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Berkeley as a Global City: A Case Study in Human Trafficking

by

Natasha Joanne Pinto

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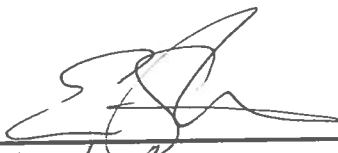

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Committee in charge:

Professor Eric Stover, Chair  
Professor Vincanne Adams  
Professor Gillian Hart

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This thesis of Natasha Pinto is approved:

	3/17/05
Chair	Date
	4/15/05
	Date
Gilman Hart	5/13/05
	Date

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## INTRODUCTION

On November 24, 1999, Chanti Prattipati, 17, died of carbon monoxide poisoning in a small apartment on 2020 Bancroft Way in Berkeley, California. She was survived by her younger sister who lay beside her (poisoned but alive), and her mother and father, who were dependent on her earnings and residing in Velvadam, a village in Andhra Pradesh, India. Her death was quiet—someone would not find her for a few hours—very unlike the ensuing five years of courtroom battles and city struggles trying to piece together the conditions surrounding her death and those responsible for them.

In fact, the case almost has a mythic quality for Berkeley city residents. After all, the Berkeley they lived in changed the day that Chanti died in a downtown apartment building. It was found that the owner of the building, Lakireddy Balireddy (known as “Reddy”) had transported her and many others, both illegally and legally, from his hometown village Velvadam in India to Berkeley to live and work in an exploitative situation in his Berkeley real estate and restaurant empire. Many of those transported to Berkeley were from a low caste and saw Reddy as a benefactor who offered them an opportunity for a better life. A subset of the workers, including Chanti, were young girls whom he also sexually exploited. It was a movement of people back and forth between Berkeley and Velvadam that was happening for at least the last 25 years. While here, they were housed and fed in the restaurant and real estate empire for which their cheap labor was exploited and while there, they invested their small earnings in land and livelihood. It

was a Berkeley whose economy and daily running had been intimately interconnected to a village far away for the last 25 years. Some residents began to see clearly a Berkeley unfamiliar to the one they thought they lived in. As the second largest landowner after University of California, Berkeley, Lakireddy Balireddy (“Reddy”) owns 1,100 apartment units in Berkeley making many residents his tenants and neighbors. Though Chanti’s death was eye-opening, for many it was not a shock. For years, there had been a collective consciousness about the women in saris who could be seen walking up and down Shattuck, Bancroft and Durant Avenues, painting and cleaning downtown apartment buildings in broad daylight. Chanti’s death merely ignited an awareness that city residents had all along.

Soon after Chanti’s death, a federal investigation ensued. Reddy was sentenced in 2001 to eight years in federal prison on human trafficking charges. Indeed, Chanti’s situation—her impoverished lower caste station in India, her illegal transport to the US, her exploitative working and living conditions—were classified as an egregious case of trafficking. United States government attorneys led a criminal prosecution against Reddy, his two sons, his brother and sister-in-law. Chanti’s death not only moved into action the federal apparatus, but also set into play a host of city actors. Local law enforcement continued the investigation. Local lawyers represented the victims in two civil cases against Reddy and his family. Social service providers sought safe shelter and health services for the victims. Activists worked to give the case political salience. The South Asian community and business owners feared what the Reddy case would do to business and their reputation in the community. City council members began to sweat



under the pressure and scrambled for resources. Each group grappled to understand the case and create appropriate responses.

The focus of this thesis is to understand how city stakeholders in Berkeley responded to the Reddy case and what impact their response has had on the city. It is an exploration of how city stakeholders—media, activists, lawyers, social service providers, law enforcement and South Asian business owners—framed the transnational phenomena within a particular historical and national trafficking context into which the Reddy case erupted. Two main framings emerge: trafficking as sexual slavery and trafficking as organized crime and immigration fraud. First, I will show how these framings are of particular salience in present national politics and how they are expressed at the city level by groups involved in the Reddy case. Second, I will show how these framings represent ideas and imaginations about the globalizing world. These spatial-cultural imaginations that the frames represent have real effects on the types of strategies achieved to end exploitation like that in the Reddy case. In other words, the spatial-cultural imaginations affect the framing of the trafficking problem; this, in turn, affects the framing of the trafficking solution and can limit the scope of analysis and the effectiveness of the intervention. Lastly, I will show how the current framing of the problem and solution are insufficient to fully characterize the transnational phenomena that occurred in the Reddy case. I present a possible new frame: trafficking as unsafe migration and labor exploitation. The new frame is also an attempt at a new spatial-cultural imagination in order to make visible the global cities that we live in, cities that are intimately interconnected both economically and culturally to places faraway. I hypothesize that, in fact, it is the inability to see the global cities that we live in that allows the conditions

necessary for unsafe migration and labor exploitation in our city. Indeed, the incomplete framings of trafficking work to mobilize inaccurate spatial-cultural imaginations that powerfully render invisible immigrants who work in the shadows in exploitative situations and live in parts of our cities zoned for poverty. In the end, there is a contradiction between the city that the city apparatus recognizes and the reality of our globally interconnected cities. Chanti was caught in this contradiction.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Problem

#### Historical Definitions of Trafficking

Human trafficking is not a new phenomenon. Tracking the definition of human trafficking through international legislation in the last century reveals that the characterization of “trafficking” depends on its context. This understanding of the definition of trafficking will be necessary to pick apart and then piece together the details of the Reddy case that have been subject to multiple definitions by groups with different interests. The hope is to understand in what ways context and political interests pull and push at understandings of trafficking. This leads to a deepened understanding of how the Reddy case erupted into a context already imbued with meanings.

Throughout recent history there have been a myriad of terms used to describe an old, ever-evolving, ever-elusive exploitative practice. Before the term and practice of “trafficking” came into use, “slavery,” “involuntary servitude,” “forced labor,” and “peonage” were other terms and forms of exploitation that appeared in legislation. The first international conference using the word “trafficking,” specifically trafficking in women, was held in 1895 in Paris and subsequent meetings resulted in the first international agreement against “white slavery” in 1904 (Wijers 1997, 20). The distinction of white slavery from black slavery, at this point in the legislation, recalls a history of black slavery which had been addressed by the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment of the US Constitution in 1865 outlawing chattel slavery and involuntary servitude. The first international agreement abolishing slavery dates to the League of Nations Slavery

Conventions of 1926. The convention defined slavery as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised” (Human Rights Center, 19). By the early twentieth century, as chattel or legal slavery was fading as a practice, slavery-like practices drew immigrants, women and children into peonage (the practice of holding someone to work off a debt) and involuntary servitude (where an individual is forced to work against his or her will). Additionally, colonial powers had begun to impose mass forced labor on indigenous populations under their control. In response, the International Labor Organization (ILO), in 1930, adopted Forced Labor Convention No. 29 which outlawed forced labor defined as “all work or service which is exacted from a person under the menace of penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself” (Human Rights Center, 20). During the second World War, slavery-like practices took on new forms at the height of the Nazi regime in German concentration camps. The Japanese military also forced hundreds of thousands Koreans and other Chinese and Allied prisoners to work under brutal conditions in mines, steel plants and construction. After the war, the international community adopted the Geneva Conventions imposing minimum conditions for prisoners of war. Soon after, trafficking legislation focused on the prostitution of women and children. The UN 1949 Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of Others condensed the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century treaties drafted to address the phenomenon of “white slavery” into defining trafficking solely in terms of prostitution (Human Rights Center, 20).

Amidst the variety of terms used to depict slavery and slavery-like practices—peonage, involuntary servitude, forced labor—“trafficking” emerged as a not-so-new

phenomenon. Looking deeper into how the characterization or framing of trafficking evolved over time uncovers a number of trends that represent ongoing societal tensions. Among the trends was a tension between focusing the definition on coercive *recruitment* of innocent women versus on their exploitative living and working *conditions*. Even when both coercive recruitment *and* working conditions were considered to be part of the framing of trafficking, there was tension around what kind of work was considered forced and what kind was considered free. Movements against prostitution framed trafficking as “even with her consent” uncovering a tension between focusing on the *nature* versus the *conditions* of the work (Wijers 1997, 29). A focus on the condition rather than the nature of work is represented in the definitional trend from “violence against women” to “violation of human rights” which foregrounds the power relationship, namely ownership, as the focal point of the exploitative phenomena. In recent years, there has also been a shift from “prostitution” to “unregulated informal labor” which is an attempt to refocus attention on other sectors besides prostitution and hold states accountable to unregulated and unprotected informal sectors. In other definitions, especially in those countries trying to counteract migration, “trafficking in women” is equated to “illegal migration.” In this approach, the focus moves from violence against women to illegality. The crime is not the violence or abuse but the infraction of state laws. Rather than women, the state becomes the victim by migrants who want to enter the country illegally and smugglers who help these migrants. Measures aimed at combating illegality often protect the state instead of women who are further marginalized by criminalization and whose ability to migrate for work is constrained (Wijers 1997, 32).

What is the modern definition of trafficking? The 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking in persons as:

[T]he recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Additionally, the United States 2001 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) defines a “Severe form of Trafficking in Persons” as:

a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by use of force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

Both the definitions in the UN Trafficking Protocol and the TVPA break down trafficking into three aspects: 1) movement and trade/sale of person 2) techniques used to bring about a condition for this movement (e.g. deception, fraud, violence) 3) a listing that relates to the purpose of movement (forced labor, prostitution, servitude or debt bondage).

These three elements draw attention to the movement of people. There is a purposeful distinction between lawful labor migration, irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking. The critical factor that distinguishes trafficking from smuggling is the presence of force, coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation. Smuggling, by this definition, involves consent. Migration is distinctive because it involves consent, it is legal and it leads to improvement of livelihood (Population Council 2001, 13). However, in the United States, a smuggling or irregular migration situation may become a trafficking situation if at any point, from transport to working, the conditions become

coercive and “severely” exploitative. The definition of trafficking, even now, after more than one hundred years since the introduction of the word into the law is confusing and sometimes contradictory. This renders the concept of trafficking susceptible to its context taking on definitions in agreement with those in political power and representing societal tensions and trends.

### Current Frame #1: Trafficking as Sexual Slavery

The US definition in TVPA has been picked up by a number of groups—both governmental and non-governmental—and been framed representative of past trends. One such framing is the focus on trafficking as sex slavery and the solution to the problem as abolition of prostitution.

In particular, an alliance has formed between Christian evangelical groups and feminists who have come together around “the emerging human rights issue of the 21st century” (Shapiro 2004, 2). The evangelical worldview is similar to that of certain brands of feminism which see the world full of abuse perpetrated by men on women with sex as the primary means of exploitation. Equality Now, a New York organization that works on international women’s rights, is working with religious groups on trafficking. According to Shapiro, a journalist for the Seattle Weekly, their strategy has been largely responsible for turning the issue into a top priority of the U.S. government. In particular, a key alliance of three groups—two of them faith-based and a secular group, the Protection Project, a research institute based at Johns Hopkins—make up the War Against Trafficking Alliance. This Alliance co-hosted the State Department Conference in Washington D.C. in 2003 and has received federal funding to convene six such

conferences around the world. Further, Republican Congressman John Mayer of Seattle, although Jewish, was favored by the evangelicals to take over the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. President George W. Bush appointed him to the post in December of 2002. In June of 2004, Bush empowered him with the title ambassador at large. Mayer's energy and bipartisanship has garnered a lot of support for a cause which he brands, "modern-day slavery" (Shapiro 2004, 2).

Not only did Christian evangelicals form unlikely alliances—they also chose issues that they could agree on. Trafficking rose to the top of this agenda. As Hertze, author of the forthcoming book *Freeing God's Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights*, states, "Trafficking was in a kind of netherworld. It wasn't the kind of human rights issue traditionally addressed by secular groups like Amnesty International, which focused on government abuses of citizens...[evangelicals understood] this is not the way children of God were meant to live" (Shapiro 2004, 3). The archetypal case—a young girl tricked into leaving her impoverished homeland by the promise of a respectable job, then brutally held captive, raped and forced into prostitution—strikes deep moral chords. The notion of modern-day slavery resounds with evangelicals reminding them of the role they played in the abolitionist movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, there is the sexual side of the issue. It fits with the evangelical concern for "sexual integrity" meaning that sex should be reserved for a marriage relationship where there is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman—a tenet broken by prostitution. The fact that prostitution was being forced upon people fit their worldview. It becomes another example of depraved moral behavior that must be rooted out (Shapiro 2004, 4).

The focus on the sexual slavery aspect of trafficking has harnessed the trafficking



issue to fight against prostitution in general. In fact, a number of evangelicals and feminists fighting trafficking consider all prostitution, whether forced or not, a form of trafficking. As one feminist scholar states, “In reality, there is no distinction between them . . . there is an inherent exploitation of the buying and selling of people for sex, which is what prostitution is—paying for sexual abuse, typically paying a third party to sexually abuse someone else” (Shapiro 2004, 8). In a congressional subcommittee hearing on trafficking in 2002, Linda Smith, former Congresswoman turned director of an anti-trafficking organization Shared Hope, said, “I encourage the administration to consider countries with legalized or tolerated prostitution as having laws that are insufficient to eliminate trafficking” (Shapiro 2004, 4). The official position of the Bush administration follows this line of reasoning. It does not penalize countries for maintaining legalized prostitution as it might through its new policy of sanctioning nations considered to be inadequately fighting trafficking, but it does withhold funding from nongovernmental groups that are judged to “promote” prostitution (Shapiro 2004, 8).

#### Current Frame #2: Trafficking as Organized Crime and Immigration Fraud

The framing of trafficking as sexual slavery has been picked up by major media outlets, specifically the *NY Times* and *National Geographic*. An article “The Girls Next Door” appeared in the *NY Times Magazine* in January 2004 and another article, “21st Century Slaves” appeared in *National Geographic* in September 2003. The articles are hard to put down. They have real sex appeal. But it isn’t just sex which makes these articles sexy. There has been another framing of trafficking woven into them about

organized crime, immigration fraud and illegal border crossings.

The NY Times article paints the picture of a leafy, middle-class neighborhood in Anytown, USA where set back off the street is a “squalid, land-based equivalent of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century slave ship” filled with girls from any dozens of countries—Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. (NY Times Magazine, 32) According to this article, most of the traffic comes to the Unites States via Mexico: “Because of the porousness of the U.S-Mexico border and the criminal networks that traverse it, the towns and cities along that border have become the main staging area in an illicit and barbaric industry whose ‘product’ are women and girls” (NY Times Magazine, 33). The article provides images of the stages of transport and trade—the abduction, the brutal grooming of the girls, the state of the stash houses along the way, the backs of vans, the border crossings, and finally imprisonment. The crime only ends with a border police or local law enforcement raid which uncovers the middle-class camoflaug. According to a spokesperson for International Justice Mission, “Sex trafficking isn’t a poverty issue, it’s a law enforcement issue...Sex trafficking gets thrown into issues of intimacy and vice, but it’s a major crime. It’s purely profit and pleasure, and greed and lust, and it’s right under homicide” (NY Times Magazine, 36).

The National Geographic article “21<sup>st</sup>-Century Slaves” also tells a story of organization crime and illegal border crossing but there is much more of a focus on the “source” countries than there is on “destination” Anytown, USA. The National Geographic goes farther in painting a specific landscape of trafficking. The article comments on the headline “21st-Century Slaves:” “The headline below is not a metaphor. This story is about slaves. Not people living like slaves, working hard for lousy pay. Not

people 200 years ago. It's about 27 million people worldwide who are bought and sold, held captive, brutalized, exploited for profit." In National Geographic fashion, the headline is followed by a series of horrifying images—a dim room of working Indian children, a dim room of working Chinese children, and scantily clad young Ukrainian women in a brothel. The emphasis of the images is not so much on where the photos were taken—Italy, Israel—but on the impoverished state of the countries where the women and children come from.

What follows from a characterization like this is a specific role for “destination” countries. Organized crime networks sprouting in countries in Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe need to be rooted out in order to stop trafficking. It becomes a matter of foreign policy. In a speech President Bush delivered to the U.N. General Assembly on September 23, 2003, he addressed both the United States strategy against terror and trafficking:

Twenty-four months ago, the center of New York City became a battlefield and a graveyard and the symbol of an unfinished war....Events during the past two years have set before us the clearest of divides: between those who seek order and those who spread chaos; between those who work for peaceful change and those who adopt the methods of gangsters; between those who honor the rights of man and those who deliberately take the lives of men and women and children without mercy or shame. Between these alternatives there is no neutral ground. All governments that support terror are complicit in a war against civilization. (New York Times, 23 September 2003, 1)

After a few more minutes of speaking on Afghanistan and Iraq, he turned to trafficking:

[Another challenge] we share is a challenge to our conscience. We must act decisively to meet the humanitarian crises of our time...Each year and estimated 800,000 to 900,000 human beings are bought, sold or forced across the world's borders... This commerce in human life generates billions of dollars each year, much of which is used to finance organized crime. There's a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable...Those who create these victims and profit from their suffering must be severely punished. And

governments that tolerate this trade are tolerating a form of slavery. ....Under the Trafficking in Victims Protection Act, the United States is using sanctions against governments to discourage human trafficking. The American government is committing \$50 million to support the good work of organizations that are rescuing women and children from exploitation, and giving them shelter and medical treatment and the hope of new life...We must show new energy in fighting back an old evil. (New York Times, 23 September 2003, 3)

President Bush concludes his speech by tying in both the war on terror and the war on trafficking as similar challenges that must be met by the United States and the United Nations with a “moral law that stands above men and women and which must be defended and enforced by men and nations.” This speech, made by the president of the United States to an international governing body, invokes a specific understanding of trafficking that aligns with other foreign policy strategies. Trafficking, like terror, is an organized crime originating in countries outside the United States. In the war against trafficking, like the war against terror, one must take sides because there is a divide between those who employ the methods of criminals to work towards chaos and those who work towards peace, between “source” countries and “destination” countries. Further, a “porousness” in national borders must be closed to keep this divide intact and protect those who live within it from the crimes that can happen in their backyard. Importantly, it is not just individuals that should be held responsible but governments as well. Two anti-trafficking acts, one prohibiting the entry of such criminals and one allowing action against governments that tolerate such evil, have been enacted. Both amplify a moral purpose to fight evil and secure peace and freedom.

Through demonstrating the two current frames—trafficking as sexual slavery and trafficking as organized crime and immigration fraud—it can be seen how a phenomenon such as trafficking can take on different meanings depending on the framing of the

phenomenon. These framings amplify the agendas and political interests of groups such as Christian evangelicals, feminists, and a government administration. In other words, the definition or the meaning of trafficking depends on its context. More importantly, the meaning can take on a certain momentum as it becomes incorporated into a specific strategy of a group—abolition of prostitution, prosecution of criminals, sanctioning of governments. In this way, the framing of the problem mediates the political interests at stake.

### Alternative Frame #3: Trafficking as Labor Exploitation and Unsafe Migration

The current framings and strategies are insufficient to end human trafficking. In the last twenty years, the phrase “human trafficking” has been used so extensively and been oversimplified that a description of the phenomena has almost become cliché. Inconsistencies remain unresolved and continue to resurface. The issue has become so politicized rendering it stagnate. Additionally, there is no agreed upon framework. Trafficking can be defined as a legal problem, a human rights problem, a migration problem, a gender problem, a child labor problem, a health problem or a combination of these. These definitions of the problem dictate the solutions—legal problems require legal solutions, a border problems require border solutions and so on. After nearly a decade, this complex social phenomenon lacks conceptual clarity. Matt Friedman, in “Revisiting the Human Trafficking Paradigm: Second Generation Thinking” calls for an integration of the inconsistencies and new insights that have continually arisen—a shift from first generation thinking to an expanded second generation thinking (Friedman 2004, 1).

Trafficking is a complex social phenomena that is made up of multiple cultural and economic dimensions and is not easily encapsulated and solved by a simplistic category such as a legal framework demanding criminal prosecution. Friedman writes about many anti-trafficking sector activists who have been in a holding pattern because of stagnated debates about sex trafficking and the abolitionist approach of eliminating the sex industry. The sector has been divided because of this debate and it has reduced the entire human trafficking sector down to one industry negating the range of exploitation that occurs in other sectors. Second generation thinking would accept the premise that the trafficking sector is much broader than the sex industry and includes a full range of interventions to address multiple sectors (Friedman 2004, 10).

Instead of framing trafficking as sexual slavery or as organized crime/immigration fraud, trafficking as a *subset* of migration and labor issues should be considered, that is, trafficking as unsafe migration and labor exploitation. Both the definitions in the UN Trafficking Protocol and the TVPA deconstruct trafficking into three aspects: 1) movement and trade/sale of person 2) techniques used to bring about a condition for this movement (e.g. deception, fraud, violence) 3) a listing that relates to the purpose of movement (forced labor, prostitution, servitude or debt bondage). The framing of trafficking as unsafe migration continues to draw attention to the conditions of movement. However, in this framing, the purposeful distinction between lawful labor migration, irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking is important but deemphasized. The emphasis is on the *spectrum* of migration patterns, on what makes them similar as well as what makes them different. Further, the United States legislation draws attention to the movement of people but does not directly address the conditions of the outcome or

end point of the movement. In the end, the human trafficking problem needs to be re-conceptualized as a *process by which a person loses control of their ability to make choices within an exploitative work-related situation*. The new frame focuses on conditions rather than on nature of work. Prostitution is considered trafficking when the working conditions are coercive and exploitative. As Alice Mayer puts it:

People remain in need of real protections, whether working locally or migrating, and the power to participate in the policies that determine their lives. Yet, their claims as citizens disappear in the current stories of “trafficking”, as contemporary anti-trafficking reports tell stories which retain the impress of anti-vice and social purity movements. The hypocritical focus on sexual harm masks the absence of concrete steps to create the conditions for sexual or economic rights for women and men. We come full circle: without the ability to intervene meaningfully against state practices and interests that generate unsafe migration, we are left helping –though the operation of the criminal law—those very same states regulate the movement of already constrained persons. (2004, 14)

Framed in this way, anti-trafficking strategies could work to ensure immigrant rights and rights in the workplace not just prevent irregular migration. Traffickers are able to exploit workers by taking advantage of United States tight immigration controls and lack of labor protections for immigrant workers. *Enforcing work and safety standards for all workers and promoting their right to organize would ensure that workers do not work in the shadows living in fear of employers and the authorities*. All anti-trafficking is not rights based. To really end trafficking, reframing of the problem is necessary. This reframing can lead to rights-based solutions.

### **Analytical Framework**

Framing Theory: Imagination Locked into Language

A review of the trafficking debate reveals the power of frames to define and problem and its solution. In order to participate in reframing the debate, an understanding of framing theory is needed. George Lakoff in his book, *Don't Think of An Elephant: Know Your Values And Frame The Debate*, addresses the ways in which citizens who want to take part in domestic politics can understand the concepts of framing and how it works. As a cognitive scientist, he is concerned with the myth that the truth is freeing, that if people are told the same facts they will reach the same conclusion because they are rational beings. Instead he suggests, "People think in frames . . . frames force a certain logic. To be accepted, the truth must fit people's frames. If the facts do not fit a frame, the frame stays and the facts bounce off" (Lakoff 2004, 17). Framing, then, is not just about language, it is about drawing you into a specific worldview. The ideas and imagery behind the frame are primary. The language simply carries and evokes those ideas (Lakoff 2004, 4). For example, Lakoff writes:

When the word "tax" is added to "relief" the result is a metaphor: Taxation is an affliction. And the person who takes it away is a hero, and anyone who tries to stop him is a bad guy. This is a frame. It is made up of ideas, like "affliction" and "hero." The language that evokes the frame comes out of the White House, and it goes into press releases, goes to every radio station, every TV station, every newspaper. And soon the New York Times is using "tax relief." And it is not only Fox; it is on CNN, it is on NBC, it is on every station because it is "the president's tax relief plan." And soon the Democrats are using 'tax relief'—and shooting themselves in the foot. (2004, 4)

Lakoff instructs citizens to become more aware of frames and how they work. Frames are about activating a worldview. Lakoff's stresses that people, though actively governed by one worldview, have other models working actively or passively. By invoking a certain frame, a group is trying to activate a specific worldview in the people they talk to. They are trying to activate a specific moral system in other people's political



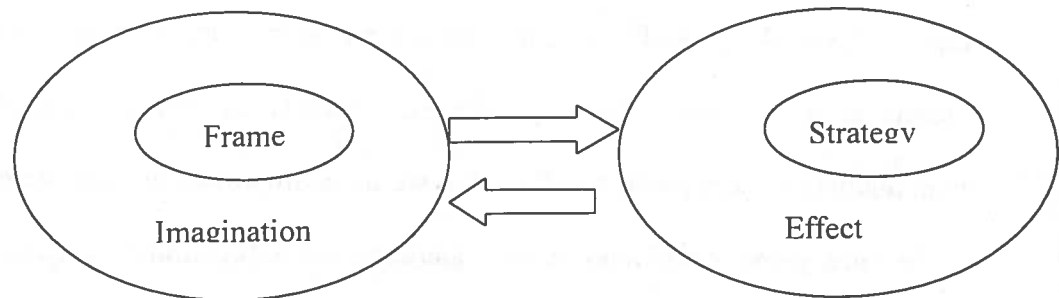
and personal decisions (Lakoff 2004, 21). The image or worldview behind the frame is crucial to the effect that the frame has. Just like the frame, the worldview, too, can be molded. Replacing the static word “worldview” with the more dynamic word “imagination” better depicts the active and creative process behind producing a worldview. Once the frame is fixed, it is repeated over and over so that eventually only a few words are necessary to evoke a specific imagination (Lakoff 2004, 24).

### Framing and Imagination has Real Effects

Social theorists have been writing about the power of language for a long time. Michel Foucault, a French social theorist, uses “discourse” to describe the concepts of framing. A discourse, in common sense terms, is simply a way of talking about something. Foucault believes that discourse is a way of representing knowledge about a topic or a production of knowledge through language. In other words, when statements are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. *It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed* (Hall 1996, 201). This is the effect.

Foucault’s use of “discourse” is an attempt to side-step deciding which social discourses are true or scientific and which are false and ideological. Most social scientists now accept that values enter into all descriptions of the social world and therefore most frames, however factual, have an ideological dimension. *Competing discourses are about struggles over power*. It is the outcome of this struggle which will decide the “truth” in a given situation. Therefore, though Foucault’s concept of discourse side-steps the problem of truth, it does not evade the issue of power. It is power, rather than facts about reality,

which makes things true. Power works through the discourse to create a “regime of truth” (Hall 1996, 203).



This is a pictorial description of these concepts. Imagination is the worldview or the idea behind the trafficking frame. The effect of the imagination is the production and fixing of a logic that informs the trafficking strategy. Said simply, how someone *thinks* about world relations affects how someone *talks* about a problem affects what someone *does* about the problem. This is a process through which power works.

The trafficking discourse demonstrates these principles. Competing political interests are represented through competing frames. The powerful effect of one group’s frame is to limit the ways in which the topic can be constructed and thus limit the strategies to solve the problem.

It is important to remember that the facts in each of the frames—sexual slavery and immigration fraud—are true; one of the largest sectors for trafficking is indeed the sex industry, trafficking is a crime that often operates through a large coordinated network, and transporting people across the border without proper authorization is illegal. The point is that each of these facts, when put into a frame, can paint an incomplete picture of the trafficking phenomena leading to mischaracterization and misdirected

strategies. For example, overemphasis on the sex industry, leads to a neglect of other industry sectors such as domestic service, agriculture, garment, and food service (Human Rights Council, 14). Also, the sexual slavery frame focuses on the nature of work rather than on the working conditions. This can take on a certain momentum as it becomes incorporated into a specific strategy of a group namely the abolition of prostitution rather than regulating the working conditions as would be important in other sectors like agriculture, garment and food service. The abolition of prostitution only has limited effectiveness in solving the problem of trafficking. Likewise, a focus on trafficking as an organized crime and immigration fraud leads to an overemphasis on criminal prosecution as the means to solve the problem. This legal framework decontextualizes the phenomena from the conditions that make trafficking possible. Further, the sanctioning of governments and the militarizing of borders limits mobility and can limit access to new forms of livelihood and restrict rights for women seeking better opportunities (Population Council 2001, 16).

#### Reframing as Social Change/ Imagination as Social Practice

Precisely because frames and imaginations have such powerful effects on anti-trafficking strategies and solutions, reframing is a powerful tool. Lakoff urges citizens to avoid others' use of language and frame issues from their own perspective. He reminds citizens to avoid just speaking the truth but to frame the truth effectively by being clear and consistent on values and ideas (Lakoff 2004, 34). Just as Lakoff encourages reframing for social change, Arjun Appadurai, an anthropologist who writes about globalization and modernity, calls for imagination as social practice. Imagination is the

idea behind the frame. It is the powerful image that is conjured up with language. Appadurai writes: “No longer mere fantasy, no longer simple escape, no longer elite pastime, and no longer mere contemplation, the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined field of possibility” (Appadurai 2004, 49). He sees imagination as a space of contestation in which individuals and groups integrate their worldview into their own daily practices. Imagination is the mental work of ordinary people in all societies in the practice of everyday lives. It is a staging ground for action.

### **The Context and the Stakes**

#### The Role of the Imagination has Increased in Context of Intensified Globalization

Modern-day trafficking takes place in the context of intensified globalization. For many centuries, the world has been made up of large-scale interactions but today’s world, according to Appadurai in *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, involves interactions of a new intensity. He says:

[B]etween travelers and merchants, pilgrims and conquerors, the world has seen much long-distance and long term cultural traffic . . . But few will deny that given the problems of time, distance, and limited technologies for the command of resources across vast space, cultural dealings between socially and spatially separated groups have, until the past centuries, been bridged at great cost and sustained over time only with great effort. The forces of cultural gravity seemed always to pull away from the formation of large-scale ecumenes, whether religious, commercial, or political, toward smaller-scale accretions of intimacy and interest. Sometime in the past few centuries, the nature of this gravitational field seems to have changed. (Appadurai 2004, 46)

Though Appadurai writes broadly of “forces” and “fields,” he is trying to describe a current context in which flows and interactions of people between faraway places have recently changed in order and intensity.

Because people and products refuse to “stay put,” there has been a profound sense of the loss of territorial roots and an erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of specific places. Cultural identities are, in effect, deterritorialized (Gupta and Ferguson 2004, 68). Refugees, migrants and displaced people are the first to live out these global realities. In a world of diaspora and mass movements of populations, attempts to map the globe as a set of cultural regions fail. Familiar lines between “here” and “there” become blurred. It is not only the displaced who experience displacement but also those who remain in their “native” places find that the nature of their relations to their place change when others migrate in (Gupta and Ferguson 2004, 69).

The important irony of these times is that, *though the natural connection of people to place is blurred, ideas of culturally distinct places have become even more salient*. That is, the role of the imagination in creating communities—cultural, national, religious—have increased in the context of intensified globalization. Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, writes about the role of imagination in creating identities and communities specifically in regard to nation-building. He shows how, at a certain point in history, there was no longer a need for face-to-face communication between persons or groups in order to create community. Rather, he shows how print media used the imagination to construct national or ethnic identities. In these times, communities are not only actively imagined but they are attached to imagined places. In a world without territorial anchors, displaced people cluster around remembered or imagined homelands.

In the face of strict cultural boundaries becoming obsolete, space has become *detrterritorialized* and then *reterritorialized* through the power of imagination (Gupta and Ferguson 2004, 70).

### Two Competing Spatial-Cultural Imaginations

Precisely because imagination and the frames that come from it hold so much power, it is important to understand the imaginations behind the trafficking frames. The imaginations at stake in the trafficking discourse are specifically those about space and culture. In other words, how does the way we talk about the movement of people across national borders both shape and express our imaginations about space and culture? In a time of intensified globalization, these imaginations are being actively created and debated.

One powerful imagination is that of culture as static and rooted in and bounded by space. As Gupta puts it, "It is so taken for granted that each country embodies its own distinctive culture and society that the term "society" and "culture" are routinely simply appended to the names of nation-states, as when a tourist visits India to understand 'Indian culture'" (Gupta and Ferguson 2004, 66). Most maps represent the world as a collection of countries and the distinctiveness of cultures is predicated on an unproblematic division of "naturally" discontinuous space. Indians live in India, Americans live in America and there is no connection between them culturally, politically or economically. The premise of discontinuity, Gupta writes, is the starting point by which to theorize the difference between cultures or the "cultural difference." In other words, the effect of thinking about culture as bounded units, made up of an

essentialized, static, frozen monolith of people linked to a specific space called the nation-state leads directly to the intensifying of cultural difference. This could form the basis of conflict.

The fiction of cultures as discrete, object-like phenomena that occupy discrete spaces becomes obvious when confronted with the question—what is the culture of those who live a life of border crossings? What is the “culture” of workers who spend half a year in India and half the year in the United States? Challenging the discontinuous, bounded and static landscape of independent nations and autonomous cultures leads to an alternative imagination. In this alternative spatial-cultural imagination, space and culture are dynamic concepts—interconnected and produced through interconnections. This abstract idea is most easily understood upon examination of a movement on a world map over time. For example, there are 20 million Indians living abroad spanning 5 continents of different religions, speaking different languages and having different histories. Further, boundaries of nations such as United States, Europe or India have changed over time. This suggests that boundaries are created and changed by political power, legal agreement and physical force. Space is, in fact, produced by social relations which are not internal to the locale but link them to elsewhere. Produced by social relations, place becomes an articulated moment—places depicted on maps are captured moments, slices of time. If one begins with the premise that spaces have always been (hierarchically) interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected, then cultural and social change becomes not a matter of cultural contact (and conflict) but one of connection. The challenge in an age of intensified globalization is to more accurately depict transnational

phenomena by understanding them as situated within *interconnected* space and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 2004, 67).

	Culture	Space	Cultural Difference	Spatial-Cultural Relationships/ Boundaries
Imagination/Worldview #1	Static	Discontinuous, Bounded	Heightened, Linked to territory, rooted in Space	Commonsensical, Pre-determined/ Pre-existing
Imagination/Worldview #2	Dynamic	Continuous, Interconnected	Lessened, Deterritorialized	Uncertain, Influx, Constantly Produced and reproduced through interconnection

The difference between the first and second imagination is crucial because imagination is a process through which power works. As Gupta puts it, “The presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography successfully to conceal the topography of power . . . Space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization is inscribed” (Gupta and Ferguson 2004, 66). The effect of this is that space becomes a central organizing principle at the same time as it disappears from analysis. Therein, lies its power. In the first imagination, *spatialized* cultural difference—“ourselves and other,” “here an there,” “us and them”—creates an unproblematized home and problematized abroad. The “other” is nativized, placed in a separate frame of analysis.

The second imagination questions the radical separation between the two that makes the opposition possible in the first place. It works not to establish a relationship between geographically distinct societies but to explore the process of *production of difference* in a historically, socially and spatially interconnected world. It works not to



capture the voice of other but to interrogate the given of a world in the first place divided up into ourselves and others. The first step is to move beyond spatialized cultures and to explore instead the production of difference within a common, shared, and connected space. *It is a move away from seeing cultural difference as world of people with separate histories as toward seeing it as a product of shared historical process that differentiates the world as it connects it* (Gupta and Ferguson 2004, 76).

### The Effect of Spatial-Cultural Imaginations

The effect of these powerful spatial-cultural imaginations is exemplified by current political debates. They are mobilized in such disparate issues as war, immigration, free trade and trafficking. These debates illustrate how the imaginations and the spaces and cultures with which they are invested are actively contested and produced.

The static spatial-cultural imagination is best exemplified by an influential, widely circulated article called “The Clash of Civilizations,” written by Samuel Huntington, published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. In it, he describes a world that is entering a new phase in which the source of conflict will be cultural: a clash of civilizations. He says that civilization is the “highest cultural grouping” and names eight civilizations that comprise the current world: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African. The differences between these eight civilizations are real and basic—essential. The civilizations/cultures are large monoliths of people whose differences sharpen and intensify with greater interaction in this age of globalization. Their cultural differences are not easily resolvable precisely because culture is not malleable (Huntington 1993, 3-22).

Said insists there is nothing natural about these difference that Huntington's story of culture. It is simply a recycled version of the "us versus them" Cold War thesis and creates an imagination that justifies global domination. His argument is actually an important version of his *Orientalism* thesis in which he shows how language and culture were paramount in producing cultural difference—one people as inferior and another as superior allowing for the justification of imperialism (Said 1979, 49-72). In short, precisely because Said feels that language and culture produce knowledge and power relations and produce ideas of cultural difference, is he so worried about the implications of Huntington's *Foreign Affairs* article on the imagination (Said 2000, 569-590).

These spatial-cultural imaginations are not just mobilized in war frames but also in immigration and free trade frames. On the one hand is a version of the dynamic and interconnected spatial imagination in which an immense, unstructured, free and unbounded space is conjured up when speaking about free trade (Massey 1999, 37). On the other hand, immigration frames incorporate a vision of space as barrier-less and open is a space divided-up and bounded—an imagination of nationalism. There is no world market for labor as there is for capital. The increasing arrival of people in First World cities from other parts of the world changes the geography of openness. Their arrival is actively prevented and another geographical imagination is employed. One that is in total contradiction to the vision of free trade. This second imagination is space that is divided-up and bounded (Massey 1999, 38).

So, there are two opposing geographical imaginations called on in turn to defend certain policies. There is an imagination of free, unbounded space for global capital and there is another of divided-up, bounded space for those who migrate for labor necessary

for global capital. *There is a contradiction between the economic globalization imagination that this nation creates and the cultural globalization imagination that the nation denies.* The contradiction does not matter because it works. The double imaginary—the freedom of space on the one hand and the boundedness of space on the other—fuels the exclusion of those who migrate for work and creates the conditions for unsafe migration and labor exploitation.

The war frames and immigration frame analysis demonstrates that the two spatial-cultural imaginations are not merely different but they are in opposition. One imagination prevents the other imagination from entering the debate. In the case of trafficking the first imagination—a static, bounded space and culture—is behind the sex slavery and immigration fraud frames. The imagination describes trafficking as a movement of people from “source” to “destination” countries in which there is an illegal crossing of borders. This reinforces the divide and lack of interconnection between source and destination countries. “Slavery” recalls a past in the present essential character of these source countries. It can even serve to heighten cultural difference and implicate culture as a cause of the phenomena. The second imagination—a dynamic, interconnected space and culture—is behind the labor exploitation and unsafe migration frame. If one can see culture as produced by interconnected social relations, then one does not see the global South as consisting of ancient culture untouched by history but as survivors of centuries of expansion, violence and exclusion. This is a process dependent on and implicated in the production of difference which occurs in continuous, connected space traversed by economic and political relations of inequality. This imagination disables the use of “natural” ideas of cultural difference to justify the sanctioning of governments. If one can

see space as produced through interconnected social relations, one can see Northern-directed trade and development policies disrupting traditional work structure creating the supply of cheap labor. The North become implicated in the creation of “source” countries through economic and political linkages. These two spatial-cultural imaginations are indeed powerful in the kinds of new knowledge that they allow.

### Bringing the Alternative Imagination to the City

The second dynamic, interconnected spatial-cultural imagination is in not just in operation at the level of the nation-state but also at the level of the city. As a way to ground the global imagination in the practice of our everyday locale, Sassen theorizes the “global city.” She believes that globalization is not a process situated elsewhere but in specific places, in cities like New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Berkeley. Even the most advanced information industries have a work process (workers, machines, buildings) that is more placebound than the self-perpetuated imagery of the information economy. This takes us away from some imagined global centralized control center to the range of activities and arrangements in our global cities (Sassen 1998, 23).

The global city is intimately connected—through capital and culture—to sites that are geographically far. Sassen’s geography is strategic as it connects the factory workers in export processing zones with the cleaners on Wall Street and highlights the politics of those who “lack power but gain presence.” She makes connections between the economies of two places. Sassen speaks about a set of conditions and linkages (military, direct foreign investment) that have created displacement and disruption of traditional work structures and made the United States a destination for immigrants. At the same

time, The United States has created conditions for the absorption of immigrants—a rapid expansion of low-wage jobs and a “casualization” of the labor market. Thus, the United States is linked to supply as well as the demand for workers (Sassen 1998, 54).

Looking inside global cities, there exists a massive downtown receiving investment in real estate and telecommunication while low-income city areas are starved for resources. The new “city users” have made an immense claim on the city but there are others who live there and are making claims on the city as well. They are the disadvantaged workers in the global economy crucial for its running (Sassen 1998, 62).

California and the Bay Area cities, rich with recent immigrants, are ripe for the sorts of global city struggles that come from the contradictions between the free flow of capital and the not-so-free flow of labor, between an economic globalization imagination and a cultural globalization imagination. For example, the investment and capital that comes out of Silicon Valley is crucial for the running of California, the 5<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world. Infosys Technologies, one of the largest outsourcing firms, with about 25,600 employees and more than \$1 billion in revenues last year is based in Bangalore, India and has its U.S. headquarters in Fremont, California. Infosys offers low-cost information technology, software and consulting services to companies around the world. H1-B visas are the main vehicle for this service. In an SF Chronicle article on July 4, 2004, Nandan Nilekani, president and CEO of Infosys was interviewed. In the interview, Nilekani agreed that his customers in the Bay Area include APL, JDS, Williams-Sonoma, Cisco, Gap and Apple making him virtually the back office for the entire Bay Area. He says, “I think what’s happening here is good for everybody. At the end of the day, what we are doing is helping American business to become more

productive. Productivity is the name of the game. It's why United States is so successful, why the standard of living is so high and why the economy does so well . . . It's a win-win for everybody" (SF Chronicle, 4 July 2004, J1).

Clearly, Indian interconnections are crucial for the California economy. While there is recognition of the Indian-filled back offices of the Bay Area, there is much less recognition of the immigrant-filled city spaces, in other industry sectors and school districts. In a SF Chronicle article on July 18, 2004, noncitizen parents and guardians of public school children—whether they are in the country legally or not—were fighting for the right to vote in local board elections. Statewide undocumented immigrants might win a renewed battle to receive driver's licenses. Meanwhile, California is led by a foreign-born governor whose early successes and popularity lead some to question the U.S. Constitution's requirement that the president be a U.S.-born citizen. According to an immigration studies professor quoted in the article, "These issues—whether immigrants should be allowed to participate in the democratic process—are fundamental questions for this country, whether it's driver's licenses or non-citizens voting in local elections. These are very important questions at the heart of a democracy. It's a debate of the future of the state of California" (SF Chronicle, 15 July 2004, A16).

As can be seen, the contradiction between the two competing spatial imaginations is mobilized in city debates and has real effects over resources and rights. The outcomes of struggles, like the one for local board elections, can either reaffirm the contradictions in global cities or reshape the city to more closely match its changing nature. This, in turn, may either make invisible the immigrants who live and work in the city, or make them visible by ensuring rights.

## Global City Struggles Produce Place

Seeing city struggles as the terrain on which transnational phenomena are resolved and through which global cities are drawn demands a fine-tuned understanding of space. Space is imagined but it is not imaginary. It is actively produced through social relations and interconnections which happen at the city level through city struggles. As Massey puts it in "Places and Their Pasts:"

Places are always constructed out of articulations of social relations (trading connections, the unequal links of colonialism, thoughts of home) which are not internal to the locale but which link them to elsewhere . . . In daily life, in politics, in battles over development and conversation, we often operate in ways which mobilize a deeply essentialist way of thinking about a place and its character. A Kentucky Fried Chicken in Paris, for example, surely does not qualify as the "real France" . . . The "real France" which we breathe in at the café, and into which a Kentucky Fried Chicken seems such a dislocating intrusion, is itself composed of influences, contacts and connections which, over time, have settled into each other, moulded each other, produced something new . . . but which we now think of as old, as established . . . the essential France. The new 'intrusions' are no more from outside, no more "out of place." than were in their time many of the components of the currently-accepted "character of the place." (1995, 183)

These kinds of essentialist construction of the character of places fail to recognize the long history of interconnectedness with elsewhere—the history of the global construction of the local. The local is always already a product, in part, of global forces where global refers to a world beyond the place itself. And yet, there are those who refuse to recognize these global interconnection by holding on to the past of these places. They experience a disruption between the past and the present or the potential future of a place. To them, the past embodies the "real" character of the place. There are, then, two different interpretations of the identity of place each based on the different socio-geographical position of the groups which promote them. Struggles between these groups produce

either a new identity of place. These identities manifested in decisions about city planning, zoning codes, school districts and so on can exclude certain groups over others.

Trafficking can happen because of lack of recognition of global interconnections which lead to the exclusion and invisibility of disadvantaged workers crucial for a city's running. This pushes workers into the shadows in unregulated sectors where they have little access to resources and rights. This is a setting ripe for exploitation. That the Reddy restaurant and real estate empire spanned Berkeley and yet the immigrant labor which Reddy housed and exploited never caught the attention of city residents or the city apparatus for twenty-five years is testament to the level of invisibility that city struggles can render on local places and local people. Because the modern era of intensified globalization happens not *to*, but *in* and *through*, our global cities, the outcome of city struggles relay a pulse on the ability of residents to produce an inclusive place in the modern context. An analysis of the Reddy case is one such case study of the identity of Berkeley, its always already global interconnections and the struggle of city residents and stakeholders to deal with their city's own interconnections.



## METHODS

This research uses a case study design specifically looking at the case of affluent Indian Berkeley landowner who transported people to Berkeley for forced labor. The research questions asks: How did Berkeley city stakeholders respond to the Reddy case? Case studies are preferred when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomena. The case study inquiry copes with the distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interests than data points. For this reason, a key concern with a case study design is the generalizability of the results. The case study does not represent a “sample” in the experimental sense. Rather, the goal of the case study is to expand and generalize theories that have been explored in the first part of this paper (analytical generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization) (Yin 1994, 10). The case study also relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needed to converge in a triangulating fashion. This case study included three main data collection methods: 1) archival analysis of criminal and civil case files, press reports and government documents, 2) ethnographic interviews with twenty-five key informants forming roughly six categories: media, activists, lawyers, social service providers, law enforcement, and South Asian community members/ business owners, 3) ethnographic field notes through participant observation of Berkeley South Asian enclave, courtroom hearings and activist meetings, specifically Alliance of South Asians Taking Action (ASATA) and the Clear Coalition.

The case study design should not be confused with ethnography although the case study methods did include ethnographic interviews or participant-observation data.

Ethnography refers to a form of social research that relies on participant observation in which the investigator talks to and observes people and activities to understand a particular social phenomena. Ethnography usually requires long periods of time in the “field” and emphasizes detailed, observational evidence. Though this type of ethnography was not undertaken, the case study utilized some of the ethnographic orientations to data collection and analysis. Ethnography typically has a tendency to work primarily with unstructured data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of closed set of analytic categories and an analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations (Denzin 1994, 143). The definition of ethnography has been subject to much controversy relating to a scientist’s position within the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. In general, quantitative methods are supported by the positivist paradigm, which leads us to regard the world as made up of observable, measurable facts. In contrast, qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and everchanging (Denzin 1994, 144). The proposed case study uses ethnographic type interviews and observation following an interpretivist paradigm.

The key informant ethnographic interviews were semi-structured. That is, the interview consisted of topics or domains that were important to cover but the order and specific questions used to address the topic were different. Domains included: framing of problem and solution, context or scope of problem, characterization of Reddy and workers, role in case, organizational mandate, strategies used in case, and challenges. The interview often began: “Tell me about the Reddy case,” or “Tell me about your

experience with the Reddy case.” The researcher strove for an informal atmosphere to facilitate conversation but also used guiding questions to keep on track and ensure depth. Interviews were audio-taped or recorded through note-taking depending on subject preference. Interviews came to a natural or facilitated close anywhere between a half-hour to three hours. Access to interviews was difficult because of the open and ongoing nature of the legal cases against the Reddy family. Most key informants were on witness lists and though effort was made to ensure confidentiality, there was a risk that the interviews could be subpoenaed by the court. The last case finally closed in September of 2004, nearly five years after the first case had been opened. The majority of interviews were carried out after this period though the legal consequences of their statements loomed over all the interviews and affected the open nature of the interview.

The researcher also periodically participated in two local activists groups planning actions involving the Reddy case or Bay Area anti-trafficking or pro-immigrant measures. The researcher introduced herself as a graduate student conducting research on the Reddy case and was open about the project and taking field notes. All members were eager to have the trafficking case and actions against it documented. Field notes on meetings focused on similar domains as the ethnographic interviews including framing of the problem, strategies toward solution, conflicts and challenges. In addition, observation of courtroom hearings and ethnic enclaves in Berkeley and in Fremont were recorded after a period of “hanging out.” These field notes were taken in journal form focusing on physical environment and social interactions.

## DATA

### Activists

Narika, a local South Asian domestic violence organization that had been called in to offer supportive services to the victims, held a public meeting on January 22, 2000, three days after Reddy had been charged. The point of the meeting was to debate the kind of public response needed. Twenty-seven people attended. A loose coalition formed that day with representatives from many Bay Area organizations. They decided to be a community presence at the courtroom for Reddy's bail hearing and also planned to stage two candlelight vigils, one in front of Reddy's Pasand restaurant in downtown Berkeley, planned by Narika, and another in front of his Santa Clara restaurant, planned by Maitri, a South Bay-based South Asian domestic violence organization. On January 29, 2000, ten days after Reddy had been charged, two parallel candlelight vigils were organized. There were approximately 200 people who gathered for the vigil and a lot of media coverage. When the newspaper article came out the next day covering the event, there was a large picture and quote from a white feminist who spoke about the case as one of sex slavery. This served to exacerbate differences between her and others in the loose coalition who were trying to form a progressive South Asian voice on the case. At the same time the South Asian domestic violence agencies were a barrier to the South Asian activist group that was forming because of accountability to funding agencies, liability and board review of public statements. The differences stemmed mainly from the fear that going public and politicizing the case would decrease the safety of the victims, jeopardize the confidentiality of the legal case that was being built, alienate the mainstream South Asian community and other agencies with which they needed to build coalitions, and

overexpose the agency adversely affecting other clients safety and the success of the domestic violence hotline. Two groups finally split off—one calling themselves Women Against Sexual Slavery (WASS) and the other calling themselves Alliance of South Asians Taking Action (ASATA).

ASATA was composed of three to six core members, including some ex-Narika members, and many others who came to meetings and helped with actions. The group was mostly composed of second generation Indians with a few people from Sri Lanka and Pakistan and some people of mixed heritage. They ranged in ages from early 20s to mid-30s, all were women (some men had initially been involved but dropped out feeling it was a “woman’s space”) and for the majority of the members it was their first experience with political activism. WASS was composed of at least two to three white women who formed the core of the group and others who helped with actions. One of the core members was the woman who had lived in the apartment building of the girl that had died and had called 911. Another woman was a long time Berkeley activist, a white South African, and feminist opposed to all forms of sexual exploitation including femicide and pornography. Neither group was homogenous in their beliefs and there was both debate and divides about frames and strategies. The WASS group’s primary framing of the case was sexual slavery but also included immigration fraud. The ASATA group’s primary framing was both sexual and labor exploitation.

After the candlelight vigil, a dialogue between the two activist groups was planned in order to discuss the media coverage and strategies. The dialogue did not go well. The groups were dealing with a clash of frames. The WASS frames represented a

version of the national frames expressed at the city level. The ASATA frames represented a version of the alternative frame.

### Frames

Doreen Rochester, a founder and core member of WASS clashed with ASATA's framing and strategies. Rochester credits herself with being the first to use the term "sex slavery" to characterize the case and was happy to see the press pick it up. However, she is aware of ASATA's concerns with that term:

Sexual slavery is a term that I know the ASATA group disagreed with because they said the girls wouldn't like it. They didn't want to see themselves as sex slaves. They said it doesn't define them. It's something that's happened to them rather than that is them. I never would call them sex workers. I've never liked the word survivor. I don't see victim as a bad term . . . Sometimes just politically you've got to finally give in. But I didn't feel like these were three young women—maybe more—that didn't want to be called that. (Doreen Rochester interview)

She characterizes the girls as having no choice in being brought to the United States by Reddy who is a pedophile and used the girls as his property. She believed that the girls were not in a position to leave and that Reddy was in a position to do anything he liked with them and was probably planning to kill the other girls as well. She does not believe Reddy's philanthropy is a contradiction to his behavior, "Pedophiles aren't necessarily monsters in the rest of their lives. They're everywhere" (Doreen Rochester interview). She disagrees with feminists who think that sex work is labor. She believes sex holds more meaning in society and cannot be grouped in with other kinds of labor. For Diana, the sexual exploitation, indeed sexual slavery, was the primary frame: "It wasn't like he was bringing them over as workers and then also sex, it was just the opposite" (Doreen Rochester interview).

In regard to the cultural framings of the case she says,

As for the ASATA people they were very offended by any suggestion that India was any different from the United States. They're talking about the rape culture of the United States, sort of like, what's different? I think they were wrong. They did not accept the cultural argument. They were opposed to it. I think the culture is significant. I think females are much worse treated in India. They would put up signs saying 'American rape culture.' That's a statement that rape happens here and rape happens there and I don't think the Indians are any worse than here. (Doreen Rochester interview)

The immigration framing also clashed. WASS held signs that said, "Illegal immigration Threatens National Security." Rochester supported but did not agree with ASATA's priority to ensure the victims are not deported. She said at the time, "I support any effort ASATA is making to ensure that the girls are not deported . . . However, I don't see why the male workers should not be deported unless one favors an amnesty for all exploited illegal workers in the USA" (Doreen Rochester notes). Rochester also did not understand the low priority that ASATA gave to Reddy being punished because they believed it would not achieve anything significant with regard to the problem of trafficking. Rather, Rochester believes, "a failure to punish him or an overly light punishment would be a message to all perpetrators of sexual trafficking that the US does not take the crime seriously . . . how seriously crimes are taken against vulnerable populations, in this case, powerless Indian immigrants, is an indication of society's perceptions of that population" (Doreen Rochester notes).

ASATA, meanwhile, was forming a voice in the face of the urgency of a response. As a former ASATA member explains:

We took a broader perspective than sex slave, sex slave, sex slave. We were looking at global push and pull factors and what the United States is doing to contribute to trafficking. We wanted people to see this rather than a smut case. The other group didn't know the victims and weren't interested in global context.

They just saw a sexual predator. They were people outside the community who did not have any direct connections. (Joti Patel interview)

Another former ASATA member adds, “No one was talking about trafficking, labor and race exploitation. [WASS] would be at the hearing saying ‘Reddy should be deported.’ Reddy is a fucking citizen. This white activist had this mandate to save these brown women from being exploited by this brown man” (Nathasha Rupal interview). ASATA’s position was, “Yes, they may have had a better life but Reddy is still accountable for the laws in this country. Labor laws apply to the documented and undocumented.” In these frames, ASATA referred to the victims as “workers” (Nathasha Rupal interview).

ASATA members also felt that the focus on Reddy’s visa fraud rather than on the victim’s immunity from deportation was anti-immigrant. They held signs at the courtroom hearings that read, “End Exploitation, Stop Deportation” and another that read, “Why did Sitha die? She was poor, She was a women of color, She was an immigrant.” They took notice of INS work raids on South Asian business owners in restaurants in San Francisco, Texas and Alabama in the time period soon after Reddy was charged (Nathasha Rupal interview). To decrease the anti-immigrant sentiment, ASATA wanted to keep the victims and their demands a priority rather than Reddy’s sentencing (although this became increasingly difficult as they were unable to speak with the victims themselves). They saw limits to criminal prosecution as a solution to trafficking (Joti Patel interview).

ASATA also focused some effort on combating Reddy’s lawyers “cultural defense” in which it was argued that Reddy acted according to Indian societal norms. They also wanted to refocus WASS sex slavery signs. They stood in front of courtroom hearings with their own signs reading, “Every 1.3 minutes a woman is raped in the U.S.,





Do not blame people of color, Challenge the culture of rape.” This was an attempt to redirect attention away from Indian culture to a rape culture in the United States as a cause and context of the violence.

### Strategies

In addition to their presence at courtroom hearings, the WASS strategy was to boycott the Reddy-owned restaurant. Rochester picketed outside the restaurant every day for many months. Others from WASS joined her occasionally. Though ASATA was against this boycott because of their concern for its ability to hurt remaining workers, Rochester remarks, “I don’t see how the fact that these workers are exploited by Reddy justifies supporting the restaurant any more that I would favor supporting the existence of a brothel because it provides jobs for prostituted women” (Doreen Rochester notes) In fact, Rochester feels the boycott was very effective in hurting Reddy’s business and educating the public. She does not understand what similar impact ASATA strategies made: “I have not been impressed by the role that they played . . . they didn’t do very much . . . my notion of action is street action. They did sometimes go to court. We’ve been much more than they have . . . they just had two vigils the whole time whereas we were extremely active around the boycott” (Doreen Rochester interview). In the end, the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women would not support the WASS boycott because of ASATA member’s opposition.

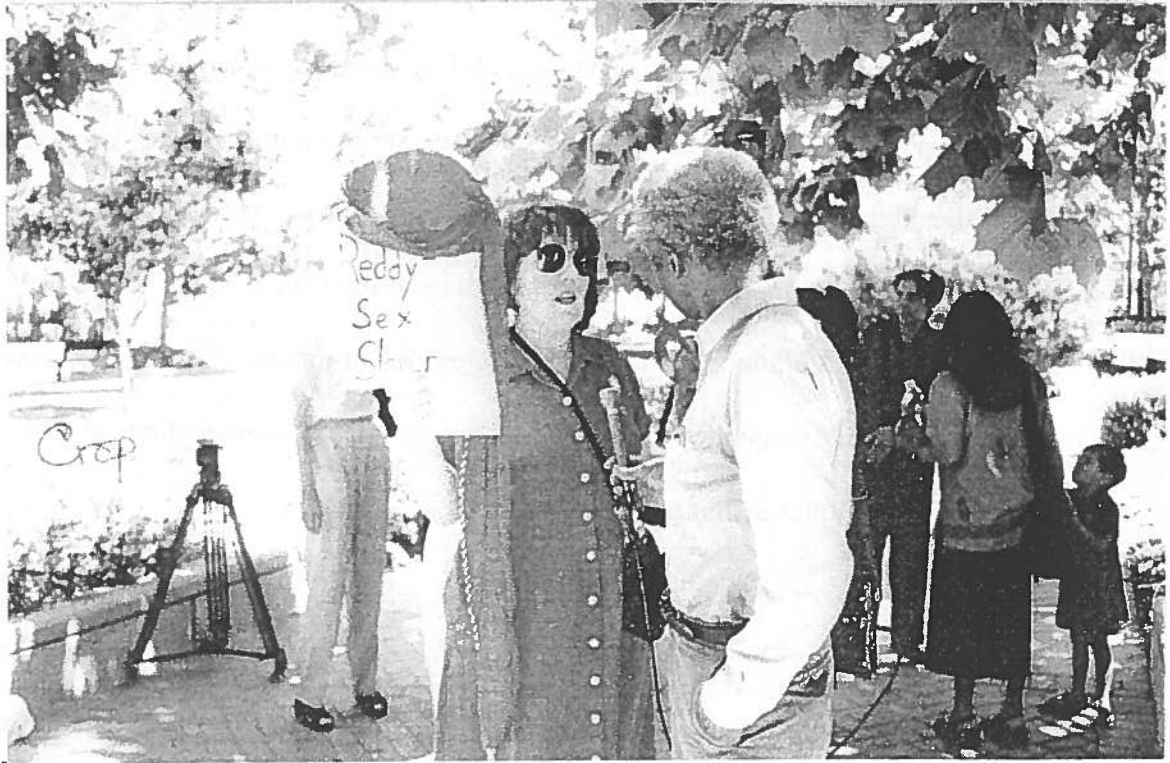
In addition to being a presence at courtroom hearings, ASATA also conducted a “know your rights” outreach and education campaign to Reddy tenants. They had less success with people opening their doors after the case became high profile but developed some relationships with people who wanted to come forward. The worker-tenants soon

became fearful of retaliation and ASATA stopped outreach feeling they were putting people at risk (Nathasha Rupal interview). They wrote letters to the judge stating that rape of young girls was not condoned in Indian society (Joti Patel interview). They also strove to change the media message through press releases and press conferences. One former ASATA member comments, “We may have looked press hungry but I don’t think ASATA would have put it in the press if it wasn’t already there” (Joti Patel interview). She also talks about reframing the solution message, “Opening borders is more of a solution. If the U.S. can acknowledge that it plays a part in the economic exploitation in other countries we won’t get stuck in this situation. There is no talk of this. We wanted to make this part of the dialogue. Also, it is part of the labor movement. People who escape exploitation are not eligible for visas. They have to wait until it gets really bad before they can get some trafficking protections and services” (Joti Patel interview).

### Imagination

Through a review of the frames and strategies of the two activists groups who formed around the Reddy case, a clash becomes obvious. Convenient to analysis, WASS frames represented versions of the dominant national frames—sex slavery and immigration fraud. ASATA frames, on the other hand, represented versions of the alternative frame presented in the beginning of this paper—labor exploitation and unsafe migration. Why were the two activists groups unable to work together around the Reddy case? The clash of frames and the resulting strategies was due to a clash of imaginations.

WASS seemed to be working from a static cultural and bounded spatial imagination.



In the above picture, this WASS member is holding a sign that says, “Reddy Sex Slaver” and is covered with an Indian-like headdress. This exoticization implicit in this imagery works to essentialize the crime to India and Indians. The “sex slaver” caption works with the image to recall a distant past that exists in the present state of Indian culture.

Together, the caption and the image heighten cultural difference between an Indian “other” and an American “ourselves.” Further, this cultural difference is linked to spatial boundaries through the immigration fraud framing. Combined with the emphasis on Reddy criminal prosecution and a lack of emphasis on victim immunity from deportation, their spatial imagination is one of national borders in which Indians live in India and Americans live in America. In fact, movements of people that destabilize this spatial understanding “threaten national security” as one of their sign read.

ASATA seemed to be working from a dynamic and interconnection spatial-cultural imagination. Through their framing they wanted to deflect attention away from

the essentializing of the crime to Indian culture. Their reactionary reframing of “culture of India” to “culture of rape” seemed to destabilize static understandings of Indian culture and decrease ideas about cultural difference. Their stress on making the “US connection” part of the media message underlines an interconnected imagination of space in which the sociopolitical and economic links between India and the United States create the conditions for exploitation. Focusing on labor exploitation rather than on sex slavery is the outcome of an imagination that makes visible spatial interconnections and the production of cultural difference.

#### Effects

These differing frames that represent different spatial-cultural imaginations have effects demonstrated through the different strategies of each activist group. It is important to remember that each group was comprised of dedicated individuals whose frames represented facets of the truth. It is not the intentions of this analysis to suggest that any of the frames or strategies were wrong. Rather, each frame was a slightly different characterization of the very real violence that occurred in the Reddy case each of which led to an overemphasis or underemphasis of ideas about the trafficking solution. This is the effect.

One effect of the a static and bounded spatial-cultural imagination present in the immigration fraud frame is the overemphasis on criminal prosecution as a solution to the problem. The focus on a bad man who must go to jail for exploiting poor women serves to decontextualize trafficking from its global interconnections. Also, the national security threat framing leads to militarizing borders, increasing the barrier for labor migrations

and fueling the conditions for exploitation. The culture essentializing effect of the sexual slavery frame and its rootedness in other countries can lead to the justification of sanctioning governments that “tolerate this evil.” Another effect of the imagination behind the sexual slavery frame is a focus on the nature of the work (sex) rather on working conditions. This excludes other industry sectors from regulation and protection.

### **Media**

There is no doubt that the Reddy case was a big story. When it became clear in January 2000, approximately two months after Chanti had died from carbon monoxide poisoning that, in fact, she had been transported to the United States illegally by Reddy and housed with her sister in one of his apartments, and that Reddy was being arrested for crimes against them including sexual and labor exploitation, the story became one of front-page interest—locally, nationally and internationally. Nationally, the story was heard on *National Public Radio* and seen on the *News Hour*. *Disney* approached the Berkeley high school paper *The Jacket*, believed to have broken the story, for a made-for-TV movie. Locally, the mainstream papers such as the San Francisco Examiner, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Berkeley Daily Planet, the Oakland Tribune and the San Jose Mercury ran stories. It made headlines in the ethnic press such as *India West*, *India Post* and *India Abroad*. In India, six local papers in Andhra Pradesh covered the story for many months.

## Frames

What made this case a front-page story? Lisa Fernandez, the reporter who covered the Reddy case for several years for the San Jose Mercury News called the story “super sexy.” According to her, the case consisted of so many elements of a good story, “You have a millionaire, an immigrant from India, the American dream, a guy who built an empire filled with corruption and sex slaves, H1-B visa fraud for high-tech, a caste thing going on, sex, and a super rich guy who looks like a schlub.” Matthew Yi, then at the SF Examiner, also agrees on the story’s readability:

These girls were brought here for ugly reasons. And the fact that one of the girls actually died; the fact that Mr. Reddy is the biggest landlord in Berkeley next to UC Berkeley. There were a lot of different elements to it. The visa issue, I mean here in Silicon Valley, that’s a huge issue. And then there’s this whole labor issue. People are brought here and they don’t get paid the legal amounts, the minimum wage. And then there’s the whole sexual exploitation issue and then there’s this whole trafficking issue and then there’s this huge community here, South Asian community here in the Bay Area that we may not be as familiar with. So a lot of different elements. I mean it’s the kind of story that I think if you talk to any reader they would read. (Matthew Yi interview)

In addition, Fernandez points out why the story may have had wide appeal: “People had seen women in saris walking the streets. There had been rumors but no one looked into it. People thought, ‘How quaint! A little India in Berkeley!’ and felt ashamed that they had looked over it.”

Yet, despite the multiple angles that could have been explored by media outlets two main frames were emphasized: sex slavery and visa fraud. The SF Examiner article titles in the first month of the charges against Reddy were ‘Landlord Sex Charges,’ (*SF Examiner*, 19 January 2000) “Cops Hunt Victims in Landlord Sex Case,” (*SF Examiner*,

20 January 2000) “Landlord’s Records Probed in Sex Case.” (*SF Examiner*, 22 January 2000) By contrast, the San Jose Mercury which has a large South Asian and Silicon Valley based readership ran an immigration fraud story a week later: “Berkeley Sex Case Fuels Criticism: Visa Program Abuse on Rise, Officials Say.” The article reads, “Beyond the tragic story of young girls allegedly imported for sex, the case of a Berkeley businessman accused of arranging fraudulent visas illustrates a growing problem with an immigration program that many Silicon Valley firms—and workers—consider vital to their success.” (*San Jose Mercury News*, 23 January 2000, 1A) When asked why “sex slavery” and “immigration scandal” were in the leads with little emphasis on the labor exploitation issue, Fernandez replied, “H1-B is a big thing in my area. I do think it is a labor issue. And fair wage came out, but I don’t think it sells newspapers. It is easier to understand violation in sex terms. Why Monica Lewinsky and not WMD? It is a fair statement. Press should have covered labor more. Sure” (Lisa Fernandez interview). Matthew Yi, was more defensive saying the legal documents led his reporting of the news: “If you look at the complaint it was about sexual exploitation and it was about INS fraud. So if you’re asking us to ignore that and cover these issues that wouldn’t be fair either; that wouldn’t be reporting the issues . . . Newspapers don’t make those charges. We report the news” (Matthew Yi interview).

One newspaper made those charges. In fact, the Berkeley High School newspaper *The Jacket* is widely credited with being the first to break the story at least a month before Reddy was arrested. The December 10, 1999 article title reads: “Young Indian Dies in Berkeley Apartment—South Asian Community Says ‘Indentured Servitude’ May Be to Blame.” (*The Jacket*, 10 December 1999) After the story broke, the high school



teenagers, Iliana Montauk and Megan Greenwell, were pursued by local and national media outlets as a result of their investigative reporting. The two reporters wrote an editorial about this experience for the May 10, 2000 issue of the SF Examiner. In the editorial, they evaluate how the media responded to the case:

When we published the article in the Jacket in December, there was no reaction. When the Examiner ran its story a month later, the entire Bay Area was in an uproar... They blatantly portrayed him as the evil man exploiting his victims: helpless Indian girls. Headlines flashed the words “multimillionaire” and “sex slaves” for an entire week, grossly sensationalizing the story. While this oversimplification may have increased newspapers’ readership, it had a strong negative impact on the Bay Area community... The media decided to ignore the forced labor issue altogether and instead glamorize the two young Nancy Drews who had uncovered the ‘sex slave ring’ in the first place. (SF Examiner, 10 May 2000)

### Strategies

The point in illustrating the dominant frames used by the local media is not to be naïve about newspapers and the audience they must cater too, but rather to begin to explore the space-culture-power imaginations within which these frames operate and the story collecting strategies through which these imaginations gain momentum. Each of the three newspapers—San Francisco Examiner, San Jose Mercury News, and the Berkeley High School Jacket—employed very different fact-collecting strategies for their stories.

Yi of the SF Examiner traveled to the village in India where Reddy and the workers came from “to paint a fuller picture” (Matthew Yi interview). Yi details the all-day trip from San Francisco to Velvadam, a village located in Andhra Pradesh, southern state in India. Yi was accompanied by a photographer and another reporter from the Bay Area-based India West newspaper to serve as cultural broker. They contacted a police officer who had no ties to the village to assist in setting up a meeting with the deceased

girl's parents. They were able to interview the parents for about an hour. By that time, their presence became conspicuous and the Velvadam police officer gave them a tour but did not allow them to roam freely. They were shown the girl's home and the part of the village they lived in. They also met one of Reddy's brothers and the home where he grew up. They tried to talk to other people but no one else spoke to them. After a one-day visit, they returned to San Francisco to write the story.

While Yi of the SF Examiner traveled to India to dig deeper into the case, Fernandez from the San Jose Mercury employed a different strategy. When it was discovered that the Indian community was displeased with the coverage of the case, the San Jose Mercury News held a meeting with the Indian community. Lisa describes the meeting, "It was the first time that the mainstream press had covered the Indian community, and the Indians said, 'This is what you are saying about us?' So my publisher called the Indian mucky-mucks together for a luncheon at the Fremont Hilton so that they could air their displeasure. It was a turning point for us because I think they felt heard. It spurred different stories" (Lisa Fernandez interview).

At Berkeley High School, an entirely different strategy was employed. One of the teachers, Rani, is South Asian and had lived in Berkeley next to a Reddy building for many years. She says, "I knew from way back, like ten years ago, I knew his whole story. I knew he was bringing workers in and housing them in certain buildings. It wasn't like I had hard evidence but I had a lot of observation. So when this girl died it all made sense." (BHS Teacher interview) The South Asian teacher working from her own observations of the community felt compelled to get the students together to write a story:

I talked to some of the girls that were enrolled in my classes, which I think were two South Asian girls. Because some of the kids were directly connected to him

and they're here in this country because of him. I told the [newspaper] faculty advisor, 'We've got to do a news story on this'. So he told the kids and the reporters came to me. So I organized the focus groups around the story to give some direct evidence. [The South Asian girls] all wanted to be anonymous and so they got some quotes from the group. (BHS Teacher interview)

Rani explains that the focus groups happened so easily because she had already been trying to help organize a South Asian group on campus: "I wanted to recreate that among high school kids because you know most of them are recent immigrants here and they're not active in the same way . . . Because the whole South Asian scene is pretty invisible on this campus. There aren't that many of them. And when something happens to other ethnic groups, several times there have been kids who have died. And they had a lot of rallying around. But very few people are clued into the Asian-American or Asian immigrant experience on campus" (BHS Teacher interview).

### Imaginations

The different spatial-cultural imaginations of the staff at San Francisco Examiner, San Jose Mercury and the Berkeley High School Jacket informed their story-collecting strategies. Their strategies directly affected the "full picture" of the Reddy case that they reported. Again, though each reporter told a true story, the story reflected the truth amplified from a different spatial-cultural angle.

Yi, the reporter from the SF Examiner who had traveled to the village in India, wrote a story titled "Report from India: A Tale of Two Worlds." It shows a place where, "India's poverty and traditional caste system still hang heavily over rural families like the Prattipatis." According to the article, Reddy belongs to a landowning caste while the Prattipatis are Dalits, once called the "untouchables." Further, dowry, the "practice of

girls going to live with their husband's family and taking the inheritance or dowry" is another Indian cultural tradition that factored into the Prattipati's sending their daughters to America because they could not afford weddings or dowries. Yi writes that in Velvadam, the "past and the future collide" (SF Examiner, 7 February 2000). Reddy's house has a framed picture of the Golden Gate Bridge and his vision for a "Silicon city" is realized in an engineering school and in the computer labs filled with students in white lab coats. But, as Yi writes, "the narrow street outside Reddy's school bustles with trucks, scooters, bicyclists, pedestrians and cows." (SF Examiner, 7 February 2000). This article depends on a static sense of culture. The sprinkling of untouchables, dowry and cow images fuels a heightened sense of cultural difference, a difference which is held responsible for the crime by the legal team. It is also a difference rooted in two separate spaces—Indians in India. Though there is some depiction of spatial interconnections (the Golden Gate Bridge and Silicon Valley visible in the village), the temporal is connected to the spatial which has the effect of linking India to the past and America to the present. This also serves to further the imagination of "two worlds" with different cultures, histories, politics and economies not spatially interconnected.

Fernandez, from the San Jose Mercury who gathered and interviewed the Fremont South Asian community, wrote articles with a different spatial-cultural imagination. She feels responsible for breaking the "cultural defense" story that worked to bring the dynamic nature of culture to the forefront of the readers' mind. After reading in the case files that Reddy's lawyers posited that it was common in India for an older man to have sex with young girls, Fernandez wrote an article titled, "Reddy Offers Cultural Defense, Landlord's Lawyer Says Sex with Girls OK in India, Indo-American Groups are Angered

by Cultural Claims” in which she quoted a community members as saying, “rape isn’t cultural” and showed that the Indian community in the Bay Area disagreed with this reading of societal norms (San Jose Mercury News, 15 June 2001, 1B). The emphasis that Fernandez put on covering the Bay Area South Asian diaspora opinion on the Reddy case alone highlights spatial interconnections. Her foregrounding and coverage of the cultural defense story works directly to decrease cultural difference or an “others” and “ourselves” perspective. Fernandez’ spatial-cultural imagination works against Yi’s “two worlds” imagination.

The Berkeley High School Jacket staff worked from an even different spatial-cultural imagination. Their article was credited with breaking the story of the Reddy case and spurring further investigation into the carbon monoxide poisoning. Why did the high-schoolers see something that no one else was able to see? Perhaps, it is because of their global city imagination, an imagination that came from sitting in classrooms next to girls from faraway villages, and from walking daily the two block distance between their high school, the Reddy-owned restaurant and the apartment building in which Chanti died. They served as intimate witnesses to a downtown Berkeley that has always been spatially and culturally interconnected. Rather than focus their article on these taken-for-granted interconnections, they chose to ask why a girl that was their age was not going to high school. Indeed, of all the subsequent coverage of the Reddy case, this was the only rights-based framing of the Reddy case. Why was someone who lived and worked in Berkeley not afforded the same rights? Only a global city imagination can make visible this framing of the Reddy case.

## Effects

An analysis of the media frames, strategies and imaginations does not follow the linear diagramming of these concepts mapped out at the beginning of this paper. In the case of the media, the imagination informed the data-collecting strategy and this data was then used to build the frame. In fact, the main and powerful effect of the spatial-cultural imagination is the propagating of this imagination via frames to the general public.

The most important part of the media's spatial-cultural imagination is its power to fix a certain logic in the minds of the readers. That the case is remembered by Berkeley residents as the "sex slavery" case or the "visa fraud" case and not the "labor exploitation" or "unsafe migration" case is a credit to this power. Most remember Reddy as an Indian village landowner not an American entrepreneur and they remember the crime as a replication of an ancient feudal relationship rather than a modern transnational phenomena. To underestimate the power of these collective memories of a case would be underestimating the power of spatial-cultural imagination on the cities in which we live. The stakes here are not just finding a frame that will better inform a strategy to end trafficking but changing the spatial-cultural imaginations of the city residents so that they can be more receptive to the changes happening in and through their cities in this age of intensified globalization. They must be urged through the imagination to see the exploitation on which their city depends.

## DATA: GLOBAL CITY STRUGGLES

### Law enforcement

On the ground, the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) became involved in the case from the beginning when it had been exclusively a case of carbon monoxide poisoning. Mayer recalls that it happened the day before Thanksgiving and that they had to evacuate the apartment building and try to contact non-emergency city officials who had already left on vacation. He says, that within a few days the department learned that there were a few “kids going to Berkeley High School who were of Indian background and had some information about something that wasn’t right” (Bill Mayer interview). When the case began to unravel in early January 2000 from a carbon monoxide poisoning to a trafficking case, it became overwhelming for both the Berkeley Police Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now Immigration and Customs Enforcement or ICE). David Hart, the INS agent assigned to the case says about that day, “It all hit the fan on a Friday afternoon. They came clean about the non-existent familial relationships with Reddy. We took Reddy into custody for criminal charges and the girls were taken in for immigration violations. From then on, the investigation was in high gear” (David Hart interview). Hart mainly worked with two other individuals—Bharati Venkatraman from the US Attorney’s office (AUSA) and Eileen Jacobs from the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). The FBI and INS worked to get corroborating evidence for the AUSA prosecution while the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) assisted the investigation at the local level. The BPD welcomed the resources that the federal authorities brought but were frustrated by the transfer of the case to the federal level. As one sargeant puts it, “The case was taken from us because they wanted to prosecute on

federal not state laws. It's historical. The feds are the boss and they tell us what to do. That's the way things are" (Kay Lantow interview). The tension between the national and city apparatus that came alive around the Reddy case reveal the stakes at the city level. An analysis of the frames and strategies help illustrate this city struggle.

### National versus City Frames and Strategies

Hart talked openly about his frame that informed his strategy: "When I walked in, all I saw was immigration violations. That's my mindset. That's my job" (David Hart interview). He covered his eyes while saying this as if to suggest that his frame was accompanied with some blinders. He believes that his mindset and the ICE department priorities have changed to reflect trafficking as a priority. For the Reddy case, their main strategy was to launch a transnational investigation to track down more potential witnesses to corroborate evidence for the federal case. Hart flew to India twice, worked with the FBI liaison in Delhi, and stayed in contact with the US attorney to be guided on the evidence he needed to develop the case. He continued to go through the INS database for visas connected to Reddy and also went through these files with the victims to identify faces and fake names. He tried to reach out to villagers through the victims via long, late-night three-way conference calls. They were able to stop a potential witness at an airport who was jailed in Yuba county for immigration fraud and who later agreed to testify with her sister. The investigation took up the majority of his time for many months and now, years later, it is still a part of his life. Still, when asked about how he would identify a trafficking case, he stumbled. He talks about how when cases come up in the smuggling department or the marriage fraud department, they "take a look" since it is "on



their radar.” But, he says, they are still on a learning curve in regard to trafficking and there is a lot of tug-of-war within the department about resources and priorities so it is too soon to tell how trafficking will be targeted.

The BPD also had trouble defining how to identify another case of trafficking and the department has not received or diverted resources to trafficking. Mayer says:

It can happen anywhere. To the extent that it’s happening in Berkeley I believe this case frightened others or pushed it further underground.... We learned from this case. It sensitized a number of us to the types of things that can happen. And if something similar were to happen we’d do everything that we can... We weren’t given extra resources. We have a finite number of employees. We sit down and figure out the best way to deploy those police officer whether they’re an auto theft inspector or officer of sex crimes or youth services... we have enough people to handle the process. Other things are just left undone. (Bill Mayer interview)

He continues to describe in detail how an investigation or a lead might take place: “You have to have some kind of lead-in. Because of Lakireddy we can’t start profiling people saying, ‘Oh my god! A bunch of them over there must be doing it!’ That is worse than what he did. I won’t deny that it’s going on somewhere else but do I know somewhere else where it’s going on? No, I don’t.” Mayer goes on to describe the kind of police work involved in a city such as Berkeley where there are many immigrants:

I’ve seen a lot of changes in the 36 years I have been a police officer for the BPD. Berkeley is one of the refugee cities of the world, open arms to any nation that’s having a struggle, especially with their people being oppressed. And we’ve had an immigration of a lot of people, the Middle Eastern people, Cambodia and what not. And we have certain areas, apartments where different ethnic backgrounds moved in that weren’tt here before. We’re also seeing kind of a turnaround where middle class America is buying back in the city; they got tired of commuting. And we’re actually experiencing some struggles in our neighborhood groups where people expect a certain kind of atmosphere and the neighbors ain’t the same. I’ve observed a lot of those kinds of movement in and out. And again, a continuing mix of different cultural backgrounds in the city which requires us to learn and understand versus some people’s attitude is, ‘if you’re gonna live here you’re gonna come and live the way we live.’ Everybody has a cultural background and its not the place of the police department to dictate that you’ve gotta change your

culture if you're gonna live here. I think it's our responsibility to learn all of the cultures in our city and understand them as much as we possibly can. (Bill Mayer interview)

In this context of city struggles, Mayer seems to be careful about the kinds of strategies to pursue around trafficking. He feels the local law enforcement has to strike a balance between fighting crime and protecting citizen rights and that the best way to do this is to have an ear to the community:

We are report-driven, we're information driven. I deliberately talk to people to get an ear for what's going on. And try to get close enough to the community that the community can and will talk to me. We don't have any specific program right now that says you go out there and try to fetter out any kind of crime... The school district reports things to us—see a lot of stuff is rumor and how do you take rumor to reality? It's based on our ability to get people to talk to us. Because there's not a lot of physical evidence out there that's open to the police. Because we have our own private rights and people who do this kind of thing keep it under wraps as much as they possibly can. (Bill Mayer interview)

Mayer worries that there were people in the city—business owners, member of the South Asian community—who might have know what was happening and did not report it to the police:

I can't put anything into anybody's mouth but I believe a lot of people of Lakireddy's ancestry knew about these things. And you know some affluent people living right here knew that things were not right. I don't know how much of it they knew, but probably were hoping that someone did something about it but was not the one to come forward because they didn't have any real evidence of their own to say these things are happening. (Bill Mayer interview)

### National versus City Struggle

There is a potential strategy clash between the local law enforcement and ICE. In the context of the city of San Francisco, there is a limited ability for local law enforcement and ICE to work together on a potential trafficking case because it has been declared an ICE sanctuary by the city. Hart says, "In SF, we don't do work with the

locals. If local law enforcement has a strong relationship with us, it goes against their relationship with the immigrant community. It is the responsibility of the locals to filter information to us” (David Hart interview). This clash between the ICE strategy and local law enforcement was expressed in the House of Representatives Bill introduced on July 9, 2003 called the CLEAR Act (HR 2671, Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal Act) and its companion Senate bill introduced on November 20, 2003 (S 1906, Homeland Security Enhancement Act). The Act would have required state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce federal immigration laws. Those against the act feel that community policing which encourages local police to gain the trust of neighborhood residents has a proven track record in reducing crime and that when immigrants and their families are scared to report crimes and suspicious activity the safety of the entire community is compromised. The California Police Chiefs Association opposed the CLEAR Act because “in order for local and state law enforcement to be effective partners with their communities, it is imperative that they not be placed in the role of detaining and arresting individuals based solely on the immigration status.” (letter) Because police have no way of knowing a person’s status without asking, if they are charged with enforcing immigration law, some will inevitably stop and question people just on the basis of race, ethnicity, language or accent. Additionally, there is no evidence that this strategy deters terrorism or illegal immigration. Strategies against trafficking framed as immigration fraud trouble a fine line between fighting crime and protecting the rights of immigrants.

The Bay Area community organized a legislative and media campaign around this bill. They called themselves the CLEAR Coalition. Immigration and asylum lawyers,

social service providers, political organizers, and community advocates made up the majority of the key players. Organizations including lawyers from Bay Area Anti-Trafficking Taskforce were present at coalition meetings. The meetings were powerful arenas in which to gather city power to combat the federal bill. A map of the California districts was put on the table and the question was posed: "Who here has the geographical reach in this district? And this district?" As each city in Northern and Central California was announced, hands went up. Each hand represented an organization that represented immigrant and worker communities. After the map was completed a strategy was launched: letter writing, meeting with congressman representing those districts and staging press conferences in districts that were going to be difficult to impact. It was a dance by key players to defend the rights of immigrants and workers who live and work in their cities. As the federal apparatus tries to encroach on the city apparatus, city stakeholders fight for visibility. The realities of the spatial interconnections in this era of intensified globalization register most clearly at the city level. The results of struggles like these both shape and express the city.

### **South Asian Immigrants**

#### **Visibility**

The reality of Berkeley as a global city is best understood by looking at a map of his properties. Reddy is the second largest landowner in Berkeley after the University of California. He began buying property in 1971 and owns approximately 1,100 apartments units estimated to be worth approximately \$70 million. In addition, he owns two restaurants, one in Berkeley and one in Santa Clara. His construction company, called Jay

Construction Co. is located in Berkeley but was responsible for the construction of a house in Sunnyvale that housed some of the victims. Not only do Reddy properties span the Berkeley map but people that Reddy legally-sponsored own restaurants and fashion outlets in the Bay Area such as Fashion-for-Less on University and San Pablo. Reddy is said to have legally sponsored approximately 30 families who currently live and have started their own businesses in Berkeley. Their children attend Berkeley schools. Reddy, his family, his properties and the people that he has brought, both legally and illegally, are a presence in Berkeley. Once made visible, Reddy becomes difficult not to see on nearly every corner of downtown Berkeley. The realization that Berkeley's economy has been tied to a village in Andhra Pradesh for the last twenty-five years becomes inevitable. Velvadam has changed as well. The price of land has increased since the traffic to and from Berkeley began (Suffer Not the Children video). Reddy has built schools, a hospital, restored a Christian institute, constructed two Hindu ceremonial halls, and established a college of engineering.

Berkeley's connection to India is not just made through Reddy properties. There is an Indian enclave visible on University and San Pablo inching its way up and down University Avenue. The cross section of University and San Pablo is lined with large chain stores interspersed with Mexican groceries, Indian restaurants, sari palaces and music stores. Glancing up and down the street on a weekend afternoon, there are Indian couples pushing strollers and shopkeepers watching and waiting outside their storefronts. Inside the sari stores, women dressed in salwaars with coconut oil in their long braids crowd into cramped quarters to argue over the price of saris. The two groceries are true import-export depots offering a familiar smell of Indian spices. Walls and windows are

plastered with Hindi film star posters and community event flyers. Local Indian publications—India West, India Abroad, India Currents, Siliconeer—are stacked by the doors. Even this description of the University and San Pablo enclave does not fully capture the flow of people and capital into and out of the city. It also does not give a sense of how the strip has changed over time, how a variety of stores representing different cultures, religions and histories have been added and subtracted over the last thirty years.

### Invisibility

Despite the dynamic nature of the city, the reality of Berkeley's global interconnections to India, especially that of Reddy's real estate empire and the workers that labored within it, were below the threshold of observation for many years. According to a South Asian tenant who lived in a Reddy Realty building from 1995 to 2003, was neither suspicious nor shocked by the news that there were exploited workers being housed in his buildings for many years. She said that the apartments were badly maintained. Whenever she would make a complaint an Indian man would come to look at the problem. She also remembers a time when her neighbors moved out and two women in saris came to paint it. She recalls that they smiled at her but she never spoke to them. Her friends who lived in other Reddy properties also lived in poorly maintained apartments. She recalls that they had neighbors from India. She says, "They didn't speak English. We didn't speak Telegu. There was no real sense of who they were or how they had come" (Archana interview).

That the exploited are also the invisible becomes difficult for the researcher trying to get a sense of the existence or spectrum of labor exploitation experienced in her city. Fear of deportation or fear of authorities is a major obstacle. Most declined to answer especially with an audio-recorder present. Still, silence is data. It speaks to a prevalent fear that pushes certain immigrants further underground rendering them more vulnerable to isolation, exploitation and invisibility. This invisibility was crucial for Reddy's scheme to take place amidst a city of Berkeley residents.

### City Struggles for Visibility

As Indian immigrants become a larger presence in Berkeley and the wider Bay Area, they struggle for city visibility. They work to both create partnerships within the South Asian community and the city community at large.

Mrs. Kapur, the owner of Bazaar of India, the first Indian business on University Avenue, is a witness to these changes over the last thirty-five years.

We were the first Indian store within a hundred miles, nobody except in Yuba city and Stockton, but in the Bay area, none. People used to bring food from India. We felt that it was something that we needed to do, and so we took a big chance with very little money and opened up the store, and started doing home deliveries for people. Everything imported, people started coming from miles and miles, first three years there was nobody in competition, then a sari shop opened up. (Kapur interview)

At that time, precisely because they were the only Indian store around for miles and miles, their store became a community hub (Reddy was one of her regular customers.) The Kapurs willingly took on this role and would plan a yearly music and dance show that became very popular. Indian food, music and dance were scarce commodities at that

time, Kapur recalls. Through their store, they were able to help orchestrate the beginnings of an Indian community in Berkeley and the Bay Area. Times have since changed:

The customers I had 33 years ago still live in the Bay Area. Some of them became friends socially, their kids knew me when they were little and now they have kids. It became a very close-knit environment. Because when you are the only one and people come from so far it creates a bond. You're not just a customer. It's a very strong bond. But anyone who came here in let's say the last 20 years would not know us because so many businesses opened up. In the last ten years everything just boomed—San Jose, Santa Clara, Fremont. (Kapur interview)

The Kapurs had to change their strategy in order to keep their business alive and stay visible both to the Indian community and the Berkeley community. Their business practice and the clientele they catered to changed. As Kapur says, "At that point we diversified. My customers were not all Indian so we started importing instruments, cut food items back, started a restaurant upstairs which ended about 5 years ago, it was family oriented, that's what people wanted. My clientele is 20% Indian, 80% non-Indian" (Kapur interview). In the midst of so many Indian shops opening on University and San Pablo, Kapur also employed another strategy to keep her Indian clientele:

Down near San Pablo, rent is not so high. Since they are next door to each other within that area they do get the weekend people coming from out of town. They can get everything done in one go. A lot of them don't realize there is a store up here. What has brought the Indians to us in the last 10 years? We do wedding rentals. That is strictly Indian business—Indian oriented. More and more weddings are taking place, its not like before where people went to India and got married or had somebody come over, now everybody's getting married here. (Kapur interview)

In subtle ways, Kapur's store has kept a pulse on the growing and changing Indian community in the Bay Area and changed with it in order to stay an important and integrated part of Berkeley business. Because of the import-export transnational nature of their business, the Kapurs also have a transnational identity which takes for granted an alternative spatial-cultural imagination. They consider their household "both Indian and



not Indian” (Kapur interview). Though they sell Indian products, they intentionally do not sell it with Indian style. They like a clean shop, refuse to negotiate prices and are angered by those customers who “culturally can’t get it out of their system” (Kapur interview). Not only have they participated actively in creating Berkeley and the Indian community but meanwhile their view of India has also not remained static:

A young girl like yourself is now going to work, is taught the American accent, how to think that way, how to construct sentences that way, and they’re happy... Young people don’t feel like second class citizens anymore of the world, they can have jeans, cars, makeup... People used to say in India this doesn’t happen. And I go excuse me how long have you been away from India? Everything is happening in India that you can’t even imagine is happening. (Kapur interview)

The Kapurs and their shop on University Avenue are active participants in the changes that take place in the city. The city can change to further include or exclude the immigrant communities. In the case of the Kapurs, they have employed strategies to be furthered incorporated in Berkeley life. Their dynamic and interconnected transnational spatial-cultural imaginations are taken-for-granted truths of the globally interconnected city in which they live and work.

Fremont, another Bay Area city, has also seen many changes because of its fast-growing South Asian population. As one gets off the BART station train at Fremont at the end of the work day, the station is bustling with Indian men with briefcases, a sign of those filling the back offices of Silicon Valley. Fremont is another example of the ways in which city residents struggle to participate in the making of their cities in order to further inclusion of the immigrant communities to which they belong. Yagdish Chandran, a spokesperson for the Northern California chapter of Federation of Indo-Americans (FIA) believes that Fremont is undergoing a “metamorphosis.” He describes an old

Fremont and a new Fremont. The new Fremont is one with 22,000 Indians in which Indians “want a seat at the table.” Mr. Chandran is actively strategizing with other members to get an “Indian voice in city planning.” He believes this is a “critical moment for Fremont.” He cites a recent victory in which an Indian beat the incumbent and a Chinese candidate for a seat on the hospital board. He says, “You want to be participating in this process of recreation and thinking and collaboration and now we have more Indians on city commissions and advisory boards, and foundations. You want to be considered responsible citizens.” He talks about other successes including a Festival of India that has grown each year. Chandran says, “The festival is supposed to accomplish a sense of belongingness and shared understanding. It is supposed to say ‘we are different but we still care about the same issues that are important to everyone in Fremont.’ Then it failed and the city reprimanded us. They were the ones we were trying to affect. But we changed and fought for it and we won.” Chandran believes that the city is indeed changing. He says, “We are succeeding and giving back to our community, 16 years ago we were just one small community interacting with ourselves, now our community has become so large and we are interacting with everybody else out there.”

Chandran is actively working to becoming an integral part of Fremont and American society. Through his strategizing about his city, he gives momentum to a dynamic and interconnected spatial-cultural imagination. Though this interconnectedness infuses the Indian community, he believes that there are a number of strategies and identities that follow from it. He says, “I think some Indians are learning that America is our new adopted home and we need to come back and make a presence here. And others who spend their energy in giving back to India. I have reservations about that, the needs

of this country come first, India will take care of it self. We chose to leave that country. Why do we meddle so much in what India does? Some people say we have to make India much better because if India looks bad we look bad. But I say there are orphanages and shelters in this country.” He takes issue with Indians in the Fremont community who want to force policy in India. He acknowledges many Indian high-tech entrepreneurs who want to be sitting at the table in Indian government more than in Fremont. Though Chandran wishes these Indians would “just leave Indian alone,” he is dealing with the reality of a global city in which the global interconnections that happen in and through cities can serve to make people feel more connected to a country faraway than to the city in which they live. Neither of these imaginations are static and they can lead to a movement of people and investment both within the city and across two continents. Regardless of the transnational imaginations within the community Chandran feels that the imagination of the mainstream community needs to be changed. He says:

We need to work with the media. For too long America has relied upon the discovery channel for its image and impression of India. And often it’s not very flattering. Today when there are articles written about India in the Wall Street Journal or NY times it is based on the impression of one or two readers. I think 911 did a very complicated thing to the psyche of the America mind. It created a certain distrust for your neighbor. We as a community need to understand that it is something that we are going to have to work through. It put every community and every immigrant under a negative light. 911 caused a moment in our existence in our nation which made us strengthen ourselves and say how do we come back and address this issue. (Yagdish Chandran interview )

Even with setbacks, Chandran is excited for the critical moment in Fremont’s metamorphosis. He says, “I love Fremont. It has temples and good school and a safe community. We have done many things wrong but we plan to do many things right.” Indeed, these city struggles for more inclusiveness of immigrants in city planning are telling of the kinds of changes our global cities are going through. In this age of

intensified globalization and increased movements of people and capital, our cities are being actively created by our global interconnections.

## RESULTS

The focus of this thesis is to understand how city stakeholders in Berkeley responded to the Reddy case and what impact their response has had on the city. It is an exploration of how city stakeholders—media, activists, lawyers, social service providers, law enforcement and South Asian business owners—framed the transnational phenomena within a particular historical and national trafficking context into which the Reddy case erupted. Two main framings emerge: trafficking as sexual slavery and trafficking as organized crime and immigration fraud. These framings are of particular salience in present national politics and are expressed at the city level by groups involved in the Reddy case. These framings are not only about trafficking but also represent ideas about the changing globalizing world. They represent a specific imagination about the world in which culture is static and bounded in static space. In this imagination, cultural difference is heightened and spatial interconnections between two places are denied.

The spatial-cultural imaginations that the frames represent have real effects on the types of strategies achieved like those in the Reddy case. In other words, the spatial-cultural imaginations affect the framing of the trafficking problem which, in turn, affects the framing of the trafficking solution and can limit the scope of analysis and the effectiveness of the intervention. In particular, hyperattention to anti-vice leads to superficial global analysis and weakens interventions. Abolition of prostitution, criminal prosecution, and sanction strategies resonate with these framings but advocacy on the World Trade Organization does not. Anti-trafficking work can be complicit in limiting rights and policing workers. To really end trafficking, reframing of the problem is necessary. This reframing can lead to rights-based solutions.

The current framing of the problem and solution are insufficient to fully characterize the transnational phenomena that occurred in the Reddy case. A new frame—trafficking as unsafe migration and labor exploitation—is presented. The new frame is also an attempt at a new spatial-cultural imagination. This is one in which both space and culture are dynamic and deterritorialized. This imagination enables space and culture to be seen as produced, lessening difference and emphasizing interconnection.

I hypothesize that, in fact, it is the inability to recognize our global interconnections that allows the conditions necessary for unsafe migration and labor exploitation. Indeed, the incomplete framings of trafficking work to mobilize inaccurate spatial-cultural imaginations that powerfully render immigrants invisible. These imaginations require but do not recognize a transnational workforce. Immigrants are relegated to work in the shadows in exploitative situations. With tight immigration controls and without labor protections, they live in fear of their employers and the authorities. This situation is ripe for trafficking. With the alternative frame—labor exploitation and unsafe migration—and the alternative imagination behind it—dynamic, interconnected space and culture—an alternative strategy is possible. Enforcing work and safety standards for all workers and promoting their right to organize would ensure that workers do not work in the shadows living in fear of employers and the authorities. The alternative frame and imagination make visible the global cities that we live in, cities that are intimately interconnected both economically and culturally to places faraway.

These cities are constantly in flux, being produced each day through city struggles. The stakes are high for city members' spatial-cultural imaginations and the outcomes of the struggles in which they participate. They can render immigrant workers

visible or invisible. Because the modern era of intensified globalization happens not *to*, but *in* and *through*, our global cities, the outcome of city struggles convey a pulse on the ability of residents to produce an inclusive place in the modern context. That the Reddy restaurant and real estate empire spanned Berkeley and yet the immigrant labor which Reddy housed and exploited never caught the attention of city residents or the city apparatus for twenty-five years is testament to the level of invisibility that city struggles and imaginations can render on local places and local people. An analysis of the Reddy case is one such case study of the identity of Berkeley and the struggle of city residents and stakeholders to deal with their city's own global interconnections.

In the end, there is a contradiction between the city that the city apparatus recognizes and the reality of our globally interconnected cities that depend on cheap labor and thrive on immigrant business. Chanti was caught in this contradiction. Her death symbolized the contradictions present at the borderlands of global cities and revealed a city unprepared for its own global interconnections.

## LIMITATIONS

My main limitation was time. Had time permitted, I would have liked to conduct a multi-sited ethnography both here in Berkeley and in Velvadam exploring how each site has been changed by the traffic in people over the last twenty-five years. Even if an ethnography would not have been possible, this research would have benefited from more extensive interviews with key informants especially the workers and the Reddy family. Attempts were made early in the research timeline, but when obstacles became too great due to the ongoing and unending nature of the legal cases, scope of the research was revised. The focus on city stakeholders changed the direction of the study into looking only at the way people thought, talked about and responded to the case rather than the “lived experience” of the case.

Focusing on frames and imagination did not prove to be an easier direction. Power, space and culture are elusive and intangible concepts. Trying to work them into a linear frame → strategy model sometimes felt forced. Imagination is also complex and contradictory. Having more data might have helped elucidate these concepts.



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