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Art and Advocacy: Evaluating Anti-Trafficking Representations Utilized in the Red Sand Project

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Abstract

In contemporary discourse, terms such as 'trafficking victim,' 'migrant laborer,' and 'illegal alien' carry significant weight in an increasingly polarized political landscape. This rhetoric, often sensationalized in American politics, can obscure the nuanced realities of human trafficking and those affected by it. This project investigates how artistic approaches raise awareness for human trafficking survivors and influence public narratives. Drawing from transnational feminism frameworks, I examine the contributions of an artist-led anti-trafficking campaign, the Red Sand Project, and its impact on the cultural dissemination of anti-trafficking narratives within the confines of news media.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Anti-trafficking is a concept which is relatively new to the modern world. Twenty years ago, when research on human trafficking began, the debate was primarily confined to two main perspectives within feminist circles. The first focused on women in the Southeast Asian and Western European sex industries, framing trafficking as a form of gendered sexual labor migration shaped by global inequalities and structural constraints on mobility. A second perspective viewed women in the global sex trade through the lens of 'female sexual slavery,' and was prominent in groups focusing on sexual exploitation around U.S. military bases and tourist industries in Southeast Asia (Kempadoo, 2015). Both perspectives initially centered sex trafficking as the dominant form of exploitation, reflecting broader tendencies within global feminist discourse to universalize women's experiences despite vastly different geopolitical contexts.

Today, the discourse has expanded to include terms such as 'forced labor' and 'modern slavery', yet it has also become more ambiguous. This is particularly evident across transnational policy arenas such as the European Union, where these terms are frequently standardized but variably interpreted. In contemporary anti-trafficking discourse, several studies highlight how problematic narratives are often reproduced, exacerbating harm for human trafficking survivors (Andrijasevic, 2010; Kempadoo, 2015; O'Brien, 2016; Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018). These narratives are not confined to one geographic or institutional context, but circulate across borders through media, policy, and advocacy networks. Although most widespread campaigns are typically government-led, there are other organizations taking on the mission to combat human trafficking as well.

This study employs the Red Sand Project, an internationally acclaimed art installation created by Molly Gochman, as its primary case study. In 2014, recognizing the global scope of human

trafficking and drawing from personal experiences, Gochman saw the urgent need to raise public awareness for this issue. According to her website, an estimated 50 million people are either trafficked or living in modern slavery, enduring forced marriages, labor, or sexual exploitation (Red Sand Project, n.d.). Gochman first launched the Red Sand Project at Art Basel Miami Beach, filling sidewalk cracks with red sand to symbolize those who 'fall through the cracks' of societal systems (Red Sand Project, n.d.). In 2015, she expanded the project with earthworks, four large art installations shaped like political borders to highlight how borders divide communities and increase vulnerabilities. The emphasis on borders is particularly significant, as it foregrounds how state systems of migration control and global inequality contribute to differentiated exposure to exploitation. The project also offers free tool kits for public participation, encouraging groups to share their own installations on social media using the hashtag #redsandproject. The Red Sand Project has now engaged over one million participants across all 50 states and 70 countries (Red Sand Project, n.d.). It is a collaborative movement which uses art to break down language barriers and highlight how arbitrary border policies create opportunities for refugees and migrants to be exploited, raising critical questions about freedom of movement and the risk of trafficking (Red Sand Project, n.d.).

Art interventions can raise public awareness for political and social issues, but achieving holistic, lasting change requires collaboration to avoid further marginalization of vulnerable groups. This paper examines media coverage of Red Sand Project actions to address the following question: How does the Red Sand Project contribute to the cultural dissemination of anti-trafficking narratives, and how are these narratives reflected in news media?

This study contributes to anti-trafficking scholarship by examining artist-driven advocacy campaigns as potential sites for challenging dominant and harmful narratives surrounding human trafficking, an area that remains underexplored in academic literature. While artistic practices are often positioned as tools capable of restoring agency to individuals routinely

reduced to victimhood, transnational feminist theory cautions against assuming that such intentions are automatically realized in practice. Instead, it emphasizes how representations are shaped by intersecting systems of gendered, racialized, and geopolitical power that operate across borders. This framework therefore interrogates whether artist-led initiatives can meaningfully disrupt dominant narratives simply by virtue of existing outside bureaucratic or state institutions.

Focusing on the Red Sand Project, the findings reveal that despite the campaign's intention to empower trafficking survivors and raise awareness, media coverage continues to reproduce familiar tropes including victim–villain narratives, the victimization and sexualization of women, and the influence of Western ideals. Themes related to securitization and sensationalization and campaign effectiveness appear less frequently. These findings suggest that artist-driven anti-trafficking advocacy does not inherently escape the harmful frameworks often associated with institutional or governmental campaigns. While art holds the capacity to influence anti-trafficking narratives through the shaping and circulation of cultural meanings, it is also embedded within global systems of power that structure how trafficking is represented and understood. As a result, recurring themes persist across varying media forms, geographical contexts, and historical periods. Even in transnational contexts, anti-trafficking narratives remain highly standardized despite differences in institutional framing. This includes within European media and policy environments where similar discursive patterns continue to shape public understandings of trafficking. This persistence indicates that some advocacy efforts may unintentionally reinforce unequal power relations, even when their explicit aim is empowerment. Consequently, the study argues that the transformative potential of art should not be assumed; rather, artistic advocacy must be critically examined as both a site of culture and a reflection of the broader social, political, and historical contexts in which it exists.

This dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 1 provides an overview of human trafficking perspectives and introduces the Red Sand Project case study. Chapter 2 situates the study within academic discourse. Chapter 3 explains case selection and rationale, while Chapter 4 details the methodology. Chapter 5 presents findings and analysis, and Chapter 6 concludes with overarching themes and real-world implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Human Trafficking Concepts

In the 1990s, the world saw an increasing criminalization of migration, prompting political and legal shifts in an attempt to limit these movements (Khosravi, 2010). Academics acknowledged these shifts and documented the patterns of harm which ensued, leading to the emergence of human trafficking-related research.

Attempts to address human trafficking are guided by the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which focuses on redefining human trafficking as a transnational crime. Human trafficking is defined here as, 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring 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' (Article 3(a) in Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018). Policies, judicial decisions, law enforcement initiatives, and other measures to combat human trafficking across the world have relied on this protocol to shape their strategies and execution.

The term 'human trafficking' is frequently used interchangeably with 'modern slavery' in anti-trafficking campaigns. This is a concept developed through the work of Kevin Bales, who co-founded the organization Free the Slaves and estimated the number of modern-day slaves to be 27 million in his publication *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (1999). He also helped create the Global Slavery Index, which ranks countries according to their estimated prevalence of slavery (Kempadoo, 2015). As defined by associates in his professional circle, modern slavery concerns 'situations of debt-bondage, where a person is indebted to another and works for that person to pay off the loan' (Bales, 1999; Quirk, 2007). According to Bales,

Modern slavery is related to trafficking, in that trafficking is a 'process by which a person is placed into slavery. If they don't end up in slavery in the end... it's called smuggling' (Persaud, 2012). Scholars have found this concept to be problematic because it uses the term 'slavery' to make an emotional appeal to its audience (Kempadoo, 2015). Nevertheless, the terms 'modern slavery' and 'human trafficking' are intertwined, often distinguished by the nature of an individual's migration experience.

To understand the scope and impact of human trafficking, it's crucial to examine the existing research. A 2017 report estimated that 40.3 million people were living in modern slavery, including 24.9 million in forced labor (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018). This figure underscores a significant issue in human trafficking discourse: the reliance on estimates and averages due to insufficient empirical data (Goz´dziak & Bump, 2008; Goz´dziak & Graveline, 2015; International Organization for Migration, 2008; Kelly, 2002; World Health Organization, 2012; European Commission, 2014). A primary source of these shortcomings is attributed to the covert nature of the crime, which makes collecting reliable data difficult. This challenges anti-human trafficking campaigns by complicating the dissemination of reliable information to the public, increasing the risk of misinformation, and hindering the development of effective advocacy strategies. While we know human trafficking exists and has disastrous consequences for those involved, obtaining accurate data on its prevalence remains elusive. And when we look at terms used in the Modern Slavery Movement and pair them with these data shortcomings, the campaign becomes one of morality rather than one based on evidence (Kempadoo, 2015).

2.2 Traditional Representations in Human Trafficking

The Ideal "Victim"

Critical victimology offers a useful framework for examining human trafficking representations by exploring the cultural, political, and legal construction of victimhood. Rather than treating

victim status as self-evident, critical victimology highlights how institutional systems determine who is recognized as a victim and who remains invisible (Killean, 2018). This ties to the term "pyramid of victimhood," which refers to the hierarchical system where certain victims are elevated as publicly recognizable and deserving of support, while others remain marginalized and excluded (Kendall & Nouwen, 2013). As a result, survivors whose experiences do not align with dominant trafficking narratives often face barriers to recognition and support, traffickers are less likely to be held accountable, and public understandings of trafficking remain limited.

Such exclusions are reinforced by representations that rely on rigid social categories. As Möller (2010) argues, Western modes of understanding frequently depend upon clear dichotomies—victim and perpetrator, good and evil, rescuer and rescued—while remaining skeptical of ambiguity and complexity. Yet, human trafficking rarely conforms to these binaries. Perpetrators may become rescuers, survivors may participate in exploitation, and those positioned as rescuers may experience victimization. Deconstructing the "pyramid of victimhood" therefore requires expanding conventional understandings of survivorhood, perpetration, and rescue to better reflect the realities of trafficking experiences.
Scholars have also critiqued anti-trafficking campaigns for their emphasis on female victimization, particularly through processes of gender stereotyping and sexualization. Andrijasevic (2007) argues that trafficking representations often rely upon a simplistic dualism that juxtaposes innocent female victims against malevolent male traffickers, intertwining narratives of victimhood with narratives of criminality. However, empirical evidence complicates this framing. According to UNODC data, while women account for 51 percent of trafficking victims, they also constitute 37 percent of traffickers. And men account for 21 percent of victims (UNODC, 2016). These figures challenge assumptions that gender alone determines victimhood or criminality. Furthermore, these representations often reinforce binary conceptions of gender, rendering gender-diverse individuals largely invisible within dominant trafficking narratives.

The prioritization of women and children as victims of sexual exploitation also shapes data collection practices and policy responses. Cases involving men, non-binary individuals, and victims of labor trafficking may be underreported, resulting in distorted understandings of trafficking patterns and unequal access to support services. While such representations are often designed to generate public sympathy, they simultaneously reinforce broader narratives concerning the regulation of women's bodies, sexuality, and labor mobility (De Lauretis, 1987). These gendered assumptions are reproduced through migration and labor regulation, shaping which forms of exploitation are recognized and which victims are deemed worthy of protection and assistance.

Anti-trafficking campaigns play an important role in informing audiences and mobilizing collective action; however, their effectiveness depends upon accurately reflecting the complexity of trafficking experiences. Trafficking narratives shape not only public perceptions but also the visibility of both survivors and offenders, distribution of resources, and design of interventions.

The Ideal "Perpetrator"

The portrayal of perpetrators within anti-trafficking narratives similarly relies on reductive assumptions. While women are frequently depicted as victims, men are commonly represented as perpetrators (O'Brien, 2016). Despite extensive research demonstrating the role of restrictive migration regimes, limited economic opportunities, and structural inequalities in producing vulnerability, anti-trafficking discourse continues to emphasize the image of the trafficker as either an organized criminal syndicate or a male purchaser of sexual services (Chacon, 2006; Sullivan, 2008; Chuang, 2006; O'Brien, 2016). This framing obscures the role of state policies and economic systems in facilitating exploitation. Restrictive immigration controls, visa requirements, inadequate labor protections, and neoliberal economic structures can

significantly increase vulnerability to trafficking, yet these factors are frequently absent from mainstream campaign narratives (Andrijasevic, 2010).

By locating responsibility primarily in individual "bad actors," anti-trafficking campaigns often divert attention away from the structural conditions that enable exploitation. As a result, governments and institutions evade scrutiny for policies that perpetuate inequality through restrictive migration systems, unequal resource distribution, exploitative trade arrangements, and patterns of "brain drain" (Kempadoo, 2015). Examining trafficking through a transnational feminist lens therefore requires attention not only to the conditions that produce exploitation, but also to the power relations embedded within efforts to represent and address it. This perspective highlights how dominant anti-trafficking narratives often privilege particular forms of knowledge and authority, raising critical questions about who is positioned as a victim, who is cast as a rescuer, and how interventions may reproduce existing global inequalities.

Dominant anti-trafficking representations must be understood within broader histories of Western interventionism and global power relations. Narratives grounded in notions of benevolence, modern slavery, and moral rescue frequently position Western actors as saviors while obscuring the structural conditions which enable exploitation. These representations are closely connected to systems of global governance shaped by white supremacy, which privilege Euro-American perspectives and position Western societies as inherently more advanced or enlightened (Kempadoo, 2015). These dynamics have become particularly pronounced in the post-War on Terror era, during which processes of racialization and securitization have increasingly influenced migration and anti-trafficking policies (Kempadoo, 2015). In this context, anti-trafficking interventions are frequently articulated through border governance, reinforcing hierarchies of deservingness between those framed as victims and those constructed as security threats.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Transnational Feminism offers a framework for analyzing the diverse experiences of individuals living near or within boundaries. This includes immigrants, refugees, displaced persons, those who have experienced forced migration, and those navigating multiple cultural identities (Horne & Arora, 2013). This paper employs key themes of this framework, such as reflexivity, intersectionality, inclusive definitions of global and transnational feminisms, cross-border analysis, diverse forms of agency and resistance, and decolonizing theory and practice (Zerbe Enns, et al., 2021). This perspective enables us to examine patterns of injustice and the ways in which several forms of discrimination can be applied and experienced by an individual. Historically, ignoring racial oppression and promoting the idea of a singular women's experience has become the dominant lens for analyzing discrimination. Coined 'essentialist feminism', this perspective 'reduces the lives of people who experience multiple forms of oppression' in a way which isolates individual's experiences into categories (Harris, 1990). Here, we apply a transnational feminism lens to provide a more comprehensive approach.

2.4 New Directions

The effectiveness of anti-trafficking campaigns has been increasingly questioned in light of empirical challenges. Scholars have consistently identified significant shortcomings in official, quasi-governmental, and humanitarian representations of human trafficking. In a systematic review of anti-trafficking campaigns, eight recurring issues emerged: stereotyping, the conflation of trafficking with migration, the conflation of prostitution with trafficking, the sexualization of women, victimization narratives, the role of anti-trafficking organizations, data limitations, and the oversimplification of trafficking experiences (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018). These findings underscore the need for greater critical scrutiny of the narratives circulated through anti-trafficking campaigns and public awareness initiatives, particularly given their influence on public understanding, policy development, and intervention strategies.

In response, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has urged governments and organizations to assess 'the relationship between the intention of anti-trafficking laws, policies and interventions, and their real impact,' and to distinguish between measures that reduce trafficking and those that may merely displace it (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2002). Building on these concerns, scholars have questioned whether anti-trafficking campaigns meaningfully reduce trafficking or instead simply contribute to an increase in reported cases (Gould, 2010). This highlights the need for rigorous evaluation frameworks that assess campaign outcomes, impacts, and implementation processes (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018).

The importance of this study lies in its potential to fill critical gaps within existing human trafficking discourse. While legislative, judicial, and diplomatic responses to human trafficking have all been examined, there is a significant gap concerning the impact of artist-driven advocacy. This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the narratives disseminated in media coverage of the Red Sand Project. Introducing art into the conversation allows us to acknowledge new methods of raising awareness which are outside the constraints of traditional campaigns, while also examining the power it has to challenge discriminatory narratives and restore political agency to survivors whose experiences are often simplified, sensationalized, or marginalized within dominant discourse. This is essential to ensure quality policy is placed at the forefront of politics, particularly in transnational settings such as the European Union, where anti-trafficking frameworks are shaped by both domestic legislation and broader regional governance structures. This study seeks to bridge the divide between theoretical discourse and practical application by evaluating whether artistic interventions can meaningfully influence public understanding and contribute to more nuanced, survivor-centered approaches to advocacy and policymaking in addressing one of the most pressing human rights issues of our time.

Chapter 3: Case Selection and Rationale

The Red Sand Project was chosen due to the extensive media coverage it has received since its conception, the physical scale of its installations, and the range of participants who engage with it. Although the Project has an international impact, this analysis is limited to publications from, and reporting on actions within, the United States. This focus is driven by time constraints, which necessitate a manageable scope for coding and review. Furthermore, the artist is from the United States, and most actions and media coverage have taken place there. Lastly, the United States' diverse religious, cultural, ethnic, and racial demographics provides a comprehensive perspective on the project's impact and reception. While the empirical focus is grounded in the United States, these findings may have broader significance to understanding how artist-driven anti-trafficking campaigns are interpreted across other global contexts, particularly where similar media and policy narratives around trafficking circulate transnationally.

Newspaper articles were chosen as the primary data source due to their ability to reveal themes and narratives, communicate complex social issues, and shape public perceptions through strategic framing. Although linking media coverage directly to public attitudes is challenging, scholars like KhosraviNik (2008) emphasize that media both informs and constructs societal discourse. This narrative construction is particularly influential in shaping communal beliefs and attitudes toward specific groups, especially among members of the public who lack personal interactions with the target demographic (Hartmann & Husband, 1974). This approach will enable an in-depth examination of human trafficking narratives and their influence on public perceptions.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This study draws from 81 newspaper articles, published between March 2016 and April 2024. NVivo data analysis software was used to develop a 'systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' to analyze within the corpus (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Six codes were developed through an initial and iterative coding process. This involved reviewing 81 articles and generating additional themes based on a summative analysis of language-based data (Saldaña, 2021). An abductive analytical approach was used to examine data relevant to the research question, with findings interpreted through a transnational feminist framework. This chapter is organized as follows: data preparation and corpus description, unit of analysis and coding scheme, and a summary.

4.1 Data Preparation and Corpus Description

The corpus was sourced from Factiva and LexisNexis online databases. The criteria for inclusion were: articles with the search term 'Red Sand Project' or 'Molly Gochman,' formatted as newspaper articles, in English, and published in the United States. The search terms were chosen to ensure relevance to the case study. No temporal limit concerning when the articles were published, nor limitations on which media outlets should be included, were imposed. This was to ensure the maximum number of articles were available for analysis when the search was conducted in June 2024.

This strategy produced 116 sources from LexisNexis and 125 sources from Factiva. These sources then underwent a review process where they were screened for relevance and duplication. Those referencing, for example, a geological project working with red-colored sand, were removed on grounds of relevance. In cases of duplication, the oldest version was removed from the corpus to ensure that the most recently edited and circulated version was

analyzed (Nash, 2013). This strategy ensured relevancy and consistency within the sample.

The final corpus totaled 81 articles: 44 from LexisNexis and 37 from Factiva. *Table 1* provides a breakdown of the corpus by year, demonstrating that the most common publishing year was 2023 (21 articles) and the least common was 2024 (3 articles). This low number is likely due to the search being conducted in June 2024, which limited the number of available articles for that year.

Table 1: Corpus According to Year Published

Year published	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*	*2022*	*2023*	*2024*	*Total*
Articles Published	*5*	*10*	*7*	*13*	*5*	*11*	*6*	*21*	*3*	*81*

4.2 Unit of Analysis and Coding Scheme

The unit of analysis in this study is the news article. Each unit was coded for the themes it reflected, as defined in this section. Each coded unit represents one 'file,' and each occurrence of a theme within a file represents a 'reference.' Only the 81 selected files were coded and included in this analysis, and only the sections relevant to the case study were coded.

In Step One, instances related to the *Viewer Response* were identified across the 81 files. This initial theme was determined using a codebook that incorporated findings from past studies (see *Table 5*) (Pepe et al., 2022). If multiple subthemes were shown throughout a single file, multiple references were noted. This initial coding was designed to analyze the impact of the installation on its participants and the communities in which the installation occurred. Once

coded, references were then reviewed. References that did not match in relevancy, as determined upon review, were transferred to another (more relevant) theme or subtheme, or removed from the analysis. This theme was referenced 196 times throughout the corpus.

Step Two involved identifying themes which were developed from reading each of the 81 files (see *Table 6*). These had not been accounted for in initial coding: (Re)Shaping Narratives, Female Victimization and Sexualization, the Paradox of Western Influence, Securitization and Sensationalization, and Data Shortcomings. Once coded, references were then reviewed. They were removed or transferred to other (more relevant) themes if they did not match in meaning. Once this process was completed, all references from Step One and Step Two were reviewed a second time. This strategy ensured consistency, as each code was manually included in the analysis, checked, and double checked. The need to note multiple themes to one entry was frequent but essential to a holistic analysis of this data. *Table 2* provides a summary of the articles coded in in Step Two.

Table 2: Step Two Coding

Themes	*Data Shortcomings*	*Female Victimization & Sexualization*	*The Paradox of Western Influence*	*Securitization & Sensationalization*	*(Re)Shaping Narratives*	*Total*
References	*44*	*106*	*95*	*94*	*210*	*549*

4.3 Summary

This chapter outlined how the corpus was obtained and processed, using a two-step coding strategy involving both predetermined and data driven thematic processes. The unit of analysis

is the news article, which was coded twice and reviewed twice. The next section will discuss the results produced from this methodology.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

This chapter discusses findings and analysis resulting from the coding strategies outlined in Chapter 4. *Table 7* details the number of articles (files) coded under each theme and subtheme, and how many instances a theme and subtheme is referenced. A total of 745 references were assigned to the 81 files. Here, we examine overarching themes within the corpus, analyzing patterns which emerge when examining the data through temporal perspectives. We will begin with the three themes most prevalent, then shift to the three themes least prevalent.

5.1 (Re)Shaping Narratives

(Re)Shaping human trafficking narratives within news media reports of the Red Sand Project is the most prevalent theme in the data, with 49 files and 210 references coded. Narratives within trafficking discourse traditionally focus on two individuals: the victim and the villain. Several factors impact an individual's affiliation with a specific role, attributes such as their citizenship status, country of origin, gender, or occupation. However, as one scholar reflected, 'Acknowledging trauma and resilience are often ignored in favor of the driving desire by the media and public to support only a perfect victim' (Smith & Mac, 2018). In essence, sometimes the labels or roles assigned to an individual oversimplify the true complexity of their nature.

Victim Narratives

139 references and 44 files were coded under the Victim Narratives subtheme. 23 files specifically highlighted the victimization of women, 27 files highlighted the victimization of children, and 7 files focused on female human trafficking survivors which were in attendance at the reported event. This demonstrates a strong theme of limiting acknowledgement of other survivor demographics. This is a discrepancy between media coverage and the Red Sand Project website, which rarely discusses survivor backgrounds in terms of gender (Red Sand Project, n.d.). Furthermore, 12 files (18 references) carried themes of disempowering survivors

of trafficking, whereas 5 files (6 references) carried themes of empowering survivors. We define disempowerment as placing survivors in a narrative of victimhood that undermines their agency, while empowerment acknowledges and supports their autonomy, resilience, and right to shape their own futures. Examples of each are provided below:

> *'The sand stands for the fragility of the victims' situations, and how easily they can be "washed away"' (University Wire, 2017b).*

> *'The demonstration expresses pain in a unique way, drawing on thoughtful expression without relying on exploitive imagery... "The message isn't one of pity... it's of recognition and that's the first step to solidarity"' (University Wire, 2017a).*

These findings suggest that themes of disempowerment predominate in the dataset. Female survivors and children are also more frequently represented in media coverage of the Red Sand Project, indicating uneven patterns of visibility across survivor groups. This contributes to the literature by demonstrating how dominant narratives influence which victims are recognized within public and advocacy discourse. From a transnational feminist perspective, these findings highlight how trafficking representations privilege certain survivor experiences over others. While women and children are more frequently represented, this visibility is often achieved through disempowering narratives that emphasize their vulnerability and victimhood rather than agency. This greater visibility does not necessarily lead to more empowering forms of representation and may instead reinforce gendered stereotypes. Therefore, these findings underscore the need for news media to prioritize empowerment-oriented narratives that amplify survivor agency and reflect the diverse realities of trafficking experiences.

Villain Narratives

This study coded 71 references across 29 files to the subtheme of Villain Narratives, significantly less than what was coded under Victim Narratives. The data reflects a diversion in the ways these narratives are represented in media covering Red Sand Project initiatives, as compared to traditional awareness campaigns. The majority of files (19, about 65.5% of those coded under Villain Narratives) mention systemic issues impacting survivors' vulnerability. Many articles referenced a line from the Red Sand Project website, stating that the use of red sand symbolizes those who fall through the cracks 'whether the cracks of our social, economic, and political systems or those of our personal consciousness' (Red Sand Project, n.d.). However, while many files acknowledged systemic issues as contributing to victim vulnerability, its broad approach to this theme limits its effectiveness in addressing specific problems.

Furthermore, the discussion of migration crises, referenced only three times, is confined to 'Global' or 'European Union' contexts, and neglects the U.S.-specific migration regimes where the earthworks installations were located. This selective framing is significant because it shifts attention away from domestic border enforcement and immigration policy in the United States, thereby limiting accountability for restrictive regimes that contribute to vulnerability at the border. It also deviates from the artist's original intentions, as the Red Sand Project website explicitly emphasizes the critical role that borders and border policies play in contributing to human trafficking (Red Sand Project, n.d.). The predominant framing of traffickers and survivors as United States residents or citizens (70 references) also isolates trafficking from other related policy areas. This separation hinders a comprehensive understanding of how global systems of power interconnect and contribute to vulnerability, ultimately weakening the campaign's ability to address the root causes of trafficking.

> *'We don't think of trafficking as a rural issue. We think of it as something that only happens in big cities. There are all kinds of disadvantaged populations, not just young girls who get sucked into the streets' (Abbott, 2019).*

Within the Border Crisis, Migration, and Racialized Issues subtheme, about one third of the total files coded (9 files, 16 references) focused on indigenous peoples, specifically missing and murdered indigenous women. While these discussions highlight important issues such as policing resources, intercommunity relations, and responses to sexual violence, they remain largely centered on domestic populations and enforcement contexts. The main focus remained on United States residents, with limited mention of historical racial and ethnic inequalities beyond Native American populations. This diverges from existing scholarship, which situates trafficking within wider transnational systems of migration, labour exploitation, and global inequality.

Other scholars focus on anti-trafficking campaigns which assign blame to what is known as the 'Shadowy Figure' (O'Brien, 2016). This is an individual who is unknown to the victim, who is identified as socially undesirable and assumed to be not only those who 'recruit, transport and coerce,' but also the 'brothel owners, and pimps, as well as the "johns"' (O'Brien, 2016). While this narrative emerged in the scholarly discourse frequently, only about 12 references perpetuated this narrative in Red Sand Project media coverage (about 16.9% of all Villain Narratives references). Shadowy Figure narratives were most prevalent from 2017-2020, and 58.33% (7 references) were paired with Securitization and Sensationalization themes. The imagining of the Shadowy Figure strikes fear within the reader, and ultimately aims to justify increased securitization actions:

> *'The traffickers who prey on the victims use threats, violence and intimidation to maintain control over them… Salavantis cited one case in which a sex trafficker told a teenage girl that if she did not follow orders he would "chop her up into little pieces and throw her in the river'"' (The Citizens' Voice, 2018).*

This is contrasted with our 'Known Perpetrator' subtheme. This type of perpetrator is identified as being known by the victim prior to when crime occurred. This includes, but is not limited to, family members, romantic partners, or workplace associates. The Shadowy Figure subtheme is referenced 12 times and is present in 11 files (about 37.9% of all Villain Narrative coded files). The Known Perpetrator subtheme appears in 12 references, and 8 files (about 27.6% of all Villain Narrative coded files). These subthemes share similarities in that they both fall under the 'bad actor' narrative, collectively underscoring a crucial point: the persistent blame of individual traffickers rather than addressing the specific conditions and systems that enable trafficking to occur. This emphasis obscures the broader structural forces that shape vulnerability to trafficking. By centering the actions of "villains," these narratives depoliticize trafficking and divert attention away from the intersecting systems of power that produce and sustain exploitation. This finding contributes to transnational feminist scholarship by demonstrating how anti-trafficking discourse reproduces individualized understandings of harm, limiting opportunities to critically engage with the transnational and structural conditions that facilitate trafficking in the first place.

A third focus within the Villain Narratives theme relates to the role of commercial sex and consumerism in fueling demand. The following quote from our corpus illustrates this rhetoric:

> *'Slavery only exists because of the high demand for commercial sex and products made by slave laborers. "If there was no demand, traffickers would have no incentive to enslave people... Almost everyone contributes to the slave industry"' (University Wire, 2016a).*

Research examining traditional anti-trafficking campaigns has consistently found that responsibility is shifted away from institutional systems and toward individualized villains. While this narrative was also present in our data, the artist-led campaign examined here demonstrated a somewhat broader engagement with systemic issues and consumer responsibility. Although these systemic factors were acknowledged on the Red Sand Project

website, they received considerably less attention in media coverage, illustrating how public representations often simplify more complex institutional critiques. Rather than blaming larger institutional systems or individual 'bad actors,' this subtheme shifts the blame to the consumers. 12 files from our corpus cite consumerism as a driver of trafficking (about 41.4% of all Villain Narrative coded files, and 14 references). Four references conflate human trafficking with prostitution and five instances highlight the role of consumerism in fueling demand for sex trafficking. This theme was most prominent from 2021-2023, and trends at an upward slope over time.

This framing places disproportionate emphasis on sex trafficking while marginalizing other forms of labour exploitation. It also reinforces a narrative that conflates prostitution with trafficking, a tension long critiqued by transnational feminist scholars for oversimplifying complex labour realities and erasing the agency of sex workers. By centering consumer demand, these narratives frame trafficking primarily as a matter of individual moral responsibility, drawing attention away from the broader political, economic, and social structures that produce conditions of exploitation. This finding demonstrates how consumer-focused anti-trafficking discourse can narrow understandings of trafficking, privileging sex trafficking narratives at the expense of a more transnational analysis of labour exploitation.

Figure 1:

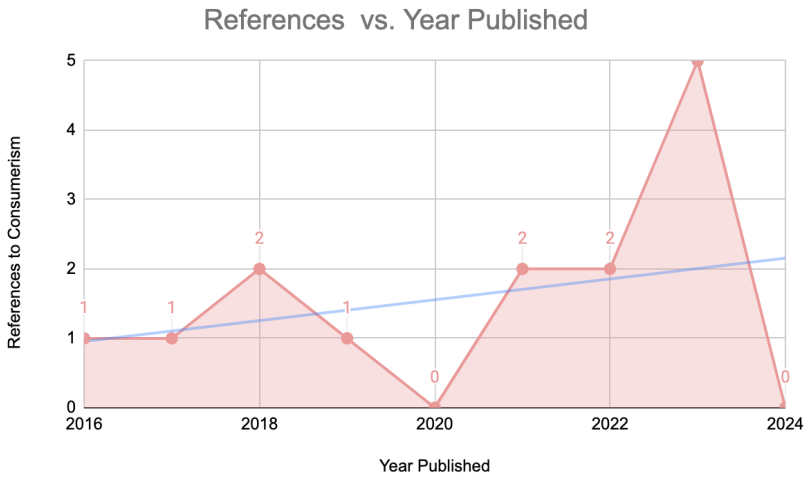


Table 4: Villain Narrative Subthemes

Subthemes	*Systemic Issues (including those related to racism, borders, and drugs)*	*Consumerism*	*Known Perpetrator*	*Shadowy Figure*	*Total*
References	*33*	*14*	*12*	*12*	*71*

5.2 Female Victimization and Sexualization

In our study, there were 38 files and 106 references attributed to this theme. There were 23 files (39 references) which specifically highlighted the victimization of women, 26 files (40 references) which emphasized sexual labour as a primary reason for trafficking, and 9 files (11 references) which mentioned dating violence or sexual assault experienced by women. These findings underscore the persistence of gendered narratives in Red Sand Project news media coverage, similar to studies of other, more traditional anti-trafficking campaigns.

Conflating Prostitution with Sex Trafficking

The conflation of human trafficking and sex work within anti-trafficking discourse reflects a key limitation of dominant narratives. Research has documented extensive human rights violations experienced by sex workers during arrest and detention, including physical and sexual assault, repeated strip searches, denial of legal representation, and restricted access to information regarding legal rights (Lam, 2018). In some jurisdictions within the United States, undercover officers have been permitted to engage in sexual activity during prostitution stings, resulting in documented cases of abuse and exploitation (Mac, 2018). Public exposure and criminalization can have severe psychological, social, and economic consequences for those affected. And anti-trafficking interventions have often been criticized as "anti-sex work, anti-migrant, and racist" (Lam, 2018).

Despite narratives suggesting significant numbers of individuals are trafficked and forced into sexual exploitation, these claims lack robust empirical support (Lam, 2018). Furthermore, the majority of sex workers have not been trafficked or coerced into their profession. One study found that approximately 6 percent of sex workers were trafficked, aligning with international research (Mai & King, 2009; Wagenaar et al., 2013; Sahni & Shankar, 2013). However, 10 files and 16 references within the corpus conflate prostitution with sex trafficking. The majority of these references occurred between 2018-2019 (9 references). An example of this subtheme includes:

> *'"Before watching, I had no idea prostitution was a form of sexual exploitation"' (University Wire, 2016b).*

These findings demonstrate how media coverage continue to reproduce conflations of sex work and trafficking that obscure the structural and transnational dimensions of exploitation.

Legal Challenges and Social Stigma

Legal challenges and social stigma deter survivors from reporting crimes, accessing services, seeking employment, securing housing, and even seeing their children (Mac, 2018). And as noted above, increased involvement of law enforcement can exacerbate individuals' vulnerability. Some examples of this subtheme include:

> *'She noted that more than often than not, victims are arrested for prostitution, rather than those doing the trafficking' (The Times Leader, 2022).*

> *'McKenzie herself was tried as a co-defendant with her trafficker because she was forced to drive the car used to transport minors across state lines for illegal purposes... In order to have her charges vacated, McKenzie would need to legally identify herself as the perpetrator of a crime, rather than a victim of one...*
> *"Because of my criminal conviction, in some states I must register as a sex offender"' (University Wire, 2019).*

> *'"If they go into one of the existing programs or shelters that we have, people tend to point them out as prostitutes, call them names. It's very sad. You can't recover like that,"' (The Deseret News, 2018).*

Legal challenges and social stigma experienced by human trafficking survivors were discussed in 7 files with 8 references. These conversations have become more frequent in recent years, with the highest number of references occurring in 2019 (3 references). The growing awareness of human trafficking's impact on survivors offers hope for a better future, as it helps governing bodies better address their needs and tackle challenges such as underreporting.

The themes of gender stereotyping within anti-trafficking campaigns underscore the persistent victimization and sexualization of women. These narratives, as highlighted by scholars like Andrijasevic (2007), present a simplistic dichotomy between victims and traffickers that shapes how trafficking is identified and responded to. Media coverage that centers on women and children, particularly in the context of sexual exploitation, narrows the understanding of human trafficking and creates data imbalances by overlooking other demographics and forms of exploitation. This framing is reinforced through a feedback loop in which media narratives inform public and political priorities, which in turn shape enforcement practices and legal categorizations. The conflation of prostitution with sex trafficking further complicates the discourse, as it diminishes the autonomy of sex workers, and obscures the distinct and diverse experiences of trafficking survivors. Addressing stereotypes and conflations is therefore critical to developing more precise and equitable legal frameworks that reflect the structural and transnational conditions underpinning exploitation, while better safeguarding the rights of all individuals affected.

5.3 The Paradox of Western Influence

This theme explores how Western influence, often related to notions of benevolence, modern slavery, and religious ideals, can inadvertently sustain contemporary human trafficking. This was our next largest theme, reporting 42 files and 95 references coded. These narratives reveal how global power relations are reproduced through humanitarian and moral discourses that position the West as the primary agent of rescue and reform.

Western Benevolence

Western Benevolence appeared in 8 files and 14 references. The peak in references occurred between 2016-2017 (9). Furthermore, this theme more often disempowered survivors (3 references) than empowered them (0 references).

The intersection of white supremacy and neoliberalism is evident in Western humanitarian rescue missions, which often involve interventions in Indian brothels, Bangladeshi factories, Nigerian slums, Polish truck stops, or Thai massage parlours (Agustín, 2012; Ahmed, 2014; Kapoor, 2013). These interventions rely on racialised and gendered constructions of vulnerability and function to reproduce moral authority rather than address structural drivers of exploitation. Scholars critique this "rescue industry" as the "soft side of imperialism," where the spectacle of saving victims displaces attention from the systemic conditions that sustain trafficking (Agustín, 2012). Transnational feminist scholarship situates these practices within broader histories of colonial governance and global inequality, highlighting how humanitarian interventions can reinforce rather than disrupt uneven power relations. Examples of this subtheme include:

> *'"I wish I could save them all, but if I could save one person and save a parent from experiencing what I've gone through and the heartache — it's gonna be a lifetime of healing,' she said. 'It's not like she's just gonna walk out of this and be OK, I'm going to forever have to help her heal"' (Watertown Daily Times, 2021).*

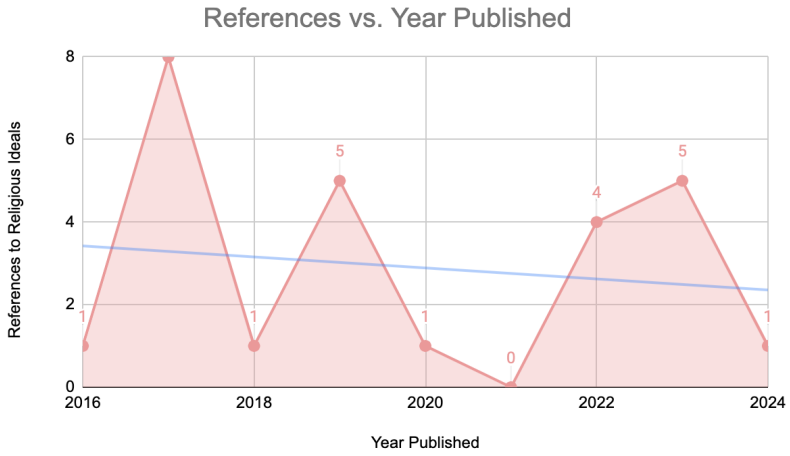
Religious Ideals and Modern Slavery

The thematic connection between Modern Slavery and Religious Ideals is evident in our data, with both subthemes sharing traits such as the desire to save others, self-transformation, and guiding moral values. A significant development in the intersection of religious ideals and modern slavery was the formation of the Global Freedom Network, which united leaders from the world's major religions to sign *The Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery* (Walk Free, n.d.).

The subtheme of Modern Slavery appeared in 55 references and 33 files. Religious language appeared in 26 references and 18 files, peaking between 2017 and 2019 before trending down.

This period coincided with the rise of Trump-era politics and the increasing visibility of Evangelical influence in U.S. public discourse. The alignment of religious morality with anti-trafficking agendas demonstrates how global governance initiatives promote particular cultural and political values under the universalized language of "freedom." Overall, the data demonstrates how Western humanitarian and religious discourses frame trafficking through logics of rescue, morality, and salvation that obscure structural inequalities and reproduce global hierarchies of race, gender, and geopolitical power.

Figure 2:



5.4 Securitization and Sensationalization

The 1980s brought about an international 'deportation turn', reinforced by the 9/11 attacks in the United States (Anderson et al., 2011). These attacks led to increased global shifts in border securitization, barriers to visa access, and heightened divisive rhetoric in politics and the media. Securitization highlights the policies employed to secure borders. Sensationalization is defined as presenting information in a shocking or exciting way (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Integrating these themes into our study enhances our ability to explore the interplay between security concerns and advocacy responses, highlighting the broader implications for human

rights in contemporary contexts. It elucidates how the media frames specific issues as security risks, shaping public perceptions and justifying restrictive measures such as deportation or imprisonment. It also enables critical analysis of how public discourse excludes or criminalizes certain communities, perpetuating inequalities and marginalization. Lastly, it uncovers the underlying power dynamics and ideological foundations that drive policies, informing advocacy efforts for more humane and rights-based approaches to governance.

In our study, data was coded as either Sensationalization or Securitization, which in total appeared in 42 files with 94 references. Under the Sensationalization theme, two main ideas emerged from the data: that human trafficking is 'happening more than we realize' and that it is 'happening close to home'. The first was recorded in 9 files and 10 references, and is exemplified in the quote below:

> *'"You grow up thinking you're safe… but when you look at the numbers, we're really not safe"' (Abbott, 2019).*

The second narrative was more frequent, with 40 files and 70 references. An example of this subtheme is provided below:

> *'It's not only happening in remote, poor countries far away... It happens in the U.S.' (University Wire, 2018).*

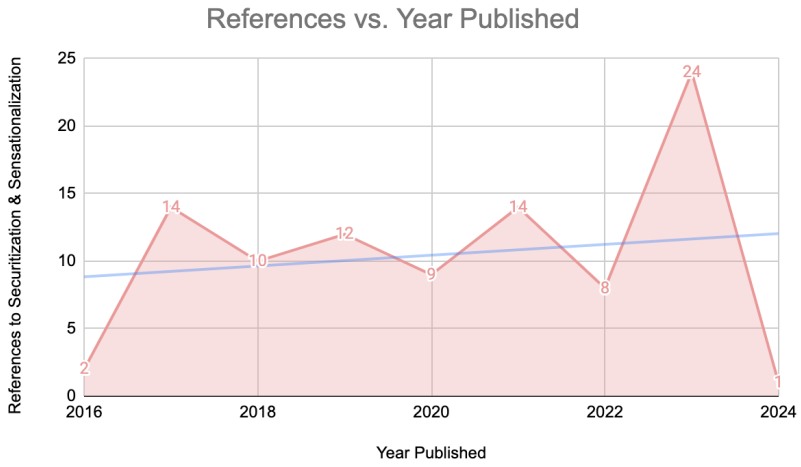
These narratives frame human trafficking as an urgent issue that threatens not only distant countries, but also local communities, thereby justifying increased securitization measures. Sections coded under the Securitization theme comprised 11 files and 14 references. For example:

'Sanguedolce spoke on the resources necessary to fight human trafficking: Boots on the ground, people that can investigate, patrol, and save lives. "We intend to prosecute the criminals to the fullest extent of the law"' (The Times Leader, 2022).

An additional finding was the association of drugs or addiction within human trafficking discourse, which was noted in 5 files. These were referenced either as a method to keep victims compliant or by traffickers exchanging humans for drugs, further emphasizing the criminal nature of human trafficking. For example:

'"How often is human trafficking associated with drug use?" ... "In my experience, almost always,' Crisp answered. 'If you look at any crime, drug use is the root of it"' (News-Topic, 2023).

Figure 3:



From a transnational feminist perspective, securitization and sensationalization themes within anti-trafficking discourse help to construct trafficking as a constant threat. And media narratives tend to privilege enforcement and criminal justice interventions over broader social

and economic solutions. This framing legitimizes surveillance and punitive responses while diverting attention from the structural factors that shape vulnerability to exploitation.

5.5 Effectiveness of Anti-Human Trafficking Campaigns

Data Shortcomings

The next subtheme identified across the corpus is Data Shortcomings, which appeared in 44 references and 29 files. Data limitations remain a persistent challenge in human trafficking research and advocacy, as hidden populations, inconsistent reporting practices, and contested definitions often produce incomplete or unreliable information. These limitations can shape public understanding and policy responses by privileging certain forms of exploitation and affected populations, while rendering others invisible. Data can be used to establish the scale and urgency of trafficking, making the quality and interpretation of findings particularly consequential for how the issue is understood. Concerns related to data shortcomings were frequently identified in anti-trafficking awareness campaigns and have been similarly highlighted within the scholarly literature (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018; Kempadoo, 2015).

Analysis of the corpus identified three sources related to data shortcomings: underreporting (20 references across 10 files), reliance on estimates, predictions, and inconsistent averages (15 references across 15 files), and the covert nature of trafficking itself (9 references across 9 files).

References to underreporting frequently position victims as responsible for data gaps by emphasizing their reluctance to come forward. In doing so, they obscure the social and systemic factors that can deter reporting, including fear of retaliation, mistrust of authorities, limited access to support services, and social stigma. Consistent with patterns identified elsewhere in this study, responsibility is often individualized rather than connected to broader institutional

and structural conditions. Notably, underreporting is addressed in only 10 files, suggesting that this issue remains inadequately discussed within media coverage.

The reliance on estimates, predictions, and inconsistent averages due to the covert nature of the crime is also problematic. While the hidden aspects of these crimes make data collection challenging, the casual acceptance of vague data can have dangerous implications. In the absence of robust data, these estimates are often presented as fact to the public, especially in campaigns that prioritize education and awareness-raising. As a result, numerical claims can become central to advocacy narratives despite limited transparency regarding how those figures were produced. This practice not only misleads the public but also undermines the credibility of advocacy efforts. If the data used in these campaigns is later found to be inaccurate or exaggerated, it can erode public trust and diminish the perceived legitimacy of the cause.

The lack of discussion surrounding data shortcomings, and accepting it as inevitable, discourages efforts to improve data collection methods. Instead of relying on estimates, predictions, and averages, anti-trafficking campaigns should call for more rigorous methodologies, increased transparency, and a critical examination of the factors that contribute to underreporting. This could include enhancing support for victims to report, improving data-sharing practices among agencies, and developing more sophisticated tools for measuring and analyzing covert crimes. This study contributes to the literature by showing how artist-led campaigns and media coverage can reproduce these data limitations, shaping public understandings of trafficking through incomplete or uneven representations of exploitation.

Red Sand Project Viewer Response

This section centers on Red Sand Project installations, specifically examining their impact on participants, attendees, and community members. References to the audience and community's

change in behavior after being exposed to the Red Sand Project installation was referenced 90 times, in 59 files. References to the audience and community's growth in knowledge about the topic of human trafficking after being exposed to a Red Sand Project installation was referenced 79 times, in 39 files. The reported emotional impact the Red Sand Project installation had on participants and community members was referenced 18 times, in 14 files. The data therefore suggests that Red Sand Project installations have had the largest reported impact on changing participant behaviors (discussed in about 73% of all files).

Other files were coded under the Viewer Response subtheme when organizations reported sustained engagement with the Red Sand Project movement or when community members recalled participating in or witnessing past Red Sand Project activities in the past. An example of this theme's impact on participating communities are included below:

> *'"Once you know what it is you can't forget... The sand sticks around for weeks, and is biodegradable and represents a natural part of our society sticking out"' (University Wire, 2017a).*

This quote underscores the enduring nature of the project's ability to be remembered long after participant's initial engagement. The metaphor of the sand 'sticking around for weeks' mirrors the project's capacity to embed itself within the consciousness of its audience, symbolizing the persistence of the message in the public mind. This subtheme was identified in 9 files and 9 references, representing 11.11% of the files in the corpus. The majority of these references were concentrated between 2022-2023. Findings suggest that future evaluations of the effectiveness of human trafficking campaigns should consider not only immediate shifts in viewer responses, but also whether these changes translate into longer-term understanding and action.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The visual methodologies employed by the Red Sand Project transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, establishing a potent and universal mode of communication that appeals to diverse audiences. The use of red sand serves as a metaphor for the often-overlooked yet pervasive nature of human trafficking, compelling viewers to engage. Its participatory nature democratizes activism, positioning community members as active contributors in the fight against human trafficking.

This study analyzed newspaper coverage of the Red Sand Project to examine its artistic representations of human trafficking through the lens of transnational feminism. The thematic analysis of 81 articles revealed that media coverage of artist-led anti-trafficking campaigns can effectively perpetuate some recurring themes present in traditional anti-trafficking campaigns, while challenging others. Art has the power to influence anti-trafficking narratives, but it is also influenced by the context in which it exists. As a result, certain themes persist across different media formats, geographical regions, and time periods.

The theme of (Re)Shaping Narratives was most prevalent in the data, with 49 files and 210 references. Coding dedicated to Victim Narratives demonstrated how the project's media coverage reproduces the simplistic dichotomies often portrayed in traditional anti-trafficking campaigns such as those relating to survivor gender, age, and the type of exploitation they endure. Media coverage of the Red Sand Project also challenges traditional representations, such as the importance of systemic issues in creating vulnerabilities, which was cited in 19 files. Although we did see a shift in blame towards broader socio-political conditions, messages were often diluted through media coverage. And while subthemes such as the 'Shadowy Figure' and 'Known Perpetrator' were less frequent, together they had a larger impact in contributing to the 'bad actor' narratives, in alignment with traditional campaigns. The subtheme of

'Consumerism' was relatively unanticipated, however it demonstrated a potential new trend in villain narratives with noticeable increase in references over time.

The Female Victimization and Sexualization theme reveals significant issues with the portrayal of trafficking in anti-trafficking campaigns, especially those which reinforce gender stereotypes. This theme, prevalent in 38 files and 106 references, distorts the complex realities of trafficking by emphasizing women's sexual victimization and conflating sex trafficking with prostitution. Such narratives create data imbalances, and neglect non-female identifying individuals and other forms of labor trafficking. The GAATW's *Collateral Damage* report found that even well-intentioned anti-trafficking efforts can result in further harm towards trafficked individuals, including migrants and sex workers (GAATW, 2007). The findings and analysis within this study support this. Similar patterns have been identified in European anti-trafficking media and policy discourse, where gendered framings and the conflation of trafficking with sexual exploitation remain particularly persistent.

The Paradox of Western Influence, coded in 42 files and 95 references, exposes how Western interventions, framed by benevolence and religious ideals, perpetuate problematic narratives. These narratives reinforce racial hierarchies, portraying Western actions as morally superior while disempowering survivors. The subtheme of Modern Slavery was most frequently coded under this theme, appearing in 33 files and 55 references. Religious ideals, identified in 18 cases and 26 references, was the second most referenced subtheme. Finally, Western Benevolence appeared in 8 files and 14 references. Together, these subthemes discussed narratives which prioritize moral gratification over long term solutions to human trafficking by neglecting to address the root causes of this issue.

The sensationalized rhetoric in media coverage of the Red Sand Project, which frames trafficking as an immediate and localized threat, feeds into a broader discourse of securitization. While this approach effectively mobilizes public concern, it frequently leads to policies that criminalize rather than protect vulnerable populations. The data shows that linking trafficking with drug use further criminalizes survivors, diverting the focus from a human rights perspective to supporting punitive measures. While this theme was less prominent in the data in recent years, it was still noted in 42 files and 94 references.

Lastly, assessment of campaign effectiveness must be understood in relation to data shortcomings and viewer response. Data Shortcomings was the least coded subtheme, appearing in 29 files and 44 references. The media's limited attention to underreporting and reliance on imprecise estimates is problematic, and highlights the need for more nuanced approaches to data collection to improve public understanding and response. The Viewer Response theme highlighted the *Red Sand Project* installation's immediate impact on participants and communities, particularly in shaping reported behavioural change. However, long-term effectiveness is less frequently reported, reflecting a broader theme of short-term impacts rather than sustained influence. Together, these patterns suggest that while the Red Sand Project demonstrates the capacity to generate immediate public engagement and influence behavioural responses, evaluating and improving its sustained effectiveness remains challenging.

The findings in this study highlight the necessity for anti-trafficking campaigns and media outlets to adopt a rights-based approach that prioritizes survivor empowerment. Survivors of trafficking should be afforded the agency to articulate their experiences and determine the forms of assistance they receive on their own terms. Labeling individuals as victims imposes significant social and legal barriers on them, making it challenging to rebuild their identities after trafficking (Ham & Dewar, 2014). Anti-trafficking campaigns should highlight their

strength, resilience, and contributions to their communities. Audiences engaging with anti-trafficking messaging need to critically evaluate the underlying themes of these campaigns, as raising awareness alone is insufficient to address the complexities of the issue. Future research should conduct comparative analyses of artist-led anti-human trafficking campaigns across different geographical contexts to better understand their impact. This includes in-depth examination of European settings, where rights-based frameworks are increasingly emphasized in EU anti-trafficking policy but, in practice, often coexist with punitive or securitized approaches. Such work could clarify how artist-led campaigns reproduce or challenge dominant trafficking discourses across contexts, contributing to more effective and comprehensive interventions.

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Appendix

Table 5: Initial Codebook - Relating to the Installation Itself

Themes	Description with Subthemes
Viewer Response	*Emotional Impact:* Associated with participant and community sentiment toward those who experience human trafficking, and the issues related to the topic. *Educational Impact:* Associated with how the Red Sand Project's actions served to educate the public on the issue of human trafficking. *Behavioral Impact:* Associated with participant and community actions to address the issues relevant to human trafficking. *Lasting Impact:* Associated with the long term impact of the Red Sand Project's actions on participants, community members, and those who have experienced human trafficking.

Table 6: Secondary Codebook - Relating to Themes Reflected in Media Coverage

Themes	Description with Subthemes
Female Victimization and Sexualization	*Conflation of Prostitution with Sex Trafficking:* Associated with the lack of distinction, or even outright conflation, between prostitution and human trafficking.

	Dating Violence & Sexual Assault: Associated with the focus on dating violence and sexual assault. *Focus on Sex Trafficking:* Associated with the focus on sex trafficking. *Female Victimization and Sexualization:* Associated with the focus on the victimization and sexualization of women.
The Paradox of Western Influence	*Modern Slavery Movement, Religious Ideals, & Western Benevolence:* Associated with the prevalence of modern slavery concepts within news media discussions, which also involve elements of religious ideals and western benevolence.
Securitization and *Sensationalization*	*Trafficking 'at Home' & Trafficking Frequency:* Relating to the sensationalization of the topic of human trafficking for the purpose of justifying political and legal actions of securitization in the United States.
(Re)Shaping Narratives	*Victim & Villain Narratives:* Relating to the victim/villain narratives shaped and reshaped through the media coverage of Red Sand Project actions.
Data Shortcomings	*Covert Nature of Crime:* Associated with the limited access to data on human

	trafficking, both in the United States and internationally, due to the 'nature of the crime'. *Underreporting:* Associated with the limited access to accurate data on human trafficking, both in the United States and internationally, due to underreporting by survivors and community members. *Estimates, Predictions & Inconsistent Averages:* Associated with the inconsistencies in human trafficking data, both in the United States and internationally, and reliance on estimates and predictions as a result of the above two subthemes.

Table 7: Files and References Identified in the Data

Theme	Subthemes	Description
Reviewer Response: *121 Files & 196 References*	*Emotional Impact:* 14 Files & 18 References *Educational Impact:* 39 Files & 79	Associated with participant and community sentiment toward those who experience human trafficking, and the issues related to the topic.

	References *Behavioral Impact:* 59 Files & 90 References *Lasting Impact:* 9 Files & 9 References	Associated with how the Red Sand Project's actions served to educate the public on the issue of human trafficking. Associated with participant and community actions to address the issues relevant to human trafficking. Associated with the long term impact of the Red Sand Project's actions on participants, community members, and those who have experienced human trafficking.
Female Victimization and Sexualization:	*Conflation of Prostitution with Sex Trafficking:* *10 Files & 16 References*	*Conflation of Prostitution with Sex Trafficking:* Associated

38 Files & 106 References	*Dating Violence & Sexual Assault:* *9 Files & 11 References* *Focus on Sex Trafficking:* *26 Files & 40 References* *Focus on Female Victimization:* *23 Files & 39 References*	with the lack of distinction, or even outright conflation, between prostitution and human trafficking. *Dating Violence & Sexual Assault:* Associated with the focus on dating violence and sexual assault. *Focus on Sex Trafficking:* Associated with the focus on sex trafficking. *Female Victimization:* Associated with the focus on the victimization of women.
The Paradox of Western Influence: 42 Files & 95 References	*Modern Slavery Movement:* 33 Files & 55 References *Religious Ideals:* 18 Files & 26 References	*Modern Slavery Movement, Religious Ideals, & Western Benevolence:* Associated with the prevalence of modern

	Western Benevolence: 8 Files & 14 References	slavery concepts within news media discussions, which also involve elements of religious ideals and western benevolence.
Securitization (11, 14) *& Sensationalizatio n* (41, 80)*:* 42 Files & 94 References	*Trafficking 'at Home':* 40 Files & 70 References *Trafficking Frequency:* 9 Files & 10 References	*Trafficking 'at Home' & Trafficking Frequency:* Relating to the sensationalizat ion of the topic of human trafficking for the purpose of justifying political and legal actions of securitization in the United States.
(Re)Shaping Narratives: 49 Files & 210 References	*Victim Narratives:* 44 Files & 139 References ● *Demographics Impacted (Women):* 23 Files & 39 References ● *Demographics Impacted (Children):* 27 Files & 59 References	*Victim Narratives:* Relating to the victim narratives shaped and reshaped through the media coverage of Red Sand Project actions.

	• *Disempowering Survivors:* 12 Files & 18 References • *Empowering Survivors:* 5 Files & 6 References • *Stigma and Legal Repercussions for Survivors:* 7 Files & 8 References • *Survivors Attending RSP Event: 7 Files & 8 References* *Villain Narratives:* 29 Files & 71 References • *Consumerism:* 12 Files & 14 References • *Known Perpetrator:* 8 Files & 12 References • *Shadowy Figure:* 11 Files & 12 References • *Systemic Issues:* 19 Files & 33 References • *Border Crisis, Migration, & Racialized Issues:*	*Villain Narratives:* Relating to the villain narratives shaped and reshaped through the media coverage of Red Sand Project actions.

	9 Files & 16 References • *Drug Addiction:* 5 Files and 5 References	
Data Shortcomings: 29 Files & 44 References	*Covert Nature of Crime:* 9 Files & 9 References *Underreporting:* 10 Files & 20 References • *Victims Don't Want to Report:* 5 Files & 6 References *Estimates, Predictions & Inconsistent Averages:* 15 Files & 15 References	*Covert Nature of Crime:* Associated with the limited access to data on human trafficking, both in the United States and internationally, due to the nature of the crime. *Underreporting:* Associated with the limited access to accurate data on human trafficking, both in the United States and internationally, due to underreporting by survivors and community members. *Estimates, Predictions &*

		Inconsistent Averages: Associated with the inconsistencies in data on human trafficking, both in the United States and internationally, and reliance on estimates and predictions as a result of the above two subthemes.