

Framing Labour Trafficking, Modern Slavery, & Forced Labour

The Canadian Context

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Agenda

Section 1

Gil Niessen | **Canada's Human Trafficking Action Plans**

Section 2

Stephanie Holman | **Labour Trafficking in Canada**

Section 3

Will Foley | **Canadian Media Coverage of Labour Trafficking, Modern Slavery,
and Forced Labour**



Canada's Human Trafficking Action Plans

Policy Analysis

Documents & Key Themes

2012 - Conservative Action Plan (National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking)

2019 - Liberal Action Plan (National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking)

- Key actors in the policy universe construct human-trafficking “problems”
 - Governments, media/entertainment, NGOs, etc.
- Policy-based problem solving, not evidence-led
- How do we analyze policy problems?

What is the Problem Represented to Be?

- Bacchi (2009) suggests that government policy does not solve problems, but produces them
- Key considerations:
 - What is the problem?
 - What assumptions underpin the problem?
 - What is left unproblematic?
 - What effects are produced by the problem?
 - How/where is the problem produced/disseminated/defended?

Rhetoric Analysis

- Policy problems utilize rhetoric as a persuasive device
- Rhetorical appeals often idealize victims and oversimplify problems
- Anti-trafficking rhetoric often focuses on sexual exploitation
- Rhetorics of pathos centre compassion rather than broader debates

For example (2012 Conservative Action Plan):

“Human trafficking and all forms of child exploitation is a horrific abuse of human rights and impacts all of us. Defeating it must unite us all as a nation in the fight to protect our most vulnerable citizens.”

Joy Smith, Member of Parliament for Kildonan-St. Paul



Discourse Analysis

- Policy is discursively constructed and has implicit interpretations
- Discourses position traffickers/victims/actors in limited subject positions
- Key considerations:
 - Who is vulnerable?
 - How do policy problems limit their subject positions (and policy solutions)?

For example (2019 Liberal Action Plan):

A 22-year old female entered into a romantic relationship with an individual who would provide drugs to her and her friends. She was transported to an apartment by her alleged boyfriend, locked into the bedroom and forced, by sexual assault and threats, to provide sexual services to men. The victim fell pregnant and was forced to continue working and was given drugs and alcohol to feed her addiction.



*Sharapov, K. (2017). 'Traffickers and *their* victims': Anti-trafficking policy in the United Kingdom. *Critical Sociology*, 43(1), 91-111.

*Fournier, S. (2020). *The human trafficking crusade: A content analysis of Canadian newspaper articles*. [Master's thesis, University of Ottawa]. uO Research.

A Selection of Codes

Policy Problem

Policy Solution

Canadian Factors

International Influences

Challenges/Limitations

Victims

External Forces

Lexical

Rhetoric/Discourse



Preliminary Findings

2012 Conservative Action Plan

Problems: Intimidation/violence, gender inequality, lack of education/social programs, demands for sexual services

Victims: women, vulnerable, impoverished

Solutions: criminal accountability, awareness training, RCMP task force, data collection, immigration amendments

(Call to Action 2018)

2019 Liberal Action Plan

Problems: Some people are vulnerable to poverty, sexism, racism, lack of education/social programs, demand for low-cost goods

Victims: women, vulnerable, impoverished

Solutions: empower victims, raise awareness, work with private sector, CSR, immigration amendments, supply chains/CSR transparency



Limitations of Canadian policy problems

- Reactionary
- Often ignores root causes of modern slavery/exploitation
- Victims have little to no agency
- Implies that demand for sex/goods causes exploitation

- Ignores trafficking/exploitation within Canada
- Supports oppressive sex work legislation within Canada
- Paternalistic/saviour narratives
- Discourses: immigration control, moral crusades, CSR, securitization



Labour Trafficking in Canada

Literature Review

Introducing Work & Method

- Dominant discourse focuses on sex trafficking
- Method
 - Identified 30+ peer-reviewed articles, guides, government reports and book chapters
 - Search engines: Academic OneFile, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Nexis Uni
 - Search terms: “modern slavery”, “forced labour”, “labour exploitation”, “human trafficking”, “sex trafficking”, and “labour trafficking”, also adding “in Canada”
- Two overarching categories
 - Legal definitions and approaches
 - Preponderance of labour trafficking and its causes

Legal Doctrinal and Critical Legal

- Limitations of Canada's current legislation in addressing labour trafficking, particularly in the context of criminal law
- Legal alternatives focused on remedies for the victim
 - Human rights law
 - Labour law
- Socio-Legal and Theoretical
 - Assembling a social understanding of labour trafficking
 - Impact of legal jurisdiction and the confusion of competing jurisdictions

Labour Trafficking in Canada by the Numbers

- Available and accurate data is extremely limited – why?
 - Legislative focus on traffickers in the criminal context
 - Continuum of exploitation
 - Reluctancy of workers to report

Practices Resulting in Labour Trafficking in Canada

- **MICRO & MESO**

- Migrant workers in Canada experience compounded vulnerability
- Language barriers & limited resources
- Poor socio-economic conditions in their country of origin
- Precarious immigration status
 - Cases treated as illegal immigration, fear of being criminalized
 - Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP)
 - Third-party recruiters taking advantage of migrant workers

Practices Resulting in Labour Trafficking in Canada

- **MACRO**

- Broader social and economic factors driving migration and creating vulnerability
- International economic inequality, 'economic refugees'
- Potential impact of climate change, 'climate refugees'

Canadian Media

Coverage of Labour Trafficking, Modern Slavery, and Forced Labour

Analyzing the Globe and Mail and National Post

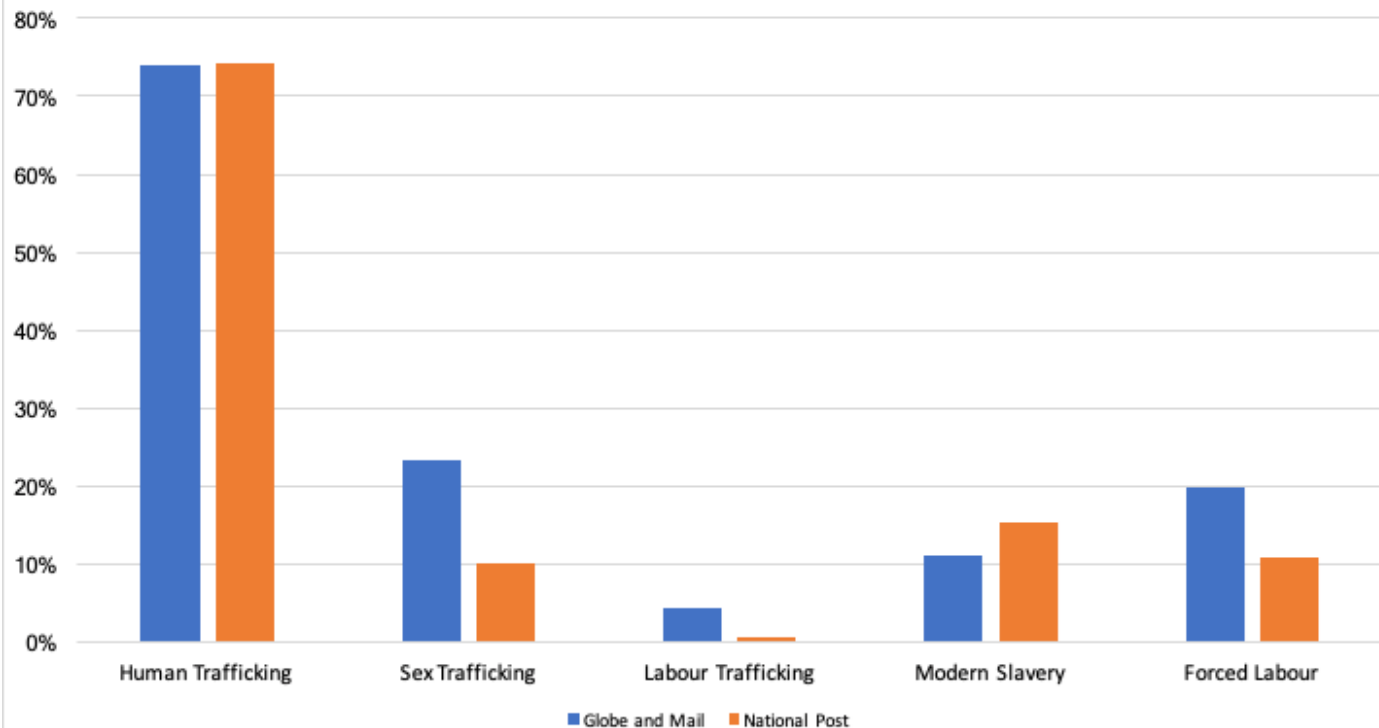
Methods

- Collected From the Database NEXIS UNI
- Date range: 2011-2019
- Search Term: Human Trafficking, Sex Trafficking, Forced Labour, Modern Slavery
- Exclusion Criteria

Why the Globe and Mail and National Post?



Figure 1. Examining the frequency of appearance of search terms in The Globe and Mail as compared to the National Post



Content of Labour Trafficking, Modern Slavery, Forced Labour Articles

Labour Trafficking

- Most articles (4/6) with the term 'labour trafficking' do not examine instances of labour trafficking
- Two that do-focus is on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

Modern Slavery & Forced Labour

In Canada

- News story of trafficking, or quote government officials
- Modern Slavery Legislation:
 - National Post and Globe and mail's differing perspectives

Internationally

- Focus on Supply Chains
 - Little discussion of root causes
- As a problem of the Global South

Concluding Thoughts

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