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Understanding the Adoption, Prioritization, and
Biases Within Anti-Human Trafficking Policy

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Understanding the Adoption, Prioritization, and Biases Within Anti-Human Trafficking Policy

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MA, Emory University, 2019

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Abstract

Understanding the Adoption, Prioritization, and Biases Within Anti-Human Trafficking Policy
By Rachel Allison Harmon

The primary purpose of this dissertation project is to explore government policies designed to respond to human trafficking from several angles. This is done through a three-paper format that examines both the United States and countries around the globe. The first paper looks at what potential political biases exist in how the United States government ranks other states' responses to human trafficking. The second paper explores whether more gender-equal states are more likely to have more robust anti-trafficking policies. Finally, the third paper asks whether racial and gender stereotypes shape the policy preferences and prioritization of the United States public through a survey experiment. This dissertation utilizes a mixture of observational and experimental data, and a notable theme running throughout the project is how important it is that better data be collected on human trafficking and policy responses to move this research agenda forward. Each of the three papers are summarized below.

Paper 1: One of the main sources of data on global trafficking, the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports, is susceptible to biases because report rankings are tied to political outcomes. In contrast to other country-level human rights indicators, the State Department issues both narratives and rankings, which incentivizes attempts to influence the rankings based on political interests. The study uses a supervised machine-learning algorithm to examine how narratives are translated into rankings, to determine whether rankings are biased, and to disentangle whether bias stems from changing standards or political interests. The authors find that the TIP Report rankings are more influenced by political biases than changing standards.

Paper 2: Human trafficking is a gendered issue that disproportionately harms women and girls, and women often take on leadership roles in developing and implementing anti-trafficking policy solutions. Research has shown that increasing women's representation in government can, but is not guaranteed to, lead to more robust government responses to a variety of issues, whether than is due to the power of descriptive or substantive representation. I theorize that the inclusion of women in political spaces will lead to more comprehensive government responses to human trafficking, as well as lower trafficking rates overall. Specifically, I expect that higher proportions of women in legislative bodies will be associated with better government responses to human trafficking and lower rates of trafficking perpetation. These hypotheses are tested using data from the Trafficking in Persons Report, which provides panel data on state responses to human trafficking. No meaningful support for the expectations is found, indicating that the inclusion of women in legislative office alone is not sufficient to change anti-trafficking policy in a substantial way.

Paper 3: Human trafficking has a long history of being raced and gendered in public discourse. This project tests whether public policy preferences about how anti-trafficking policy is prioritized is sensitive to numerous identity frames that vary in terms of race and gender. While the data do not provide strong support for the expectations, this is likely due to flaws in the research design. This learning experience will be used as a stepping stone for upcoming projects.

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This dissertation is dedicated to Naomi Emogene Eisner, my grandmother. Nana, thank you for being a real-life representation of what it means to be an intersectional feminist. Your example has taught me to embrace being outspoken, smart, fierce, complicated, and determined.

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Paper 1: TIP for Tat: Political Bias in Human Trafficking Reporting

By Rachel Harmon, Daniel Arnon, and Baekkwan Park

According to conservative estimates, 20.9–40.3 million people are affected by human trafficking globally (International Labor Organization 2019; Walk Free Foundation 2016), disproportionately harming women, girls and marginalized groups (International Labor Organization 2019; Shelley 2010). Yet this topic is understudied in the international relations literature, in part due to the paucity of related data. Scholars primarily use information gleaned from the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports produced by the US State Department, which provide rankings and narratives that indicate how well governments respond to human trafficking.

TIP Report rankings significantly influence political outcomes in at least two ways. First, US foreign policy is determined in part by TIP Report rankings due to legal restrictions on how the United States may interact with poorly performing states. Secondly, there is evidence that states care about their rankings and enact domestic legal reforms based on the reports (Kelley and Simmons 2015). Scholars also often rely on data drawn from the TIP Report narratives (Bell, Flynn and Machain 2018; Cho 2015; Frank 2013; Kelley and Simmons 2015). There is a disjuncture in how policy makers and academics most commonly use the report; this work is an important step toward understanding the relationship between the report narratives and tiers. The consequences of TIP Report rankings have downstream effects for foreign policy and people harmed by human trafficking, while the content of the narratives and rankings have consequences for scholarship; it is vital that the reports provide reliable, unbiased data.

There has been no systematic evaluation of whether the TIP Reports suffer from bias, despite evidence that other human rights measurements often do. This letter first determines

whether theTIP Report rankings are biased. Secondly, it determines whether the source of bias in the rankings comes from changing standards of accountability or political bias.

The literature has established two possible sources of bias in human rights reporting. The first is changing standards of accountability. This type of bias enters reports not because of political interests, but rather because, over time, the reporting agency gains access to additional resources that permit changes in the standard to which a report or country is held. Clark and Sikkink (2013) and Fariss (2014) argue, and Greene, Park and Colaresi (2018) establish, that the State Department's Human Rights reports' standards of accountability have changed over time. However, we argue that the TIP Reports have unique incentives for political bias due to the way they are constructed and the political consequences of their rankings, which leads to the second possible source of bias – political bias.

To explore whether bias is present and its source, we use supervised machine-learning techniques and a Natural Language Processing approach to map the narratives of the TIP Reports to the associated rankings. The algorithms learn how the narratives map onto rankings, and then test whether this mapping changes over time. This allows us to examine whether standards have changed. We find little support for the argument that standards of accountability have changed over time. We then propose a test for political bias by examining the changes in rankings in Asia around the time of the initial negotiations of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and show that the mapping of narratives to rankings changes dramatically around this time but not earlier. We conclude that this indicates that political interests can play a role in determining states' rankings.

Biases in Global Performance Indicators

Over the past few decades the proliferation of Global Performance Indicators (GPIs) has risen sharply. The stakes are high for states assigned GPI outcomes, particularly with regard to human

rights measurements in the age of successful 'naming and shaming' (Bandura 2008; Davis et al. 2012; Kelley and Simmons 2019; Murdie and Davis 2012). Meaningful consequences for GPI outcomes incentivize bias in TIP Reports.

The first possible source of bias in GPIs is changing standards of accountability. Clark and Sikkink (2013) and Fariss (2014) argue that, rather than explicit political bias, the information environment that feeds the reporting agencies has markedly changed over the last few decades. Recent work by Greene, Park and Colaresi (2018) tests whether the assumption of changing standards in the State Department's Human Rights Reports is warranted, and concludes that standards of accountability are changing. We build on this work to test this argument with the TIP Reports. However, due to the unique nature of the TIP Report, we argue that political bias may be present as well.

We propose two mechanisms for how political biases may affect how report narratives are translated into rankings. The first stems from the way in which the report narratives and rankings are constructed – the data-generating process. The second is determined by the expected consequences of the rankings, which lead to pre-emptive political changes. Variation in the data-generating process and the rankings' high-stakes consequences drive the types of bias that are likely to manifest.

Unlike other human rights measurements (for example, the Political Terror Scale (Gibney et al. 2015) and CIRI (Cingranelli, Richards and Clay 2014)), the TIP Reports do not receive independent third-party input. Mandated by Congress starting in 2000, the State Department produces the report narratives and rankings annually in a multi-stage process. First, the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons within the State Department (J/TIP) makes recommendations for states' rankings and drafts the narratives based on input from trafficking

experts who consult extensively with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), stakeholders and leaders. These rank recommendations are then presented to more senior diplomats, including political appointees who can amend the rankings in a process that is not visible to the public. The rankings and narratives are then released to the public in their final format. Disagreements between the human trafficking experts in non-political positions and higher-ranking staff in political positions are not disclosed to the public except on a case-by-case basis of leaks.

There is clear evidence of a disjuncture between TIP Report rankings and narratives. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has cited concerns that the report narratives seem to contradict the associated rankings and stated tier criteria (Government Accountability Office 2016). Additionally, the GAO found that 'for countries that changed tier from one year to the next, most narratives did not provide an explicit explanation as to why the rankings changed' (Government Accountability Office 2016). This also suggests that narratives are not simply used as justifications for politicized rankings. Similarly, an investigation by Reuters found that internal disagreements between the recommendations made by trafficking experts in J/TIP and diplomats' preferred rankings often led to the diplomats' rankings being used, but did not indicate any evidence that the narratives were altered from expert recommendations (Szep and Spetalnick 2015).

The bias is therefore introduced in what Haschke and Arnon (2020) call 'the second stage' of the data-generating process, in which the narratives are converted into rankings. Here we evaluate only the bias introduced in this mapping, rather than address what information is included in the initial drafting of the narratives. It is important to note that while a single entity, the State Department, ultimately publishes the TIP Reports, the process that generates the reports

involves multiple parties that have competing views. Thus it is unclear how closely the TIP Reports will mirror the trajectory of other human rights measurements created by independent third parties. The second mechanism potentially biasing the rankings in addition to an opaque creation process are the unique political consequences of rankings. These consequences create incentives to pre-emptively leverage rankings as political rewards or punishments. Report rankings, in contrast to most other standards-based GPIs, are legally tied to bilateral outcomes between the United States and its partners. In 2000, Congress passed the first comprehensive federal legislation to combat human trafficking, which states that the US government must withhold all non-humanitarian aid from Tier 3 states, including military assistance. Furthermore, US representatives at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are instructed to vote against or deny loans to any Tier 3 state. Since many states depend on such assistance and US allies tend to follow its lead on these votes, rankings become consequential for state outcomes and foreign policy.

A specific example of concern regarding bias in the report comes from practitioners who have complained about the TPP's role in creating politically biased rankings. The TPP is a now-defunct proposed trade agreement between twelve nations including the United States. The United States first agreed to enter negotiations in 2008, but most took place between 2010 until the process ended with US withdrawal in 2017. TPP negotiations coincided with an increased interest in economic ties to many Asian states (including Thailand, for example). NGOs have cited this concern about Asian report rankings while testifying to Congress. Speaking to a House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, Freedom House's president and former J/TIP director Mark Lagon warned of bias by pointing to cases like Malaysia. He said that 'the major controversy of the 2015 Report is the unjustified upgrade of Malaysia… the upgrade seems to

coincide more with desires to make Malaysia more eligible to join the TPP than the merits' (Lagon 2019). Human Rights First, an NGO, has also spoken out about bias in Malaysia's TIP Report (Human Rights First 2017). The organization is supporting a legislative reform proposed by Senator Marco Rubio (Rubio 2019); Senior Associate Annick Febrey argues that 'when politics interfere and allow even one or two countries' rankings to be inflated, the credibility of the entire report suffers' (First Human Rights 2017). A survey of the practitioner and academic work indicates that contestation occurs mainly around the reports' rankings, rather than narratives (Szep and Spetalnick 2015).

We derive two expectations. First, consistent with the extant literature, we expect changing standards of accountability to occur in how the narratives map to rankings over time. Secondly, diverging from the current literature's findings, we expect that political bias will be more likely to manifest in highly salient cases due to differences in the data-generating processes and the political consequences of the rankings, which, as tested in this project, can be observed in Asian states around the time of the TPP negotiations. To be clear, we are testing one possible manifestation of political bias; others are feasible but are outside the scope of this project.

Research Design

To test our expectations, we use a rolling window forecasting model based on a supervised machine-learning technique (Greene, Park and Colaresi 2018). The algorithm examines how the lexical features of the TIP Report narratives are mapped onto TIP Report rankings. The function is defined as $y_{it} = f_t(x_{it})$ where y_{it} refers to a TIP ranking for country $i \in (1, \ldots, N)$ at time $t \in (1, \ldots, T)$. x_{it} denotes a vector of lexical features. $f(\cdot)$ is a function that maps lexical features onto rankings. Once the function is trained on a specific set of reports, or the training set, we use it to predict the rankings of different reports. We then compare the accuracy of the predictions

based on different training periods of the data. This approach allows us to test for changes over time in the mapping of narratives to rankings. We do this first on the global sample to test for changing standards, and then we subset on cases for which we would expect political bias. If the results remain similar using both training sets, this would indicate that the main bias is changing standards of accountability.

We first split the data into a changing (rolling) in-window training set and a constant (fixed) out-window testing set. The in-window training set spans the early period reports (2001–2012), in 5-year increments of reports, to train the function to predict rankings based on the narratives' lexical features. We then test the predictions on the constant out-window testing set (out-of-sample testing).

Figure 1 illustrates the model. In Window 1, the narratives from 2001–2005 (a 5-year window) train the algorithm to predict the rankings. The trained algorithm then predicts the rankings of the most recent 5 years of reports, 2012–2017 – the out-window testing set. We then record the accuracy of the out-window prediction of the 2001–2005 in-window training set. This process is repeated eight times, and each iteration moves the in-window training set one year forward. In Figure 1 these are Window 2, Window 3 and so forth.
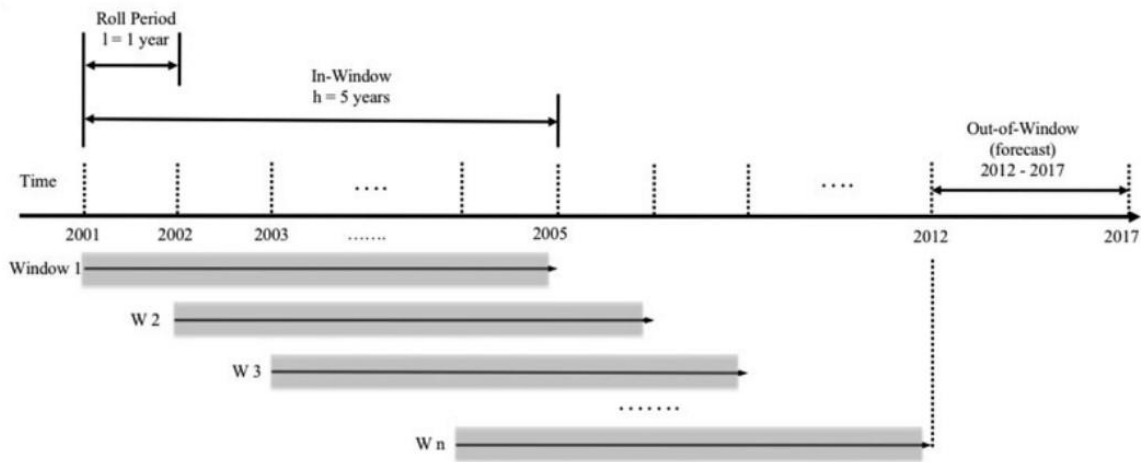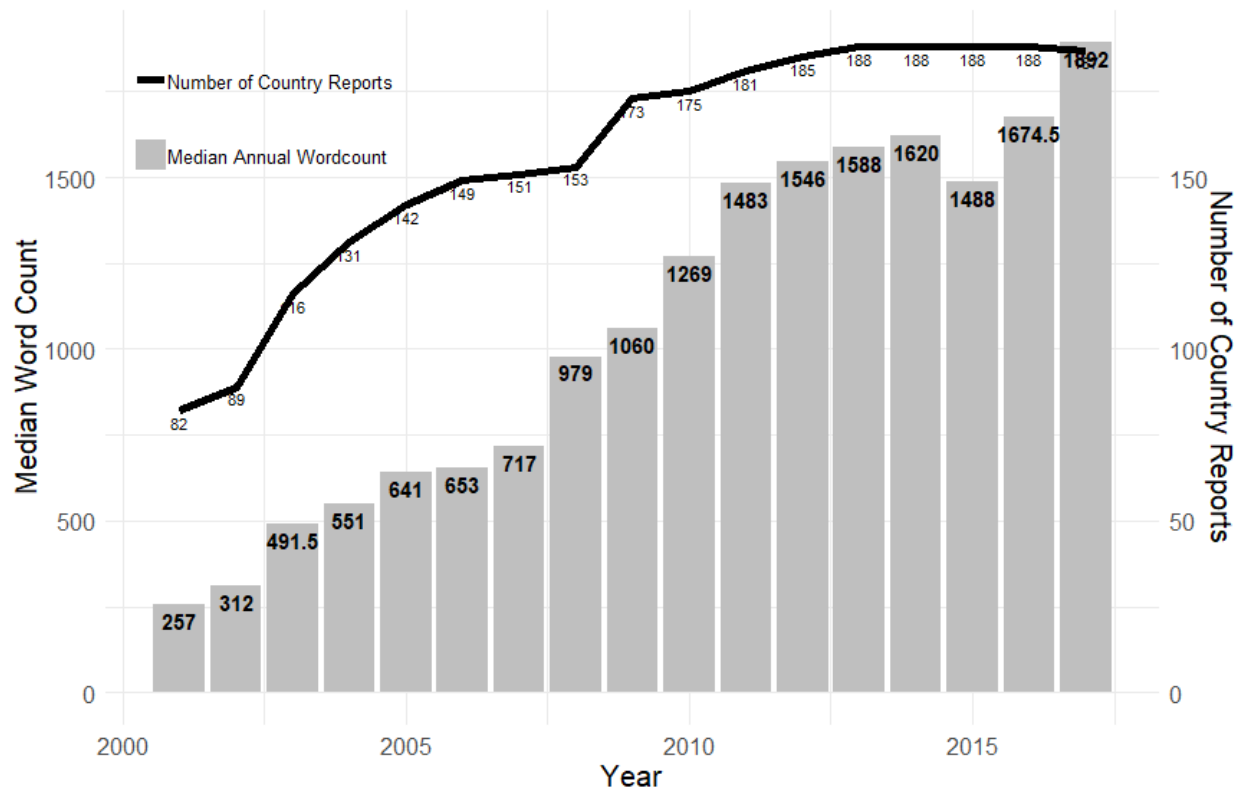
Figure 1.1. Fixed rolling window model

Figure 1.2. Changes in Coverage and Median Word Count of TIP Reports

Note: Shown are the annual median word counts of the TIP Reports, since 2001, and the number of countries covered. The left y-axis reports the median word counts and corresponds to the bar graphs. The right y-axis reports the number of countries covered, and corresponds to the thick black line.

The main evaluation metric to examine is the out-window accuracy. This measures the proportion of cases that the algorithm predicts correctly based on a specific in-window training set. Each of the eight 5-year in-window training sets produces a measure of out-window accuracy as reported in Figures 3 and 4 in the top panels. If the algorithm improves out-window accuracy over time, this would indicate that report standards are changing over time, since later reports more accurately predict contemporary reports than earlier ones. Put differently, if the out-window accuracy from the early in-window training sets is lower than the out-window accuracy from later in-windows, this is likely because the mapping of the narratives into rankings has substantively changed, which is what the algorithm is detecting. Analyzing the State Department's Human Rights Reports onto Political Terror Scale (PTS) rankings, Greene, Park and Colaresi (2018) find an increase of roughly 15–20 per cent in out-window accuracy and conclude that standards of accountability are changing. This large change in out-window accuracy serves as our benchmark for testing whether standards have changed in the TIP Report.

To test whether political bias is introduced into the report-to-rank mapping, we subset the sample to cases in which the reports are expected to be politically salient for the United States – Asia during and after the initiation of the TPP negotiations. If accountability standards are changing across the board for all countries, we should observe a similar pattern of out-window accuracy for this subset. Alternatively, if the out-window accuracy changes only around the period of the TPP, we can infer that the narrative-to-rank mapping changes in response to

political considerations. Because we expect political cajoling to occur only around the rankings, and narratives to remain unchanged, the algorithm should detect unexpected deviations from the mapping of narratives to rankings that did not occur in the global sample. To be clear, we expect that additional forms of political bias may also exist; the particular subset of cases we test simply represents one manifestation identified by practitioners. This test allows us to determine the feasibility of the claims of political bias.

The second metric reported for both the global and Asia-only samples is the in-window accuracy. We train the algorithm within the in-window training set, and test the accuracy of prediction within the window (5-fold cross-validation). In-window accuracy is similarly the proportion of cases predicted correctly. This metric tests whether there are changes in the algorithm's ability to learn and correctly predict over time. The third metric is bias, which is calculated as the average of differences between predicted and observed values. If the algorithm predicts all the observations correctly, bias is equal to zero.

We use a number of supervised machine-learning algorithms: Logistic Regression (LR), Naive Bayes (NB), Random Forest (RF), Support Vector Machine (SVM), and a majority vote ensemble classifier with a bag-of-words representation of lexical feature vectors (VC). We run a total of twenty-five models (each classifier with unigram, bigram, and trigram and either term frequency or term frequency inverse document frequency weighting).[1] For each of them we set aside the narratives from the 2013–2017 reports for an out-window testing set. We created a number of 5-year rolling windows.[2] For example, W1: 2001–2005, W2: 2002–2006, … W8:

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[1] For a full explication of the model see Greene, Park and Colaresi (2018).
[2] For robustness, we also run the same models with 3-year windows. We also run the forecasting model in the opposite direction, first training window W8, and then rolling the window backwards in time. The results remain largely unchanged and are consistent with the main findings reported.

2008–2012 are used for in-windows. Each of these is tested using the fixed out-window testing set (2013– 2017) after being trained for each rolling in-window.

If bias is introduced through changing standards alone, we expect both the global and Asia-only samples to show a large and consistent increase over time in the out-window accuracy. If bias is introduced through both changing standards of accountability and political biases, we expect to see an overall increasing trend of out-window accuracy in both samples, with larger variation around the out-window accuracy of in-window training sets around the period of the TPP (particularly post-2010). If only political bias is present, we expect to see a non-changing trend line of out-window accuracy in the global sample, but marked changes in the Asia-only sample, specifically around the TPP period.

Analysis

Figure 2 shows the changes that have occurred in the TIP Reports since they began in 2001. First notice the scope of reports: the number of countries covered expanded rapidly in the first five years, from 82 to 149, and by 2009 the reports covered nearly all countries. Secondly, the length of the reports has expanded dramatically. The median length nearly quadruples in the first eight years, and the median word count for later reports is consistently over 1,400. Additionally, the number of tiers has increased from three to four (1, 2, 2-watch list, and 3). Another important change is the professionalization of the reports over time. Early reports were short and included spotty coverage of countries, with little investment in production value. Later years include an introduction by the secretary of state and are more visually polished in their presentation and now include an additional tier option, 2-watch list.

These figures indicate that reports have increased in length and geographic coverage, which is consistent with Clark and Sikkink (2013) and Fariss (2014), who argue that increased

information leads to changes in standards of accountability. The implication is that, because the narratives contain more information, a country that scored a 2 in 2002 would be qualitatively different from the narratives of the reports that led to a ranking of 2 in 2012.
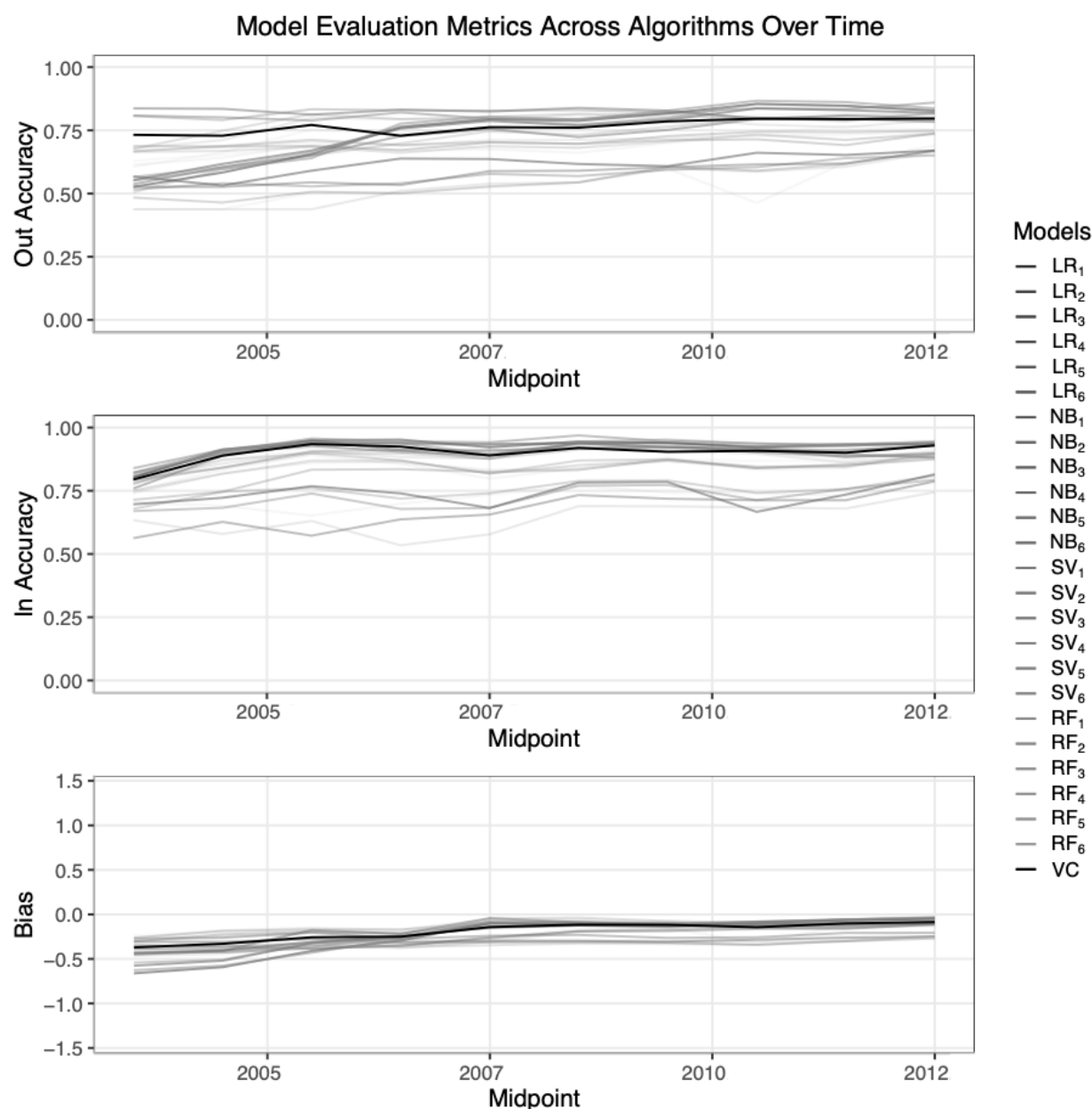

Figure 1.3. Accuracy and bias across windows – Global Sample

Figure 3 presents results that include every report issued between 2001–2017. The top panel reports the out-window accuracy over time, the middle panel reports in-window accuracy and the bottom panel reports bias. If standards of accountability are changing over time in TIP Reports, then the early reports are substantively different from later reports. As a result, the accuracy of predictions should change when the mapping function changes over time. In short, if standards of accountability are changing, we would expect to see a large increase (or decrease) in out-window accuracy over time.

As can be seen in the top panel, the out-window accuracy does increase slightly, but it is relatively stable over time. Examining the majority vote classifier, out-window accuracy improves over the entire period by roughly 3 per cent. Recall that in comparison, Greene, Park and Colaresi (2018) find that out-window accuracy improves by almost 20 per cent when examining a different set of human rights reports. The relatively small change in out-window accuracy in our results indicates that the standards of accountability in TIP Reports haven't changed much over time, if at all.

In the middle panel we report the in-window accuracy. Recall that this indicates whether we are over-fitting (or under-fitting) the models due to the level of difficulty of each in-window prediction. The middle panel also shows a relatively stable line, indicating that the models fit reasonably well and, more importantly, do so consistently. In the bottom panel we report the bias, which measures the average difference between the predicted and observed rankings. As the models improve performance (out-window accuracy increases), the differences between the predicted and actual rankings shrink. Thus the average biases get closer to zero. In the early period almost all classifiers are marked with bias, but they all improve over time and converge to zero. While the bias does approach zero, this early bias is quite low as well.

Have the accountability standards in the TIP Reports changed over time? These results indicate that this is not likely the case, as the reports' mapping of narratives to rankings remains fairly consistent over time. This is particularly interesting compared to the analysis by Greene, Park, and Colaresi (2018), who find that the PTS rankings, which are based on the State Department's Human Rights Reports, displayed significant changes in standards over time due to a shift in the informational environment. The TIP Reports, in contrast, don't show the same indications of overall change.

<u>Political Biases in TIP Report Rankings</u>

The expectation that bias will be present in only some rankings hinges on the argument that bias is incentivized in cases that are highly politically salient. To systematically test for political bias, we identify a set of cases that experienced temporal variation in the level of political salience. Specifically, we examine TIP Reports for Asian states and expect to find divergent patterns in how narratives map to rankings starting in 2010. Using the rankings in Asia as an expected focal point for bias stems from the claims of practitioners concerned with the process, and do not reflect any opinion on the part of the authors about relative human trafficking conditions within that region.

To test whether there are systematic changes in the reports we repeat the rolling-window exercise from earlier, but subset the reports only to Asian countries for the entire period. If the reports are not biased by geo-political considerations, the trend lines should remain similar to those in Figure 3. But if they are influenced by political biases, we should observe a marked change in the out-window accuracy in the period around the TPP negotiations, particularly 2010 and later. We follow the quantitative test with qualitative evidence of political bias in TIP Report ranking outcomes in Asia during the same time period.

Figure 4 presents the results following the same methodology as in Figure 3. The top panel reports out-window accuracy, the middle panel reports in-window accuracy and the bottom panel reports bias. Notice that the out-window accuracy changes dramatically for Asian countries, jumping from an initial 0.5 probability of accurate predictions in the early period to around 0.75 by the end. Importantly, the out-window accuracy remains relatively flat from the early period, and only begins to change around 2010 – when the TPP became politically salient. Similarly, the in-window accuracy, which measures the algorithm's ability to learn consistently within each in-window, falls drastically in the lead-up to the TPP negotiations. Lastly, while the models' bias converges in the early period, in the lead-up to the TPP we see a drastic divergence of the model's bias.

Model Evaluation Metrics Across Algorithms Over Time
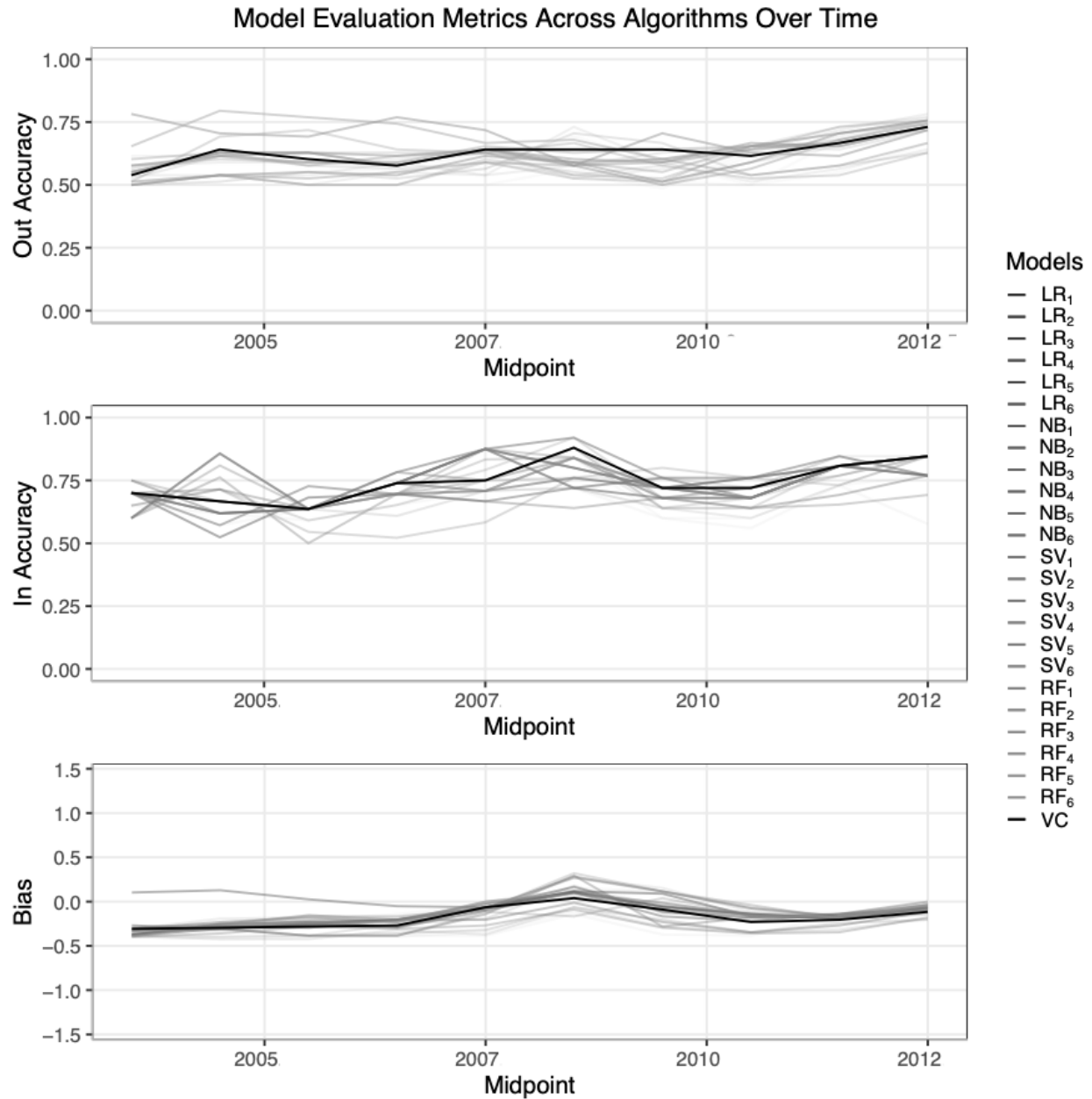
Figure 1.4. Accuracy and bias across windows - Asia only

These findings indicate that the rankings in Asia are markedly different from all other rankings during the TPP negotiations as the United States' economic relationships in the region evolved. While the overall trends between all countries, as seen in Figure 3, and only Asian countries, are similarly flat in the early years of the report, there are distinct differences around the period of TPP negotiations that are not present in the global analysis. Consistent with the

expectation of the geo-political bias argument, we find that the changes in the TIP Reports correspond to the geo-political interests of the United States. Note that these results do not indicate whether the rankings issued were better or worse than what should have been expected.

A brief examination of the qualitative record provides examples of political bias in the reporting and ranking process for Asian states in recent years. For example, there was a notable backlash between 2013–2016 when Thailand was ranked on the Tier 2 Watch List or given waivers for poor performance in the report. This came after the country was downgraded to Tier 3 in 2014 when the military (seen as unfriendly to the United States) seized control of the government (Reuters 2019). Relations between the new Thai government and the United States eventually thawed, though trafficking experts report that Thailand still has high human trafficking rates (Gharib and Northam 2016; Reuters 2019). Thailand has faced persistent human trafficking problems, especially in the fishing and seafood industries, yet their TIP Report rankings track with changes in US–Thai relations.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The TIP Report is a highly utilized source of panel data on human trafficking and state responses globally because the narratives are a primary source for other datasets. It is therefore important to evaluate the quality of the reports given that the rankings have meaningful policy consequences. To evaluate the quality of the TIP Report rankings as they relate to the report narratives, we ask two questions: does bias exist in TIP Reports and, if so, what type of bias is present? Looking at changing standards of accountability and political bias, we argue that the latter is more likely to manifest in the TIP Report due to the opacity of the report creation process and because of the tangible consequences for poorly ranking states.

Using a machine-learning technique, we tested the two expectations using the TIP Report narratives and rankings from 2001–2017. The global sample, used to test the changing standards of accountability argument, finds that standards have remained relatively consistent over time. Early narratives are just as effective at training an algorithm to predict recent rankings as those from later years. The results indicate that there have been no meaningful changes in the standards of accountability over time on a global level.

Yet this result alone does not address whether geo-political motivations play a role in determining rank outcomes, because we expected that highly salient cases are where political bias should present. We test the claims made by practitioners that the negotiations surrounding the TPP and broader changes in the economic and political interests of the United States in Asia led the report to be used as a political tool in the region. The results presented here are consistent with the claims made by some practitioners that the rankings contain an element of geo-political bias. Narratives from reports for Asian states in 2010 and later are meaningfully better at training the algorithm to predict the most recent rankings relative to the early years of the report, which indicates that political bias is at work.

This project is the first in a broader agenda to evaluate the TIP Reports. We suspect that other forms of political bias may exist, and future work on this topic should investigate the presence of bias from alliances or trade partnerships. Additionally, the results presented here do not indicate whether biased rankings are usually better or worse than an expected outcome; future studies should therefore determine whether the rankings are used more often as carrots or sticks.

Given the serious consequences of the TIP Reports, for both broader political outcomes and the lived experiences of people harmed by human trafficking, political scientists have an

important role to play in moving the anti-trafficking research agenda forward. Our contribution represents an important step in that direction by evaluating the linkages between report narratives and rankings. We demonstrate that there are flaws in the way narratives are translated into rankings. As a scholarly community, we need to call for greater clarity and standardization in the way TIP Reports are constructed.[3]

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[3] Supplementary material. Data replication sets are available in Harvard Dataverse at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ QUNOJS and online appendices are available at https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000344.

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Paper 2: Examining How Gender Equality in Political Spaces Influences Global Human

Trafficking Outcomes

Gender equality in political settings, particularly as manifested by the inclusion of women in formal and informal political spaces such as elected office and civil society groups, has been touted as a key pathway to better outcomes across a broad range of indicators related to human progress. This claim is especially prevalent in the policymaking and practitioner realm, with many NGOs and IGOs explicitly committed to increasing the number of women who are represented in government office. For example, the National Democratic Institute argues that "evidence is strong that as more women are elected, countries experience higher standards of living; the priorities of families, women and minorities are addressed; and confidence in democracy goes up" (National Democratic Institute 2021). Many organizations and institutions now offer programs specifically designed to increase the number of women holding elected office with the promise that their presence in office will help states, and especially women in those states, thrive (She Should Run 2021, Represent Women 2015).

Many important institutional stakeholders believe that gender-equal political spaces may be especially well-equipped to address issues that disproportionately harm women and girls, including human trafficking. This leads to the central question addressed by this project: does gender equality and the inclusion of women in political spaces influence human trafficking-related outcomes for states? While women in politics can be observed in many ways, this can primarily be thought of in two domains of informal and formal political influence. Informal political spaces center around civil society and community organizing, where women are especially active in the anti-trafficking space. Formal political spaces are focused on state

positions, and this project is especially interested in the role that women play when elected to legislative office.

Essentially, this project tests the proposition that the inclusion of more women in elected office will lead to better outcomes in the fight against human trafficking on the global scale. While practitioners seem to share a widespread belief that increased numbers of women in elected office will lead to better outcomes, the scholarly record is more muddled on whether women in office legislate in a significantly different way than men or bring about meaningful policy change simple because of the gender composition of a government (Bump 2015, Wängnerud 2009).

Human trafficking is a gendered issue that disproportionately harms women and girls. We know that increasing women's representation in government can (but is not guaranteed to) lead to more robust government responses to a variety of issues, whether than is due to the power of descriptive or substantive representation. This is expected to be especially present in formal political spaces, such as elected office. I expect that increased proportions of women in national legislatures will lead to better, more comprehensive government responses to human trafficking, as well as lower trafficking rates overall. These hypotheses are tested primarily using data from the Trafficking in Persons Report, which has provided information on government responses to human trafficking for more than two decades now with nearly complete global coverage.

Weak to no support for the expectations is found, indicating that the inclusion of women in legislative office alone is not enough to change anti-trafficking policy or trafficking rates in a meaningful way. This suggests that public and institutional expectations about the ability of women in office to change anti-trafficking outcomes should be tempered. This finding makes two important contributions. First, this project increases our understanding of what tools will be

effective at addressing human trafficking. Second, the findings of this endeavor add to debate on descriptive and substantive representation, and under what conditions elected officials are actually able to influence policy change in a meaningful way.

The remainder of the paper proceeds in the following sections. First, human trafficking is theorized as a gendered human rights violation, which sets up the theoretical expectation that women in politics will be especially well-equipped to address the violation. Second, the literature on the effect of women in legislative office is explored through the lens of the debate on descriptive and substantive representation. The hypotheses are laid out in the next section, which include expectations on a range of government outcomes related to human trafficking. Fourth, the research design is described, followed by the results of the data analysis. The results of the analysis are then discussed. I then describe next steps for research that will better test the theory, including advances made in my own collaborative work to follow this dissertation. Important recommendations are made to broaden and deepen the data used for both the independent and dependent variables. Finally, I conclude with a summary and discussion of policy relevance of this work.

Human Trafficking as a Gendered Human Rights Violation

Human trafficking affects all genders, but women are disproportionately harmed. Human trafficking is simultaneously a gendered topic and one that is a women's issue, and this means two distinct but related things. First, while people of all genders and orientations are harmed by trafficking, a person's likelihood of being trafficked and the form of trafficking they experience is often predicated on their perceived gender and societal gender stereotypes. This explains why best estimates indicate that women and girls are disproportionately likely to be trafficked (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021), and this disproportionate harm is especially stark

when looking at specific subtypes of human trafficking including sex trafficking and domestic servitude (Global Slavery Index 2018). Within conflict settings, men and boys are disproportionately likely to be victims of forced or child soldiering, but women and girls are more likely to experience sex trafficking by armed forces and are also often forced take on non-combat and combat roles within armed struggles (Argibay 2003, Flórez and Villacampa 2018). Overall, the evidence is clear that on a global scale women and girls make up a majority of individuals being trafficked, making it both gendered and a women's issue.[4]

There is an unsurprising reason that women and girls are disproportionately likely to be trafficked: traffickers do not target individuals to traffick at random, but rather act based on target vulnerability and external demand. Inadequate support and opportunities in many aspects of life leave women and girls especially vulnerable to trafficking. There are consistent findings that poverty and exposure to crime and corruption are top predictors of vulnerability to trafficking, both at the national level (Bales 2007) and individual level (Onyejekwe 2005). For example, in Nigeria, poverty is found to be a root cause of human trafficking, but the relationship between trafficking and poverty is further complicated by how victims experience crime and corruption, which often cut off access to avenues for justice or assistance (Onyejekwe 2005). Traffickers are aware that poor individuals, especially poor women and girls, are unlikely to gain access to resources or information that would prevent trafficking from occurring, and traffickers use that knowledge to their advantage.

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[4] It is important to note that most research on trafficking primarily explores how it relates to men/boys and women/girls, thus assuming a gender binary and leaving gender non-conforming or non-binary individuals out of the conversation. While I do describe trafficking as a women's issue, I simultaneously argue that it is a gendered issue and individuals of all gender identities can be harmed by trafficking in different ways that are shaped by social stereotypes, stigmas, and expectations related to gender expression and identity. I also use language in this paper that conflates gender and sex by using the terms women and female interchangeably. This decision does not reflect my own views, but rather I repeat the exact terms used in other research when appropriate and use gender terms when writing my own work.

Describing human trafficking as a women's issue goes much deeper than the simple observation that women and girls are victimized at higher rates generally than men and boys. Human trafficking is also a women's issue because the predictors of trafficking are other social problems that disproportionately harm women and children due to a lack of social protections.

In addition to human trafficking being a women's issue, recall that it is also a gendered issue more broadly. This means that societal understandings of human trafficking and responses to the violations are driven by beliefs about gender norms and gender stereotypes. While there is great variation in how different types of trafficking affect individuals based on their gender, disproportionate attention is usually given to sex trafficking in research and in NGO responses to human trafficking. Sex trafficking is often conflated with all types of trafficking in both research and practice (Cockbain and Bowers 2019), and people often assume that those who are harmed by sex trafficking are women. Thoughtlessly lumping all types of trafficking into one category and assuming all survivors are women is harmful for both policy and programmatic outcomes, as well as for academic research. Failing to disaggregate data on trafficking can lead to suboptimal anti-trafficking programming; boys and men are often left out of the conversation, male survivors may receive fewer options for assistance (Cockbain and Bowers 2019), and often face damaging assumptions and stereotypes about what a survivor "should" look like. Additionally, non-binary individuals often face social exclusion, stereotypes, or stigmas due to their gender expression and identity and this is true both generally and how it relates to any trafficking experience of non-binary individuals. While this project primarily focuses on understanding the role that women play in anti-trafficking policy formation, it is important to note that people of all gender identities can experience trafficking and be part of policy solutions.

Additionally, women are substantially overrepresented in the staff ranks of the nonprofit work sector generally, and especially within organizations that are dedicated to social services (which includes many anti-trafficking NGOs) (HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector 2008, Themudo 2009, Lanfranchi and Narcy 2013). This has been found to be true across many portions of the world, though Europe and North America are overrepresented in this research. Indeed, the anti-trafficking NGO sector is overwhelmingly staffed by women based on anecdotal observations from years of working alongside anti-trafficking nonprofits. This is important to note here, because it indicates that women are more likely to have experience in anti-trafficking work and are thus best positioned to serve as norm entrepreneurs in governmental responses to human trafficking. Women are more likely to have the experience needed to develop and implement anti-trafficking policies as well as policy that addresses other social services that help remedy the root causes of human trafficking. If there is any pipeline from NGO or IGO experience into formal political spaces, then it would follow that women would, on average, have better background knowledge on how to advocate for anti-trafficking policy and are expected to fill that role of addressing a women's issue like human trafficking.

Women's Political Participation

Because women are uniquely well-equipped to provide leadership in the anti-trafficking space, I theorize that their participation in political spaces will be especially important for the develop of anti-trafficking policies by states. However, the inclusion of women in political life is not something that is constant or ubiquitous, and women's political participation can be observed through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms. Formal avenues for participation include government positions, especially within elected offices. These formal venues where women's political participation can be observed is the primary focus of this current project (and will be

addressed in the following section), but it is also important to note the ways in which women can shape policy through informal participatory spaces.

Specifically, women's inclusion and participation in civil society is an informal way for these actors to influence the state policymaking process. While we know that women are often leaders within the NGO or CSO space working against human trafficking, I theorize that two criteria must be met for women's participation in civil society to effectively shape anti-trafficking policy outcomes. First, women must hold meaningful roles within civil society organizations, particularly within CSO leadership. Token spaces reserved for women in CSO will not be an effective avenue for their expertise to influence policy outcomes. Second, civil society and CSOs as a whole must have true independence from the state in order to meaningfully shape state policy outcomes in a way that is visibly different than what would have occurred in the absence of the civil society actors (Carothers and Barndt 1999). In other words, civil society actors can be effective in shaping policy outcomes precisely because they are external and separate from the state and represent different interests from the state. Women acting as members of CSOs have more independence to push for potentially unpopular or costly anti-trafficking policies than women in formal political spaces like elected office, who must also consider broader constituent and party needs. Civil society actors can provide much-needed specialized and technical knowledge to state officials, and this is an important way that women working in CSO anti-trafficking spaces can influence policy outcomes if meaningful participation opportunities are available (Lottholz 2021). Additionally, civil society actors can work to hold states accountable by acting as "watchdogs" and raise the alarm if policies are not passed or implemented in appropriate ways (Champagne, Sebrié and Schoj 2010). For a topic like human trafficking that must compete for political attention with many other issues, it is important that

independent groups maintain pressure and visibility on states so that progress is made in anti-trafficking policies.

<u>Women in Elected Office: Descriptive and Substantive Representation</u>

If human trafficking is understood as a women's issue in politics, then the expectation is that an increase in the number of women in formal political spaces, such as elected office, would lead to an increase in the visibility of human trafficking as a political issue. This matches what has been observed as human trafficking has entered discussions of human rights in a more significant way in the last three decades. As women's representation in political spaces broadly and legislative bodies specifically has increased markedly in the past century in most parts of the world, so has attention to what effect their presence may have on what issues are taken up by the political bodies to which they are elected, and how their presence influences policy outcomes at the domestic and international level (Melander 2005, Horowitz et al 2015, Welch 1985, Wang 2013, Wängnerud 2009). This line of inquiry was first developed with a focus on the US congress in the 1970s-1990s, and scholars found that women tend to have more liberal voting patterns and their presence leads to an increase in the amount of attention given to issues that are considered women's issues (Welch 1985, Vega and Firestone 1995, Wängnerud 2009).

Looking at foreign policy, research has produced inconsistent and sometimes contradictory evidence for how the inclusion of women in politics shapes policy outcomes. Looking specifically at conflict outcomes, several authors find that increasing the number of women in elected parliamentary office is associated with a lower likelihood of entering a conflict and more peaceful behavior (Dahlum and Wig 2020, Koch and Fulton 2011, Melander 2005). On the other hand, some authors report mixed findings when also looking at women in executive or state leadership positions. According to Melander, female state leadership has no statistically

significant effect on the likelihood of conflict, while more gender-equal societies, measured either in terms of female representation in parliament or the ratio of female-to-male higher education attainment, are associated with lower levels of intrastate armed conflict (2005). Koch and Fulton find that increases in women's legislative representation decreases conflict behavior and defense spending, while the presence of women executives increases both (2011), which indicates that the presence of women in politics does not have a monotonic influence on policy and must be understood in the broader political context and the types of roles that women fill. Similarly, Horowitz and his co-authors use a massive dataset of over 2400 leaders and find that gender does not seem to matter; an executive will not avoid war simply because she is a woman (2015).

Over time, these findings have been replicated and expanded by examining women's representation in other parts of the world and there are consistent findings that increases in women's representation in parliamentary offices leads to increases in women's issues being raised on the domestic level (Devlin and Elgie 2008, Wängnerud 2009, Wang 2013). However, raising the issue of human trafficking, or any other women's issue, is not enough to guarantee that there are meaningful changes to the way a government deals with the topic. While the presence of women in elected office is consistently found to have some influence on what issues are brought before a legislative body, there has been inconsistent and limited evidence that the presence of women changes policy outcomes in a major way (Wang 2013, Devlin and Elgie 2008, Wängnerud 2009, Curtin 2008).

For example, women elected to parliament in Rwanda shared that women's issues are more likely to be raised by women because of their increase in numbers in office, but that they have not seen swift, substantial changes to policy outcomes as a result (Devlin and Elgie 2008).

Similarly, Wang finds that, in the case of Uganda, increased women's representation in parliament alone is not enough to explain advances in policy outcomes, and that other important factors include "the role of the women's caucus in Parliament, the support of male legislators, and relationships between female legislators and actors in civil society and the aid community." (Wang 2013, 113). On the other hand, some findings do provide evidence that women in office leads to different policy outcomes. For example, Bratton and Ray find that more women elected at the local level led to better provision of childcare options in Norway (Bratton and Ray 2002). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that the presence of women in legislative bodies is linked to an increase in human trafficking being on the radar for those chambers, but whether their presence will lead to better policy outcomes is very much in question and at the crux of this project.

To explain why women in parliamentary office leads to different outcomes, two distinct but linked theoretical approaches have been advanced, descriptive and substantive representation (Wängnerud 2009, Pitkin 1967). In this context, descriptive representation refers to the idea that an elected official's characteristics mirror their constituents (for example, the proportion of women in congress approximating the proportion of women in the population) (Pitkin 1967), while substantive representation refers to an elected official's capacity to act in the interest of those they are representing (Wängnerud 2009). Phillips argues that the two types of representation are linked, and that there should not be a false choice between descriptive representation (the politics of presence) against substantive representation (the politics of ideas) (Phillips 1995). She notes that both are important and make distinct contributions to political life in a democracy (Phillips 1995). When working together, descriptive and substantive representation complement one another and should not be pitted against one another because each is a necessary but insufficient condition for ideal policy outcomes.

Both descriptive and substantive representation would lead to the expectation that more women in elected office will lead to better human trafficking-related outcomes. Women are more likely to address issues that lead to underlying vulnerabilities to human trafficking. For example, women are more likely to legislate on "women's issues" like health care and housing. Thus, if we have more women in power it should lead to increased legislation on issues that contribute to human trafficking vulnerabilities, leading to fewer people being vulnerable and trafficked when more women are in power.

In the following sections of this paper in which the hypotheses, data, and analysis are described, it is unfortunate that the data available do not offer differentiated measures that capture descriptive and substantive representation. Theoretically, women should be best-positioned to advocate for anti-trafficking policy, and this could be driven by descriptive or substantive representation but the theory developed here posits that both play a role. If the findings suggest that higher proportions of women in political office are associated with better state outcomes related to human trafficking, that will not distinguish between whether that result is being driven by descriptive or substantive representation. However, if the data do not show that relationship then it suggests that simply testing for outcomes based on the proportion of women in legislative office is a better test of only descriptive representation and if descriptive representation alone is not enough to drive change.

While I am theoretically interested in the inclusion of women in political spaces broadly speaking, this project focuses on the role of women in formal political participation. Specifically, I expect that elected women in legislative bodies will be uniquely positioned to advance anti-trafficking policies, and that legislative bodies with higher proportions of women have better chances of developing and implementing meaningful anti-trafficking policies. Theoretically

though, women in other political spaces such as civil society and community organizing spaces should also be expected to influence the anti-trafficking policy adoption process.

Another potential complication to the story is gender quotas in legislatures. This project does not fully take them into account due to data limitations, but it is important to note the theoretical role that gender quotas might play (Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2012). Many states now require that a certain number or proportion of legislative seats are held by women, known generally as gender quotas. If a woman is only in office due to it being a quota-seat, and her colleagues are otherwise hostile or indifferent to her work, will she be in a position to successfully advocate for any cause, including anti-trafficking efforts? The empirical evidence on gender quotas is mixed, with some finding that they can actually cause a backlash against women, while others find that the quotas can improve outcomes for women (Pande and Ford 2012). In other words, it would be best theoretically to be able to control for whether a person's position is the result of a quota, or at least whether states have gender quotas, but I don't have the data collected to do that. This is an aspect of this project that is very underdeveloped at the moment.

It is worth noting that the theory developed in this paper does not distinguish between various subtypes of human trafficking. While considering human trafficking as a monolithic human rights abuse is problematic in many cases, that is the approach taken in this project for two reasons, one is theory-driven and one is data-driven. First, because there is evidence that policymakers and practitioners often approach anti-trafficking work as a monolith or focus efforts on sex trafficking (Cockbain and Bowers 2019), it makes sense to evaluate their efforts in that same fashion. Additionally, legal statutes against various types of trafficking often apply to traffickees of all genders (though in practice that is not always the case and access to justice is

not equitable). Second, this project relies on data drawn from the Trafficking in Persons Report from the State Department. Due to the structure of the reports, the data that are used in this project are not disaggregated by gender or trafficking sub-type, but instead looking at states' responses to trafficking as a whole. Therefore, it follows that their efforts will be evaluated in that way. Still, it is important to note that disaggregating these data would be a fruitful future endeavor.

Hypotheses

The theoretical connections outlined above lead to several distinct hypotheses to be tested empirically. Hypotheses 1 speaks directly to the relationship between the proportion of women in national legislative office and the strength of state responses to human trafficking and predicts a positive relationship between the two.

> *H1: States with higher proportions of women in national legislative offices will have more robust governmental responses to human trafficking.*

On the other hand, hypothesis 2 predicts a negative correlation between the proportion of women in national legislative office and the level of exploitation within a state. The hypothesis is split into two sections because the degree of trafficking occurring within a state can be conceptualized as a proportion of the population as well as the absolute number of individuals being trafficked. Hypotheses 2a and 2b are stated below.

> *H2a: States with higher proportions of women in legislative offices will have lower proportions of the population being trafficked or exploited.*

> *H2b: States with higher proportions of women in legislative offices will have fewer individuals being trafficked or exploited.*

The key difference between the hypotheses is that the first hypothesis examines government responses to human trafficking, while the third looks at the number of individuals or

proportion of individuals being trafficked within a state. It is possible (though unlikely if policies are effective and fully implemented) that states might have more robust responses to human trafficking but have failed to meaningfully reduce the number of victims, which is why it is important to test for both types of outcomes.

Research Design

The independent variable for all three hypotheses is the percentage of women holding elected office in a state-year in a national parliament as provided by the World Bank (World Bank 2021). The data offer global coverage and span the years 2000-2020. Specifically, these data cover the proportion of women elected when a state has a single-chamber parliament, or the proportion of women elected to the lower chamber when a state has a multi-chamber design. Table 1, presented below, provides summary statistics for the data on the percentage of women in these legislative offices. In the results presented later, the dependent variable has been lagged by two years for all hypotheses.[5] This has been done for two reasons for the first hypothesis. First, it often takes a good bit of time for newly-elected representatives to author, propose, and pass legislation. Thus, it is appropriate, for example, to evaluate the government's responses to human trafficking in 2018 based on who held elected office in 2016. Second, the data that will be used as the dependent variables for tests of hypotheses 1 and 2 are collected over ranges of times that do not neatly fit the calendar year, meaning that the measures of government responses to human trafficking in 2018 actually include data from part of 2017 and part of 2018, making it most fair to look at who held office in the year prior to the data being collected.

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[5] Please see the appendix for the results of a robustness check using a one-year lag. No substantively different outcome was found.

Table 2.1: Summary Statistics for the Percentage of Women in Parliament (World Bank 2021)

Min	Max	Mean	Variance	SD	N
0	63.75	17.8662	129.3040	11.3711	3654

There is an additional justification for the two-year lag for testing both parts of the third hypothesis. It often takes even more time for government policies and laws to result in changes to people's lived experiences. Thus, for hypotheses 2a and 2b the independent variable has been lagged by two years in order to give more time for women in the legislature to influence policy changes and for those changes to result in fewer (or more) individuals being trafficked.

Recall hypothesis 1, which lays out the expectation that states with higher proportions of women in office will have more robust government responses to human trafficking. The dependent variable, government responses to human trafficking, is operationalized as the rank a state receives from the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report from the US State Department. Produced annually since 2001, the TIP Report provides a rank for nearly all states on a four-tier system (tiers include 1, 2, 2 Watch-List, and 3), in addition to a narrative report about each government. It is crucial to understand that a state's ranking is not based on the severity of human trafficking within a country, but rather on the strength of the steps a government is taking to eliminate human trafficking. Of course, these severity of trafficking and strength of government response may be linked to one another (and should, normatively speaking) but for the purpose of this research these are understood to be separate concerns.

States' rankings on the TIP Report are based on how they meet the standards laid out in the TVPA, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). The TVPA, while a domestic federal law in the US, aligns closely with the Palermo Protocol, which is the standard developed by the United Nations. The Palermo Protocol was adopted by the United Nations in 2000 and requires that ratifying states criminalize human trafficking, develop anti-trafficking laws in line with the protocol, and provide support and assistance to survivors of trafficking. As of September of 2021, 179 states have signed on as parties to the Palermo Protocol. Thus, while the dependent variable for the first hypothesis is taken from data based on domestic law in the US, that standard is in accord with the most relevant international law and standard.

A rank of 1 on the TIP Report indicates that a government fully meets the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Tier 2 indicates that a government is not fully compliant with the TVPA's standards but is making an effort to get in compliance. In 2004 the State Department added the additional category of Tier 2-Watch List, which is reserved for states that require special scrutiny due to inadequate efforts to improve their standing or disproportionately weak efforts to mitigate increased trafficking in their state. A state on the watch list is supposed to be automatically moved to a rank of 3 after failure to improve over two cycles, but implementation of this has been imperfect and states sometimes receive waivers to circumvent this.

A rank of 3 on the TIP Report, the worst ranking possible, invokes restrictions on financial assistance to those states and indicates that a state does not meet the minimum standards laid out by the TVPA and the government is not taking meaningful steps to do so. In practice, this often indicates that a government is complicit in human trafficking or purposefully turns a blind eye to it. The report is released mid-year, and each cycle includes information from

part of the previous calendar year as well as the report's calendar year. Thus, using a lagged measure of women in parliament is appropriate to go along with using the annual data from the TIP Report.

The TIP Report data is chosen as an indicator for the dependent variable for hypothesis 1 because it is the most comprehensive and consistent source of information on government responses to human trafficking globally. However, it is reasonable to critique the contents of the reports due to potential political bias. The US State Department is not an independent actor and may have incentives to rank states based on politicized criteria other than a government's handling of human trafficking. Additionally, even if intentional political bias does not exist, it is true that the report is developed and approved by the perspective of elites in the US and may not reflect understandings of anti-trafficking work and human rights advocacy found in other contexts.

For example, the TIP Report now ranks the US government (after years of failing to do so) but routinely overlooks prison labor in prisons run by federal and state-level governments, which is widely considered a form of human trafficking by many anti-trafficking practitioners and activists. Additionally, the TIP Report often downplays the responsibility of countries (including the US) that receive goods at the end of a supply chain that is produced by forced or child labor, rather than holding both sending and receiving states accountable. All this is to say, there is good reason to think that the data provided by the TIP Report are a flawed measure of how other governments respond to human trafficking.

Despite the flaws of the TIP Report, there is likewise good reason to still use the TIP Report data for this project. As the most comprehensive and consistent source of data over the span of two decades, it is better than other options available. Additionally, there is empirical

evidence that political bias within the TIP Report rankings is limited rather than ubiquitous. While there is evidence that political bias plays a role in how Asian states are ranked for some years, the process of mapping the report narratives to the resulting scores has remained consistent over time, even as the length and coverage of the reports has expanded greatly (Harmon, Arnon and Park 2020). The narratives contained in the TIP Report are consistent in how they map to tier rankings throughout the two decades of report creation globally, but this process is biased when looking at outcomes specifically for Asian states. This indicates that, while the report data are imperfect, those imperfections are fairly consistent over time on a global scale.

For the TIP Report data used in this project, 1637 state-year observations received a ranking of 2 out of a total sample size of *n=*3384, which means the ranking of 2 was the mode. For the histogram provided in Figure 1, states that receive a ranking of tier 2-Watch List are represented by the number 4 for clarity. The most uncommon ranking is tier 3, with 388 observations. Statistics for this variable such as mean or standard deviation are not reported because they are not substantively meaningful given the structure of the data.

Figure 2.1: TIP Report Rankings Summary

Histogram of TIP Report Rankings
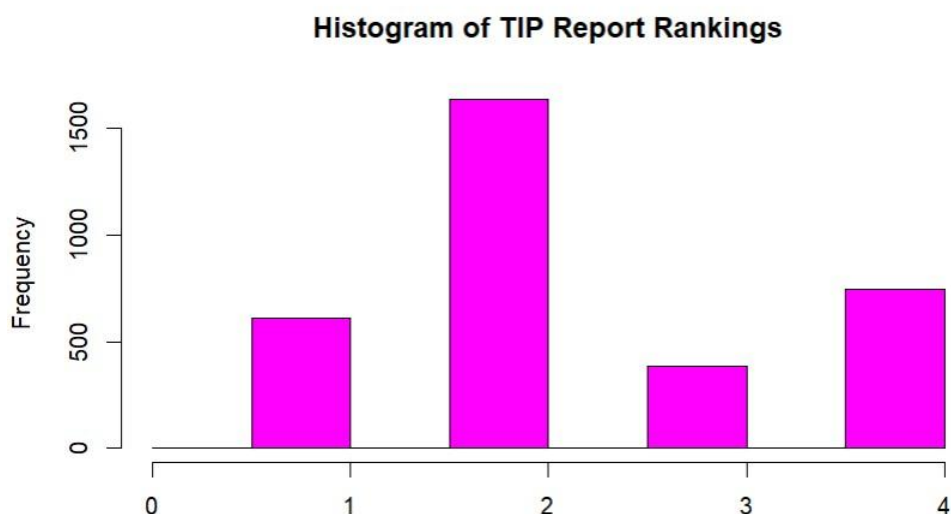
While the first hypothesis seeks to evaluate how well governments respond to human trafficking depending on the proportion of women in office, hypotheses 2a and 2b change direction and look to the actual trafficking conditions within a state. Recall that the expectation for hypothesis 2 is that states with a higher proportion of women elected to parliament will have lower rates or lower absolute numbers of cases of human trafficking, or, in other words, better trafficking outcomes. This independent variable of trafficking rates is far harder to measure than the independent variables for the first two hypotheses. This is due to the hidden nature of human trafficking; while governments are eager to publicize their anti-trafficking efforts, traffickers do everything they can to keep their violations out of sight from those who would eliminate it. States themselves (versus illicit organizations) also often directly or indirectly perpetrate human trafficking and are not keen to advertise it.

Despite these challenges, a serious effort has been made to measure and quantify an estimated number of persons being trafficked globally. The Global Slavery Index (GSI) from the

Walk Free Foundation is one such effort, and in 2018 they produced a global prevalence estimate that covered nearly all countries in the world (Global Slavery Index 2018). The GSI measure comprises two sub-estimates for forced labor and forced marriage. Within the sub-estimate for forced labor three categories are included that are forced labor in the private economy, forced sexual exploitation, and state-imposed forced labor (Global Slavery Index 2018). The effort that went into the GSI data collection process is staggering: more than 71,000 people were interviewed with detailed surveys across 48 countries that represent over half of the world's population. Cases of human trafficking were identified in all states covered. Extrapolations from these extensive surveys were then used to create prevalence estimates of human trafficking globally, and this prevalence data are what are used here in this project.

One challenge of using the GSI prevalence data is that the numbers are generated through a process that incorporates many factors that would commonly be included in a model as control variables, and so one cannot simply use the GSI prevalence data in a regression and also add in those controls.[6] The GSI prevalence scores rely on the survey data, as well as information about risk factors for trafficking on both an individual and country level. Individual-level risk factor indicators include age, gender, marital status, education, urban/rural, employment, life evaluation, business ownership, and the ability to live on one's current income (Global Slavery Index 2018). Country-level risk factors from the GSI Vulnerability Model were also included for 35 indicators that range from the presence of conflict, to corruption, to the GINI coefficient just

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[6] This challenge comes up with both hypotheses where the data providing the dependent variables incorporates measures that might be used as right hand variables (controls). This also creates a barrier to using these data in a model that uses country-year fixed effects, for example. However, some of my later work does address this issue to an extent. As discussed later in this paper, I work with two co-authors to test the same expectation using more detailed, disaggregated data. We use data on specific anti-trafficking policies/state interventions rather than overarching measures like those provided by the TIP Report and the GSI. We are then able to control for things like GDP, population, and other variables one might expect. We still find that increasing the representation of women in legislative office does not consistently lead to higher or faster adoption rates of anti-trafficking policy.

to name a few (see full list in footnote).[7] Using this information for both the aggregated individual and country-level risk factors, the GSI team then extrapolated prevalence scores for essentially all countries using a method that looked at how much a country's risk-score deviated from the average regional risk score.

One important takeaway from the GSI work is that the prevalence of human trafficking is higher than many suspected, especially in states that typically rank well on the TIP Report. This bolsters the expectation that it is possible that the results for hypotheses 1 and 2a and 2b will be inconsistent with one another since women in legislative office may be able to initiate better policies that result in better TIP Report rankings for states but have little influence over the number or proportion of people being harmed by human trafficking.

The estimated prevalence of human trafficking for each state in 2018 as a proportion of each state's population is used as the dependent variable for hypothesis 2a as measured by the Global Slavery Index. Similarly, the total estimated number of individuals being trafficked in a state is used as the dependent variable for hypothesis 2.b. A proportion of a population being trafficked seems like the more fair measure to hold a state to, but the absolute number of individuals being harmed is used as a secondary way to test the third hypothesis because the data are available and it serves as a sort of basic robustness check since the process for testing hypothesis 2 is so simple.

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[7] Political Rights, Civil Rights, Financial Inclusion – Received Wages, Literacy, Child Mortality, Corruption, Alternative Social Safety Net measure, GDP (PPP), Government Effectiveness, Gender Inequality Index, Environmental Performance Index (EPI), Financial Inclusion – Ability to Borrow Money, Financial Inclusion – Ability to Obtain Emergency Funds, Cell Phone Users, Social Safety Net, Undernourishment, Access to Clean Water, Tuberculosis, Confidence in Judicial Systems, Political Instability, Impact of Terrorism, Internal Conflicts Fought, Violent Crime, Women's Physical Security, Weapons Access, GINI Coefficient, Same Sex Rights, Disabled Rights, Acceptance of Immigrants, Acceptance of Minorities, Global Slavery Index Government, Response, Alternative Political Rights measure, Regulatory Quality, Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees

Of course, these measures of the prevalence of human trafficking are not without their flaws. The temporal domain is limited to a single year, and while all regions are covered, there are some states missing in the data. The missingness is particularly common in small island states. Additionally, the Global Slavery Index reports that their estimates are most likely an undercount of the actual number of trafficking cases occurring. This undercounting is especially problematic for forms of trafficking that include forced marriage and forced or child soldiering because these are topics that their underlying data-generation process is unable to fully measure or address. State-imposed forced labor, for example, is especially hard to measure because of lack of transparency about this. Once again, we see the gendered nature of human trafficking play out even in research with forms that disproportionately harm men and boys given short shrift. Despite these limitations, the GSI data provides the best prevalence estimate available globally.

In testing hypotheses 2a and 2b a very simple method of looking at the correlation between the dependent and independent variables will be used. This is because using some sort of more sophisticated regression model would be difficult due to the way the data in the GSI were built. Specifically, many of the things that would be used as control variables when putting together a model to test this relationship were already taken into consideration by the GSI prevalence estimates. For example, it would be appropriate to control for whether a state is engaged in a civil conflict in a given year, but the model used to develop the GSI prevalence score already takes that into account. The proportion of a population being trafficked, the dependent variable for hypothesis 2.a, already explicitly takes into account the overall population of a state. It would not be appropriate to control for something that is already measured in the independent variable and so that has left this project without anything to control for theoretically.

Results

For the test of hypothesis 1, there is a simple correlation done between the proportion of women in legislative office and each state's annual ranking from the TIP Report. The correlation is $r = -0.306$. This is a weak correlation, though it is in the expected direction. As a reminder, states with better government policy responses receive lower TIP Report rankings.

Similarly, for the initial test of hypothesis 2, parts a and b, just a simple correlation between the dependent and independent variables is used. The correlation for hypothesis 2a, between the proportion of women in national legislative office and the proportion of a state's population that is being trafficked, is negative but small at $r = -0.038$. Similarly, the correlation between the proportion of women in national legislative office and the estimated number of individuals being trafficked within a state (for hypothesis 2b) is $r = -.098$.

Discussion

Overall, the preliminary results suggest that the proportion of women holding national legislative office has little meaningful influence on human trafficking outcomes at the governmental or societal level. Increased representation in government is not enough for a government to successfully develop an anti-human trafficking agenda. Specifically addressing the correlations that speak to hypotheses, the correlations are weak at best, though they are in the expected direction. It seems that having women in office does not harm the anti-trafficking agenda, but it seems that their presence alone is not changing outcomes. The correlation that is the strongest is between women in the legislature and TIP Report rankings, but more should be done to explore this relationship.

Specifically, additional data should be used to more adequately measure state policies related to human trafficking, and additional measures of women's political power should be used. The TIP Report ranking is a blunt measure of state anti-trafficking policy generally and using that measure does not capture the complexity and variety of anti-trafficking policies that states can develop, even though this variety is mentioned in the narrative of TIP Reports. There are several types of anti-trafficking policies that are especially important and women in formal political spaces like legislative office have varying levels of input and control over these policies. The first, and most basic anti-trafficking policy is the criminalization of human trafficking. This would be a fitting measure for the dependent variable because members of the legislature are tasked with introducing and passing laws that criminalize human trafficking. Thus, if data were available for this indicator, it would be a better test of whether women in legislative office or other political spaces are able to exert meaningful pressure on policy outcomes in favor of anti-trafficking legislation.

Fortunately, a project with better data is currently under review. This project is a co-authored piece with Rachel Harmon, Glenn Harden, and Kate Perry. This new project asks the same general research question as this current paper (does gender equality and the inclusion of women in political spaces influence human trafficking-related outcomes for states?) but answers the question with additional and more detailed data for the dependent and independent variables.

This co-authored piece was motivated by Harmon's initial lackluster findings in this current paper and discussions about how to better test the hypotheses. The most important innovation of this follow-up project is the provision of new data collected by Harden. Harden's data provide fine-grained measures of various anti-trafficking policies developed by states and serve as the dependent variables in this follow-up project (Harden 2021). Harden collected policy

data on criminalization, intersectoral coordinating bodies, and National Referral Mechanisms from various sources, primarily the US TIP Reports, but also the GRETA country monitoring reports, other regional reports, the 2009 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, country-specific intersectoral coordinating bodies, and domestic laws when the US TIP Reports were inadequate (Harden 2021). In other words, these data go far beyond what is offered by simply looking at the state rankings from TIP Reports.

Criminalization is best considered a law enforcement policy, though these laws may also enact capacity-building or victim protections as well. Intersectoral coordinating bodies promote cooperation within the government and sometimes between the government and civil society actors to improve anti-trafficking efforts in all its dimensions, and this outcome would be especially important to consider when looking at the influence of women in informal political spaces. National Referral Mechanisms are formal policies by which government officials may identify victims and refer them for assistance. These are best considered victim protection policies. These three variables are the dependent variables in the analysis of the follow-up project.

Back to the findings presented in this current paper, the initial weak or null findings here do not mean that specific women are not effectively working to end human trafficking; we have many examples across the globe of women both in and outside of government who are making real progress in the fight against human trafficking. Rather, these initial findings should be interpreted to mean that simply electing women is not enough to bring about robust government responses to human trafficking or reduce the proportion or number of the population being harmed by human trafficking. This is perhaps not surprising; women who are elected to office may face pressure or have the desire to legislate similarly to other legislators on issues related to

human trafficking, which would explain the weak correlation between their presence in political office and government responses to human trafficking.

There is also a more foundational concern that there is an underlying feature of the political environment that drives both the dependent and independent variables. It could be that there is a causal connection between overarching levels of gender equality in a state and the dependent variables (trafficking and government responses to trafficking) and the independent variable of women in legislative office. This picture becomes complicated, because this causal relationship may also be multidirectional. It seems reasonable to expect that gender equality affects trafficking and political representation outcomes, but also that these outcomes in turn shape how gender equal a state is. The limited data available in this project do not allow these relationships to be teased out, but they are important to consider.

These findings should not be taken to mean that there is no value in electing more women to national legislative office. There are other reasons to elect more women, because there is evidence of their ability to alter policy outcomes in other domains. Additionally, there is inherent value in electing women at more equal and equitable rates so that populations are fairly represented.

Second, it is important to consider the role of women in politics outside of elected office. Additional measures of women's inclusion in other areas of politics may be a better measure that reflects how women are pressing forward with anti-trafficking policy work. This would make sense theoretically, given that women are especially active in leadership roles within the NGO and community-organizing spaces within the anti-trafficking community. If women are often the ones with the expertise and experience that helps propel anti-trafficking policy forward, then we should observe a connection between their inclusion in many forms of political spaces and policy

outcomes. Specifically, data that measure the power of women in civil society advocacy groups should be used as an additional independent variable.

Moving forward, a similar theory and research design will be developed alongside co-authors Harden and Perry that will include an additional measure of women's formal political participation and a measure of the inclusion of women in informal political spaces. In other words, two independent variables will be used to measure the inclusion of women in political spaces. Specifically, we use data provided by Varieties of Democracy, which provides an independent variable "Women's political participation index" (Coppedge, et al. 2022). This index is formed by taking the average of the indicators for lower chamber female legislators and power distribution by gender. Like the measure used in this paper, this indicator focuses on women elected to legislative bodies. However, it also includes an ordinal measure 0-4 for whether men retain full political power or if there is gender equality in political power.

Additionally, an indicator of women's participation in informal political spaces will be used as an independent variable. Once again taken from Varieties of Democracy, we use a variable that provides an index that includes indicators for freedom of discussion for women, CSO women's participation, and female journalists (Coppedge, et al. 2022). This is an important step in testing whether women acting outside of formal political spaces can have influence on policy outcomes. In our paper we develop a theory for why women in civil society in particular could be powerful policy entrepreneurs for anti-trafficking policy. Notably, this is distinct from a more general sense that an active and independent civil society can influence government policy (which we control for in the project). We are specifically interested in the unique role that *women* play when they are included in civil society working on a gendered issue like human trafficking policy.

By using these two independent variables combined with more detailed policy data for the dependent variables, we expect this follow-up project to test the ideas developed in this paper in a more meaningful way.

Conclusion

Based on practitioner and policymaker beliefs, it was reasonable to expect that gender-inclusive political spaces would be associated with better human trafficking-related policy outcomes. The literature has shown contradictory results for whether the inclusion of women in political spaces leads to different policy outcomes at both the domestic level and for foreign policy (Horowitz et al 2015, Melander 2005). However, by looking at the correlation of women formally participating in the political process in elected legislative office and TIP Report ranking, I find that there is no substantial evidence that having more women elected to national legislative office leads to more robust government policies against human trafficking, and no evidence that having more women elected to national legislative office leads to lower rates of human trafficking within a state.

These findings should not be taken to mean that there is no value in electing more women to national legislative office. There are other reasons to elect more women, because there is evidence of their ability to alter policy outcomes in other domains. Additionally, there is inherent normative value in electing women at more equal and equitable rates so that populations are fairly represented. Instead, these findings suggest that improving state responses to human trafficking will take deeper work that likely requires substantive representation by those who are entrenched in anti-human trafficking work, and this work can stem from a variety of stakeholders.

There are several possible routes to take this project moving forward. First, I would like to consider more fine-grained measures of anti-trafficking policy adoption that reflects the wide range of policies available to states. Second, I could explore whether other indicators (such as the presence of women in civil society) better capture the role of women's participation in the policy formation process. These next steps are already being explored in a co-authored project with Glenn Harden and Kate Perry, with results that are consistent and more detailed than what this initial paper offers.

Additionally, it would be helpful to find a way to take into account gender quotas. It may be that women elected in non-quota seats are able to advocate very differently than women holding quota seats, and this pattern would only be visible with detailed data on the women holding offices globally. Thinking practically, I hope to be able to at least control for whether states have gender quotas in place and see if that changes the results significantly. I also am currently just looking at simple correlations and I could add in control variables and run a basic OLS model looking at hypothesis 1.

It would also be possible to take this project in the direction of sub-national outcomes. There are data available for the US at the state level with "score cards" for state-level laws against human trafficking. It would be interesting to see if results were consistent at this sub-national level. (Note: I think this is an interesting idea for something to do in the future for a focus on US state policy, but probably not a loose end to chase right now).

These preliminary findings should not be taken to mean that there is no value in electing more women to national legislative office, or that there is no connection between women's political participation and anti-trafficking policy outcomes. There are other reasons to elect more women, because there is evidence of their ability to alter policy outcomes in other domains.

Additionally, there is inherent value in electing women at more equal and equitable rates so that populations are fairly represented. And importantly, this research agenda would benefit from other measures of women's political participation in informal and formal settings and fine-grained data on anti-trafficking policy, which will be provided in the follow-up project. Instead, these initial findings suggest that improving state responses to human trafficking will take deeper work than simply electing more women to legislative office. Meaningful policy progress likely requires substantive representation by those who are entrenched in anti-human trafficking work, and this work can stem from a variety of stakeholders.

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Appendix A: Robustness Check

While the main body of the paper presented results looking at the relationship between TIP Report scores and the percentage of women in parliament with a two-year lag on the dependent variable, this same process was also done with a one-year lag of the dependent variable. Theoretically, the two-year lag makes sense as described in the paper, but checking with a one-year lag as a robustness check is helpful. It is expected that the correlation between these two variables will be even weaker when used with just a one-year lag and will still be a negative correlation. As expected, the correlation is $r=-.296$. This is a slightly weaker correlation than when a two-year lag is used, and provides additional evidence that the relationship between the percentage of women in legislative office and state outcomes on trafficking policy is weak (which is further tested in my follow-up co-authored paper in more detail), though the relationship is consistently in the expected direction.

Paper 3: Experimental Evidence of the Sources of Public Support for the Prioritization of

Anti-Trafficking Policy

Introduction

Political leaders have vocally supported anti-human trafficking programming and policies in the past few years, with prominent conservative leaders like Georgia governor Brian Kemp and former president Donald Trump naming combating human trafficking as a policy priority. This is an interesting and noteworthy development because oftentimes these anti-trafficking campaign platforms are not matched with other political priorities like progressive immigration or housing policies that are known to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking. This may indicate that these policy proposals and support for anti-trafficking programming stems from a response to what platforms will be popular with voters, regardless of actual influence on trafficking outcomes. Thus, it is important to understand what public preferences around human trafficking policy are.

What are the determinants of public preferences in the United States for how political leaders prioritize human trafficking policy, and, more specifically, how do perceptions of race and gender influence these preferences? An intersectional approach is taken in this project. Rather than only looking at gender or race as separate concepts, they are also examined as complex and interconnected concepts that work together to uphold a traditionally racist, sexist social hierarchy that informs stereotypes and stigmas associated with survivors and victims of human trafficking (traffickees is a term that will be used in this project). The research question is answered through an online survey experiment consisting of adults in the United States. Limited or weak support is found for the theory and hypotheses, but this is likely due to challenges with the research design.

The paper proceeds in six sections. First, the literature on how human trafficking is raced and gendered is explored, followed by an exploration of how race and gender intersect to shape perceptions of human trafficking. In the second section the theoretical framework and hypotheses are presented for this project, which is that people's preferences for anti-trafficking policy is shaped by perceptions of race and gender of traffickees. Third, the research design is described in detail, including important design flaws and limitations. The fourth section reports the results, followed by a discussion in the fifth section. Finally, a conclusion for the sixth section summarizes this work and the next steps that will be taken in this research agenda.

Race and Human Trafficking

The ways that people perceive and respond to human trafficking is rooted in the fact that human trafficking is a raced issue, both symbolically and objectively (Gutierrez Chong 2014, Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2019). Saying that human trafficking has racial implications brings up several points. First, while there is consensus amongst most scholars and practitioners that people of color are disproportionately harmed by human trafficking both in the United States and globally, exact figures are hard to come by (Polaris 2020, UNODC 2021). For example, evidence shows that in Louisiana Black girls account for roughly 49 percent of child traffickees who have experienced child sex trafficking, while that same demographic group makes up only 19 percent of the youth population (Polaris 2020). A recent task force in Orange County, California found that more than sixty percent of individuals trafficked there were Black or Latinx (Brazil 2021). While these reports only provide a snapshot of trafficking in specific places at a specific time, similar findings have been reported across many states in the United States. Ultimately, this points to a pattern that women and girls of color are at a disproportionately high risk of being targeted by traffickers. Unfortunately, generalizable estimates are not available on a national or

global scale despite consistent evidence demonstrating that people of color are at a disproportionately high risk of being trafficked.

Second, while people of color experience unique risks of human trafficking, public perception often fails to match that reality. There is a deep-rooted historical legacy of a public fear of a white slave trade that was especially prominent in the early twentieth century in the United States and Great Britain (Keire 2001). The legacy of this racist misinformation campaign persists to this day. As a result, the public often assumes that human trafficking is a problem that is equally likely to harm people of all races, or that white women in particular will be targeted. In the age of viral posts on social media, misinformation is frequently shared that regarding perpetration patterns, such as posts suggesting that traffickers frequently look to kidnap traffickees in public locations like parking lots at big box stores.

One nuance to add to this picture is that the tide is slowly turning in terms of community education about human trafficking. More than ever, some stakeholders, leaders, and NGOs are attempting to paint more accurate pictures to the public and push back against myths regarding "white slavery" and informing the public about misinformation being spread. To be clear, these statements are not meant to indicate that only people of color are harmed by trafficking, because there are survivors and victims across all racial identities. Instead, the point here is that the public perception is often out of step with reality with more concern expressed for white potential victims. This also means that the public often builds their political preferences regarding human trafficking policy based on stereotypes and misperceptions.

Gender and Human Trafficking

While any person can be exploited, women and girls suffer disproportionately from human trafficking, making up the majority of individuals who have been trafficked (UN Women 2022, UNODC 2021, Global Slavery Index 2018). This assertion holds true domestically in the United States as well as globally. This gendered element of trafficking is especially stark when considering sex trafficking disaggregated from other forms of trafficking, where women and girls make up the vast majority of those trafficked (UNODC 2021). In this case, public perception that women and girls are especially likely to be trafficked does line up with the reality, but that is not without additional complications and consequences for non-women who experience trafficking.

Unfortunately, a large portion of anti-trafficking works tends to be exclusionary toward men and boys. This is important for this project that focuses exclusively on sex trafficking, where this oversight is especially prevalent. This follows a larger pattern observed of services that support survivors of sexual violence more broadly.

Many of the institutional solutions and services offered to survivors reflect an assumption that only (or almost only) women are sex trafficked, and that only a weak man would experience that type of harm. For example, a review of more than four thousand NGOs that provide services to survivors of war-related sexual violence found that only three percent specifically mention male victims in their material (DelZotto and Jones, 2002). Coming forward as a survivor as a man or boy is still considered taboo in many settings. Boys and men are often left out of the conversation, male survivors may receive fewer options for assistance (Cockbain and Bowers 2019), and often face damaging assumptions and stereotypes about what a survivor "should" look like. An anecdote that highlights the paucity of resources specifically designed for men who are survivors of sex trafficking in the United States is the fact that the first and only safe house for men, Bob's House of Hope, opened in Texas in 2021.. It follows then that the general public

is also less likely to respond vigorously in favor of anti-trafficking policies and interventions when presented with material about traffickees who are men.

It is also worth noting that this project only explores these topics in relation to men and women, falling in line with a gender binary that is not inclusive of gender-nonconforming individuals. This is not a theoretical distinction, but rather one made to simplify the survey experiment that will be described in the next section and also build on work already done. In reality, gender nonconforming individuals face significant risks in relation to human trafficking and sex trafficking in particular. Even in research conducted on this specific population subgroup, most attention is given to trans women, once again highlighting the limited support devoted to individuals of other genders (Tomasiewicz 2018).

In summary, human trafficking is a gendered human rights violation because women, girls, and gender-nonconforming individuals are disproportionately likely to be targeted by traffickers, but at the same time men and boys face unique barriers to coming forward and are met with stigmas and limited resources. The public and service providers often focus on women and girls as victims to the detriment of other survivors, though all survivors face resource scarcity.[8] Because of this, policy preferences and policy prioritization related to human trafficking follow this same line of thinking. Anti-trafficking work associated with assisting women and girls is expected to receive more vigorous support from the public than work that is primarily associated with supporting non-women.

Intersection of Race, Gender, and Human Trafficking

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[8] Note that this is not arguing that women and girls need fewer resources. They also face a lack of resources! The point is that men and boys face an additional stigma and resource scarcity due to perceptions of masculinity, victimization, etc.

Understanding how human trafficking is raced and gendered is key to understanding public perceptions of trafficking more broadly, and it cannot be adequately explained without also examining how race and other facets of identity intersect and interact in relation to human trafficking. Race intersects with other forms of subordination and social hierarchy (Gonzalez 2022, Nelson Butler 2015) in ways that produce the result that women of color face disproportionately high risks of being trafficked.

Recalling that historical fears about a white slave trade centered on concerns related to the protection of white women in particular helps illustrate the ways that race and gender are linked even in the present day. More recent anti-trafficking discourses often take on a similar tone that reflects persistent assumptions and stereotypes about women's sexuality, autonomy, and who is even capable of being victimized (Doezema 1999). The public assumes that women, and white women in particular, are likely to be targeted by traffickers and that this demographic group deserves a special level of concern. Recent offerings in popular media (for example, the movie *Taken*) have continued to perpetuate and strengthen this misunderstanding of human trafficking that has been widespread in public discourse. This logic is what underpins the expectation that respondents to the survey will be especially likely to indicate high levels of support and concern when reading about a traffickee that they perceive to be a white woman, especially amongst respondents with little background knowledge of human trafficking.

Ultimately, an informal hierarchy exists within public understandings of human trafficking as well as in service provision. White women being trafficked brings the highest level of concern, while people of color and non-women receive less attention. This pattern in public perceptions, stereotypes, and service provision may also translate into political preferences, which are explored through a theoretical framework in the next section.

Words Matter: Framing Human Rights Issues as Raced and Gendered

Scholars have long asserted that the ways in which political issues are framed, or the words used to describe circumstances, produce an effect on public opinion and preferences (Nelson and Oxley 1999) independent of the actual events that occur even when this seems to undercut the assumption of rationality of respondents (Druckman 2004). These framing effects could be driven by the way that elites frame an issue (Amsalem and Zoizner 2020), or framing by the media (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 2014), or other stakeholders. Amsalem and Zoizner find in a meta-analysis of experiments in political science across subfields that framing from elites produces a moderate-sized effect on citizens' political attitudes and emotions, though they find little effect on behavioral outcomes by elite framing (2020).

Human trafficking is specifically now framed as a human rights issue that is linked to slavery (Mende 2019), with the term "modern day slavery" used by some practitioners and scholars (Global Slavery Index 2023). Because the topic of human trafficking also has a deep historical context, the ways in which any narrative about trafficking includes information about gender or race is also going to shape the ways in which people think about human trafficking. Additionally, racial framings of human rights issues have been shown to have an effect on public opinion. For example, an experiment to understand how the public forms opinions about poverty and solutions to poverty found that respondents who received information about white communities in poverty were more empathetic and supportive of policy solutions than respondents who received information about Black communities in poverty (Hannah and Cafferty 2006). A similar pattern is expected when racial framing is used on the topic of human trafficking.

<u>Theory</u>

Human trafficking has gained greater attention domestically over the past three decades than it has seen since the end of institutionalized slavery in the United States. This renewed interest in human trafficking has manifested in public spaces in many ways, one of which is that anti-trafficking work is now a political policy priority for many voters and candidates. This project seeks to determine some important determinants of people's preferences on how the state and politicians prioritize their responses to human trafficking. Specifically, I ask how perceptions of gender and race influence policy prioritization in domestic political spaces.

Because human trafficking is gendered in the United States in ways that depicts women and girls as primary and "correct" type of traffickees, it is expected that people will have stronger preferences for political leaders to respond to human trafficking when they have women in mind. On the other hand, when thinking of men, I argue that people will be less likely to identify anti-trafficking work as something that elected officials need to prioritize. This leads to the first hypothesis that focuses on how perceptions of gender shape policy prioritization preferences.[9]

> *Hypothesis 1: Respondents primed to think about women as victims/survivors of human trafficking will report higher levels of prioritization of human trafficking as a political issue than respondents primed to think of men who are traffickees.*

Building on hypothesis 1, a second expectation is developed that adds more nuance to the discussion. Gender is not the only important facet of identity to consider as research on how human trafficking is raced has shown. Because there is a public preoccupation with fears about

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[9] Drafts of hypotheses were pre-registered with EGAP (which is now the OSF Registry), but have been reworded or modified for clarity and to reduce the number of total hypotheses. None of the directions of the expectations have been changed.

white women in particular being trafficked (or trafficking occurring in spaces that are predominantly white), it is expected that respondents will also be most likely to select human trafficking as something they want to see prioritized by officials when they are primed to think about white women as traffickees. This means that other categories of traffickees, including Black women, Black men, Latina women, Latino men, and white men will all elicit lower levels of support for anti-trafficking work being prioritized. The intersection of race and gender is key to understanding public perceptions about human trafficking, and the second hypothesis offers this intersectional approach.

> *Hypothesis 2: Respondents primed to think about white women as traffickees will report higher levels of prioritization of human trafficking as a political issue than respondents primed to think of victims/survivors of other genders and racial identities including Black and Latinx traffickees.*

The two hypotheses outlined above only provide a first look at a complex topic. To make the theory and research design more tractable, the number of gender and racial identities have been limited to the largest groups represented in the United States. While the methodological reason for this will be described in the next section, it is also worth mentioning now the theoretical reason for this. By focusing on the most commonly found gender and racial identities, this project centers the aspects of identity that are the most salient to this discussion. This is particularly true of the decision to include racial categories of white, Black, and Latinx.

The identity categories included in this project reflect historical patterns of human trafficking in the United States such as institutionalized slavery (a subtype of human trafficking) and public responses to that policy. Additionally, immigration from Latin America in particular

has become a frequent topic of discussion for many candidates and voters and human trafficking is often brought into the conversation in that context. Ultimately, it is expected that the gender and race stereotypes, stigmas, and hierarchies that have dominated many policy spaces in the United States will also drive public preferences on when and how they wish to see anti-trafficking work prioritized.

It is also likely that there are interesting ways that public perception varies based on the identity of the member of the public who is thinking about human trafficking. In particular, it seems probable that members of an identity group will be more ready to prioritize responses to human trafficking when they have members of their own identity group in mind. For example, I expect that Latinx individuals, on average, would place more emphasis on anti-trafficking work when thinking about Latinx traffickees compared to white individuals. Women, relative to men, may be more likely to empathize with traffickees who are also women, though frankly I expect that there would not be strong gender-based differences in this respect. These types of expectations about the race and gender of the person(s) offering their opinion on policy could be expanded and provide the basis to a follow-up project to this current work, Note that these are simply ideas at this point, because the current sample size of the survey discussed in the next section does not provide enough variation in respondents to test all these possible connections.

Research Design

The hypotheses are tested using data from an online survey experiment that was fielded in the spring of 2020.[10] The survey was fielded in two rounds spaced a couple weeks apart on the MTurk platform owned by Amazon using Qualtrics software. While COVID was a growing

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[10] This survey experiment received approval from the Emory University IRB.

concern both in the US and globally during this time, it is not expected that the rapid changes in public knowledge about COVID influenced survey outcomes because the survey topic would not be linked to COVID-related issues for most people, particularly very early in the pandemic before any long-term consequences were understood.

Participants in the first round (n=1200) were paid $1.80 USD to complete the survey, while participants in the second round (n=700) were paid $1.50 USD for their time. The reason for the difference in pay is due to the fact that the first round of the survey showed that participants were taking less time than expected to complete the project, under five minutes. In both rounds the wage paid to participants is proportionally equivalent to being paid more than $16 per hour, which was set as a baseline ethical compensation for respondents. Funds for the project were provided by Emory University.[11]

For the survey experiment respondents were given three hypothetical scenarios that involved three community problems: fire protection, human trafficking (specifically sex trafficking), and children's healthcare. Respondents then answered questions about how they would prioritize policy responses to these community problems. Questions about general knowledge of human trafficking were posed as well. The variation in the survey is found in what information a respondent received about a human trafficking scenario: the gender and race of the hypothetical traffickee varied. Specifically, names and pronouns were varied in ways that would typically be perceived by respondents to indicate someone's race as white, Black, or Latinx and gender as women or men. Names were selected based on previous research about what people

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[11] The author and an undergraduate student contributed their funding allocation to the project and collaborated on the survey experiment. The survey was used by both the author and an undergraduate student collaborator who included a few additional questions that pertained to their specific interests, but this did not change the design of the survey vignettes and the design randomized which questions respondents received first.

perceive to be names associated with Latinx, Black, or white individuals. This name selection was meant to prime respondents to think about human trafficking in certain contexts, but this treatment is not meant to suggest that these names are determinative of race or gender. These vignettes draw on personal narratives about human trafficking because previous research has shown that employing personal narratives related to human rights issues can generate an effect on public opinion and policy preferences (McEntire, Leiby, and Krain 2015).

Full texts of these vignettes can be found in Appendix B. The surveys are designed to help answer the question of how people prioritize human trafficking relative to other community issues to better understand how important anti-trafficking work is to respondents. Because respondents are not directly asked about race or gender, and those aspects of identity are only indirectly mentioned in the survey, this treatment should have weak effects. Two survey questions in particular will be used to construct the dependent variables for hypotheses 1 and 2. By using the responses from two survey questions, two different outcomes that both point to political priorities. Respondents answered the following two questions:

> Survey question A: When considering whether to support a political candidate, how important is it to you that their platform include increased support for anti-trafficking services?

> Survey question B: Would you consider supporting a candidate for public office who you had not otherwise supported because they have increased support for anti-trafficking programs in their platform?

Respondents would indicate their answer on a scale of 1-5 (not at all important to extremely important) for question A. Respondents replied to question B with their selection from four answer options that include "I would *definitely support* a candidate because of their anti-trafficking platform; I would *consider supporting* a candidate because of their

anti-trafficking platform; I would *not support* a candidate differently based on their anti-trafficking platform; and I am unsure how an anti-trafficking platform would change how I view a candidate." Additional questions were included on the survey post-treatment and these can be found in the appendix with their full text.

Before discussing the data analysis, it is important to note that the implementation and design of the survey experiment faced several significant hurdles and limitations. First, it would have been wise to design a stronger treatment. Simply changing out names and pronouns will likely result in minimal changes to perceptions of trafficking since respondents read the human trafficking vignette alongside vignettes about other community issues. If I did a design like this in the future I would consider making the experiment treatment stronger (a stronger dose?) or cutting the additional scenarios because I think they were likely a distraction.

There were three changes made to the post-treatment portion of the survey taken by respondents between the first and second round of fielding the survey. Ideally, no changes would be made between rounds, but these were necessary. The first change was not substantive, but simply corrected an error that made nested questions populate in a more straightforward way following an initial question. This particular question set had been set up incorrectly in an inconvenient way to the reader in the initial round that required viewing an additional page, so this small correction was made between rounds of the survey.

The second change was to alter who was eligible to complete the survey. A global audience was offered the survey for the initial round of the survey, which resulted in respondents almost entirely from the United States and India. This was an unintentional error, because the survey is meant to track prioritization in domestic policy of the United States based on racial

identities that are most common and salient in domestic policy discussions about human trafficking. Thus, responses from individuals outside the United States were extraneous. The experiment was set-up in this way initially because I mistakenly thought a researcher had to pay for responses outside the United States and thought the restriction to the United States would be automatic. For the second round, only respondents based in the United States were eligible to complete the survey, and only people who had not taken the survey previously were eligible to complete the project. To correct for this mistake in the analysis only responses from individuals in the United States are included. To clarify, the first wave included respondents from the United States and outside the United States, mostly India, and the second wave only has respondents from the United States. For the analysis that follows the responses from both waves have been combined to increase the sample size, but all respondents outside the United States have been dropped because their policy views are not relevant to the survey design.

The final and third change in the second round of the survey was to add additional instructions to the briefing at the beginning to ensure that people were aware that they needed to spend 5 minutes (or more) taking the survey. While most people still spent five minutes or less taking the survey, this addition did increase the average amount of time taken on the survey. This instruction was added because a common occurrence in the first round was for respondents to only take about two minutes or less on the entire survey and that raised concerns about the quality of the responses. In the analysis, responses that took under two minutes to complete are dropped from the dataset because it is unlikely that someone could thoughtfully complete the survey (answer demographic questions, read several vignettes, answer survey questions, and read the debriefing) in under two minutes. Responses that included nonsensical answers to an open-ended question were also dropped because those survey answers do not represent sincere

attempts to understand the material and answer thoughtfully or sincerely. For the results presented here the responses across both rounds of the survey have been combined to increase the power and sample size, which was important after it was necessary to drop many of the responses due to the design and implementation limitations discussed here. Overall, the flawed implementation of the survey experience yielded data that was a valuable learning experience for future surveys.

A final note on the ethics of the survey design is about the debriefing page at the end of the survey. In addition to standard information about contacting the researcher and how the information will be used, links to educational materials about human trafficking were provided as well as an opportunity for respondents to donate to direct services that support traffickees.

Results

Before any analysis was conducted some survey responses were removed from the dataset. First, I dropped all observations from surveys when respondents took less than two minutes to complete the survey. The survey was long enough that it would not be possible to give a meaningful, thoughtful response in under that amount of time, indicating that these respondents were not carefully reading the information and thus their answers would not be useful. Similarly, I dropped all responses for surveys that took over one hour to complete, which likely indicates that a participant stepped away from the survey. While dropping these responses did decrease the sample size, this was still an appropriate step to take because the remaining data are higher quality and better reflect the policy preferences of people who took the time to read the survey rather than answer questions haphazardly.

Respondents that took less than two minutes or over an hour to complete the survey are considered "inattentive" respondents. Research has shown that using questions aimed at tracking reading comprehension as a way to weed out inattentive respondents can be problematic (Varaine 2022, Alvarez et al 2019). Respondents who take less time or answer comprehension questions incorrectly do not do so at random, and so simply dropping these respondents might create additional biases in the results. Varaine finds, in particular, that dropping respondents who fail post-treatment attention check questions can lead to an increase in the risk of false positive findings (Varaine 2022). For that reason, and because the attention check question I included in the first round of the survey was worded and designed in a confusing manner, I felt it was more appropriate to drop those who took very little time or a lot of time to complete the survey rather than those who failed the comprehension/attention check question. In the future, I would design a better, more clear attention-check question and ensure it is in the pre-treatment section of the survey to avoid these pitfalls. Because it was not possible for someone to read and complete the survey in under two minutes, I felt confident that these responses did in fact represent individuals who did not read the material and thus should be excluded from the analysis.

Second, I dropped any surveys that were only partially completed.[12] Third, any responses submitted outside of the United States were dropped to ensure that the sample is drawn from relevant individuals. After taking these steps a sample of $n=1280$ surveys remained for the analysis across both waves. For the analysis in this project, all responses from participants in the United States that fit the timing criteria have been aggregated to a single dataset.

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[12] I may go back later and rerun the analysis including those incomplete surveys but that is an idea for after the dissertation is completed.

The first dependent variable is the survey response to a question that asks respondents how important it is to you that candidates' platforms include increased support for anti-trafficking services. The responses range from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important). The average response is 4.6 (mean=4.6, variance is 3.016397).

Figure 3.1: Histogram of dependent variable 1: Importance of anti-trafficking platforms
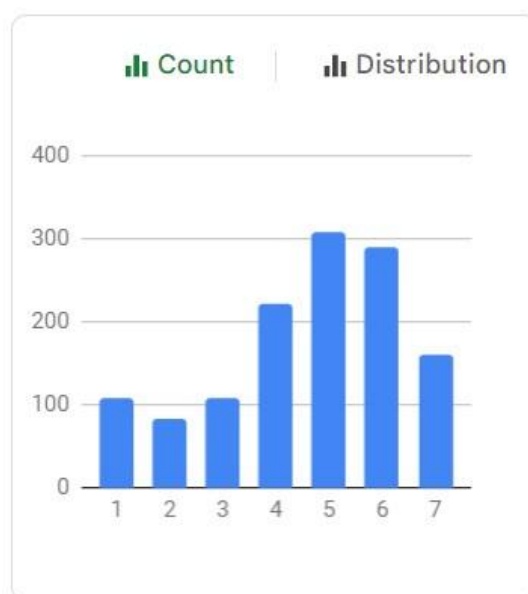
The second dependent variable is taken from a survey question that asks whether a respondent would support a candidate based on their support for anti-trafficking programming. The responses include unsure (0), definitely not (1), would consider (2), and definitely would (3). The majority of respondents (mean=1.96) answered that they would consider supporting a candidate based on their support for anti-trafficking programming (which is represented by a 2 in the dataset), and there is less variation in the second dependent variable than the first (variance in the second dependent variable is .7939155). The correlation between the dependent variables is not especially high a r=0.436129.

Figure 3.2: Histogram of dependent variable 2: Support for candidate based on anti-trafficking platform
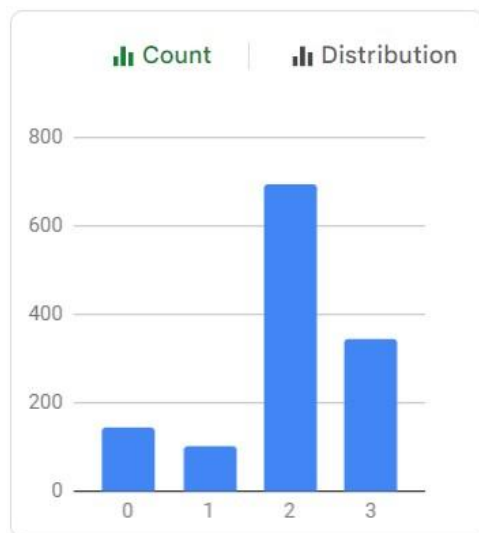
A balance table between the control and treatment groups is the following step to determine whether there are meaningful differences between the two groups. Table 1, below, indicates that the control and treatment groups are in fact balanced on a range of demographic characteristics. These demographic characteristics of interest include age, race, sex, political ideology, level of education, income bracket, and participation in religious services. The F-test statistic located in the right-hand column indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in the mean values of the demographic variables between the control and treatment groups.

Table 3.1: Balance Table

Summary Statistics

Control/Treatment		0			1		
Variable	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Test
Age Categories	168	2.1	0.74	1112	2.2	0.78	F=0.358
Race	168	1.8	1.6	1112	1.8	1.6	F=0.042
Sex	168	1.7	0.49	1112	1.6	0.48	F=0.276
Ideology	168	3.3	1.9	1112	3.4	1.9	F=0.608
Education	168	3.7	0.83	1112	3.7	0.83	F=0
Income	168	2.6	0.81	1112	2.6	0.81	F=0.006
Religiosity	168	3.7	1.5	1112	3.6	1.4	F=0.009
Statistical significance markers: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01							

Because the sample of respondents is balanced, t-tests can be used to test hypotheses 1 and 2. For hypothesis one, the relevant division of groups are the respondents who received no information about traffickee gender (control), respondents who received vignettes about women who are traffickees, and respondents who received vignettes about men who are traffickees. In other words, hypothesis 1 focuses on the effect of information about gender and does not incorporate race, which comes in hypothesis 2.

A two-sample T-test for hypothesis 1 (no assumptions made about the variance for this t-test or those that follow) on the survey responses for the first dependent variable showed a significant difference between the control and treatment groups for the level of support people reported for how they want to see anti-trafficking platforms prioritized. However, there was no significant difference at the .05 level between the treatment groups when broken down by gender. In other words, the introduction of the treatment, the vignette, did produce an effect in

comparison to the control group, but there is little significant difference in how people responded to the survey based on the version of the vignette they received. These t-tests were significant and also the means of the treatment groups were higher than the mean of the control group (indicating that the relationship is in the expected direction, though not for the reason theorized. This will be discussed in the following section). Interestingly, the average level of support for the prioritization of anti-trafficking platforms is highest amongst respondents in the treatment groups with vignettes about men at 4.79. While the treatment groups who received vignettes about women traffickers reported higher average levels of support than the control group as well (4.61 for the former and 3.95 as the average for the latter), it is unexpected that the effect of the treatment was stronger for the "men" vignette treatment groups rather than the "women" treatment groups. Though to clarify, there was no significant difference *between* the treatment groups. This is summarized in table 2, found below.

Table 3.2: Summary of results from hypothesis 1 for dependent variable 1 (Women and Men indicate the content of the vignette and prompt the treatment groups received)

<u>Comparison</u>	<u>Result</u>
Control vs. Women	Significant ($p=.0001185$)
Control vs. Men	Significant ($p=8.143e-07$)
Women vs. Men	Weakly significant ($p=.07598$)

Another two-sample t-test was used for hypothesis 1 for the second dependent variable, which indicates whether a respondent says they are more likely to support a candidate thanks to an anti-trafficking platform. Here no significant differences were found across the treatment and control groups. Additionally, no significant difference was found between the control groups.

Table 3.3: Summary of results from hypothesis 1, dependent variable 2

Comparison	**Result**
Control vs. Women	Not significant ($p=.5263$)
Control vs. Men	Not significant ($p=.8138$)
Men vs. Women	Not significant ($p=.3711$)

The second hypothesis takes an intersectional approach and asks how race and gender intersect to produce political priorities for respondents. Thus, the relevant groups are the control group (no vignette, just a topic list of community issues that includes human trafficking) and the treatment groups that read vignettes that vary the race and gender of the character in the narrative. The treatment groups received vignettes about a traffickee who is meant to be perceived as a white woman, white man, Black woman, Black man, Latina woman, and Latinx man for the six various treatment groups. Once again, a two-sample t-test (no assumption regarding the variance here either for H2 tests) was run for the first dependent variable indicator. As expected, the results show significant differences between the control group and the various treatment groups for the first dependent variable. However, there is not a consistent significant difference between the treatment groups. For example, while there is a significant difference between the groups that read vignettes about white and Black women traffickees, there was no significant difference between groups that received information about white and Latina women traffickees and in both cases the average values of the dependent variable indictaor for the Black and Latina women vignette treatment groups was higher than the average value for the group receiving information about white women traffickees, cutting directly against theoretical expectations. Thus, this does not provide meaningful, deep support for the second hypothesis.

Table 3.4: Summary of selected results for hypothesis 2, dependent variable 1 (race+gender included in vignettes)

__Comparison__	__Result__
Control vs. white women	Weakly significant ($p=.0716$)
Control vs. white men	Significant ($p=2.623e-05$)
Control vs. Black women	Significant ($p=4.043e-07$)
Control vs. Black men	Significant ($p=2.261e-06$)
Control vs. Latina women	Significant ($p=.002394$)
Control vs. Latino men	Significant ($p=6.685e-05$)
White women vs Black women	Significant ($p=.0009968$)
White women vs Latina women	Significant ($p=.2347$)

Finally, two-sample t-tests were run for the second dependent variable to test hypothesis 2. Differences across the control and treatment groups were not statistically significant for any of the pairwise matchups. This is summarized in table 4 below. Additionally, comparisons of treatment groups with one another (the groups receiving a vignette about white women versus the group with a vignette about Black men traffickees) also showed no significant differences. This is a clear and consistent lack of support for hypothesis two when looking at the second dependent variable. Overall, the results indicate weak or no support for the hypotheses.

Table 3.5: Results summarized for hypothesis 2, dependent variable 2

Groups being compared	Result
Control vs. white women	Not significant ($p= .6189$)
Control vs. white men	Not significant ($p= .8138$)
Control vs. Black women	Not significant ($p= .613$)
Control vs. Black men	Not significant ($p= .9892$)
Control vs. Latina women	Not significant ($p= .5718$)
Control vs. Latino men	Not significant ($p= .9003$)

Discussion

The fact that most respondents report human trafficking as a topic that is at least somewhat important to them when evaluating candidates (DV1), but relatively few respondents say that they would definitely support a candidate based on their anti-trafficking platform may indicate that human trafficking is an important topic to many people, but less often a decisive factor in political preferences compared to other policy issues. The second indicator used as a dependent variable to test both hypotheses was likely a poor choice for this project and should have been worded differently.

Overall, no meaningful support was found for the hypotheses, or very weak support at best that really just indicates that reading longer information engages people in the topic more. For hypothesis 1 (gender-based), respondents in the treatment groups do report significantly higher levels of support for anti-trafficking policy for the first dependent variable, but not for the second dependent variable indicator when compared to the control group. However, there is no significant difference between respondents who were given information about women traffickees

versus treatment groups provided vignettes about men traffickees, though the average level of support reported by the latter treatment groups is higher than other treatment groups or the control group. In other words, while the vignettes did produce an effect, that change in outcome is likely not driven by the change in pronouns and names used in the vignettes (which was the key part of the treatment). Certainly, reading about traffickees who were specifically women did not produce the effect of higher levels of support for anti-trafficking platforms. This suggests that the increase in support for prioritization of policy found in the first dependent variable outcome stems from the additional information provided to treatment groups in comparison to the control group that did not read a vignette. It seems that people tend to be more interested in prioritizing policy responses to human trafficking when they receive more information overall (and a stronger priming) and when the indicator question only asks for an easy "lift" (aka, saying it is an important policy topic for candidates to address, but not going to far as to say it would change who they vote for).

Even more surprisingly, respondents who read the vignette and prompt about white women traffickees actually reported lower rates of anti-trafficking policy prioritization than respondents who read some of the other vignettes that varied the racial and gender identity, though even that relationship was not always significant. In other words, this experiment did not show that providing survey participants with additional information about the race and gender of perceived traffickees would change how respondents answer political preference questions.

Conclusion

Discussions about human trafficking have become increasingly common in political campaigns and in policy platforms. Still, little is known about the determinants of public

preferences on this topic. Using an online survey experiment, this project explored how perceptions of race and gender influence how respondents report their policy preferences. I expected to find that respondents primed to think about women being trafficked, and white women in particular, would report higher levels of interest and support of anti-trafficking platforms and policy. However, the results were surprising.

I find that receiving additional information about human trafficking through the presence of a vignette and prompt does have an effect on respondents, who report higher levels of prioritization of anti-trafficking policy compared to the control group that did not receive a vignette or prompt about human trafficking. However, varying the race and gender of the traffickee discussed in the prompt is not associated with any change. This suggests that the additional information of any variety about human trafficking drives more engagement from respondents than how that information is raced and/or gendered. This means that no substantial support was found for the hypotheses, though I did find that increased access to information may drive policy preferences. This latter point is something I plan to explore in more detail in the future.

Numerous avenues are open for additional research on this and related topics. Political affiliation and political identity may be another interesting determinant of how people approach anti-trafficking policy. This theoretical idea is informed by anecdotal observations over the past few years as many political leaders in the United States have started to discuss human trafficking as a policy priority in their campaign platforms. Examples of this include Brian Kemp, Georgia's governor, who has run on a platform that claims he will work to eradicate human trafficking. He ties his stance on immigration and urban crime to trafficking, and created GRACE, which is a state agency that pulls together multiple stakeholders to work against human trafficking. On a

national level, President Trump made human trafficking a frequent policy discussion topic and drew publicity for funding some programs. It is worth noting that many members of the anti-trafficking community, including many NGOs, refused to be associated with Trump's work in this area because his broader policy on immigration is known to exacerbate human trafficking. While there has been bipartisan support for anti-trafficking work to some extent (for example, the TVPA has been sponsored and signed by both republicans and democrats), it seems that the discussion currently is dominated by republicans and this is particularly strong in the south.

Future work should explore whether candidates, and especially conservative candidates, are focusing on human trafficking as a policy issue because they know it will be a popular policy priority with constituents that is relatively hard to critique. However, this is rooted in fears about "white slavery" and connected to anti-immigrant and often anti-Black policy work being done as well. Thus, my hope is for my future research agenda to determine whether conservatives more readily report human trafficking as a political priority and prefer to see candidates addressing this topic.

While conservatives see human trafficking as a political issue that they want candidates to address, there are still boundaries on how they want that work carried out. It is possible that conservative leaning people are more likely to want political leaders to focus on law enforcement-based responses to human trafficking, rather than victim/survivor-centered direct services. This is unfortunate, because the latter are more in line with what survivors need and are more effective based on my experience. However, some data from the survey experiment described in this project could be used to test the idea that conservative-leaning respondents would prefer NGOs or non-government stakeholders to be the ones engaging in more service provision for survivors/victims. This leads me to a potential hypothesis for future work:

H(future): Conservative respondents will be more likely to prefer anti-trafficking work to be done by non-state actors (NGOs) rather than the state compared to moderate and liberal respondents.

Additionally, I have some similar thoughts about religion working similarly to party affiliation/political identity. I think that many conservative Christian denominations and other religions use the prioritization of work related to human trafficking as an extension of a very toxic purity culture and homophobic culture that limits and harms all traffickees, but especially women and gender nonconforming traffickees (just look at how many shelters are openly discriminatory against LGBTQ+ individuals). This ends up framing anti-trafficking work as something that is not trafficked-centered and promotes policy responses that are inadequate and often harmful. These are additional areas that need to be addressed in future work because of the important normative implications they carry.

Upcoming steps in the research agenda in the near future include another online survey experiment regarding public opinion related to human trafficking. I will be starting a survey experiment with a co-author, Daniel Arnon, in the summer of 2023 that will explore whether people respond differently to information about various human rights violations. While this current experiment did not confirm the hypotheses, it was a valuable learning experience. Several key mistakes were made (see the discussion in the research design section) in the design and implementation of the survey itself. While frustrating, these challenges will provide a much stronger foundation for future work because the same mistakes will not pop up a second time.

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Appendix B: Survey Vignettes

Read the following three scenarios and imagine these are important issues facing your own community.

Story 1: (Everyone reads the same)

Last fall the Davenport family awoke in the middle of the night to find that a fire had started in their kitchen due to old wiring. The parents, Tina and Jay, were able to quickly get their three kids out of the house to safety and call 911. The closest fire department unit responded as quickly as possible, but the home was a total loss. Unfortunately, this outcome is far too common. Fire chief Taylor Blattman says that average property damage from fire and smoke is severe because most fire departments suffer from inadequate numbers of response vehicles and too few station locations, putting all families at higher risk. Increased funding for emergency services like fire departments would allow all families to rest easier knowing they will be better protected.

Story 2: (Everyone reads the same)

Ashley Walter is only 7, but she has already been through a lot in her short life due to a chronic life-threatening medical condition. Ashley's father, Dan, had to quit his job to be able to provide constant care for Ashley and to be able to take her to treatment appointments that are only available in another city. The family is concerned they won't be able to keep their home in the future without financial assistance. Increased funding for pediatric medical care for terminal and life-threatening conditions would allow families like Ashley's to receive assistance closer to home, and funding social services for affected families would provide home aide options and allow parents to continue to work.

Vignette 1: (This is the piece that will vary, each respondent will get one of six treatments)

When Hannah Miller was 19 she met someone they thought they could trust who turned out to be a sex trafficker. Hannah was a victim of sex trafficking for over two years and was eventually identified through a law enforcement operation. Since then, Hannah has received services offered through partnerships with government agencies and local nonprofits that have allowed her to access medical care, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and job training services. However, these vital services are underfunded and in need of additional support to provide these services to all sex trafficking survivors in the state currently on waitlists.

Vignette 2:

When Jake Miller was 19 he met someone they thought they could trust who turned out to be a sex trafficker. Jake was a victim of sex trafficking for over two years and was eventually identified through a law enforcement operation. Since then, Jake has received services offered through partnerships with government agencies and local nonprofits that have allowed him to access medical care, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and job training services. However, these vital services are underfunded and in need of additional support to provide these services to all sex trafficking survivors in the state currently on waitlists.

Vignette 3:

When Camila Garcia was 19 she met someone they thought they could trust who turned out to be a sextrafficker. Camila was a victim of sex trafficking for over two years and was eventually identified through a law enforcement operation. Since then, Camila has received services offered through partnerships with government agencies and local nonprofits that have allowed her to access medical care, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and job training services.

However, these vital services are underfunded and in need of additional support to provide these services to all sex trafficking survivors in the state currently on waitlists.

Vignette 4:

When Miguel Garcia was 19 he met someone they thought they could trust who turned out to be a sex trafficker. Miguel was a victim of sex trafficking for over two years and was eventually identified through a law enforcement operation. Since then, Miguel has received services offered through partnerships with government agencies and local nonprofits that have allowed him to access medical care, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and job training services. However, these vital services are underfunded and in need of additional support to provide these services to all sex trafficking survivors in the state currently on waitlists.

Vignette 5:

When Keisha Williams was 19 she met someone they thought they could trust who turned out to be a sextrafficker. Keisha was a victim of sex trafficking for over two years and was eventually identified through a law enforcement operation. Since then, Keisha has received services offered through partnerships with government agencies and local nonprofits that have allowed her to access medical care, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and job training services. However, these vital services are underfunded and in need of additional support to provide these services to all sex trafficking survivors in the state currently on waitlists.

Vignette 6:

When Malik Williams was 19 he met someone they thought they could trust who turned out to be a sex trafficker. Malik was a victim of sex trafficking for over two years and was eventually identified through a law enforcement operation. Since then, Malik has received services offered

through partnerships with government agencies and local nonprofits that have allowed him to access medical care, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and job training services. However, these vital services are underfunded and in need of additional support to provide these services to all sex trafficking survivors in the state currently on waitlists.

CONTROL:

Read the following list of issues that government services could be funded to address. Imagine these are issues facing your own community.

- Inadequate funding for fire departments

- Inadequate funding for services for sex trafficking victims and survivors

- Inadequate funding for treatment for acute pediatric medical care

Appendix 3: Survey Questions Post-Treatment

- Comprehension check: Which topics were addressed in the previous vignettes? Select all that apply.

  o Fire department funding

  o Animal control

  o Sex trafficking victim services

  o Pediatric medical care

  o Special education programs

- Please indicate how important you think it is that candidates in your district address these issues on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important):

  - fire department funding

  - sex trafficking services

  - pediatric medical care

- Suppose your district and state is facing serious financial problems and budget cuts. If the candidate you support had to publicly state their willingness to support budget cuts to programs designed to address one of the problems you've read about, which would you prefer they support budget cuts to? Select one:

  - Fire department funding

  - Services for human trafficking victims

  - Medical care for children with terminal and life-threatening conditions

Recall the vignette about (NAME, match to trafficking vignette). Now think about the issue of sex trafficking in your own community and how you think the problem can be addressed.

- When considering whether to support a political candidate, how important is it to you that their platform include increased support for anti-trafficking services?

    - 5-point scale from not at all important to extremely important

- Would you consider supporting a candidate for public office who you had not otherwise supported because they have increased support for anti-trafficking programs in their platform?

    - I would *definitely support* a candidate because of their anti-trafficking platform.

    - I would *consider supporting* a candidate because of their anti-trafficking platform.

    - I would *not support* a candidate differently based on their anti-trafficking platform.

    - I am unsure how an anti-trafficking platform would change how I view a candidate.

- Do you think anti-trafficking services should primarily be provided by government or nonprofit agencies?

    - 5 point response scale with government on one end and nonprofits on the other.

- Why did you select the position you did on the last question?

    - open text box

- Would you be willing to donate a portion of the reward for this task to an anti-trafficking nonprofit organization that benefits survivors like (NAME, match to vignette)?

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- Yes

- No

- How much?

  - Open text box

- Think of your experiences and those of your close friends and family. How acute do you think the problem of sex trafficking is in your own community?

  - Extremely common

  - Very common

  - Somewhat common

  - Rare

  - Not at all