Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (University of Alberta, 2016)

“Controlling Boarders & Securing the State: An Interpretative Analysis of International Human Sex Trafficking Policy”

Department of Political Science

Friday, April 16, 2021
10:00 A.M.
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. A. Claire Cutler, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Cecilia Benoit, Department of Sociology, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, School of Public Administration, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Employing the methods laid out by Carol Bacchi (2009), this policy analysis poses the question, what is the policy problem represented to be in international human sex trafficking policy, and what gaps and silences emerge as a result of this representation? This analysis examines the current international policy framework established by the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as five historical agreements that have governed the international community’s approach to antitrafficking efforts since 1904. I argue that international human sex trafficking, since its inception as a policy issue in the early twentieth century, has been problematized as an issue of border control and state security with policy interventions focusing on the criminalization of trafficking and the control of female migration. I further contend that this type of policy approach serves to, first and foremost, protect the state, oftentimes at the expense of the wellbeing of the victims. As such, I conclude that international anti-trafficking policy does little to protect victims of trafficking because policymakers primarily understand the phenomenon as a threat to the state, not to individuals. Section one traces the genealogy of international human sex trafficking policy through the analysis of the contextual factors that legislators faced while negotiating, drafting, and implementing these agreements. Section two involves a discourse analysis of the current policy and a discussion regarding the presuppositions and assumptions reflected within the policy. Section three examines alternative ways in which the issue of international human sex trafficking can be problematized and addressed as a policy issue. These alternative conceptualizations help reveal what is left unproblematized in the dominant narrative and bring attention to the silences within the current anti-trafficking framework.