

Enter The Darkness To Bring Others Into The Light Human Trafficking: The Modern-Day Version of Slavery

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ABSTRACT

This research primarily examines how human trafficking systems in the Balkan region of Europe compare and contrast to the ones in the United States. Trafficking in these specific areas can be analyzed and summarized using the perspectives of shame in trafficking, lack of social support, and the need for reform in schooling and the general public's understanding of human trafficking. Using comparative analysis with cultural patterns and ethnographic data, I discuss various genres of human trafficking, the patterns and methods of trafficking in the areas specified, the effects on the victims, and how trafficking culture had shifted. I provide case-specific examples of scenarios the various victims of human trafficking face, primarily focusing on women. These findings indicate a need for further analysis on the differences between trafficking systems around the world and prevention methods.

Introduction

Around the beginning of April this year, I created a presentation about Greece's history and traditions for my World Civilization class in school. While researching I came across the Black Sea and the Balkan area of Europe— specifically Romania and Bulgaria. This area has always been somewhat close to home. I have bloodlines in the area, as my mom and her family hail from Eastern Europe, while my dad's side originates from Western Georgia on the Black Sea. This somewhat neglected part of Europe never caught my attention before, but Romania and Bulgaria were both countries that sat right on the Balkans. Through further exploration, I learned that poverty, poor government, and violence characterized this region of Europe. As I dove even deeper, I connected that this is where the Yugoslav Wars and Srebrenica had taken place. An interest in history led me to watch several documentaries about violence in Europe, watching all sorts of films about World War II and ancient Europe. Beforehand, I learned about a large population of Muslims in the Balkan area, unlike anywhere else in Europe. I soon discovered that Srebrenica, which appeared in the documentaries I watched, was a massacre of the Bosnian Muslim population that resided in the country. Our school curriculum does not explore Srebrenica and the Yugoslav Wars in depth, and I found that surprising due to the lasting cultural and political implications that this violence continues to have worldwide.

Why was large-scale violence in a continent like Europe never emphasized in any texts or lessons? This question further points to the lack of knowledge the general public has about the Balkan region. Srebrenica and the Yugoslav Wars combined killed almost 150,000 people. Approximately 400,000 women are trafficked through the Balkans every year. The Balkan region, an area with about 55 million people, has the highest rates of forced labour throughout Europe, a continent with about 750 million people. Yet, schools rarely discuss the significance of these humanitarian crises.

Many connections exist between Balkan culture and my family's Eastern European culture. Characterized by poverty, poor government, and violence, the inhabitants of the Balkan area continue to face widespread oppression and exploitation. The Gypsies had large populations residing in the Balkans, especially Romania, and conflicts resulted between

these groups and local populations. Many of these countries were part of the Soviet Union, and governments were left in shambles after the collapse of the USSR. Most importantly, however, the post-Srebrenica time period (1990s) was what put the Balkans on the world map. Humanitarian aid flooded into the country, and international organizations rushed to the rescue. At the time, this foreign aid presented a logical solution to a pressing problem. Years later, however, the effectiveness of this aid remains in question.

A large humanitarian issue arose in the Balkans after this aid. Derived from this foreign presence, human trafficking flourished in the region. Mass numbers of women and children were transported into the Balkans for the increasing international presence. As I learned about human trafficking in the Balkans, I was struck by a revelation. The city in which I was born and raised, Miami, is also a hotspot of human trafficking in the United States. This shocking fact, and the connection between trafficking in the United States and in the Balkans became something I sought to understand more deeply. . These two areas of the world were completely different: different laws, different cultures, different societies, and different people. Yet, in these two completely different vicinities—one known as the land of the opportunity, the other known for its struggles and poverty—human trafficking flourishes.

In this paper, I seek to understand how two vastly different social, economic and cultural ecosystems create the conditions for human trafficking to occur. Through research, articles, videos, and interviews, I analyze the similarities and differences of human trafficking in the Balkans and in the United States. Specifically, two key differences in the systems of trafficking emerged:

Types of trafficking

Environment of trafficking.

The Balkan trafficking system's main focus is sex trafficking, while the United States' arenas are more of a balance of sex and labour trafficking, and a lean towards the latter. In addition to this, the Balkan domain experiences deep corruption, impoverishment, and porous borders. All of these factors create the conditions for local organized crime rings to use the area as easy transport for trafficking victims. The United States, in contrast, is characterized by fortification, resulting in the usage of local populations for trafficking more frequently. Albeit, both systems take advantage of penetrable borders. In the Balkans, many trafficking victims are transported from the Middle East, while in the United States, the majority of victims originate from Mexico and South America.

Purpose

I seek to understand the human trafficking systems of the Balkan region in Europe and the United States, respectively. Each of these areas of the world relate to me and my background, and I find it important to understand their similarities, differences, and identities. The connection between the trafficking systems in these regions is not obvious on the surface, but further examination unveils points of comparison. In these points of comparison, I believe we can create sustainable policy reform that works to combat human trafficking worldwide. By bringing together different texts, interviews, articles, I am able to make distinctions between the two trafficking systems. Through this research, I highlight a fundamental issue with foreign governments and a lack of education. In doing so, I urge policymakers, researchers, and citizens to consider the lasting impacts of this ongoing humanitarian crisis. The porous borders, political instability, and ongoing corruption all create a human trafficking hotspot of Europe. Our schooling fails to address and illuminate the post-World War II conflicts that went on in Europe and the lives lost because of them, which keeps students ignorant to ongoing injustices happening in their own backyard and across the globe.

Data Collection

This comparative analysis uses existing interview data of trafficking victims in the Balkans to understand the effects of trafficking on them and their families. Through these interviews, I uncover the flaws of the Balkan countries, and the numerous problems these countries face. I created codes to summarize the main problems, which include political and economic instability, corruption, and exploitable borders. I then analyzed the patterns of human trafficking in the Balkans in relation to the organizations and people that run the trafficking systems.

In addition to this, I dive into human trafficking systems in the United States with three main questions:

How the trafficking culture is different

What factors unique to the United States lead to an increase in human trafficking in certain areas

Which populations are exploited the most and become victims of the system

The final part of my analysis involves making connections between the trafficking systems of the Balkans and the United States. While this research does not take into account all the factors involved, the broad conceptualization helps us to better grasp some general similarities and differences, in addition to a few unique and specific discoveries. This research contributes to the existing conversations on human trafficking reform, while unearthing human trafficking in nontraditional and little understood geographic regions. It also expands to understanding the nuances of both the United States and Balkans and educates more people about the victims of trafficking, while gaining insight into existing commonalities between seemingly different geographic regions.

Theory of Coercion

Albert Biderman, a sociologist, developed a method for understanding psychology during duress and confinement. He studied interrogation techniques in World War II used to generate false confessions. More specifically, his focus was to analyze how to manipulate someone without the use of physical force. This idea translates to modern-day human trafficking in studying these victims, who are not only abused physically, but psychologically. Researchers conducted a study on the theory of coercion to understand how it affects, specifically, female human trafficking victims in Los Angeles county. They uncovered the process in which captors use with their victims, and it all ties back to manipulation. The selected victims feared their captors watched them, which hindered their ability to function without being in survival mode. Sometimes, their captors forced them to take substances. Traffickers often frightened their victims by claiming they were powerful and had connections to the police and government. Occasionally, traffickers would provide occasional acts of kindness to motivate compliance. The influence of their captor took a toll, but they were in a new environment and country that was nothing like their old life. Through disorientation and dependency, cultures of coercion controlled the women. These situations have lasting and severe implications for one's mental and physical health.

Ecological Systems Theory

An ecological perspective can also help academics better understand human trafficking. Understanding trafficking victims in their environment proves vital in Ecological Systems Theory. Rather than focusing on victims in isolation, this theory emphasizes the examination of victims in their environment and understanding the social and economic factors of human trafficking. Individuals living in impoverished communities, for example, tend to seek out new environments with better conditions. Traffickers take advantage of this, and these environments make it easier for them to exploit victims.

While using Ecological Systems Theory to understand trafficking cases, it is essential to understand that trafficking is person-centered. Thus, many predators do not use a "one size fits all" approach when luring victims. Instead, drawing from the the Ecological Model of human trafficking intervention, we understand that five main categories influence each individual. These include: individuals and environment, habitats and networks, power and

privilege, stress and resilience, and life-course. These categories may influence different people at varying degrees. For example, under the category of habitats and networks, the local government might influence an individual more than fair work practices, which fall under power and privilege. The Ecological Theory accounts for these perspectives and highlights individual, family, local, and global contexts of trafficking, shifting blame away from the victim and onto the system that creates the conditions for their trafficking. Furthermore, it calls for practice and policy efforts regarding trafficking to take into account the welfare of these victims and examine implications on a case-by-case basis. This theory provides a framework for understanding human trafficking, while shifting victim blame in different contexts. In doing so, we improve our understanding of current techniques used to analyze trafficking cases.

Research Questions

One key question guided and aided my comparative analysis: How did two completely different vicinities, one known as the land of the opportunity while the other is known for its struggles and poverty, have such vast numbers of human trafficking? The contrast is interesting, as the United States is closely associated with freedom and success yet still has an astoundingly high trafficking rate for a developed and well-governed country. Meanwhile, the Balkans also have an extremely high concentration of human trafficking. The countries within the area, however, have less recognition with poorly-managed governments. The comparison between what specific types of human trafficking are more relevant in each area and the different victims of trafficking is essential to understand the systems of each respective area. While exploring this area of research, it is also essential to note that society tends to focus on the criminal aspects of trafficking. At the same time, the less-emphasized psychological effects on victims can alter behaviors and lives forever. No matter the area of the world in which trafficking occurs, its effects on victims cannot be measured nor deemed insignificant.

Methods and Data Collection

This study primarily uses ethnographic and narrative analysis to support my conclusions. Using a qualitative approach, I designed this paper to center three core areas of source collecting: focus groups, focus geographical locations, and interviews. The primary focus group of this study is victims of human trafficking, particularly women. I focus my inquiry around the United States and the Balkan region in Europe. Finally, I mainly use YouTube interviews for my analysis, which were primarily of women who chose to come forward about their experiences of human trafficking. These women were the victims of the trafficking systems, specifically in the United States and the Balkans. Being fortunate to grow up in a privileged community, I never experienced the terrors of human trafficking networks. However, being the son of immigrant Eastern-European parents who came from less fortunate backgrounds, I have heard stories about the poverty that characterizes these areas of Europe. In impoverished conditions, people in survival mode will do anything to get out of their environment and situation, which makes exploitation by traffickers much easier. As a result, using these methods to uncover more about localized trafficking proves necessary in bringing more attention to this humanitarian issue.

The analysis gathered throughout this process primarily derives from qualitative research and evidence. I focused on non-numerical data and the historical context of the focus regions to guide my framework and research questions. I triangulated my data to include versions of focus groups (YouTube Interviews), geographical locations (ethnographic), and narrative analysis. I decided to use these facets of data collection because it proved to be the most efficient, accessible, and ethical way of understanding the situation and environment of a distant region, the Balkans. An essential aspect of making reasonable conclusions for this subject is becoming acquainted with life in the specific areas of focus. Throughout the process, I watched and read through about eight different interviews. I watched most of these interviews to understand what these women were going through effectively and the implications trafficking had on their lives. In listening to the women's interviews, two key themes emerged. First, these women often lack a

trusted social safety net, and their unfavorable environment and relationships only hurt them more. At the same time, there was a common theme of victims feeling too ashamed to come forward to their families for help. This theme was especially the case in the Baltics, and in some instances, the family was also unsupportive and ashamed that their kin were victims of trafficking. However, my findings didn't just lead me to common themes; I also began to recognize a flaw in our educational system. Not only is there a lack of awareness of just how big of an issue trafficking is, but people misinterpret the scope of the problem. Often, people refer to human trafficking as something only poor people experience. Studies show, however, that the country's economic status has nothing to do with trafficking levels. A great example of this is the two focus areas of this paper: the United States and the Balkans. These findings further sparked my interest in digging further into the subject.

Analyzing my qualitative data went into the next phase while I was collecting and evaluating my interviews. A key component of my interview evaluation was looking for similarities and differences in the victims' situations' themes, ideas, and rhetoric. The interviews I used were primarily of victims of trafficking or professors and educators who specialized in trafficking research. My first code, shame, is illustrated in several interviews. Specifically, my primary interview for this code was an interview conducted by Lucy Watson of ITV News. Watson traveled to the outskirts of Romania and focused on the locals, inquiring about the way of life and how trafficking dominates the environment and people alike. The theme of shame came alive here, as customary Romanian families often felt ashamed of their children when they learned of their trafficking experiences and wanted nothing to do with them. Another code that sprung up through watching Balkan interviews was the lack of safety nets trafficking victims have. The primary interview used for this code focused on Bulgarian perspectives. Many Bulgarian victims completely lacked a social support system, so they turned to outsiders with work promises. These illegitimate work sources, such as "fake" immigration agencies, were where the traffickers took advantage of the women. The third code has more to do with an overarching issue with trafficking. Several interviews with women of different economic statuses exemplify a shared experience of the trafficking systems. These women, such as Rebecca Bender, were financially stable and ordinary people, which goes against the typical narrative of trafficking as something poor people experience. Repeatedly, studies show the country's economic status has nothing to do with trafficking levels, instead leaning towards environment and structure as prefaces of trafficking. These codes provided a stable framework for my research, and they allowed me to center on the real-life experiences of these women.

AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCES

Shame Code

Shame can be a devastating feeling for any individual on the receiving end of it. It is known as the feeling of violating the social norms we live in. In other words, having done something with the perception of it being dishonorable or improper. Throughout the history of humanity, the feeling of shame has entrenched hierarchies and bolstered oppression, but it also has contributed to growth and learning from mistakes. Thus, when examining the issue of human trafficking and the various theories and societal interactions involved, the theme of shame appeared. Unfortunately, in the case of human trafficking, shame is a pervasive feeling. The female victims of human trafficking, especially ones in the Balkans, face the dilemma of shame in the context of their families especially.

Oftentimes, families of trafficking victims in the Balkans will feel very ashamed of their children's "tarnished" status, even though it was not their fault that they were trafficked. Whether it be economic, social, or political pressures, these women need familial support to recover from a traumatic experience, such as trafficking. However, unlike the United States, there is much less awareness about the issue of human trafficking in the Balkan region, so families are much more critical and ruthless in their actions and comments. For example, a reporter from ITV News traveled to Romania to achieve a better understanding of the context of shame in the niche of trafficking. A local expert illuminates the real situation, and says that "there's no way (the victims) can go back home because of the pressure and the shame" they face from their families (ITVNews). Shame is a powerful emotion, and when these

desperate women are in need of familiar support, sometimes they can't get it from their families due to this overwhelming emotion.

Sadly, the situation these victims face isn't limited to the family. It often extends into the community as well. Balkan communities tend to be smaller, closer, and more intertwined, which allows word of mouth to spread quickly. The same Romanian expert talks about how these victims are "not only (failures) in their own eyes, but in the community's eyes" (ITVNews). The implications of the shame that the family and the community hold impact the victim to a tremendous extent. With the erosion of familial and social support, they do not have a suitable social safety net, and are often left to fend for themselves. Specifically, a frequent situation in this context is when female Romanian victims see opportunities in foreign cities, such as London. These females often come from more secluded, smaller parts of the country, home to small towns and villages. Everyone in these villages knows each other, and even though there has been a continuing cycle of trafficking throughout these areas, the female victims can't seek advice and help from their kin because of their tarnished status. Therefore, they seek work in places like London, and at this point, traffickers take full advantage of the vulnerable women. The power shame holds in the context of human trafficking is very significant, and it ties into a similar code of Social Poverty.

Social Poverty Code

The importance of a social safety net in the context of human trafficking, for both recovery and termination of trafficking, cannot be stressed enough. Throughout my research, I explored and discovered stories of many female trafficking victims. Even though these victims were in the Balkans and the United States, there was one common theme between all their experiences: lack of stability. These women, ranging from teenagers to adults, did not have people in their lives they could trust, or people who were able to support them. Oftentimes, the case involved the lack of parental and familial support stemming from abuse or neglect. When a person's support system unravels in this manner, they begin living in a negative environment. This type of environment is defined by a profound lack of connections and support. At this period in time, desperation or outcomes of their existing trauma push them to trust people who do not have their best interests in mind. Desperation, sometimes characterized as survival mode for those with compounding traumas, is a powerful emotion that can influence anyone in any condition. When people become desperate, they will go beyond and do anything to get what they need or lack. In the case of human trafficking, desperation is a driving factor of migration. Migration, in the context of human trafficking, occurs when desperation characterizes someone's existence, pushing them to do anything to get out of their current situation. In the context of the Balkans, it was often escaping the impoverished and corrupt governments and environments of Southeastern Europe. Similarly, in the case of the United States, it was women from Central and South America escaping the poverty and dangerous situations they presided in. When the desperation dominates these women's situations, they become most vulnerable to traffickers. In both the Balkans and the United States, traffickers offered various women promises of employment, stable environments, and a home. These women were inclined to accept their offers, even if it meant risking their lives with unknown individuals. The lack of a social safety net, combined with the overpowering feeling of desperation, are the two factors that most often lead to women being susceptible to traffickers and human trafficking systems.

However, there are instances where these women don't even have the opportunity to escape. Especially in the Balkans, families will sell their young girls to traffickers, in return for money or goods. Thus, these girls have a profound distrust and misunderstanding of "what love means." (Matei) Thus, a phenomenon of selling off children for practically nothing, emerging from Matei's experience with Romanian trafficking, is derived from the incredible amount of poverty in the Balkan area. Iana Matei, founder of Reaching Out Romania, found that mothers will "sell their daughters for four cigarettes." When these families have no method of generating income, traffickers will come to them and offer a form of payment for certain services. In the context of human trafficking, it means little girls are forced or expected to sell their bodies away in order to support and provide for their family. Impoverished conditions create easy exploits—opening these women up to abuse, exploitation, and torture. This reiterates that the lack of social safety net these women have is one of the greatest factors in their continued exploitation.

Schooling Code

When the thought of trafficking comes to one's mind, people think of it in the context of lower-income communities and poor women. These women are also mainly thought to be stolen or taken against their will. This narrative is one of many that people hold in regards to human trafficking. Previously, I also believed this narrative. Unfortunately, for many reasons, this characterization is factually and ideologically inaccurate.

Throughout my research, I discovered that many of these women, especially in the specific case studies of the Balkans and the United States, do not always have many options for their lives. No matter the state or country, the female victims of trafficking often live life out alone, in harsh conditions, and avoid their domestic environment due to parental abuse and neglect. These conditions lead to desperation—forcing these women to go beyond ordinary measures to get out of their current environment and start a new life somewhere. This feeling of desperation is what traffickers and ring leaders prey upon. They take advantage of it with promises of economic and social stability to these women. In these situations, women have nowhere else to go and know "no other life." Thus, they will take any opportunity for security and stability, even if it means putting them in the hands of unknown people and harm's way. For example, in the case of the Balkans, traffickers will often take advantage of routes that refugees from the Middle East take (Bierbach). These refugees are very often the victims of the same desperation that trafficking victims worldwide face. In the United States, refugees are also often the victims of trafficking, especially those who desperately cross Central America's border with hopes of work and stable living (Schrock).

Nevertheless, this is where the misconception falls and counternarratives emerge. It is not just desperate and impoverished people affected by trafficking. Ordinary women living in stable conditions also became the victims of this trade. Rebecca Bender's story represents this idea. Bender, an American trafficking victim, met a man and fell into a relationship, even taking him to meet her parents. However, this man was not who she thought he was, and he eventually forced her into prostitution. Bender explains that she was "running from a man who had forced her into doing things she didn't want to do." Escaping through the casinos of Las Vegas, people around her did not know what she was experiencing. These women face incredible horrors that cannot be summed up in words, with Bender saying that she "didn't know if she was going to live or die." This experience is similar to what happened at the Super Bowl in Miami. Female victims of trafficking were walking around the stadium under the duress of their captors but could not do anything out of fear (Robertson). These two stories paint a picture of our society's lack of awareness of this issue, yet countless more are out there. The general public needs to be more aware of how big of an issue trafficking is. That can start in schools, where trafficking needs to be explained and emphasized. It is an international emergency and silent humanitarian crisis that will continue unless society collectively takes further action.

Analysis of Data Collection

When analyzing the collected data throughout the process of this project, the most important concept I came across was the importance of qualitative and non-numerical data. This is especially the case when researching and exploring a topic such as human trafficking, which oftentimes relies on spoken accounts and stories of abuse to successfully catch the criminals. Thus, I focused my background research on the historical context of the focus regions to guide my framework. Specifically, this was done through gathering and examining YouTube Interviews, geographical locations, and basic narrative analysis of common themes throughout human trafficking cases. These methods of data collection provided the most successful understanding of the human trafficking environment in a distant region such as Balkan territories. A main takeaway from this collection was understanding that it was essential to become acquainted with life in the specific areas of focus, which involved learning about social culture and gender norms in these areas. A lot of these themes displayed themselves through interviews, where I began to understand what these women were going through, and how hard it was to escape their situation. The root cause of these situations is oftentimes derived from the social issues that women face in these areas. Balkan women often lack a trusted social safety net, and there was a

common theme of victims feeling too ashamed to come forward to their families for help. The family was unsupportive and ashamed that their kin were victims of trafficking.

Throughout the analysis of my collected data and codes, I recognized a large flaw in our educational system: many people misinterpret the degree in which human trafficking not only plagues underdeveloped areas such as the Balkans, but also more industrialized and stable societies that we have in the West. Many people believe that human trafficking as something only populations at low poverty levels face. However, the data points to the opposite; in fact, the country's economic status has nothing to do with trafficking levels. A great example of this is the two focus areas of this paper: the United States and the Balkans. Moving on to the elements I kept an eye out for when analyzing the interviews of Balkan victims of trafficking, it was essential to find common themes in their accounts. This would be the way I could make educated generalizations and criticize the systems in place in their home nations. The interviews I used were primarily of victims of trafficking or professors and educators who specialized in trafficking research in the Balkan region. My takeaways from the interviews are illustrated and elaborated on in the form of codes. My first code, shame, appears as a common theme in almost all of the interviews. My primary source for the shame code was an interview conducted by Lucy Watson of ITV News. Watson traveled to the outskirts of Romania and focused on the local environment, inquiring about the way of life and how trafficking dominates general society and individuals alike. Shame reappeared many times in these interviews, as it became evident that Romanian families often felt ashamed of their children when they learned of their trafficking experiences. Eventually, these families decided that they wanted nothing to do with their children, and distanced themselves from them instead of providing support. The second code that emerged was the lack of safety nets trafficking victims have. The primary interview used for this code focused on rural Bulgarian perspectives. The situation for many of these Bulgarians is incredibly bleak, as they are surrounded by incredibly few individuals who would be willing to help them. Thus, they often turn to outsiders with work promises. Examples of these illegitimate work sources include "fake" immigration agencies, where traffickers lured women in and eventually took advantage of them. Finally, the third code has more to do with an overarching theme with human trafficking. Several interviews with women of different economic statuses display a shared experience of the trafficking systems. These women, such as Rebecca Bender, were financially stable and ordinary people, who got involved in unfortunate situations and turned into victims themselves. This situation goes against the typical narrative of trafficking as "something poor people experience". Again, studies show the country's economic status has nothing to do with trafficking levels. Instead, the core elements that foster human trafficking are environment, social norms, and class structure. These codes provided a way to explain my research in three parts, and eventually became easy to break down and analyze in a simpler fashion.

Future Research Directions

In conducting this research, I have made numerous connections and discovered several new things in the context of human trafficking. Specifically, topics such as the magnitude of the issue around the world, along with the different "styles" traffickers use in kidnapping victims, were foreign concepts to me before. More importantly, I sought to answer my core research questions and elaborate on each of them, and each question led me to different facets of my research. However, there are several questions that I did not pose or consider in my study of trafficking in the Balkans and the United States. My research did not entail much government policy, so I did not emphasize examining and questioning current trafficking policy reforms. Instead, I sought to establish counternarratives that targeted people's misconceptions of the issue at hand and explain how introducing human trafficking in schooling would help change these misconceptions. Furthermore, my research is limited by my exploration of two particular areas (Balkans and the United States). Thus, I did not consider or compare any other areas in the world since this was a comparative study—though, I urge future research to do so. Finally, I do not detail how the United States became a significant trafficking hub, and instead; I focused on the backstory of the Balkans. Emerging from my limitations, these future research directions will furthering the study of human trafficking, and establish important counternarratives that push against norms in culture, society, and institutions that allow these systems to flourish.

It's important to note that there are many more intersectional perspectives not highlighted in this paper or in trafficking research, more generally speaking. In my understanding of the subject of human trafficking, I analyzed the information through three identified thematic codes. These perspectives included the victim's shame and trafficking, the victim's environment, the dangers it opens them up to, and the general public's misconceptions about trafficking. However, there are several angles that one could take on this research. I did not consider a lawmaker's perspective, as I did not focus on policy in my research. In addition to this, I did not consider an educator's perspective, even though I pointed to the need for increased trafficking awareness in a school environment. Lastly, my research was all done from the viewpoint of a high school student, so I do not have the same experiences as trafficking victims, lawmakers, or educators. However, my research still managed to open me up to some exciting and helpful connections that can help bridge the gap between trafficking in two different areas of the world.

Concluding Remarks

This qualitative and comparative analysis on human trafficking in the Balkans and the United States proved to be a fascinating paper. Through many different methods, including articles, interviews, journals, and other research papers, I managed to make lots of different connections in the sphere of this topic. Furthermore, my codes merit future consideration for researchers and emerged as stimulating takeaways of the research. Combined with the other sections of the paper, the codes paint a picture of what human trafficking looks like in the Balkans and the United States. Not only that, but also the similarities and differences between the two.

The comparison between the Balkans and the United States matters most right now. It is essential to pinpoint what kickstarted the human trafficking systems in each region because finding the starting point of a problem makes it easier to analyze the possible solutions. My research identifies humans' flow and migration patterns into each of these areas and provides a specific series of events that led to trafficking skyrocketing in the Balkans. This study matters because it provides a framework for other academics, policymakers, and researchers to look at when examining human trafficking cases all over the world. At the same time, my study illuminates the horrors of human trafficking and helps people understand the feeling of shame and how it can impact families, communities, and victims.. Furthermore, this research establishes a basis and reasoning for why a social safety net is vital to a person's safety and well-being. Without these things, our communities are not as educated as they should be. Education is one of the main ways we can combat human trafficking. With increased awareness comes results, and those results can one day save trafficking victims' lives.

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ITVNews. (2020). *Romania's sex trafficking trade: 'There is no other life they know'*. Retrieved From: *YouTube*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YLLJYv7PyA>.

The video seeks to educate the general public on how Romania has become an epicenter of sex trafficking in Europe. Furthermore, it accounts for personal experiences of the victims of the process, and how the traffickers operate. Highlighted within the video are key, behind-the-scenes details such as the harsh conditions and pressure the girls face, sometimes leaving them no choice but to allow others to exploit them to get out of their environment. Several key statistics were put on the spotlight in this video. Girls as young as 14 were already giving birth to children whose fathers were either rapists, traffickers, or even the girls' biological relatives. The ideal location for the traffickers to exploit these girls are flats in the rural countryside of Romania, in small, poor villages. These rough conditions lead to the girls sometimes feeling as if they have "no choice" but to allow traffickers to exploit them, while in return escaping the terrible circumstances. Most often, these girls will get shipped off to the United Kingdom, as three-quarters of the women trafficked to the United Kingdom come from Romania. Finally, when some of

these girls finally escape their cycle of misfortune, they often feel too embarrassed and ashamed to come home, and are left to fend for themselves in the streets. Unfortunately, some dismal conclusions can be derived from this video. The government and legal systems of Romania are doing a substandard job of prosecuting the traffickers, as less than half of them end up being prosecuted, which indicates system reform is vital. There is also not much news coverage and world knowledge of the massive trafficking rings that take place in Romania, often being overshadowed by news of trafficking in bigger countries such as Russia and Thailand. This resource is key in demonstrating the process of trafficking in rural Romania, the failing legal system, and the consequences and effects the crimes leave on the girls. It also is beneficial in understanding the deeper meaning of why these girls know nothing else in life, and why sometimes they feel obligated to allow themselves to become exploited (350).

Brunovskis, A. (2017). *Vulnerability and exploitation along the Balkan route: Identifying victims of human trafficking in Serbia*. <https://humantraffickingsearch.org>. <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/vulnerability-exploitation-along-the-balkan-route-tip-in-serbia-2017.pdf>.

This report by the Fafo Research Foundation seeks to outline many of the general concepts of human trafficking in Serbia and the surrounding regions. These concepts include the types of people that are the victims of trafficking, the geographical migratory patterns the majority of the victims take, and the connection between human trafficking and refugees. Furthermore, the report analyzes the risks and vulnerabilities of traveling along these migratory routes, what types of exploitation the victims undergo, and how “trafficking triggers flight”. The Balkan route is established as a heavily used passage that ranges from Greece to Hungary and Slovakia, passing through the Balkans. The route comes into context because it is the next step in the journey of the refugees travelling from Turkey and the Middle East to Europe, escaping their war-torn homelands. Based on research done in Serbia, there were about half a million refugees stuck inside the country because the other European countries had built walls to stop incoming refugees. These asylum seekers were not only running away from war, they were running away from their past trauma: exploited in various types of trafficking. Documented in Serbia were these several types of trafficking, such as trafficking for sexual exploitation, criminal activity, and even organ removal. Based on the data collected, the report presents the sad truth that so many of these refugees were left fending for themselves. They also found that human trafficking occurred en route, where the situation often was that they had to pay these smugglers more as they were heading towards their final destination, in turn allowing them to do whatever they wanted with the victims. Overall, the report reveals the underlying theme where conditions were so terrible at home, that the victims felt as if they had no choice but to escape their home countries with smugglers, who the majority of the time exploited these women. It was the start of another series of treacherous conditions that we so often see with those individuals who are victims of human trafficking (336).

Vujin, J. (2009). *Human Trafficking In The Balkans: An Inside Report*. St. Thomas University School of Law. Retrieved from: <https://www.stu.edu/portals/law/docs/human-rights/ihr/volumes/4/267-316-jasnavujin-humantraffickinginthebalkansaninsidereporthumantraffickingglobalandlocalperspectives.pdf>.

The report goes in-depth on how closely human trafficking is related to slavery, and the massive numbers associated with the topic. It answers the questions of the annual victims of the trade, how much profit is gained by the traffickers and organizations that support them, and what factors come into play when encouraging the trafficking of humans. This resource refers to human trafficking as modern-day slavery.

This stems from the identification of human trafficking as being forced and coerced into labor or sexual exploitation. Furthering this reference, they find that about 120,000 women and children annually are trafficked across the European Union, mostly through the Balkan region. However, the true significance of this resource stems from the outlining of the three factors at work that encourage trafficking. The first is that there is always an abundant supply of victims available due to the terrible economic and social conditions of the country of origin, and sometimes referred to as the “push effect”. The second factor is that in the countries that receive these trafficking victims, there is a large

demand for their services, also known as the “pull factor”. The last is more large-scale, as criminal organizations take advantage of the supply and demand environment and conduct trafficking for massive profits. These conclusions and statistics are most useful as roadmaps. These roadmaps showcase the environment where human trafficking brews most frequently. For example, it is often characterized by poor, disorganized countries who have large populations of defenseless people. This is the clear case in the Balkans, especially in countries like Romania (261).

McCallester, M., & Martinovic, J. (2011). *Kosovo's mafia: A hotbed of human trafficking*. The World from PRX. Retrieved from: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2011-03-27/kosovos-mafia-hotbed-human-trafficking>.

McCallester brings to light the treacherous human trafficking systems in Kosovo, a small country in Balkan Europe. The article goes in depth on the history of the sex trafficking rings in Kosovo, the profits made from the business, and the criminal organizations who orchestrate it. Furthermore, they outline the vast corruption in the country and how the “Mafia” runs the show, pointing to the helplessness of the individuals who become victim to the sex trade.

The history of human trafficking in Kosovo begins in the aftermath of the U.S-led war in 1999. The war-torn Kosovo was born after this war, in a world-wide effort to protect human rights with the idea of it being a safe haven. However, the plan backfired, and Kosovo, a very poor country, has become a massive hub in the trade of humans. The human trafficking industry runs in dark, underworld circles, and are controlled by past members of armed militias. The sources point to corruption at the top of the government, as officials and law enforcement sometimes partake in the trade. McCallester even goes as far as to say that Thaci, the former president of Kosovo, has associates that are heavily involved with trafficking. Based on the data, research, and interviews, Kosovo’s human trafficking systems are operated through the underworld, with people in high government systems getting involved. The corruption levels are astronomical, and this leads to the Mafia being able to traffic women in and out of the country as they please. Overall, this publication aids in outlining Kosovo’s human trafficking system, who controls what, and the people involved in it. It also shines on how corruption allows criminal enterprises to flourish, and how Kosovo might not be the only hotbed in the Balkan Area. It further points to the Balkan region of Europe being one defined by poverty, failing governments, and opportunities for human trafficking to thrive (315).

Bilgen, A. (2014, December 27). *Trafficking of women in the Balkans: A modern-day slavery*. The European Strategist. Retrieved from: <https://www.eurstrat.eu/trafficking-of-women-in-the-balkans-a-modern-day-slavery/>.

Bilgen starts by outlining several key differences between human smuggling and human trafficking, doing so effectively by defining exploitation and in which situations it becomes an issue. The research also addresses how massive the Balkan trafficking trade is, compared to other areas of Europe. Finally, it goes into the reasons the trade is so prevalent in these countries, and the reasoning of the strong international presence being explained the best.

First, it is important to compare and contrast smuggling and trafficking. As Bilgen explains, smuggling “does not necessarily include exploitation”, while trafficking entails sexual exploitation, slavery-like practices, and forced labor. Some shocking statistics come to light in this article, as one-fifth of the women forced into prostitution world-wide are trafficked into Europe through the Balkans. Furthermore, it is a very low-risk and high-profit business, especially in this geographical area. The luring of these women is often done through deceit, which includes false job and marriage opportunities, sale by family, or abduction. Interestingly enough, the author outlines several unique reasons as to why the Balkans are so attractive for traffickers. The first one is fairly common among reports, as the Balkan area has a high demand for women, due to the increase in brothels and cheap street prostitution, and the people who profit from the sex industry, including the traffickers and the corrupt officials.

Another major reason the Balkans human trafficking trade is so extensive is because of the presence of NATO troops, peacekeepers, and humanitarian relief workers, as many of these foreigners saw sex services during conflict rather harmless. In Kosovo, where the UN sent 50,000 foreign troops, there was a large increase in the human trafficking rate. Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO stabilization force workers were found to frequently gather at the

many night bars surrounding the NATO base in the country. Overall, the Balkans are notorious for several problems, such as constant political and government instability, vast corruption, a high unemployment rate. These issues only help the criminal enterprises that are already abundant in the region. The foreign aid and influence that comes as a result of the region's problems is often seen as a positive thing, but the research points to a darker side of the story; one where an increasing number of women are being trafficked to satisfy the needs of these men, both local and foreign (393).

Mendelson, S. E. (2005). Peacekeeping Operations and Links to Trafficking in Women and Girls. In *Barracks and brothels: Peacekeepers and human trafficking in the Balkans* (pp. 1–7). essay, Center for Strategic & International Studies.

Mendelson's book focuses on the relationship between foreign intervention in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina and an uptick in human trafficking levels. In response, the book also outlines these international organizations' responses to the frightening data. Furthermore, discussions of the cost of ignoring this humanitarian issue are also included.

At the global scale, human trafficking is found to generate profits somewhere in between 7 and 9 billion dollars annually. This makes it the third largest illegal profit market in the world. A significant chunk of these profits come out of the Balkan Region in Europe, which includes Kosovo and Bosnia. The Yugoslav War and Srebrenica, which occurred in the 1990s, were the epitome of violence; killing about 150,000 people. This massive outburst of violence from a relatively irrelevant area in Europe put the Balkans on the map, along with the numerous human-rights violations that this area is known for. It attracted foreign aid and international organizations to come to the rescue, including NATO, the United Nations, and U.S troops. Unfortunately, the arrival of these foreigners gave way to a steep increase in a major humanitarian issue: the trafficking of women and children. The poverty and corruption levels in the area also shot up after the brutality in the 1990s. After this data was revealed, these international organizations came up with Zero-Tolerance Policies, which was supposed to ensure that these foreigners would in no way engage and support the prostitution of women. Unfortunately, to this date, the levels of human trafficking in the Balkans are extremely high, which means the other factors, such as corruption, porous borders, poverty, and demand, are just as significant. Ignoring these things is not an option, as human trafficking does not just involve prostitution. Rather, it includes slave-like practices, forced labor, and abuse. This research further paves the connection between foreign presence and the implications it has on this business. Furthermore, it brings light to how violence in an area can affect humanitarian rights and issues for decades to come. Until the countries of the Balkans undergo some serious reform at all levels, this will remain a defining factor of these countries for a very long time (363).

Bierbach, M. (2018, February 20). *New trafficking hubs emerge in the Balkans*. InfoMigrants. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/7641/new-trafficking-hubs-emerge-in-the-balkans>.

Bierbach's piece extends beyond human trafficking, as it goes into depth about migratory patterns not limited to traffickers, but migrants from Turkey as well. It establishes the Balkans as the pathway between the Middle East and Europe for the transportation of humans. Some history of the "Balkan Route" is also explained. It is rather important to note that the Balkans are not a particularly attractive area of Europe to settle in, due to ongoing violence, corruption, and political turmoil. Due to this, these Balkan countries have developed into pit stops on the Balkan Route, a route where migrants have hopes of entering Europe from Turkey, travelling through the Balkans, and ending up in developed European countries, such as Germany. Unfortunately, human traffickers have taken advantage of this route, and transport victims from neighboring Asia into southeastern Europe. Migrants and victims of human trafficking alike are often hidden in trucks, as they often have a fake floor serving as hiding grounds. However, this practice often results in the risk of suffocation, as the space is usually extremely small. Further along the route, the city of Timisoara in Romania serves as an anchor point for the flow of these people. The German police found the same to be true, as

the city was explained as a “hotspot for human trafficking organizations” in the Balkans. Significant takeaways from this article include the varying routes of transport, the methods of transportation and risks that come along with it, and the ventures of traffickers with their victims, as well as migrants. Furthermore, discovering the key stops along the way located in the Balkans, such as Timișoara in Romania, are often extremely poor. This common theme translates to earlier research, which answers the question of why the Balkans are a breeding ground for human traffickers, and how the venture thrives in these areas (307).

Schrock, J. (n.d.). *Human trafficking: A Growing criminal market in the U.S.* Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/218462.pdf>.

This report from the Department of Justice discusses human trafficking in the United States. It differentiates human trafficking from alien smuggling, which is very common in this country. Furthermore, it answers questions about the numbers involved in the business and the most common entry points for traffickers.

Human trafficking has grown more of an issue for the United States, and it is fair to say that it is indeed distinguishable from alien smuggling. They are similar in some ways, but the thing that sets them apart is that trafficking has the elements of coercion and exploitation. Another key difference is that alien smuggling is a short-term profit business, while human trafficking involves exploitation over an elongated period of time, producing long-term profits. Human trafficking, along with alien smuggling, usually occur over the United States’ southwest border with Mexico. Traffickers are often able to get people into the country without documents. However, there are many other forms and ways of transport of humans into the country, including the increasing level of usage of the Canadian border for entry and Chinese boat smugglers in the East and West Coasts. The vast majority of people that are trafficked into the United States are people from impoverished and less-developed sectors of the world, such as South and Central America, the Caribbean, and South Asia. Unfortunately, the United States human trafficking system is much more international than most other countries. There have been multiple reports finding that Italian criminal organizations have worked with Russian crime groups to supply trafficked women to venues such as nightclubs. Smugglers and traffickers often use transportation companies and employment agencies to hide their ventures. Finally, a big reason why human trafficking ends up being successful in the United States is because of employers being willing to give work to undocumented individuals. This means that women trafficked into the country and being forced to work by their traffickers can do so successfully, and no red flags will be raised. This is especially common in the state of Florida, where the illegal job market is massive and farmers often prefer illegal workers who will work for substantially lower wages. The two main takeaways from this report include the close relationship of alien smuggling and human trafficking in the United States, along with a rather foreign presence in the trafficking business. America is often seen as the land of opportunity, so people in fact do want to be smuggled here, but oftentimes the end result is being forced to partake in forced, painful or hurtful activities (423).

Human trafficking Modern enslavement of immigrant women in the United States. American Civil Liberties Union. (2020). <https://www.aclu.org/other/human-trafficking-modern-enslavement-immigrant-women-united-states>.

This report on human trafficking answers a lot of key questions about general human trafficking in the United States. On the broad side, these include the definition of human trafficking, how it entices forced servitude and labour, and making a connection between it and slavery. More specifically, quantitative data is revealed specific to the United States, along with what drives the industry in the United States.

The report by the American Civil Liberties Union finds that human trafficking can be defined as modern-day slavery. This is due to the qualities of extreme labor exploitation, and how the victims are lured through opportunities of fake jobs and better lives, but instead forced to follow their traffickers orders. The victims of human trafficking are often found working in the sex industry. However, others are forced to partake in domestic servitude, factory work,

or agricultural work. The victims also often experience violent abuse, lack of food and water, sleep deprivation, and an isolation from the free world. On the numerical side, the International Labor Organization finds that 12.3 million people across the world fall victim to forced labor at any time. The US Department of State furthers that somewhere in between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked into the country annually. The even more frightening factor is that those numbers don't include victims of trafficking across state borders. States with high levels of immigrants are those with the highest amount of human trafficking victims, notoriously Florida, California, and New York. The reasons this industry still exists and is growing in several locations across the country have to do with fear. These victims are very often afraid of US law enforcement and too scared to come forward with their stories, a common theme with immigrants across the world. Another reason is that the jobs that the victims of human trafficking in the United States take part in are often excluded from labor and employment laws, leading to certain job communities having a higher amount of trafficking victims. The conclusions derived from this report include the close relationship between modern day human trafficking and slavery in the past, which share many characteristics and effects on it's victims. In addition to this, the report outlines numbers specific to trafficking levels in the United States, and the unique reasons why the country is a hotspot for human trafficking (394).

Mollema, N. (1970). Follow the leader: best practices to combat human trafficking in the United States. In *The comparative and international Law Journal of southern Africa* (pp. 1–41). essay, Inst. of Foreign and Comparative Law, Univ. of South Africa.

This section of Mollema's book focuses on the legislative side of human trafficking in the United States. Specifically, what has been passed and what has been outlawed by the United States government. Furthermore, the history behind human trafficking is explained, and the connection between slavery and modern-day trafficking is made yet again. Human trafficking is considered to be a "high-profile issue" in the United States. Contrary to other governments, the United States government is considered a leader around the world in combating human trafficking. A reason as to why the government is very active in fighting this humanitarian issue is because of the nation's history with slavery. As outlined in the book, the US has had a long and grueling history with slavery, until it became illegal in 1865. Per the Constitution, Section 13 says that involuntary servitude shall be outlawed. Slavery made a reappearance in the 20th century, this time in the case of females being exploited involuntarily by foreigners, typically Asian or Arab men. However, since the passage of the White Slave Traffic Act in 1910, the nation has had to deal with a modernized version of slavery, known as human trafficking. The government has created the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), in an effort to prevent trafficking by growing international cooperation with foreign governments in a whole-some effort to combat human trafficking. Furthermore, the country has made strides in giving illegal and undocumented victims the same protection as a "crime victim" as documented ones. The TVPA has had a vast domestic impact, as the number of trafficking investigations has tripled, while twice as many defendants have been prosecuted, along with double the amount of convictions being attained. All in all, the United States' efforts in combating human trafficking have gone in the right direction. As a country with a history of slavery, it has made stopping modern-day slavery an important subject on it's agenda, and the results are slowly coming to light (325).

Bracy, K., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2019). A four-year analysis of Labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics and Labor Trafficking Patterns. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 7(1), 35–52.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2019.1638148>

This study by Arizona State University heavily uses data and numerical information to analyze the issue and patterns of human trafficking in the United States, specifically labour trafficking. The paper seeks to define what labour trafficking is in the United States, where most of the victims come from, and numbers that help us understand the patterns of trafficking from 2013-2016. Bracy starts off by defining forced labour as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily". In the

US, this labour trafficking most often occurs from the manipulation of migration paths and exploiting the vulnerabilities of these people, most often aliens who are searching for work and in desperate need of assistance. The study also provides extensive quantitative data collected from victims of labor trafficking in the US from 2013-2016. Labor trafficking was the most common form of trafficking. 76% of labour trafficking victims were from a country other than the United States. About 1 in 3 victims originated from Mexico, while the next most common victims were Thai. Having to do with modes of transportation, nearly half of all traffickers in the US crossed state lines with their victims. Almost three-fourths of traffickers bought tickets of travel for victims, whether it be plane or bus tickets. Overall, there was an increase in immigrant labor trafficker involvement over this four-year period, and an increase in labor traffickers who committed visa fraud. This raw data is important because it proves immensely useful in identifying the case of trafficking in the US as different from the Balkans. The Balkans human trafficking system was primarily focused around sex trafficking and exploitation. However, the United States' trafficking systems were dominated by labor trafficking victims. This can be attributed to there being more opportunities for work in the United States, while there is a higher demand for prostitution and illegal sex in the Balkan area of Europe. Furthermore, the United States is attributed as a place where aliens and immigrants want to go, as the US is known for its opportunities for work and better lives. At the same time, the Balkans are much more impoverished and overall less stable, and it serves as more of a forced destination for the victims, and much less immigrants are looking to start a life there (398).

Baldwin, S. B., Fehrenbacher, A. E., & Eisenman, D. P. (2014). Psychological coercion in human trafficking. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(9), 1171–1181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732314557087>

This study's focus was the experiences of human trafficking victims in the United States in relation to Biderman's theory of coercion. The individuals studied were the victims of labor trafficking and/or sex trafficking. Furthermore, their overall condition and the effects of the trafficking experience were focal points as well.

The researchers conducted interviews with 12 women who were trafficked into Los Angeles County. It was a diverse group; these 12 women were trafficked from 10 different countries. The psychological effects of trafficking trauma on these victims were never studied in-depth, as the most common way to tell abuse is through physical appearance. Trafficking involves deception and psychological manipulation, so it is not just limited to physical abuse. Albert Biderman, a sociologist, developed a method for understanding psychology during duress and confinement. He studied interrogation techniques in World War 2 used to generate false confessions. It goes as far to analyze how to manipulate someone without the use of physical force. This translates to modern day human trafficking in the study of these victims, who weren't abused physically, but rather psychologically. The selected victims had the fear of always being watched by their captors, hindering their ability to function normally. Sometimes, they were forced to take substances. Traffickers often frightened their victims by claiming they were powerful and had connections to the police and government. Occasionally, traffickers would provide occasional kindness, in order to provide motivation for compliance. It all ties back to the theory of coercion. The influence of their captors was already taking a toll, but they were in a new environment and country that was probably nothing like their old life. These situations most likely have serious implications on one's health. The research conducted helps us understand what happens to these women post-trafficking. Theories of manipulation and coercion come into play, relating back to methods used in the 20th century. Overall, it was a very psychological source that provides a deeper meaning to what these people truly go through (333).

Robertson, L. (2020, January 31). 'A bonanza for traffickers': Why a Miami Super Bowl is a magnet for sex-trafficking Read more here: <https://www.miamiherald.com/article239767408.html#storylink=cpy>. Miami Herald. <https://www.miamiherald.com/article239767408.html>.

Robertson discloses the horrors of festivities, such as the Super Bowl, in a city such as Miami, notorious for its party scene. Often overlooked are what goes on behind the scenes, as men all around the country flock to the NFL's crown

jewel to find themselves exploring the vast pool of women available. The only thing is, some of these women are not living a normal life, and this article illuminates the shady, traumatic, and terrible things that these women experience in the shadows.

The week leading up to Super Bowl Sunday is usually one of festivities, partying, and rowdiness. This was especially the case in Miami and South Beach, and over 100,000 men came to the city for the special game, with vast opportunities to have fun with women. Behind the scenes, however, are women who often have “bar-code tattoos on their lower lips”, their systems full of drugs, and extensive burns and bruises who live a life of terror. These women are the prey of human traffickers, who set up in various places in Greater Miami while posting ads for sex-for-hire. A trafficking survivor spoke up, describing the Super Bowl in a place like Miami as a “bonanza for traffickers”. This first-hand witness outlines the process: locking girls up, drugging them up and not feeding them, abusing them physically and verbally, and forcing them to have sex for the trafficker’s profit. Miami’s Super Bowls aren’t the only human trafficking epicenter; the weeks leading up to the Atlanta Super Bowl in 2019 involved over 150 trafficking arrests, and a 23% uptick in trafficking hotline calls. Overall, Miami-Dade County has the highest levels of trafficking in Florida, with the state having the third-most cases in the nation. Incredibly, being a Miami resident, I never realized this issue was so close to him, making it hit even harder (308).

Farrell, A., & Pfeffer, R. (2014). Policing Human Trafficking: Cultural Blinders and Organizational Barriers. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653(1), 46–64.
<https://doi.org/10.11770002716213515835>

Farrell and Pfeffer’s research dove them into many avenues of human trafficking in the United States. The primary routes they went through were police agency culture and their perceptions of human trafficking in general. In addition to this, they find that local departments mostly focus on child trafficking, but women’s trafficking remains largely in the shadows.

Numerous sources cite that local police and sheriffs often don’t have the resources and training needed to recognize human trafficking, even in their own jurisdictions. This is shown by the strangely low numbers of trafficking-related arrests in the 50 states, when numbers of human trafficking victims are known to be much larger. A key factor in this is law enforcement culture. Data collected from 140 trafficking cases were thoroughly examined, questioned, and debated by Farrell and Pfeffer. Interviews with police and prosecutors often showed the obvious: they didn’t know what they were doing or what they were dealing with. They struggled to understand whether the victim gave consent freely, or under influence or force. Another unclear difference was the distinction between “exploitive labor practices” and actual human trafficking, and it’s very hard to distinguish how far does involuntary servitude go on a case-to-case basis. Furthermore, trafficking laws are also relatively new, as states like South Carolina and West Virginia didn’t pass anti trafficking laws until after 2010. Lastly, units are often focused on child exploitation and trafficking, as this is more known by the community as “child predators and molesters”. Unfortunately, women are more under-the-rock, along with general labor exploitation, and awareness about this forced labor and the adult women involved are lacking (269).

Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. (2012, August 6). *Balkans: Shifting landscape of human trafficking*. OCCRP. <https://www.occrp.org/index.php/en/ccwatch/cc-watch-indepth/1612-balkans-shifting-landscape-of-human-trafficking>.

This report details how human trafficking culture has changed in the Balkans from the time period of the Srebernica-Yugoslavian conflicts to the 21st century. It outlines what human trafficking looked like in the 1990s, fresh out of mass conflict, who were the primary victims at that time, and the reform that went on throughout the region. Now, Balkan human trafficking has taken a new turn, with the culture transforming and an emphasis on staying within the region. A call to action is also taken, and intelligence from residents of the Balkan region is of utmost importance now.

The 1990s were an extremely chaotic time for the countries of Eastern Europe, especially those in the Balkan region. Following the Srebrenica massacre and Bosnian War, the region was full of international spotlight, and humanitarian aid rushed to the rescue. This mass influx of foreign men, coming as peacekeepers, soldiers, or for relief efforts, sparked a sharp increase in human trafficking in the region. Traffickers took advantage of the increased demand for sex, and women from all over the world were taken hostage and crossed borders at a rapid rate, flushing into the Balkans. These women were extremely common at brothels and bars in the region, brought in by organized crime groups, making massive profit off of the women's work. However, as the Balkans became an epicenter for human trafficking in Europe and the world, international and national attention followed. Governments worked extensively to close off borders and increase patrols and education about trafficking. This caused a variation in the victims of human trafficking, and the vast crime groups in the region instead focused on the local populations, rather than trafficking women from outside of the region. The primary victims have shifted to girls under the age of 18, specifically ones eager to get away from their homes, whether it be homelessness or domestic abuse. The bottom line is: they needed to get away from their current lives, but instead, they were taken advantage of by these traffickers and their lives got even worse. This is why the law enforcement systems of the Balkans need citizen reporters more than ever. These locals know the infrastructure and people of their towns more than anyone, but sometimes the people of the Balkans have a passive attitude to trafficking. Roma children are one of the biggest groups at risk, as they are often discriminated against by locals, and seen as rather poor or "beggars" themselves, so people turn a blind eye. This narrative of the change in scenery in the Balkans is extremely valuable and written in an understandable way, proving very useful (437).

Kajosevic, S. (2021, June 2). *Montenegro urged to Compensate human trafficking victims*. Balkan Insight. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/06/02/montenegro-urged-to-compensate-human-trafficking-victims/>.

Kajosevic of Podgorica discusses the need of compensation for human trafficking victims in Montenegro, a small country in the Balkans. One of Europe's main organizations combating trafficking, GRETA, published a report that serves as a baseline and reference for these authors, including Kajosevic. Furthermore, she establishes Montenegro's relationship with the EU, and the patterns emerging from the country.

Most of Montenegro's human trafficking victims of late are from the Roma community, the Romani, commonly referred to as gypsies. Another large chunk of the victims are from other nations in the Balkans, such as Serbia and Bosnia. These fit in place with the common theme that human trafficking has shifted from a larger, continental ring to more locally sourced victims, as noted in previous sources. GRETA's report finds that a key issue with Montenegro's human trafficking victims are not given compensation for the damage they had to endure. For example, out of a pool of 39 local victims, 9 filed for property claims, and none of them were granted compensation. The US State Department decided to take a call of action, and informed Montenegro that they weren't doing enough about the issue and had to investigate and dedicate more resources to human trafficking. The government has been taking action of late as well, as they set up a multidisciplinary team, made up of officers, doctors, and psychologists to help recognize human trafficking victims. Further strides that need to be taken include increasing the scope of witness-protection programs and overall justice. This narrative tells the story of how human trafficking is overlooked in the Balkans, and how action can lead to better results (271).

Barner, J. R., Okech, D., & Camp, M. A. (2017). "One size does not fit all:" A proposed ecological model for human trafficking intervention. *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work*, 15(2), 137–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23761407.2017.1420514>

Using an ecological perspective helps academics better understand human trafficking. Analyzing trafficking victims in their environment proves vital in ecological systems theory. Rather than focusing on victims in isolation, this theory emphasizes the examination of victims in their environment and understanding the social and economic factors of

human trafficking. For example, individuals living in poorer environments tend to seek new environments with better conditions. Traffickers take advantage of this, and these environments make it easier for them to exploit victims.

While using ecological systems theory to understand trafficking cases, it is essential to understand that trafficking is person-centered. Using a “one size fits all” approach in regards to trafficking cases is wrong. Using the ecological model of human trafficking intervention, five main categories influence each individual. These include individuals and environment, habitats and networks, power and privilege, stress and resilience, and life-course. These categories may influence different people at varying degrees. For example, under the category of habitats and networks, the local government might influence an individual more than fair work practices, which fall under power and privilege. The ecological theory accounts for these perspectives and highlights individual, family, local, and global contexts of trafficking. Furthermore, it calls for practice and policy efforts regarding trafficking to take into account the welfare of these victims and examine implications on a case-by-case basis. Overall, this theory provides a framework for understanding human trafficking in different contexts and allows improvement of the current techniques used to analyze trafficking cases (246).

Noelle Karpowicz. (2021). Sex Trafficking in Bulgaria. YouTube. Retrieved October 12, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQB-sC0Sw10>.

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