

Rethinking the Professional: The Role of Dutch Anti-Trafficking NGO Workers in the Representation and Empowerment of Trafficked Women

End of Year Thesis

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Foreword

I would like to thank my supervisor Agnes for all her advice and words of encouragement throughout the researching and writing process. Special thanks go to all the NGO workers I interviewed; your hard work and obvious dedication to your clients is inspiring. I'm afraid that 15,000 words cannot do justice to the complexities and challenges you face in your work, but I hope this study will encourage further attention to be given to the valuable insights you can offer in the field of anti-trafficking.

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Abstract

This study is concerned with how Dutch anti-trafficking NGO workers represent and empower trafficked women. It critiques the popular image of the innocent, naïve trafficking victim in need of 'saving' and argues that NGO workers present a more complex image of their clients. It asserts that NGO workers' position has given them a nuanced understanding of trafficking and trafficked women, where the line between woman-as-agent and woman-as-victim is not so easily drawn, and trafficked women are seen to be a highly heterogeneous group with diverse experiences and needs. This complex understanding of trafficked women means that NGO workers have a more effective method of empowerment that takes into account the abilities, strengths and knowledge base of their clients and rejects the traditional hierarchical client-professional divide. At the same time, NGO workers can be constricted by their institutional position as a professional, and show that it can be difficult to challenge hegemonic power relations. The empowerment process is also frustrated by wider cultural notions of trafficking and legal frameworks that restrict choices for formerly trafficked women. Ultimately, I argue that anti-trafficking NGOs provide valuable insight into the representation and empowerment of trafficked people and that further research needs to be made into how to further harness their knowledge in anti-trafficking policy and discourse.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In her critique of anti-trafficking legislation, sociologist Wendy Chapkis laments that definitions of trafficking are 'as unstable as the [estimated] numbers of victims' (Chapkis 926). Her comment reveals a key problem of anti-trafficking discourse. Chilling tales of abuse, violence and exploitation appear frequently in the media; politicians and human rights activists have decried the practice as 'modern-day slavery' and a myriad of campaigns and laws have been launched to combat it. Yet despite this global attention, the concept of human trafficking remains fraught with misunderstanding. What counts as trafficking changes according to various definitions, meaning that the boundaries of trafficking are shifting and unclear, in turn making estimation of numbers of victims difficult. The Palermo Protocol adopted by the United Nations in 2000 stands today as 'the accepted international definition of human

trafficking’ (Huda qtd. in Bosworth et al. ‘Labelling the Victims of Trafficking’ 316), and defines trafficking thus:

‘For the purposes of this Protocol:

(a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean 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. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used’

(‘Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons’, United Nations)

Within the broad definition of the Protocol, trafficking is seen to be a practice that appears in multiple forms. It can take place both across international borders and within the borders of one country; it is not dependent on the movement of people across borders but more on the exploitation of one person by another. It also takes into account the fact that trafficked people may ‘consent’ to exploitation. For instance, many women are voluntarily transported across borders with the full intent of becoming sex workers or labourers. This situation only becomes trafficking when they arrive and ‘find themselves in conditions they did not expect [...]’. It is the end outcomes – the nature, the terms and conditions, of work at the destination point – which defines most cases as trafficking’ (Arnold and Bertone 32). Trafficking can thus best be seen as a ‘continuum of limited autonomy to complete bondage’ (Long 7); it encompasses a range of diverse experiences with varying degrees of agency.

Despite the relatively nuanced definition of the Palermo Protocol however, the representation of trafficked people, and trafficked women in particular, remains limited.

Even though large numbers of men are also trafficked, and labour trafficking makes up a large portion of trafficked people (International Labour Organisation), the most common image of a trafficking victim is that of a helpless young woman forced into the sex industry. She is a ‘sexually innocent [female] sold or tricked by relatives or families without any complicity, sexual knowledge, or experience’ (Zheng 5). More often than not, she is also racialised, seen as coming from a ‘Third World’, ‘backwards’ country (Hua xxi). This representation of the naïve, powerless and racialised female victim is one that has frequently been perpetuated by (Western) governments wishing to promote various ‘political, moral and social regimes’ (Long 8) and sensationalist media accounts that ‘capitalize on the combination of sexuality and exploitation to provoke a public voyeurism that sells copy but also effectively distances audiences from real lived experiences’ (Long 7).

This image has been thoroughly critiqued as reductive and harmful to trafficked women, denying them any agency (Zheng 9). It obscures the diverse experiences and realities of trafficking and thus a better understanding of how to prevent it and how to adequately assist those who have been trafficked. For instance, the privileging of a particular narrative of trafficking sets up a limited image of what counts as a ‘true’ victim. A woman whose experience does not fit the narrative of unwilling innocent ‘may deny her the status of an “ideal victim” and the credibility that attaches to it’ (Bosworth et al. ‘Labelling’ 322). Thus rather than helping to empower trafficked women, certain representations can in fact further marginalise them.

There are many studies devoted to the representation and empowerment of trafficked women, but few focus on the role that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play in this. However, NGOs are now ‘well established as an institutional form around the globe, especially in relation to questions of women’s welfare and empowerment’ (Bernal and Grewal 1). They play a key role in promoting new representations of ‘woman’ (Bernal and Grewal 11) and as such it is necessary to explore the frameworks and knowledge that they produce in the field of anti-trafficking. In this study I examine the role of Dutch anti-trafficking NGOs in the representation and empowerment of

trafficked women.¹ Based on semi-structured interviews with representatives of NGOs that work with trafficked women in various capacities, I address the following questions: how do Dutch anti-trafficking NGO workers reflect on and contribute to the representation and empowerment of trafficked women? As representatives of trafficked women, how do they construct categories like victim and agent and how does this affect their work? How do NGO workers perceive their role in the lives of the women they work with? In focusing on NGO workers' experiences, I explore a key perspective in the anti-trafficking field. In examining the role that NGOs play in trafficked women's lives, valuable light can be shed on the complexities surrounding representation and empowerment of trafficked women, leading to a better understanding of how to best tackle trafficking.

Representation and empowerment are inherently linked; I see both as informed by issues of knowledge production and power relations. The working definition of empowerment throughout this study is as a 'process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives by taking part with others in development of activities and structures that allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly' (Bystydzienski quoted in Yuval-Davis 179). Empowerment entails people working together to harness ways that enable oppressed people to change the way they are treated and perceived in society. To me, this definition portrays empowerment not just as an end-result, but as a distinct process by which one gains new knowledge and subsequently the power to shape one's own life. However, I also acknowledge that empowerment can be problematic and complex. As Barbara Cruikshank asserts, it holds 'the twin possibilities of domination and freedom' (Cruikshank 2); while empowerment has a liberating capacity, it is also fraught with issues of power relations, and as such can be an instrument of (unconscious) control over oppressed groups by the very people who seek to assist them.

¹ I acknowledge that in focusing on women trafficked for sex work rather than other other forms of trafficking I am perhaps perpetuating the myth that it is mostly women who are trafficked; however, while I think that more research should be made into other trafficked groups, this does not mean that further research about trafficked women is redundant. On the contrary, I argue that in exploring how NGOs represent and empower trafficked women, the need for further research into the complexities of trafficked women as a heterogeneous group will be made clear.

I start by outlining the existing literature about trafficked women, exploring the distinction between woman-as-victim and woman-as-agent and how anti-trafficking discourse sometimes highlights this distinction in order to assert a specific agenda that justifies strict anti-immigration laws and perpetuates reductive images of the West and the non-West rather than focusing on assisting trafficked women. I explore the argument that anti-trafficking discourse should be more influenced by the voices and experiences of trafficked people themselves in order to lead to a more nuanced understanding of the practice, as well as the problems and complexities that come with this form of empowerment.

I then outline the main theoretical frameworks used in this study. I principally draw from standpoint theory, focusing on how people's experiences and social positioning influence the way they understand the world. This is important in order to acknowledge that trafficked women as a group are highly diverse and have different experiences from each other, and thus different ways in which they conceive of themselves and their situation. I also draw on intersectionality as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which draws attention to the ways in which people can be discriminated against on multiple axes. It is important to be aware of the multiple ways in which trafficked women are oppressed, and that some trafficked women may be discriminated against differently than others, so an intersectional analysis is essential. I also refer to postcolonial theory to an extent, as anti-trafficking discourse brings up issues of immigration, culture and relations between the 'West and the rest'. Chandra Mohanty's critique of Western feminists' perpetuation of the West as superior and the non-West as inferior through their monolithic representation of non-Western women provides useful insight for this study. An outline of my methodology is then given before exploring my research findings.

In exploring the role of NGOs in the representation and empowerment of trafficked women, I hope to highlight a gap in research and contribute to a more thorough understanding of how to effectively assist trafficked women without reproducing damaging hegemonic discourses and frameworks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As a global phenomenon, trafficking is a subject that has been approached in many different ways. The literature reviewed thus comes from a wide range of fields, including feminist and gender studies, criminology, law, sociology and development². Despite its diverse background, however, the predominant view within this body of work is that anti-trafficking discourse and policy frequently misrepresents trafficked women. Anti-trafficking discourse rose rapidly in the 1980s (Doezema 31), and in response the last thirty years have seen several studies dedicated to challenging it, arguing that not only does it have harmful consequences for the women it claims to protect, but that the representation of trafficked women as silent, powerless victims is used to justify ‘a particular political, moral, and economic regime’ (Long 7). Sex worker’s rights activist and development researcher Jo Doezema has written extensively about this issue, and in an influential article examines how narratives of trafficking form a false cultural consciousness around issues of migration and the sex industry. She asserts:

‘All over the world, communities are caught up in identity crises in the face of displacement, mass migration, and globalisation. The myth of “trafficking in women” is one manifestation of attempts to re-establish community identity, in which race, sexuality, and women’s autonomy are used as markers and metaphors of crucial boundaries.’ (Doezema 46)

In calling trafficking in women a myth, she is not suggesting that this practice does not happen, rather that the image of the ‘young and naïve [foreign] innocent lured or deceived by evil traffickers into a life of sordid horror’ (Doezema 24) is an extreme one that has been harnessed as a means of controlling and defining aspects of society, and does not accurately reflect the reality of trafficking. Quoting from a study by GAATW³, she asserts that in fact ‘[t]he majority of “trafficking victims” are aware that the jobs offered them are in the sex industry, but are lied to about the conditions they will work under’ (Doezema 24). This exposes the image of the unwilling, sexually innocent victim as an inaccurate portrayal of many trafficked women’s experiences, showing them to have a degree of choice and agency; as such, it blurs the line between innocent

² Many authors also take an interdisciplinary approach in their studies of trafficking.

³ The Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women, made up of anti-trafficking and women’s rights NGOs worldwide.

trafficking victim and illegal economic migrant. But it is precisely the distinction between ‘innocent’ and ‘guilty’ that is used in anti-trafficking discourse in order for nations to justify stricter anti-immigration practices; for as Chapkis asserts, ‘[p]rotections offered to the innocent help to reinforce the suggestion that the punishments meted out to the “guilty” are justified’ (Chapkis 925). Anti-trafficking discourse that paints trafficked women as passive victims with no control over their own lives implicitly sets up migrants who choose to migrate as sex workers as guilty, and thus deserving of punishment. This creates a ‘good’ prostitute vs. ‘bad’ prostitute dichotomy, where only those that conform to the popular trafficking narrative are deemed deserving of support. For instance, some anti-trafficking organisations refuse to provide trafficking protection assistance to women who ‘at any point willingly engaged in prostitution’ (Haynes 9), as they automatically become ‘guilty’. This is not only harmful for many trafficked women but for all sex workers, as it implies that if one chooses to be a prostitute, one ‘deserves all [the exploitation and abuse] they get’ (Doezema 37).

Critics further argue that not only does the dichotomy between innocent and guilty create confining boundaries for what constitutes a ‘good’ victim, but the inherent racialization of the powerless victim reproduces the colonial image of the West as progressive and the non-West as ‘backwards’. Doezema argues that the portrayal of non-Western women and women from former Communist countries as ‘helpless, childlike creatures is a result of and perpetuates what Chandra Mohanty has identified as the “colonial gaze” of western feminists’ (Doezema 37)⁴. Trafficked women are powerless because they are seen as coming from nations that ‘subjugate’ women, thereby implicitly placing the enlightened West as the saviour of these unempowered women. Thus the colonial image of the West as superior and the non-West as inferior is often reproduced in anti-trafficking discourse.

In critiques of the way anti-trafficking discourse represents trafficked women, NGOs are often accused of perpetuating rather than challenging this damaging and reductive

⁴ Mohanty’s critique of Western feminists’ portrayal of non-Western women as a homogeneous, static and unempowered group will be further explored in the theoretical chapter.

portrayal. Mary Bosworth, Carolyn Hoyle and Michelle Dempsey, who have researched extensively in the areas of criminology and feminist law, argue that NGOs tend to enforce the image of the powerless victim. This assertion is based on a small UK-based study focusing on the experiences of trafficked women and the NGO workers who support them. They argue that the expansive way in which the Palermo Protocol (as outlined in the introduction) defines trafficking allows for ‘the possibility that a person might very well be – at the same time – both a victim of trafficking and a choosing agent. In so doing – in theory at least – it transcends the sharp dichotomy between women-as-victims and women-as-agents’ (Bosworth et al. ‘Labelling’ 317). The Palermo Protocol arguably gives more room for the complex realities of trafficking and blurs the distinction between trafficked people being either completely powerless or making active choices. From this, they argue that there is a gap between policy and practice, for in their interviews with NGO workers, they found that they ‘seemed to be far more influenced by the cultural language of slavery, coercion and (ideal) victimhood, than by the legal language of the Protocol. Some perceived that only those with no [rather than a degree of] choice could be legitimately labelled as victims of trafficking’ (317). Thus they argue that NGO workers tend to adopt the narrower representation of trafficking and reinforce the image of trafficked women as outlined previously.

This study is useful for highlighting a gap between policy and practice, but does not offer reasons for why NGO workers would adopt the stereotypical definition of trafficking victims. Feminist theorist Jennifer Musto’s study of anti-trafficking approaches in the Netherlands shows that NGOs may adopt the ‘powerless victim’ label as an attempt to help their clients. For instance, in training police officials, Musto claims that NGOs have ‘centralised the victimization of all prostitutes, whether forced or voluntary’ (Musto 389) in order to ‘transform a previously unsympathetic police force into one that increasingly sees foreign prostituting women as exploited, vulnerable and psychologically traumatized victims who need human rights relief juxtaposed to detention and deportation’ (390). Here we see how NGOs try to work around the dichotomy of ‘innocent’ and ‘guilty’ prostitute to protect their clients; for if police perceive all migrant sex workers to be victims rather than criminals, they will be eligible for support rather than punishment. This offers the possibility that NGOs may have to

adopt mainstream anti-trafficking discourse not necessarily because they agree with it, but in order to try and protect their clients as best they can in a society that imposes strict dichotomies on victim and criminal, trafficking victim and economic migrant. Despite good intentions of NGO workers, however, this is still highly problematic, as the women themselves may not self-identify as victims or even as being trafficked (Musto 392). Thus NGOs are portrayed as often perpetuating damaging representations and dichotomies, which I challenge in my research findings.

The literature outlined thus far is valuable for my own research as it exposes how mainstream representations of trafficked women are highly racialised and gendered, and can be harmful to not only trafficked women but also migrant subjects and sex workers generally. This will help me be more critical and reflective of how interviewees construct categories like ‘victim’, ‘criminal’ and ‘rescuer’. However, these studies are also limited. Certainly they work hard to challenge the representation of trafficked women as passive, Third World victims, which is undoubtedly an important project; however, in their bid to shatter this image by showing trafficked women to also be migrant subjects with agency, they frame trafficking as being exclusively an issue of migrants entering Western nations, and ignore other trafficked peoples, such as those internally trafficked⁵. Their rejection of the kidnapped, tricked and abused victim also risks excluding the category of trafficked women for whom this experience is real and who do in fact feel victimized. Ironically, in trying to show trafficking to be complex and heterogeneous, their exclusive focus on willing migrant subjects ends up enforcing yet another homogeneous representation of trafficking that can have harmful consequences for the empowerment of trafficked people.

Anti-trafficking policy in the Netherlands is an example of how this focus on migrant subjects may lead to the neglect of some trafficked people. Dutch criminal law recognizes that trafficking can take place across international borders but also within the borders of the Netherlands; according to Article 273f of the Dutch Penal Code ‘any one who wilfully profits from the exploitation of another person shall be guilty of [trafficking in human beings]’ (National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings).

⁵ By ‘internally trafficked’, I mean trafficking taking place within the borders of one country, rather than crossing international borders.

Thus trafficked persons can be both international and Dutch subjects in the eyes of the law. According to the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, the most common nationality of trafficked persons registered in the Netherlands is in fact Dutch⁶. Contrary to the image of the Third World victim as discussed above then, it would seem that many trafficked people in the Netherlands are in fact national citizens. In spite of this however, Dutch policy regarding the protection and assistance of trafficked people is largely provided in Dutch migration law. Known as the B-8 procedure, the law offers ‘aliens in whose case there is the “slightest indication” that they are the victims of human trafficking a maximum of three months in which to reflect, free from pressure, on whether they wish to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of their alleged traffickers’ (Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs). During the reflection period and in exchange for their willingness to co-operate in prosecution efforts, trafficked persons are offered support services such as temporary and permanent residency, ‘shelter, medical and social services, job training and language programs’ (Musto 384-5). While this law comes with several problems⁷ of its own, it in theory at least provides a degree of protection and assistance of internationally trafficked people. However, because it revolves around issues of residency, the needs of domestically trafficked persons who do not need a residency permit are potentially neglected. A study carried out by Tilburg University focusing on how effectively Dutch anti-trafficking policy meets the needs of trafficked people argues that there are inadequate protection and assistance services for internally trafficked people:

‘Dutch victims stated that they experienced a lack of specific professional health care facilities, especially mental health care facilities, trained in

⁶ It is necessary to be cautious about this assertion, as it only concerns registered victims. Thus it does not necessarily mean that there are more Dutch victims than international victims, only that more Dutch victims get registered by the law. Nonetheless, it highlights that trafficking of Dutch citizens is a real and pressing issue.

⁷ The B-8 procedure has been criticised by many as focusing more on ‘the enforcement of criminal law’ (Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs) rather than the adequate protection of trafficked people. Under the law, trafficked persons who choose not to testify against their trafficker lose all access to services, which fails to take into account the many reasons why a person would wish not to testify against their trafficker (ie; trauma, fear of retribution, etc.). Most interviewees were very critical of the B-8 procedure, and this will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

dealing with victims of trafficking. They described sometimes feeling mistreated compared to non- EU victims, as non- EU victims are granted specialised treatment in [specific] facilities, which are not open to Dutch victims. Dutch victims are expected to use ordinary health facilities, which do not necessarily specialise in the counselling of trafficking victims. Furthermore, the safety of victims cannot always be guaranteed in ordinary care facilities.’ (Klerx-van Mierlo et al. 146)

Here, the concept that only non-Western citizens can be seen as being trafficked has damaging consequences for those who do not fit the category, leading to their feeling further marginalized and excluded. While I am not saying that studies such as Doezema’s are unaware of the fact that trafficked people include Western citizens, their almost exclusive focus on non-Western migrant subjects inadvertently reinforces the homogeneous representation of trafficking.

Given the heterogeneity of trafficked people then, it is evident that representing them as a group is extremely problematic and can lead to trafficked people feeling disempowered and marginalized. Some studies have concluded that it is through hearing the stories of trafficked people themselves that best captures the diverse reality of trafficking. Policy should be based more on trafficked people’s experiences. Feminist socio-anthropologist Tiantian Zheng laments that despite past research focusing on the struggles of trafficked women, few studies have actually centred on the stories of the women themselves (Zheng 1). Bosworth, Hoyle and Dempsey assert that ‘if women are to overcome abuse, control or oppression, whether at the hands of individual men or of the state, feminist academics must create knowledge of *their* experiences and *their* viewpoints, not simply report the voices of those charged either with supporting or punishing them’ (Bosworth et al. ‘Researching Trafficked Women’ 773, writers’ emphasis). I find this emphasis on trafficked women’s stories a very valuable one, as it privileges trafficked women’s own understanding of their lives and experiences rather than imposing another framework of understanding on to them. It ensures that trafficked women are not silenced, and allows for the nuances and complexities that make up trafficking to be heard. Moreover, it recognizes that these women have agency and are capable of empowering both themselves and others through using their experience to challenge mainstream discourse and policy.

I certainly agree that anti-trafficking discourse and policy needs to be based on trafficked people's own understanding of their experience, and that telling one's story can be a form of empowerment. However, I argue that one should also be cautious in emphasising speaking as a mode of empowerment, as it depends very much on the context in which someone is speaking. Bosworth, Hoyle and Dempsey, while stressing the importance of hearing the voices of the actual women themselves rather than their gatekeepers, also acknowledge that there are reasons why this would be problematic. For one, women may not want to relate their experiences as they would rather forget that period in their life (Bosworth et al. 'Researching' 772); in this instance, speaking is not empowering but in fact keeps the trafficked woman tied to her role as a victim, and becomes yet another exploitative act inflicted upon her. Trafficked people often have to tell their story multiple times to various stakeholders such as police, immigration authorities and judges, which can be a stressful ordeal. Indeed in the Tilburg University study, interviews with trafficked people found that 'victims experience the hearings by the police and the (investigative) judge as onerous and even threatening. Victims generally do not trust the police and, therefore, do not tell their full story. This fear is not unfounded as some of the victims reported being treated as perpetrators initially' (Klerx-van Mierlo et al. 147). Trafficked people often do not have the opportunity to talk about their experiences in a way they would choose to do so; rather, they are used as a means of building a case against traffickers or to defend their status as a victim rather than a criminal (even if they might not easily fit either category). Thus the situation in which trafficked people find themselves relating their experiences is often one that is the opposite of empowering. Bosworth, Hoyle and Dempsey encourage researchers to directly focus on the voices of trafficked people in order to raise awareness of the reality of trafficking; however, even this approach, no doubt intended as a means of supporting trafficked people, still means that most often the researcher will be interpreting the words of trafficked women and controlling the agenda, rather than the trafficked people themselves.

It would seem then that considering speaking as a means of empowerment, while certainly important, is not a straightforward issue. As the Tilburg study asserts, 'there is a high level of heterogeneity in [trafficked people's] needs' (Klerx-van Mierlo et al.

145); some people may need certain services that are not needed by others. Therefore it is important to have a wide range of strategies for empowerment in order to meet these diverse needs. As development theorist Jo Rowlands presciently observes, '[e]mpowerment is a process that cannot be imposed by outsiders' (Rowlands 105); empowerment cannot be 'given' by one person to another. The emphasis on telling one's story privileges only one means of empowerment while ignoring other possibilities that may be preferable for some trafficked people. It also conforms to a limited notion of agency in which only some actions can be seen as 'agentive and rational' (Hua 67); in this case, telling one's story makes one an agent, while not telling it suggests the opposite. The fact that there are very few studies that focus on other means of empowerment, such as skills development, housing assistance and community-building, to me shows a significant gap in research about effective means of empowering trafficked people. Human rights law researcher Rachel Shigekane's study of rehabilitating trafficked people in the US offers a rare glimpse into other empowerment methods, in which she describes how 'services such as legal, housing, and employment assistance are rendered in a way to promote self-sufficiency and to increase self-esteem so that survivors become prepared to make informed decisions' (Shigekane 130). Rather than importance being placed on relating one's experiences, the focus is on assisting trafficked people to become able to control their own lives. While Shigekane's lack of reflection on the issue of power relations in the empowerment process limits her study, it is nonetheless useful for bringing to light various forms of empowerment other than speaking, which I further explore in my research findings chapter.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

From the literature reviewed, it is evident that mainstream representations of trafficked women are often used to fulfil other social and political objectives such as restricting the movement of migrant subjects (particularly migrant women), and has harmful consequences for trafficked women. This brings up issues of power and knowledge; those in control of determining what is 'real' or 'true' shape how society is structured. It highlights that knowledge production is very much a social construction; the image of

the passive, 'Third World' trafficking victim is not an inherent fact, but a product of a specific culture. Thus one of my main theoretical frameworks is standpoint theory, as it is useful for critically analysing how knowledge is produced. According to feminist standpoint theory, there is no one empirical 'truth' that exists outside the social sphere; what constitutes knowledge is always influenced by cultural and social factors (Harding 119). The materiality of people's lives 'not only structures but sets limits on human understanding: what we do shapes and constrains what we can know' (Harding 120). Our location in society and the experiences we have influences the extent of our knowledge and understanding of the world. No one perspective can 'see' the whole truth then; knowledge cannot come from one single perspective, but is made up of many. However, some perspectives are continually privileged over others. As Sandra Harding asserts, historically knowledge claims have generally been grounded in white male experience (Harding 121), silencing other groups and defining what counts as reality. In order to have a fuller understanding of the world and to challenge oppression, then, standpoint theory asserts that subjugated knowledges (ie; those knowledges that have been oppressed and silenced by dominant groups) have to be heard. Thus standpoint theory is useful in highlighting the need for mainstream representations of trafficked women to be confronted by producing knowledge based on the experiences of the women themselves.

At this point it may seem contradictory that my study focuses on how NGOs represent and empower trafficked women rather than focusing directly on the voices of the women themselves; if it is about trafficked women's self-definition and knowledge production, why not go 'straight to the source' as it were? However, aside from ethical and practical reasons⁸ for not interviewing trafficked women, I want to focus precisely on the role NGOs play in representing and empowering trafficked women, looking not only at how they affect the lives of the women they work with but how they in turn are affected by their clients. How does the specific location of NGO workers as professional

⁸ As I have previously stated, I find interviewing trafficked women for the purposes of research to be problematic. It has to be done carefully in order to ensure a non-exploitative, stressful or negative experience for interviewees. This would take considerable time, including finding women willing to be interviewed and gaining their trust. Given the restricted time constraints of this study, this was not a viable option.

assistance and/or protection providers shape their understanding of the women they work with? Does their position allow them to better acknowledge the standpoint of trafficked women, or do they adhere to a more mainstream anti-trafficking discourse? Standpoint theory is useful for exploring whether people can learn to ‘see’ from another’s perspective. Being based on the idea that our experiences determine our understanding and knowledge of the world allows for the fact that people (and thus culture) are not static, but are constantly changing according to the experiences they have. Thus our standpoint will not remain the same throughout our lives. I explore the possibility that working with trafficked women has affected the standpoint of NGO workers, and if so in what way. After all, understanding the perspective of another is a challenging process, as Uma Narayan asserts;

‘Those who display sympathy as outsiders often fail both to understand fully the emotional complexities of living as a member of an oppressed group and to carry what they have learned and understood about one situation to the way they perceive another. It is a commonplace that even sympathetic men [to feminist causes] will often fail to perceive subtle instances of sexist behavior or discourse.’ (Narayan 376)

Narayan’s quote shows that even when one tries to understand and support members of an oppressed group, it is difficult to fully grasp the complexity of their lives, and one can fail to recognize (and thus unconsciously reproduce) forms of discrimination and oppression even as we hope to help combat these issues. This becomes doubly complex when we consider that oppressed people can sometimes internalise mainstream representations about themselves and come to believe that they are the stereotype (Hill Collins 23). Having a standpoint is thus not just about claiming a specific position, but is a process of self-conscious struggle to reach that position, one that must constantly be assessed. No standpoint is neutral ‘because no individual or group remains unembedded in the world’ (Hill Collins 33); whether we are aware of it or not, we are all part of a society that has been structured by dominant groups (such as white males) and are thus all imbricated in its system of power. This will not only be useful for examining to what extent NGOs are aware of the complexity of power relations in regard to trafficked women, but to keep me self-reflexive as a researcher; how does my positionality affect

the way I will conduct my research? What potential biases or assumptions will influence me?

Alongside standpoint theory I bear in mind Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, which challenges how discrimination is viewed along a single categorical axis, ie; one is seen to be discriminated against based on one's sex *or* race, not both (Crenshaw 140). Using Black women as an example, Crenshaw argues that the experiences of certain groups are erased as they are confined to only one category of discrimination (Crenshaw 152). She exposes the racist roots of feminism, where race was overlooked and 'white women [spoke] for and as *women*' (154, writer's emphasis), thereby upholding certain patriarchal forms of oppression and undermining Black women's experience. Intersectionality thus pays attention to the ways in which people can be multiply discriminated against, and how factors like race, sex, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and many other factors intersect with and inform one another. To my mind intersectionality and standpoint theory are inextricably linked, as both demand the multiple dimensions of a person's identity to be acknowledged and for previously silenced experiences to be heard. It is useful for highlighting the diverse ways in which trafficked women may be discriminated against (for example as a migrant *and* as a prostitute) and also that trafficked women may not all experience the same level of discrimination. This will inevitably affect the representation of trafficked women and the type of services they require. I will explore whether NGOs take this into account in their work with clients.

As I have shown in my literature review, the mainstream representation of trafficked women is thoroughly racialised, perpetuating the image of the non-West as backwards and its native women as non-agents. Thus it is also important to take into account postcolonial theory's critique of how the West constructs the non-West as its inferior Other⁹. Chandra Mohanty's critique of how Western feminist scholarship constructs the

⁹ I base this notion of Self and Other on Edward Said's *Orientalism*, in which he argues that 'the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' (Said 1-2). The West has constructed both itself and the non-West through its depiction of the non-West as inherently different – and subordinate – to the West. This notion of difference has historically been used, and to an extent is still used today in various forms, to allow the West 'to control, contain, and otherwise govern

image of the 'Third World' woman is particularly useful in showing that Western feminists often reproduce the idea of the superiority of the West, and in doing so reduce non-Western women into one homogeneous, static category that is 'ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.' (Mohanty 53). This image contrasts with 'the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own choices' (Mohanty 53). In other words, Western feminists, despite good intentions, may represent non-Western women as non-agents and set themselves up as agents, reproducing the idea of the non-West as backwards and the West as progressive. This inevitably produces a victim-saviour dichotomy, in which Western feminism is seen as the only model for progress and non-Western frameworks for challenging oppression are eclipsed. Mohanty's insights will be useful for examining whether NGO workers reproduce notions of non-Western women as needing 'saving' and how this affects their work.

Intersectionality, standpoint theory and postcolonial theory are useful for challenging the imposition of one form of knowledge over another. This is especially important when looking at theories of empowerment. As I have already argued, the concept of empowerment is problematic and needs careful scrutiny. Social work theorist Bob Pease offers an insightful theoretical framework for examining empowerment in his Foucauldian analysis of the practice in social work. He asserts that in spite of 'the good intentions of those who seek to empower others, the relations of empowerment are themselves relations of power' (Pease 137-8). While empowerment has become an essential part of the social work mission, it can also be seen 'as a more subtle refinement of domination, masked by the respectability of a liberatory discourse' (Pease 138). While empowerment professes to be a practice in which individuals regain control of their own lives, it can in fact be another means of exercising control and power over these individuals, albeit unconsciously. In particular the client-professional relationship can harm the process of empowerment (Pease 135). The 'professional', after all, is defined as possessing 'a specific knowledge base [...] Professionals are supposed to be

(through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other' (47-8).

experts [and] are placed in a position of power over others through their institutional position' (137). Again, those deemed to have knowledge are the ones in control, getting to define what is deemed 'right' or 'wrong'. As Pease asserts, this can be disempowering to clients, as it implies that empowerment is done 'to' them by a professional rather than coming from themselves (137). This sets up a power/powerless dichotomy between professional and client that takes away any agency on the part of the client to define for themselves their needs and identity. Pease refutes this dichotomy by using Foucault's claim that oppositions of power/powerless are too simplistic as we are all implicated within systems of power; people's capacity to 'develop "power against" through resistance means that oppressed people are not completely powerless' (139). This conception acknowledges that while oppressed people may exist in unequal relations of power with others, they are nonetheless valid agents with the capacity to challenge their oppression. Like standpoint theorists, Pease calls for 'the insurrection of subjugated knowledges' (141) in order to contribute to a better form of empowerment. He sees professionals as playing a key part in assisting with this insurrection process, but it involves the hierarchy of the client-professional relationship being dissolved, becoming based on dialogue rather than authoritarianism (142), and the 'role of expert' being abandoned (Hartman 21). This theory of empowerment highlights the need to be aware of power relations and that, while professionals are important for facilitating the process of empowerment, they cannot impose what they deem to be 'empowering' on those that they work with, but base their practice on the local knowledge of their client. This theoretical understanding of empowerment will be useful for exploring how NGOs define and practice empowerment, and for examining their understanding of their role in the empowerment process.

Chapter 4: Methodological framework

Over a period of five weeks, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of NGOs that provide services to trafficked women. Given this study's emphasis on individual experience and representation, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was the most appropriate method. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour and 40 minutes. A total of ten workers from seven different NGOs

were interviewed. The NGOs vary in their mission and work with trafficked women, often simultaneously providing services to other vulnerable groups. Three of the NGOs work to promote and protect the rights of voluntary sex workers as well as providing services to trafficked people; one focuses on domestic violence; one reintegrates vulnerable people into society by co-ordinating buddy programmes¹⁰; one runs a social enterprise offering skills development and internships specifically for trafficked women; and one is the co-ordination and information centre for anti-trafficking services in the Netherlands. Interviewees vary in their roles within their organisation, ranging from those who are more involved in policy-making and have little to no contact with trafficked women to those who work closely with clients on a daily basis. Most of the interviews were one-to-one except for interviews 2 and 4, which each involved interviewing two colleagues together. The purpose of the interviews was to ascertain how NGO workers view the women that they work with, how they conceive of their own role in their clients' lives and how they understand notions of empowerment. I wanted to examine whether NGO workers challenged, reinforced, or otherwise responded to stereotypical definitions of trafficked women and their awareness of power relations in empowerment practices. To measure the position of NGO workers in relation to these issues, my questions¹¹ were tailored to ascertain the following: how much (or how little) interviewees privilege the knowledge and experiences of their clients; their level of awareness of the 'myths'¹² and complexities surrounding trafficking; their level of awareness of the diversity of trafficked women's experiences; their level of awareness about reproducing damaging hierarchies. I had to bear in mind the tension between interviewees as representatives of an organisation promoting a distinct 'public persona' and as an individual with their own subjective understanding and experiences. I was interested more in how the NGO workers themselves framed their understanding of trafficked women rather than the NGO as a more abstract whole,

¹⁰ A buddy programme involves a client being matched with a member of the public for a period of time. During this period they go on outings and do activities together with the aim of breaking down the client's isolation and getting them used to being in a community again. This was a widespread practice, with several NGOs offering it as a service to their clients.

¹¹ A list of initial interview questions is included in the appendix.

¹² As outlined in the literature review.

therefore most questions focused on how the interviewees' experiences informed their views and opinions. Interviewees were told in advance that interviews would be anonymised to protect both their and their clients' identities in order to facilitate a relaxed atmosphere in which interviewees could voice their opinions more freely. I used the principles of grounded theory to analyse the data; as Sharlene Hesse-Biber asserts, the process of grounded theory analysis keeps one 'close to the data (by coding and memoing) [and] allows you to "hear" the voices of the participants' (Hesse-Biber 397). In closely reading the data, categorising it and writing memos about it, the interviewees' own understandings and meanings were kept at the forefront of my research, and allowed me to adapt my questions based on my findings. Interviewees were then sent copies of the interview transcript and were invited to amend or add to it.

Limitations

My study is based on interviews with a small group of interviewees, and thus comes with a few limitations. Firstly, the small sampling size means it cannot stand as being representative of anti-trafficking NGO workers in general; indeed, while I attempted to interview at least two persons within each NGO, this was not always possible, and only happened with three of the organisations. As such the opinions of one NGO representative cannot be seen to be indicative of their organisation as a whole. While I tried to make my interview questions as in-depth as possible, I spent a relatively short amount of time with each interviewee, and considering the many complexities of the topic, it would be optimistic to assume that interviews fully captured the experiences and views of the interviewees. Finally, while all interviewees were highly proficient in English, I feel that they would have been able to more fully express themselves in Dutch, and so were slightly inhibited from that perspective. Nevertheless, my study is useful for bringing to light issues concerning the role of NGO workers in relation to trafficked people's representation and empowerment, and can be used as a valuable starting point for further research in this area.

Position

It is important to mention my own experience of working in an anti-trafficking NGO, as I found that it had the potential to be simultaneously a strength and a weakness in my research. Having previously worked with an anti-child trafficking NGO in Thailand, I have a certain ‘insider’ knowledge about working in this sector. This could be useful; for one thing it was helpful in gaining me access to certain interviewees and in creating rapport during interviews, as I was seen to share their experience to a certain extent rather than being a ‘detached’ researcher. I could not only empathise but relate to the frustrations and complexities of working in the anti-trafficking sector. However, I was also aware that this ‘insider’ knowledge could easily bias my research findings, or blind me to differences in our experiences; for although I have worked in the anti-trafficking sector, it was within a vastly different culture and context. Thus I had to remain constantly self-reflexive that the interviewees’ experiences, rather than my own, were privileged in the interpretation process.

Chapter 5: Research findings

Research findings have been divided into two sections, representation and empowerment. However as I have already stated, the two are inherently linked and should not be seen as separate but rather two sides of the same issue; representation focuses more on the ideology of NGO workers, while empowerment focuses on how this ideology plays out in practice. The findings show that, contrary to what previous studies have argued (ie; Bosworth et al.), the NGO workers I interviewed have a nuanced and complex view of trafficking and of trafficked women and a significant level of self-awareness in their role in assisting trafficked women. However, it is also evident that this view is not simple when it comes to practice, as empowerment can often be hindered by certain social and legal frameworks and – despite high self-awareness – NGO workers’ occasional (unconscious) reproduction of hegemonic discourses.

Part 1: ‘As every woman is different you can’t have one opinion about trafficking’: Representation

‘They have their own power’: Representation of woman-as-agent

During interviews it appeared that interviewees’ notions of agency within trafficking were linked with attitudes towards sex work. Before elaborating on this it is necessary to outline the two main arguments in anti-trafficking discourse about sex work in relation to trafficking. The first, commonly known as the abolitionist argument, draws on notions that women are pervasively sexually dominated and oppressed by men (Cavaliere 1419), and thus all forms of sexual labour, including voluntary sex work, are seen as oppressive and indicative of women’s inherent subjugation. Contrastingly, the sex-worker’s rights-based argument sees the ‘individual woman as agent of her own life and choices’ and thus ‘forward a vision of women autonomously choosing to engage in sexual labor as they would choose any other form of employment’ (Cavaliere 1429). In her critique of these two approaches, legal theorist Shelley Cavaliere offers an insightful perspective into the limitations of both arguments. She argues that the abolitionist approach universally categorises all forms of sexual labour as ‘inherently exploitative’, and in doing so ‘refuses to engage with any counterexamples to its presumptions and, in effect, fails to account for the lives and experiences of myriad women’ (1426). It paints all sex work as subjugating women and thus creates a monolithic representation of sex work, silencing experiences that go against this representation. In conflating sex work and trafficking, abolitionism presents an extremely simplistic view of a complex issue and relegates all women in the sex industry as victims. The sex-worker-rights model on the other hand rejects this narrow representation and bases its framework on the diversity of women’s experiences, thus allowing for a more complex understanding of trafficking and sex work. However, in focusing so much on an individualistic conception of coercion and consent, this approach can overlook ‘the societal structures and pressures that shape women’s experience in the public labor [sic] market’ (1445). For instance, a woman may choose to become a sex worker but only because of a lack of alternative viable options; in this case, while she is technically a ‘choosing agent’, her range of choice is severely limited, complicating the notion of what counts as choice. This model neglects to take into account the wider social and cultural framework that influences

women's decisions. Cavalieri offers a 'third way approach' that combines the sex-worker-rights-based privileging of women's individual experience and their power to be a choosing agent with the abolitionist's focus on the wider social and economic conditions that influence the oppression of women. I find this third-way approach to have a more nuanced concept of agency, taking into account individual women's experiences and respecting women's choices while framing it within a broader view of women's position in society.

Based on interviews, I argue that Dutch anti-trafficking NGO workers adopt this third-way approach in their attitudes towards trafficking and sex work, and as such have a more complex view of agency in relation to trafficked women. All the interviewees confirmed that they and their organisations respected sex work as a legitimate profession and criticized the conflation of voluntary sex work and trafficking. At the same time, they recognize that sex work is still often surrounded by stigma, and because of this cannot currently be seen as a 'normal' job, but one that comes with added risks and complications. All interviewees took the view that while some women may be deceived or forced into sex work, many actively choose to be sex workers but then end up in a situation of exploitation. They refute the simplistic vision of women as unwilling, 'innocent' victims and portray them as individuals making choices. As one interviewee stated of her international clients, 'They have their own power...there is one thing in a way that made them come to Holland, or decide to go abroad, not only because they were trafficked, maybe they had wanted a better life. That can be a reason why they are coming to Holland. It means they are well-thinking human beings' (Interview 4). This assertion is indicative of the general attitude of interviewees in their conception of trafficked women as having agency and initiative. Through this conception, interviewees' view of trafficking is shown to be complex, taking into account diverse experiences.

This pro-sex-worker-rights approach was tempered by broader considerations of the economical and social conditions that affect women's choices, creating complicated notions of what counts as voluntary and non-voluntary. Many interviewees asserted that while women choose to be sex workers, they often do so out of poverty and a lack of alternative economic options. One interviewee who worked in a sex-worker's rights

organisation gave a particularly striking overview of the complexity of choice in this situation;

‘[P]overty [...] *forces them to choose* to come to Amsterdam and to work here for a year or two in prostitution [...] And there are so many forms of not working voluntarily, because we also have women from Colombia or the Dominican Republic, they say “Yeah our children are our pimp, because we have to work for our children...to give them the opportunity to go to school, to go to university”’ (Interview 3, my emphasis).

According to the interviewee, women are ‘forced to choose’ sex work due to poverty; this is an inherent paradox in which choice is negated due to the lack of other options. The women’s use of the word ‘pimp’ with regards to their children highlights that coercion comes in many forms; for them, their obligation to provide for their children has the same violence of force as an actual pimp.

Thus while interviewees conceive of women as capable and independent agents and promote the right of individuals to choose sex work as a profession, they frame this within a wider consideration of the restrictive economical and social factors that influence women’s decisions. One could argue that the emphasis on lack of choice reflects the image of trafficked women coming from ‘backwards’ non-Western countries, and reproduces the homogeneous representation of the ‘Third World’ woman (Mohanty 53). However, I would argue that the focus on poverty shows an awareness of global economic disparities rather than women being culturally subjugated¹³. Rather than women being painted as passive ‘Third World’ victims, they are portrayed as strong, independent and resourceful women. Most interviewees who did mention cultural oppression of women focused specifically on Dutch culture; in one interviewee’s discussion of how to prevent trafficking, he asserted that addressing unequal gender relations was an essential factor, adding; ‘There’s a lot we want to do to change the world, but a lot we need to change in our own countries’ (Interview 4). This

¹³ Indeed interviewees were keen to continually emphasise to me that trafficking arose largely out of economic conditions and affected men almost as much as it affected women.

shows an awareness that trafficking is a global phenomenon that in part arises out of gender inequality, and that the West is as complicit in this as non-Western countries.¹⁴

In taking this third-way approach then, I argue that the NGO workers interviewed have an effective balance of privileging individual experience while still retaining an awareness of gender and economic oppression and how it affects women's choices. It allows them to respect the choice of sex work as a career option but at the same time have a more complex understanding of what counts as voluntary. This conception of women as agents means that they have a more effective response to their clients; for instance, several organisations offer skills development such as computer and language classes, meaning that they fully accept women making the choice to be a sex worker, but recognise that this only becomes a true choice when they have other options to choose from.

'Not a victim only': Representation of woman-as-victim

With this complex understanding of agency, the opposition between woman-as-agent and woman-as-victim becomes blurred; a woman can at once be a choosing agent and a victim according to the NGO workers interviewed. For instance, all interviewees frequently referred to trafficked people as 'victims' during interviews. However, their notion of victimhood does not fit that of the helpless, innocent victim, as they simultaneously see them as the agents discussed above. Rather, victimhood is seen to be something that happens to a person but does not inform their identity. As one interviewee asserted, '[P]eople have a history. He or she is not a victim only. You need to approach them as if he or she is equal but [they are] in a certain position at that moment' (Interview 4). Here, victimhood is seen as a temporary state. People's whole narrative has to be taken into account, not just their 'victim' status; it does not define a person as inherently 'different' or 'inferior' to the rest of society. It became apparent then that the term 'victim' is mostly used by NGO workers not to emphasise their clients' powerlessness,

¹⁴ However, while all interviewees were keen to stress the strength of their clients, some displayed conceptions of culture that were problematic, as I shall elaborate in the section on empowerment.

but the wrong that was done to them. As one interviewee said, ‘I see them more as women that have gone through quite a hard experience; but all women have had a hard experience. But it *is* human trafficking so they have been exploited, they’ve been forced to do something that they didn’t like, or they have been abused’ (Interview 6, interviewee’s emphasis). Here, the interviewee seems keen to emphasise that trafficked women are not inherently different from other women, as all women experience hardship at some point in their lives. However, she also does not want to detract from the serious nature of human trafficking by collapsing all trafficked women’s experiences into the general theme of ‘female suffering’.

In using the word ‘victim’ to denote wrongdoing to a person then, NGO workers envision victimisation as a temporary state that their clients have the power to change. The prospect of looking past one’s victim status is one that many interviewees see as an essential step: ‘[W]hat would be better than focusing on the bad issues, on what happened [to them], I think what we should try and focus on is “Okay, you’ve been a victim, but what now? What’s your future? What are you going to do?”’ (Interview 4). This conception acknowledges the hardship of exploitation, but also refuses to confine clients to the status of victimhood, showing a less static notion of what constitutes a victim.

However, it became apparent throughout interviews that the use of the term ‘victim’ is also a problematic one for a number of reasons. A significant issue is the fact that women often do not see themselves as victims, or even as being trafficked for that matter. Most interviewees recounted experiences in which they talked to a potential victim of trafficking (both international and Dutch citizens) who did not view their situation as a form of exploitation: ‘[Y]esterday I was talking to a girl, who was living with a big pimp, a really big pimp, and she said, “He was not my pimp, we just lived off all my money”. So her image [of him was that he] was not a pimp’ (Interview 2). Contrastingly, there are women who do see themselves as victims to the extent that they can’t envision being anything else. As one interviewee commented, ‘[I]t’s so different because some people, they’re really strong and can go ahead, and others just, by what has happened to them they really see themselves as a victim, but some don’t’ (Interview 6). In this instance, applying the term ‘victim’ to a group of women with such highly diverse experiences and conceptions of themselves is problematic. Just as trafficking can be viewed as a

‘continuum’, so too can victimisation be seen as a spectrum. During interviews, the factor that seemed to unite all trafficked women into the category of ‘victim’ for NGO workers was their perceived lack of knowledge and information, and thus limited view of their situation. Women who do not see themselves as victims have to be made aware of their rights as sex workers in order to see their situation more clearly;

‘And sometimes they... first they don’t see themselves as trafficked, but then along the way, for example when you ask them questions they can compare their own situation with [...] sex workers who have not been trafficked, and then they notice that their situation is not the way it should be, or can be, and then they start to identify themselves as being in a situation of exploitation’ (Interview 1)

Here, being given information in which their situation is shown within a wider context allows trafficked women to more clearly ‘see’ the truth of their situation. Similarly, many interviewees asserted that women who do think of themselves as victims are so affected by their trafficking experience that their view of themselves as agents is limited as a result; ‘I think with some, when they are still so much in their trauma, they might not see the future – they might not see the perspective, although I see the perspective. So [...] I might want to do more with them than they can comprehend or they might view themselves’ (Interview 6).

In both scenarios, the trafficked woman is seen to have a partial view of her situation, from which she needs to be given new knowledge in order to more clearly view her position and enable her to stop being a victim. This could be seen as an imposition of the interviewees’ knowledge over the women’s own knowledge of their situation, and thus a reflection of unequal power relations that perpetuates the notion of the helpless, ignorant victim that needs to be ‘saved’. It also denies that trafficked women as an oppressed group could derive an “epistemic advantage” from having knowledge of the practices of both their own contexts and those of their oppressors’ (Narayan 376). As a group excluded from mainstream society, their position allows them to have a more critical perspective and awareness of both their own situation and that of the dominant group. However, as Narayan correctly asserts, ‘The thesis that oppression may bestow an epistemic advantage should not tempt us in the direction of

idealizing or romanticizing oppression and blind us to its real material and psychic deprivations' (Narayan 378). In some circumstances, oppression may offer one a clearer perspective on social reality. However, this is not an automatic product of oppression; it can also bring about the opposite where one comes to accept certain practices as normal even as they enforce one's subjugation. As I have already argued, all perspectives are limited by one's social location. Ignoring this limitation by seeing oppression as automatically creating the clarity of 'double vision' (Haraway 38) makes a dangerous assumption that those who are oppressed always know that they are and thus are not in need of new knowledge, further marginalising them as a result.

Thus providing information can be a means of enabling a clearer perspective; the important thing is that this knowledge is offered to people without denying their own form of knowledge. While NGO workers feel that women have a lack of information about their situation and can be victimised as a result, this does not detract from their view of them as agents. They asserted that they do not force the women to see themselves as victims; rather, they provide them with information about their rights as sex workers and from there women are able to decide for themselves whether they are being exploited or not. As one worker said of clients who did not define themselves as victims, 'If I think she is a victim, and she thinks "No I'm not a victim", then you just leave it, and maybe in the future she will come and say "Yes, there is a problem". And we just give help if that time comes' (Interview 2). Thus while NGO workers see their clients as needing new knowledge in order to better see their situation, they still claim to base their assistance as much as possible on their clients' conception of themselves. Moreover, they are as much aware of their own knowledge limitations as that of their clients, and that in certain instances their clients do indeed have a better perspective than them, which I shall discuss further in the paragraph on NGO workers' self-representation. Thus while gaps in how NGO workers conceive of victimhood and how their clients conceive of it may differ, this does not mean that it is irreconcilable when handled carefully. Nevertheless, many interviewees admitted that clashing notions of victimhood are a big challenge in their work.

A further problem with the term 'victim' is in its conception as a legal status, which due to Dutch law is inherently bound up with issues of race. The B-8 procedure, which

I have previously outlined, is on the surface in place to offer services and protection to internationally trafficked people. However, all but two of the NGO workers interviewed criticised the B-8 as not adequately focusing on the needs of their clients. As more than one interview stated, ‘the B-8 procedure is mainly there for the police force for investigation [of trafficking]. What it bypasses is the basic needs of the victim’ (Interview 4). Because the B-8 focuses on catching criminals, the status of ‘victim’ is dependent not on the violation of their human rights but on whether there is enough evidence to make a case against a trafficker; otherwise, people aren’t an ‘official’ victim. According to interviewees, this means that many people who have been exploited slip through the cracks, as police are some of the main identifiers of trafficked women: ‘[With] the police, it often happens that they only report the victims at our organisation if they have a case. But there are lots of victims, lots of girls they have talked to, that they don’t report to our organisation’ (Interview 4). The status of ‘victim’ is not based on the wrong done to an individual here, but on whether they provide enough evidence to make a case. It creates uncertainty about the status of a trafficked person; ‘It can happen that today you are a victim, then after two weeks, you are not officially a victim anymore’ (Interview 4). If someone loses the official status of victim, they also lose the services that come with it. According to an interviewee, this further marginalises trafficked people as ‘they feel like they are being victimised for a second time because the interests of the prosecutors is what’s important’ (Interview 7).

The B-8 means that the victimhood of international and national trafficked people are treated differently. Under its convention ‘there’s more pressure [for internationals] to talk with the police to press charges because if they don’t do it then they just remain in this country illegal[ly] without rights. And for the nationals they had their rights already’ (Interview 2). There is more freedom for national victims to choose to tell their story to police or not, and even when it is told, it is treated differently. As one interviewee stated, with domestic victims ‘[t]he police can focus on the story, what happened, without filling all these papers and checking indicators of if it’s a B-8 [situation]’ (Interview 4). According to this, national victims’ own perception of their situation is more privileged than that of their international counterparts, whose story must be corroborated by external evidence. For many interviewees this is a huge barrier

for their international clients; they see them as being multiply oppressed, not only by their traffickers, but also by Dutch law. Their race and ambiguous migratory status means that they are often at a disadvantage and face more pressure to tell and prove their story (and thus victimhood) even when they have legitimate reasons for not doing so.

At the same time, some interviewees asserted that national victims are the ones who need more intense care. One interviewee who worked closely with both national and international women found that her Dutch clients are 'heavier' clients to have. She asserted that international clients are 'survivors', but with Dutch clients, they were victimised long before they were trafficked due to circumstances like difficult childhoods (Interview 2). Additionally, their Dutch status sometimes works against them: 'Sometimes, it's more complicated with the Dutch victims because they stay here; the perpetrator knows where they are, they know these things...they are more in a dangerous situation sometimes than victims from outside' (Interview 4). Given, this, it is understandable that NGO workers continue to use the word 'victim' when referring to all clients, as it emphasises that they are all deserving of aid whether Dutch or international.

It is evident then that NGO workers have complex representations of their clients; their understanding blurs the lines between agency and victimisation, and they show an awareness of intersections of oppression and its effects on trafficked women. They are also limited in their ability to represent their clients as complex individuals through the need to legally identify their clients as victims in order to make them eligible for services. I now turn to how NGO workers understand their own role in their clients' lives before exploring how this impacts on empowerment practices.

'I always try to have the idea that I know nothing': Self-representation

Based on interviews, I argue that NGO workers' conception of themselves in relation to their clients reflects the tenets of transversal politics as described by Nira Yuval-Davis. Simply put, transversal politics is a means of empowerment that seeks to transcend the limitations of identity politics 'that homogenize and naturalise social categories and

groupings and which deny shifting boundaries' (Yuval-Davis 179). In other words, it seeks to create solidarity among people while recognizing that there is great diversity of experience not just between groups but between individuals within one group, and that our experiences mean that we are not static, remaining tied to only one perspective or group. As such, we must recognize that people have their own partial, situated knowledge that remains 'unfinished' (Yuval-Davis 192). In order to work together to achieve a goal, transversal politics advocates the practice of 'rooting' and 'shifting', in which one remains 'rooted' to one's own experience, identity and set of values while also 'shifting' to empathise and respect the perspective of another (Yuval-Davis 193). This allows for solidarity, but a solidarity that is still critical and questioning, and based on dialogue rather than 'fixity of location' (192). While Yuval-Davis discusses transversal politics in terms of coalitions among different women's organisations, I argue that it is also relevant on a more individual basis. In the case of NGO workers and their clients, NGO workers 'root' and 'shift' in order to work with their client to achieve specific goals. They stay grounded in their own knowledge base but also recognize that this knowledge is, like that of their clients', 'unfinished'.

As I have previously mentioned, NGO workers see their clients as lacking certain knowledge which they as professionals can provide, such as awareness about their rights. Their vantage point sometimes allows them to see more objectively than their clients, as one interviewee says of her international clients; 'Some of them are not even thinking about the future; [...] for them it's not important to learn anything or [...] to develop anything because they're just so busy with how to deal with everything [now]. But we know that in a couple of months they will have to think about that because they will probably be sent back [to their home country]' (Interview 6). Another asserts, 'She needs your help because you have information she doesn't have about... housing, to get a house, how to get this, how to get that' (Interview 2). With their professional knowledge base they are able to offer another perspective on their clients' position, and come up with solutions that their clients may not have thought about given their specific location in that moment.

However, NGO workers also acknowledge that their vantage point has been shaped by dialogue with their clients; it is through working with them that their knowledge has

grown. For instance, many interviewees admitted that before working in the anti-trafficking field they adhered to more stereotypical images of trafficked women. One asserted;

‘[W]hen I just started, I *always* felt [...] that the women who were trafficked [...] were kidnapped to the Netherlands and didn’t know what they were going to do and were forced to be a prostitute... But over the years I really learned that a lot of women have worked for years in prostitution [...] So...I cannot say [trafficking is] milder because I also know stories really with a lot of physical abuse [...] But there are so many different levels in trafficking, [...] and if everybody thinks “Oh, so she was locked up in a room and had 10 rapes a day”, that’s not true, so it’s...all the levels in trafficking, that was really surprising me’ (Interview 8, interviewee’s emphasis)

Others said that they had barely thought about trafficking before working in the field: ‘I don’t think before [working here] I was thinking about trafficking. You can hear something or see a movie, but it’s in one ear and out the other; and for me it’s better to work with them, now I really know better than before’ (Interview 2). Thus they conceive of their knowledge as a learning process that is influenced by their clients; this involves an acknowledgment of their own positional limitations. As one worker stated when discussing empowerment methods: ‘I try to always think that I know nothing; you know what can I teach you [as a trafficked woman]? You were able to survive that long in that situation, then you are probably the one to teach me’ (Interview 2). Her colleague agreed, adding; ‘They can also give you tips, advice, *good* advice, yeah. We also learn from our clients’ (interviewee’s emphasis). Here the interviewees demonstrate their ability to ‘shift’; they centre their clients’ location rather than their own, as they recognise that while they may have their own opinion, their client was the one who actually experienced the situation and so is often in a position to expand the knowledge of the NGO workers rather than the other way around.

Thus NGO workers conceive of their role as involving constant dialogue between their own partial knowledge and that of their clients. Often this dialogue is not just between them and a client, but others within the anti-trafficking network. This was particularly the case in issues of culture and language. All of the interviewees were

aware of cultural differences and how their own knowledge was limited in this regard. For instance, one interviewee noted the value of having a Bulgarian cultural mediator¹⁵ accompany her during outreach work in the Red Light District; ‘We talked to one of the girls, and we walk on to the next window, and then [the cultural mediator] tells me “This [girl’s situation] was really not okay” and then [I said] “Oh? I didn’t see anything”’ (Interview 3). Here, the cultural mediator’s position as a Bulgarian woman allowed her more insight into the situation of the potential trafficked woman than the interviewee herself, despite the interviewee’s experience as an NGO worker.

Thus interviewees showed awareness of the need for a balance between staying grounded in their own knowledge and privileging the knowledge of others. Their awareness of their own limited position means that they do not strictly adhere to the notion of the professional as expert which I have previously discussed. I will now go on to discuss how this ideology plays out in practices of empowerment, and how the NGO workers interviewed sometimes indirectly showed that it is difficult to maintain this balance of knowledge.

Part 2: ‘It can mean a lot and it can also mean nothing’: Empowerment

Defining empowerment and identifying needs

Interviewees’ understanding of both themselves and their clients means that the empowerment process is built on mutual co-operation rather than on NGO workers ‘giving’ empowerment to their clients. Interviewees unanimously defined empowerment as the ability to make one’s own decisions, as having control over one’s life. They see their role as assisting clients to reach this stage, but not telling them what to do. As one worker asserted, ‘For a long time somebody else controlled everything with them, so that stops here. When they come here, *you* [the client] are in charge. Because they have to learn also to take charge again’ (Interview 2, interviewee’s emphasis). The client is

¹⁵ According to the interviewee, cultural mediators are ‘more than just translators’, as trafficked women are often more open with them if they share the same cultural background (Interview 3).

seen as the one in control of her empowerment process; her own strengths and abilities are viewed as the chief motivator rather than the NGO worker. This view has been incorporated as an official methodology by NGO workers, as one interviewee explained when describing the steps taken when working with new clients: ‘[Y]ou do an inventory of strengths, and you do an inventory of what it is this person wants in her life; what are her goals, her dreams, her aspirations in life and how can we support her to get that. And what kind of resources does she have to work on herself, and how can we support her to strengthen her own resources. Those inner resources or the resources [...] in the society’ (Interview 7). This method, in focusing on a client’s ambitions and abilities, means that the empowerment process is tailored to suit the individual, taking into account the diverse needs and strengths of each client. Listening to what their clients want allows NGO workers to have a better insight into the needs of trafficked women, challenging certain assumptions about empowerment. For instance as I have previously outlined, the notion of speaking as a form of empowerment is one that has been particularly emphasised in previous studies (ie. Bosworth et al, Zheng). However, none of the interviewees mentioned telling one’s story as a particular need identified by their clients; rather it was practical things such as money, security, housing, shelter and skills development. Indeed, while interviewees acknowledged that a focus on women’s own stories and experiences is useful for raising awareness of the complexities of trafficking, they also find that speaking can be exploitative and disempowering for their clients, for instance during the B-8 procedure as previously discussed, but also telling one’s story to the media. Many interviewees asserted that the media often has its own agenda, which frequently leads to misrepresentation: ‘[T]he media is... out for a story [...] We don’t put forward the victims [to the press] but we are telling our stories, how we do our work [...], and still we see the way it’s represented in the media is sometimes not right... They needed news and they blew it up’ (Interview 4). Sometimes this agenda leads to the neglect of clients’ needs and can have harmful consequences, as one interviewee illustrated: ‘[There was] a victim who’s been on television and they have promised to make her anonymous and they didn’t, so that’s very dangerous for her. So you know, things can go wrong’ (Interview 1). Here, speaking for the woman becomes an exploitative act that other people rather than the woman herself benefit from.

It is evident then that speaking as empowerment is not straightforward, and moreover is not something that works for everyone. Many interviewees mentioned that the need to share one's experience of trafficking depends on the client in question; some share immediately, while others take much longer. The importance of building a relationship was also frequently mentioned in relation to clients opening up about their experiences. According to some interviewees it is through mutual knowledge exchange about each other that clients feel comfortable to share what happened to them;

'I think [to be] able to empower victims of human trafficking [...] you have to be in a relationship. Because I can try to empower you, but I don't even know you, so what does that mean? And you don't know me. In my opinion it's if you start a relationship with someone. Not like, "I'm a social worker and you're a client", no. That you have a relationship together, you are both partners in this relationship [...] I want to know *you*, I don't want to know your [identity] as a prostitute, but *you*. And I hope you can also get to know *me*. Because it's part of being in a relationship, sharing' (Interview 2, interviewee's emphasis)

Here we see a departure from the traditional client-professional relationship, in which the professional is seen to hold all the knowledge (and thus power); rather, both individuals share their experiences with each other to create a more egalitarian, trusting relationship. It is through this relationship that the act of speaking becomes empowering rather than exploitative. In instances such as the B-8 procedure and media interviews, trafficked people are in a position where another person holds all the information about them and gives nothing back. By sharing personal information with clients, the power divide is lessened. It is not about a victim and a 'saviour', but simply about a relationship between two people. As the interviewee above told me, showing her own vulnerability at times sets her clients more at ease; 'I think it is also healing for somebody, to be able to comfort *me*' (interviewee's emphasis).¹⁶

¹⁶ Of course not all the NGO workers interviewed shared the same ideology; some preferred to keep more of a distance with their clients. The importance of building relationships was nonetheless acknowledged by most as a means of empowerment, for instance through buddy programmes, and those who preferred a less personal relationship asserted that they did not expect their clients to share their experiences with them if they didn't want to.

Thus speaking as empowerment is shown to be something that often comes after a period of time, but is not an immediate priority for many clients. Indeed even in cases where clients have built positive relationships with others, they still sometimes prefer not to share their story. One interviewee gave an insightful example of this through the buddy programme that she oversaw: ‘I have some examples of very nice volunteer contact, and people had a great time, they did so many nice things, but [the client’s] specific story was never mentioned. [...] So yeah it can be so difficult for a victim to tell what happened, that they want to forget [it], when they’re with you they just want to have a good time’ (Interview 5). Here relationships are a form of escape for trafficked women. It allows them to identify less as a victim; focusing on one’s present is an act of empowerment rather than speaking about the past. Thus it is evident that while speaking as empowerment is certainly important, it does not always work for every individual, and in many cases is secondary to more practical forms of empowerment such as gaining skills and finding a job. NGO workers’ method of focusing on individual clients’ needs and abilities allows them to have a better understanding of the complexities of empowerment and to be aware of diverse needs.

Issues of power relations

However, even in this more egalitarian conception of empowerment, issues of power arise. As I have previously stated everyone is embedded in relations of power, meaning our actions and thoughts are inevitably informed by these relations. One is thus a part of power structures even if we seek to challenge them. It was evident throughout interviews (albeit generally indirectly) that the empowerment process is affected by dominant power structures and thus occasionally reproduces the hierarchical client-professional relationship. Some NGO workers showed an awareness of this, such as one interviewee when explaining why her NGO has a policy of clients not giving interviews to the media; ‘We are always afraid that if we ask our clients to do that then they think that they have to because they are dependent on us for all the things that we organise for them’ (Interview 1). Here, the interviewee shows an awareness that the client-

professional relationship is enforced by structures outside individual control; as the professionals, they are automatically ‘placed in a position of power over others through their institutional position which also undermines the activity of empowerment’ (Pease 137). They are perceived by others (and clients themselves) to hold the position of power and authority, negating the egalitarian conception of empowerment described above. While the interviewee is wary of reproducing this hierarchical relationship, in doing so she admits that it is difficult to escape it, and critical self-awareness is needed to avoid it.

Meanwhile some other interviewees did not seem to be aware of this issue; the interviewee in charge of overseeing the buddy programme, when asked how she ensured that a client was satisfied with their volunteer match, asserted ‘they can always tell me whether they like it or not. [...] I say “You’re free to say no”, because I know especially in other cultures it’s impolite to say “No I don’t want this person”, and many people never tell me’ (Interview 5). Here the interviewee sees culture as the constraining factor rather than her potential to be seen as an authority figure who should be obeyed. This conflation of culture with being submissive is problematic as it ignores dominant power structures and its effects on the empowerment process. This appeared in a few interviewees’ narratives. For instance one asserted; ‘some girls are not so used to talking and especially not about their feelings, or are very shy [...] So for sure it’s cultural, very much’ (Interview 6). Here, shyness and not wanting to talk become equated with one’s culture. While this could be true in some instances, the interviewee does not seem to take into account that shyness and reluctance to speak could be due to a large number of other reasons, such as a traumatic experience of trafficking or not being able to communicate because of language barriers. In assuming that a woman is shy and quiet due to her culture, the image of the non-Western, subjugated woman is reproduced to an extent, enforcing unequal power relations.

At the same time, the very interviewees who reproduced this image also challenged it, depicting their clients as a highly heterogeneous group with varying levels of agency. This contradiction is especially apparent in an interview in which the interviewee asserted that many clients have a negative vision of themselves as women due to their culture; ‘[I]f they learned [in their country of origin] that a woman is worth nothing, here

in the Netherlands we're not going to change it in a couple of months. [I]t's difficult to convince them that they should go to school and make them strong; if you're not raised for generations like that, of course it gives you that [mentality]' (Interview 8). Here clients are depicted as non-agents because of their culture; the Netherlands is implicitly set up as more egalitarian and advanced, and clients as entrenched in a 'backwards' way of thinking. Yet this interviewee also criticised the infantilisation of clients, asserting '[W]e're not talking about children, we're also talking about women who [...] can manage to take care of themselves', showing an acknowledgment of their agency. Further, she rejects centralising Dutch culture when working with clients; '[I]f you don't understand that people are working from a completely other perspective than we know [...] then you're getting a really hard job because then you're making the Dutch law and Dutch point of view like something that is the truth'. This shows an awareness that the Dutch way of thinking is not 'the' truth but 'a' truth, and should not hold precedence over other perspectives.

Thus these contradictions in interviewees' narratives reveal that the practice of empowerment is complex, as NGO workers may have ingrained assumptions that centralise certain hegemonic perspectives (ie; to do with race or the client-professional relationship) even as they challenge these assumptions. This highlights that adopting a specific standpoint is a self-conscious struggle 'to develop new interpretations of familiar realities' (Hill Collins 27); one has to constantly question one's own position in systems of power in order to challenge hegemonic discourse. The process of 'rooting' and 'shifting' is shown to be a difficult balance to maintain, complicating the empowerment process as NGO workers may occasionally (unconsciously) privilege their own forms of knowledge over their clients' or not be aware of the position of authority that comes with being a professional, thus taking control over the empowerment process away from their client.

Social attitude and legal constrictions

However, I would argue that NGO workers, while occasionally reproducing the discourse of hierarchical power relations, largely maintain a relatively high level of self-

awareness and a strong opinion of their clients' ability to empower themselves. To me it was evident that empowerment practice is limited more by wider social and legal frameworks than NGO workers' own subjective understandings of their role and their clients. For instance NGO workers have to work within the bounds of certain laws and conventions that they do not necessarily agree with but nonetheless have to adhere to; this means that while they advocate the importance of choice in clients' lives, often the choices offered to clients are limited by circumstances beyond the NGO worker's control.

A good example of this was given during an interview with an NGO worker who, along with 11 other organisations, is involved in creating a policy to introduce the topic of safe return to countries of origin in their work with international clients. According to the interviewee, this policy arose out of the fact that increasingly clients in the B-8 procedure did not get a residency permit to stay in the Netherlands. In response to this, the policy aims to provide clients with more information and options for returning to their home countries, involving increased co-operation with NGOs in other countries. According to the interviewee this policy was initially met with criticism by social workers who work closely with trafficked people;

‘What has happened in the beginning is for many social workers it has been an issue to even talk about the word ‘return’, they felt it like as a betrayal to the victims to even talk about it. [...] And of course they come from a tradition where social workers very much identify also with victims and they felt that it's unfair [...] not to give them a permit and [...] in the end their needs are not met. Which I fully agree [with]. But given that situation, we cannot change that situation [of not getting a residency permit]. In the end, the victim is still in a bad situation and have to deal with this issue [of returning to their home country].’ (Interview 7)

Here it is evident that NGO workers want to adhere to the wishes of their clients, in this case their desire to remain in the Netherlands. However, this is often not possible due to legal constraints. In this situation, the interviewee sees the implementation of this new policy as the best means of working within such confines; if a client cannot get her wish to stay in the Netherlands, the next best thing is to ensure a safe return and increased options and support in her home country. Again it is about providing the client with as much information as possible in order to enable her to make decisions for herself; the

policy is not meant to force women to return to their countries, but to make them aware of all the options. Still, these options remain somewhat limited despite NGO workers' best efforts.

Choices also remain limited due to social stigma of trafficked women and sex workers. One interviewee identified discrimination as a real barrier to empowerment, as many service providers such as social benefits officers have an unrealistic view of trafficking and thus don't adequately meet clients' needs (Interview 3). Her organisation attempted to rectify this by creating a network among service providers; '[W]e can inform those people about [trafficking] and share our knowledge about the feelings of the women [...] I think it's important to have this network so that people think like us, and about their attitudes to women and to see that they really need their services to get [...] empowered'. This comes back to the importance of knowledge sharing; it highlights the need for NGO workers to have a greater role in public discourse about trafficking in order to change social attitudes and legal frameworks to better accommodate the needs of trafficked people. NGOs have certainly already brought about positive change in policy and practice; most interviewees confirmed that they had seen a marked improvement in attitudes and understandings towards trafficking in recent years. However, as the above examples indicate, there is still much that needs to be changed in order for NGO workers to be able to assist the empowerment of their clients as effectively as possible.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Based on this study's findings, I argue that NGO workers provide valuable insight into the representation and empowerment of trafficked women. Through focusing on their experiences of working with trafficked women, it was made evident that NGO workers have a nuanced understanding of their clients, transcending the sharp divide between victim and agent and showing trafficked women to be a highly heterogeneous group with diverse needs and experiences. This allows NGO workers to promote a more effective model of empowerment that takes into account the individual knowledge and power of their clients, thus giving trafficked women more control over the process.

However, through contradictions in their narrative, they also demonstrated that it is difficult to maintain this balance of power due to their perceived position of authority, and thus needs constant dialogue and critical self-awareness. The empowerment process is also limited by wider social attitudes towards trafficked women and legal frameworks that restrict trafficked women's choices and NGO workers' ability to assist them. NGO workers' knowledge needs to be more widely circulated in order to bring about positive changes that debunk the 'myths' surrounding trafficking and promote greater agency to trafficked people. As this was a small study, further research needs to be made into NGO workers' roles in trafficked people's lives; concentrated studies in different countries would shed greater light on how specific cultures affect this role. Further research is also needed into other groups of trafficked people. Finally, it would be valuable for research to be made into whether formerly trafficked people can become more involved in anti-trafficking policy and practice. While there are sex worker's rights organisations run by sex workers (Zheng 15), there seems to be no equivalent for trafficked people. To truly recognise trafficked people as having agency, it is important to look into ways they can influence policy and practice on their own terms. Basing anti-trafficking policy and discourse on NGO workers' experience would be a positive step in this direction.

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Appendix : List of initial interview questions

Part 1: Organisation and representative's role, legislation

1. Please give a brief outline of your organisation's mission and your role within it. What are the specific services you provide for trafficked women?
2. How do you personally define the term 'trafficking'?
3. How does your organisation locate and engage with women who have been trafficked? How do women locate your service?
4. Do you think the legalisation of prostitution has affected sex trafficking in the Netherlands? If so, in what way?
5. What is your view on the B-8 law? Do you think it addresses the needs of trafficked women?
6. What are the main challenges you face in your work?

Part 2: Representation, image, stereotyping

1. How do you identify women as being trafficked?
2. How do your clients define themselves? Does it correspond with the way in which your organisation defines them? If not, what impact does this have on your working relationship?
3. What general patterns, if any, appear in your clients' experiences of trafficking? Do you find they are forthcoming about communicating their experiences?
4. Do you encounter communication barriers (ie; cultural, language) in your work with trafficked women and if so how do you overcome this?
5. What is your opinion on the way in which trafficked women are represented in mainstream media and society in general? Does it capture the lived experience of the women you have worked with?
6. Do you find that a particular narrative is required in order for other stakeholders (ie; immigration authorities and police) to believe a woman has been trafficked and to make her eligible for assistance and protection? If so, what is this narrative?

7. Do you find that funding for your organisation is dependent on a particular narrative of trafficking? If so, what is this and how does it affect the work you do?
8. What do you find is the general attitude of both stakeholders and the public towards trafficked women? How are they treated by stakeholders such as police and immigration officials? What effect does this attitude have on your clients?
9. What was your view of trafficked women before working in this sector? Has it changed since then, and if so in what ways?

Part 3: Empowerment in practice

1. How would you define 'empowerment'?
2. How do you assess the needs of your clients?
3. What do you find are the most pressing needs of the women you work with? What for them is the biggest priority?
4. What barriers, in your opinion, restrict a more successful empowerment of trafficked women?
5. What, in your experience, is the most effective means of empowering trafficked women? What is the least effective? Can you give specific examples?
6. How do you measure the success of the services you provide to your clients?
7. How do you decide that your services are no longer required? Do you stay in contact with clients once they stop using your services?

Part 4: Future/improvement

1. What changes in policy/practice would you like to see? What changes would make a positive difference in your work and in the lives of the women you work with?
2. Do you have anything else you would like to share?