institutional commitments” (p. 6).

Subsequently, public apathy plays a large role in the success or lack thereof behind certain political movements—especially the anti-human trafficking movement. While it is true that many individuals denounce the industry of human trafficking, there is an evident gap between verbal support and substantive action for stopping its practice in the United States. This thesis will address the fight against human trafficking from a policy perspective—what factors cause individuals to care about policy issues such as human trafficking?

In order to understand why the illicit industry of human trafficking so difficult to fight against, one must understand the role that public opinion plays in shaping and advancing national policy. Politicians will inevitably cater their agendas to public opinion since they depend on the electoral power of voters to be in office. Such a practice has been largely predominant in the representative democracy that is the United States (Sharapov, 2014). However, this tendency means that the public’s perception of how important policy issues are strongly influences whether or not elected politicians choose to prioritize certain issues on the U.S. public policy

agenda. Accordingly, this thesis explores how public attitudes towards the human trafficking industry, specifically child victims, affects support for domestic anti-human trafficking policy.

Domestic child sex trafficking is used as a case study in this thesis to address a general research question about politics: Why do certain domestic policy issues receive more public attention than others? Why do individuals prioritize the policy issues they do? The main hypothesis of this thesis is based off of a theory outlined in the Iyengar and Kinder (1987) study: the public is more likely to care about those policy issues that personally affect themselves or have the potential to. Thus, the following study looks at who the beneficiaries of anti-trafficking policy are (trafficking victims) and the public's attitudes towards such victims. The study also explores how racial biases, other forms of prejudice, and relatability to victim populations influence one's support for U.S. domestic policy. Thus, the following experiment will use a public opinion poll to study the how the framing of child sex trafficking victims affects the public's willingness to support domestic human trafficking legislation.

The Purpose of this Thesis

The current study explores why sex trafficking runs rampant in a country that abhors its persistence. The persistence of slavery in the nation's borders contradicts the fundamental values of a liberal democracy like the United States. Why can such flagrant violations of American values—freedom, equality, and the security of basic human rights—be systemic in the United States? An issue as complex as human trafficking is already hard for the average person to comprehend, let alone fight against. The current study will attempt to answer the above question by analyzing how public attitudes are affected by the framing of policy issues in the United States.

Chapter 2: Understanding Human Trafficking

Manifestations of human trafficking are visible everywhere, unless one turns a blind eye to their widespread occurrence. These manifestations can be seen in the case of Gloria, another victim whose story is often relegated to the dark. Gloria, an 18-year old-girl, paces up and down the sidewalk, periodically stopping in front of the glass door at the gas station to stare at her emaciated reflection. Tears stream down her cheeks as she glances at a withered version of her once strong, lively self. She continues to stare at the bruises on her body, which seem to grow in purpling colors across her upper chest and arms. These blemishes depict a story of abuse in ways her voice cannot. They illuminate the pain of an industry that is often silenced and hidden to the public. *Perhaps someone will notice these bruises*, she thought.

Gloria's attention turns to the gas station corner as a run-down Mercedes approached her. *Be strong*, she thought to herself. *One day you will have enough money to leave*. Downing the remnants of her pocket-sized vodka bottle, she braves the treacherous journey across the parking lot and over to the Mercedes in her worn-down platform heels. Feet throbbing and spirits low, she crouches down to greet her "John" at the car window. *If you smile long enough, they say it can turn into a real one*, she reminded herself.

Gloria did not choose this life, nor does she continue to "choose" selling sex. She does not even retain a majority of the money she makes from her sexual services. Her profits are immediately given back to her trafficker, who coerced her to work in the "sex industry." He continues to threaten her physically if she tries to run away. He even threatens to harm her family if she does not hand over enough money to satisfy him. Such coercive tactics employed by traffickers are common in the United States sex trafficking industry (U.S. Department of

State, 2008). Will the public turn a blind eye to girls like Ava and Gloria? They both suffer from the same form of abuse—perpetual sexual exploitation.

As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this thesis is to address why the public cares (or fails to care) about certain policy issues like domestic sex trafficking. Research reveals that the public desires to see human trafficking end (Mapp 2016; Peters 2015). However, the struggle to see this dream become a reality warrants another question: Why do individuals collectively fail to *prioritize*, rather than merely express support, for the anti-human trafficking cause? Do factors like nativism and/or racial bias play a role in shaping policy preferences? How can the framing of human trafficking victims contribute to such policy preferences or even exacerbate such bias? In terms of prostituted woman, buyers are typically indifferent as to whether or not the person they are having sex with is a victim of human trafficking (Melton 2017). Such indifference confronts the public with a disturbing reality—the end to sexual exploitation needs to start with an *attitude* change.

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it. –Martin Luther King, Jr.

MLK Quotes (n.d.). In *Legacy*. Retrieved from <http://www.legacy.com/news/explore-history/article/mlk-quotes>

Failing to care about an issue as widespread and endemic as human trafficking is responsible for worsening the proliferation of an industry which thrives on ignorance and apathy. Silence on this issue is costly, for it enables traffickers and their victims to be concealed in the dark. Such circumstances are favorable for the trafficker, but not for the victim. In the dark, victims' cries are not heard and their bruises cannot be seen. Their affliction is thus left to the

backburner, and they are routinely exploited with little hope of escaping the fetters of sex trafficking.

However, without a demand for cheap sexual services, the sex trafficking industry would die. Thus, the survival of the sex trafficking industry is dependent upon the public's will to remedy the problem. To begin fighting against this issue, the public must first grapple with the reality that human trafficking exists in the United States—if one continues to remain ignorant on the issue or apathetic towards provoking change, he or she is passively allowing this industry to flourish. The public must recognize and actively fight back against this issue to help eradicate it.

Dr. Kiril Sharapov, from Central European University, concludes in her report, *Understanding Public Knowledge and Attitudes towards Trafficking in Human Beings* that “the general public remains one of the key constituents in finding a solution to reducing vulnerability of men, women and children globally to exploitation, including exploitation facilitated by means of human trafficking” (p. 7). Public attitudes are responsible for shaping the policy that legislators craft. Because of the public's voting power, they have transformative influence in the most pressing social movements; the public informs legislatures on which issues they should care about. Considering the power of public opinion in shaping policy, the public's attitudes towards human trafficking will be further explored in this thesis. However, in order to better understand the case study presented in the thesis, this chapter will explain the nuances of human trafficking and how its many forms, practices, and operations aggregate into one dominant, widely pervasive industry.

Defining Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is often referred to as “modern-day slavery” in the rhetoric of advocates, politicians, and the public. Although “slavery” is practiced differently today than it

was during the Atlantic slave trade, its past and present forms share one fundamental principle: the enslavement of an individual against his or her will, through use of debt bondage, deception, psychological coercion, physical force, and/ or intimidation. The United States officially expressed support for the anti-trafficking cause in 2000 when it sought to legally define the practice of human trafficking in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000.

Modeled after and inspired from the policies set by UN members in the Palermo Protocols⁸, the TVPA signifies an important shift in U.S. effort to eradicate human trafficking from its borders. After the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons occurred, the U.S. created this federal law the same year (Nichols, 2016). This act was monumental in that it created federal definitions for human trafficking. Such definitions equipped federal prosecutors with clearer standards on how to prosecute and convict human traffickers:

I. Federal Definitions from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000

- a.** A commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- b.** The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, for the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (2000, October 28). In U.S. Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/laws/61124.htm>

Congress, in creating these federal definitions, set the ground work for fighting against human trafficking in the United States. Human trafficking was not truly recognized as a dire

⁸ The Palermo Protocols were adopted by the United Nations to supplement the 2000 Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Nichols, 2016).

issue in need of addressing until the government created these definitions in 2000. In addition, the creation of federal definitions prompted many states to define human trafficking in their own penal codes, promoting a sort of anti-trafficking movement within the government (Melton, 2017).

As reflected in the above definitions, human trafficking includes two major forms that exist in the United States—sex trafficking and labor trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2008). Labor trafficking includes forced labor, debt bondage, and/ or domestic servitude. This form of trafficking commonly takes place in homes (via forced labor from housekeepers or nannies), agricultural fields, restaurants, factories, construction sites, industrial cleaning, and other businesses that are seeking to exploit people for cheap labor (Center for Public Policy Studies, 2013). Sex trafficking includes forced sexual acts, which are commonly found in the prostitution and pornography industries; such trafficking occurs when violence escalates and boundaries are pushed beyond consent. Sex trafficking occurs in bars/ cantinas, strip or exotic dancing clubs, truck stops, residential brothels, massage parlors, and even in private homes (Center for Public Policy Studies, 2013). However, it is important to remember that this list is not exhaustive. Sex or labor trafficking can impact anyone in any area of the country; these industries affect people of all socio-economic classes, races, and gender (Melton, 2017). Besides sex and labor trafficking, less common forms of exploitation such as trafficking for marriage, domestic servitude, child soldiers, and even trafficking for organs (known as organ trafficking) occur throughout the world in developing countries and less often in the United States (Nichols 2016; Shelley, 2010).

Despite the pervasive occurrence of both forms of human trafficking within U.S. borders, labor trafficking occurs far more frequently among the population at large than sex trafficking.

However, sex trafficking is more likely to affect minors and receives more attention from the public than labor trafficking does (Center for Public Policy Studies, 2013; Mapp, 2016; Texas Young Lawyers Association, 2019). Again, domestic sex trafficking is explored in the case study of this thesis to address overall attitudes towards U.S. anti-trafficking policy.

The Difference Between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking and prostitution are not mutually exclusive practices; the two are intricately linked. Both practices fuel the sexual exploitation of women (and sometimes men) in modern-day society. However, domestic sex trafficking in the United States is most commonly trafficking for prostitution (Ray, 2011).

The argument is often made that women have full control over their bodies when they “choose” to sell sex as prostitutes. However, it does not matter if a woman entered the sex industry “willingly.” If an adult consented to have sex, and he or she is later subjected to physical threat or psychological manipulation in order to perform sexual acts, he or she has become a sex trafficking victim (U.S. Department of State, 2018). This is why researchers conclude that many cases of prostitution quickly turn into sex trafficking cases (Nichols, 2016). If an element of force, fraud, or coercion is involved in a sex act, as enumerated in the TVPA definitions, the situation is now classified as human trafficking under law (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000).

To make matters worse, traffickers often profit by sending their victims out to scour street corners and search for buyers of sex. They routinely force their victims to perform in online pornography videos to which they do not consent. Such videos are readily consumed by the American public and are *not* frequently viewed as instances of forced sex work (Melton, 2017). Women in pornography videos are often called “prostitutes,” “porn stars,” or “sex

workers.” They look like individuals who “choose” a life of sex work. However, they are often immensely deprived of any choice in their sex work, creating the illusion that they are working of their own volition.

In fact, all levels of sex work have trafficked women. This means that victims of human trafficking can be found in escort services, massage parlors, strip joints, bars, and brothels (Shelley, 2010). Social workers and law enforcement agents, who work with at-risk victims, form a general consensus on the issue—most of the women we view to willingly engage in the sale of their bodies are not doing so willingly (Raymond and Hughes, 2001). Researchers Janice Raymond and Donna Hughes (2001) found in their report that “the majority of law enforcement (76%) and social service providers, advocates and researchers (71%) confirmed that a large number of women were not free to leave the sex industry” (p. 9). Nonetheless, traffickers are skilled at trapping their victims in a perpetual cycle of exploitation through a variety of means; alcohol or drug dependencies, economic dependency, emotional attachment, threats of physical or sexual violence to the victims or their family members, stolen identifying documents (such as driver’s license, passports, etc.), and threatened exposure of one’s pornographic films (Raymond and Hughes, 2001).

Understanding that human trafficking can occur in prostitution or pornography settings is important for one to recognize the prevalence of human trafficking in American society—human trafficking affects a larger segment of society than most people realize. Kirsta Melton (2017) concludes in her report that the “wholesale migration of the sex trade from the street corners to the back alleys of urban centers to the computer screens...has resulted in exponential economies of scale for the sellers and normalization of sex buying for prospective buyers” (p. 3). Society increasingly tolerates the idea of purchasing sex, and the technological age we currently live in

exacerbates online sexual exploitation. From dating apps to online advertisements, both traffickers and victims alike have infiltrated some of the most common websites and applications we use. Victims are unfortunately becoming more accessible for consumption in this technologically oriented world. Furthermore, Melton speaks of a fundamental reason why human trafficking is so deeply rooted in the United States. The proliferation of the sex industry across the national landscape and even on our phone screens leads to a sort of “normalization” of commercial sex. What many fail to realize, however, is that such sex is neither consensual nor confined to well-regulated porn industries or internet advertisements. Its practice is forceful, endemic, and painful to uproot in a society that largely accepts it.

The Difficulty in Fighting this Illegal Industry (3 Reasons)

The following section elaborates on three reasons why the human trafficking industry is so difficult to fight in the United States. The obstacles towards eradicating this illegal industry are great and the ability to combat such obstacles is contingent upon understanding exactly what they are. The follow summaries will serve as a guide to explain why the industry of human trafficking runs rampant in the United States.

1. The Difficulty of Illuminating an Invisible, Underground Industry

Human Trafficking is an industry that thrives in the darkness. Due to its secretive nature, no accurate estimates exist for the prevalence of human trafficking. In fact, many U.S. government agencies refuse to publish prevalence estimates due to their inaccuracy—and those that do publish them offer wildly different estimates (Nichols, 2016).

In 2012, the U.S. Department of State estimated that there were roughly 15,000-18,000 victims of sex trafficking victims in a given year (Nichols, 2016). However, the Central Intelligence Agency raised this estimate to a projected 50,000 annual victims (Nichols, 2016).

The Polaris Project, one of the largest national anti-human trafficking non-profits in the U.S. estimates that there are roughly 100,000-300,000 child sex trafficking victims each year (Nichols, 2016; Ray, 2011). It remains clear that there are no widely accepted estimates for instances of domestic sex trafficking in the United States. There are a variety of methodological challenges that make instances of sex trafficking hard to accurately quantify. These challenges include identifying a hidden victim population, understanding what human trafficking looks like in the developed world, and differentiating sex trafficking from other similar crimes like prostitution or domestic assault (Melton, 2017).

The extent to which human trafficking plagues the United States is rather impossible to calculate because the available statistics on victim estimates measure different groups of people. Existing statistics lack the coherency needed to quantify the number of people who are, in total, trafficked in the United States. A part of this problem lies in the tendency of researchers to isolate different instances of trafficking—estimates often pertain to international victims who were trafficked into the United States or domestic born victims who fell prey to this industry while living inside of the United States (Ray, 2011). Contriving separate estimates for the number of domestic and international victims inhibits the goal of finding a cohesive estimate that encapsulates all trafficking occurrences in the United States. As Raymond and Hughes (2001) conclude, the separation of trafficking instances is problematic because it “create[s] the impression that trafficking is an immigration crime rather than a human rights violation.” (qtd. in Ray, 2011, p. 214).

Denise Brennan from Georgetown University, after extensively researching trafficked persons, wrote in a paper that “perhaps nothing is more disputed than the numbers of persons who are trafficked world-wide and to the United States” (Brennan, 2005). In order to fully

understand why quantifying the number of trafficking victims is so difficult, one must understand how the nature of the crime affects human trafficking's visibility. For a crime to be identified by law enforcement as well as the public at large, individuals must be able to correctly identify the crime. Human trafficking is extremely deceptive by nature, and individuals will probably not see its occurrence unless they are adamantly looking for it.

Both sex and labor trafficking hide behind business fronts that appear to be legitimate. Traffickers use clever strategies to outwit those who are looking for them. From strip clubs and escort services to nail salons and restaurants, human traffickers make use of a plethora of businesses across the U.S. landscape to run their illicit business (Polaris, 2019; Raymond and Hughes, 2001). Traffickers are skilled at using false-front businesses to mask the true nature of their work—specific cases in Florida and Texas demonstrate this. In Florida, traffickers were discovered setting up make-shift bars as a front for hidden brothels where women were forcibly sold for sex (Nichols, 2016). In Texas, false-front spas and other clubs have provided a front for the same illegal practices as those in Florida (Nichols, 2016). In the eyes of the human trafficker, the possibilities are limitless; they may operate in almost any environment deemed well suited for disguise and corruption.

Sex trafficking has become more accessible and visible to the public due to technological advancement. The expansion of the internet consequently exacerbates sex tourism; websites like Craigslist and Backpage are notorious for posting advertisements of trafficked women in their “adult” sections. However, the U.S. government recently shut down Backpage in April 2018 and has committed to fighting the problem of online sexual exploitation (Savage and Williams, 2018). The Trump administration signed the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) into law the same month, in April 2018. SESTA makes companies liable for the content posted on

their websites by third parties—such as human trafficking advertisements. This advancement is crucial to note since the majority of trafficking victims in the United States are advertised online (Portnoff et al., 2017). Human trafficking is still a problem for a nation that tolerates modern-day slavery, whether victims are trapped behind the façade of a “premiere escort service” or a risqué Craigslist advertisement.

Despite the variety of mediums through which traffickers can sell women, most of them are uniform in the way they conduct their business transactions. Essentially, traffickers take every precaution so they do not leave a trail of evidence that could convict them. They book hotel rooms under the names of their victims and force them to post their own online advertisements. Human traffickers avoid associating their name with any illegal transactions (Nichols, 2016). When human traffickers enter legitimate businesses such as hotels, they commonly pay off the staff in order to create a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that keeps any objectors silent (Mapp, 2016). Researchers have thus concluded that most victims of human trafficking remain undetected by law enforcement and most instances of human trafficking go by unnoticed or unreported (Brennan 2005; Farrell and Fahy, 2009; Melton, 2017; Nichols, 2016; Peters, 2015; Sharapov, 2014). As Raymond and Hughes (2001) put it, “Sex enterprise owners rarely are involved in the daily or frontline operations, and may depend upon many layers of people to run the business.” (p. 7)

Unfortunately, “The relatively low number of identified victims and offenders has fueled criticism of anti-trafficking policies and cast doubts on the extent of the human trafficking problem” both internationally and domestically (Farrell and Fahy, 2009, p. 617). The secret, back-door activities within the human trafficking industry results in a population of trafficking victims who are often unseen and unrecognized by both the public and law enforcement agents

alike. Additionally, it is hard for civilians to identify situations that may look like trafficking if they fear they may be confusing the situation with another type of crime (like prostitution, kidnapping, or domestic/ sexual assault). The lack of clear standards for how one ought to respond to human trafficking instances also creates a perplexing situation for onlookers of human trafficking. Onlookers must use their own judgement to decide whether or not they are witnessing something that can be classified as human trafficking; even law enforcement agents admit difficulty in identifying instances of sex or labor trafficking (Melton, 2017)

2. The Struggle of Law Enforcement

Traffickers are smart enough to lurk behind the shadows of a criminal operation that would severely penalize them if they were apprehended and later convicted. Unfortunately, the likelihood of a trafficker being arrested and convicted on human trafficking charges is relatively small in the U.S. criminal justice system—526 individuals were convicted for human trafficking in the 2019 fiscal year, which is the highest number of convictions the U.S. Department of Justice has ever documented (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). This number is relatively small when comparing it to the thousands of estimated victims of human trafficking within the United States (Nichols, 2016).

There are a variety of reasons why traffickers lead their illegal enterprise with relative impunity. Those tasked with identifying instances of trafficking, such as law enforcement and social workers, lack the requisite knowledge and experience to correctly identify human trafficking. Many individuals fail to recognize what human trafficking is and what it looks like in society. This is a struggle that law enforcement wrestles with daily—identifying instances of human trafficking and convicting traffickers of their crimes. Government officials, policemen,

attorneys, and the public are not well versed in the intricacies of an industry as complex as human trafficking.

Denise Brennan (2005) from Georgetown University explains, “The learning curve about trafficked persons...is steep, even for organizations that have experience assisting trafficked persons, since as service providers and trauma counsellors report, each case of trafficking has distinct characteristics” (p. 40). As discussed in the introduction, human trafficking has no dominant mode of exploitation—it occurs in every state, it can affect any type of vulnerable person, and it has no “typical-looking” perpetrator or victim. Kirsta Melton (2017) from the Texas Office of the Attorney General concludes that “[human trafficking] impacts people of every age, race, color, gender, ethnicity, religion, and nation around the globe” (p. 2). When traffickers target their victims, they do not discriminate among gender, race, or ethnic lines. They target anyone who is deemed to be vulnerable in their eyes. Vulnerable populations include the mentally ill, physical disabled, sexually abused, substance abusers, and runaway children (U.S. Department of State, 2008). There are also no easy-to-identify characteristics of a trafficker’s business that can *definitively* set it apart from a legitimate one. Human trafficking operates behind a façade of legitimacy, making it nearly impossible for someone to detect its presence without years of training and experience in the field.

Due to the variability and hidden nature of the practice, human trafficking is not easily identified by *anyone*. Human trafficking reports may be confused with prostitution, extortion, kidnapping, sexual assault or other similar crimes (Melton, 2017). The lack of accurate reporting and identification subsequently leads to many misclassifications of human trafficking cases. When a trafficking case is handed over to a state or federal prosecutor, it is seldom marked as a trafficking case. Instead, it is usually classified as a compelling prostitution, aggravated

kidnapping, domestic violence, or a variety of other violent and/ or sexually related crimes (Nichols, 2016).

When misclassification is not the case, there is still a likely chance that a trafficker will not be charged with human trafficking. Prosecutors frequently opt to charge the defendant with a lesser crime so their chances of winning the case are optimized. Their rationale behind this strategy is that they would rather have a criminal locked behind bars for a “lesser” crime than to be free, roaming around in society. Thus, if a federal prosecutor does not believe with reasonable certainty that they can convict a trafficker, they will most likely prosecute the criminal based on a related, lesser crime like kidnapping or aggravated assault (Nichols, 2016). In doing so, law enforcement officers are gambling with the fate of a trafficker, whose culpability is never fully acknowledged by the court in the form of a human trafficking conviction.

In the courtroom, there are many other challenges that keep human trafficking conviction rates almost non-existent. The failure of human trafficking survivors to self-identify as victims is a major obstacle to gathering eyewitness testimony against traffickers. Human trafficking victims may refuse to see themselves as victims if they are “in love” with their trafficker and do not understand the psychological coercion and manipulation employed on them. Their feelings of allegiance and attachment to their trafficker, known as a “trauma bond,” compel victims to defend men who rape, assault, and emotionally abuse them (Nichols, 2016). Other times, victims may be too fearful to identify as victims. Fear may arise when a victim’s trafficker or accomplice sends explicit threats to his or her family. Traffickers’ use of discouraging tactics is often successful in silencing their victims, whose testimony is tantamount to their conviction (Brennan 43; Melton 2017; Farrel et al. 2012).

Victims may also accept the abuse they endure, or for some reason, believe they deserve it. In other cases, the housing and care victims receive by their trafficker, although it is probably subpar, could be an improvement from their previous living situation (Melton, 2017). Such may be the case for domestic run-away victims of familial violence, sexual assault, and other domestic turmoil. International victims may also feel this way, especially if they were promised a “better life” in America.

Victims may fail to identify as victims if they believe they will be criminalized by the justice system (Farrel et al., 2012). Many victims of human trafficking view the police as the enemy. Once indebted to a trafficker, they see no liberty in being imprisoned in a jail cell and labeled as an offender. To make matters worse, domestic trafficking victims often have a record of prostitution, which makes their fear of being criminalized even greater. Victims’ fear and distrust of the police is heightened even more when they believe that the police will not believe their stories if they come forward. Such a problem is pervasive in the fight to convict human traffickers (Brennan, 2005). The result of this fear leaves prosecutors with few attempted charges of human trafficking and a very low conviction rate for those cases that are tried.

The United States, despite its effort to combat human trafficking with the passage of TPVA in 2000, continues to struggle with recognizing sex trafficking as a pressing issue in need of more attention and resources. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) did not begin the collection of human trafficking data until the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program was established in 2013. Because of this late implementation of uniform crime reporting, many states did not have human trafficking listed as a type of offense in their annual crime reports until 2013 or 2014 (Texas Department of Public Safety, 2018). In other words, the classification of human trafficking as a crime did not even exist in all states until five years ago. Although the TPVA set

the groundwork for much needed change, the United States is evidently still working to acknowledge the problem of human trafficking within its borders.

Farrel et al. (2012) concludes that, “Despite the attention and resources directed at combating this crime, reports indicate that fewer cases of human trafficking have been identified and prosecuted than would be expected based on estimates of the problem.” For a rising issue in the United States, there is a lackluster prosecutorial response in terms of trafficking convictions. The numbers of federal trafficking convictions each year are in the low hundreds, while the cases of trafficking are in the hundreds of thousands. The Bureau of Justice Statistic released a report in 2018 on the number federal human trafficking prosecutions from 2000 to 2015. The report concluded that the number of human trafficking defendants who were convicted and sent to prison increased from 132 in 2000 to 759 in 2015 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). Although the numbers of convictions are increasing, it is possible that the number of victims (and the occurrence of human trafficking) is likely increasing as well (Shelley, 2010), countering the fact that progress is actually occurring.

A consensus has been made among advocates and researchers studying how to remedy the aforementioned problems; the failure to properly identify victims, misclassification of the crime, and dearth of prosecutions in proportion to the prevalence of the problem. Those working with at-risk victim populations need to be equipped on how to properly identify and report human trafficking instances. As of right now, Farrel et al. (2012) surmises that “law enforcement agencies lack resources that are devoted to training and equipping their staff on how to best investigate and handle human trafficking cases. Yet, the lack of resources may be due to the “general failure of local communities to prioritize the problem of human trafficking and the subsequent low prioritization of such crimes by law enforcement agencies” (Farrel et al. 2012, p.

6). Such a failure to prioritize the issue signifies that the shortcomings of law enforcement in dealing with human trafficking cases may be a result of public indifference towards the issue. Those issues which the public care about most are more likely to receive increased attention, funding, and resources (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Thus, the fight to end domestic sex trafficking may need to start with an attitude change.

3. The Spread of Stereotypes and Erroneous Information

Harriet Laidlaw, a suffragist and anti-trafficking campaigner, announced to an audience of women activists in the early 1900s, “remember ladies, it is more important to be aroused than it is to be accurate. Apathy is more of a crime than exaggeration in dealing with [white slavery]” (Soderlund, 2013, p. 18). Laidlaw believed that sensationalizing public policy issues could be a positive strategy when used correctly. She believed that exaggeration could garner public support for crises that would otherwise lack attention. Perhaps heightening the shock value of a given issue such as human trafficking will help root out the apathy that may stand in the way of social and political progress, according to advocates like Laidlaw.

Adhering to Laidlaw’s perspective, current day media and public speakers frequently use sensationalized images of little girls when depicting or speaking about sex trafficking. Farrell and Fahy (2009) concluded in their research, “Anti-trafficking advocates have been accused of overstating the magnitude and harms of trafficking and misrepresenting the experiences of women in prostitution by relying on simplistic ‘narratives of female powerlessness and childlike sexual vulnerability’ to garner public support for anti-trafficking programs and legislation” (p. 617). In contrast to Laidlaw’s theory, many scholars and researchers agree that adopting sensational discourse is actually *detrimental* to the fight against human trafficking. They claim that we cannot begin to fight against a complex problem like human trafficking if we do not truly

understand it (Latonero, 2011; Melton, 2017). The proliferation of sensational iconography of human trafficking comes at the expense of accurately depicting its reality.

Researchers agree that the dominant discourse on sex trafficking, as advanced by the media, paints a shocking yet stereotypical picture of the “ideal” trafficking victim in the United States. Headlines are followed by images of little girls shackled to dark basement cellars or emaciated victims held in bondage by overpowering male perpetrators. This dominant picture is what ultimately informs the public’s knowledge about what human trafficking looks like in the United States (Peters, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sharapov, 2014). However, when this dominant yet inaccurate depiction is reiterated to the public, it feeds a dangerous stereotype that easily misinforms the public: all instances of human trafficking do *not* necessarily conform to the aforementioned, highly popularized features dispelled by the media—older male perpetrators, vulnerable little girls, basement cellars, extremely sexualized situations, and poverty-stricken climates.

Alicia Peters from the University of New England elaborates on the U.S. construction of an “ideal” victim in her book, *Responding to Human Trafficking: Sex, Gender, and Culture in the Law*:

"The association of trafficking only with the most extreme cases of victimization and with prostitution sustains the view that there is only one type of victim. State sponsored policies and reports, as well as media coverage...often rely on uncritical representations of victims because they rouse public support...The public wants a dramatic story so that its intervention can complete a fairy-tale-like rescue...The construction of a trafficking victim who appeals to the public and policymakers must be sexually blameless...an unwilling victim who is in need of

rescue—that is, who was brought to the United States to engage in prostitution against her will." (Peters, 2015, p. 13-14)

Peters explicates the ways in which anti-trafficking advocates spin the human trafficking narrative in the United States. She claims advocates provoke a sort of white savior complex; a need for the United States to take care of the foreign-born girls who have been trafficked across the U.S. border and need rescue from their abusers. In creating this dominant narrative, advocates are misrepresenting the victim population to comprise one particular identity, when in fact there is no “ideal” victim. “Ideal victims,” Peters affirms, “are weak, vulnerable, defenseless, blameless, and worthy of sympathy and compassion” (2015, p. 14). This means that *anyone* can be a victim of human trafficking if they are vulnerable enough.

By referencing the above stereotypes in their rhetoric, journalists and political advocates are limiting the public’s understanding of the problem by defining its operations within a very strict, narrow frame. Those who speak about human trafficking such as political actors, journalists, and other advocates, often create incorrect stereotypes about this illegal industry when they talk about human trafficking in a dominant frame (Sharapov, 2014). This frame consists of who the victims are, who the traffickers are, and how the industry operates in our society. The creation of a dominant frame, however, ends up simplifying a complex issue into its most rudimentary elements, creating a counterintuitive, binary way of thinking. If the public believes that sex trafficking only affects a particular group of people or a certain area of the country, the public may be less inclined to view the issue as something that affects the average American. Will this narrow way of framing the issue cause the public to care less about domestic human trafficking?

The current study seeks to explore this issue further and ask: how does the ability to connect with the perceived victim population affect the public's willingness to care about and prioritize the issue of domestic child sex trafficking in the United States? This issue is important to address since policymaking is directly influenced by public opinion and attitudes (Sharapov, 2014; Nichols, 2016).

When relying on sensationalized stereotypes to inform oneself on what human trafficking looks like, one is going to make presumptions on sex trafficking's occurrence based on untrue stereotypes. Thus, a potential victim, as seen by a bystander or police officer, may only be recognized by an onlooker if the victim fits the typical "persona" of a trafficking victim. The dialogue that informs the American public of who victims are is severely flawed and unrepresentative of the actual victim population. This dialogue becomes problematic when it skews the idea of who a victim is and how we can go about helping them. As Peters (2015) explains, "funding follows heartstrings" (p. 14). By this, Peters means that advocates who are looking for funding or candidates who are looking for more political leverage do so by tugging at the heartstrings of their audiences. They attempt to rouse public sympathy for the causes they champion by framing the issue as one the American public should care about.

Chapter 3: Review of the Literature

Research Question Revisited

As noted earlier, the present study is aimed to address the following research question: How does the framing of child sex trafficking victims affect the public's willingness to support the anti-trafficking cause in the United States? This question, overall, helps to answer a general question about public attitudes and how they influence national policy. The present research uses the case study of human trafficking to answer the question of why the public chooses to care about certain policy issues more than others.

Literature Review

A problem to date is that minimal research has been done on the topic of human trafficking in the United States, especially concerning public attitudes towards the issue and those whom are affected by it (Brennan, 2005; Ray, 2011). However, research that exists on human trafficking often addresses its general framing in the media. Such research is helpful for understanding how human trafficking is portrayed in society and how its framing influences the public's ability to accurately understand the issue. However, past studies do not focus on how *victims* are specifically framed and how one's relatability and/or bias to the victim population may influence their support for the issue.

The question of why individuals choose to care about certain political issues more than others has been explored in past research. Specifically, researchers have devoted ample resources to address how people form impressions on policy issues. Such studies highlight the interaction between one's relatability to a problem and their expressed support for it. Iyengar and Kinder (1987), in their study on U.S. television news coverage, conclude that individuals only care about problems that personally affect themselves, or ones that can potentially affect them. The study

found that one's identity with and relatability to a given problem increases one's willingness to view the issue as important; African Americans were much more likely than whites to view the civil rights issue as important, older participants were much more likely than younger ones to view social security as important, etc. (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987).

If individuals tend to only care about those issues affecting themselves, they may be more likely to support legislation or political issues that favor themselves—this is a fundamental theory explored in this thesis, as outlined by Iyengar and Kinder (1987). Before diving further into this matter, it is important to note the variety of explanations scholars have attributed to this bias in policy preferences. Sirin et al. (2016) addresses how empathy is a powerful means of shaping public opinion and domestic policy. Individuals are more empathetic towards individuals whom they share group membership with. By closely identifying with the experiences of a target group, one may be more inclined to care about this group and prioritize their needs above those of dissimilar groups (Sirin et al., 2016). This finding remained consistent through their analysis of attitudes towards minority groups in American society. Sirin et al. (2016) found that group empathy is the strongest when historically marginalized groups were asked to sympathize with the needs of other oppressed groups, like undocumented immigrants. That is, empathy towards a given group of people is highest when individuals can relate to the population (i.e., through shared historical experiences of oppression).

The above research reveals a further insight in the study of biases that affect policy preferences—individuals are not entirely self-interested in their preferences. They often support policies that are targeted at groups of people who share similar experiences, even if the individuals are not a part of their specific group (i.e., minorities may support legislation that affects other minority outgroups). In order to better understand why individuals care about the

policy issues they do, researches have begun to look at the intersection between shared group identity and racism. The formation of attitudes towards target groups can play a negative role for dissimilar, outgroup populations when prejudice is involved. Overall, researchers posit that both perceived dissimilarity between individuals and another group of people is an important factor that can lead to prejudice—especially subtle prejudice (Pettigrew and Meertens, 1995). The subtly prejudiced tend to exaggerate actual differences between themselves and the outgroup, leading to increased beliefs of dissimilarity. (Pettigrew and Meertens, 1995). Such prejudice, although subtle, becomes problematic when it leads to a decreased willingness of the public to alleviate the plight of marginalized groups through policy support.

According to Sullivan et al. (1982), a ‘prejudiced attitude’ combines stereotyped beliefs about a group of people and negative evaluations about them. This sort of attitude creates a disposition to act negatively towards this group. Negative attitudes towards a body of people is common when individuals allow an outgroup’s minority status to inform their public policy decisions. Migetz (2004) reveals in his study that racial minorities are particularly prone to the ill effects of negative racial attitudes in current day society. The effects of such racism, whether subtle or blatant, can be seen in fewer job promotions, pay raises, and educational opportunities allocated to racial minorities. Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) further asserts that these biases are likely the result of viewing individuals in a way that exaggerates cultural differences between themselves and the outgroup population. This exaggeration subsequently compels an individual to view outgroup or minority members as acting in “unacceptable” ways. This viewpoint encourages negative emotional responses towards such a group (such as prioritizing policies that address *other* groups of people).

The following thesis studies how a negative emotional response to outgroup, minority populations may affect one's willingness to support policy aimed to alleviate the plight of such minorities (see "Nita" frame in Appendix I, p. 98). Racism, sexism, and classism all play a role in exacerbating human trafficking in America (Mapp, 2016). Accordingly, racism and other biases affect the public's attitudes towards victims of human trafficking as such victims are often viewed as inferior or unworthy of attention. In fact, "racism increases the vulnerability of minority women and girls to sexual exploitation, and keeps them trapped in the sex industry through limiting their alternative opportunity structures and paths to safely exit the trade" (Ray, 2011, p. 216). Prevailing research, as noted above, elaborates on the role that racism plays in exacerbating the mistreatment of trafficking victims. Accordingly, it becomes important to study the public's view of sex trafficking victims through an analysis of victim framing. Such a view may affect the government's attempt to help these victims via anti-trafficking legislation.

Schneider and Ingram (1993) reiterate how the support given to public policy imparts a message to the benefactors of such legislation. That is, public policy informs individuals about who the government deems to be most worthy of support. It instructs the public on whose needs are the most legitimate in society and condones those groups of people who they create legislation for. Thus, the following study intertwines the topic of public policy, victim framing, and public attitudes towards the issue of human trafficking. In doing so, the present study addresses how the public perception of sex trafficking victims specifically influences levels of support for anti-trafficking policy.

In all, the failure of one to readily identify with another group of people (an "outgroup" population), combined with prejudiced attitudes towards a dissimilar group, compels individuals to care less about the problems of "other people" and more about the problems of like-minded, or

ethnically homogeneous individuals. Such conclusions are reaffirmed by the aforementioned Iyengar and Kinder (1987) study, which outlined that people are inherently self-interested in their policy preferences. Individuals make decisions that, first and foremost, secure their own livelihoods. However, individuals are still responsive to issues that affect other people, even those whom they cannot easily relate to, but such responsiveness is often delayed and secondary to the matters concerning the private individual.

Thus, when looking at the issue of human trafficking, it becomes important to analyze how the public views victims of human trafficking—are these individuals whom the public can readily relate to (increasing the likelihood that such legislation will have widespread public support)? Are these victims' members of marginalized communities who suffer from the effects of historical racism? None of the aforementioned studies address how racism or relatability to human trafficking victims specifically affects support for anti-trafficking policies, a major question explored by the present thesis. Previous literature, in effect, allows us to see why humans fundamentally care about certain issues more than others, through the development of empathy and relatability to a victim population—but these studies also elucidate the negative effects that racism plays in bolstering support for recipients of legislation. The following study uses such precedent to explore the more nuanced policy issue of domestic child sex trafficking.

According to Ray (2011), the influence of prejudice in shaping the anti-trafficking fight is seldom researched or even talked about:

“[Trafficking] is rarely analyzed from the perspective of race discrimination. There has been little discussion of whether race, or other forms of discrimination, contributes to the likelihood of women and girls becoming victims of trafficking... Even though the

associations between contemporary sex trafficking and racism are not immediately clear, they are nonetheless undeniable” (Ray 2011, p. 215).

Thus, in moving forward, research should start analyzing how the perception of human trafficking victims relates to public support for the issue. The following study does this through the analysis of framing sex trafficking victims to the public.

Although the phenomena of framing can be analyzed in a variety of ways across numerous disciplines, there has been a growing interest in academia for studying human trafficking framing—especially framing espoused by the media. Starting at a rudimentary level, frames are defined as cognitive structures through which humans perceive the world. At a subconscious level, frames dictate how humans act based on their interpretation of the events around them (Farrell and Fahy, 2009). Farrell and Fahy (2009) found that the way human trafficking is framed by the media determines how individuals think about the issue and how policy makers craft legislation in lieu of such frames. In particular, they concluded that defining the problem of human trafficking as a crime issue leads to an increase in laws aimed towards mitigating the problem of human trafficking through the criminal justice system. Similarly, when the media defined or framed the issue of human trafficking in terms of a national security threat, policy makers were more adamant about passing anti-human trafficking legislation concerning international victims and relevant policies (Farrell and Fahy, 2009).

The varied ways human trafficking is framed—as a crime issue, an immigration issue, a national security threat, etc.—affects how the public both perceives and responds to the problem. Such framing will inherently influence how legislators or “other powerful stakeholders” respond to the issue with appropriate legislation (Farrell and Fahy, 2009; Sharapov, 2015). Such findings are important for understanding one fundamental concept—the framing of human trafficking is

related to the forming of public opinions on the issue and how legislators respond to this national crisis. However, prevailing studies on human trafficking framing do not analyze *who* the industry is perceived to affect, i.e., who the public believes its victims to be (racial minorities, international victims, and/or victims whom the majority can relate to etc.).

Peters (2015) elaborates on the importance of studying victimization in issues like human trafficking. His study that lightly addressed the topic of victim terminology on public attitudes about human trafficking. Although the lens of gender and sexuality have mostly profoundly shaped views on trafficking, the study argues, it is not the only possible approach, and assumptions about violence, crime, and victimization may also frame how the phenomenon is commonly understood (Peters, 2015). The present study, instead of focusing on gender and sexuality framing, will focus on where the Peter (2015) study left off—analyzing the effect of framing for child victims of sex trafficking.

Studying victim framing is important because “those who acquire the status of 'ideal victim' may attract mass levels of media attention, generate collective mourning on a near global scale, and drive significant social change to social and criminal justice policy and practice” (Greer, 2007, p. 22). Furthermore, “the definition of who may legitimately claim victim status is profoundly influenced by social divisions including class, race, [and] ethnicity...” (Greer, 2007, p. 21), implicating the need for racism to be analyzed in the present study.

Prior literature indicates how one’s personal beliefs, values, and sympathy with a given policy issue deeply affect whether or not one supports the said issue. Accordingly, there is a multitude of ways in which the public describes the issue of human trafficking, contributing to the plethora of frames used to identify, talk, and think about the issue. The present study will seek to address how, based on previous research, individuals interpret the problem of human

trafficking in the United States—is this an issue that can affect the average American, or one that is relegated to marginalized or minority individuals? Sharapov (2014) findings reveal that individuals commonly fail to recognize that human trafficking is a problem that could personally affect their lives, despite their ability to perceive the issue as a problem for their country. This study looks to how the portrayal of human trafficking victims influences one’s ability to identify with and subsequently support (or not support) anti-human trafficking question. Human trafficking is portrayed in two ways in the current study: as an industry that affects foreign born, minority girls like “Nita” in the minority identity condition (see Appendix I, p. 98 for “Nita” graphic), or native-born girls like “Ava” in the majority identity condition (see Appendix I, p. 98 for “Ava” graphic).

In light of the following studies, the study will answer the following research question: How does the framing of child sex trafficking victims affect the public’s willingness to care about and express support for the domestic policy issue? The primary hypothesis is as follows: **1)** I predict that the participants in the majority identity condition will express higher levels of support for the issue of human trafficking than participants in the minority identity condition; this is due to the consensus on past research, which concludes that individuals are inherently self-interested and prioritize their own needs above others. I have two secondary hypotheses based on the analysis of the control group with each of the treatment conditions. **2)** I predict that participants in the majority identity condition will express higher levels of support for the issue of human trafficking than participants in the control condition. **3)** I also predict that participants in the minority identity condition will express higher levels of support for the issue of human trafficking than participants in the control condition.

Chapter 4: The Study

Methodology

Participants

The participants consisted of a sample of 776 college students from the University of Texas at Austin. Of these 776 students, 257 students were in the control condition, 256 were in the majority identity condition, and 263 were in the minority identity condition.

Materials

- Online Qualtrics survey

Design

The experiment used a 3x1 between-subjects design. The independent variable, the framing of child sex trafficking victims, was operationalized by the sex trafficking graphic and information displayed to each participant in Phase 1 of the survey (the policy summary section, which the participants were instructed to read before answering the survey questions). There are two identity conditions which manipulate the framing of human trafficking victims in this section—the minority identity condition and the majority identity condition.

In the minority identity condition, the human trafficking graphic depicted a foreign-born girl from Honduras with dark hair and eyes (see Appendix 1 for graphic). The caption “Meet Nitza, a native from Honduras” along with the statistic “She is one of the 200,000-300,000 foreign-born girls who are trafficked every year into the U.S.” was displayed across the picture. The minority identity condition also contained information in the policy background that stated: “Although human trafficking can affect anyone, the primary victims of human trafficking in the U.S. are foreign-born, international individuals.” This was the only manipulated information in the policy background paragraph for human trafficking. Such a display was meant to frame

human trafficking as a problem that predominantly affects those who are in a minority community (i.e., those who were not born in the United States, racial and ethnic minorities, etc.)—that is it is called the “minority identity” treatment.

In the majority identity condition, the human trafficking graphic depicted a blue eyed, blond-haired girl—this picture was meant to depict the average, native-born American girl (see Appendix 1 for graphic). The caption “Meet Ava, a girl from Cedar Park, Texas” along with the statistic “She is one of the 200,000 to 300,000 American-born girls who are trafficked every year in the U.S.” was displayed across the picture. The majority identity condition also contained information in the policy background that said: “Although human trafficking can affect anyone, the primary victims of human trafficking in the U.S. are native born, American citizens.” Such a display was meant to frame human trafficking as a problem that predominantly affects those who are in the majority community in American society (i.e., those who were born in the United States, Caucasians, etc.)—that is why it is called the “majority identity” treatment. Such a display was meant to frame human trafficking as a problem that predominantly affects (or has the potential to affect) the average American citizen, not individuals who are trafficked into the United States from abroad (as is the case in the minority identity condition).

Those in the control condition will not be exposed to the policy summaries in Phase 1 of the survey. Because of this, these respondents will not be exposed to any child sex trafficking frames; they will not be asked to read about any of the policy issues nor will they be exposed to any graphics about them. The respondents in the control condition will start directly at Phase 2 of the study, where they will be asked about their support for various domestic policy issues in the United States. This condition is exactly the same as the minority and majority conditions, absent the policy summary section. The point of the control group is to record a baseline for human

trafficking policy support among the general public. This baseline will provide a solid point of comparison with which the study analyzes how the manipulations in the two different identity conditions will potentially influence the respondents' answers.

The dependent variable measured was the respondent's willingness to support the policy issue of domestic human trafficking in Phase 2 of the study. This variable was operationally defined in three different ways—through **(1)** a budget proposal simulation, **(2)** an issue importance question, and **(3)** a class interest question.

The respondents first read a hypothetical situation regarding the U.S. congressional budget. They were asked to rank which of out of four policy issues deserved the remaining congressional allocations for the 2019 fiscal year. They ranked each of the issues from 1 to 4 in level of priority. This question measured the respondent's willingness to prioritize the issue of human trafficking above other relevant policy issues listed. Next, the participants were also asked, "How important are the following U.S. domestic policy issues to you?" They had to rate each policy issue on its perceived level of importance to them (ranked on a Likert scale of 1 to 5). Lastly the respondents were asked, in order to measure further interest in the policy issues, "Would you be interested in signing up for a course at UT on any of the following topics (if the class could easily fit into your degree plan)? Please mark all that apply." These three questions were meant to measure the respondents' willingness to support, but more importantly to prioritize, the issue of human trafficking in their lives. The last question about taking a course on the relevant subject was meant to measure the subject's interest and level of engagement with the policy issue—are they willing to do more than verbally express their support and take actions in their own lives?

Procedure

Students from the University of Texas at Austin were recruited by their professors, who sent out a link to access the Qualtrics survey (full survey is in Appendix 1). The sample population, for the most part, came from lower division government classes, with students from all majors and disciplines participating. The students used either their mobile phones or laptops to fill out the survey once opening the link. None of the respondents were given money or other incentives to fill out the survey. Each participant who agreed to participate was randomly assigned to one of the three conditions via a random assignment generator in the Qualtrics software.

Phases of the Survey

Phase 1: Policy Summary Section

Phase 2: Measures of Support for the issue of Human Trafficking

Phase 3: Demographic Question Section

At the start of the survey, the participant was asked to sign a consent form. After giving their electronic signature, the participant was introduced to the survey and asked to “read the following background information on policy issues in the United States” and “carefully consider all descriptions and pictures.” After reading this prompt, Phase 1 of the survey commenced, which exposed the participants to 3-4 sentence policy summaries of four different U.S. policy issues: public education, human trafficking, hepatitis C, and immigration in the United States. However, the only policy summary that was manipulated was human trafficking. Each policy summary was written as non-partisan as possible, in a way that framed the issue in the context of different viewpoints and potential strategies for combatting such issues. These summaries introduced the participant to background information that would pertain to the policy areas

referenced in Phase 2 of the study. The main point of these summaries, however, was to provide a frame through which the issue of human trafficking could be manipulated.

Note: The study was designed to prevent human trafficking from standing out in comparison to the other mainstream issues listed (immigration and education). This is why the study includes the more obscure issue, Hepatitis C, as a policy issue. The purpose of the study—to measure the effects of framing human trafficking—could not be given away by the presence of one outlier like “human trafficking.” Thus, the four policy issues chosen were supposed to provide the participant with a balanced list of domestic policy areas to choose from.

Each policy summary was followed by a relevant picture and caption. The captions contained statistical or qualitative information that addressed matters relevant to the policy areas. The purpose of the survey, to test for human trafficking attitudes, could not be revealed to the survey population without biasing their results—so all issues had to contain a picture and caption in order to make the survey appear neutral. The captions associated with the human trafficking policy summary were key to manipulating the framing of human trafficking victims (see Appendix I for Phase 1 of the survey—the Policy Summary Section). In order to make sure that each survey respondent was exerting meaningful effort to read through and analyze all descriptions, pictures, and captions, a timer of 7 seconds was set before each respondent could advance to the next policy summary.

After reading all of the policy summaries, the participant was then prompted to Phase 2 of the survey. This phase of the survey helped measure the dependent variable (the participant’s willingness to support the issue of human trafficking in the U.S. public policy agenda). The first question was presented in the policy ranking simulation, and it asked the respondents to prioritize the issues based on their preferences for congressional funding. The following scenario can be seen below:

“The United States Congress is finalizing its budget for the next fiscal year. Congress has \$10 billion dollars left to spend, but the money can only go towards one of the following programs. Please indicate which program you would like to fund. Please rate your preference on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest priority program and 4 being the lowest priority program.”

After the respondent read the above hypothetical scenario, the respondent was given the following choices of policy choices to rank in order of preference:

- Public Education Reform
- Anti-Human Trafficking Reform
- Hepatitis C Research Funding
- Immigration Reform

After ranking the above legislation to gauge a sense of the respondent’s willingness to prioritize the issue, the respondent was then asked two more questions to measure support for the issue of domestic human trafficking. These questions were meant to gauge the level of interest and perceived importance of the given policy issues (factors which may influence levels of prioritization). The subject was asked, ““How important are the following U.S. domestic policy issues to you?” and “Would you be interested in signing up for a course at UT on any of the following topics (if they fit into your degree plan)? Please mark all that apply.”

This last question will help measure the participants engagement with the following policy issues at hand, which can shed light on their ability to not only express support for the issue but to act on their support—and subsequently prioritize the issue of human trafficking on the U.S. domestic policy scene. The former question, which asks for participants perceived level of importance on each issue, will help elucidate the personal importance of the following issues to the subject. This information will be helpful in analyzing how much the respondents care about the issue of human trafficking, compared to the other relevant issues listed.

The respondent was then introduced to phase 3 of the study—the Demographic Question Section. These questions were asked for the purpose of collecting basic demographic information, some of which can speak to possible confounds in the study (i.e., the possible effect of gender or race on human trafficking policy support). This information was also collected to conduct a subgroup analysis with the data; perhaps there was a significant effect of framing, but only for specific segments of the population (like women or men, etc.). The demographic section consists of nine questions. The first three were Likert-scale questions that assessed the respondent's feelings of closeness to their identity and belongingness to minority/ marginalized populations. These questions helped garner information on the respondent's attitudes towards the populations which human trafficking is erroneously thought to target the most—those in the marginalized and minority communities. Such a measure is necessary to assess any correlations between a strong identity to minority communities and one's willingness to support the issue of human trafficking. Aside from these three questions, the rest of the section asks for basic demographic information such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. (see Appendix I for a complete list of the Phase 3 Demographic Question Section).

After completing all three phases of the survey, the respondent was directed to an online debriefing form that briefly explained the purpose and goals of the study.

Descriptives for Survey Sample

Figure 1
Gender Breakdown in Survey Sample

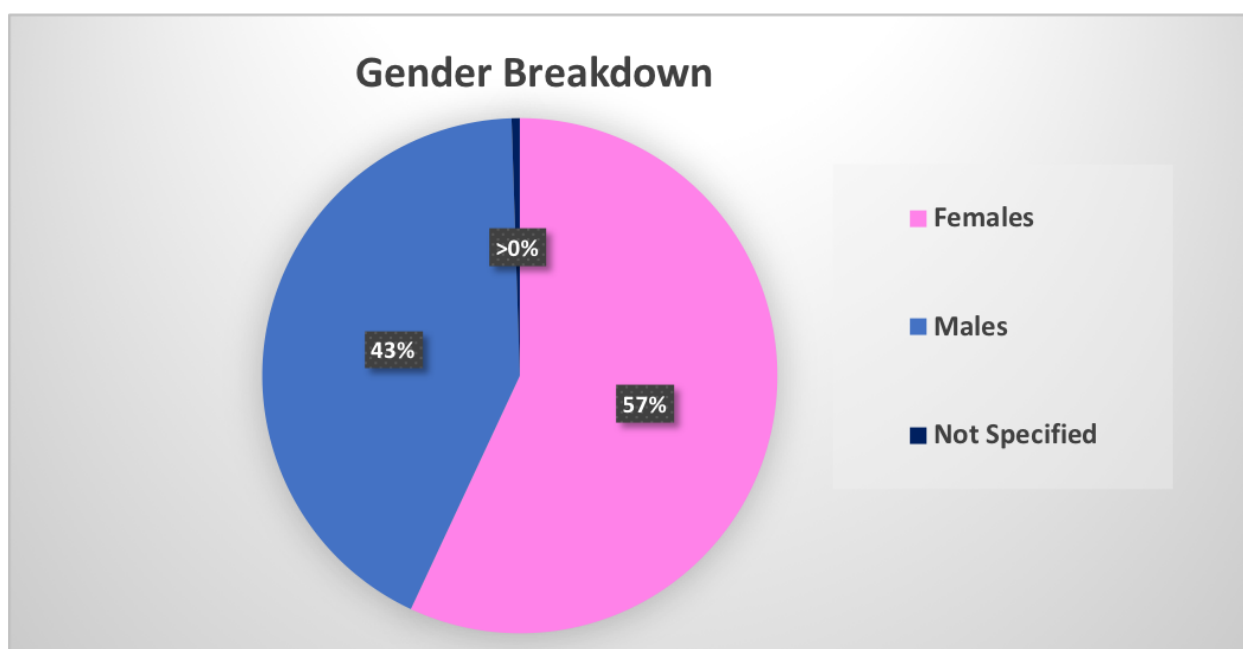


Figure 2
Race Breakdown in Survey Sample

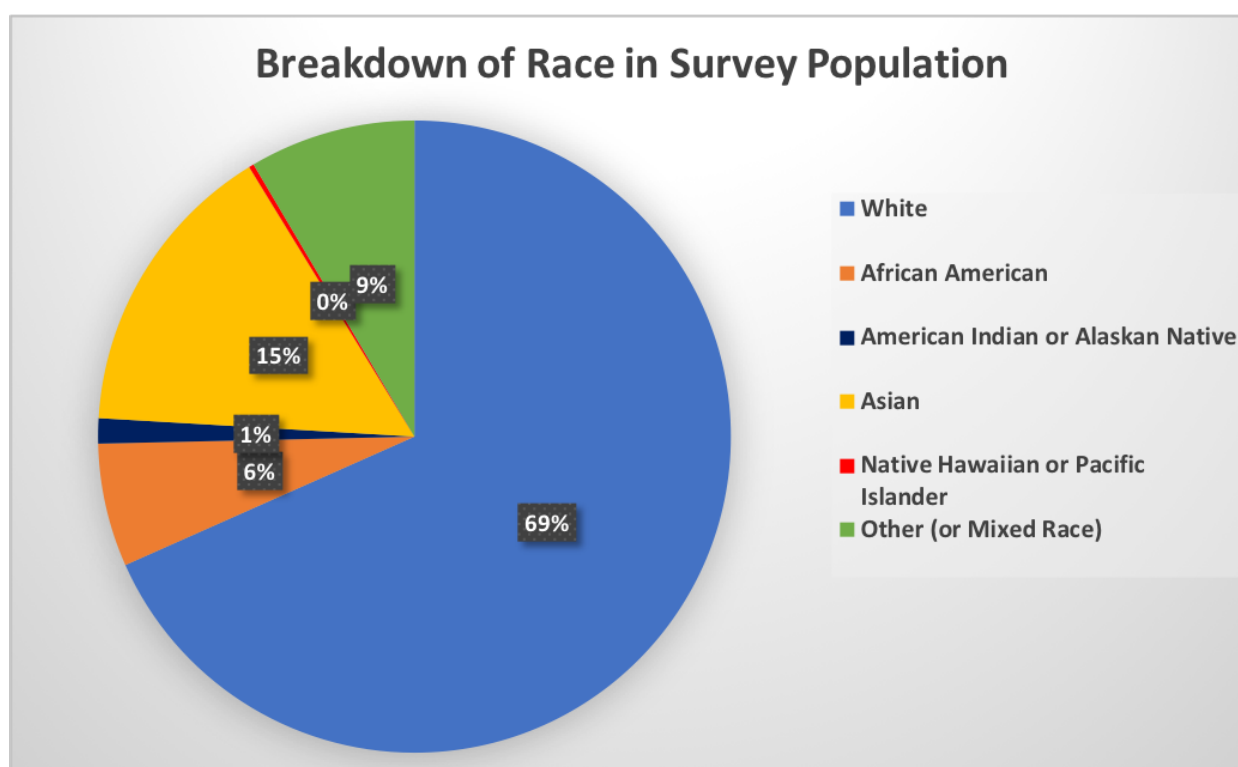
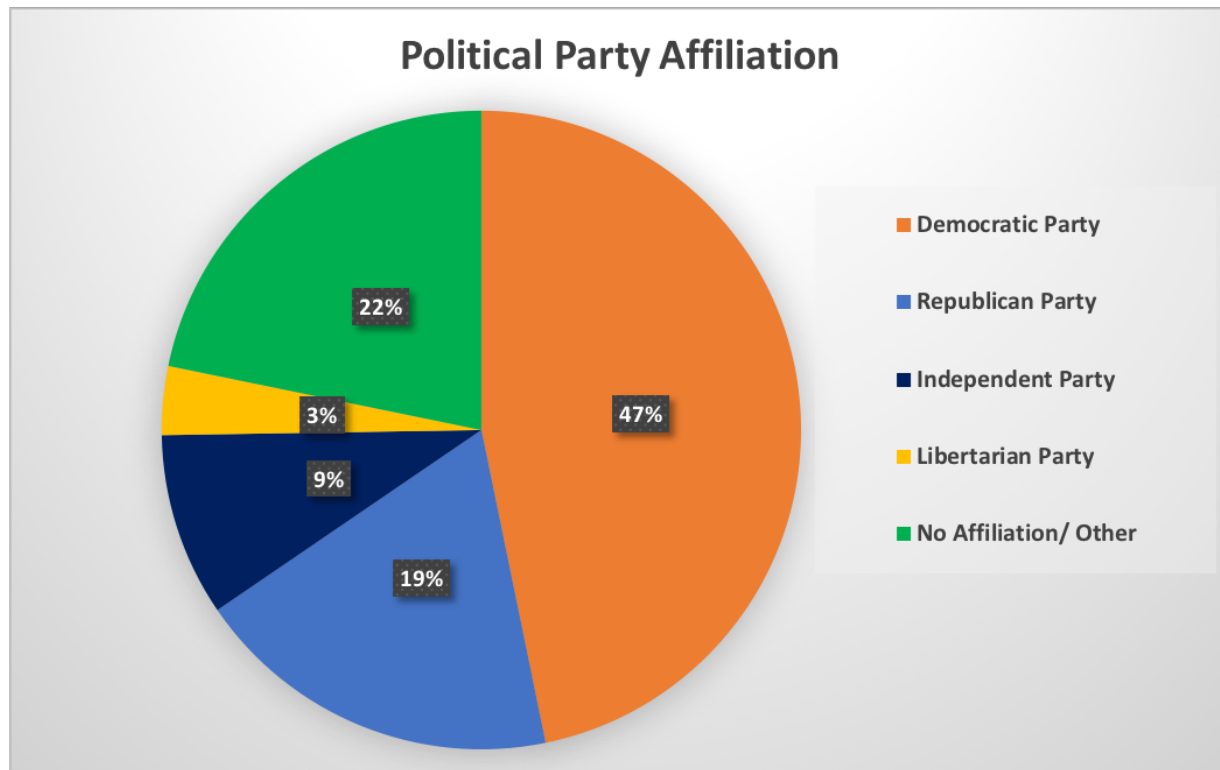


Figure 3
Political Party Breakdown in Survey Sample



Results & Discussion

The following analysis is based on a series of independent sample t-tests that examine the relationship between each of the three conditions and how they affect (or do not affect) the respondents' answers in each of the three dependent measures tested—the budget proposal simulation, the question of issue importance, and the class interest question. The following t-tests were run using a Bonferroni correction in order to reduce the chance of obtaining type 1 errors⁹ in the simultaneous tests; the study used an adjusted Bonferroni alpha level of .0167 per test (.05/3)—there were 3 t-tests performed for each of the dependent measures (one between the

⁹ A type 1 error is when the researcher concludes that results are significant when they are not. Such a conclusion is often made when the results can be attributed to chance, not from the experimental manipulation. (Morling, 2015).

majority and the minority treatments, one between the majority and the control condition, and one between the minority and the control condition).

Dependent Measure 1: The Budget Proposal

The first dependent measure asked participants to rate four domestic policy issues on a scale of 1 to 4 based on priority for congressional allocations. The highest priority ranking was 1 and the lowest priority ranking was 4. The results for human trafficking ranking are discussed below, and its mean ranking for each of the three conditions are displayed in the table below.

Table I

Budget Proposal Simulation: Variables Measured for the Majority, Minority, and Control Conditions

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Ranking (majority condition)	1.930	.951	256
Ranking (minority condition)	1.894	.876	263
Ranking (control condition)	2.428	.882	257

The results reveal that there was not a significant difference between the mean budget proposal rankings for the minority condition and the majority condition (Table 1); $t(517)=.451$, $p=.656$. This means that the type of framing used to portray human trafficking victims did not significantly impact the level of priority respondents gave to the issue of human trafficking in the budget proposal question. It is important to note that while the type of framing from the majority and minority conditions did not have a significant effect on this ranking, participants in these two

conditions did rank human trafficking as a high priority overall when looking at the combined mean between the minority and majority conditions ($M= 1.911$, $SD= .913$).

We can see from looking at Table 1 that the rankings assigned to human trafficking are relatively high for those who received a frame (whether it be Ava or Nita). These results show us that that people *do* care about the issue of human trafficking, enough to prioritize it above other major U.S. domestic policy issues like education, immigration, or hepatitis C research funding. However, the framing of *who* the victim is perceived to be does not have a significant effect on changing this priority level.

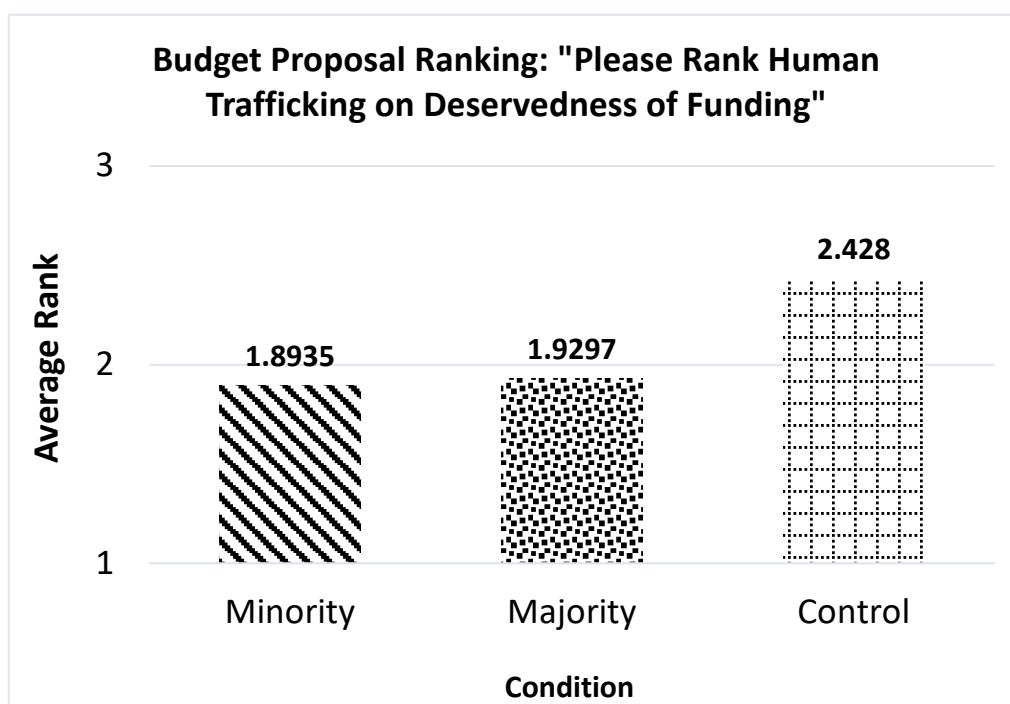
Results also reveal that there was a significant difference between the budget proposal rankings for the control condition and the minority condition (Table 1); $t(518)=6.935$, $p=0$. These results show us that the participants who were exposed to the minority frame, on average, rated human trafficking at a significantly higher ranking than those who were not exposed to any frames in the control condition (as seen in Table 1).

There was also a significant difference in the budget proposal rankings between those who were in the majority condition and those who were in the control condition (Table 3); $t(511)=6.155$, $p=0$. These results show us that the participants who were exposed to the majority frame, on average, rated human trafficking at a much higher ranking than those who were not exposed to any frames (as seen from the means in Table 3).

A graph of the mean rankings for each of the 3 treatments is visually displayed in Graph 1 (found below). The discrepancies between the conditions with frames (the minority and the majority) as well as the control group are illustrated here.

Figure 4 1

Average Ranking for the Budget Proposal Simulation by Condition



Note: The participants were asked to rate human trafficking on the following scale: 1 = highest possible priority and 4 = lowest possible priority.

The point of this dependent measure was to see how much individuals were willing to prioritize the issue of human trafficking above other issues the public may care more about. We can see from these results that individuals care enough about the issue to rank human trafficking as something deserving of congressional funds. Perhaps this willingness to support human trafficking in the form of monetary support sheds light on a new phenomenon—that the country is awakening to the issue human trafficking, which has been ignored for so long as a domestic problem.

We see that the *type* of framing did not have a significant effect on the level of priority given to human trafficking in the budget proposal simulation. However, those in the control condition (the individuals who did not receive a framing reinforcement) expressed, on average,

significantly lower priority ratings for human trafficking funding than those in either the minority and majority conditions.

These results also tell us that the presence of victim framing (regardless of who the victim is portrayed to be—Eva or Nita) has a significant effect on the rankings given to human trafficking in the budget proposal scenario. This data sheds light on an interesting phenomenon; that exposure to the framing of an issue influences one’s willingness to engage with that issue. We see this phenomenon play out in the policy issue of human trafficking in the United States.

The level of prioritization assigned to human trafficking funding seems to be dependent upon exposure to a frame. The reminder that human trafficking is a pressing problem in American society (not the face of the victim) prompted respondents to rate the issue higher than they did without this exposure. This reveals that race and ethnicity may not play as big of a role as the study originally predicted, at least for human trafficking. The respondent’s relatability to the victim or who they perceived the victim to be did not appear to change how important they thought human trafficking was.

This data can equip policy makers in the United States with a better understanding of the factors that affect public support for policy issues—like exposure to the issues beforehand. This research helps answer the question on why the public chooses to care about certain domestic policy issues more than other issues. Perhaps the public ignores certain issues because they are not reminded of their presence or importance in society (like in the case of human trafficking). Understanding how the public attitude is formed will inform legislators on how to better engage the public with their ideas.

Dependent Measure 2: Issue Importance

Table 2

Issue Importance: Variables Measured for the Majority, Minority, and Control Conditions

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Majority condition	4.227	.865	256
Minority Condition	4.293	.839	263
Control	3.984	.939	257

The second dependent measure asked the participants to rate each domestic policy issue on how important they viewed them to be. The results are based on the following scale for level of importance: 1 = not at all important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = very important, and 5 = extremely important = 5. The data shows that that there was not a significant effect of the type of framing on the level of importance assigned to the issue of human trafficking between the majority and minority conditions (means are displayed in Table 2); $t(517) = -.885, p = 0.377$. These results show us that the type of framing used to portray trafficking victims did not significantly impact how important individuals believe the issue of human trafficking to be. These results mirror the results from the budget proposal measure, affirming the following premise: the portrayal of a trafficking victim does *not* influence public attitudes as originally theorized.

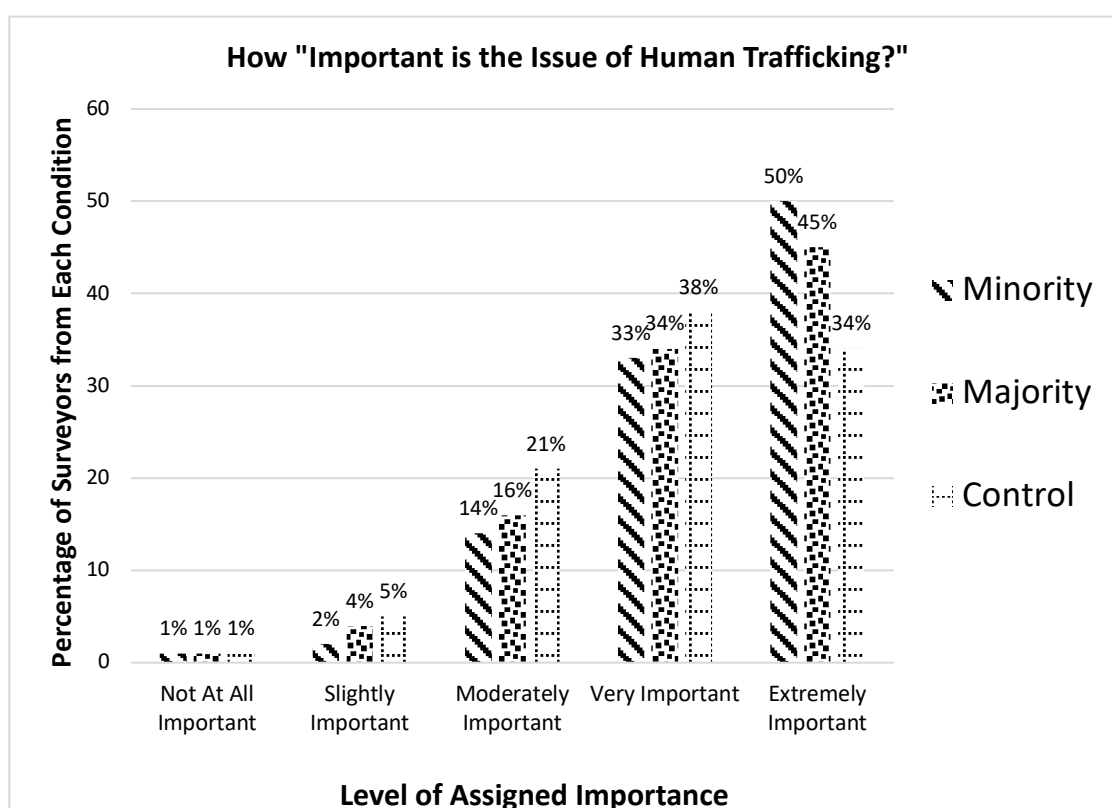
These results also indicate that there was a significant effect of framing's presence on assigned levels of importance (whether the participant was assigned to the control condition with no framing or a condition with framing). That is, manipulating the *presence* of framing, not the *type* of framing, created a significant difference between the average means of importance for the control groups and the framing groups (for both the minority and the majority condition). There

was a significant difference in the issue importance scores for the control condition and the minority condition (means are displayed in Table 2); $t(518)=-3.950, p=.0001$. Similarly, there was a significant difference in the issue importance scores when comparing the control condition to the majority condition (see Table 2); $t(511)=-3.036, p=.0025$.

These results affirm the conclusion that the type of framing did not create a significant effect on the level of priority, but the absence of framing in the control condition had a significant effect on rankings. The presence of a frame has the same effect on assigned level of prioritization as it does on assigned level of importance, affirming the idea that issue framing significantly impact one's support for the issue. However, issues can be framed in a variety of ways so the research done in the present study on human trafficking may not apply to all issues in the same way. More research should be done on how the victims of different domestic policies are framed in society and the effect this has on public attitudes.

Figure 5

Surveyor Response to the Issue Importance Question by Condition



In conclusion, it is important to note that a majority of the participants, no matter what condition they were randomly assigned to, rated human trafficking as “very important” or higher (displayed in Figure 5). Additionally, 609 out of 776 respondents, roughly 78% of the participant sample, rated human trafficking as either “very important” or “extremely important.” The “extremely important” category (the highest level of importance on the scale) comprised the most individuals in any given category—338 out of 776 (roughly 44%) of the total respondents. We can also see that the average for all three groups is $M = 4.168$ (based on means from Table 2). This data collectively shows us that a majority of individuals believe the issue of human trafficking to be important in American society, and that the issue should be solved. However, it is unclear how far the public is willing to go to achieve such solvency. The next dependent measure was designed to address this inquiry.

Dependent Measure 3: Class Interest

For the third dependent measure, the respondent was asked the following question: “Would you be interested in signing up for a course at UT on any of the following topics (if the class could easily fit into your degree plan)? Please mark all that apply.” The respondents were given the chance to mark interest in any of the policy issues: human trafficking, immigration, Hepatitis C, and U.S. public education (they were allowed to mark as many options as they wanted—some, all, or none). For the purposes of scoring, each respondent was given a score of 1 for marking interest in taking a course on human trafficking and a 0 for not marking interest in the course. The results from the data are found below in Table 3.

Table 3

Class Interest: Variables Measured for the Majority, Minority, and Control Conditions

Variables	M	SD	N
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Majority condition	.451	.499	256
Minority Condition	.546	.499	263
Control	.475	.500	257

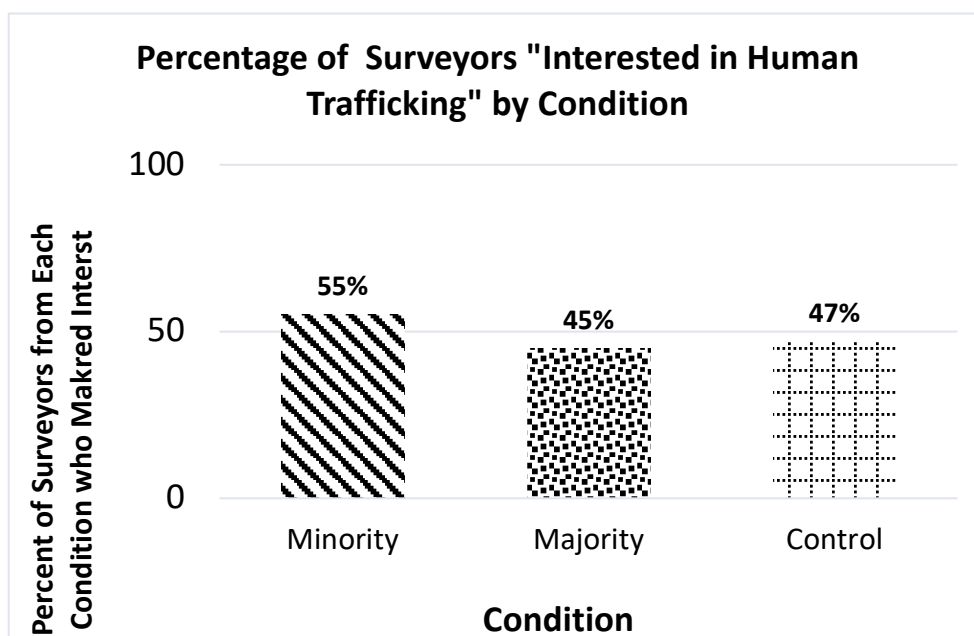
The results reveal that the type of framing (majority v. minority) did not have a significant effect on the level of interest expressed by the participants, $t(518)=-2.199$, $p=.028$. This means that participants in the minority treatment did not express significantly higher levels of interest in taking a course on human trafficking than those in the majority treatment. Such results indicate that the population (as long as the survey sample is representative) was not affected by their views on who human trafficking victims are. This leads me to believe that there must be other factors which affect one's responsiveness and engagement to the issue of human trafficking—factors this study explores in the subgroup analysis (such as gender, political party affiliation, etc.).

Results also indicate that the presence of minority framing (v. no framing in the control group) did not have a significant effect on the level of interest expressed by the participants. There was not a significant difference in the scores for the control condition and the minority condition; $t(518)=-1.662$, $p=.097$. This means that those who saw a portrayal of Hispanic Nita did not, on average, express a significantly different level of interest in learning about human trafficking than the individuals who were not exposed to a frame in the control condition.

The results also indicate that the presence of majority framing (v. no framing in the control group) did not have a significant effect on the level of interest expressed by the participants, $t(512)=0.530$, $p=.596$. On average, the presence of majority framing (which entailed White girls like Ava) did not significantly influence the rate of interest in taking a class on human trafficking when compared to the control treatment.

Figure 6

Percentage of Surveyors "Interested in Human Trafficking" by Condition



We can see from Figure 6 that, overall, only a small percentage of individuals in each condition mark interest in learning more about human trafficking. These results tell us that individuals, overall, are no less willing to take a class on human trafficking if they learn about the issue beforehand or not (i.e., through the presence of a frame in this case). These results differ from the results of the two other dependent measures, where the presence of framing *did* have an effect on the survey responses. A possible explanation for this outcome may have to do with the demand and intrusiveness of the class interest measure. Asking someone to sacrifice their personal time on an issue is far greater of a request than asking someone to prioritize the issue in a hypothetical situation. The effects of framing were not significant enough to push people to commit to such greater degrees.

Additionally, the type of victim portrayed as the face of human trafficking did not seem to affect the respondents' interest in taking a class on human trafficking. This result is consistent with the results from the previous dependent measures, which indicate that the type of victim framing does not have a significant impact on the individual will to prioritize the issue. Thus, the class interest question becomes an outlier in the present study—neither the two framing manipulations nor the control treatment appeared to affect the surveyors' expressed support for the issue of domestic trafficking in the United States. Such results point future researchers to other factors that may undermine (or enhance) levels of engagement with the issue of human trafficking. These alternative factors (including gender, political party affiliation, and ethnicity) will be discussed in the next chapter on subgroup analyses.

Hypotheses Revisited: What do these results mean?

The data rejects the first hypothesis—that participants in the majority identity condition will express higher levels of support for the issue of human trafficking than participants in the minority identity condition—for all three dependent measures. The results were not significant; that is, the type of framing did not appear to have an effect on the individual's response to the three dependent measures (in the budget proposal ranking, the issue importance question, and the class interest question). These results tell us that frames, which inform the public of “who” victims of human trafficking are, do not seem to have a significant impact on increasing levels of engagement and support for the issue of human trafficking. Thus, biases based on race and relatability to the victim (based on the framing conditions) do not appear to affect participant responsive and support to the issue of domestic trafficking. In other words, the characterization

of who the victim is (Ava v. Nita) does not seem to play a hand in causing individuals to care more (or less) about the issue of human trafficking.

This finding stands in contrast with the previous literature that points to racism as a reason for failing to adopt legislation that caters to the needs of a marginalized or stigmatized community (Brader et al., 2008). In the case of human trafficking, the idea of who the victim is does not seem to play an important role in whether or not this population should be helped. Perhaps this is because the issue of human trafficking is so dark and intolerable that individuals desire to stop it regardless of who the issue affects. After all, the anti-human trafficking fight garners widespread global support as a valence issue (Bunting and Quirk, 2017; Mapp, 2016). Few, if any people, are willing to say they do not care about the preservation of human dignity and freedom. As Alicia Peters, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of New England, states:

“While there is nearly unanimous agreement that human trafficking is a serious and despicable crime, there has been far less consensus on what trafficking actually is and how to approach the problem” (Peters, 2015, p.5).

It is also important to note that the above findings also stand in contrast with another conventional theory. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) concluded that individuals are instinctively self-interested and care chiefly about the issues that affect themselves or individuals whom they can relate to. However, the present study found that it did not matter if the typical human trafficking victim was portrayed as an American girl or a foreign-born girl from Honduras—those who chose to support the issue were not affected by the victim frames. Rather, the absence or presence of a frame influenced how individuals responded to the issue of human trafficking in the current study.

Accordingly, the data is consistent with the second hypothesis that participants in the majority identity condition will express higher levels of support for the issue of human trafficking than participants in the control condition, but only for the budget proposal and issue importance measures—not the class interest measure. These results tell us that exposure to the Ava frame, in the majority-identity treatment, had an impact on an individual’s willingness to express support for the issue of human trafficking. Those who were exposed to the Ava frame, were more likely to assign human trafficking as a greater priority or more important than those who were in the control condition. These results bring to light an interesting finding; exposure to the idea of who a victim of human trafficking is leads people to care more about stopping the issue (or at least verbally expressing their support for stopping it).

This phenomenon can be explained by the theory of group empathy. Sirin et al. (2016) surmise that “group empathy [is] a process where members of one group begin to internalize and vicariously experience the perspectives and emotions of members of another group even when they do not share intimate family or friendship bonds.” Thus, we can look to frames as an enhancement of a vicarious experience of the trafficked victim. In light of this theory, it is possible that victim framing made the effects of human trafficking more tangible and personal for the surveyor. The reminder of the issue in the form of a frame thus enhanced empathy for the victim, leading to an increase in support for the issue of human trafficking and its victims, *even if these victims are not relatable to the average American* (as is the case in the minority-identity treatment).

For the first two dependent measures, participants expressed greater levels of support and prioritization for the issue of human trafficking than those who were in the control condition. However, this trend was not seen across all dependent measures of support—this was not the

case for the class interest question. Perhaps individuals are more likely to express support for human trafficking at face-value, when they are not forced to make substantial changes in their lives—as is the case with the importance question and the budget proposal simulation. These questions only ask the survey respondents how much they support the issue of human trafficking (or how much they support it in a hypothetical scenario). These measures of support differ from the class interest question in that they are not asking an individual to make a lifestyle change and become more engaged with the issue on a daily basis. However, when individuals must go out of their way to take a class on the topic, they may be less willing to respond yes to the option of taking an additional class on the issue of human trafficking in America.

The data is also consistent with the third hypothesis that participants in the minority identity condition will express higher levels of support for the issue of human trafficking than participants in the control condition, but only for the budget proposal and issue importance measures—not the class interest measure. Such results mirror those from the t-test between the majority and control group, which were explained above. Nevertheless, these results tell us that participant exposure to the Nita frame, in the majority-identity treatment, had an impact on an individual's ranking assigned to human trafficking just like exposure to the Ava frame did. It appears that individuals are more likely to express higher levels of support for the issue when they see Nita as opposed to when they do not see a frame at all (in the control condition). However, the victim's specific race or home country does not appear to have a significant impact on the respondent's answers since the results of the minority condition, when compared to the majority condition, are not significantly different. These results reaffirm the idea that the *type* of framing did not significantly impact the results on the dependent measure but the *presence* of framing did.

Overall, these results lead me to draw the following conclusion: individuals appear to care about human trafficking more than issues like education and immigration when they are reminded of the issue beforehand—specifically, when the participants are reminded of *who* human trafficking affects (i.e., little girls like Ava from Cedar Park, Texas or girls like Nita from Honduras). Subsequently, when the individuals were asked to rate human trafficking in the budget proposal question without exposure to either of these frames (those who were in the control condition), they were more likely to rate other issues at a higher level (like education and immigration). This same trend appeared in the question of issue importance. However, this trend was absent in the class interest measure. These findings lead me to recognize that the *presence* of framing, not its *type*, plays a role in the shaping of public support for issues like human trafficking. However, the extent to which individuals will make meaningful steps in their lives to help fight the issue is something to be further explored.

When analyzing public attitudes about human trafficking, there appears to be a continuum of support for the issue. Most individuals, as we can see from the issue importance measure, rate human trafficking as either “extremely important,” or “very important.” It appears that, at face value, a majority of individuals are willing to express verbal support for the anti-trafficking fight. Many individuals are even willing to rate human trafficking as higher of a congressional priority than issues like U.S. education or immigration. Yet, when it comes to making changes in their personal lives, individuals are less likely to mobilize for the anti-trafficking cause, as is evidenced in the class interest measure.

Chapter 5: Exploratory Analyses

Introduction

The previous findings yielded no significant results for the effect of framing type on surveyor support for the anti-human trafficking cause. However, there are other ways to interpret the data based on the answers given from the demographic section of the survey (see Appendix I for full survey). This chapter explores the significant effects of framing type within subgroups of the survey population (women, men, democrats, republicans, etc.). The study seeks to determine if significant effects existed among those who saw “Ava” v. those who saw “Nita” among the different groups of the survey population.

This chapter also explores the effect of demographic variables on support for the issue of human trafficking. Perhaps gender or political party affiliation plays a role in shaping an individual’s support for the slavery endemic. T-tests were used to examine the difference between the means of survey answers from women and men (or other demographic variables) within both the minority and the majority conditions. The overall results are discussed in the sections below.

Subgroup Analysis

The below figures display the results for testing different subgroups within the overall survey population. The subgroups tested are listed in Tables 4, 5, and 6 (see below). A series of t-tests, which compared the means between the minority and majority conditions for each of the subgroups, were run for all three dependent measures. The t-tests in this chapter tested for significance with an alpha level of .05—the Bonferroni correction was no longer needed since one t-test was used on each subgroup (the study only compared the differences between the minority and majority conditions). These tests examine whether the type of framing assigned to

surveyors in the minority and majority treatments had an effect on their willingness to support the issue of human trafficking—but only for specific segments of the survey population, not the general population.

Table 4

T-Tests Comparing Minority and Majority Means for the Budget Proposal Question
(Dependent Variable 1)

Subgroup	Category of Subgroup	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Majority Condition	Minority Condition	Majority Condition	Minority Condition	
Gender	Females	141	156	1.766	1.821	.596
	Males	114	105	2.132	1.981	.232
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino	74	82	2.00	1.99	.934
	Not Hispanic or Latino	182	181	1.901	1.851	.599
Race	Whites	180	176	1.878	1.875	.977
	Non-Whites	76	87	2.053	1.931	*.048
Political Party	Democrats	125	133	2.032	1.812	*.046
	Republicans	40	44	2.100	2.022	.737
Marginalized Identity Status¹⁰	Marginalized	50	67	2.000	2.099	.600
	Not	71	67	1.690	1.791	.500

*Note: The means listed above range from a scale of 1 to 4 (with 1 being the highest priority and 4 being the lowest). The presence of a * indicates statistically significant results using an alpha level of .05. Please note that N will not take into account the total survey population since answers from those who were in the control group are not analyzed here.*

From these results, we see that the type of framing (in the minority and majority condition) only had an effect on perceived levels of support within two of the subgroups

¹⁰ The Marginalized Identity Status subgroup reflects those identify with the marginalized community (question 15 on the survey, Appendix I); participants were asked to rate on a Likert scale how much they agreed with the statement: “I consider myself a part of a marginalized or minority community in American society.” Those who marked “strongly agree” are reflected in the “Marginalized” subgroup category. Those who marked “Strongly Disagree” are reflected in the “Not” subgroup category.

analyzed—Non-Whites and Democrats. This means that those individuals whose race was not 100% White (i.e., African Americans, Asian, mixed-race statuses, etc.) were affected by their viewing of Ava or Nita when rating the issue of human trafficking. These survey respondents assigned human trafficking at a significantly higher priority when they viewed the issue to affect girls like “Nita,” in the minority condition, than when they viewed the issue to affect girls like “Ava” in the majority condition.

Such results are consistent with Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) theory that individuals tend to care most about issues that affect themselves or people like themselves. Perhaps having a racial minority status fosters more empathy for victims of an industry that is perceived to also affect marginalized groups. In being reminded that the issue affects girls like “Nita,” those in the minority condition may be more susceptible to the influence of empathy that is generated from such a frame. Accordingly, researchers Sirin et al. (2016) posit that “empathy develops particularly when an outgroup’s experiences map onto historical patterns of unfair treatment experienced by the ingroup” (p. 2). Their theory sheds light on a possible explanation for the above finding—perhaps groups who have been historically oppressed like African Americans or other racial minorities will be most likely to empathize with victims of human trafficking and assign a higher priority to the issue. Through a shared experience of struggle and marginalization, these racial minorities may best identify with and relate to other groups who experience oppression in the modern-day (like victims of human trafficking).

The results from Table 4 also reveal that the type of victim framing did have an effect on the democrats’ answers in the budget proposal question. That is, those who marked Democratic Party affiliation on the survey rated human trafficking at a significantly higher rating when they were exposed to minority condition as opposed to the control condition. Perhaps this is because

the Democratic Party is known to sympathize the most with uplifting the status of marginalized groups (Democratic National Committee, 2018), and victims of human trafficking like “Nita” certainly fall into this category of marginalization. The effects of victim framing are not widespread; however, they do appear to influence the answers on certain segments of the population—like those who belong to the Democratic Party. The fact that such effects are not existent among a majority of the groups analyzed highlights the overall lack of effect that “Ava” or “Nita” has on the general population.

Table 5

T-Test Comparing Minority and Majority Means for the Issue Importance Question
(Dependent Variable 2)

Subgroup	Category of Subgroup	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Majority Condition	Minority Condition	Majority Condition	Minority Condition	
Gender	Females	141	156	4.454	4.473	.808
	Males	114	105	3.939	4.038	.433
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino	74	82	4.338	4.366	.830
	Not Hispanic or Latino	182	181	4.181	4.260	.390
Race	Whites	180	176	4.228	4.284	.541
	Non-Whites	76	87	4.224	4.310	.501
Political Party	Democrats	125	133	4.144	4.436	*.008
	Republicans	40	44	4.300	4.068	.200
Marginalized Identity Status	Marginalized	50	67	4.380	4.492	.462
	Not	71	67	4.282	4.254	.856

*Note: The following means range from a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important ranking assigned to each issue). The presence of a * indicates statistically significant results using an alpha level of .05. Please note that N will not take into account the total survey population since answers from those who were in the control group are not analyzed here.*

The above results point out that, yet again, democrats are significantly affected by the type of framing assigned to them when answering about the issue of human trafficking. Specifically, those who identified with the Democratic Party assigned a higher level of importance to the issue of human trafficking when they saw human trafficking as an issue predominantly affecting girls like “Nita.” The results mirror that of the results from the above budget proposal analyses. Together, the findings lead me to believe that democrats are more expressive of their support for the issue of human trafficking when they perceive it to affect the marginalized community v. the majority community in American society.

Table 6

T-Test Comparing Minority and Majority Means for the Class Interest Question
(Dependent Variable 3)

Subgroup	Category of Subgroup	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Majority Condition	Minority Condition	Majority Condition	Minority Condition	
Gender	Females	141	156	.589	.667	.166
	Males	114	105	.281	.371	.433
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino	74	82	.432	.488	.492
	Not Hispanic or Latino	182	181	.462	.569	*.041
Race	Whites	180	176	.411	.551	*.008
	Non-Whites	76	87	.552	.529	.762
Political Party	Democrats	125	133	.504	.586	.185
	Republicans	40	44	.325	.477	.159
Marginalized Identity Status	Marginalized	50	67	.560	.567	.939
	Not	71	67	.479	.463	.850

The results from Table 6 reveal two conclusions. The effects of framing type were significant for (1) individuals who are not Hispanic or Latino and (2) Whites. That is, those who belong to the demographics of the majority in America (individuals who are in the majority race

or ethnicity) are more interested in taking a class on human trafficking when they are exposed to the issue as affecting “Nita” as opposed to “Ava.” This result goes against the literature justifying the original research theory, which posits that individuals care most about issue that affect people whom they can relate to. This phenomenon points out that individuals may support issues that do not have a likelihood of affecting themselves—at least, Whites and Non-Hispanic or Latino populations do.

However, it is important to remember that this effect only exists when these subgroup populations are exposed to a frame that delineates who the issue specifically affects. Such effects may not as powerful when no frame is involved, as is the case with the control treatment. Chapter 3 created a solid foundation for the idea that the presence or absence of framing has significant bearings on the level to which individuals support and engage with the issue of human trafficking.

Demographic Variable Analysis

This section highlights the effect of third variables, which may influence how individuals respond to the issue of human trafficking. Specifically, the answers from individuals of different demographics or characteristics are compared to see if such characteristics have an effect on an individual’s willingness to support the anti-trafficking effort. The following data reflects a series of independent sample t-tests that were performed on the means between different groups of people for all three dependent measures. Using an alpha level of .05, the t-tests compared means within each of the framing conditions in order to control for the effects of framing.

The Hypotheses:

- 1) Females will support the issue of human trafficking at a significantly higher level than males will.

- 2) Those who are a part of a marginalized/minority community will support the issue of human trafficking at a significantly higher level than those who are a part of the majority community in the United States.
 - a. This study marks the following groups as part of the minority or marginalized community: Non-Hispanics or Latinos, Non-Whites, and those who marked “Strongly Agree” to question 15 (see Appendix I): “I consider myself a part of a marginalized or minority community in American society.”
- 3) Democrats will support the issue of human trafficking at a significantly higher level than Republicans will.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are based off of the theory that individuals sympathize with and care most about the issues that affect groups of people whom they can relate to. In fact, many studies have confirmed that shared group membership enhances perspective-taking and concern for the needs of others (Turner et al. 1987). Since human trafficking primarily affects women and vulnerable populations (like those in the minority communities) (U.S. Department of State, 2008), the study predicts that, when the effects of framing are controlled for, women and minorities will express the highest levels of support for the anti-trafficking cause. In essence, the study hypothesizes that characteristics like marginalized status and gender will have a significant impact on a person’s willingness to care about the issue of human trafficking. This section of the study examines at the answers given to each of the three dependent measures for the following demographics characteristics (listed below in Tables 7-11) to test these hypotheses. Again, information collected from the demographic phase of the survey (see Appendix I for full survey) was used to gather the results.

Please note that the figures below are sorted by demographic or characteristic analyzed. For each characteristic, the mean for each of the three dependent measures are listed, and they are broken down into separate means for each of the framing conditions (majority and minority treatments).

Key for the Dependent Measures in Tables 7-11.

BP = Budget Proposal Question (Dependent Variable 1)

II = Issue Importance Question (Dependent Variable 2)

CI= Class Interest Measure (Dependent Variable 3)

See Appendix 1, Questions 3, 4, and 5 in Appendix I for the complete survey questions.

Table 7

T-Test Comparing Means among Gender:

Dep. Measure	Condition	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Female	Males	Females	Males	
BP	Minority	156	105	1.821	1.981	.144
BP	Majority	141	114	1.766	2.132	*.002
II	Minority	156	105	4.474	4.038	*>.001
II	Majority	141	114	4.453	3.934	*>.001
CI	Minority	156	105	.667	.371	*>.001
CI	Majority	141	114	.589	.281	*>.001

*Note Please note these results do not account for all survey respondents since (1) the control group is not accounted for and (2) there was a third survey option marking “Not Specified” for gender, and the answers from these respondents were not taken into account. The presence of a * indicates statistically significant results using an alpha level of .05.*

The results from Table 7 illuminate the effect that gender has on the expressed levels of support for the issue of human trafficking. Women support the issue of human trafficking at a significantly higher level than men do, based on their average means from the dependent

measures. Such results are consistent with hypothesis 1. This trend occurs across all three dependent measures (with the exception of the budget proposal question for the minority treatment).

From these results, we can surmise that factors like relatability to victims of pressing social issues *can* bolster someone's support for alleviating the plight of these victims. Women showcased this phenomenon well. In the present study, they were more likely to champion the cause of human trafficking than men were. Exploring women's relatability to this victim population is crucial for understanding why they are more likely to support the cause than men are. Sex trafficking disproportionately affects vulnerable populations like women and children (Nichols, 2016; Sharapov, 2014; U.S. Department of State, 2008), so it is fitting that depictions of girls like "Ava" and "Nita" provoked a greater response from females than males.

Overall, it is important to note that trafficking targets those who, first and foremost, identify with a vulnerable or marginalized community. In regards to sexually-related trafficking, a disproportionate share of American-born victims are racial or ethnic minorities (Mapp, 2016). This truth does not discount the fact that trafficking still happens to middle-class, Caucasian people. Yet, the problem is more pronounced for those who are already oppressed in some way. Minority women are often viewed as sexual objects and are seen as culturally less dominant from those in the majority (Ray, 2011). Such views perpetuate growth of an industry that preys on individuals who are viewed as less "worthy" of aid. Factors, such as gender, race, and ethnicity *do* make individuals more vulnerable to the trafficking industry.

As academic Ranita Ray (2011) puts it, "Demand in the sex market is related to marginal identity of those who are trafficked...It constitutes a risk factor for trafficking since women who are victims of sex trafficking are already marginalized in a variety of ways" (p. 216). Perhaps

legislation aimed at vulnerable communities in the United States (like victims of human trafficking) will only gain widespread popularity until legislators find a way to appeal to those who do not readily sympathize or identify with such groups of people. The results from this study can help legislators better understand the factors that influence overall support for the policies they propose, and it can help them better stay attuned to the attitudes that may either inhibit or advance the progress of their policy agendas.

Table 8

T-Test Comparing Means among Ethnicity:

Dep. Measure	Condition	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	
BP	Minority	82	181	1.988	1.851	.241
BP	Majority	74	182	2.000	1.901	.452
II	Minority	82	181	4.334	4.181	.190
II	Majority	74	182	4.144	4.300	.348
CI	Minority	82	181	.488	.569	.222
CI	Majority	74	182	.432	.462	.673

*Note Please note these results do not account for all survey respondents since the control group is not accounted for. The presence of a * indicates statistically significant results using an alpha level of .05.*

Results from Table 8 indicate that ethnicity did not have a significant effect on the surveyors' expressed interest and support for the issue of human trafficking. Perhaps any effects, if they do exist, may appear with a large sample size. Future experimenters to take a closer look at the issue of ethnicity on support for egregious social issues. This could be done by discarding the framing conditions and instead making the manipulation itself the ethnicity of the surveyor.

Table 9

T-Test Comparing Means among Race:

Dep. Measure	Condition	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Non-Whites	Whites	Non-Whites	Whites	
BP	Minority	87	176	1.931	1.875	.626
BP	Majority	76	180	2.053	1.878	.180
II	Minority	87	176	4.310	4.284	.812
II	Majority	76	180	4.224	4.228	.973
CI	Minority	87	176	.529	.551	.733
CI	Majority	76	180	.553	.411	*.038

*Note Please note these results do not account for all survey respondents since the control group is not accounted for. Those who are in the Non-White category are those who marked anything other than solely “White” in their answer to question 5 regarding race (this includes those who indicated mixed-races). The presence of a * indicates statistically significant results using an alpha level of .05.*

The results from Table 9 reveal that, for the most part, racial status does not play a major role in shaping one’s attitude towards human trafficking. The differences in survey responses between whites and non-whites were not great enough to conclude that race has any meaningful effect on the population’s support for the anti-human trafficking fight, disproving hypothesis 2.

The only exception to this conclusion was for the class interest question from the majority condition; non-whites expressed significantly more interest in taking a class on human trafficking than whites were. Such results elucidate the complexity of human trafficking and garnering support for the issue; while race did not generally influence the respondents’ support for anti-trafficking measures, it *did* make an impact in the aforementioned area. The presence of significant results amidst a majority of insignificant results prompts more research and investigation into the matter.

Table 10

T-Test Comparing Means among Political Party Affiliation:

Dep. Measure	Condition	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans	
BP	Minority	133	44	1.812	2.023	.157
BP	Majority	125	40	2.032	2.100	.700
II	Minority	133	44	4.436	4.068	*.010
II	Majority	125	40	4.144	4.300	.348
CI	Minority	133	44	.586	.477	.208
CI	Majority	125	40	.504	.325	*0.048

*Note Please note these results do not account for all survey respondents since (1) the control group is not accounted for and (2) only those who marked an affiliation with the Democratic and Republican parties were taken into account there (the survey allowed for a number of political party affiliations; data was only collected from the two most popular political parties here). The presence of a * indicates statistically significant results using an alpha level of .05.*

The results from Table 10 reveal that, overall, political party affiliation between these ideologically different groups does not play a significant role in leading to increased or decreased support for the issue of human trafficking. These results are consistent with hypothesis 3 for only the issue importance (minority treatment) and class interest (majority treatment) measures. In conclusion, the effect of political party membership on support for anti-human trafficking policy is minimal, except in the few situations listed above.

Earlier, Tables 4 and 5 in the subgroup analysis revealed how those from the Democratic Party were susceptible to the effects of framing type. That is, democrats expressed higher levels of support for the issue of human trafficking when they were assigned to the minority condition than when they were assigned to the majority condition. The conclusions drawn from Table 10 are different from these conclusions in one major way; the data from Table 10 examines the effect of political parties on attitudes towards human trafficking policy. It does not examine the effects of framing. Thus, political party affiliation is a matter worth exploring more, as it relates to support for other valence issues in U.S. politics. For the most part, it remains clear that

Democratic Party membership did not foster more sympathy for the issue of human trafficking than it did for Republicans.

Table 11

T-Test Comparing Means among Marginalized Identity Status:

Dep. Measure	Condition	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	P value
		Marginalized	Not	Marginalized	Not	
BP	Minority	67	67	2.090	1.791	.064
BP	Majority	50	71	2.000	1.690	.052
II	Minority	67	67	4.493	4.254	.099
II	Majority	50	71	4.380	4.282	.555
CI	Minority	67	67	.567	.463	.229
CI	Majority	50	71	.560	.479	.384

*Note Please note these results do not account for all survey respondents since (1) the control group is not accounted for and (2) only those answers marked “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” to question 15 from the survey were analyzed here. The presence of a * indicates statistically significant results using an alpha level of .05.*

According to the results from Table 11, marginalized identity status did not play a major role in influencing the surveyor’s responses to the issue of human trafficking, disproving hypothesis 2. Such results are inconsistent with the major theories justifying the research inquiry; that individuals sympathize with and care most about the issues that affect groups of people whom they can relate to. It is important to note the above measure is only one out of many that were tested. As noted from the results from the entire section, there were sporadic instances when relatability could have played a role in support for human trafficking (see the analysis from Table 7 and Table 9 on race and gender). Thus, future research should take a look at factors like relatability and identification with certain groups in the United States and their impact on the U.S. policy agenda. After all, legislators must cater to the preference of the public and their transient attitudes in order to bolster their electability. Paying greater attention to how the public

thinks about and forms opinions on public policy issues is worth doing if we seek to understand why issues like human trafficking exist in our free society.

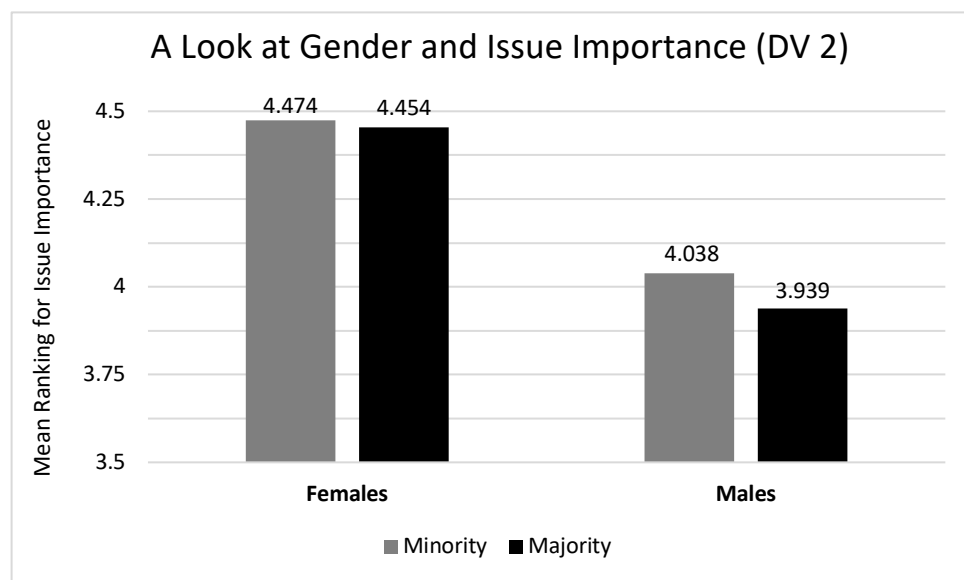
Discussion: A Combined look at Subgroup and Demographic Variable Effects

This last section takes a look at the significant effects discussed in the two previous sections—the subgroup analyses section and the demographic variable effects section. In doing so, this analysis took a comprehensive look at both of these factors and emphasize the most important findings gathered from the data.

1) Females v. Males

Figure 7

Gender Mean Graph for the Issue Importance Question (DV 2)



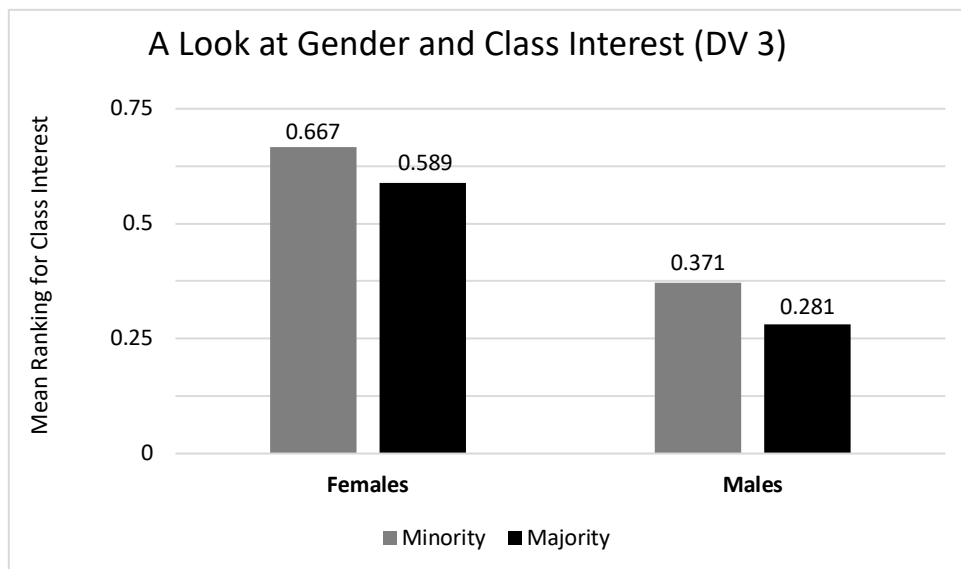
Note: The results are based on the following scale for level of importance: 1 = not at all important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = very important, and 5 = extremely important.

The above graph shows the difference in average ranking for the issue importance dependent measure. It visually shows the significant difference between male and females scores for importance ranking. Women, in both the majority and minority conditions, rated human trafficking as significantly more important than men do. However, it is important to keep in mind that the difference in scores was not drastic enough to warrant an assertion that men are apathetic or unsupportive of the anti-human trafficking fight. Men, on average, rated the issue of human trafficking as very important or higher (see Table 7 note for scale). Thus, women appeared to rate the human trafficking as a more important issue than men did—but the male average ranking is already significantly high. While gender may compel one to care more about the issue of human trafficking (females caring more than men), both genders seem to care about the issue to a significant extent.

Table 7 also illuminates the marginal difference between those men and women who were exposed to the minority v. majority treatments. Again, the type of framing did not produce a significant effect on the respondent's levels of importance assigned to the issue of human trafficking. It does not appear to matter whether the respondent, male or female, was exposed to the Ava or Nita graphic when looking at their expressed levels of support.

Figure 8

Gender Mean Graph for the Class Interest Question (DV 3)



Note: The results are based on the following scale for level of interest: Respondents were assigned a 1 for indicating class interest and a 0 for not indicating class interest. Class interest was measured by the respondent's willingness to mark human trafficking as a class they would be interested in taking if it was offered at their university.

The above results indicate that females, in both the majority and minority conditions, expressed significantly higher levels of interest in taking a class on the domestic human trafficking endemic than males are; $t(259)=4.893, p=0.000$ for the minority condition and $t(253)=5.144, p=0.000$ for the majority condition. It appears that, when taking the effects of framing out of the data analysis, gender is a demographic variable that influences people's willingness to engage with and care about the issue of human trafficking. We see this theory confirmed in both the issue importance and class interest measures. Such results are important because, in the analysis of the total survey population from chapter 4, there were no significant effects involving the third dependent variable (in the initial data analysis, only the effects of framing type were analyzed and no effects appeared to influence the participants' response to the class interest measure). However, when taking a look at the effects of characteristics within

subgroups of the population, there does appear to be a discrepancy in participant willingness to not only express support for the issue but also to engage with the issue at a more personal level, such as taking a class on the issue. However, engagement with this issue was affected by the participant's gender—not the “Ava” or “Nita” frame. This conclusion leads me to ponder how many other factors, besides gender, may play a role in shaping public opinions on rather controversial issues like human trafficking in the United States.

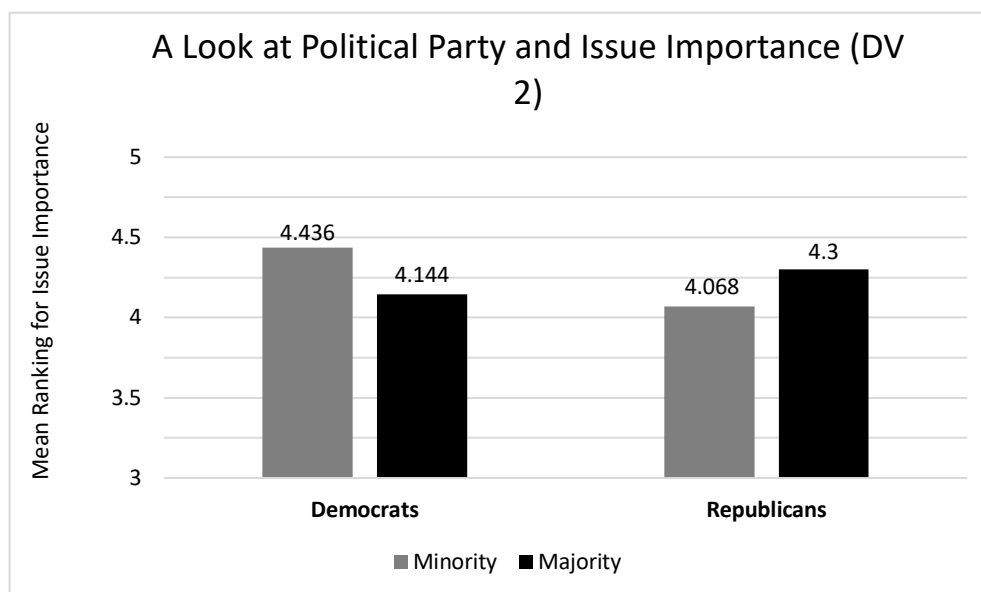
Figure 8 also reveals how there was not a significant difference between the expressed levels of class interest between those in the minority and majority conditions for each gender subgroup; $t(295)=-1.390$, $p=.166$ for the female subgroup and $t(217)=-1.433$, $p=.153$ for the male subgroup. These results affirm the finding found in chapter 3; individuals are generally not affected by who the victim of human trafficking is portrayed to be. However, the results *do* show a substantial effect of gender on attitudes towards human trafficking. These results lend support for the belief that women care immensely about the issue of human trafficking, at least more so than men do. Perhaps this is because the victim population primarily targets women. Males, on the other hand, are not as easily able to empathize with and relate to the victim population, which may account for their lower levels of support for the issue. Garnering support for the issue of human trafficking does, to an extent, depend on one's relatability to the victim population.

These results are consistent with hypothesis 1, which predicted that females will support the issue of human trafficking at a significantly higher level than males will.

2) Democrats v. Republicans

Figure 9

Political Party Affiliation Mean Graph for the Issue Importance Question (DV 2)



Note: The results are based on the following scale for level of importance: 1 = not at all important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = very important, and 5 = extremely important

The above figure reveals how one's membership to a political party affects their view on the issue of domestic human trafficking. Such results are consistent with hypothesis 3, that democrats will support the issue of human trafficking at a significantly higher level than republicans will. The data shows that democrats rated human trafficking as a significantly more important issue than republicans did within those in the minority group; $t(175)=2.604, p=.010$. Although this significant finding was not seen in the majority group, its presence among the minority condition reveals that political party does have somewhat of an impact in influencing surveyor support.

The above findings were not replicated among those who were assigned to the majority condition—democrats did not rate human trafficking as significantly more important of an issue than republicans within this treatment group; $t(163)=-0.941, p=.348$. From these results, one cannot conclude that those who are in the Democratic Party inherently care more about the issue of human trafficking than those who are in the Republican Party. To infer a claim that strong

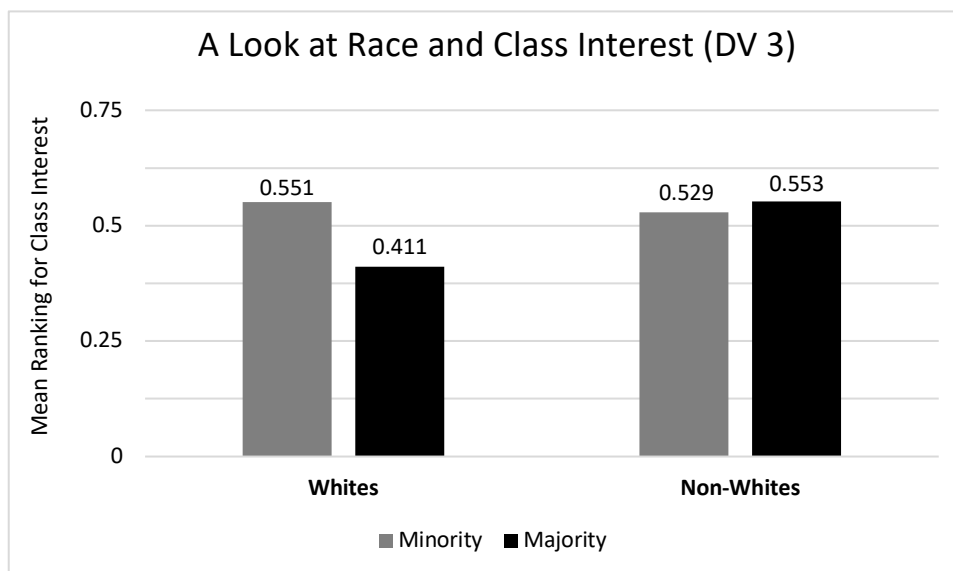
would be to exaggerate the modest findings of this study; the findings may not be applicable to the general population at large, given the limitations of a small study (which had a relatively small sample size and a predominantly Republican survey population, $N= 363$ for Democrats and $N= 145$ for Republicans). However, the results analyzed above shed light on the need for further study and analysis of the effect of political party affiliation on support for policy issues.

There does not appear to be a significant effect of framing type on those who marked affiliation with the Republican Party; $t(82)=1.293, p=.200$. However, another important finding arose from the subgroup analysis on the population of surveyors who indicated affiliation with the Democratic Party. When looking solely at the respondents' answers from the democratic subgroup population, the data showed that there was a significant difference in the scores between participants in the majority and minority conditions for the second dependent measure. This means that the type of victim framing did have an effect on the survey's level of importance assigned to human trafficking. From the democratic population, those who saw the minority frame expressed significantly higher levels of importance than those who saw the majority frame; $t(256)=-2.679, p=.008$. Such results, although they do not confirm the effect of framing type on the general populace, affirm the idea that our perception of who trafficking victims are does affect how much we support the overall issue of human trafficking. However, this phenomenon does not occur throughout the entire population; democrats appear to be more willing to support the issue if they believe it to affect minority populations.

3) Whites v. Non-Whites

Figure 10

Race Mean Graph for the Class Interest Question (DV 3)



Note: The results are based on the following scale for level of interest: Respondents were assigned a 1 for indicating class interest and a 0 for not indicating class interest. Class interest was measured by the respondent's willingness to mark human trafficking as a class they would be interested in taking if it was offered at their university.

Results from Figure 10 reveal that an individual's race has an effect on his or her willingness to take a class on human trafficking in the United States. Non-whites expressed significantly higher levels of class interest than whites did among those who were in the majority condition; $t(254)=2.088, p=.038$. Such results are consistent with hypothesis 2, which predicted that those who are a part of a marginalized/minority community in American society will support the issue of human trafficking at a significantly higher level than those who are a part of the majority community. This data leads me to believe that race and identity to a marginalized group do have an influence on public support for issues like human trafficking, issues that largely prey upon racial minorities and marginalized groups.

The results from Figure 10 also highlight that, within the white subgroup of the population, victim type framing effects did exist. That is, exposure to the minority and majority conditions did produce significantly different results for the class interest measure. Whites who were exposed to the minority condition expressed significantly higher levels of interest in taking a class on the issue of human trafficking than whites who were in the majority condition; $t(354)=-2.663, p=.008$. Thus, the effect that “Nita” produced was substantial enough to compel white individuals to support the issue of human trafficking at significantly higher levels than the effect from the “Ava” graphic. Such results are inconsistent with the major research theory underlying the present research, which surmises that individuals care more about issues that affect people like themselves over issues that affect outgroup, or minority populations. The results, although unexpected, illuminate the complexity of a problem that has yet to be fully understood.

Conclusion for Exploratory Results

The findings draw from this study elucidate how different segments of the survey population respond to the issue of human trafficking. It appears that certain innate characteristics we possess as humans oblige us to care about policy issues differently. Our gender identity, race, and political beliefs all play a role in forming our impressions of the world, impressions which bias us into supporting one issue over another.

The presence of significant results between framing types among subgroups indicates that the perception of who victims of human trafficking are does play a role in garnering public support for anti-trafficking policies. It is important to note that, when looking at the survey population as a whole, significant effects did not exist between those who were in the majority

condition and those who were in the minority condition (see previous chapter). Significant effects only existed among specific subgroups of the population, as noted in this chapter. However, the factors that influence one's overall willingness to support such policies may be more nuanced than conventional wisdom lends it to be. Future research is required to address why certain subgroups of the population react differently to the framing of human trafficking victims than others.

When you take the complex, extremely multi-faceted issue of human trafficking, which is framed in a plethora of ways to the public, it becomes difficult to accurately conclude what factors are leading to increasing or decreasing levels of support for the policy issue. Perhaps women were more support of the anti-trafficking effort than men were because frames from the media often emphasize the predominance of female victims at the expense of males (Sharapov, 2014). Although this theory may explain the positive bias exhibited by women, it does not account for the totality of factors which may influence support for such a controversial, emotionally-charged, and deplorable issue.

The influence of third variables like gender, identity to a marginalized group, and race on attitudes towards human trafficking raises the following question: what other factors influence one's support for modern-day slavery? There are a number of factors that may influence one's ability to sympathize with the plight of trafficking victims and support policy that is aimed to eradicate the horrors they face. The significant results found in this section can only encourage other researchers to conduct more studies on the variables that influence support for issues that appear on the U.S. policy agenda. More work can be done on examining how factors like sexuality, income, and education levels affect the public's attitudes towards public policy. In regards to solving the issue of human trafficking, however, we must not be slow to explore

further research into the issue. As the human trafficking industry rapidly grows, we must strive to do as much as we can to figure out how to combat the rising number of domestic trafficking victims. We must also attempt to figure out why a society that champions freedom as one of its core values tolerates the issue of human trafficking within its hallowed borders.

Chapter 6: Concluding Thoughts and Moving Forward

This thesis addresses why individuals support (or do not support) the policy issue of domestic human trafficking in the United States. I hypothesized that support for domestic anti-trafficking policy was contingent upon the public's perception of *who* victims of child sex trafficking were. The results from the current study revealed that the perception of who victims of child sex trafficking were did not affect support for the issue of human trafficking among the survey sample. The data also showed that students care more about the issue of human trafficking when there is a face attached to the issue (regardless of who the face is perceived to be— “Ava” or “Nita”). These results discount the idea that factors like racism, sexism, and relatability to the victim population substantially influence levels of public policy support among those sampled for the issue of domestic human trafficking.

The lack of significant results for the framing conditions in this study paints a positive outcome for the future of the anti-trafficking fight, specifically through the creation of anti-trafficking legislation. For the United States to attempt to end domestic human trafficking, it must be able to mobilize enough support for anti-human trafficking policy from the general public. According to the current study, it does not appear to matter if the typical victim of child sex trafficking is a member of the minority or majority community in the United States. The fact that human trafficking is occurring within U.S. borders is enough to provoke a positive response from those surveyed. Such a response consisted of

1) recognition that the issue is important (dependent variable 2)

and

2) support for domestic anti-human trafficking policy in the United States (dependent variable 1)

Such results are in line with the vision asserted by the President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2014. Their vision for the country is to maintain “a system [of government] that recognizes all victims of human trafficking—whether adults or children, male, female, or transgender individuals, U.S. citizens or noncitizens—regardless of the type of modern-day slavery they endured” (2014, “Commitment to Action” page in the Introduction). Additionally, a majority of participants rated the issue of human trafficking as “extremely important,” regardless of the condition they were assigned to in the study (refer to Figure 6 for details). The results from Figure 6 show that individuals in the United States *do* care about the issue of domestic human trafficking. The question now becomes, *to what extent* do college students, or the public at large, care about this issue? Is human trafficking high enough of a priority on the U.S. domestic policy agenda for its presence to be substantially mitigated in society? Continuing to study the effects of framing in the fight against human trafficking can help address this question.

In the current study, perhaps the “Ava” and “Nita” frame did not have a strong enough of an effect to produce a significant change in the surveyor’s willingness to support the anti-trafficking effort. Or perhaps the survey population is not strongly influenced by an individual’s native or foreign-born status. It may also be true that biases such as xenophobia, racism, and related prejudices *do* significantly impact an individual’s policy preferences. However, the issue of human trafficking may be so grave that the effects of prejudice are overshadowed by the individual’s desire to support the preservation of greater humanitarian needs (such as right to not be trafficked).

Most of the research done on human trafficking to date has focused on its general framing as an industry. Such research addresses the human trafficking narrative as told by the

media, politicians, and human rights advocates alike. These narratives do not, as explained in the literature review, take a comprehensive look at who this industry specifically targets and how the public's attitudes towards this target population influences the potency of anti-trafficking legislation in the United States.

Thus, the present study adds to the existing literature by providing a foundation for studying victims of human trafficking and how they are perceived in society. As sociologist Andrea Nichols states in her book, *Sex Trafficking in the United States: Theory, Research, Policy, and Practice*, "since public opinion directly influences government policy it is important to understand the general public's attitudes towards...the public's awareness of sex trafficking" (Nichols, 2016, p. 6). Accordingly, this study examined the factors that drive public policy preferences through the framing of child sex trafficking victims. The focus of this research explored how positive factors like shared group identity or negative factors like prejudice towards beneficiaries of public policy affect overall support for the items on the U.S. domestic policy agenda. Additionally, future research can analyze how public support for policies is formed, maintained, and bolstered in the United States, especially regarding policy on sensitive and widely undermined issues like domestic sex trafficking.

The following paragraphs discuss future recommendations for the study of public attitudes on human trafficking policy. Those who wish to reexamine the issue of human trafficking should attempt to do so by considering a variety of other possible ways to frame the issue. Thus, a future study could look more closely at the beneficiaries of various types of legislation through a variety of different frames. Doing so will allow researchers to more closely analyze how our attitudes lead to changes in public policy support. The current study only manipulated the foreign-born or native-born status of trafficking victims. However, there may be

other possible ways to frame victims that can illuminate significant effects of framing type on support for anti-human trafficking policy. A new study could manipulate the race, gender, or age of the victim(s) to see how these variables influence overall levels of policy support for the issue of domestic (or even international) human trafficking. Similarly, one could also manipulate the frame of who traffickers are (as opposed to victims).

Perhaps framing a trafficker as a white, Caucasian male in his twenties would drastically change the public's reaction to the issue; we too often forget that perpetrators of this crime come from mainstream American society. The startling truth is that traffickers are not always disheveled, older-looking men or powerful foreign diplomats (Melton, 2017). Traffickers can be young, affluent-looking individuals who easily blend in with society (Melton, 2017). Sometimes, traffickers are even women (Shelley, 2010), a fact that is largely unknown in society. It is important that researchers study a variety of human trafficking frames in order to account for the many factors that influence public perception of the issue. An extended study could help legislators better understand how to successfully mobilize support for anti-trafficking policies they wish to propose.

The current survey experiment can be improved for future research in many ways. Having a larger survey sample may increase one's chances of finding significant results. Future researchers seeking to conduct similar studies should survey a variety of individuals; those of all ages, races, and geographic locations. The opinions of nearly 800 college students at one of the most liberal universities in the state of Texas is not necessarily representative of the American population at large. Any conclusions drawn from this study are thus limited and cannot be definitively applied to the general public. Online survey distribution software like Amazon's

Mechanical Turk (MTurk) may be helpful to researchers for its ability to gather survey data from individuals from all over the United States.

Future studies could also create more dependent measures for analyzing public attitudes towards policy issues like human trafficking. Perhaps the dependent measure was not the most effective way to operationalize support for the anti-trafficking initiative. Researchers could incorporate more survey questions which ask the respondent to record their support, interest, and dedication to fighting against the issue of human trafficking. Perhaps asking individuals how far they are willing to go to support the issue will be more telling of public support than the presentation of a hypothetical scenario. The stakes in choosing to support or not support anti-trafficking policy are relatively low in the budget proposal scenario presented in this study. The possibilities of survey design are endless and it is up to future researchers to both revisit and explore new ways of measuring levels of support for U.S. policies.

Lastly, the precedent set by this study can be used to explore other issues besides human trafficking. Reconsidering the many ways an issue can be framed will also help researchers study other items on the U.S. public policy agenda. A new study could look at how beneficiaries of asylum seekers are perceived by the public and how views of immigrants influence support for related legislation. This study could be used as a template for researchers who are searching for better, more nuanced ways to explore the effect of public attitudes on support for domestic or even foreign policy issues. That is, researchers can assess how factors like prejudice, victim relatability, and ethnocentrism all play a role in the subtle biases that form our impressions of policies besides human trafficking.

Appendix I

This appendix includes the Qualtrics survey (as seen below).

Qualtrics Survey:

Start of Block: Consent Form

U.S. Policy Attitudes Study

Conducted by: Sarah Beech, UT Department of Government, sbeech@utexas.edu

The University of Texas at Austin

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Derek Epp, depp@austin.utexas.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Also, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about why individuals care about certain U.S. policy issues.

If you choose to participate, we will ask you to read through a survey and answer some corresponding questions about policy preferences. We will also ask you to provide some basic demographic information. We expect that this survey will take you about 5 minutes. You can contact the faculty member at the above address and phone number to discuss the project.

The risks of participating in this project are no greater than everyday life. There are no costs for participation in this study. There are no benefits for participation.

You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections: To protect your privacy, we will not collect any information (like your name) that could personally identify you as a subject. The information collected from the survey may be given to the following organizations or individuals: the principle investigator of the study, the faculty sponsor(s) of the study, and members of the Institutional Review Board. The data or samples that we will collect about you will not be shared with any other researchers. In addition, we will not keep your research data to use for future study.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may decide not to participate, choose not to answer any question, or stop participating at any time without any penalty. If you want to withdraw from the project, simply exit out of the survey in your internet browser. Your results will not be saved unless you complete the entire survey.

Contacts and questions: Your decision whether or not to participate will have no affect with your relationship with Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin or any of the researchers or faculty listed above. If you have any questions about the research, please contact the faculty member or principle investigator listed above. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

1) **Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and consent to participate in the study:

☐ Yes

☐ No

2) Are you a student at the University of Texas at Austin?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Page Break

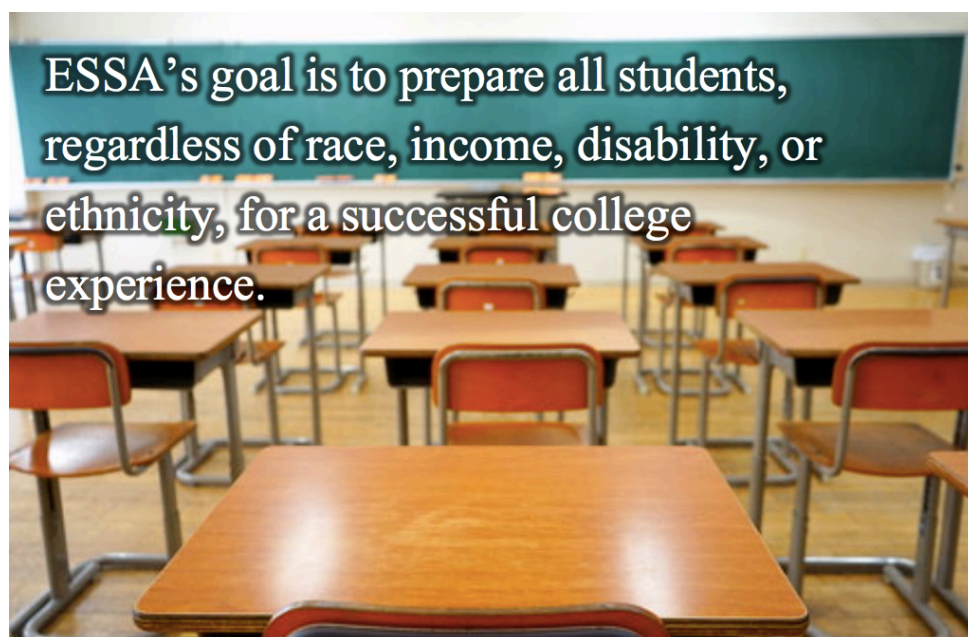
End of Block: Consent Form

Start of Block: Minority, Majority, and Control Conditions

Before you start the survey, I would like you to read the following background information on 4 different policy issues in the United States. Please read through and carefully consider all descriptions and pictures.

Page Break

Public Education: There are clear gaps in persistence and college degree completion among racial/ethnic and family income groups in the United States. Laws like Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which passed in 2015, aim to eliminate this gap by increasing college readiness among all students. This law also requires secondary schools to offer Advance Placement courses and career and college counseling for all students.



Page Break

(Minority Condition) **Human trafficking:** Human trafficking is a booming industry in the United States, with sex trafficking and labor trafficking comprising its most common forms. Researchers conclude that the problem is significantly increasing on the demand side as internet platforms enable sex tourism to grow. Although human trafficking can affect anyone, the primary victims of human trafficking in the U.S. are foreign-born, international individuals.



Meet Nitza, a native from Honduras.

She is one of the 200,000 to 300,000 foreign-born girls who are trafficked every year into the U.S.

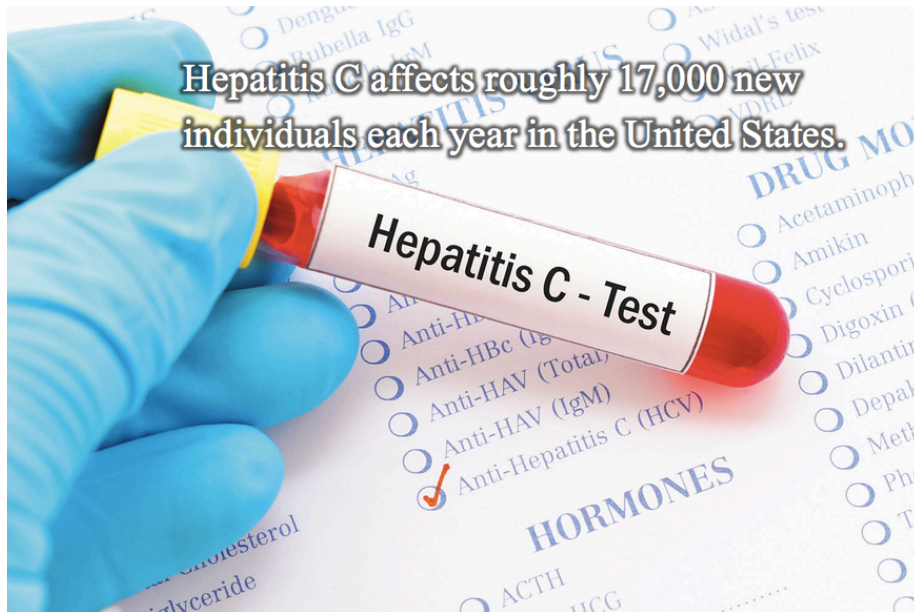
(Majority Condition) **Human trafficking:** Human trafficking is a booming industry in the United States, with sex trafficking and labor trafficking comprising its most common forms. Researchers conclude that the problem is significantly increasing on the demand side as internet platforms enable sex tourism to grow. Although human trafficking can affect anyone, the primary victims of human trafficking in the U.S. are native-born, American citizens.



Meet Ava, a girl from Cedar Park, Texas.

She is one of the 200,000 to 300,000 American-born girls who are trafficked every year in the U.S.

Hepatitis C: The CDC reports that the number of individuals infected with Hepatitis C in the United States is increasing. This viral infection, which is transmitted through direct contact with an infected person's blood, often leads to chronic liver disease. Since this disease is so difficult to treat, some individuals support increasing U.S. government funds to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health for Hepatitis C research.



Page Break

Immigration Reform: Within the past two decades the U.S. government has heightened national security by hiring more border guards and increasing technology at the U.S.-Mexico border. Although these efforts are in place, many individuals still try to illegally cross the border and seek asylum in the U.S. The current debate hinges on whether or not the government should make it easier or harder for individuals to enter the U.S.



Page Break

3) Please read through the prompt and follow the instructions given:

The United States Congress is finalizing its budget for the next fiscal year. Congress has \$10 billion dollars left to spend, but the money can only go towards one of the following programs. Please indicate which program you would like to fund. Please rate your preference on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest priority program and 4 being the lowest priority program.

- ☐ Public Education Reform
 - ☐ Anti-Human Trafficking Reform
 - ☐ Hepatitis C Research Funding
 - ☐ Immigration Reform
-

Please answer the following questions:

4) How important are the following U.S. domestic policy issues to you?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Public Education Reform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anti-Human Trafficking Reform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hepatitis C Research Funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Immigration Reform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5) Would you be interested in signing up for a course at UT on any of the following topics (if the class could easily fit into your degree plan)? Please mark all that apply.

- ☐ U.S. Public Education
- ☐ Human Trafficking in the U.S.
- ☐ The Hepatitis C Endemic
- ☐ Immigration in the U.S.

Page Break

This is the final section of the survey. Please answer the following demographic questions:

6) What is your race? (mark all that apply)

☐

White

☐

Black or African American

☐

American Indian or Alaska Native

☐

Asian

☐

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

☐

Other: _____

7) What is your ethnicity?

☐

Hispanic or Latino

☐

Not Hispanic or Latino



8) What is your age?

9) What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Not Specified
-

10) Please indicate your political party affiliation (if any):

- ☐ Republican Party
- ☐ Democratic Party
- ☐ Independent Party
- ☐ Libertarian Party
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ No affiliation
-

11) Were you born in the United States?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
-

12) Do you consider yourself a member of the LGBTQ+ community?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
-

13) How important is your ethnicity to your identity?

- ☐ Not at all important
 - ☐ Slightly important
 - ☐ Moderately important
 - ☐ Very important
 - ☐ Extremely important
-

Please rate your level of agreement with the following two statements:

14) The U.S. government should pay more attention to the needs of the minority or marginalized communities in American society.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Strongly agree
-

15) I consider myself a part of a marginalized or minority community in American society.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

Thank you for completing the survey. You will now be directed to a debriefing form that explains the purpose of the study and provides contact information if you have any questions or comments for the researchers.

Page Break

Start of Block: Debriefing Form

U.S. Policy Attitudes Study

Purpose of the Study: You were told that the purpose of the study was to “learn more about why individuals care about certain policy issues more than other policy issues.” The real purpose of this study is to assess how victim framing affects the public’s willingness to prioritize human trafficking reform on the U.S. public policy agenda.

You were not given the real purpose of the study in case that would have changed your answers or how you acted. This is an ongoing study and we do not want this detail to influence future participants. We ask that you do not tell others about the real purpose until the Spring 2019 semester is over.

Present research concludes that there are roughly 200,000 to 300,000 American girls are trafficked in the U.S. every year. In regards to nationality, research suggests that most victims of sexual trafficking in the U.S. are American-born minors (and not international victims). However, these numbers are often disputed due to difficulty in reporting incidents of human trafficking.

Remember, we want to understand how people act in general. We will never draw any results about you personally. Because your name and other identifying information was not collected,

your survey responses will not be linked to you in any way.

If you want more information about this study, you can talk to the follow investigator: Sarah Beech, sbeech@utexas.edu, 281-881-9527.

If you would like to talk about this study with someone not involved in the study, you can contact The Office of Research Support at The University of Texas at Austin by phone or e-mail at (512) 471-8871 or orosc@uts.cc.utexas.edu

End of Block: Debriefing Form

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