Islamic Immigration, Sex Trafficking, and the Media

THE IMPLICATIONS OF GENDERED AND RACIALIZED TRAFFICKING NARRATIVES IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Outline

• Context
• Research Puzzle and Question
• Existing Thought
• Thesis
• Research Design
• Findings
• Conclusions
• Implications
• Further Research
Islam and Immigration in the Netherlands

"The Netherlands would be a happier place if there was less immigration"

VS.

"The Netherlands is hospitable for migrants"

Strongly Agree and Neutral
- 72%

Strongly Disagree
- 28%

Turkish: 43% 47% 68%
Moroccan: 43% 47% 68%
Ethnically Dutch: 43% 47% 68%
Islam and Immigration in the Netherlands

• History of Tolerance
• Rising tension with immigrant population
• Increased Islamophobia after 9/11
• Rise of Islamophobic parties
• Rise of integration policy
Trafficking Narratives in the Netherlands

- Human trafficking is another “crisis” for NL
- Anti-trafficking policies
- Loverboys – A connection between Islamophobia and the trafficking frenzy
The Research Puzzle & Question

- Historical Tolerance → Uncomfortable Intolerance
- Why has a liberal, Western, tolerant state become increasingly intolerant of Islam and immigrants?
- What role do trafficking narratives play in building this intolerance?
Existing Thought

Argued Against
- Migration Theory
- Tolerance Studies
- “Clash of Civilizations”
- Islam as Misogyny

Used in Argument
- Reaction to “Clash of Civilization”
- Sexual and Secular Exceptionalism
- Exploitation of Sex Work Panic
- The Trafficking and Terror Model
Existing Thought: “Trafficking and Terror”

USA in 1990s

9/11

USA in post-9/11 Islamophobia

Fear of Islam abroad

War on Terror AND War on Trafficking
Thesis

9/11 causes Islamophobia in the West

Tolerant states must justify intolerance

Islamophobia justified through protection of women

Racialized Trafficking Narratives

Anti-trafficking sentiment & policy

Anti-Islamic sentiment & policy
Research Design

- Timeframe: 1995-2014 (focusing on 9/11)
- Sources
  - Newspapers
  - Films
  - Books
  - Government data-hubs
- Discourse analysis (qualitative and quantitative)
- Comparative analysis of public opinion over time
- Historical contextualization
Findings I: 9/11 as a Turning Point

Occurrence of terms related to the immigration crisis in the Dutch media over time

Seats Captured by Anti-Immigration Parties in Recent Dutch Elections (1994-2012)
Findings II: Gender and Sex and the “Clash of Civilization”

**Articles mentioning the term "headscarf" in two leading Dutch newspapers from 1995-2014**

**Number of Articles in Two Leading Dutch Newspapers that Mention Both Islam and Homosexuality from 1995-2014**

- "Islam" and "gay"
- "Muslim" and "gay"
Findings II: Gender and Sex and the “Clash of Civilization”

Articles on Islam and Gender and Sexuality in 2014 NRC Handelsblad

- Positive: 21%
- Negative: 70%
- Neutral: 9%
Findings III: Re-Conceptualizing “Trafficking and Terror”

Frequency of the term "Loverboy" in Dutch Newspapers

![Graph showing frequency of the term "Loverboy" in Dutch newspapers from 1995 to 2014. The x-axis represents the years from 1995 to 2014, and the y-axis represents the frequency of the term "Loverboy". The graph shows a general increase in frequency with a significant rise around 2001.](image-url)
Angelique was forced into prostitution by a "boyfriend"
Findings III: Re-Conceptualizing “ Trafficking and Terror”

USA in 1990s

9/11

USA in post-9/11
Islamophobia

Fear of Islam abroad

War on Terror AND War on Trafficking
Findings III: Re-Conceptualizing “Trafficking and Terror”

Holland in 1990s

9/11

Holland with post-9/11 Islamophobia

Fear of Islam at home

War on Immigration AND War on Trafficking
Findings III: Re-Conceptualizing “Trafficking and Terror”

Western State in 1990s → 9/11 → State with post-9/11 Islamophobia → Localization of Islamophobia → War on Localized Policy Issue AND War on Trafficking
Conclusions

- Gender and sexuality → NL “clash of civilizations” discourse
- Sex trafficking narratives are used to justify Islamophobic policies (immigration in NL, anti-terror in US)
  - The Islam-related policy issue that is important to the country plays out in trafficking discourse
- 9/11 as a turning point
  - Fear of radical Islam feeds fear of Muslims
  - Intolerance is supported by the media
Implications

• Immigration Policy/Integration Policy
  • Criminalization of migrants
• Trafficking Policy
  • Sex work – regression of rights
  • Immigration and trafficking
• Potential application of this model elsewhere
  • Shifting the discourse
Further Research

• Discourse v Reality
• Application to other cases
• Other trafficking trends in NL
• Policy recommendations for integration, immigration, and trafficking
• Past the point of no return?
Discourses heavily impact lived experience, and by challenging our paradigms, we can have more honest conversations that seek to hold corporations, governments, and even ourselves accountable.

—Pardis Mahdavi, *From Trafficking to Terror*