SHAME IN SHQIPERI: POST-SEX TRAFFICKED FEMALE EXPERIENCE IN CONTEMPORARY ALBANIA

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the perceptions and experiences of Albanian women post-sex trafficking, upon their return to Albania. It interrogates these experiences through notions of shame and victimization, arguing that such notions can be both societally and self-imposed to create a climate in which these women are often excluded from or unable to (re)join Albanian society. It argues that notions of victimhood, often imposed by the international community and NGOs, have the power to compound domestic marginalization by promoting a narrative of victimhood which, when viewed through the Albanian mentality/*mentalitet schqipare* promotes exclusion, rather than inclusion. In arguing for such a case, I conduct a discourse analysis of interviews of post-sex trafficked women, as conducted by Vatra, an Albanian organization established to aid women post-sex trafficking, as well as looking at the wider public discourse including national and international newspaper articles. What, overall, this work seeks to present is the idea that Albanian society itself needs to reframe how it thinks about women post-sex trafficking, thinking of them not as victims, and therefore worthy of shame, but as survivors.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference. I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 18,002 words

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Signed _____Marcela Dodi

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1. Introduction - The role of NGOs and initiatives to prevent sex trafficking In Albania

As an Albanian woman born in the 1990s, I along with many other people of my generation, entered into a transitioning society, an fragile society that had just overthrown the communist government and was about to experience democracy. Our childhood was atypical, our parents faced and dealt with widespread poverty, immense crime rates. and socio-economic instability. From the age of eight I can recall being exposed to and listening to stories and warnings about sex trafficking and crime, hearing them in various places from the neighborhood, to in friends' houses and round and about on the streets. While sex trafficking was a taboo, and still remains a taboo subject, there was also a lot of fear and panic around it in the mid-1990s, which played a huge role in shaping my knowledge and understanding of the issue. This issue has been one that has been close to my heart and has influenced me to pursue a career and degree in gender studies and, as is already apparent, to write and reflect upon it over the course of this work.

Furthermore, it is a subject which I feel deserves to have more literature and a more diverse set of narratives produced around it, in particular, when speaking of the Albanian context, narratives that are produced by Albanian scholars themselves. I chose to focus my work on the aftermath of the lives of women who have been a part of the sex trafficking narrative and the way in which a particular organization, Vatra, aims to integrate these women in to the society. Their mission is to make sure that women who came back have a place in society, however I will analyze that the terminology and label "victim" prevents them from doing so because it further reproduces and marginalizes women through the concept of shame.

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Albania is one of the countries which has been most heavily affected by the human/sex trafficking phenomena that emerged in the mid-90's in the wake of its democratic turn, after having been isolated from the rest of the world for roughly fifty years.[1] There are no exact numbers to show but roughly 10,000 to 30,000 women and children were estimated to have passed "through the port of Vlora. This city served as a major gateway to Italy and the rest of Europe because of its strategic location close to the Italian border."[2] Due to its geographical significance and the enormous amount of trafficked women, Albania has received international attention which has further established and encouraged non-profit work in the fight against human and sex trafficking.

The international pressure and initiative to combat sex trafficking has also been put on the Albanian government, which has led to the passing of more legislations concerning the sex trafficking problem and fighting it "with the aim of punishing perpetrators and curbing the wide-spread corruption, especially among the police".[3] The solution to the wide-spread trafficking problem in Albania has been facilitated by the intervention of the international world, aid, and pressure. This does not mean that the fight against trafficking has been achieved and successfully conquered through international intervention. Furthermore, a recent UNHCR[4] report shows that the work towards combating trafficking through prosecution has not been achieved and is not meeting the standards placed by the international aid and efforts. The report illustrates that even though international aid is being received by local governments, the involvement and work does not seem to reflect massive efforts by local officials.[5] While this shows that international measures are being

[1] Venera Bekteshi, Eglantina Gjermeni, Mary Van Hook, "Modern day slavery: sex trafficking in Albania" *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 32, 7/8 (2012), 480-494.
[2] Bekteshi, "Modern day slavery," 482.
[3] Ibid., 482.
[4] United Nations, "2018 Trafficking in Persons Report - Albania" (*Refworld*, 2018).
[5] The government allocated 5.7 million lek ($51,540) to the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (ONAC) in 2016 and 2017. The national action plan expired in December 2017, but ONAC, in cooperation with an

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taken and that the access to international initiative and aid is being made available, it also shows that local involvement of organizations and officials is low and not being fully utilized by local officials.

There has also been a religious approach from faith-based organizations which has further encouraged their own missions, providing aid and funding in Albania in order to fight against sex trafficking as part of a moral and religious compulsion. Scholars and academics like Gjermeni and Van Hook have praised the role of faith-based programs and their involvement in the international initiative to preventing human/sex trafficking.[6] They commend the work of non-governmental organizations for putting pressure on the Albanian government, as well as their crafting of legislation regarding prevention and support.[7] Gjermeni and Van Hook illustrate the religious initiative as follows, "The mission statement of Religious United In Albania against Trafficking in Human Persons (URAT), an organization of religious (members of a religious order) working to combat human trafficking in Albania, highlights both its commitment to Christian social justice and a spirit of collaboration".[8] The approach and analysis provided by Gjermani and Van Hook seems to align more with the notion of saving the "the helpless victims" and "pleasing humanitarian and religious constituencies" as illustrated by Brisk. The praising of religious organizations and programs can be problematic as often they are using their own agenda to influence change in order to meet their own mission, rather than necessarily thinking entirely selflessly about the subjects of their intervention.

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international organization, convened three meetings with stakeholders to begin developing a new plan. ONAC continued to publish regular activity reports on its website and held four meetings with stakeholders involved in the NRM. Observers reported prosecutors rarely attended NRM meetings. Twelve regional anti-trafficking committees (RATC) comprising local officials and NGOs worked on prevention and victim assistance.

[6] Eglantina Gjermeni, Mary Van Hook, "Trafficking of Human Beings in Albania: The Role of Faith-Based Programs" *Social Work & Christianity* 39, 4 (2012), 435-448.

[7] Gjermeni and Hook, "Trafficking of Human Beings," 440.

[8] Ibid., 441.

Such actions are not limited to religious organizations but can also come from NGOs or feminists considering the notions of sex trafficking and sex trafficked women, as the narratively frame the issue, influenced by their own opinion and understandings of it. Framing, Chong and Duckman argue is when, "an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations. Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue."[9] When organizations chose to frame something in a certain way, it can become problematic because it shows how power can be utilized on the international stage to further the organization's particular agenda, framing their perspective as the most important. Therein, relieving governments and local legal systems from dealing with the issue of sex trafficking, by making said organizations perspective assume primary global importance.

In order to understand the role of NGOs in Albania it is important to note that their role has been based on international intervention, as well as aided by international funds which promote the combatting of sex trafficking. By doing so, the organizations end up doing work that should be accomplished by government and government officials. A good example of this is Vatra, a non-profit in Vlore, Albania. "The mission of "Vatra", a Psycho-Social Centre, is to prevent trafficking of human beings and fight against domestic violence, while at the same time protect and provide social inclusion to the victims of these phenomena by means of information, education, and advocacy programmes, and through community and residential social services".[10] Vatra's mission indicates that they see themselves in Albanian society as saviors and protectors of these women, as they are one of the few organizations that deals with sex trafficking and prevention.

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[9] Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (2007), 104.
[10] "Qendra Vatra," accessed June 6, 2019, http://www.qendravatra.org.al/.

While I commend the work that they are doing, I also feel that situating the mission and aim as that of a protector can create a savior complex, which can take away both agency and empowerment for women post-sex trafficking.

'Vatra' has been involved with government officials and legislation in order to bring forth awareness and preventions. In their Strategic Planning Manual, 'Vatra' notes their involvement with both governmental offices as well as with the legal and the legislative office. It is important to say here that Vatra receives international funding and can therefore be thought of as an international NGO. It is evident that the work and role of NGOs in Albania is based on an international legal framework and funded by international organizations and/or aid which further put the burden on the local government.

It is worth noting that both the radical feminist and liberal feminist approaches have impacted and altered both the narratives of women experiencing sex trafficking and the legal international intervention and the international intervention of NGOs. Brysk, highlights the ways in which human trafficking has been positioned as an international human rights initiative and claims that "the narrative of trafficking itself has particularly salient features for contemporary Western publics, vis-à-vis other type of human rights abuse."[11] Moreover, the international attention has become so wide-spread and glossed through the media and film industry, noticing also that in a college setting, students without knowledge of human rights law were more concerned with human trafficking issues than with any other human rights issue.[12] Brysk's analysis of the sex trafficking narrative, with respect to international involvement, sheds light on the overwhelming attention and framing of this issue and the ways in which international organizations have become involved.

[11] Alison Brysk, "Beyond Framing and Shaming: Human Trafficking, Human Security and Human Rights," *Journal of Human Security* 5, no. 3 (2009), 15.
[12] Brysk, "Beyond Framing," 11–12.

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Such framing can also be problematic because it changes the narrative of sex-work and migration and the way in which this narrative is constructed. Doezema notes that this new the feminist involvement has created, in the last two decades, a "campaign against "trafficking in women"" which has gained increasing momentum worldwide, but in particular among feminists in Europe and the United States. This current campaign is not the first time that the international community has become concerned with the fate of young women abroad."[13] Hence, it essential to analyze the correlation between feminist, international organizations and international aid which all contribute to the limited narrative of survivors of sex trafficking.

The international initiative and/or involvement can be clearly observed through Vatra, as it is one of the main organizations working to combat sex trafficking, with the objective of integrating women post-sex trafficking in Albania. While Vatra does partner with about 32 local non-profit organizations and government agencies in Albania, there are is no funding or even donors that are from Albania. The majority of funding for projects from 2007-2019 has been coming from European organizations and aid, such as Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), OSCE, UN Commission, etc., while the other portion is from the USA from organizations such as the US Embassy, USAID, and US Department of State, etc.[14] In addition, Vatra's international donors and partners are of high numbers which have heavily influenced the mission and the work of the organization. Therefore, there are overlaps between donors and partners with organizations such as Anti-Slavery International, International Organization for Migration, and Amenity International which have very specific missions and goals towards anti-trafficking and sex trafficking issues.[15]

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[13] Jo Doezema, "Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-Emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women," *Gender Issues* 18, no. 1 (December 1999), 23.
[14] See graph below for funding of projects of Vatra.
[15] See graph below for more info.

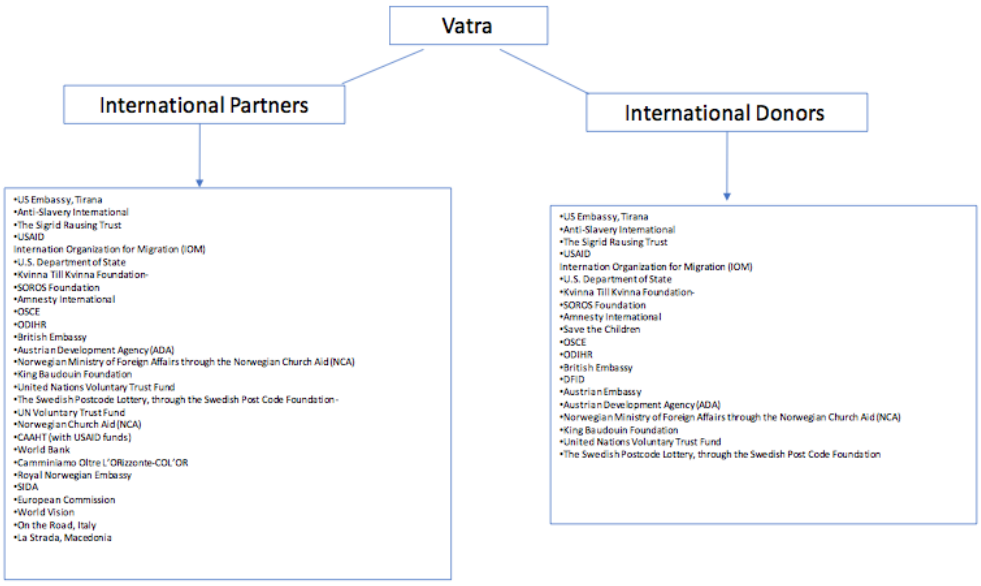

Fig 1. Vatra's Donors and Partners

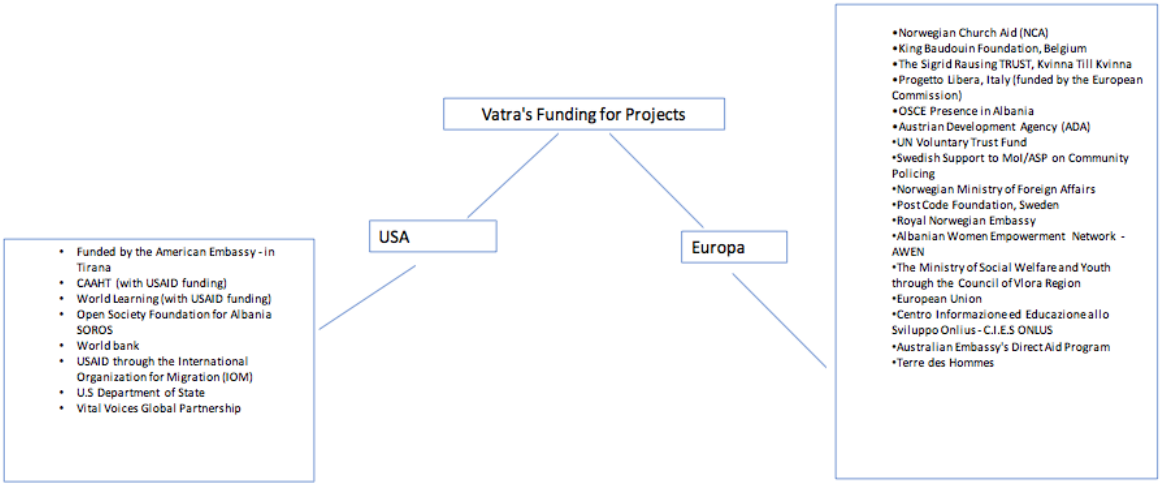

Fig 2. Vatra's Funding for Projects

1.1 Chapter Outline

In this thesis, I will first introduce and explore the concept of sex trafficking prevention, looking at the work of Vatra, an NGO based in Albania, which deals with post-sex trafficked women, addressing questions as to how to reintegrate them into society and more broadly, it's

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mission to prevent sex trafficking. Following this chapter, I will briefly outline the historical context and political shift of Albania after the fall of Communism during the early 1990s and into the 2000s to provide the context in which migration and sex trafficking takes place. In the third chapter I will position myself and situate myself as both an Albanian and American scholar, while providing my methodology for this research project. Then in the fourth chapter, I will utilize liberal and radical feminist theory regarding sex- trafficking and prostitution to explain the way in which international organizations and NGOs have contributed to the intervention of sex trafficking narratives. I analyze selected online texts and interviews from both the Vatra website and Albanian newspapers to show how victimization and shame is interpreted in Albanian public discourse. In the fifth and sixth chapters I then illustrate how shame and victimization further marginalize women post-sex trafficking before concluding and summarizing everything in my final chapter.

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2. Albania's Political and Historical Shift

2.1 Albania's Shift from Communism to Neoliberal Democracy – The Early 1990s

Neoliberalism and democracy appeared and rapidly occurred in the Albanian political and social sphere after the fall of communism in the 1990s.[16] Whilst neoliberal democratic systems emerged in most European countries after the fall of the communism, the case of Albania differs because it was completely isolated from the rest of the outside world for about 50 years. Albania and its economic-political shifts have been described by Clunies-Ross and Sudar as unusual, arguing that, "Albania was a maverick in Cold War Europe, and it has continued to be a maverick among the 'transition economies'."[17] Albania in the early 1990s emerged from its total exclusion from international markets to a full-blown open market, with no transition or regulations on how to implement these new systems.[18] Neoliberalism in Albania brought forth migration and sex trafficking which eventually spread at a large scale and were some of the main contributing factors to the shift in the role and perception of Albanian woman after communism.

Neoliberalism is based on the notion that competition and open markets are the center of the government, state, and society, it is a system which removes the citizens as human and expects them to participate as competitive agents. Chomsky explains that "the 'principal architects' of the neoliberal 'Washington Consensus' are the masters of the private economy, mainly huge corpora-

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[16] Blendi Kajsiu, "The Birth of Corruption and the Politics of Anti-Corruption in Albania, 1991–2005," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 6 (November 2013), 1008–25.
[17] Anthony Clunies-Ross, Petar Sudar, and Petar Sudar, *Albania's Economy in Transition and Turmoil 1990-97* (Routledge, 2019), 1.
[18] Clunies-Ross et al., *Albania's Economy*, 2–4.

tions that control much of the international economy, and have the means to dominate policy formation as well as structuring of thought and opinion."[19] Thus, in order to understand the role of neoliberalism, one must understand the emphasis put forth by governments on the markets and their role in shaping policy and society. This completely alienates citizens and also encourages them to put the markets and profits first.[20]

The focus of neoliberalism is on gathering the capital by owners and institutions that have financialized and redistributed the axis of control.[21] Monbiot defines neoliberalism through human competition as follows, "Neoliberalism sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations. It redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency."[22] In other words, neoliberalist economic markets have replaced the role of society and its ability to influence governments and policy-making, stripping the agency of society by way of consumption and the enforced need to survive.[23] In return, individuals have a stronger relationship and stake in the market and profit, that in some cases also allows them to commodify other humans in the process.

The political, social and economic shift from communism to a democratic neoliberal system in Albania was not a smooth transition by any means.[24] As I will discuss, this shift played a key role in the commodification of women's bodies as the political and social sphere changed to

[19] Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (Seven Stories Press, 2011), 20.
[20] Chomsky, *Profit Over People*, 20–21.
[21] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (Verso, 2006), 24.
[22] George Monbiot, "Neoliberalism–the Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems," *The Guardian* 15, no. 04 (2016).
[23] Monibot, "Neoliberalism".
[24] Elez Biberaj, *Albania in Transition : The Rocky Road to Democracy*, Nations of the Modern World. Europe (Boulder, Col. : Westview Press, 1998, n.d.); Fred Abrahams, *Modern Albania : From Dictatorship to Democracy in Europe* (New York : New York University Press, 2015, 2015); Clunies-Ross, Sudar, and Sudar, *Albania's Economy in Transition and Turmoil 1990-97*.

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regressive gender roles and norms, neoliberalism created problems in both the economic and the social spheres. Occurring during a sensitive transition period, where issues such as poverty, the opening up of closed borders after 50 years and a collapsing dictatorship were surrounding Albanian citizens, economic and political shocks were just some of the numerous changes experienced by them during the 1990s.[25] However, the collapse of the old system was accompanied by feelings of hope for a new democratic system, which would afford freedom and opportunity towards a stable financial life for both men and women. Thus, democracy and neoliberalism seemed to be the answer and the beacon of light for people in Albania which, one could argue, was desperately needed.[26] The hopes and feelings for a brighter future seemed too good to be true, given that there was no government or a political body in place to establish such systems.

The state and its citizens experienced this shift harshly, as the extreme change meant going from a total control of dictatorship system to an uncontrolled society.[27] Pettifer illustrates this change and shift from communism to neoliberalism in Albania explaining that, "it was very hard to run from the autarchic and isolated society that Albania used to be towards the wider world."[28] The one-party system had been able to pass laws and legislation, but the new politicians and system were not even able to agree on establishing a basic election law, that was part of the democratic experimentation in the first six years.[29] Moreover, Biberaj explains the transition as, "this political stalemate and drift away from democratic processes significantly increased the political, economic,

[25] James Pettifer and Miranda Vickers, *The Albanian Question: Reshaping the Balkans* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).
[26] 'At the time GDP in Albania was roughly $1200 per capita, roughly a third of the global average. "Albania GDP per Capita" Trading Economics, Accessed May 31, 2019, https://tradingeconomics.com/albania/gdp-per-capita
[27] James Pettifer, "Albania: From Hunger to Consumer Society -- A Price?," *Suedosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 51, no. 1 (January 2011): 71; Mathias Lerch, "The Impact of Migration on Fertility in Post-Communist Albania," *Journal of Southeast European & Black Sea Studies* 9, no. 4 (December 2009): 519–37.
[28] Pettifer, "Albania," 72.
[29] Abrahams, *Modern Albania*, 212.

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and social strains on Albania's fragile democracy."[30] Between rigged elections and the fall of the pyramid scheme which crumbled the economic system within the first few years, Albania was hit with an armed revolt from gangs that took over major cities.[31] In the following years the system was unable to regain itself fully in order to productively institute a democratic system.

The new issues that arose were dynamics of corruption produced by neoliberalism in an already weak democratic system.[32] Kajsiu claims that the neoliberal system and corruption operated hand in hand as, "the corruption discourse that came to dominate the Albanian public discussion during the period 1998 – 2005 served to legitimize a neoliberal regime by rearticulating corruption primarily as an inherent feature of the public sector that could be eradicated through privatization, deregulation, and the diminution of the public sector."[33] Corruption become a major part of the public sectors, especially within the political and legislative sphere,s which also gave way and fueled criminal and illegal practices.[34] As noted by Kara, the economic and political crises were also the doings of the new state and system, "The first crisis was the spectacular collapse of several pyramid schemes in 1997, in which Albanians lost over one billion dollars, totaling the savings of over 70 percent of the country."[35] While this was common in other post-communist countries, Albanian people got the worst of it because "almost every Albanian invested in the schemes and there was also a sense of mistrust towards the new government as "suspicions ran

[30] Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 311.
[31] Ibid., 311–20.
[32] "Following rapid liberalization and privatization in the Albanian economy after 1991, corruption also marked the transformation of the former communists into capitalists. There was growing anxiety that those who had been privileged under communism were in the best position to benefit from an open market economy", Kajsiu 1010.

[33] Kajsiu, "The Birth of Corruption and the Politics of Anti-Corruption in Albania, 1991–2005," 1009.
[34] Kajsiu, "The Birth of Corruption," 1011.
[35] Siddharth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery* (Columbia University Press, 2009), 142.

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high that corrupt politicians and organized crime groups were responsible for the treachery."[36] These new politicians, along the new government, was predominately made up by male politicians and the scheme was thought to have been orchestrated by Sali Berisha the president at the time of the economic collapse.[37] Women, even though they were part of the new neoliberal system, were not in positions of power within it, they invested in and were impacted by the corruption but did not have much ability to change the system itself.

As women were not participants in the new governmental structure and held little power under the constraining patriarchal roles they suffered in ways that were not just financial.[38] Women also fell prey to many illegal immigration schemes and privatized tracking activities, executed by gangs in the new neoliberal democratic state.[39] The role of women changed along with the decline of opportunity, the lack of access to jobs and lack of prosperity which was contributed by the new neoliberal regime and practices. This overt change had direct consequences for Albanian women, as these women had enjoyed some privileges in the workforce and public life under the communist regime. Vullnetari notes that, "political participation also improved, albeit through allocated quotas. For instance, between 1970 and 1990, women constituted around 30 per cent of the People's Assembly representatives." Furthermore, women increasingly joined the labour force outside the home and by 1989 around 80 per cent of working- age women were employed."[40] This shows that women were participating and had more opportunities of employment under the communist regime

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[36] Kara, *Sex Trafickking*, 142.
[37] Ibid., 142.
[38] Venera Bekteshi, Eglantina Gjermeni, and Mary Van Hook, "Modern Day Slavery: Sex Trafficking in Albania," *International Journal of Sociology & Social Policy* 32, no. 7/8 (July 2012), 481.
[39] Bekteshi et al., "Modern Day Slavery," 481–83.
[40] Julie Vullnetari, "Women and Migration in Albania: A View from the Village," *International Migration* 50, no. 5 (October 2012), 171.

which drastically disappeared during the new neoliberal democratic system. These statistics illustrate the extreme changes that occurred within women's roles in Albania and the ways in which they were linked to the neoliberal system and marginalization of women.

2.2 Neoliberalism in Albania – 1990 to 2000

The failed move towards a new political structure, which manifested itself in the form of anarchy, paved the way for immigration and was the main contributor towards mass migration, as people were forced to escape the new unequal and harsh democratic neoliberal system.[41] As King, Piracha and Vullnetari note, migration was linked to economic transition and contributed to the mass migration. "Barjaba produced a widely quoted total of 800,000 Albanian residents abroad in 1999, and this was raised to more than 1 million by the government of Albania in 2005. Given the size of the Albanian population (3 million in 2001), this implies that more than one-quarter of Albanians have moved abroad since 1990."[42] This mass migration as reported was due to multiple political and economic factors that show both the instability of the Albanian state, as well the need that individuals had for migration due to the exclusion and exile that they had previously experienced as a society. This massive migration was correspondingly in considerable amount of numbers because of the proximity to other European countries which offered more prospect according to King, Piracha and Vullnetrari as explained as such;

> The geography of Albanian emigration has been very simple. Two "corridors" of movement have predominated, one across the Adriatic Sea to Italy, the other over the southern mountainous border to Greece. Both produced vivid human images of a population desperate to engage with the outside world, which they had been denied access to for so long:

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[41] Kajsiu, "The Birth of Corruption," 1010.
[42] Russell King, Matloob Piracha, and Julie Vullnetari, "Migration and Development in Transition Economies of Southeastern Europe: Albania and Kosovo," *Eastern European Economics* 48, no. 6 (2010), 3.

> boats turned into human mountains bearing down on the ports of Bari and Brindisi in southern Italy; and columns of young men snaking along remote mountain passes, walking clandestinely into Greece, playing cat and mouse with the Greek border guards.[43]

It is imperative to note here, both the enormous number of migrants and the high risk of dangerous routes which migration, which they would rather undertake in a desperate attempt to flee the unstable social-economic situation. Migration was not unusual and thought of by many as necessary to escape the socio-economic inequality created by neoliberalism.

The unstable government made mass migration, through methods such as trafficking and smuggling, possible and fostered many other exploitative and dangerous practices that were reinforced through neoliberalism.[44] Kajsiu highlights these practices, noting that "By 1995, problems of crime, trafficking of humans and drugs... These phenomena had been growing, as expanding criminal networks got involved in smuggling petrol and weapons into Yugoslavia and trafficking drugs and human beings from Albania into Italy and other EU countries, especially from the coastal cities of Durres and Vlora."[45] It was during the political and economic turmoil that weaker individuals in society suffered most, and in this case it was the Albanian young women that were most affected by hardship. As Vullnetari shows, the economic changes and losses that women underwent during this period and political shift were most acute:

> While three-quarters of working-age women (15–54) were in the labour force in 1991, by 2002 less than half of women in this age-group were formally economically employed. For working-age men this indicator was reduced from 85 per cent to slightly less than 75 per cent over the same period of time (Moreno-Fontes Chammar- tin and Cantu´ -Bazaldu´a, 2003).Women also earn significantly less than men – about 68 per cent of male wages on a monthly basis – both because they work fewer hours and because they earn less per hour

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[43] Russell King et al., "Migration and Development," 7.

[45] Kajsiu, "The Birth of Corruption," 1011.

(World Bank, 2006). Most highly educated women continue to work in health and social care, education, the welfare services, and mid-level managerial positions.[46]

Such information shows that women in Albania were disproportionally affected by this new political and economic system, in terms of employment opportunities and the wage gap that was prevalent in the new neoliberal capitalist structure. Sadly, whilst many were looking for new and prosperous opportunities, they were exploited, kidnapped and trafficked, or in some cases chose to be smuggled into other countries. such as Italy, in order to perform sex-work. This is not to say that some women did not voluntarily decide to migrate and perform sex-work, but that even those who did were met with harsh conditions, both in the process of migrating, and in the new place where they performed sex-work.

2.3 Neoliberalism and Sex Trafficking in Albania

In order to analyze the relationship between sex trafficking and neoliberalism, it is imperative to illustrate the nature of women's roles before and during democracy in Albania. This political and social change must be observed in order to comprehend the shift that led to democracy and neoliberalism as the forces which opened the gates for women to be exploited and trafficked, both literally and figuratively. There was also the shift that took place in society regarding women's roles and status within it. In the public sphere, during the communist regime, both women and men were perceived equally as workers in most professional fields and in academia, and therefore participation in the workforce by both genders was normalized as a focused rested primarily on productivity, rather than on appropriate gender performances.[47] This was due to an initiatives and campaigns by the communist regime, which aimed to promote women's status by trying to

[46] Vullnetari, "Women and Migration in Albania," 172.
[47] Bekteshi et al., "Modern Day Slavery," 484–85.

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integrate women both professionally and in academia. However, this was juxtaposed with unequal gender roles and patriarchal structure in the household and the private sphere, particular in most rural areas,[48] where women were expected to do most of the work, alongside their participation in the labor force. Although women had a more equal role in the workforce under communism, this was not mirrored within the household.

The notion of women being primarily responsible for the management of the household and operating in the private, rather than public sphere, did not disappear during the democratic setup, rather it was utilized as tactic by the patriarchal structure, where keeping women in the private sphere was framed as a way of keeping women safe at home. The loss of jobs and employment opportunities in Albanian society during the democratic transition forced women to take a back seat and claim their roles as housewives and mothers. Gjermeni and Van Hook illustrate the relationship between women and economic decline as follows, arguing that "poverty was especially severe in rural areas, leading to a major exodus from rural areas to the cities. Women were hurt by massive unemployment in the rural zones due to the fall of agriculture cooperatives that constituted the main form of employment organizations in the villages."[49] It is here we see the direct impact democracy and neoliberalism had on women's roles and work in rural areas and in agricultural jobs. There was no official system for agricultural products to be moved in and out of the open market and farmers that had operated under the Communist state were unable to both produce and participate in an agricultural market since the new democratic state had not supported this or regulated it during the transition. Albanian women's bodies and sexualities were utilized as assets in a new market which was supported and maintained by the new turmoil that by default

[48] Ibid., 484.
[49] Eglantina Gjermeni and Mary Van Hook, "Trafficking of Human Beings In Albania," 438.

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commodified women and further objectified them. The competitive nature and total collapse of structure affected women directly and left them more vulnerable in a patriarchal neoliberal society.

Gjermeni and Van Hook note that the increased unemployment rates among women allowed for the exploitation and manipulation that took place, as women's bodies were commodified through sex-work and the neoliberal system. Increasing unemployment and poverty made women in Albania want to search for jobs outside the country, with migration presenting a way out for women who had lost their job and had to support families.[50] Gjermeni and Van Hook claim that, "escaping from unemployment, isolation, and the patriarchal mentality of rural life was considered as the way to a better life."[51] There are two things here that link the necessity for migration and neoliberalism. The first is that once neoliberalism was introduced, this left the individuals in rural areas to produce and compete with the outside market, without any proper rules, regulations or protection. These individuals were left with this task, but not the resources to move agricultural products in the open market. The second is that people were now introduced to the idea of a better future and the hope to dream, but there was no actual knowledge on how to obtain this new-found freedom.[52] Moreover, Gjermeni and Van Hook note that, "this massive migration of people and the social and family disruption that ensued provided opportunities for criminal groups to begin smuggling people desperate for a better life."[53] Women participated in sex-work, both willingly and unwillingly as the only way to take advantage of the neoliberal system, using their bodies as a commodity. It is here that the commodification of women's bodies was visible, as through neoliberalism it was the only asset that was present. Women were taken advantage of and used as

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[50] Gjermeni and Van Hook, "Trafficking of Human Beings In Albania," 438.
[51] Ibid., 438.
[52] Ibid., 438.
[53] Ibid., 437.

objects moving in and out of Albania through a mass trafficking industry that was allowed and promoted by neoliberal beliefs.

2.4 Conclusion

This section aims to have illustrated and outlined the intersection and relationship of neoliberalism and sex trafficking, which has led to the commodification of women in Albania. The political shift and the change of women's roles have been observed through the lens of the neoliberal definition. Thus, I aimed to expose the exploitation that neoliberalism has caused in post-communist Albania at the expense of women's bodies. The link between neoliberalism and sex trafficking proves that both systems have abused and exploited those deemed to be weak in society, by transforming them in to objects of the open market. It is essential to analyze the political trend that lead to the exploitation of certain groups in society, in order to understand that these social-political systems do not benefit all individuals in them.

3. Methodology/Reflexivity/Positionality: An Albanian Woman Writing About Albanian Women

"*The bridge I must be*
Is the bridge to my own power
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate
My own weaknesses"
-The Bridge Poem; Donna Kate Rushin[54]

As an Albanian American woman, I have often felt that the work that I do is one of an intermediary or an in between. I was born in Berat, Albania and lived there until I was about eleven years old. My knowledge and exposure to Albanian culture, tradition and expectations has followed me across the ocean as my family and I joined a new society and sub-culture of Albanians in Boston, U.S.A. As a young woman who had the privilege to be educated in an elite liberal arts university and attain a degree in Gender Studies, I at times feel as an outsider in both the academic space and in my own community. As Donna Kate Rushin articulates in the Bridge Poem, "I'm sick of filling in your gaps".[55] I too have felt the frustration of being the bridge that connects and brings these two different parts of myself together, acutely aware of the necessity to do so. I feel a sense of awareness and an obligation that I must fill in the gap pertaining to Albanian women's narrative concerning sex trafficking, as well as women post-sex trafficking. While this gap can be considered as a relatively small step towards progress within a larger frame, it is one that is essential and personal to me.

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[54] Donna Kate Rushin, *The Bridge Poem* (1981).
[55] Rushin.

The gap I speak of in this particular context is the gap of narratives and analysis that surrounds Albanian women's stories post-sex trafficking. There is a body of literature that focuses on women as victims,[56] and there is literature on NGO's involvement regarding the prevention and/or combat of sex trafficking,[57] however, there seems to be a gap in the actual analysis of the term victim and how that, along with shame, works to further marginalize Albanian women post-sex trafficking. These bodies of literature along with public discourse shape narrow narratives that limit the voices and stories of Albanian women. Understanding of trafficked women in Albania has developed from the works of scholars and activists who have explored international, national and local efforts with regards to prevention of sex trafficking.[58] While this work is crucial and has been produced by both Albanian as well as non-Albanian scholars, it has also limited the narratives, which has further hindered knowledge production. The way that knowledge is produced, or in this case, the way that knowledge production itself is hindered is important to note because it has the power to shape the narratives as well the public discourse. Therefore, my role in producing this piece of text via my thesis, is one that aims to question knowledge production and the role of scholars as well as non-governmental organizations who have constructed a limiting narrative for trafficked Albanian women.

Knowledge production is often utilized as a tool in academia to both construct narratives and introduce new thoughts and ideas. Edward Said articulates the concept of knowledge and its

[56] Sheila Jeffreys, *The Industrial Vagina: The Political Economy of the Global Sex Trade*, RIPE Series in Global Political Economy (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009); Kara, *Sex Trafficking*.
[57] Cherish Adams, "Re-Trafficked Victims: How a Human Rights Approach Can Stop the Cycle of Re-Victimization of Sex Trafficking Victims Note," *George Washington International Law Review* 43 (2011), 201–34; Gjermeni and Van Hook, "Trafficking of Human Beings In Albania"; Bekteshi, Gjermeni, and Van Hook, "Modern Day Slavery."
[58] Jeffreys, *The Industrial Vagina*; Kara, *Sex Trafficking*; Bekteshi, Gjermeni, and Van Hook, "Modern Day Slavery"; Gjermeni and Van Hook, "Trafficking of Human Beings In Albania."

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production through Balfour as "rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant."[59] Said further notes that "To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it."[60] Hence, we have to question and analyze the way that knowledge is being produced and not just accept it at face value. While there is a dominant narrative of the knowledge and scholarship that already exists within the Albanian discourse regarding women post-sex trafficking, it does not necessarily mean that it should not be questioned, or that authority should not be critiqued and/or analyzed.

3.1 Methodology

I develop my methodological framework using discourse analysis as the basis for a critical reflection on the role of shame in the victimization of sex-trafficked Albanian women after they return to Albania. Tonkiss explains discourse analysis as the examination of "a single utterance or specific speech act (such as private conversations) and to a more systematic ordering of language (such as legal discourse)."[61] The definition of discourse analysis as provided by Tonkiss emphasizes the importance of "language as data" and places language "as the topic of the research," while noting that the discourse analyst is concerned with observing the way that "people use language to construct their accounts of the social world."[62] Hence, Tonkiss notes, "a discourse analyst may develop an argument about the power relations implied by different speaking positions (such as the gender of the speaker) by reference 'outward' to external social relations" and that this means going further than the text when analyzing language for a broader social context.[63]

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[59] Edward W. Said and Wolfgang Laade, *Orientalism*, Wolfgang Laade Music of Man Archive (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1978).
[60] Said, *Orientalism*, 32.
[61] Fran Tonkiss, *Analysing Discourse'in Researching Society and Culture. C. Seale, Ed* (London: Sage, 2002), 246.
[62] Tonkiss, *Analysing Discourse'*, 247–48.
[63] Ibid., 249.

It is not only Tonkiss who highlights the importance of thinking of discourse as a social structure, Howarth also argues that structuralism has a deep impact upon discourse, stating that;

> Structuralis[t] theory provides an important starting point for developing a viable concept of discourse in the social sciences by assuming that there is a clear analogy between language and social relationships…Saussure emphasizes the shared systems of signs which make up our natural languages. Words, symbols and other forms of communications require a shared set of norms and rules that human beings learn and internalize.[64]

Thus, Howarth utilizes structuralist theory to explain discourse and further demonstrate that it is a science that is made of a set of observable systems and signs. I look at the discourse surrounding Albanian women when returning to Albania post-sex trafficking, which focuses on language and words such as "victim" and "shame," as my data for how they further reproduce stigmatization for these women and society ends up marginalizing them. In addition, I focus on how these words and labels, like 'victim,' that are constructed by feminist thought, as well by international NGOs, work against women survivors in societies like Albania because of the public discourse and stigma, associated with the labels that these women who have been sex trafficked are subjected to, creating an internalized narrative of shame as a result of societal discrimination.

I look at texts which illustrate the role and work of NGOs and non-profits, who interact with women post sex-work, and how they define and create the discourse around sex trafficking and post sex trafficking. In particular I look at one non-profit organization, Vatra, which is based in Albania and helps women reintegrate into society post sex-work. I analyze how the word victim is being used in their website and mission statement, looking also at interviews which are both recoded and written on their webpage. These interviews are conducted with women post-sex trafficking, to analyze how they identify themselves as well as how they respond to the use of the

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[64] David Howarth, "Discourse. Concepts in the Social Sciences," (*Bukingham: Open University*, 2000).

word victim and the shame associated with it. In addition, I translate, analyze, and examine numerous newspaper articles written in Albanian to show and illustrate how the victimization reproduces shame in the public discourse within the Albanian society.

3.2 Objectives of the research

1. To understand the way in which radical and liberal feminists have constructed the narrative of women who have been sex trafficked through feminist theory and literature
2. To draw connection between the term victim, victimhood and shame in order to understand the constructed narrative and public discourse surrounding Albanian women post-sex trafficking
3. To analyze how victimization produces shame and further marginalizes Albanian women post-sex trafficking

3.3 Reflexivity

As a scholar, I find it of crucial importance to analyze my own position and reflectivity with relation to my case study and research focus. As Kim England notes, "reflexivity is self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher. Indeed, reflexivity is critical to the conduct of fieldwork; it induces self-discovery and can lead to insights and new hypotheses about the research questions."[65] I also think it is essential for me, as I embark on my research, to reflect on my own previous notion and understanding of Albanian women and the public discourse surrounding sex trafficking. England further demonstrates the importance of the personal and the process of research as follows, noting that "the researcher cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork

[65] Kim V. L. England, "Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research," *The Professional Geographer* 46, no. 1 (February 1, 1994), 244.

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is personal." I reflected upon my position and realized, as I was conducting this research, that the professional is personal and that my own experiences help me to see gaps in scholarship, as will be explored in my literature review. Whilst I recognize the project is a professional part of my work, there is also the personal that needs to be addressed and acknowledged, which cannot be compartmentalized or ignored as to do so would betray both myself, the communities I write about and the work produced.

As mentioned in my introductory chapter, I was still living in Albania at the time of the rise of sex trafficking issue and I was affected by both the conversations and stories I had witnessed and heard, but also by the young women in my neighborhood or city that were a part of these stories. I am also a member and a part of the Albanian community in the USA and when visiting Albania, I am able to observe the way in which this issue is situated in both societies and the public discourses within them. Such an issue remains taboo, with sex trafficking considered a loaded term, used by the community to further police the bodies of young Albanian women. As a young Albanian woman, I was exposed to the public discourse both in Albania and in the diaspora regarding the fear and panic surrounding women's body and sexuality.

The personal aspect of the research needs to be highlighted because it connects me to the project in a very particular way that other scholars might not have experienced. I vividly remember the panic around the movement of young girls in my neighborhood in Albania. I remember my parents, my aunts, my uncles, and my neighbors being nervous and scared about the safety of the young women in the house, especially when they would leave the confines of the household. I also remember the panic and stories that were told in the neighborhood about yet another young girl who had been kidnaped and subsequently was trafficked.

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My exposure to these stories from the past, and the panic they induced in me, has had a great impact upon me, especially because of the ways in which the narratives on post-sex trafficking need to move beyond the limited narratives presented to me within these stories. As Nadia Jones-Gailani notes in relation to the personal, "This helped me blur the boundaries between personal and private within these intimate exchanges where I was implicit in the exchange, often by inviting me to share parts of my past,"[66] I have to acknowledge that this research and my work on this thesis is private and personal and that it is an exchange of my past and of my present. I was one of the young girls that lived during a time when sex trafficking and kidnappings were at their peak, between 1997 until 2001, and am, therefore, very connected within these narratives. Not only this, I am a scholar who is able to utilize the available resources to critically analyze and assess the impacts of said narratives. It is, therefore, crucial that I contribute to the knowledge of the scholarship and help construct a new diverse narrative, using my dual experiences of Albanian and researcher to frame the discussion as both academic and personal. I have spent a significant amount of time in Albania and within the Albanian community in the USA. In addition, I have had certain privileges and exposure to both knowledge and scholarship which has further shaped my views as a feminist. Thus, my experience and my position is not one of an insider and yet not one of a complete outsider either, since I am an Albanian woman who is aware of both the cultures and the public discourses surrounding women post-sex trafficking from a personal standpoint.

3.4 Positionality

As an individual living across two different worlds, cultures and societies I have felt the sense of duality and hybridity, while being able to partially fit into two different spaces, but never

[66] Nadia Jones-Gailani, "Qahwa and Kleiche: Drinking Coffee in Oral History Interviews with Iraqi Women in Diaspora," *Global Food History* 3, no. 1 (January 2, 2017), 4.

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quite fully belonging to either. Lila Abu-Lughod describes her experience as "the partial insider" and such terminology resonates deeply with me. During her field work in Egypt, Abu-Lughod found that as a researcher of Arab decent, she was someone who "shared with them [her interlocuters] a fundamental identity as a Muslim woman," while also being an educated woman from the West. This duality of identity and hybridity is explored through the concept of the partial insider and the traits that scholars and researches who have studied abroad but focus their work on the communities or countries that they or families come from, much as I do. In addition, Sharan Merriam has also explored and notes this concept of duality in positionality as follows, "The *indigenous-outsider*, a second position, 'has experienced high levels of cultural assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture' but remains connected with his or her indigenous community."[67] I can relate to both Merriam and Abu-Lughod's definitions of the "partial insider" and the "*indigenous-outsider*" and find myself in the same position when doing research and writing about the public discourse of shame surrounding Albanian women, the notion of victimization produced by scholars and NGOs.

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[67] Sharan B. Merriam et al., "Power and Positionality: Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status within and across Cultures," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 20, no. 5 (September 1, 2001), 405–16.

4. Situating the Existing Literature

In this chapter I provide a framework of feminist theories and debate relating to the understanding of concepts such as prostitution and sex trafficking. These theories, I argue, have constructed a limiting narrative for women who have performed sex-work or have been trafficked for the purpose of sex-work. In doing so I engage with feminist literature in order to connect it to the impact that the international community and organizations have had on this narrative and on women's stories. In the first section of the chapter, I will show how radical feminists have defined prostitution and how liberals have constructed a narrative around sex-work and choice. In the second part, I subsequently look at how feminists have defined sex trafficking through international laws and the narratives that have been crafted by NGOs working on issues related to sex trafficking and sex-work.[68] The aim of the chapter is to address the literature that shows the role of both radical, as well as liberal feminists in understandings of sex-work and those who participate in it, as viewed through the international lens.

4.1 Prostitution

Prostitution has been defined by feminist theorists, activists, and writers as a problematic and widespread phenomenon.[69] As Goldman illustrates, "prostitution has been, and is, a widespread evil, yet mankind goes on its business, perfectly indifferent to the sufferings and distress of the victims of prostitution. As indifferent, indeed, as mankind has remained to our industrial system, or to economic prostitution."[70] In this way, Goldman, concisely expresses her opinion on and

[68] Rutvica Andrijasevic, "The Sex Trade," in *Migration, Agency and Citizenship in Sex Trafficking*, ed. Rutvica Andrijasevic, Migration, Minorities and Citizenship (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 57.
[69] Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 177.
[70] Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 178.

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definition of the impact that prostitution has had on women in society. It is clear that she opposes such practice and identifies it as problematic and "evil". Moreover, Kesler notes that prostitution has been an ongoing debate among feminists, as "sex-work, and prostitution specifically, has divided feminist thinking for some time now. Prostitution is seen by many as the absolute embodiment of patriarchal male privilege, clearly disallowing feminist support or participation"[71] however the other side of the debate[72] focusses on agency, survivorship and the narrative of sex as a means to an end.[73] Such hegemonic structure has kept women from having a voice within an issue that affects them directly.

Radical feminists oppose prostitution and "have done most to highlight the harms experienced by women in this area and have illustrated the inequalities in prostitution within the context of a gendered analysis of the state and sexuality."[74] Thus, radical feminists have been concerned with and have advocated against the violence and harm (especially the biological implications of sex-work) associated with sex-work to protect and account for the well-being of sex-workers. As Scoular notes, radical feminists have "an understanding of prostitution as violence against women – violence not only in the practice of prostitution but more fundamentally in the very idea of 'buying sex' which is considered so inextricably linked to a system of heterosexuality and male power that it represents 'the absolute embodiment of patriarchal male privilege'."[75] Pateman describes

[71] Kari Kesler, "Is a Feminist Stance in Support of Prostitution Possible? An Exploration of Current Trends," *Sexualities* 5, no. 2 (May 2002), 219.
[72] Kathy Miriam, "Stopping the Traffic in Women: Power, Agency and Abolition in Feminist Debates over Sex-Trafficking," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36, no. 1 (March 2005).
[73] The agency that is advocated by sex-work also comes with insecurities and risks which can be defined as "precarious agency" while it offers authority to individuals it does not do so without the ultimate risk of their bodies and selves. Kate Hardy, "Uneven Divestment of the State: Social Reproduction and Sex-Work in Neo-Developmentalist Argentina," *Globalizations* 13, no. 6 (November 1, 2016), 81.
[74] J. Scoular, "The 'subject' of Prostitution: Interpreting the Discursive, Symbolic and Material Position of Sex/Work in Feminist Theory," *Feminist Theory* 5, no. 3 (December 1, 2004), 344.
[75] Scoular, "The 'subject' of Prostitution," 344.

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prostitution as a "business, political, and diplomatic transactions", as a "private enterprise" and argues that "prostitutes are readily available to all levels of the marker for any man who can afford one.[76] While the approach of radical feminists stands true with respect to equality and the protection of women, it is detrimental to the agency of women, and potentially marginalizes them further, and denies them the right to have a choice of their own. The radical feminist approach through such limiting narrative further hinders them from sharing their own stories and shuns them into oblivion.

Contrary to this, the liberal feminists approach seems to be occupied with the notion of agency and "concerned with this notion of 'free choice', or 'consent'. Mirriam describes the liberal feminist point of view as such;

> By legitimizing the "labor" of prostitution, pro-sex- work advocates aim to restore dignity to those decisions that enable women to survive within the constraints of the current global economy. Given conditions of extreme poverty for women, pro-sex-work advocates claim that women choose prostitution to survive, and that recognition of this choice as a form of labor is essential to the goal of securing health and safety standards for women in an industry that otherwise remains unregulated and unprotected, leaving sex-workers particularly vulnerable to such "work hazards" as violent assaults, rape, and sexually transmitted diseases.[77]

Thus, liberal feminists not only hope to move away from radical feminist narratives regarding prostitution but also to take into account that some women might need to indulge in sex-work for survival. Liberal feminists offer some sort of agency, while promoting that it is important that sex-work is recognized as labor with rules and regulations in order to be able to better protect sex-workers. This school of thought is an essential addition to the narrative of prostitution and sex-work debate because it allows for feminism to allow multiple narratives and voices to be heard. However, Kesler offers some food for thought by noting that "Many sex-workers do not identify

[76] "What's Wrong with Prostitution?," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (1999), 53.
[77] Miriam, "Stopping the Traffic in Women," 4.

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as feminists because they feel that there is no place in feminism for them. Some of them claim to be 'feminists in exile; excluded from a rightful place in the feminist movement."[78] Evidently, this shows that certain voices and narratives are indeed excluded from the debates on the agency of sex-workers, suppressing their voice while these are the same people who are directly affected by it.

4.2 Sex Trafficking

The human trafficking industry has been defined by international law as an industry which commodifies and exploits human bodies. This definition has aimed to control and prevent human trafficking from spreading through international efforts and initiatives. The international law set forth by the United Nations: Human Rights 2014[79] and its definition specifically addresses the exploitation and the coercion occurring through the movement of the human bodies. [80] This definition within human rights law is essential, as it specifically addresses the recruitment, transportation, and receipt of persons by means of force or coercion, and exploitation; all of which contributes to the commodification of the human body through the trafficking process. In doing so, the law creates a clear and direct way to address and identify human trafficking in order to prevent and put an end to this form of commodification of persons and their bodies. Andrew Wancata[81] utilizes the argument put forth by Radin in order to explain and problematize the commodification

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[78] Kesler, "Is a Feminist Stance in Support of Prostitution Possible?," 220.
[79] "OHCHR | Human Trafficking: A Rights-Based Approach," accessed June 10, 2019, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/HumanTrafficking.aspx.
[80] (a)Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.
[81] Andrew Wancata, "No Value for a Pound of Flesh: Extending Marketinalienability of the Human Body," *JL & Health* 18 (2003), 199.

of the human body as tied to "market rhetoric."[82] In order to understand the human/sex trafficking as connected to the commodification of the human body, Wancata (via Radin), argues that we must combine the definition provided by human rights law of "purpose of exploitation" as the "instance of sale" which leads to the "market rhetoric". Thus, the commodification of the human body and the actual transportation and sale of humans and/or sex are linked to one another.

Sharma on the other hand argues "that anti-trafficking practices operate as a moral panic that simultaneously obscure the vulnerability of migrant women in the nexus of state and capitalist practices while representing them as victims solely of traffickers."[83] This argument illustrates that once an individual is labeled and a narrative has been ascribed to a woman migrant, it further then limits her story, her history, as well as her autonomy. Thus, it is important to draw from Sharma's concept when mapping out the history of Albanian women who migrated to Italy and indulged in sex-work. These women were labeled as being sex-trafficked as this was the only narrative which they were boxed into and were ascribed with. Regardless of circumstances, Sharma argues that women participating in sex-work are always seen as victims and it is because of this narrative, which has taken a dominant position in the Albanian society that is prescribed upon Albanian women in Italy, which is further explored in the next few sections.

Sharma further establishes that the term and narrative of "trafficking" means that it has been identified as a criminalized act and that there is some sort of exploitation and manipulation occurring within it. In practice however, it is harder to recognize and draw differences between smuggling and trafficking "as both smugglers and traffickers move people along illegalized routes

[82] In other words, commodification represents the subconscious categorizing of something as a market good. Radin argues that, once this first step of commodification occurs, that is, "once market value enters our discourse" in regards to a certain object in the primary instance of sale, a slippery slope will result, and "market rhetoric will take over and characterize every [future] interaction in terms of market value."44

[83] Ibid., 89.

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of migration." [84] This unpacking is important to this project because the narrative of Albanian women has been that of being trafficked and victimized both within Albania to other countries to which they have been migrated. The term "trafficking" takes away the agency from the diverse and complex history of some of these women who may have been smuggled earlier on but might have chosen to migrate via these routes in order to perform sex-work as a means to an end. Sharma's methodology is to observe and investigate the way in which laws and policies have affected women migrants and have prescribed these migrant identities. She borrows from other work to show that the Italian migration policy regarding sex-work is linked to social policy that aims to protect women and ensures that they do not return to sex-work. [85] This type of policy and regulation also takes away from the fact that some women might have chosen to perform sex-work, and "such "progressive" anti-trafficking measures, then, are about regulating women's mobilities and sexuality". [86] Sharma's contribution is important because it exposes how historical narratives have been controlled and structured by legal and political strategies and disable women from their migration narratives and histories.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, while feminist debate is an important aspect within the narrative of sex trafficking, it can also add to the problem, creating a narrative that is limiting and constructed in such a way that it can result in the victimization of the survivor. It is important to note however, that both radical and liberal feminists provide important arguments, defining terminology and providing us with theories and concepts that aid in the understanding of women's experiences post sex

[84] Ibid., 91.
[85] Ibid., 103.
[86] Ibid., 103.

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trafficking. However, as feminists we must be more careful in our work, regarding the labelling and referring to of women involved with sex-work, so as to avoid the limiting or even to avoid the essentialization of the voices of the women themselves. Thus, instead of adding to the moral panic[87] and negative public discourse, feminists must further observe their own role and allow for women who have experienced sex trafficking to have a voice in their stories.

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[87] Nandita Sharma, "Anti-Trafficking Rhetoric and the Making of a Global Apartheid," 89.

5 - The International Initiative, Victimization of Women through Sex Trafficking

Radical feminist theory argues that sex trafficking has shown to be an exploitative industry that persistently reduces a woman's body to a subordinate, commodifying the body to create a system which generates billions of dollars through the exploitation of sex, sexual activities, and women's bodies.[88] This theory attempts to expose the way in which women are being reduced to a sensualized subject, objectified through sex trafficking. Such notions have been coopted by the international legal system, as well as NGOs. They promote and produce widespread initiatives to prevent sex trafficking, while simultaneously shaping the narrative of these women as victims in order to legitimize their claims.[89] This chapter provides a framework of the way in which international NGOs initiatives construct a limiting narrative of the victim using legal frameworks, which further marginalizes Albanian women within Albanian society. The aim here is to examine and analyze how victimhood is constructed in the international sphere, through a critical examination of the term, as well as through an analysis of its legal implications. The situating and framing of women who have been sex trafficked within the existing literature as well as the dominant narrative of their victimization needs to be examined in connection with the initiatives and interventions of NGOs and non-profits, in order to fully understand their role and stake in combating human/sex trafficking. This chapter argues that the role and influence NGOs, although important for high-

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[88] Jeffreys, *The Industrial Vagina*.

[89] Vanessa Bouché, Amy Farrell, and Dana E. Wittmer-Wolfe, "Challenging the Dominant Frame: The Moderating Impact of Exposure and Knowledge on Perceptions of Sex Trafficking Victimization," *Social Science Quarterly* 99, no. 4 (December 2018): 1283–1302.

lighting the issue of sex trafficking, has also played a problematic role in formulating and constructing the narrative of the victim and acts as a catalyst in the victimization of the sex-trafficked women, which further alienates and marginalizes Albanian women post- sex trafficking.

5.1 Defining the Term 'Victim'

The analysis of the term "victim" is explored through the sphere of international initiatives for the prevention of sex trafficking and the international involvement to better comprehend how such an initiative functions within Albanian society. The term "victim", as defined by Kapur, exists in the international "legal discourse both in the West and in the third Word" and "the victim subject is a transnational phenomenon".[90] Kapur claims that the "Third World victim subject has come to represent the more victimized subject; that is, the real or authentic victim subject. Feminist politics in the international human rights arena, as well as in parts of the Third World, have promoted this image of the authentic victim subject while advocating for women's human rights."[91]

Moreover, Kapur argues that such interventions are imperialistic and are used to seek validation when it comes to the "native subject" and that this fortifies "gender essentialism and cultural essentialism."[92] Kapur notes that imperialist interventions cause an additional layer of separation between "the Third World and the First World." [93] It is evident from the definition that Kapur stresses the divide between the West and those Third World countries that are subjected to this intervention, as well as the difference in their understanding of the term "victim" when associated with women from these cultures. In doing so, Kapur problematizes the role of international

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[90] Rarna Kapur, "The Tragedy of Victimization Rhetoric: Ressurecting the 'Native' Subject in International/Post-Colonial Feminist Legal Politics," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 15 (2002), 2.
[91] Kapur, "The Tragedy of," 2.
[92] Ibid., 2.
[93] Ibid., 2.

feminist legal discourse and how they construct the role of the victim through the international framework.

The international framework and its mission for intervention relating to sex trafficking and victimization is positioned by Bouche, Farrell, and Wittmer-Wolfe as something which "resonates with the public because of longstanding beliefs that women need to be protected".[94] They also link the victimization framework as being shaped by migration trends, along with sex trafficking of women as such;

> the feminization of global poverty, described as the burden of poverty borne by women, especially in developing countries. With the fall of the Soviet Union challenging the dominant frame and the subsequent opening up of borders in Eastern Europe, there were serious policy concerns about the ways in which poverty might lead to mass migration toward regions of the world with higher economic growth.[95]

The notion of migration and poverty correlates with the framing of the narrative of the Eastern European women who migrated for the purpose of work, sometimes through the process of being smuggled out of the country, as intimately connected with sex trafficking. Similarly, Albanian women who have been trafficked for the purpose of sex exploitation share the calamity and the burden of being dislocated from their homes and suffer at the hands of traffickers; and consequently the narratives that are built around these women are shaped by these factors- migration, poverty, displacement- which are upheld in post-communist Europe.

The framing of the victim narrative by the international world of NGOs and human rights initiatives is widespread and serves to compound the limiting and reduction of the lived experiences of these women. It also takes away agency from them as human beings, reduced to this

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[94] Bouché, Farrell, and Wittmer-Wolfe, "Challenging the Dominant Frame," 1285.
[95] Bouché et al., "Challenging," 1284.

notion of agency-less victims, becoming the women of "classic humanitarian object[s] of protection,"[96] devoid of their own experiences and reduced to a trope. Similarly, Jo Doezema[97] critiques western feminists' claims of saving the "'third world trafficking victim', specifically focusing on the mission of CATW which positions 'third world prostitutes' as helpless victims in need of rescue".[98] Doezama problematizes this new initiative which campaigns to "constructs third world prostitutes" as agency-less victims in order to justify its own "interventionist impulses".[99] She further argues that these organization create binaries between so-called "'voluntary' sex-workers from civilized western countries and the 'agency-less' sex-workers of Third World countries.[100] Situating this analysis with the sex-trafficked women of Albania can also result in the political consequences associated as discussed by Doezama.[101] It is of crucial importance to question the role of the international community as well as domestic organizations regarding the framing and understanding of sex trafficking and the women involved with it. This double standard regarding "voluntary" sex-workers versus "victimized" sex-trafficked women unravels the role of international organizations and their stake in the matter, which is made concrete through proclamations of international law, delivers new forms of intervention and prevention.

5.2 Victim Narratives versus Survivor Narratives

While international attention is garnered through the work that the NGOs and the international organizations accomplish to combat the exploitation and abuse that sex trafficked women and children have to endure, there is a fine line between recognition versus the prescription of a

[96] Brysk, "Beyond Framing and Shaming," 15.
[97] Jo Doezema, "Ouch! Western Feminists' 'Wounded Attachment' to the 'Third World Prostitute,'" *Feminist Review*, no. 67 (Spring 2001): 16–38.
[98] Doezema, "Ouch! Western," 17.
[99] Ibid., 17.
[100] Ibid., 18.
[101] Ibid., 18.

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particular narrative for the experiences of said women and children. Often, international initiatives have the potential to limit and deprive women post sex trafficking of any agency and voice by prescribing a standardized narrative to them, which fails to take account their own experiences or their personal motivations. Helms describes the framework constructed by international initiatives, relating to survivors of rape in Bosina and Herzegovina and their status as victims, as such;

> Despite the feminist-led attention to violence against women, then, such frameworks somewhat ironically leave unchallenged some of the main patriarchal assumptions about women and rape. Instead of approaching victims as adult, sexual beings with the power—even when severely limited—to make decisions and act, any attention to victims' sexuality and agency invites questions about their innocence: Why did some women stay with their abusers even in cases where they might have escaped? Were they not somehow complicit? If they developed feelings for their tormentors or sought the protection of one man, does this make them less of a victim?[102]

Thus, it is important to note that agency and the innocence of survivors are interconnected, which further creates a limiting narrative that fuels stereotypes about women as victims. First, there is a distinction that needs to be made regarding the term victim and survivor, since, as mentioned, 'survivor' has been related to the movement concerned with "identifying and healing survivor suffering as a sole focus"[103] post trauma. The term victim, however, takes away agency from women, which hinders the process of healing, further producing the dominant narrative of oppressed women from the Third World countries in need of a savior, pushing them into a rhetoric of blaming and shaming based on their innocence.

Furthermore, Ovenden illustrates the impact of the term survivor and the effect that it has on those labelled as such, in relation to the creation of their own narratives and the consequent self-created identities post trauma, that gives meaning to and legitimizes their struggle. Ovenden claims that the term survivor "suggests that 'victims' of abuse can shed their stories and embark

[102] Helms Elissa, "Rejecting Angelina: Bosnian War Rape Survivors and the Ambiguities of Sex in War," *Slavic Review* 73, no. 3 (2014), 620.
[103] Georgia Ovenden, "Young Women's Management of Victim and Survivor Identities," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 14, no. 8 (September 2012), 942.

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on a 'new', more empowered journey toward self-actualization. Thus, while survivor stories do not represent the excluded and silenced voices in public discourse, they often take the particular form of a confessional narrative."[104] The term survivor, when compared to victim, offers a sense of empowerment which can lead to the overcoming of the trauma as well as become a source for moving away from the limiting narrative of victimhood. The term survivor would be more suitable in the case of Albanian women who either choose to, or are forced to, due to undesirable circumstances, to return to Albania post-sex trafficking, mostly because they are seeking to reintegrate into the society and be a part of it as its equal members. Thus, I believe that a better alternative to the term 'victim' for Albanian women post-sex trafficking would be for them to have the option to define themselves as survivors, or the equivalate of this in Albania. The definition must encompass the narratives and voices of these women in order to generate empowerment and acceptance as opposed to the stigmatization and discrimination as implied by the term victim.

In Albania, while Vatra is attempting to reintegrate these women back into the society as equal members, it is also reducing them to victims, which further contributes to their marginalization and creates a separate category in already existing stereotypes within the Albanian society. In other words, the stigma attached to sex trafficking is the same as that to victim. An article in Barazia[105], notes that this is in part because public opinion surrounding sex trafficking is connected to the social stigma these women are forced to face. Due to this rejection from the social sphere, trafficked women also face abandonment as they are disowned by their families and their loved ones.[106] Thus, identifying as a victim does not allow Albanian post sex trafficked women to be

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[104] Ovenden, "Young Women," 945.
[105] "BARAZIA," Barazia, accessed May 31, 2019, https://www.barazia.com/.
[106] "GRATË SHQIPTARE TË TRAFIKUARA NË EUROPË: TË BRAKTISURA, TË ABUZUARA dhe TË REFUZUARA," *Barazia* (blog), January 26, 2017, https://www.barazia.com/2017/01/26/grate-shqiptare-te-trafikuara-ne-europe-te-braktisura-te-abuzuara-dhe-te-refuzuara/.

able to reintegrate within society, rather they have to face discrimination because of the stigma attached to the term itself, potentially further isolating themselves.

5.3 Victimhood and Shared Narrative

Through the concept of victim and the prescribed narrative that is associated with women post sex trafficking, the notion of victimhood as a collective and shared narrative is formulated. Helms explains this notions with respect to women who were victims of rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina as such, "Claims to victimhood are a double-edge sword, precisely due to their gendered connections: the point of such claims is not victimhood itself but its association with innocents, distance from responsibility, and thus moral purity, which it turns affords a basis for claims to legitimacy in the field of the social."[107] Victimhood is another prescribed narrative which is counter-productive, as it is not limited to the individual but open to a collective recognition in seeking justice. As Helms points it out, it can in fact be a "double-edge sword" in the case of Albanian women post sex trafficking as well. While Vatra, in one of their recent projects,[108] is endeavoring to help these women become a part of the society which has put them in the margins for being victims, it also needs financial and legal support from the international world to continue to work against prevention and reintegration and, therefore, needs to identify and prescribe to the notion of victimhood in order to be able to accomplish their mission. In doing so, Vatra is acting as an agent which confines these women to restrictive narratives of sex trafficking and victimhood, in a society

[107] "GRATË SHQIPTARE TË TRAFIKUARA NË EUROPË: TË BRAKTISURA, TË ABUZUARA dhe TË REFUZUARA," *Barazia* (blog), January 26, 2017, https://www.barazia.com/2017/01/26/grate-shqiptare-te-trafikuara-ne-europe-te-braktisura-te-abuzuara-dhe-te-refuzuara/.

[108] *"Strengthening sustainable reintegration assistance for former victims of trafficking, po- tential victims of trafficking and victims of violence".* This project started in 2001 with the opening of "Vatra" shelter, and is still going on at present. The project is funded by different donors. During the last three years the Centre has received funding by the U.S. Department of State, the United Nations / UN Voluntary TRUST Fund, the International Organization for Migration (USAID/IOM), Open So- ciety Foundation for Albania (SOROS), Kvinna Till Kvinna, The Sigrid Rausing TRUST, King Baudouin Foundation, Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Ti- rana, Albania and OSCE.

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where the association with sex trafficking and victimhood is viewed as shameful and subsequently excludes these women from (re)becoming a full member of the society.

As noted by Kapur, violence against women is an important subject and has been addressed by the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights and U.N. General Assembly which led to the passing of the Declaration on Violence Against Women. The Declaration illustrates the success of the international legal system and the initiatives led by NGOs to fight against violence on women.[109] Kapur further argues that the, "VAW [violence against women] discourse has succeeded partly because of its appeal to the victim subject. In the context of law and human rights, it is invariably the abject victim subject who seeks rights, primarily because she is the one who has had the worst happen to her. The victim subject has allowed women to speak out about abuses that have remained hidden or invisible in human rights discourse."[110] Thus, while the term has proven to be useful in addressing and preventing violence against women, it should not be the only narrative which defines women post sex trafficking.

Helms also proposes that, "these interventions have paradoxically reinforced the image of female victimhood – for women in general but specifically in the case of Bosniac women – and foreclosed other avenues of academic inquiry, activist engagement, and policy approaches".[111] The problem with the term itself is that it has forced women "through a variety of dominant representations [to] become the only victims, and more worryingly, only victims."[112] In the context of Albanian women post sex trafficking and the work that Vatra is hoping to achieve, this work becomes paradoxical in nature, as it has created a climate in which the women identify only as victims,

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[109] Kapur, "The Tragedy of Victimization Rhetoric," 3–4.
[110] Kapur, 5.
[111] Helms, *Innocence and Victimhood*, 27.
[112] Helms, 27.

while promoting to integrate them into the society, something that their enforced 'victimhood' prevents. Public discourse within Albania remains one that alienates and stigmatizes women post sex trafficking, as documented in an interview published in an Albanian newspaper *Bota Sot*[113], "Stigma *i bën vajzat e trafikuara dy herë viktima*" which translates to "the trafficked young women are stigmatized twice as victims".[114] The article stresses that although women deserve a new start, they still face judgement, the stigma of stereotypes, and rejection by society, family, and loved ones.[115] This shows that international intervention, as well as Vatra's mission, through the use of the term victim, is not able to reach to the core of the problem. In fact, the use of victim as a label associated with sex trafficked women who wish to reintegrate within the society, establishes an environment in which they must face the double judgement of stigma and marginalization.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I show the problems that may arise when prescribing the term victim to women survivors and the way it is defined and utilized by both radical feminist and NGOs working against sex trafficking. I outlined the problematization of the construction and definition of the term victim through Kapur, in order to demonstrate the way in which these women are positioned as the "third world victim" through feminist discourse. In this chapter I also compare the term victim to the term survivor, through Ovenden's definition, in order to empower and give voices to women who have experienced sex trafficking. Lastly, I noted that the term victim in the Albanian context is problematic, especially when it is framed as a shared narrative of victimhood. In such a conception, the public discourse which surrounds women post sex trafficking, relating to notions of sexuality

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[113] "Bota Sot," accessed May 31, 2019, https://www.botasot.info/.
[114] "'Në Kthetrat e Prostitucionit', Dëshmitë e Vajzave Shqiptare Të Trafikuara - Bota Sot," accessed May 30, 2019, https://www.botasot.info/sociale-lajme/726842/ne-kthetrat-e-prostitucionit-deshmite-e-vajzave-shqiptare-te-trafikuara/.
[115] "'Në Kthetrat e Prostitucionit', Dëshmitë e Vajzave Shqiptare Të Trafikuara - Bota Sot."

and women's bodies, has the potential to create shame, and is shown to have impact beyond themselves and onto their wider family and community circles.

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6. Reproducing Shame through Victimization

6.1 Analysis of Shame

This chapter explores the concept and notion of shame, and how shame reproduces itself through the notion of victimization in the case of Albanian women who have survived/experienced sex trafficking, sex-work, or human smuggling. I observe and analyze the discourse surrounding Albanian women post sex trafficking and the shame they face when returning home and attempt to reintegrate into the society. In particular, I look at both video clips, produced by Vatra, which address their mission statement, focused on the "protection and social inclusion of the victims of these phenomena through information"[116] along with interviews of women post-sex trafficking and how they define themselves in relations to the shame they feel and the blame that they place on themselves as victims. This chapter explores the way shame is defined in the Albanian context and the way in which it is internalized through blaming one's self.

It is essential to define shame and the implications it has on the self and the process of internalizing shame through communication and interactions in the Albanian society. Shame, as illustrated by Sedgwick, Kosofsky and Frank, is connected and defined as being "close to the experienced self," manifesting as a relationship which creates "the torment of self-consciousness."[117] Sedgwick, Kosofsky and Frank draw a connection between shame and self-worth noting that, whilst "not so immediately strident as terror, the nature of the experience of shame guarantees a perpetual sensitivity to any violation of the dignity of man."[118] This scrutiny and contempt that the

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[116] "Qendra Vatra."
[117] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Adam Frank, and Irving E. Alexander, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Duke University Press, 1995), 136.
[118] Sedgwick, Frank, and Alexander, 136.

self can experience can also be the experience of scrutiny and hostility by others, which can lead to the condemnation of the self.[119] This same concept can be understood when analyzing the public discourse and opinion surrounding the concept of *turp*[120] in relation to the Albanian women post sex work, sex trafficking and/or smuggling.

There is direct connection between women who have experienced any sort of sex exploitation or sex trafficking and the experience of feeling a sense of shame (*turp*) towards their families' reputations. Pastner illustrates that notions of honor and shame are prevalent in various societies, however they are more commonly deliberated with respect to the Middle Eastern and the Mediterranean societies.[121] As such Pastner notes that, "in each case, honor and shame relate to concepts of correct conduct, especially the sexual conduct of women, which is seen to reflect upon the status of male relatives. The ideology has much to do with the overall functioning of society and not just the nature of relationship between men and women".[122] It is essential to recognize that this notion of honor should be maintained by women's 'proper' sexual conduct and when this is not the case, it is deemed as 'shame' which encompasses the overall relationship with the society. Gjermemi and Hook discuss the role of *turp* within the Albanian family structure as such, "for victims of sex trafficking, their exploitation in the commercial sex industry brings dishonor to the

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[119] Ibid., 138.

[120] *Turp* translated from Albanian meaning shame. *Turp* in the Albanian language and context has been associated with a larger social practice, thus it is something that not only the individual bears but also the family and relatives. The burden of shame is experienced by others in association with the initially 'shamed' individual, not simply by the individual themselves.

[121] Carroll McC. Pastner, "A Social Structural and Historical Analysis of Honor, Shame and Purdah," *Anthropological Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1972), 152.

[122] Pastner, "A Social Structure,"153.

family".[123] Thus, Albanian women are faced with this notion and responsibility of honor and shame that they bring to the family if they have been trafficked or have indulged in sex-work.

Furthermore, Sedgwick, Kosofsky and Frank explain the notion of shame as an expressed bodily affect connected to one's feelings as follows;

> Shame is both an interruption and further impediments to communication, which is itself communicated. When one hangs one's head or drops one's eyelid or averts one's gaze, one has communicated one's shame and both the face and the self unwillingly becomes more visible, to the self and others.[124]

This notion of shame as a "visible marker to one's self" is connected to the interactions and observations of others especially in a society where shame (*turp*) is an essential notion attached to the body of the Albanian women. As mentioned in a previous paper of mine, analyzing shame (*trup*) provides an essential connection to understanding of the internalized shame that women experience regarding their status as "victims" and demonstrates that these two terms reinforce the marginalization of women. In using such terminology, society prevents women from fully integrating within the society, by being labeled as "victims" who carry shame (*turp*) with them, acting as a barrier to their reintegration. Furthermore, Ahmed illustrates that, "the very physicality of shame - how it works on and through bodies - means that shame also involves the de-forming and re-forming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies turn away from others who witness the shame".[125] An article on the Albanian website Barazia, describes the social economic hardship that women face when they return after being sex trafficked.[126] One of the people interviewed in this article, and who aided women with their job search, mentioned that it is difficult to find job placements

[123] Gjermeni & Van Hook, "The Role of Faith-Based Programs," 440.
[124] Sedgwick el al., "Shame-Humiliation and Contempt-Disgust," 137.
[125] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Routledge, 2013).
[126] "BARAZIA."

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for those who have been trafficked because of the social discrimination, attached stigma, and the stereotypes often meaning these women return to sex-work.[127] In the article it was also mentioned that organizations and centers reached out to businesses for employment opportunities for women post-sex trafficking, however, once these businesses learnt of the status of the candidate, they refuse to employ them on the bases of stigma that is attached to these women, a direct form of discrimination.[128] Thus, Albanian women post sex trafficking are unable to achieve complete integration into a society that turns away from them and enacts self-induced shame by placing the blame on the victim.

6.2 Internalized Shame Post Sex-Work, Sex Trafficking and Human Smuggling

In the Albanian context, most women post sex trafficking have experienced internalized shame (*turp*) in the process of self-blaming which has been reproduced through "victimization", discrimination and stigmatization.[129] Ahmed further explains this notion of shame and how it works against the self as, "crucially, the individuation of shame the way it turns the self-inwards and against itself can be linked precisely to the inter-corporeality and sociality of shame experience."[130] In the case of the women that seek services from Vatra, the notion of how shame functions in the Albanian society is visible in their testimonies, where women describe their feelings about their actions and being sex trafficked. As mentioned by one Vatra member in an interview on the organizations website, "the center is like a protecting mother to us, respecting us for what we are,

[127] "BARAZIA."
[128] "BARAZIA."
[129] "'Në Kthetrat e Prostitucionit', Dëshmitë e Vajzave Shqiptare Të Trafikuara - Bota Sot.""GRATË SHQIPTARE TË TRAFIKUARA NË EUROPË.""Rrëfimi Tronditës i Shqiptares Së Trafikuar (Video) - Telegrafi," accessed June 6, 2019, https://telegrafi.com/rrefimi-trondites-i-shqiptares-se-trafikuar-video/.
[130] Sara Ahmed, "Shame before Others," *TEKSTY DRUGIE*, no. 4 (2016): 194–212.

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regardless of the mistakes we make".[131] The women experience their actions as a mistake, thus blaming themselves while also identifying as victims. It is important to observe that women define the experience of sex-work as mistakes, even in cases where they were coerced or trafficked, thus, the society as well as the survivors hold themselves responsible which affects them physically and mentally.

Furthermore, these women state on the Vatra website video that they experience the center as accepting them, meaning that the center is seen as a safe haven, where wider society has made them feel as if they do not belong.[132] This sense of not belonging in the society or being accepted was illustrated by a Vatra member who had received their services, where they stated in a videoclip on the organization's website that, "It was very difficult for my family to accept me after they learned what had happened to me. It was due to their mentality; the opinion is of others. They said they felt embarrassed. They were not used to the idea that I had become a victim."[133] Hence, while Vatra can provide a sense of home and safety, the larger issue in the outside world still remains present on how these women are treated by others when labeled as victims.

On the organizations online page, the testimonies of women sometimes express symptoms of depression, and in some cases show even suicidal tendencies, as a result of their exposure to both sex trafficking and how the events have unfolded afterwards. As noted by Sedgwick, this notion of self and pitiless scrutiny is not uncommon as, "this continuing unwillingness to renounce what has been or might again be of value exposes the face of the self to pitiless scrutiny by the self

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[131] "Qendra Vatra." Qendra Vatra. Accessed April 3, 2019. http://www.qendravatra.org.al/.
[132] "Qendra Vatra."
[133] "Qendra Vatra."

or by others".[134] This feeling of scrutiny is expressed by one of the Vatra members in an online interview analyzed on website, they say that they were "feeling severely depressed. I wanted to commit suicide".[135] This desire to commit self-harm comes about by both as a result of the experience itself of trafficking or abuse, but also, through the lack of support and integration into the society upon their return. Sedgwick, Kosofsky and Frank explain this notion of self-contempt which derives from shame by arguing that, "to the extent which such renunciation is possible, the self can condemn itself wholeheartedly in contempt, or can meet the scorn of the other with counter-contempt or with hostility".[136] Hence, Albanian women are working with the center in order to rejoin and reintegrate society but still there is no space in society for them to feel without shame, which leads to a further self-victimization, potentially creating a series of increasingly damaging behaviors and thought processes.

Internalized shame works closely with the status of victim, which marginalizes Albanian women, and does not offer them access to participate as equal members or allow them to integrate fully in to society. As Sedgwick, Kosofsky and Frank note, "shame-humiliation is the negative affect linked with love and identification, and contempt-disgust the negative affect linked with individuation and hate."[137] Therefore, how women identify when returning from sex trafficking can be connected to their identification as victims and the way in which society thinks of victims can contribute to these women's lack of self-worth and love. Albanian women have expressed the lack of self-love that they feel and how this solidifies into self-contempt, post sex-work or sex trafficking. One of the post-sex trafficked woman explains this notion during an interview with

[134] Sedgwick et al., "Shame-Humiliation and Contempt-Disgust," 138
[135] "Qendra Vatra." Qendra Vatra. Accessed April 3, 2019. http://www.qendravatra.org.al/.
[136] Sedgwick etal., "Shame-Humiliation and Contempt-Disgust," 138.
[137] Ibid., 139

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the EUObserver, saying that "No one taught me what love is, what right and wrong are. I've been stigmatized since I was a child and as far as everyone's concerned, I'll always be a whore."[138] This Albanian woman is able to identify that lack of self-love, she seems to place on herself the burden and the stigmatization of performing some sort of sex-work. She understands the way in which Albanian society functions through placing the blame and further marginalizing these young women on the bases of their sex and their sexual activities; whilst continuing to blame herself for these actions, maintaining and internalizing this societal discourse.

The sort of self-blame that is experienced by the "victims" is further related to the shame and guilt that they experience. Sedgwick, Kosofsky and Frank address this relationship between shame and contempt by stating that, "Contempt is the mark of the oppressor. The hierarchical relationship is maintained either when the oppressed one assumes the attitude of contempt for himself or hangs his head in shame."[139] In the same article another interviewee mentioned the feeling of shame and contempt towards herself as stated:

> In 2006, after she was deported from Britain as an illegal alien, the woman returned to Albania, found refuge at the centre for trafficking victims in Vlora and filed charges against him."When she came she was traumatised, fearing her pimp, who had threatened to kill her brothers," recalls Enkelejda Abdylaj, a coordinator at the centre. "She was ashamed to say what had happened to her and felt guilty for running away from home with him [Sokolaj]."[140]

Thus, because women internalize shame, this leads them to feeling guilty for the choices they believed they made, even though they may have been coerced into it or may have been influenced towards these decisions. This is due to the fact that the culture and the public discourse blames

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[138] Lindita Cela, "[Investigation] Albanian Women Trafficked in EU: Abused, Rejected, Abandoned," EUobserver, 25 January 2016.
[139] Ibid., 139
[140] Lindita Cela, Albanian Women Trafficked in EU.

women for being or for even falling victim to sex trafficking. The internalized shame (*turp*) functions in such a way that further victimizes and blames Albanian women for falling prey to sex trafficking. Albanian women also bear the burden of threats relating to their safety and the burden of maintaining the reputation of their families which is connected to the shame (*turp*) concept or *mentalitet shqiptare*[141] It is not just contempt for oneself that arises from (self-)victimization but also a societal contempt towards both the individual and their family. Shame (*turp*) is not limited simply to the individual, but, as a result of the Albanian mentality towards their wider circle and community.

Public discourse within the Albanian society surrounding shame and internalized shame is often influenced by shared beliefs and concepts, that is, the Albanian mentality (*mentalitet shqiptare*). As Sedgwick, Kosofsky, and Frank illustrate, "contempt will be used sparingly in a democratic society lest it undermines solidarity, whereas it be used frequently and with approbation in a hierarchically organized society in order to maintain distance between individuals, classes and nations."[142] Societies have the power in shaping a certain set of concepts and beliefs which they uphold, and through these they are able to marginalize and shame others who do not follow through. In the context of Albanian women and sex trafficking, the notion of shame on the bases of *mentalitet shqiptare* has created a hierarchy which is upheld by the family members of the women. Such practice is illustrated in Cela's article with the case of a woman disowning her daughter, after the daughter was involved with sex-work.[143] It is not only internalized shame that

[141] Albanian mentality/*mentalitet shqiptare* referrers to a general conservative set of shared opinion and beliefs that exist in Albanian society. They apply across of all society and societal practices however, in regards to women's bodies and sexualities, as this project deals with, *mentalitet shqiptare* refers to the set of beliefs and values surrounding women's bodies and promiscuous sex behavior. The mentality cautions against promiscuity and considers sex and sexual behavior to be legitimate primarily within the confines of marriage or a monogamous relationship.
[142] Sedgwick et al., 139.
[143] Lindita Cela, Albanian Women Trafficked in EU.

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these women face and experience, but it is also externally produced shame that society and members of the community and the women's family experience and participate in.[144] "Because of the shame, their families don't accept them," Laci says. "Girls also haven't returned because they fear everyone will be pointing fingers at them."[145] Thus, public discourse surrounding sex trafficking, places the blame and shame on the "victim", which is further enforced by parallel actions undertaken by the community and the family. When, and if, these women return they tend to face shame through marginalization along with stereotypes and therefore are not treated as equal members within society and the community.

6.3 Reproducing Shame Through Victimization

In order to understand how victimization reproduces and emerges through the shame that women in Albania face post human/sex trafficking, it is important to unpack and evaluate the role of NGOs and non-profits. The impact of NGOs and non-profits as Brysk reports, can be traced through the international intervention into, and framing of sex trafficking issue which has enabled non-profits and NGOs to perpetuate the notion of "victimization." By doing so, they remove some of the responsibility from states to provide constructive changes for these women within economic and political structures.[146] Brysk's claim rings true, when analyzing the mission statement of Vatra and comparing it to the testimonials of women in the website. The reality of women's lives post sex-work or sex trafficking is very different from the aim or mission of Vatra which is to reintegrate women back in to society, as their struggle with the stigma they face does not end after their interaction with said organizations;

[144] It is important to note here that it is not only the bodies of the women involved in sex-work that are subject to shame and victimization. Their wider families may also be forced to leave their town or be subject to the same shame-based narratives, as a result of their connection to the woman.
[145] Albanian Women Trafficked in EU.
[146] Alison Brysk, "Beyond Framing and Shaming," 9-11.

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> Even after going through rehabilitation programmes, trafficking victims struggle to find work. "We've had only one case of employment in a state institution and this was due to our mediation," says Enkelejda Avdylaj, the coordinator at the Vatra centre in Vlora."We talk to businesses, but when we tell them the profile of the employee they refuse to hire them." If trafficking victims are able to find a job, even a poorly paid one, they still suffer the stigma attached to their former lives.[147]

This statement explicitly shows the struggle and marginalization that women face once they return to Albania post sex-work or sex trafficking. Thus, the issue here is not that these women need to be trained or given skills to fit back in to society, but rather the social discourse needs to change in order to create a climate in which these women are afforded equal opportunities.

This mission statement and the goal of Vatra are subsequently in line with the efforts of organizations who work to combat this marginalization, aiming to integrate women back into society. The issue lies deep within social structures that have been created to oppress women and the overall general option and beliefs encompassing women and sex trafficking. Integration into society becomes difficult in the case of Albanian women because they face internalized shame and stigma that is attached to victims. The concept of victim when it comes to women and sexuality in the Albanian context becomes a bit more complex as there are notions such as shame and family honor, women sexuality is restricted and policed heavily, which further places the blame on victims and ends up marginalized them. Pastner notes that, "the notions of shame and personal and family honor ideally involve the widest limits of kinship, with the absence of strong lineage organization, the concepts relate more to the personal realm of honor and shame, particularly with regard to female sexual honor".[148] In the Albanian context the term victim is further causing women who have returned from sex trafficking to be alienated from their own communities and society on the bases of their sexual conduct and the honor that is placed on these women.

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[147] Lindita Cela, Albanian Women Trafficked in EU.
[148] Pastner, "A Social Structural and Historical Analysis of Honor, Shame and Purdah," 151.

Vatra's mission statement is a classic example when analyzing how the discourse around "victim," "moral panic," and the initiative to "please humanitarian and religious constituencies" are all interconnected. In a society which equates shame (*turp*) with sex trafficking and in which women are marginalized and stigmatized based on "family honor codes," western interventions such as Vatra's often work to reproduce, rather than combat, these issues. Vatra's mission statement is as follows;

> Mission of the organization: "Vatra" Psycho-Social Centre aims to prevent trafficking in human beings and community violence, protect and provide social inclusion to the victims of these phenomena by means of information, education and advocacy programmes, and community and residential social services.[149]

It is essential to recognize the ways in which the organization's mission aims to be working towards achieving the goals that are set up by international standards by using words like "victim" while promising "social inclusion". By doing so, the mission statement and the label "victim" are not able to grant access and integration for women into a society where shame (*turp*) are linked to "victimhood". Thus, because victims are not able to have access to society, jobs, and are discriminated against when identifying by this term, it further alienates them from society. As noted by Sedgwick, Kosofsky and Frank, "if distress is the affect of suffering, shame is the affect of indignity of defeat of transgression and of alienation".[150] Thus, shame and alienation seem to be emerging and responding from each other through "victimization" while also fostering alienation instead of integration.

In order to analyze the public reaction and discourse around the term "victim" or the notion of "victimhood" the treatment that "victims" in Albania endure must be analyzed as well. Women

[149] Qendra Vatra." Qendra Vatra. Accessed April 3, 2019. http://www.qendravatra.org.al/.
[150] Sedgwick et al., 133.

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and young girls are subjected to blame even when they are "victims" because they are held responsible for acts of violence, especially sexual violence, regardless of their own culpability and with little thought to those who coerced or brought them in to such a situation. Through this blaming and shaming, the term "victim" further reproduces itself and is unable to bring about inclusion or integrations for women post sex-work or sex trafficking. It is also important to note that unfortunately young girls and women who experience more violence are at once labeled as victims of any sexual violence.

In the case of a young women who has been trafficked by her fiancé, the Independent reported that the young girl had been subjected to sexual assault as a teenager and because of this "subsequently became a source of shame to her family. Her uncle wanted to kill her, blaming her for "seducing" the man – despite the fact that he was more than twice her age. She and her parents had to move away from their home city to get away from the family."[151] This situation of abuse and victimhood led the family to move, and to subject their daughter to a situation of more danger and abuse just in order to escape the shame (*turp*). The notion that "victims" will be able to receive help and integration through Vatra and their services is good in theory, but in practice one must account for the public opinion and discourse regarding shame and the treatment of victims in the society. As per the Vatra website, the center has been able to assist with the following, "Rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of human trafficking and domestic violence. Building capacities for the representatives of public and private institutions regarding issues of human trafficking and violence against women, girls and children. Lobbying and advocacy to protect the rights of women and girls."[152] However, it must be taken into account that in this case and other cases as well, the

[151] May Bulman, "Sex Trafficking Victim Reveals Terror at Being Forced out of UK," The Independent, March 18, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/dark-realities-of-country-home-office-deems-safe-a8219901.html.
[152] "Qendra Vatra."

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family does not reach out to centers but rather handles the situation privately and seeks to escape the shame that the community or society bestow upon them and their families.

Hence, the term "victim" (*vikitim*) within the Albanian context, is further complicated by notions of "family honor codes" know as *Kanun*[153] and how these codes police women's bodies, not simply physically but also as a result of how they impact and shape public discourse.[154] Women's victimhood is connected to the shame of the family and women are the ones blamed for the family's rupture of reputation. Shame and blame are placed on victims, which brings about the shaming of victims themselves. These women are captured in a cycle of abuse and discrimination once they are identified as victims, especially victims of sexual abuse. The notion and term of victim is reproducing and inducing more blame and shame for women who are seen as victims of sexual violence. This cycle of abuse through victimization and the reproduction of abuse through victimhood is stated in an article in the Independent, where an Albania woman gave her account of being sex trafficked and her fear to return back as such;

> "I've been through a lot. For 13 years of my life I've been hiding from everyone, trying not to be seen. I'm so tired. Going home will be like returning to the same point, and I'm scared I'll go through the same thing." She adds that Albania doesn't offer women adequate protection against abuse, saying that even after she was abused by her teacher as a child, the support wasn't there.[155]

The personal experience of this women who has survived both sexual abuse and sex trafficking shows that women are subject to violence but also blame and shame. The idea of "hiding from

[153] "Kanun I Lekë Dukagjinit, the Code of Lekë Dukagjini, a series of thirteen books that have functioned as the common-law bible of rural Albania since they were set down on paper by Lekë Dukagjini, a feudal lord, in the fifteenth century. Though the Kanun lost influence during five decades of communist rule, after the fall of communism in 1992 and subsequent socioeconomic strife that engulfed the country, many rural Albanians returned to the Kanun as a trusted guide to their daily lives. The Kanun's aggressive subordination of women and strict laws of personal honor and blood feuds are two of the top contributors to Albania's slave-trading crisis."Kara, *Sex Trafficking*, 131.

[154] Gjermeni and Van Hook, "Trafficking of Human Beings In Albania," 437.

[155] May Bulman, "'I'm Terrified to Go Back': Albanian Sex Trafficking Victim Tells of Despair as Home Office Rejects Asylum Claim,"

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everyone" after experiencing abuse shows that women labeled as "victims" are seen as outcast who need to be hidden from society and from the shame that they bring to the family. This shows that the term victim is not able to grant access to inclusion and integration for Albanian women in society.

6.4 Conclusion

Consequently, the notion of shame (*turp*) functions as markers in the Albanian society which are utilized to stigmatize women who have experienced sexual violence, sexual exploitation or have been trafficked for purposes of sex-work. It is due to this notion of shame (*turp*) that Albanian women experience discrimination and are disintegrated when returning back to Albania post sex-work/ sex trafficking/ human smuggling. These women experience and internalize the shame (*turp*) and are unable to fully rejoin or integrate into society after being marginalized by it. Furthermore, women post sex-work/sex trafficking/human smuggling undergo severe emotional and mental health issues due to the trauma and abuse that they continue to face. The term "victim" as utilized by international organizations and NGOs through their interventions is an indicator which seems to work against the missions, they aim to accomplish in terms of integration for women post sex-work/ sex trafficking/ human smuggling. The term victim and the concept of victimhood seems to be reinforcing and producing further the concept of shame (*turp*) since women labeled as "victims" experience marginalization and stigmatization based on this label. Shame (*turp*) is a loaded concept that is tied to both social norms and opinions which reinforce the mistreatment and marginalization of victim.

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Conclusion

In summary, I have provided an analysis of public discourse surrounding the shame and victimization in the Albanian society of women in post sex trafficking situation. Firstly, this thesis established the historical, political, and social-economic shift from communism to democracy which occurred during the early 1990s and continued well into the early 2000s. This shift contributed to the massive migration trends in connection with human trafficking and other of movements. This shift also allowed for enormous amounts of women to be subjected to sex trafficking abusive circumstances which lead to the unequal treatment of women.

The methodology that was used in this thesis was that of discourse analysis which required me to analyze how the words "victim" and "shame" (*turpi*) reproduce shame and further marginalize women post sex work. I researched the way in which Vatra an Albanian NGO utilized the word "victim" in order to gain international financial support and recognition. I also analyzed the way in which Vatra members who had received their services and identified themselves as victims, experienced both shame and blame from society and themselves. In addition, I examined numerous articles both Albanian and international that discuss sex trafficking and the discrimination that women face when they return to Albania. In order to do this, I drew from Tonkiss' to establish my methodology when applying discourse analysis to show that I strongly agree that "language is data" when examining the role that NGOs and feminist have in constructing narratives for women as victims and how such terms affect and are affected by public discourse in Albania. The theoretical framework engaged in this thesis was one that aligned with questioning and problematizing the role of NGOs, international involvement and feminist theory regarding the limiting construc-

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tion of sex trafficking narratives. My main focus is that academic feminist though works to supports and helps bridge the gap of narratives and voices of women that have experienced sex trafficking.

This focus is evident throughout the chapters as I explored concepts and theories which support the notion of giving voices to narratives of women post sex trafficking. I do so by exploring the definition of sex trafficking and prostitution as defined by feminist and international organizations, in order to understand how these can affect women post sex trafficking and how they engage with public discourse in Albania. I further examined the feminist debate between radical an liberal feminist to observe and note how they defined sex trafficking and prostitution in order to observe their roles in constructing narratives for women who have been trafficked and I drew a link between this and the way in which NGOs create and advocate for international initiatives regarding sex work. In The International Initiative, Victimization of Women through Sex Trafficking chapter I discussed how the term victim is problematic through feminist theories and how it further creates a gap between feminist and women who have experienced sex trafficking. I also addressed and analyzed the problem within the Albanian discourse and how this creates a double victimization and further marginalizes women post sex trafficking. Lastly, I explored the meaning of shame within the Albanian context through feminist text in order to better understand the role that it has in the discrimination of women post sex work. I argued that the term victimization creates a sense of shame which further hinders the inclusion of women post sex work in Albanian society.

As far as my limitations go for this thesis project, because of the time limitation I was unable to collect interviews of my own in order to further analyze the public discourse in the Albanian society surrounding the use of “shame” and “victim” and tie that in with the way in which it alters

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the daily lives of these women post sex trafficking. My limitations also included a lack of narratives and scholarly text that is available regarding sex trafficking and Albanian women which does not permit fruitful discussion. My aim would be to continue on the research and expand the availability of data by conducting interviews with post-sex trafficking women which would further contribute to the feminist literature on the matter as well as region.

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