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The Construction of Sex Trafficking

*Swedish Policy-making, Effects and the Complexity of a Global Social
Problem*

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Abstract

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The purpose of this qualitative study is to analyse how sex trafficking is constructed and represented as a social problem in policy documents. Further, to investigate how the problem representation of sex trafficking impacts the work of public and non-governmental organisations, and in the end the victim's right to support and protection. Departing from those premises, a policy analysis of documents that sets the frame for how sex trafficking is handled in Sweden today has been critically examined. Moreover, nine interviews with professionals working in the public sector and at non-governmental organisations have been conducted. The analysis departs from a constructivist perspective and Bacchi's analytical method for policy analysis. The theoretical framework is complemented with intersectional theory and concepts regarding the welfare system and global inequality. The main findings of the study are that sex trafficking mainly is represented as a criminal issue in policy documents, rather than a global, social, economic and cultural problem. As a consequence, the public support system for victims becomes clearly connected to their legal status and to the criminal law process, which results in that victims that do not "fit the frame" do not get access to the public support system. This put a lot of responsibility on non-governmental organisations, that can offer support outside the bureaucratic frames.

Keywords: sex trafficking, victims, policy analysis, public sector, non-governmental organisations, Bacchi, intersectionality

Popular Science Summary

Sex trafficking is a subject that evokes a lot of emotions. It involves elements such as global organized crime, gender inequality, cultural differences, poverty and ruthless exploitation of individuals. It is a widespread social issue with victims and perpetrators from all over the world. But what happens when you take a global organized crime and put it in a Swedish context?

In this study, I have analysed policy documents that set the frame for how sex trafficking is handled in Sweden today. How is the crime, and especially the victimhood perceived? What is the main focus in the policy documents, and are there certain areas of the crime or the victimhood that is unproblematized or left completely in silence? What becomes clear when studying the policy documents, is that sex trafficking mainly is perceived to be a criminal issue, rather than a global social problem in policy documents. This impacts what kind of help and support that is offered for victims of sex trafficking, and most importantly, who has access to the support system.

The focus on the criminal law process and the limitations in policy regulation regarding the victimhood correlated with what was stated in the interview sessions that I conducted with actors that work against sex trafficking in the public and non-profit sector. In my interview sessions, the respondents expressed frustration over the limited support the public system can offer, and which often is dependent on the victim's legal status or their status in the criminal law process. This has resulted in that a lot of responsibility has been laid on non-governmental organisations, that can offer support and help outside the bureaucratic frames. Reducing the complexity of a global, social, economic and cultural problem into a Swedish crime, impacts in other words victim's right to support and protection.

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1. Introduction

Those people [victims of sex trafficking] have been through things that are completely indescribable..., despicable, things that are completely... /the informant sighs/. But that doesn't matter, I mean, THEIR background doesn't matter. Because we got our regulations and legislation. (Public employee, operative function 2)

The statement above is expressed during an interview session with a state employee that meets victims of sex trafficking regularly and under different circumstances. During our conversation, the respondent expresses frustration and states that the authorities many times are unable to provide help and support for [potential] victims of sex trafficking, that often are caught in a complex exploitation characterized by ethnic subjugation, feminization of poverty and delusions (Vidra et al., 2018). This is also stated by other actors that I have interviewed, which is professionals that are working with issues regarding sex trafficking both within the public sector and non-governmental organisations (NGO:s¹).

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), sex trafficking is the most common form of human trafficking in Europe (2018). It is an internationally growing, multifaceted crime, that results in a great and complex exploitation of already vulnerable individuals, which is stated above. In comparison to many other forms of social problems and crimes, human trafficking, including sex trafficking, got attention from the Swedish government first in the 1990ths (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2003). In recent years, sex trafficking has raised more attention– from a public, media, and governmental perspective. The work against sex trafficking in Sweden has intensified, and public and civil organizations have joined forces in an attempt to deal with this issue, and provide a support- and protection system for victims (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2019).

However, as my interview respondent states above, the government has had a hard time dealing with this issue, despite an increased collaboration between different key actors. In the latest report from The Swedish Police Authority (2020) regarding human trafficking (where sex trafficking is included), it is stated that lack of knowledge and resources among authorities, complex legislation, and victim's inability to participate in ongoing investigations makes it hard to investigate and prosecute crimes. In 2019, there were 94 reports regarding sex trafficking in

¹ Non-governmental organisations, often referred to as “NGOs” or civil society actors, means non-state actors that are nearly or wholly independent from government control, often with the intention to affect political outcomes (Josselin & Wallace, 2001). NGOs sometimes depart from religious or ideological premises that are beyond state control, and they often extend across state boundaries (Foot, 2015).

Sweden. Four of them were prosecuted and three of them ended up in a guilty verdict (The Swedish Police Authority, 2020, p. 11). Moreover, the number of unknown and unregistered victims is presumed to be big. Further, it is also stated, that the support- and protection system for victims is deficient, especially outside the big city regions (Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö) (The Swedish Police Authority, 2020).

Accordingly, the civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also criticizing the support system for victims. The NGOs common platform and organisation concerning the issue of human trafficking, Swedish Platform Civil Society against Human Trafficking, states in their latest status report (2020) that victims in many cases could not be directed to the authorities because of specific regulations, terms, or circumstances. It is also stated that many victims of human trafficking never had been in touch or gotten any support from the Swedish authorities. Further, the platform emphasized the need for the authorities and the government to depart from a victim-right perspective when combatting and handling cases of human trafficking (Swedish Platform Civil Society against Human Trafficking, 2020).

Another report from the civil society which includes interviews with actors both within the public- and civil sector states that lack of interest from managers and politicians results in a lack of resources and time for supporting and protecting victims, which makes it a question of priority (Inte din hora et al., 2020). A majority of the support systems that were included in the study focused on victims of domestic violence, rather than sex trafficking and prostitution. Respondents often argue that cases of domestic violence are “clearer” (Inte din hora et al., 2020, p.28). The result is that victims of prostitution and sex trafficking might end up without protection.

The issue has also gotten attention in the media. Sundell et al. (2019), states in an article for Dagens Samhälle [a magazine that discusses current societal events], that “Sweden’s rhetoric about human trafficking is not matched by political action. Admittedly, nice words are written in /.../ [policy documents]. But it is no more than words. In the vacuum that arises, civil society operates”. Moreover, in an interview reportage for Radio Sweden [Sveriges Radio], a lawyer working with cases of human trafficking states that Sweden does not fulfil the international commitments that Sweden has agreed on, and that this has resulted in critic from the European Expert committee regarding human trafficking (GRETA), that monitors the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Actions against Trafficking in Human beings, that Sweden has ratified to follow (Ridderstedt, 2019). The shortcomings that exist in Swedish

policy and law, which result in an incomplete support system for victims of human trafficking, is also discussed in a debate article from Dagens Juridik [a magazine that discusses current juridical issues and events] (Njord Johansson et al., 2020). Departing from those premises, it is clear that the government have had a hard time combating and handling the issue of human trafficking, including sex trafficking, and providing support for victims. Why is that? How is society unable to fulfil the needs of the victims?

1.1 The purpose of the study and research questions

This thesis examines how sex trafficking as a social problem is constructed in policy documents, and how victims and their needs are portrayed. Moreover, I am studying how the construction of the crime and the victimhood affects the work against sex trafficking in practice and especially the support system. By bringing in voices from the public sector as well as from non-governmental organisations (both in the forms of studying policy documents and by interviewing relevant actors), I investigate how sex trafficking is being constructed, processed and in the end handled by the public as well as the civil society. The issue of sex trafficking is in the end the state's responsibility to handle, but the work of the civil society must be enlightened to be able to identify potential problems in the bureaucratic structure that authorities are departing from (Johansson et al., 2015; Erikson & Larsson, 2020).

Based on those premises, my research questions are formulated as follows:

- *How is sex trafficking as a social problem constructed and created in policy documents?*
- *How does the construction process impact the way the problem is handled (by different organisations (public/non-governmental organisations))?*
- *How is the construction of sex trafficking affecting the people in need of support?*

Firstly, a social problem can be described as shortcomings in the living conditions of numerous people, where the state has a responsibility to intervene (Meeuwisse & Swärd, 2002). Secondly, human trafficking means an exploitation and violation of vulnerable individuals and human rights. It is also a component of illegal migration and transnational organized crime which means a threat against state security. Departing from those premises, human trafficking is regarded as a *global social problem* that needs to be combatted both on an international (United Nations, 2000) as well as on a national and local level (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2018). Sex trafficking is a subcategory to human trafficking, meaning that a sex act is induced by coercion, force or fraud [or when a person under 18 is induced to perform such an act], and

involves trade measures for exploitation purposes (United Nations, 2000). Moreover, as being stated above, sex trafficking is the most common form of human trafficking in Europe (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018). In this study, I will focus exclusively on sex trafficking. Moreover, it is important to separate the concepts of sex trafficking and prostitution, even though prostitution as well might be regarded as harmful for the individual (Farley et al., 2003). Therefore, I will avoid using the word “prostitution”, when discussing victims of sex trafficking. Instead, I will use formulations such as “selling sex” or “forced to sell sex”.

This study departs from a victim-centred approach, which means that the main premise is that victims have special needs and therefore the right to support, protection and restoration. Based on those premises, my main focus is to study how the formation of policy documents and regulations affects *the victims* of sex trafficking (Heber, 2019). I am going to focus on female victims. According to international sources (International Labour Organization, 2017) and reports from the Swedish authorities (The Swedish Police Authority, 2020), the absolute major part of the victims that are exploited for sexual purposes are women and girls. Further, I will not focus on how policy documents affect the support and protection of minor victims of sex trafficking, meaning children and youth under 18. First, there are different legislations and routines for handling those issues (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2019). Second, the area of research must be delimited and issues concerning children and youth need to be studied and dealt with based on other theoretical and empirical standpoints.

1.2 Outline

The study begins with a chapter where previous literature is presented. Further, sections regarding theoretical standpoints and methodology follow. Thereafter, I present my findings and analytical standpoints, which is followed by a final discussion. The literature review focuses on the complex victimhood of victims of sex trafficking in relation to policy documents and legalisation. The theoretical chapter departs from a constructivist perspective and policy analysis, followed by intersectional theory and concepts regarding the social welfare system and global inequality. In the methodology chapter, I will argue for my choices of methods, and also share some thoughts regarding ethics. A critical discussion of my thesis is also included.

The analytical part is the most comprehensive part of the study. It is divided into two sections. In those sections, I will present and analyse my material by interweaving the findings that I have made in the policy documents and in the interview material, by departing from my chosen

theoretical standpoints and previous literature. The final results are the last part of the essay, which includes my final standpoints and conclusions.

2. Literature review

As stated in previous sections, sex trafficking is a complex issue. Narrow opportunities, poverty, the subjugation of women and the unchecked power of globalization is turning victims of sex trafficking into an exposure that includes several layers of complexity and oppression (Mörner, 2010; van der Pijl et al., 2011; Orme & Ross-Scheriff, 2015; Baarda, 2016). Departing from those premises, much can be said about sex trafficking and its victims. However, my research question is focused on the construction of sex trafficking as a social problem in relation to the formation of policy documents and legalisations, and how this affects the support that is provided for victims. Therefore, it is suitable to assign most of the part of this literature review to present research that is discussing victims of sex trafficking in relation to policy documents and legalisation. I will also assign part of the literature review to discuss the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their work against sex trafficking, since they often have specific roles and unique opportunities working with this issue (Bertone, 2008; Erikson & Larsson, 2020).

2.1 Policy documents and their (non)-focus on victims

Discussing policy documents, a recurring conclusion in previous research is that regulations and guidelines are not formed to be beneficial for victims of sex trafficking (Breuil et al., 2011; Borg Jansson, 2014). For example, Orme and Ross-Scheriff (2015), who has studied anti-sex trafficking policies in 166 countries, states that there in many cases is a strong focus on criminalization and prosecution of trafficking, rather than a victim-centred - or preventative approach. Moreover, Goodey (2005) states that victims often are “treated as tools through which criminal justice agencies might be able to secure convictions of traffickers” (p. 274).

Noyori-Corbett & Moxley (2018), who has studied sex trafficking policy in Japan, further states that policies regarding sex trafficking, in similarity with other national policies regarding social problems, are failing to address human trafficking from a legal, social and cultural perspective. Another problem, departing from a Swedish context, is presented by Åström (2014). In comparison with other legal systems, Åström (2014) states that Sweden generally is considered to give victims a strong position in procedural law and legal protection. However, Åström

(2014) claims that it is extremely difficult for victims of sex trafficking to get access to the support system. One reason for this is that measures against sex trafficking often are associated with measures against prostitution. Even though prostitution in many cases means great suffering for the individual, a separation of the concepts is needed. In cases of prostitution, victims are not getting the status of a plaintiff, instead, they are only getting the legal role as witnesses. This means that potential victims of trafficking that do not get identified as trafficking victims, do not get access to the legal rights of support that they have the right to.

Further, Åström (2014) claims that the lack of support for victims is a lack of the implementation of human rights in Swedish legalisation, which is regulated in international agreements. The violation of human rights regarding help and support of victims are also stated by Vidra et al. (2018) who argues that victims in the Netherlands are not identified and provided the right support because of the lack of protocols, routines and knowledge about the victim's complex exploitation. Further, Vidra et al. (2018) state that "it takes much more than signing and ratifying international conventions and protocols [in order to fulfil victim's humanitarian rights]". Departing from those premises, it is clear that there is a need to study the problem of sex trafficking and victimhood beyond the legal regulations and policy documents. From my cultural criminological and sociological perspective, the juridical aspects are not in focus, rather, it is the social problem itself and the consequences of the strong focus on criminal law and the juridical process that I am interested in.

2.2 Knowledge about the complex victimhood is necessary

Åström (2014) claims that the small amount of victims that are getting identified depends on how sex trafficking and its victims are perceived in society and the law. Knowledge about the victims' situations, their own biases and how the crime of sex trafficking is committed is of great importance for identifying victims and providing support. The narrow view of victimhood in policy documents and law regulation is argued for by other researchers (Breuil et al., 2011; Judge & Boursaw, 2018). Heber (2018) argues that policy documents often departs from discursive complex arguments about the victimhood as well as sex trafficking as a crime. Andrijasevic (2010) means that this marginalising understanding of the victim is a result of the current discourses in our society, which according to Hallner (2009) and Heber (2018) is presented in political text and media, which reproduces the victim of sex trafficking as weak and passive. A more complex view of victimhood and its characteristics and premises is presented in research (Mörner 2010; Hoyle et al., 2011). Further, Breuil et al. (2011) and Judge

and Boursaw (2018) claim that the empirical narrative should have a greater influence when constructing political guidelines and policy documents. Moreover, Aronowitz (2003) discusses the complexity of the victimhood in terms of “global business” when stating that “In the receiving countries there is, and always will be a demand for cheap labour and sex. In countries of origin there is and always will be a dream of a better life and the ability to support oneself and family members at home” (p.89).

The need for knowledge and an understanding of the complexity of victimhood and crime is also discussed by Vidra et al. (2018). Vidra et al. argues that the identification of victims of sex trafficking is dependent on institutional actors, and that the right tools as well as knowledge about the cultural perspective and identities of victims, are of great importance. Further, Orme and Ross-Scheriff (2015) argue for the need to depart from a victim-centred approach, and that policies and protocols must be culturally sensitive and trauma-informed, in order to be efficient and provide actual help for victims. A multidisciplinary approach with collaboration between different actors and services and over a longer period (Brennan, 2015), served by one case manager, is also desirable. Accordingly, previous research stresses the need for knowledge about the complexity of the victimhood. In my study, I hope to investigate this further. By combining policy analysis and interviews, I will not only be able to investigate how the perception of sex trafficking and its victims is presented in the policy documents, I will also be able to investigate how this perception reflects and impacts the work of the organisations and the professionals involved.

2.3 A parallel to migration policy

Plambech (2014) criticizes other types of shortcomings in policy work when describing how European countries invest large resources in identifying victims, in order to eventually deport them, regardless of whether they are formally classified as victims of sex trafficking or not (Plambech, 2014). In relation to this, women are often transported home safely through governmental support and return programs but once there, the same vulnerability awaits them that caused them to end up in exploitation. If criminal gangs control the trafficking, the women often live under threat and there is a great risk that the woman or some of her relatives end up in exploitation again or getting hurt if they leave (Hoyle et al., 2011). Moreover, Plambech (2014) describes how the exposure is great even for victims who have returned through IOM, (the UN's voluntary global return program, which is also applied in Sweden) (Plambech, 2014). In other cases, the woman is branded a prostitute and risks being stigmatized and frozen out.

Moreover, if the woman does not come home with money for the family, poverty and disappointment await (Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018).

Departing from those premises, it is clear that despite a political will and the good intentions of countries, interventions will fail if the complex and structural conditions that enable the exploitation is ignored (Mörner, 2010). Women live in a class society where they are exposed to racism, sexism (Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018) and sometimes cultural aspects and rites including voodoo (Baarda, 2016). Seeing only vulnerability as something one-dimensional affects the structure of the system and the design of the help offered (Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018). Aas (2007) further states that “refugees and asylum seekers have become a security rather than a humanitarian issue” (p.99). In relation to this, Plambech (2014) points out that the need and requirement to identify and differentiate between different groups are due to Europe's increasingly stringent immigration policy, which has developed in parallel with the growth of migration flows globally.

The connection between migration policy and trafficking policies are also discussed in other research, where it is described how the tough position against migrants influences the work against sex trafficking (Noyori-Corbett & Moxley; 2018). Further, Åström (2014) argues that Sweden has prioritized measures against criminal policy (for example combatting prostitution) or migration law purposes, instead of putting the protection of victims of trafficking first. Moreover, an American study by Wilson & O`Brian (2016) has analysed the annual state report US TIP (trafficking in persons) on human trafficking between the years 2001-2012. The results show that the report has reproduced the idea of "the ideal victim" (Christie, 2001) as weak and passive. This image of victims is used to justify a stricter migration policy, such as stricter border controls. Wilson & O`Brian (2016) therefore believe that the political understanding and knowledge of human trafficking and its victims must be reviewed.

Another American study (Hall, 2014) stresses the need that victims of trafficking should be eligible for services independent of their immigration status, which is possible, but that this is, as Hall (2014) states “significantly underutilized, to put it mildly” (p. 887), because of either unwillingness to help undocumented migrants or lack of knowledge among law enforcement officers. Moreover, Hall (2014) states that the state policy in the United States is lacking behind in terms of patchwork problems and backward policing policies, which results in that victims are not identified (or incorrectly defined as illegal immigrants (Judge & Boursaw, 2018), and

not provided with the right support and tools for rebuilding their lives. Departing from those premises, it is clear that migration policy in correlation to sex trafficking policy is a complex matter. In my study, I want to go beyond policy documents and legal regulations and investigate this matter from a cultural criminological and sociological perspective, where the connection to migration policy stands in contrast to the premises of a global social problem, and what this results in for victims of sex trafficking.

2.4 NGOs and their work against sex trafficking

In many countries, including Sweden, the government first started taking action against sex trafficking at the end of the 1990ths. However, the issue was raised by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) already in the middle of the 1990ths in Sweden, and even earlier in other countries, such as the United States. This means that NGOs have had a great role of framing sex trafficking as a social problem but also to keep the issue on the political agenda and bring changes in policy (Bertone, 2008; Westerstrand 2008). Civil society organisations might also be aware of local issues of sex trafficking and vulnerability which means that they can stress the (negative) effects of weak policies (Bertone, 2008). Since victims of trafficking often lack trust in authorities, the NGOs have a unique opportunity to identify and support victims. Moreover, NGOs have the possibility to ascribe agency to victims and give them the opportunity to choose if they want to make contact with authorities (Erikson & Larsson, 2019)

Further, a common standpoint made by scholars, is that NGOs traditionally provide support and activities for victims that are undertaken by the government (Tzvetkova 2002; Aronowitz 2009; Clear et al. 2018; Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2018). For example, Smith (2017) states that victims often have a hard time accessing state benefits if they are “not part of the legal framework” (p. 84). Similar arguments are made by Erikson and Larsson (2020) when arguing that “the state seems incapable of extending welfare assistance to undocumented migrants, even when they are victims of serious crimes” (p. 2).

The NGOs are important actors both in the country of origin and destination of sex trafficking (Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2018). This is beneficial because sex trafficking is a complex crime that often requires international coordination, cross-border and cross-jurisdictional activities (Erikson & Larsson, 2020). However, civil society organisations often have different roles depending on which country they operate in. For example, NGOs many times have a complementing role in supporting and protecting victims in states and governments that are

unable to address the problem of sex trafficking efficiently on their own because of underdeveloped governance and legalisation, for example in developing countries (Bertone, 2008; Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2018). However, as both Smith (2017) and Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, (2018) states, NGOs needs financial support from public or private actors for being able to proceed with their organisation.

In Sweden, there is a long tradition of civil society organisations, and in later years, the collaboration between public and private actors has strengthened and formalised (Johansson et al., 2015). The collaboration has stressed the importance of assistance beyond legalisation, and how policies can be formed and implemented beyond formal decision making (Erikson & Larsson, 2019). Other scholars as well have agreed that partnerships through different sectors and collaborative governance have been regarded as efficient in the work against sex trafficking, and valuable when identifying and supporting victims (Hall, 2014; Lagon, 2015; Jones & Lutze, 2016). Accordingly, previous research stresses the importance of the NGOs regarding those matters. In my study, I will analyse policy documents and interview professionals working both within the public and civil sector. This adds an additional layer to my thesis since it not exclusively focuses on the public or civil sector and their opportunities. Instead, I focus on both of those types of organisations, and how their work is influenced by the premises made in the policy documents regarding victims right to protection and support.

2.5 Previous research and beyond

Departing from previous literature, one can state that there is of great importance to study the policies that guide the work against sex trafficking and the support system. Previous research has mainly focused on the importance of legal frameworks and national policy, rather than empirically studied implementation and evaluated different policy efforts (Wagenaar et al. 2017; Jahnsen & Wagenaar 2018). Therefore, there is a need for this study. When conducting the policy analysis, I will depart from Bacchi's (2012) policy analysis approach, which has a clear focus on the perceived *effects* of specific social constructional processes. Moreover, by combining document analysis and interviewing professionals, I will get a unique insight into how policy production is reflected in practical work.

Furthermore, previous research stresses the importance of civil society when handling social problems such as sex trafficking. Further, Erikson & Larsson (2019) states that "gaining an understanding of a given policy field demands that researchers do more than merely examine

legislation and formal organizational models, which often misrepresent how governance, regulation, and practices are implemented” (p. 4). This means that there is a need to include not only *public* actors, but also to understand the role of civil society and their work against sex trafficking. In my study, I will interview actors both within the civil and public sector, to get insight into how they perceive their work against sex trafficking and the support of victims.

3. Theoretical standpoints and concepts

In previous sections, I have presented literature regarding sex trafficking in relation to policy material and regulations. Moreover, I have connected my study to the previous literature, to get an insight into the field and to know what needs to be accounted for in the analysis, but also to state how my study complement previous research. The overall purpose of this study is to analyse the construction of sex trafficking as a social problem, and how this affects the way the “problem” is being handled and victims are supported. For succeeding with this, there is a need for understanding some central theoretical concepts and methodological analytical tools that this study is departing from. Initially, it is important to account for what the terms *construction* and *social problem* refer to in this context. Moreover, an analytical tool for analysing and understanding how social problems are constructed in policy documents is necessary for going through with this study. Further, theories regarding intersectionality and concepts regarding globalisation and the social welfare system is needed for understanding the complexity of the victimhood and how this impacts the victim’s opportunities and right to protection and support by the public support system.

3.1 The constructivist perspective

As stated above, there is a need to clarify some central concepts that this study departs from. To understand what is meant by “the construction of a social problem”, one first needs to understand both the meaning of *construction* and how this refers to *social problems* in this context. In this case, *construction* can be further referred to the meaning of *social construction/constructivism*, which is a theoretical standpoint that argues that the reality, or specific parts of the reality is socially constructed, and a product of collective action and communication between human beings (Pernecky, 2016). For providing an example and hopefully make this clearer: Hacking (1999) is departing from a *social constructivist perspective* when he discusses the essence of the “refugee woman” (p. 24). From Hacking’s point of view, “the refugee woman” is not a constant concept, rather, it is a result of a social

construction built on events that happen in society, what is being stated by law regulation, immigrant groups, activists, lawyers, social workers and by the activities done of the women that it all concerns. Further, Hacking (2006) states the importance of understanding that classifications are not only empty words, rather, Hacking states, when discussing “kinds of people”, “names are only one part of the dynamics. /.../ there are not only the name of the classifications, but also the *people* classified, the *experts* who classify, study and help them, the *institution* within which the experts and their subjects interact, and through which authorities control” (2006, p.3). This relates to my study, and how categorisations, classifications and the construction of a certain problem representation affect the actual support that is provided for victims of sex trafficking.

Departing from the constructivist perspective, it is therefore clear that the so-called “reality”, is a product of the time, society and culture that we are living in. Based on those premises, one can also discuss the upcoming and handling of *social problems* from a social constructivist perspective. For example, Breines and Gordon (1983) argue that a “social problem” does not exist by itself, rather, it is defined and treated as a social problem first when it has been acknowledged as a threat to the social order of the society. Gusfield (1989) further states that the idea of social problems is unique to the modern world, and labelling something as “social”, also means that it is the society’s, and therefore the government’s, responsibility to handle. This, however, also means that the portraying of defining a problem and how the society is dealing with it, also is a way of controlling the boundaries of the social problem (Stone, 1988).

3.2 Bacchi and the construction of a social problem

Social problems as a social construction are also discussed by Bacchi (2008). Bacchi argues that no one stands outside those constructions, whether you are a politician, analyst or researcher, and that our era, cultural background and history impact our way of understanding and creating a certain social problem. Further, Bacchi (2008) discusses how social problems are being constructed by particular discursive constructions in policy documents, and that this affects how the issue in the end is perceived and handled. When studying policy documents, Bacchi (2008) emphasizes the need for directing attention to the limitations of legislative innovations, and to ask the material what is being problematized and what is not, in political initiatives. Moreover, Bacchi argues for the need to study which implications (effects) that follow from a particular representation.

Bacchi's main point is that the construction of a policy document is a construction of the social problem itself. In specific, Bacchi (2008) means that the way a specific problem is formulated (what is included in the problem representation and what is not included), impacts the way the social problem itself is perceived and how the problem is constituted in the living world. For example, Bacchi (2008) argues, that what is left unproblematized in policy documents regarding women's inequality (for example policies regarding domestic violence), is the meaning of power structures and gender relations. When discussing policies regarding domestic violence, Bacchi (2008) emphasises the need to discuss gendered power relations and how society maintains and reproduces them, rather than individualize both the victim and perpetrator.

Bacchi's approach has, in combination with the intersectional perspective, also been examined by Ekström (2012) when analysing proposals regarding the work against domestic violence in Sweden. Ekström found out that the construction of "the victim of domestic violence", was way too narrow in the proposals, and that a deeper consciousness of factors such as gender, class and ethnicity was needed for improving the work against domestic violence and for identifying and supporting victims. Bacchi (2008) states that silences and a lack of important factors will affect the way the social problem of women's inequality is handled and how it is perceived. Bacchi (2009) further emphasises the need to address the interconnections between different policy areas. Departing from those premises, Bacchi (2009) argues for a critical standpoint when analysing policy material. This analytical perspective that departs from a problematizing and critical perspective fits well with the purpose of my study, since I am interested in how sex trafficking is represented as a social problem in policy documents, but also which effects that follows based on a certain representation.

3.3 To create a client – Beyond policy construction

Bacchi's framework about how policy documents construct the social problem itself and the perceptions regarding it, can be further connected to Järvinen & Mik-Meyer's concept "To create a client" (2003). In their work, they are describing how a person becomes de-complexified into a client in the social welfare system, to be able to fit into the system. Järvinen & Mik-Meyer (2003) has described the process as: "The first step in most forms of social work is to diagnose a client's problem so that the right measures can be adopted... the client is adapted to the institution. If this project succeeds. The individual gets a (problem) identity in which they can collaborate with" (p. 15-16). In clearer words, clients are customised into

categories that correspond with the pre-understandings and models to action that the welfare institutions deciding over. A certain type of categorisation might be needed to structure the work inside the welfare institutions, but, as Järvinen & Mik-Meyer (2003) further argues, a person's identity consists of several dimensions and layers, which makes it hard to fit clients into already set frames, especially if their "problem-identity" (p.18) is placed far away from the welfare-systems already fitted frames. Since the victimhood of sex trafficking victims often is described as complex in previous research (Mörner, 2010; Vidra et al., 2018), it will be interesting to see how the construction process affects victims right to support and protection by the welfare system. Departing from this perspective, I believe that this theory will be suitable when analysing how victims of sex trafficking are being handled by the welfare system.

3.4 The need for intersectionality and a global outlook

However, Järvinen & Mik-Meyer (2003) and Bacchi's (2008) theoretical approach needs to be complemented with a theoretical perspective that brings in the aspect of power and gender structures. Also, Bacchi (2008) emphasizes the need for bringing in material from other feminists as a part of the analytical process. For satisfyingly answering my research questions, I need to broaden my theoretical perspective to understand the victimhood of people that are being exploited in sex trafficking, why those tendencies need to be integrated in the policy constructions, and in the end how this affects the people working against sex trafficking and the support of the victims.

Based on the premises mentioned above, I will therefore bring in the intersectional perspective, critical feminist research and research regarding globalization and gender. The intersectional perspective, first founded by Crenshaw (1989) is based on the idea that power and subordination cannot be explained based on a one-dimensional explanatory model. Rather, different power systems (such as ethnicity, socio-economic status and cultural background) co-vary and together create different types of victimhood and vulnerability (Crenshaw, 1989). The theoretical concept is departing from feminist theory and Critical Race theory (Banakar & Travers, 2013). Many times, the intersectional perspective and its precursors are criticizing western feminist theory, meaning that western feminism often departs from a narrow view of oppression and injustice (De los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005). For example, Fraser (1998) discusses the importance of separating socio-economic injustices from cultural/symbolic injustices.

Moreover, Mohanty (1984) argues that western feminists often are discussing the oppression of women from undeveloped countries as a homogenous entity, when the oppression rather is formed by different historical, geographical and cultural aspects. Those issues are also discussed and problematized by Razack (1995). In similar ways as Mohanty (1984), Razack (1995), discovered, when studying policies regarding gender persecution, that the policies might have good intentions, but was profoundly racialized and ethnized, where victims were described as the “imagined Exotic other Females in need of their [Western Feminist] benevolent protection” (p. 56). Razack (1995) continues to problematize the power relationship and the contradictory suggestion of the First World, saving the Third World, meaning that the whole pattern and the globalized system is dependent on the global economic exploitation of the poor, and by colonialism and neo-colonialism tendencies. Razack (1995) emphasises the need for bringing in those reflections when she further states that “ /.../ if feminist political practices do not acknowledge transnational cultural flows, feminist’s movements will fail to understand the material conditions that structure women’s lives in diverse conditions” (1995, p.71).

The deeply divided and stratified global order is also discussed by Aas (2007). Aas argues that the assumptions about [the cultural] otherness, and the discursive division between “the West and the rest” (p.8), has resulted in a “smaller” and more reachable world for people living in developed countries. However, people from the Third world are experiencing closed borders, as a result of increased politicization and securitization of migration (Aas, 2007). At the same time, Europe is many times perceived to be the dream (Bessa Vilela & Brezovnik, 2018). Moreover, Aas (2007) are discussing globalization as a “deeply gendered phenomenon, structuring and being structured by the unequal power relations between men and women, and between poor and affluent women” (p.42). For example, migration and sexual labour have in a number of developing countries became an elemental strategy for survival, which has resulted in a “feminization of survival” (Sassen, 2003, p. 265).

Aas (2007), as well as Chow (2003) claims that there has been a failure to incorporate gender in globalization studies and theories in a meaningful way, which undermines policy development and practice. Based on those premises, Chow (2003) argues that it is important to understand the influence of gendered hierarchies and ideologies in globalization and how it shapes institutions, experiences, relationships and identities of both women and men. Since sex trafficking is an international crime that in most cases affects the poorest and most vulnerable that are coming from different societal and cultural settings, I believe that it is necessary to

bring in the terms of gender and globalisation, and the intersectional perspective, when studying sex trafficking as a crime, the victimhood and the society's way of handling those issues. Departing from this chapter, it is clear that theoretical frameworks and concepts regarding policy analysis, intersectionality, the welfare system and globalisation will set the path for the analysis that follows, which brings us to the question of "how".

4. Methods - A combination of document analysis and interviews

As stated above, I want to study how sex trafficking is constructed in policy processes, and how this affects the support- and protection system for victims. I have some pre-understanding for the issue of sex trafficking and its victims since I have interned at both government- and civil organisations that are working with this issue. Moreover, my bachelor's thesis (Münger, 2019) also concerned the complexity of victims of sex trafficking in combination with public records, and can therefore be seen as a pre-study to this thesis. Based on those premises, this thesis is departing from a hermeneutic approach, where pre-understanding meets new insights (Thurén, 2007). Furthermore, based on my research questions and aim, this study will depart from a qualitative approach, and it will include both policy documents as well as interview material.

As I have shown above, previous research stresses the importance of empirically studying the effects of different policy efforts, rather than just state the importance of legal frameworks and policies (Jahnsen & Wagenaar 2018). In this study, I want to go beyond the policy documents, in order to understand what premises the victimhood is built upon (cf. Crenshaw, 1989; cf. Razack, 1995), and how the policy production affects the support and protection of victims (cf. Bacchi, 2009). To succeed with this, and answer my research questions, I need to conduct a document analysis, analysing relevant policy material regarding sex trafficking and the support and protection of victims. Moreover, I need to talk to professionals that work against sex trafficking and meets victims in their daily work, and whose work in different ways are affected by the policy documents. Departing from those premises, the chosen material will complement each other, and provide a more complete understanding of my research problem, than either methodological approach alone. In the end, the document- and interview material will be linked, combined and mixed (Creswell, 2008). All empirical material is originally in Swedish but has been translated into English when quoted in the analysis. Moreover, I have departed from the Swedish/English Glossary from Swedish National Courts Administration (2019), when translating specific words regarding the Swedish legislative and bureaucratic system. I use

purposeful sampling when collecting my document material and when reaching out to interview respondents. Purposeful sampling is crucial because as Patton (1990) states, being able to “select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 169).

4.1 Document analysis

When selecting policy documents, I have chosen two formal documents that deeply set the frame for how the work against sex trafficking and the support system for victims is formed in Sweden today (O’Leary, 2014). The first document is the latest published Swedish Government Official Report regarding human trafficking (SOU 2016:70). The inquiry (SOU 2016:70) was initiated in dir (2014:128), and later developed over time (dir. 2015:6, dir. 2015:64, dir. 2015:131, 2016:35). In the extensive document, one gets a clear image of how human trafficking, including sex trafficking, is perceived and understood, and therefore what forms the premises of the work against the issue and the support of victims in Sweden. The inquiry had two major themes: (1) to ensure strong criminal law protection against human trafficking and (2) to investigate the need to broaden or clarify the criminal law protection against forced labour exploitation, exploitation for other purposes or financial exploitation. My focus lies on sex trafficking, which is included in the first theme therefore, this part of the inquiry is the focus of my study. This also concerns the Proposal (2017/18:123), which is the second document that is included in the document analysis, and that I will present below.

The second document that I will include is the final Government Bill (the proposal) that inherits from the SOU-report (Proposal 2017/18:123). The proposal presents the summative and final result that lies ground for the current legislation and policy regulations regarding human trafficking in Sweden. Since the Government Bill is the Government’s final conclusions, it clearly reflects the standpoints taken by the government and therefore reflects what other policy documents and decisions are built upon, which affects the actual work against sex trafficking (cf. Bacchi, 2012). Departing from those premises, I would like to find out how sex trafficking is being perceived in different policy documents. Previous research stresses the importance of departing from a victim-perspective when forming policies, and that human trafficking must be regarded from both a social and legal perspective (Åström 2014; Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2018). Moreover, Orme and Ross-Scheriff (2015) argue that policy documents must be culturally sensitive. Departing from those premises, I would like to find out what the “problem” is represented to be in policy documents.

Table 1: List of documents included in the document analysis.

Short name (reference)	Description	Pages
SOU 2016:70	The latest published Swedish Government Official Report (SOU) regarding human trafficking.	516
Prop 2017/18:123	The proposal that inherits from the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) where the final results and measures are being presented.	90
Total number of pages:		606

4.2 Interviews

In addition to the document analysis, I have also conducted interviews with nine people working against sex trafficking and that have great insight into the support system for victims. The documents that I have included in my document study are public records and therefore have a formal character (O’Leary, 2014). I want to make the documents “talk”, by bringing in the voices of the people that in one way or another are affected by the policy documents in their daily work against sex trafficking. Below, you can see the list of my interview respondents, and how they will be referred to through the analysis.

Table 2: List of interview respondents included in the study. See chapter 7.3 *Interviews* for complete references.

Interview respondents:
Public employee, strategic function
Public employee, operative function 1
Public employee, operative function 2
Public employee, operative function 3
Public employee, operative function, 4
Police officer
NGO employee, 1
NGO employee, 2
NGO employee, 3

There are several reasons why I have chosen not to interview victims of sex trafficking, even though they are the ones that in the end are affected by the policy documents. Firstly, because of accessibility. It is, for natural reasons, hard to reach victims which are in a current exploited situation. Additional challenges are the sensitivity of the area, and that one must go through gatekeepers (for example social workers of employees at NGOs) to get in touch with the target group (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010). However, the biggest reason why I am not interviewing victims of sex trafficking, is because the victims that I (perhaps) would be able to access, would not in a clear way reflect the target group. Victims that have not been classified by the system, or that for multiple reasons have denied support, have in many cases been deported and sent back to their home countries or left voluntarily. Those people are impossible for me to reach. If I was going to interview victims of sex trafficking, I would only reach the victims that in one way or the other has gotten help from the support system, which would be problematic from a sampling perspective (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010).

Departing from those premises, I have, as mentioned above, chosen to interview professionals that in different ways are working against sex trafficking. I want to get an insight into the practical work against sex trafficking and support of victims, outside the formal frames of the policy documents. How is the victimhood perceived? What is working efficiently and are there any potential boundaries (for example connected to policy material)? I also want to get an insight into the relationship between the public and the civil sector. Are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) perceived to be a necessary part of the system, or are they seen as a complement?

I adapted a mixture of theoretical- and snowball sampling methods (van den Hoonaard, 2008; Mason, 2018) when choosing my respondents. Using theoretical sampling means that “the researcher is being responsive to the data and is, therefore, flexible to explore the depth of the concepts derived from the data and then decide what concepts will be sought next” (Ligita et al., 2019, p 117). This means, finding new concepts and themes in interview sessions and in the policy documents, inspired me to get in touch with other respondents and ask questions connected to the emerging themes. The constant search for new insights and themes resulted in a richer and deeper understanding for the work against sex trafficking and the support system (Birks & Mills, 2015). With this as my premise, I did not have any specific criteria’s for exactly which respondents or public/civil organisations that I wanted to interview for the study. However, departing from the aim of the study, I wanted to interview people working both within public- and civil organisations, as well as on a strategic and operational level. This is because I

wanted to get a broad understanding of how actors perceived the support system, and not just focus on one specific authority or NGO. This also corresponds with Patton's (2002) description of information-rich cases, which strives for getting an in-depth understanding of the purpose of the inquiry, rather than empirical generalizations regarding the issue that one is studying. The strive for collecting a "variety of experiences", is also significant for theoretical sampling (van den Hoonaard, 2008, p. 876).

Two of the interviews were conducted in spring 2019 when I wrote my bachelor thesis (Münger, 2019). During the bachelor thesis, I established some connections which resulted in connections with the two interview respondents. The remaining seven interviews were conducted during the spring of 2021. One informant was recruited with help from a gatekeeper that I knew on a personal level, which resulted in a snowball sampling process and new respondents. Moreover, I got in touch with some of my respondents by sending an email to them directly, or after being referred to them by emailing someone else. Those initial connections were taken after I had identified them as relevant actors in some way, either on an organizational level or a national level. At the end of each interview, I asked the respondent if he/she knew any other organisation or specific contact that they thought I should talk to, which resulted in further interview connections. As a consequence of the snowball sampling process, the respondents were centred to a number of regions in Sweden, even though some of my respondents had national coordination- and strategic responsibility. To keep the anonymity of my respondents, I will not specify the specific regions. However, they are geographically close to each other. This might impact the results which departs from local premises and conditions. At the same time, the work against sex trafficking is nationally governed, departs from national guidelines and a close regional and national collaboration (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2018).

I have conducted semi-structured interviews, which means that I had some specific themes and questions decided beforehand, but was able to adapt the questions during the interview (Fejes, 2019). Since I interviewed actors from different organisations and with different roles, I had some initial recurrent questions but the majority of the questions were unique and formed for the specific interview session. When interviewing strategic actors, I focused a lot on collaboration and national strategic policies, while interviewing people working operatively, I asked questions about how they perceived the victimhood of the women exploited in sex trafficking, or how they experienced the political interest in sex trafficking, and if/how this was noticeable in their daily work. Moreover, as mentioned above, themes and interview questions were constantly developed throughout the whole data collection process (Birks & Mill, 2015).

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, the six interviews that I conducted this spring, were conducted over Zoom. According to studies such as (Archibald et al., 2019), Zoom is a great option that is generally higher rated than other digital interview mediums such as telephone interviews or other videoconferencing services. Since my questions were not sensitive, I believe that it worked out great. You are still able to see people's reactions and facial expressions, and at the same time, it is time-effective for both me and my interview respondents. However, one interview was conducted over the telephone after a request from the interview participant. The interviews I conducted in 2019 were face-to-face interviews. The interviews lasted from around 40 minutes to an hour, which I transcribed as soon as possible after the interview session for having everything clear in my head. I departed from the orthographic transcription method when transcribing the interviews. This means that I wrote down the exact words that my respondents used, but excluded the phonetic aspects (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, when quoting the interview respondents, repeated words and other linguistic uncleaness's have been excluded for making the quotes easier to read. However, I have tried to keep the quotes as authentic as possible. Moreover, and as mentioned above, the analytical process and the thematization started already in the initial transcription phase (Klein, 1990).

4.3 Analytical method

When analysing my chosen documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123) as well as my interview material with professionals that works against sex trafficking, I have departed from my theoretical framework which includes theoretical concepts regarding intersectionality, globalisation and the welfare system. Moreover, for being able to critically examine the policy material, I needed to adapt some kind of methodological analytical tool regarding policy analysis. Therefore, I have departed from Bacchi's "What's the problem represented to be?" approach. The approach is originally developed for policy analysis (Bacchi, 2009), but in my case, the policy material needed to be reflected on the material from my interview sessions. The respondents were in one way or another affected by the policy documents, and I wanted to find out if they (in)directly asked the same critical questions to the policy documents as I did. This fits well with Bacchi's (2008) statement that "we are vitally interested in the effects of policy proposals and the problem representations they necessarily contain" (p. 13), rather than focusing on the discourses themselves and why some discourses might be dominant over others. The focus lies hereby on the *lived effects* of a certain construction of a social problem. In later work, Bacchi, are referring to the approach as "The WPR approach", which stands for the fundamental question "What's the problem represented to be?" (Bacchi, 2009). Bacchi (2012,

p. 21), has formulated six questions to depart from when critically examine the material one is analysing:

1. What's the 'problem' /.../ represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
 2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
 3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
 4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?
Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
 5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
 6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?
- (Bacchi, 2012, p.21).

What is important to state is that my analysis will not depart strictly from Bacchi's six questions and the WPR-approach, rather, the analysis will have a thematic character formed by my findings in the empirical material (Nowell et al., 2017). Moreover, previous literature and themes regarding for example strict migration policies (Plambech 2014, Åström, 2014), complex victimhood (Mörner, 2010; Aronowitz (2003) and the role of the NGOs (Erikson & Larsson, 2019) has influenced the thematization of the analysis. Based on those premises, this thesis is departing from an abductive approach, where previous research, theory and empirical material interacts and form the construction and outcome of the analysis (Mason, 2018). By conducting the analysis in this way, and by not strictly follow and "push" the material into Bacchi's (2012) six questions that have been presented above, the material can come alive. This fits well with Bacchi's statement that "the WPR approach ought to be conceived as an open mode of critical engagement, rather than as a formula" (Bacchi, 2012, p. 23).

The final discussion however, will be built around the three questions that I found was most relevant for my material and my research questions, which is question number one, four and five. How sex trafficking is represented in policy documents (1), what is left unproblematic (silences) in the problem representation regarding sex trafficking (4) and finally, which effects that are produced by the given representation of sex trafficking in the policy documents (5). I believe that by departing from those three questions, combined with my theoretical framework regarding the complexity of the victimhood (cf. Crenshaw, 1989) in the Swedish public system (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003), and the complexity of globalisation and inequality (cf. Razack,

1995; Aas, 2007) I will be able to answer my research questions pleasantly and get an understanding for how the issue of sex trafficking is constructed, processed and in the end handled (cf. Bacchi, 2012; p. 21).

4.4 Ethical considerations

In every research project, it is important to take ethical considerations into account when collecting and analysing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, when conducting a project such as mine, which not only discusses a sensitive and delicate subject like sex trafficking, but also from a critical perspective, there is a reason to think twice concerning certain decisions. Since I have chosen two public documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop. 2017/18:123) that are easy to access for everyone who wants to read them, there has been no ethical concerns concerning the documents that I have analysed, other than the importance of me quoting and referencing to the material correctly (O’Leary, 2014).

However, dealing with interview respondents requires ethical considerations. As always when conducting interviews, it is important to ask the respondents for their consent for participating in the study and their right to withdraw. Moreover, I asked for the respondent’s consent to record the interviews, which was accepted by all my participants (Creswell, 2008). However, other ethical considerations and decisions were not that obvious. One thing that I noticed quite early when starting interviewing people, was that the number of people that works almost exclusively with issues concerning human trafficking or/and sex trafficking, was quite limited, especially since I focused on a limited number of regions in Sweden. In the interview sessions, respondents often referred directly to another person that I was going to interview or that I had already interviewed, or to a certain professional role or organisation, both within the public and civil sector. This made me realise that if someone read my report, that just had the slightest of interest or knowledge regarding society’s work against sex trafficking, it would be easy to figure out which persons had participated in my study. Moreover, even though the topic and my research questions are related to the informants’ work tasks and experiences, which is not sensitive in nature, many of my respondents still expressed their personal experiences and frustration regarding their work, and sometimes concerning the work of other organisations/authorities, or regarding legalisations and policy documents that their work was obliged to follow, or that in other ways affected them.

This perception put me in a difficult position. I believed that it was going to provide a certain value in keeping the name of the roles and organisations that my interview respondent's worked on, but at the same time, I wanted to care for their integrity. However, when reading the report from The Swedish research council regarding ethical considerations (The Swedish Research Council, 2017), the word "ethical codex" was frequently recurring, which refers to the researcher's responsibility to take subjective ethical considerations into account when conducting research (p. 13). Moreover, Ngozwana (2018), discusses how confidentiality and anonymity is important when conducting "small scale studies" (p. 25). Departing from those premises, and since the material might be regarded as sensitive, I have chosen to anonymize my interview respondents, to maintain confidentiality, not only by name and title but also by organisation and gender. Therefore, I gave my interview respondents codes when transcribing and analysing the data [see table 2, p.18].

However, since I wanted to keep my respondent's voices somehow "alive", and since I wanted the reader to be able to follow their individual voices through the entire study, I have chosen to code them individually but by only referring to their function (strategic/operative) and sector (public/NGO). I have chosen not to anonymize the organisation of the police officer I interviewed. This is because the respondents that I have interviewed within the public sector and that had operative functions had roles that focused a lot on the victim, while the police officer works from another, crime-combatting perspective. Therefore, I believed that it was important to separate this respondent from the others. Moreover, the number of police officers that work against human trafficking in Sweden are so many that it is impossible to identify my interview respondent by the information that I will share in my study.

4.5 Discussion about methods

Departing from the premises that have been stated above in this methodology section, I believe that it is important to strengthen the fact that I am departing from an explorative approach when conducting this study. This means that I have investigated society's work against sex trafficking and come up with new insights and a better understanding of how sex trafficking is constructed as a social problem, and how professionals believe that this affects the work against sex trafficking and especially the support system. However, this study has not provided conclusive results concerning how cases of sex trafficking are being handled or should be handled in practice (Stebbins, 2001). Rather, it is, as Bacchi (2012) argues, not about problem-solving, but about "problem-questioning, as a form of critical practice" (p. 23).

In terms of ontology and as being discussed above, my perspectives are constructivist, both when discussing policy- as well as interview material analysis (Pernecky, 2016). For example, my analysis of the policy material and how this constructs sex trafficking as a social problem, is an interpretation that is based on my pre-knowledge and presumptions as a researcher. Other people or even researchers that are departing from another scholar might perceive the policy material differently. By departing from the six questions that Bacchi (2012) presents, one is also letting one's thinking becomes a part of the material that is being analysed. Hence, self-problematization and reflexivity are important throughout the whole analytical process. For example, as being stated above, I am departing from a victim-focused perspective when conducting this study (Heber, 2019). This will impact the way that I am analysing the policy material (Bacchi, 2012, p.22). This is naturally also the case when analysing my interview material. The interviews are conducted and analysed through my theoretical glasses, which means that the relationship between my informant and me as a researcher is interdependent (Patton, 2002). Moreover, my respondents, which are a result of my sampling process, are also actors with their own unique experiences that influence how they perceive "the reality". However, I agree with Noyori-Corbett & Moxley (2018) when they state that "We embrace the importance of informants' perspectives in defining what they see as real circumstances driving their work as advocates on behalf of women victimized by human trafficking" (p. 956).

Departing from those premises, it is clear that the analysis that follows does not intend to present a complete perception regarding the policy production and how the representation of sex trafficking in the policy documents affects the work against sex trafficking in Sweden. Rather, my study, which departs from a victim-focused perspective, is a critical examination of policy documents, and a reflection of how a number of different actors involved perceive the work against sex trafficking in terms of limitations and possibilities, and relate those findings to the policy documents and the effects that follow from certain representations of the problem.

5. Analysis

The analytical part of this study is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on how sex trafficking is represented as a criminal law issue in policy documents, and on what premises the problem representation was established. Further, it is being discussed how the representation of the problem is being reflected in which authorities are seen as key actors in

the work against sex trafficking, and which measures that are being suggested in the policy documents. The second part of the analysis goes beyond Swedish regulations and policy documents, and discusses the victimhood of sex trafficking from an intersectional perspective, as dependent on factors such as cultural aspects, global inequality and migration dreams. Moreover, the analysis consists of a problematization of the victimhood that is presented in the policy documents, and how the representation impacts victims' right to protection and support in the Swedish welfare system and by NGOs.

5.1 Sex trafficking as a criminal issue

5.1.1 Departing from the policy documents

Trafficking in human beings constitutes a ruthless and cynical exploitation of other people and a serious violation of the individual's human value and right to decide over his or her life and body. Trafficking in human beings is a complex problem affecting human rights issues, the fight against organized crime, migration, equality between women and men, poverty and social, economic and political disparities within and between countries. (Prop 2017/18:123, p.13)

The quote above is an extract from the problem representation of human trafficking, that is presented in the latest governmental proposal regarding human trafficking, where sex trafficking is included (Prop 2017/18:123). The formulation, which has a strong focus on victimhood, implies that human trafficking is seen as a complex crime and that the exploitation depends on a multitude of power structures which results in vulnerability, exposure and suffer for the individuals that are being exploited. The notion of the victimhood that is being presented in the quote above corresponds with what is being stated in previous research (Mörner, 2010; Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018; Vidra et al., 2018). A complex crime makes it hard to combat, which will be stated below.

In the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) that lies ground for the proposal (Prop 2017/18:123), it is stated that very few reported cases of human trafficking are leading to prosecution in Sweden, and just a small amount of those cases has resulted in a conviction. Moreover, the number of unreported and unknown cases is assumed to be large. According to the inquiry, a large amount of unrecorded cases, and the lack of prosecutions and convictions, has resulted in criticism from domestic organisations such as The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority, as well as from international organs such as the Group of Experts on action against trafficking in human beings (GRETA) that monitors the implementation of the Council of

Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (SOU 2016:70, 159). Departing from those premises, the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) was initiated in 2014. With this being said, factors connected to the criminal law perspective, such as a lack of prosecutions and verdicts, underpin the representation of human trafficking in the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) and sets the way for what is being constituted and which measures that are being suggested for handling the issues (cf. Bacchi, 2012). Moreover, to make this even clearer, the premises of the inquiry are clearly stated in the quote below:

The work against human trafficking can be conducted from different directions and purposes. It can, for example, focus on curbing the driving forces for human trafficking, including the demand for people to exploit for different purposes and the possibility of financial gain. The work can also focus on ensuring that there is strict criminal law protection against human trafficking. Our mission has been for the latter work and we have focused in particular on measures that can result in that more cases of human trafficking lead to prosecution and convictions. (SOU 2016:70, p.12)

In the quote, it is stated that the main focus is to get more prosecutions and convictions, rather than for example work preventively or with structural injustices. This corresponds with what is being stated in previous research regarding policies of sex trafficking and its focus areas (Goodey, 2005; Orme and Ross-Scheriff 2015). This departure point further correlates with what is being said in the final proposal where it is stated that “the Government decided to appoint an inquiry chair, to investigate whether there is a need for measures to ensure a strong criminal law protection against human trafficking” (Prop 2017/18:123, p. 12). Departing from those premises, it is clear that human trafficking as a social problem is initially represented as a criminal law issue in both the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) as well as in the final proposal (Prop 2017/18:123). It is, as Bacchi (2012) puts it “what one proposes to do about something reveals what one think is problematic (needs to change)” (p. 21), which in this case correlates to criminal measures and hope for more prosecutions and verdicts to follow.

The strong focus on the criminalization process rather than a victim-centred - or preventative approach also corresponds with what is stated in previous research, regarding policy documents concerning sex trafficking (Orme & Ross-Scheriff, 2015). Departing from those premises, it will be interesting to see how the strong focus on criminal justice correlates with the intersectional, victim-focused perspective that is presented in the final proposal, and which is being quoted at the beginning of this analysis. Bacchi (2012) stresses the importance of looking for potential silences and what has been left unproblematic in the problem representation. Are the regulations and focus areas that are being presented in the inquiry and later in the proposal reflected towards an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989)? How does this representation

of sex trafficking affect the public and civil society's work against sex trafficking? And in the end, how does a certain problem representation materially impact the lives of people in need of support and protection? (Bacchi, 2012).

5.1.2 Focus on the law enforcement agencies

As stated above, the policy documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123) departs from a criminal law perspective, which results in that human trafficking, including sex trafficking mainly is perceived as a criminal issue in the policy documents, rather than a social problem (Bacchi, 2012). This results in that the inquiry (SOU 2016:70), as well as the final proposal (Prop 2017/18:123), mainly focuses on the work of the law enforcement agencies, which refers to The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority in this context. The effects, as Bacchi (2009) would have put it, is that the law enforcement agencies set the voice for how sex trafficking is presented and which measures are suggested and taken in the policy documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123).

In the summary of the inquiry (SOU:2016, p. 26), seven fundamental measures are presented regarding the work of The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority, in order for more prosecutions and verdicts to follow. The inquiry states that one of the main reasons why investigations are discontinued is because victims do not take part in the preliminary investigations (SOU 2016:70, p. 15). Two out of seven of the suggested measures are directed to victims, number (5) "pursuing continuous efforts to identify potential victims, including collaboration with other government agencies and actors" and number (6) "ensuring that victims are giving greater support and protection to promote their participation in legal proceedings and their re-establishment in society" (SOU:2016, p. 26) Departing from Bacchi's perspective (2009), the assessment that a greater identification and support to victims will result in more prosecutions and verdicts, makes the victim's role central in the work against sex trafficking, also when regarding sex trafficking mainly as a criminal issue. The importance of identification and support in relation to the legal process is also stated by Åström (2014).

However, when perceiving sex trafficking as a criminal law issue and primarily putting the law enforcement agencies in the centre of attention, there is a risk of reducing the importance of other central actors regarding identification, support and protection of victims (cf. Bacchi, 2012). Different organisations have different roles and missions, which is being discussed by Johansson et al. (2015), as well as by one of my interview respondents. The interview

respondent argues that the law enforcement agencies are mainly focusing on preventing and investigating crimes, while the social services and NGOs focus on supporting victims (Interview Police officer).

Departing from what is being said above, it is clear that knowledge regarding the victimhood is necessary for actors outside the law enforcement agencies, especially regarding the support of victims. Interview respondents (Public employee, operative function 2; Police officer; NGO employee 1), as well as previous research (Brennan, 2015; Vidra et al., 2018), emphasizing that knowledge regarding the crime and the victimhood need to follow the entire chain of events, from actors involved in the identification process, for example, social workers or the migration board, up to counsels for the injured parties, that supports victims through the legal process. The limited presence of those organisations becomes an unproblematised “silence” in the policy documents (Bacchi, 2012, p.21). Furthermore, one interview respondent argues that competence regarding sex trafficking needs to be integrated on a broader level among authorities, although it is a good thing that some professionals have specialised knowledge. The interview respondent compares this with cases of domestic violence, which the informant means is a more ‘established’ social problem among authorities:

There is still a great lack of knowledge [about sex trafficking] in society. There has been a fairly strong tradition of working with those questions in civil society, but I believe that establishing this among the authorities has kind of been a challenge /.../. We have become quite good at dealing with cases of domestic violence, but we are not yet that good at the problem areas of prostitution and human trafficking yet, so that is a challenge that we are working with. I believe that the more professionals that have the knowledge, the more victims will be identified. (Public employee, operative function 4)

The quote above clearly states that integration of knowledge regarding the crime and the victimhood among professions is needed for being able to identify victims. Moreover, several of my interview respondents argue that sex trafficking is a complex issue that often seems far away from your own perceptions of the world (Public employee, strategic function; Public employee, operative function 1; Police officer). As previous research points out (Orme & Ross-Scheriff, 2015; Vidra et al., 2018), this makes the need for a clear problem description and an understanding of the social problem even more important. This is also stated during an interview session:

The problem description needs to be clearer the less pre-understanding I have about the issue. A typical example is honour violence. We had no honour violence in Sweden, and suddenly we have a lot. Knowledge makes it easier to identify and work with the problem. (Public employee, operative function 3)

In the quote above, the interview respondent clearly states that the need for knowledge regarding the complex victimhood and the problem description, is necessary for identifying and supporting a vulnerable person/a potential victim of sex trafficking. This is also stated by Åström (2014), that argues that the complexity of the crime and the victimhood of sex trafficking makes it easy to miss a potential victim if one does not know what to look for.

Departing from what is stated above, the connection to Bacchi's (2012) discussion about silences in policy material and what effects that follow, is in this case clear. Reducing the voice of important actors and only put them in relation to the law enforcement agencies (in this case The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority, will make it harder to identify and support victims, which will also result in a small number of prosecutions and verdicts. When perceiving sex trafficking as a criminal issue and primarily focusing on the law enforcement agencies, like in the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) and the final proposal (Prop 2017/18:123) one is reducing the victimhood and the crime for being less complex than it actually is (cf. Bacchi, 2012). For being able to succeed with identification and support and protection to victims, other institutions and their knowledge production regarding the complexity of sex trafficking and its victims are just as important and needs to be prioritized as well (Brennan, 2015).

5.1.3 Victims right to (un)conditional support

As stated above, the policy documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123) are departing from a criminal law perspective. Departing from Bacchi (2012), the representation of sex trafficking as a criminal issue results in that victims of sex trafficking firstly becomes victims of a crime and a plaintiff in a legal process. This undermines victims right to unconditional support, according to my interview respondents (Public employee operative function 1; NGO employee 1; NGO employee 2). Here, it is clear that the problem representation in policy documents affects the perception of victims and how they are handled (Bacchi, 2012).

Departing from what is being stated above, Åström (2014) criticizes the public support system for victims of human trafficking for being directly connected to legal processes. In this case, the formulation of the problem as a legal- and criminal issue becomes visible, but at the same time constructed through the process (Bacchi, 2012). A clear example of this, is that a preliminary investigation regarding human trafficking needs to be initiated for getting access to the support system. When a preliminary investigation has been initiated, the person in charge

of the investigation can apply for a reflection period for the victim of human trafficking which opens up for a support package. The reflection period means that victims have 30 days to decide if they want to be a part of an ongoing investigation or not, and if they are willing to do so, they can be granted a temporary residence permit (SOU 2016:70). The reflection period and its connection to the legal process has been questioned in previous research (Åström, 2014). Moreover, it has resulted in a lot of critique from international organs such as the Group of experts on action against trafficking in human trafficking (GRETA) (SOU 2016:70, p. 195) as well as by my interview respondents within both public and civil organisations (Public employee, strategic function, Public employee operative function 4, NGO employee 1, NGO employee 2). One of my interview respondents argued that the reflection period is a violation against international law and the European convention for fighting sex trafficking, for not being unconditional:

./.../ if we read the international conventions, the support should be unconditional, based on human rights and it should not be linked to any legal processes. We talk about it with the Government Offices every time we meet, but they do not really understand the issue. (NGO employee 1)

Related to the quote above, another of my interview respondents (Public employee, strategic function), also states that their organisation as well have mediated the issues with the reflection period to the government, but that “all those things take forever ./.../ before leading to a change or a decision”. However, the issues with the reflection period and the criticism it has evoked was discussed already in the policy documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123). Nevertheless, in the inquiry, it was further stated that “this issue should be further investigated and considered in another context” (SOU 2016:70, p.195). However, the regulations regarding this issue look the same at this point (2021), four years after the inquiry was published. Departing from Bacchi (2012), it is clear that the criminal and legal perspective makes the support system for victims that do not fit into the legal frames not a matter of priority and left unproblematized, even though it has been criticised both on a national and international level.

Moreover, one recurring critic from my interview informants regarding the reflection period (Public employee, strategic function; Public employee, operative function 4; NGO employee 1 & 2), is that there is only the leader of the preliminary investigation that can apply for a reflection period, which is a police officer or in most cases a prosecutor. The focus and the responsibility that lies on the law enforcement agencies, which is reflected in the policy documents, is once again clear (cf Bacchi, 2012). However, as stated in previous research it

often takes time for a preliminary investigation regarding human trafficking to be initiated and the process is dependent on factors such as resources, knowledge and information from the case/riot (Åström, 2014, Vidra et al., 2018). This is also stated by my interview respondents (Interview Police officer). For example, one interview respondent (NGO employee 1) argues that “A preliminary investigation is not initiated five minutes after you have met an exploited person”. Based on those premises, several of my interview respondents (Public employee, operative function 4; NGO Employee 1) argues that social workers with experience of meeting victims of sex trafficking should be able to apply for the reflection period:

This could possibly be put on the social services. That they can apply for it [the reflection period]. They would not have to write a [police] report but they could state that ‘this person is most likely a victim of human trafficking but does not dare to talk about it right now, but he or she shall be entitled to a period of reflection. (Public employee, strategic function)

In relation to the quote above, other interview respondents (Public employee, operative function 2; Interview Police officer; NGO employee 2) states that it is authorities and organisations like the social services and NGOs that have the most contact with victims. This is also stated by Erikson & Larsson (2019). If one would discuss this from Järvinen & Mik-Meyer (2003) perspective about categorisation and classification in the welfare system, it is clear that victims of sex trafficking are only seen as victims if there is an ongoing investigation regarding sex trafficking, which make them fit into the juridical categorisation of a victim of sex trafficking, which is up to the law enforcement to decide. This also fits well with the criminal law perspective that the policy documents are departing from (Bacchi, 2012). The connection to the legal process and how this correlates with the victimhood is also clear, concerning that the temporary residence can be extended as long as there is an ongoing investigation or trial. NGO employee 2, stated in an interview that victims sometimes feel “used”, when they realise that the support they got was not based on their right to justice or restoration, rather, that it was given for practical reasons:

the whole system with a reflection period and temporary residence permit and so on is based on the fact that the individual, the victim, must participate in the investigation process. The whole logic is that the person needs to remain in Sweden because the person is an important witness, or a part of a chain of evidence in some way, rather than that ‘me as a victim has those rights because I have been exploited’. So many people get quite disillusioned by the whole process when they realise that, that ‘I did not get support because I deserved some kind of redemption or justice but I got it just because I like...’. They are needed as tools or how to put it... in the investigation and the prosecution process. (NGO employee 2)

Related to the quote above, the same dilemma, and even the same choice of words has been discussed in previous research. Goodey (2005, p. 274) states that victims of sex trafficking are used as “tools” in the legal and criminal process to state evidence for making a case to the court. As being discussed above, when victims of sex trafficking mainly are seen as plaintiffs, or, as Goodey (2005) and my interview respondent above puts it, as “tools” in a legal process, one can clearly see that sex trafficking mainly is represented as a criminal issue rather than a social problem in policy documents (cf. Bacchi, 2008).

5.1.3.1 Difficulties to initiate a preliminary investigation – victims do not get support

Above, we have discussed several issues with the reflection period, and how it affects victims right to support and protection. However, another problem is that criminal investigations regarding sex trafficking in many cases are not being initiated at all (SOU 2016:70, p.105). The complexity regarding those cases is stated by one of my interview respondents

If the police or for example a social worker comes into an apartment in the evening and there are two women there, and you understand that they have been trafficked for sexual purposes, but the women themselves say that ‘no, I am doing this voluntarily etc etc’. You can clearly see that they are not, even though you have no evidence, but you can understand the circumstances. /.../ Even if victims are denying, they have the right to a reflection period, but the police cannot write a report because they have nothing concrete to report, just their gut feeling, and that isn’t enough. And since the police cannot make a report regarding sex trafficking, no preliminary investigation can be initiated, and you cannot apply for a reflection period, even though you might want to. And this is where it clashes. (Public employee, strategic function)

The quote above clearly states the frustration that occurs when bureaucratic processes complicate victims’ opportunities for protection and support. As stated in the quote, many victims do not acknowledge nor understand that they are victims of a crime. The complex victimhood opens up several opportunities for why that might be. For example, Erikson & Larsson (2019) points out that lack of trust for authorities is one reason, and Hoyle et al. (2011) states that it might depend on threats from their traffickers’ or fear of deportation. In interview sessions (Police officer), as well as in previous research (Hall, 2014; Åström, 2014) it is stated that those cases often result in that potential cases of sex trafficking are classified as “ordinary” cases of prostitution, or that a preliminary investigation regarding procuring is being initiated instead. Either way, this affects the victim’s right to support and protection. This example clearly shows the effects of connecting public support to specific categorisations of victimhood that is being established in the criminal law procedure, that victims with complex needs and backgrounds need to fit into, which they rarely do (Järvinen Mik-Meyer, 2003; Bacchi, 2012).

Based on those premises Noyori-Corbett & Moxley (2018) argues that sex trafficking must be addressed from a legal, social and cultural perspective.

So far in the analysis, I have presented how sex trafficking is being perceived as a criminal issue in the policy documents, and how this affects which organisations and measures that are being presented and focused on (cf. Bacchi, 2012). Departing from the statement made above by Noyori-Corbett & Moxley (2018), in the next session, I will move beyond the policy documents and widening the perspective. Since sex trafficking is an international global crime, one must go beyond Swedish boundaries and policies for understanding the complexity of the crime, and how this affects the victimhood and which measures and what kind of support that is needed.

5.2 Sex trafficking - A global, social, economic and cultural problem

5.2.1 Complex victimhood

So far I have shown that knowledge regarding the victimhood is necessary and that the support system needs to go beyond the criminal law process. Further, it is stated that sex trafficking is a complex crime that results in complex victimhood. However, in the inquiry (SOU 2016:70), as well as in the proposal (2017/18:123), there are no clear sections that explicitly discusses the victimhood. In the inquiry (SOU 2016:70), the victimhood is being discussed in more general terms in the introductory part and as part of a larger description of human trafficking nationally and internationally (p. 45). Further, it is mentioned in smaller sections when for example national and international programs are presented (p. 52) or when discussing the law enforcements work against trafficking (p. 99, 119). Moreover, human trafficking also refers to labour trafficking in the policy documents, therefore, the vulnerability for trafficking victims is mostly discussed in more general terms, even though specific examples from for example court cases occur in the inquiry (SOU 2016:70, p.443). Departing from Bacchi (2012), those findings clearly reflects that the victimhood is not the major priority in the policy documents, since it gets no space of its own, and is just discussed in reference to other themes.

However, based on what is discussed in interview sessions (Public employee operative function 1, Public employee operative function 2, NGO employee 2 etc.), I believe that there is a need for an explicit discussion about the agency of victims of sex trafficking in the policy documents.

The agency and complexity of victims are also discussed in previous research (Mörner 2010; Hoyle et al., 2011, Vidra et al., 2018). Right now, those sections are missing, which becomes, as Bacchi (2012) would have described it, a “silence” that is left unproblematic in the problem representation of sex trafficking in the policy documents (p.21). Previous research shows that policy documents often are following a discourse when the complexity of the victimhood is being reduced, and where victims mainly are described as weak and passive (Wilson & O`Brian, 2016; Heber, 2018). Even though the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) mentions that victims of human trafficking sometimes enter the trafficking situation “voluntarily” (but unaware of the conditions), they are still described as “independent, vulnerable and unaware of their human value” in the inquiry (SOU 2016:70, p.106). In interview sessions (Public employee, strategic function; Public employee, operative function 3; NGO employee 3), it is clear that victims of sex trafficking might have been disillusioned and lured during the way, but that they many times do not have any other option for providing food and housing for their families. Entering the prostitution business has been discussed by Sassen (2003), as a “feminization of survival” (p.265) in poor countries, meaning that women do what they have to do for keeping themselves and their families alive. An example of this is clearly stated in the first quote above. The second quote clearly shows the agency of the women and the complexity that follows:

When I meet someone [a victim of sex trafficking], I always ask the question “is this something you want to do, or would you like to do something else?”. When I ask those questions, most people laugh. I keep asking it just for that reaction. And many are like, no, but I have to, I have children to support. There are like, it is a form of “I have to do this, I have nothing else to do”. (Public employee, operative function 3)

those people, they will not throw themselves around your neck and say ‘thank you for saving me’. They will get pissed at you because you interrupted their business, and you will have to get used to that, accept it and deal with it. Some of them are filled with shame because they were lured into it, and others do not see themselves as victims at all. /.../ Those cases, in comparison with other cases of serious organized crime, are much more difficult because you often have plaintiffs... that does not agree with that, at least not initially. (Public employee, strategic function)

In the quotes above, it is clear that exploited women in trafficking in many cases do not classify themselves as victims, rather as providers and actors (Sassen, 2003). Moreover, two of my interview respondents (Public employee 3; Police officer) argues that it occurs situations where the traffickers have been victims themselves, and then raised in the hierarchy, which results in a grey zone and a duality in the role of being a victim or a perpetrator. Departing from those premises, it is important to acknowledge the fact that victims are more than victims, they are,

as Mörner (2010) puts it in her article title “objects, victims, losers, providers and actors” all at the same time, in a world which leaves them not many options (cf. Aas, 2007).

Even though the complexity of the victimhood is being mentioned in the policy documents, and that it for example is stated that “it is important with knowledge regarding other cultures, ethnic groups and psychological mechanisms” (SOU, 2016:70, p.190), it is not in a further way developed what this actually means. By not developing those aspects, the construction of the victimhood in the policy document becomes one-dimensional and unspecified (Bacchi, 2009). For example, even though interview respondents claimed that all cases were unique, many of them could still see patterns in the victimhood depending on the victim’s geographical origin. For example, several interview respondents (Public employee, strategic function; Public employee, operative function 2, 3, 4; NGO employee 2) described that victims from Eastern Europe (mainly Bulgaria and Rumania) often were from oppressed minority groups in their home countries, but they were, in general, more willing to return to their home countries than victims from West Africa (mainly Nigeria). Moreover, victims from Nigeria were often described as really hard to connect with, which many times depended on cultural and religious rites performed by their traffickers, which made victims believe that something bad would happen to themselves or their families if they left their exploited situation or talked to the authorities. The types of distinctions in the victimhood that is discussed above was not discussed at all in either the inquiry (SOU 2016:70) or the proposal (2017/18:123), and can therefore be seen as what Bacchi (2012) calls a “silence”, that is being left out and left unproblematized.

The impact of cultural rites and voodoo that is being discussed above, has also been described in previous research (Baarda, 2016). Cultural rites and their impact on the victimhood are shortly mentioned in the inquiry (SOU 2016:70, p. 190), but no further explanation of its characteristics, or how it affects the victimhood follows. Relating to this, Fraser (1998) stresses the importance of separating socio-economic injustices from cultural/symbolic injustices for understanding people’s vulnerabilities. For example, previous research (Baarda, 2016; Vidra et al., 2018) stresses the importance of taking the cultural aspect into account when forming the support for victims of sex trafficking. One interview respondent (NGO employee 1) argued for example that special knowledge is needed in cases where cultural and religious rites are involved, while in some other cases, the experience of working with domestic violence sometimes is enough. When putting this knowledge in relation to Bacchi’s (2012) argument

that policy documents construct how the problem is being perceived and in the end handled, stresses the importance of not leaving aspects such as the variety of the victimhood unmentioned, for being able to provide the right support for victims.

Following the discussion above regarding the variety of aspects that affects victimhood in multiple ways, is the variety in the notion of gender concerning the exploitation of victims (cf. Aas, 2007; Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018). For example, one interview respondent (Police officer) discusses gender and how different ways of perceiving men and women affects the victimhood in different ways. The respondent further argues that “the Swedish society has perhaps not reached all the way with gender issues, but we have come much further than other countries...”. This can be reflected in different ways. In some cases, the woman is sold by her family to traffickers (Interview Police Officer; NGO employee 1), while in other cases, the women can never tell what has happened to her because of the shame that will follow on her (Interview public employee, operative function). By referring to those cases, it is clear that gender dimensions vary in different contexts and affects a person’s vulnerability, experiences, relationships, and way of perceiving their situation in different ways (Chow, 2003; De Los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005).

Departing from the premises made in the following sections, it is easy to state that it is hard to describe “a typical victim of sex trafficking”. Bacchi (2009) would describe this as “equally unequal” (p. 69), which in this context refer to the importance of not stating victims of trafficking as a united group. Rather, their victimhood is dependent on cultural, gendered, racialized and global issues (Crenshaw, 1989; Razack, 1995). Mohanty (1984) discusses those issues when stating the importance of not discussing the oppression of women from poor countries as a homogenous entity in policy documents regarding social problems. To not clearly explain the complex victimhood in specific sections in the policy documents (SOU 2016:70, Prop 2017/18:123), is problematic since it is silencing the victims’ unique voices and makes it harder to understand what one must be attentive about and take into account when meeting with those persons (Bacchi, 2012). This is clearly stated in the quote below:

It is important to have an understanding for the person, for that specific person, why they are there, are why they are ‘allowing’ their perpetrator to treat them in a certain way. Not just ask them “but why didn’t you escape, you are a victim, right?”. We are from such different cultures. I mean, our Swedish way of thinking is a kind of narrow of thinking. Because you come from such different backgrounds, conditions and cultures. (NGO employee 3)

The quote above really stresses the importance of understanding the victimhood from an intersectional perspective. Victims of trafficking are individuals departing from very different cultures, premises and kinds of vulnerabilities, which needs to be met and understood in different ways depending on their unique situation (cf. Creswell, 1989).

5.2.2 Migration policy vs migration dreams - Understanding the weight of a global social problem

As stated in the previous section, the victimhood of sex trafficking is complex, and “the feminization of survival” (Sassen, 2003, p. 265) results in that females ends up in trafficking for having no other option, or have been lured from the beginning with hopes of a better life. In correlation to this, one of my interview respondents argues:

The world is so awfully unfair, and as long as it looks like that, and some of us live in some kind of abundance, while other's has nothing... as long as it looks like that, human trafficking will continue one way or another. /.../ You might be able to limit it [human trafficking] to some extent, but a world that is built on injustices will always include human trafficking.
(Public employee, strategic function)

Departing from the quote above, it is clear that there is a need to understand the unfairness and injustices of the world, for being able to understand the whole existence of human trafficking, (including sex trafficking) as a crime and social problem. Razack (1995) discusses how neo-colonialism and the globalized system has resulted in systematic exploitation of the poor. Moreover, Aas has described globalization as “a deeply gendered phenomenon” structured by the unfair relationship between classes and between women and men (cf. Aas 2007 p.42). In this context the statements by Aas (2007) and Razack (1995) can be referred to the fact that human beings from developed countries like Sweden exploit already vulnerable individuals, that has come to Europe for having no other options in their home countries. This results in that the “solution” (coming to Europe) ends up in exploitation and trafficking. This kind of “global business” is also discussed by Aronowitz (2003). Connected to what is stated above, and the injustices and unfairness of the global world are migration dreams and the hope for a better life (Aas, 2007; Bessa Vilela & Brezovnik, 2018). For many victims, especially from West Africa, Europe is seen as the source of happiness and success. The same respondent as being quoted above, states in the quote on the following page that the perception of Europe is one of the hardest things to deal with when meeting victims of sex trafficking:

If your pimp claims that ‘all people in Europe earn 5000 € a day, or in a week’ you believe that, because you have no idea. In their world, their only perception about Europe is that we are so enormously rich, we have so damn much money, it’s paradise. So you are prepared to take the offer. And when the pimp explains that ‘you will pay off your debt at 5000 € in one week, you believe that. /.../ And that is the hardest part, to make them [the victims of sex trafficking] realise that they have been completely fooled. (Public employee, strategic function)

The quote above really states the notion of Europe as the paradise. The injustices of the global world that are being discussed in the section above, makes it possible to create and maintain the idealisation of Europe that is being presented in the quote (cf. Bessa Vilela & Brezovnik, 2018). Another interview respondent (Public employee, operative function 4) followed the same theme when claiming that victims, especially from West Africa or Latin America often want to stay in Europe even after they have been exploited in sex trafficking:

Europe is still the big dream, and they want to continue try to succeed here, since the situations in their home countries are so bad. (Public employee, operative function 4)

Accordingly, even though a person is being “saved” from exploitation in sex trafficking, they are still settled in vulnerable positions. As stated in previous discussions and by scholars (Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018), victims of sex trafficking are not only victims of a crime, they are also victims of other circumstances, such as gendered and ethnicized poverty, shame, remaining threats or cultural pressures that do not go away just because you take a person out of the exploitation of sex trafficking. The complex victimhood implies that it must be regarded from an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989).

5.2.2.1 From migration dreams to migration policy

In contrast to the discussion above regarding global injustices, migration dreams and a complex victimhood, my interview respondents (Public employee, operative function 2; NGO employee 2), as well as previous literature (Plambech, 2014; Åström; 2014; Wilson & O`Brian 2016), discusses the connections between migration policy and human trafficking policy, and how this affects victim’s right to support, protection and opportunities to stay in Sweden, often in a negative way. This can also be referred to Bacchi (2008), that claims that complex social problems often are dependent and interact with discourses from other policy fields. In previous literature (Aas, 2007) it is clear that the borders are not open for everyone. This is also being discussed in interview sessions, as one of my respondents’ states in the quote on the following page:

so the snag is that it [human trafficking policy] is closely connected with migration policy dimensions, which is... blowing in a different direction right now sort to speak /.../ which makes it easy for the analysis to just end with 'those people have no legal right to be in this country, and therefore they shouldn't. (NGO employee, 2)

For example, as being discussed above, the support system is connected to the legal process in Sweden, and if you do not have any legal rights to stay in the country, you have to leave as soon as the criminal and juridical process is finished (SOU 2016:70; Åström, 2014). Being exploited in sex trafficking is by itself not a reason for being granted a permanent residence permit or asylum. One interview respondent (NGO employee 1) argued that because of the seriousness of the crime, and the vulnerability of the victim (gender, torture), sex trafficking should in a greater way than today be included in the overall assessment process when making asylum decisions. However, asylum is not even discussed or mentioned in the inquiry (2016:70) nor the proposal (2017/18:123). This could be referred to as what Bacchi (2012) calls a “silence”, which is something that is being left out and left unproblematicized.

Concerning what is being stated above, several respondents describe the frustration when victims have to leave, especially in cases when the victim of sex trafficking wants to stay in the country. One interview respondent (Public employee, operative function 4) states that it is very frustrating to be able “to offer a nice package of support and housing, but then take it all away, just like that”. Moreover, three interview respondents’ states that it is difficult working from those premises, since one cannot promise victims any long-term solutions, for example, an opportunity to stay in Sweden or a job opportunity, which results in that many victims turns down the support package, and does not want to participate in a preliminary investigation (Public employee, operative function 1, 2 & 3). This stresses the importance of handling the issue of sex trafficking from a long-term perspective, and realise that the vulnerability of victims extends beyond the crime (Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018). Departing from Bacchi (2012), it is clear that leaving the complexity of the victimhood in silence in the policy documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123, will get negative consequences from a victim-perspective, but also when departing from a criminal law perspective. In relation to this, Plambech, (2014) discusses how European countries are putting a lot of effort into identifying victims, in order to eventually deport them, regardless of their status as victims.

For victims that do not have a choice and needs to return home, or that have agreed of returning home, one can apply for support for a safe return and a re-establishment through the IOM (International organization for migration) programme (Plambech, 2014). Two of my public

interview respondents talk well about the support the program offers (Public employee, strategic function; Public employee, operative function 4). However, according to interview respondents from the civil sector (NGO employee 1 & 2), even those victims are still at risk, especially in countries with a lot of corruption and social problems. In those cases, actors within NGOs state that they rather help victims home through their civil international networks (NGO employee 1), that often have trustworthy local connections (Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2018; Erikson & Larsson, 2020). Similar problems regarding the deportation of victims have been stated in previous research (Plambech, 2014). In other cases, victims outside of Europe are being deported to their first country of arrival in Europe, which in many cases are the country where they first were exploited (Interview public employee 2; NGO employee 2). Here, it is once again clear that the global problem of sex trafficking goes beyond the crime itself, and beyond national/international regulations and support programs (cf. Bacchi, 2012). Regarding those issues, one of my interview respondents (Public employee, operative function 2) states that “we [the authorities/ Swedish policy makers] do not really understand that people are being exploited over country borders”, which is the whole essence of a social global problem such as sex trafficking (Aas, 2007).

Departing from those premises, it is clear that the combination of today’s migration policy and human trafficking policy, and victim’s migration dreams do not always correlate with each other, or with the premises that victims of sex trafficking live under. Even so, the policy areas are, as Bacchi (2009) brings in when discussing policies regarding social problems, interconnected with each other, which reflects upon how victims of sex trafficking are being handled. As being discussed above, for victims of sex trafficking, this results in uncertain processes where long-term support and an opportunity to stay in Sweden cannot be granted. In the interview with NGO employee 1, the respondent argued that:

we need to see the connections between the criminal procedure and migration policy /.../. This would lead to safer victims but also more verdicts. If we dare to work from a human rights perspective, all the way.
(NGO employee 1)

Accordingly, by not perceiving the problem for what it actually is, which is a global problem based on inequality and injustice, and ignoring the heritage and the upcoming of migration dreams and the hopes for a better life, and mainly treat sex trafficking as a Swedish criminal issue, makes it hard to support victims rightfully, but also to make victims take part in legal processes (cf. Aas, 2007; cf. Bacchi, 2012).

5.2.3 To get victims of sex trafficking to “fit” into the Swedish social welfare system

As stated in previous sections, sex trafficking is represented as a criminal law issue in policy documents (SOU 2016:70, Prop 2017/18:123), which results in that victims are only getting status as victims of sex trafficking if they can be connected to a legal process regarding sex trafficking. The representation of the problem is hereby affecting how the victimhood is perceived (Bacchi, 2012). Moreover, migration policy and victim’s multidimensional victimhood makes the issue even more complex. How is this affecting victim’s position in the welfare system, and their right to support?

One problem that several of my interview respondent states is that victims are denied help from the social services in some municipalities since they do not classify as “their target group” (Public Employee, strategic function 2). One interview respondent (Public employee, operative function 4) states that there is an ongoing implementation process regarding those cases in the social services, but that it is still not completely established how and by which department victims of sex trafficking should be handled. Moreover, one interview respondent (NGO employee 1) states that even though the social services have the final responsibility for all victims of crime in their municipality, victims (especially without documents), often fall between the cracks, since they are not registered or in other ways formally staying in the specific municipality. In other words, victims of sex trafficking have troubles fitting into the already established public support system (cf Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003). The issue has also been discussed in previous research. Smith (2017) states that victims often have a hard time accessing state benefits if they are “not part of the legal framework” (p. 84). Moreover, Erikson and Larsson (2020) argue that the Swedish welfare system and the state seems to be incapable of providing support to undocumented migrants. The frustration regarding those issues is shown by another respondent:

Sometimes when we are in contact with municipalities, they do not want to discuss the issue of sex trafficking as sex trafficking. Rather, they are like “what are you talking about? This person is not our target group”, “...she is not registered here” or what it might be. They are like, “this is not our responsibility, this is the Migration Boards issue”. (NGO employee 2)

When reading the quote above, it is easy to see that the Swedish welfare system has issues when it comes to categorise and fit victims of sex trafficking into the support system. This can be reflected towards Järvinen & Mik-Meyer’s (2003) concept “creating a client”, which states that the welfare system has a need for categorisation, which becomes clear in this case when the help and support are connected to already established categories that victims of sex trafficking

have troubles to fit into. In this case, as the quote above stated, victims are not firstly seen as victims of sex trafficking, rather, they are seen as a “troublesome group”, that does not fit into the categorisation of vulnerability that the Swedish welfare institutions are departing from, and which not fulfil the right criteria’s for receiving support by the welfare system. Victims of sex trafficking can therefore be seen as having “problematic characteristics” (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003, p. 20), while it rather could be discussed in terms of institutional bureaucracy and administrative problems (cf. Johansson et al., 2015). While stating sex trafficking as a criminal issue rather than a social problem, the boundaries of the problem moves, and it becomes someone else’s problem to handle, for example, the Migration Boards issue, since it is regarded as a foreign, migration issue rather than a social problem (cf. Stone, 1988; cf. Gusfield, 1989).

Another issue for why victims of sex trafficking are having trouble to “fit” into the Swedish welfare system, is because they often have special needs and support, which not always corresponds with the Swedish system. For example, previous literature (Brennan, 2015; Vidra et al., 2018) as well as several interview respondents (Public employee strategic function; Public employee operative function 2; NGO employee 3) argue that the complex victimhood requires patience, time or special needs or support. For example, one respondent argues that the complexity of the group makes it hard, or sometimes even impossible, to follow a specific plan or time frame:

You [authorities] want a person to be “fixed” in six months, or ten sessions or something, but that is not the case for people that carries that much trauma. /.../ It takes time and it must take time. This is probably what I think Sweden has missed. (Public employee, operative function 1)

The quote above states how the Swedish system wants to fit victims of sex trafficking into a specific model or time frame, that has been pre-decided and formed by the welfare system beforehand (cf. Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003). Moreover, many victims do not react in the way the system is built up for (cf. Järvinen Mik-Meyer, 2003). Interview respondents (NGO employee 1) as well as previous research (Hoyle et al., 2011; Orme and Ross-Scheriff, 2015), states that many victims do not acknowledge their victimhood directly and that their exploited situation is not something that is being stated by asking one time in a standardised document. One interview respondent (Public employee, strategic function) tells me that some situations become absurd when police officers or social workers are trying to convince a person that she

is a victim of sex trafficking, while the 'victim' becomes more and more upset and argues back that she is selling sex voluntarily. Another interview respondent further argues that:

we [the authorities] in general are having trouble with people that does not react within the frame that we have created for how victims are supposed to react. (Public employee, operative function 2)

The quote clearly states the importance of getting an understanding of the victimhood and the vulnerability, beyond the bureaucratic frames and the already established categorisations and perceptions that exist regarding victimhood in the welfare system (cf. Järvinen & Mik-meyer, 2003). Departing from what is stated in the sections above, it is easy to see that victims of sex trafficking do not have a given place in the support system and that the authorities are having trouble to handle and properly support victims of sex trafficking, from a legal perspective, but also because of their complex victimhood and needs, that needs to be understood and formed departing from an intersectional departure point (Crenshaw, 1989). Victim's (un)legal status and silences regarding the complex victimhood in the policy documents (SOU 2016:70, Prop 2017/18:123) sets the path for the work against sex trafficking in Sweden, which has resulted in that the support and welfare system is not costumed for the most vulnerable (cf. Bacchi, 2012).

5.2.4 The role of the NGOs

It is stated in the inquiry (SOU 2016:70), that civil society has an important role in supporting and complementing the public support system (2016:70). This is also stated in previous research (Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2018; Erikson & Johansson 2019). In Sweden, there exist a governance collaboration agreement, where the public and the civil sector are working together for supporting and protecting victims of human trafficking (Erikson & Larsson, 2019; Erikson & Larsson, 2020). However, when discussing the role of the NGOs with my interview respondents from both the public and civil sector, it was clear that the role of the NGOs was far more important than just being a complement to the public support system, rather, it was seen as necessary part of it:

I get the impression that the government thinks that it nice of us to help, but from my perspective, I believe that civil society is trying to fulfil the governmental responsibilities that they do not manage to fulfil on their own. (NGO Employee 1)

At the moment, I feel that we have too little to offer, really. Sometimes, I feel that we are a complement to them [the NGOs], rather than the opposite, that they are a complement to us. (Public employee, operative function 4)

Departing from the quotes above and when departing from the points made in the previous sections, it is clear that the public support system has its limitations for victims of sex trafficking, not least regarding victims that “does not fit into the frame” and the most vulnerable victims (Public employee, operative function 2: Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003). One interview respondent argues that the authorities are doing their best, but that the government that sets the legalisations and policy documents has not taken their responsibility for victims of sex trafficking, which results in that a lot of the responsibility is put on the NGOs, even though they because of their financial situation are having a hard time to work from a long-term perspective (NGO employee 1). Similar situations have been described in previous literature (Smith 2017; Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2018). In the interview sessions, it became clear that NGOs have a unique opportunity to offer individual support and help outside the bureaucratic frames (cf. Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003). For example, the NGOs are especially important for victims that have not filled the conditions for formally classify as victims of sex trafficking, or that has not been granted asylum:

I think that they [the NGOs] have a very important function. In this whole spectrum there is... sometimes a large grey area. Where society cannot help them, but they do need help, and they do not meet the criteria to be categorised as victims of human trafficking, but they are still vulnerable... so the legislation, and rules and documents and so on in all its glory, but they are sometimes so damn static. Civil society fills a huge function for those who absolutely need help, housing etc., but where society's resources do not really match the need they have, and they [the NGOs], they cover that gap. (Public employee, strategic function)

In the quote above, it is clear that the NGOs fills a huge function in supporting victims that do not fit into the frames of the public support system. One interview respondent further states that although all organisations should depart from a victim-focused and human rights perspective in their work settings, NGOs have the opportunity to work exclusively from a victim-focused perspective, which opens up for a large dose of flexibility and creativity for findings opportunities for individuals, while authorities might have other obligations or specific criteria's that they need to fulfil (NGO employee 2). This has also been discussed by Erikson & Larsson (2019). For example, NGOs can offer juridical help and “build up a strong case” for victims that for multiple reasons does not want to turn to the authorities (NGO employee 2). One interview respondent argues further that there is no idea to report a case to the police authorities before you have a strong case since this will just result in disappointment and probably deportation for the victim (NGO employee 1). This truly says something about the limitations with the Swedish support system and the effects that follow, meaning that the civil

society must be operating as a bridge between the civil society and the authorities (Bacchi, 2012).

Departing from the premises made above, it is clear that NGOs not only have a complementary role, rather they have a completely necessary role in supporting victims of sex trafficking that does not fit into the Swedish juridical- and welfare system (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003; Bacchi 2012). Policy documents, which regards human trafficking as a criminal issue rather than a social issue, and which have not taken the nature of the crime of sex trafficking nor the complex victimhood into account (Crenshaw, 1989), cannot form a support-and protection system that is suitable for victims of sex trafficking, and therefore, the support from other actors than the public becomes necessary (Bacchi, 2012). Departing from those premises, it is clear that the NGOs have an important role in the support system, that 'everyone' (authorities, politicians), in some way are counting on, for providing support for exploited people in need.

6. Final discussion and conclusions

This study aims to investigate how sex trafficking is being constructed and represented as a social problem in policy documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123). Further, the purpose is to investigate how the construction in the policy material impacts the work of public and non-governmental organisations, and how this in the end affect victims in need of protection and support. The final discussion will depart from three of Bacchi's analytical questions: How sex trafficking is *represented* in policy documents (1), what is left *unproblematic* (*silences*) in the problem representation regarding sex trafficking (4) and finally, which *effects* that are produced by the given representation of sex trafficking in the policy documents (5).

Departing from the premises of the policy documents and which measures that are being suggested, it is clear that sex trafficking is *represented* and constructed as a criminal law issue, which impacts how sex trafficking is understood and handled as a social problem. Perceiving a social problem as mainly a criminal issue opens up for *silences* in the policy material, where certain aspects are left unproblematized (Bacchi, 2012). The measures that are suggested in the policy documents have a clear focus on the law enforcement agencies, which leaves limited space for actors that are working more specifically with victim-focused measures, like the social services. Moreover, there is no clear section in the policy documents that explicitly discusses the victimhood. Throughout the analysis, the complexity of the victimhood, including cultural

and gendered indifferences, and connected aspects such as migration and global inequalities have been discussed, both in my empirical material (the interviews) as well as in previous research. This stresses the importance of departing from an intersectional perspective when discussing sex trafficking (Crenshaw, 1989). However, those aspects are briefly mentioned but not further developed in the policy documents, and are therefore left *unproblematized* (cf. Bacchi, 2012).

Departing from those premises, my study points to that victims of sex trafficking mainly are perceived to be victims of a crime and a plaintiff in a legal process in the policy documents, rather than, as Crenshaw (1989) would have put it, victims of a multitude of complex power structures and inequalities. The representation of sex trafficking as a criminal issue results in *effects* on how the support system for victims is formed (Bacchi, 2012). The help and support for victims of sex trafficking are clearly connected to legal processes and the victim's legal status. This has raised a lot of frustration among my interview respondents from both the public and the civil sector. One interview respondent argues that it is "like working with your hands tied" (Public employee, operative function 4), because of the regulations that govern the work regarding the support system for victims. This results in that a lot of responsibility has been put on the NGOs since they can offer help outside the public support system.

6.1 A global, social, economic and cultural problem becomes a Swedish crime

Regarding sex trafficking mainly as a criminal issue, get consequences for how it is being handled within the institutional framework of the welfare state. I have demonstrated that ignoring factors connected to the complex victimhood, such as migration dreams, global inequality, cultural aspects and victim's agency when forming policy documents and measures, results in that victim's many times does not get identified, and even if they do, they are having troubles to fit into the frames of the legal- and welfare system (cf. Crenshaw, 1989). It is clear that the support system works best for victims that follows the society's frame for how a victim should act, both in terms of behaviour and legal status (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer). However, victims of sex trafficking are often having troubles fulfilling both those criteria's. As one of my interview respondents argues: "the system is not built for the most vulnerable" (Public employee, operative function 2).

Based on those premises, I have shown that there is a need to understand the structural and complex conditions that enable the exploitation. Therefore, sex trafficking must be perceived as a global, social, economic and cultural problem rather than a Swedish crime (cf. Aas, 2007). It is clear that sex trafficking is not simply a legal or criminal issue, rather, it is social problem that heritages from global inequalities and a racialized and gendered vulnerability, where cultural aspects and an understanding of the complex victimhood needs to be taken into account when forming policy documents regarding sex trafficking. Moreover, victims right to protection and support is also, as being stated in interviews (NGO employee 1) as well as in policy documents (SOU 2016:70; Prop 2017/18:123), necessary for being able to increase the number of prosecutions and verdicts regarding sex trafficking. This stresses the importance of working and formulating policies regarding sex trafficking from a victim-oriented and an intersectional perspective, not just from a victim-centred approach, but also when departing from a criminal law perspective.

The conclusions drawn from the study states the importance of theoretically investigate how sex trafficking is perceived in policy documents and the effects that follow. Moreover, the study shows that further research on the work against sex trafficking is needed on all levels in society, from a legal perspective, but also regarding interventions on an organizational level. Additionally, several of the interview respondents' stresses that increased knowledge and focus on human trafficking in terms of labour trafficking is needed, which often is described in terms of a hidden and neglected crime and victimhood. On a final note, it is stated that this field of research opens up for various research areas that need to be further problematized and explored, in order to improve and strengthen the initiatives against human trafficking and the support of victims.

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7.3 Interviews

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Interview 3: Public employee, operative function 4. Conducted over Zoom 29.01.2021.

Interview 4: Public employee, operative function 2. Conducted over Zoom 08.02.2021.

Interview 5: Public employee, strategic function. Conducted over Zoom 18.02.2021.

Interview 6: NGO employee, 1. Conducted over Zoom 22.02.2021.

Interview 7: NGO employee, 2. Conducted over Zoom 25.02.2021.

Interview 8: Public employee, operative function 1. Conducted over Zoom 08.03.2021.

Interview 9: Police officer. Conducted over telephone 08.04.2021.