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Unlocking the Roots of Stigma Towards Victims of Trafficking in Albania

Dana L. Marion
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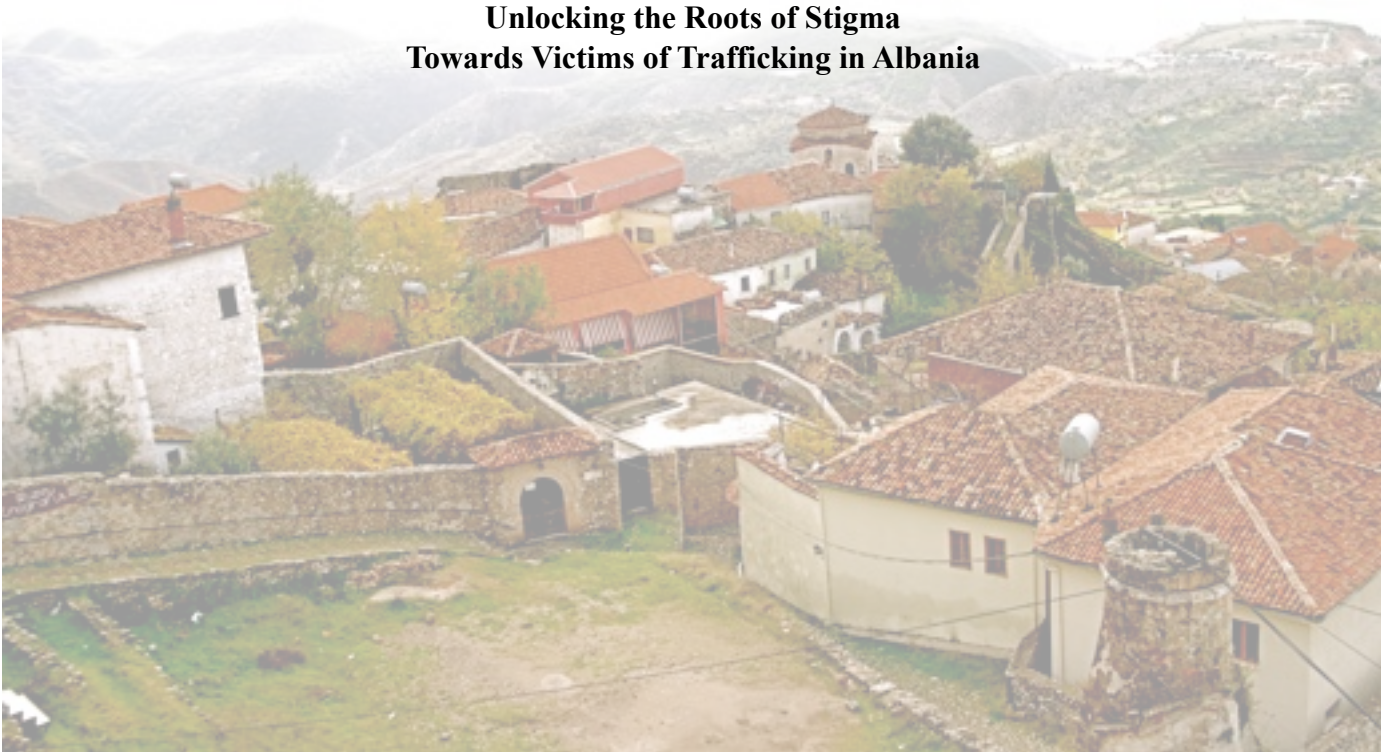
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**Unlocking the Roots of Stigma
Towards Victims of Trafficking in Albania**



Dana Marion
February 12, 2012
IPCI Capstone - February 2012 Capstone Seminar
Advisor: Tatsushi Arai

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Student name: Dana Marion Date: February 15, 2012

Abstract

Located on the Balkan Peninsula, Albania is a small country of roughly 3.3 million people. Because of a prolonged history of communist isolation, Albania remains firmly rooted to the traditions of the past. Widespread poverty and weak physical and political infrastructure have delayed development efforts. Traditional mentalities are confronted by a growing international influence on a daily basis. Modern problems, like human trafficking, are difficult to address because of taboos around sex and shame. Victims of trafficking are stigmatized and discriminated against by society, their communities, and their families. Stigmatization presents a huge obstacle in the reintegration process, as former victims of trafficking try to move forward with their lives. The perpetuation of stigma is fostered by a culture where shame and a low status of women are culture norms. This study looks at the dynamic relationship between shame and the stigmatization of returning Albanian victims of trafficking. Workers in the field of anti-trafficking in Albania report that shame is the biggest obstruction to reintegration. Stigmatization of victims of trafficking is committed by families, communities and in society, most often among potential employers, landlords, and service providers. In the case of Albania, stigmatization frequently occurs due to the anticipation of shame from the larger family or the community. Recommended programming includes educational workshops with the younger generation, in communities in the deep North, and educational programming on television.

Index

Abbreviations	i
Introduction	1
Human Trafficking	1-4
Historical Context	4-5
Human Trafficking in Albania	5-6
Literature Review	6-12
Women in Albania	6-8
Shame	8-12
Methodology	12-16
Findings	16-29
Discussion	29-35
Concluding Remarks	35-36
Works Cited	37-38
Addendum	39-129
Interview Questions	39
Interview A	40-46
Interview B	47-55
Interview C	56-62
Interview D	63-75
Interview E	76-83
Interview F	84-87
Interview G	88-90
Interview H	91-95
Focus Group	96-129

List of Abbreviations

APL	Albanian Party of Labor
CAAHT	Coordinated Action Against Human Trafficking
D&E	Different & Equal
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
GTIP	Trafficking in Person's Report
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
VOT	Victim of Trafficking

Introduction

The proposed study, Understanding the Stigmatization of Albanian Victims of Trafficking, was conducted over ten months with data gathering and observation taking place in Tirana and Vlore Albania. My research sought to understand the role stigmatization plays in the reintegration of victims of trafficking in Albania and the deep roots of this stigmatization of victims of trafficking within Albanian society. The hope is to be able to provide recommendations for programs that would directly address stigma in the future. I worked with current and past workers in the field of anti-trafficking.

My research explored the topic of the stigmatization of returning victims of trafficking in traditional cultures. More specifically, I was interested in learning about where the root of this stigma comes from in these cultures, and what, if any, recommendations people already working with this target group can make towards the creation of a program that would address the stigma on a wide scale. My assumption was that the presence of stigma is widely known and felt by workers in the field, and that there was a desire to overcome this stigma for more effective reintegration of victims of trafficking.

In my interactions with people, both informally with friends and formally at my practicum site, I heard over and over how ingrained stigma is in Albanian culture. Many I spoke with expressed no hope that the situation victims of trafficking in Albania face would change. Currently, it is extremely difficult for victims of trafficking to reintegrate into Albanian society. In addition to overcoming the trauma of their experience during the period of trafficking, they face little support from their families and the larger community as they try to rebuild their life.

My research explores the roots of the stigmatization of Albanian victims of trafficking in beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Albanian society. The direct experiences of workers in the field of anti-trafficking in Albania was critical in the gathering of this information.

II. Background of Human Trafficking & Albania

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has been with us for centuries. “Slavery is as old as human civilization. All of the world’s great founding cultures, including those in Mesopotamia, China, Egypt and India accepted slavery as a fact of life” (CQ Researcher, 2004, p. 282). Men, women, and children were bought and sold into slavery or forced prostitution. This act was not only sanctioned by

governments, it was, more often than not, perpetrated by them. Today, it is committed by criminals. Though trafficking is formally outlawed in nearly every nation, it still occurs worldwide.

Ogwu (2007) contends that today human trafficking is rampant because globalization has not only connected legitimate businesses across borders but also crime gangs, creating an intricate, transnational crime network (p. 5-6). “These well organized networks with net assets estimated at billions of dollars, ride on the back of globalization by exploiting ‘a borderless world,’ loopholes in legal regimes, and preying as much upon the weak and vulnerable as on the foibles of the rich and powerful” (*Ibid*).

The frequency of trafficking in persons is very hard to determine because of the secretive nature of the crime. Many times, it is hard to determine who is a consenting sex worker and who is a victim of trafficking because of the victims’ unwillingness or inability to talk due to fear of retribution or language barriers. The 2010 Trafficking in Person’s Report (GTIP) estimates that there are 12.3 million people living enslaved in forced labor, bonded labor and forced prostitution around the world (US Department of State, 2010, p. 7). “The majority of human trafficking in the world takes the form of forced labor. The ILO estimated that for every trafficking victim subjected to forced prostitution, nine people are forced to work” (*Ibid*, p. 8). Because of the difficulties involved in identifying victims of trafficking, the true number will never be known.

Though a smaller percentage of the total number of estimated victims, commercial sex trafficking is a much more lucrative enterprise. In 2005, the ILO estimated the profits from forced laborers, who were trafficked, to be \$3.8 billion (Belsler, 2005, p. 11). Profits from forced prostitution were estimated to be \$33.9 billion in 2005 (*Ibid*, p. 14).

Forced labor is manifested in four main ways: domestic labor, physical labor, including child labor, child soldiers and forced begging. Sex trafficking encompasses two areas: prostitution and sex tourism; it also affects women, girls, men, and boys. “Sex trafficking is one of the most lucrative sectors regarding the illegal trade in people, and involves any form of sexual exploitation in prostitution, pornography, bride trafficking, and the commercial sexual abuse of children” (Florida Abolitionist, 2011, par. 2). For the purposes of this study, I will be focusing on trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

The poor are the most vulnerable to human trafficking, and among the poor women and children are the most at risk. These groups have limited rights and protections given to them due to their lowered statuses in society (Catholic Relief Services, p. 2011). This leaves them extremely weak against the tactics employed by traffickers. Victims of sex trafficking are most commonly lured by traffickers with the promise of employment.

In the most common ploy used, traffickers promise these young girls and women jobs as waitresses, nannies, models, etc. Typically these 'jobs' are in places that are perceived to have better opportunities for her such as more developed countries or big cities in the same country. They travel with their trafficker with legitimate or falsified documents, which are confiscated when the destination city is reached, and they are then forced into the sex industry.

Many times, the women are told that they owe their captors a certain amount of money for travel expenses or as a bonded debt that they need to work off. The amount is either so high that they will never be able to work it off, or, more often, once they do work it off, they are then charged an overhead price for room and board. These women are not only forced to service up to twenty clients a day, they are also often beaten severely to compel compliance. They do not run because they have no documentation, fear prison or retribution if caught by their captors, and/or are completely isolated in a strange place where they do not know the language or a single person. Often they are made so dependent on their captor they cannot fathom what would become of them if they tried to escape.

The second common tactic used involves gaining the trust of the victim and often times her family as well. In this scenario, the trafficker pretends to have a relationship with the victim. He calls himself her boyfriend and tells her he loves her. Sometimes, he convinces her to run away with him to live or get married. Sometimes the deception includes gaining the trust of the victims parents, who think their daughter is going to marry this deceiver. Once away from the safety of her family, the 'boyfriend' often forces the victim to commit sexual acts with other men to prove her loyalty to him or else endure physical abuse by him. They do not run because they have been brainwashed to believe that they are performing a service that helps their 'boyfriend'. This is the beginning of their journey into forced prostitution.

In the third case, women are bought and sold, like commodities, by family members--and eventually other traffickers. Sometimes, they are sold into forced marriages. These women are held captive by force from the very beginning and face torture, abuse, and intimidation. They do not run because they are never free. Emotionally, they are held captive by threats to their

families and physical abuse. In almost every case, the women are forced to take drugs, as a way to control them; additionally, the women have no recourse because they do not speak the local language and live in constant fear (Somerset, 2001, p. 14).

Young girls are highly desirable in the industry because they represent innocence--virginity, and appeal to sex offenders, who have no legal means to act out on their sexual fantasies. "Cases of child sex tourism involving U.S. citizens have included a pediatrician, a retired Army sergeant, a dentist, and a university professor. Child pornography is frequently involved in these cases, and drugs may also be used to solicit or control the minors" (US Department of State, 2008, p. 25). Reports indicate that victims of child sex tourism may be forced to service 100 to 1,500 sex offenders per year.

Historical Context of Albania

Human trafficking targets the vulnerable. Women and children are certainly the most vulnerable, and those coming from unstable states are at an even greater risk. Albania's history of isolationist communism has produced a state with very weak political infrastructure, high rates of corruption, and extreme poverty. Many citizens of Albania are struggling to survive as their country seeks to take its place within a competitive global market.

A brief look at Albania's history, shows a state marked with years of oppression and occupation. Albania was occupied by the Ottoman Empire from 1385 until 1912, when it declared its independence. During World War II, Albania was occupied by both Italy and Germany between 1939 and 1944. In 1954, Prime Minister Enver Hoxha seized total control of the government. Hoxha was a devout follower of Stalin. Under his regime, all forms of religious worship were banned, and all intellectual or industrial activities were done for the good of the state. Leaders of the opposition, religious sects, and rural clans and wealthy land owners and party defectors were executed, exiled or jailed in internment camps.

Hoxha's Albania was plunged into a deep state of isolation that began in 1948. Hoxha ruled Albania until his death in 1985. As Communism fell in 1991, the country began to make the change to democracy, starting with the opening of its borders. In 1996, the Albanian people had been urged to invest their entire savings in other European companies. Unfortunately, these were pyramid schemes, and by the fall of 1996 they began to collapse. Those who had invested, which was about two-thirds of the population, lost everything. The following three years were marked by chaos.

In 2005, Sali Berisha was elected Prime Minister, and he and the Democratic Party vowed to tackle corruption and organized crime, but failed to make any real gains. 2007 saw another election, which ended contentiously with claims of electoral fraud. Currently, the country is still struggling to find stability, which has left fertile ground for traffickers, both because of the desperation of the people and its proximity to many key countries has making it an ideal route for slave trade.

Human Trafficking in Albania

Understanding the historical context of Albania is a very important part of understanding Albanian culture. Albania is a country that has been influenced by centuries of occupation and has only been self-governing for about the last 70 years. From my observations, centuries of foreign rule and communist isolation have created a fierce sense of national identity. Modern history shows that occupation has left the country weak both economically and politically, especially if you consider the years of Hoxha a form of occupation. Living in conditions like this has left the people to rely on traditional values instead of propelling them towards a more modern mentality. Albania is a traditional country trying to deal with modern problems.

Poverty leaves many vulnerable to the threat of trafficking in Albania. In Albania, roughly 30 percent of the rural population lives below the poverty line; where as in urban areas, the poverty rate is about 20 percent (Ekonomi & Gjermeni, et al., 2006, p. 16-17). Poor economic conditions create situations where there is limited access to education and employment opportunities. As most of the emphasis is put on advancing the opportunities of boys, many girls fall behind. Many girls are desperate to leave their homes. In addition to poor opportunities for advancement, many VOTs are victims of family violence, as too often domestic violence is connected to poverty (Satyanathan and Pollak, 2007). Their desperation to flee their current situation leaves them vulnerable to the false promises of traffickers. In 2010, D&E reported that 40 percent of VOTs came from poor families (p. 14).

In Albania, a large percentage of victims of trafficking are minors. They typically come from poor rural areas, especially in the north of the country; many have very little education. In 2009, anti-trafficking D&E reported that nearly 48 percent of victims of trafficking came from rural areas, 21 percent had moved with their family from a rural area to Tirana or Durrës, and 52 percent had seven years or less of formal education (*Ibid*, pp. 11, 16). After the pyramid schemes in 1996, trafficking in human beings became a major problem in Albania. The situation was dire for many families and traffickers had an easy time tricking their victims and the families of victims. Also, Albania's borders were extremely porous because of high levels of corruption

with border officials and police. In many instances, these officials were collaborating with traffickers in return for a monetary kickback. Albanian became a major route that traffickers used to move victims east to west.

In light of increasing international attention, the Albanian government began to really monitor the movement of people in, out and through the country over the last few years. Also, restrictions were again imposed on Albanians trying to leave the country. Visas were required for international travel. This has led to an increase in internal trafficking. D&E reports that nearly 47 percent of victims of trafficking are trafficking exclusively within Albania (*Ibid*, p. 19). D&E also reported that 25 percent victims of trafficking entering in the reintegration program were 17 years or younger, and 50 percent of VOTs above the age of 19 were trafficked as minors (*Ibid*, p. 13)

In Albania, stigmatization of victims of trafficking presents difficulties for returning victims of trafficking. A 2010 IOM report of re-trafficking claims that “returnees believed that their families could have reacted violently to their return due to their experiences of having been trafficked. A number of writers have documented the effect of stigma on women’s ability to reintegrate into their former communities and families after such an experience” (Jobe, 2010, p. 41).

III. Literature Review

Women In Albanian Society

Albania has a long history of patriarchy. The role of women has, traditionally, been to tend to the household chores, bear children, raise the children, prepare daughters for keeping house, and to be obedient to their fathers, brothers, uncles, etc. The subjugation of women can first be documented in the 15th century with the Kanun. Through the Kanun, Albanian’s were given the guiding principles for their lives. The Kanun¹ dictates everything from hospitality, the treatment and purposes of women, the family, how to settle disputes, honor, to morality, among other topics. The Kanun’s teachings held that “women had a vastly inferior status, being deprived of virtually all male rights and privileges, but also of all male duties. The code states explicitly, ‘a woman is a sack for carrying things’” (Elsie, 2010, p. 224).

¹ There are actually several regional variations of the Kanun, named either for the region of origin or regional clan leader. The most famous is the Kanun Leke Dukagjini. In Albania, the term Kanun is the common term to refer to both the Kanun Leke Dukagjini and the general concept of the Kanun.

Since the time of communism, Albanian women have led two very separate lives. In the public sector, they are espoused as equals and occupy many of the same types of professional positions as men. During communism, Hoxha and the APL campaigned diligently to make it appear that women were important, contributing partisans in Albania. Albanian art, most of which was propagated by the APL, from this period depicts men and women contributing equally to the building and strengthening of the country. Both pictures of industry and armed forces depict a country where both men and women are integral members of the society, standing shoulder to shoulder or working together as equals². However, in the private sphere women were and are not viewed as equals. The traditional roles of women are still the standard for most households. It is important to note that while, today, the official rhetoric claims equality, in practice this is often not the case, and women are relegated to work as teachers, social workers, or health workers (Nixon, 2009, p. 106). Many uneducated women perform service jobs like hairdressers, tailors, or cleaners. It is true that women can be found in every sector of society, but, in the opinion of many women I have interacted with, this frequently feels like tokenism.

If women want to assert their rights in the private sphere, it can often have violent consequences. “In this case, the man finds himself threatened by the loss of power and control, showing aggressive behavior and intolerance toward the woman for as he thinks that he is not the epicenter of the power in the family” (Qendra Vatra, 2008, p. 14). Violence against women and girls is a shocking norm, one that many are resigned to live with (Amnesty International, 2006; Women News Network, 2011; Dervishi, A., 2011; EEAS, 2010; US Department of State, 2010). Various studies about domestic violence in Albania put the number of women abused by the partners between 20 and 46 percent, but Amnesty International is quick to point out that this number may be far lower than the reality. “They have seen their mothers beaten, and they think it is normal to be beaten, or to be shouted at by the husband or brother or mother-in-law, and that it is their husband’s right to beat them” (Amnesty International, 2006, pp. 11-14). Therefore, it could be that this statistic fails to represent those women who see domestic violence as a normal part of family and private life.

Official reports show no inequity in educational levels in Albania, except a slight increase in the number of women enrolled in higher education (World Bank, 2003). However, Amnesty International reports a troubling when examining figures among the illiterate citing that “there are twice as many women as men, and in some rural areas where the secondary school enrollment rate is only 24.9 per cent, the drop-out rate is higher for girls than for boys” (2006, p.

² I have seen a great number of these works of art at the art museum in Tirana.

8). Amnesty International also reports that women earn 20 to 50 percent of what men do and only own 8 percent of all property (*Ibid*).

There is great importance placed on girls to maintain their purity. Traditionally, the best way for a girl to honor her family was to get married. This was a woman's primary function in society. "The overwhelming social importance for Albanian women is based on an understanding that a woman's identity is totally tied to her husband" (Davies, 2009, p. 188) Refusing to marry is a cultural taboo, and "such persons are stigmatized by Albanian public opinion either as people who shy away from their main objective or as people with doubtful morals" (Murzaku, I. & Dervishi, Z, 2003, p 232). The same stigma is also attached to those who chose to delay marriage and/or having children once married, as the expectation is that once married starting a family will immediately follow (*Ibid*). For girls living in rural areas, a girl must do everything to protect her reputation to be considered desirable for marriage. This frequently means she should never be seen in mixed company with another male and should not be seen outside of the home, unless it is with her father or brother.

"In Albanian, the term 'good girl' is a social value weighted with signification and implies such things as purity in the form of virginity, appropriately submissive behaviour towards parents, the maintenance of appropriate social distance from males outside the family, cleanliness of person and home, quietness, and respect for a woman's role in the practices of familial hospitality. There is no clear corollary to being a 'good girl' in terms of male behaviour, which is permitted considerably more freedom. Moreover, the judgement over whether someone is a 'good girl' is made from outside the family, within the immediate community. Thus, the presence of externally designated 'good girls' in a family is a means by which the immediate community assesses the overall reputation of a family." (Nixon, 2009, p. 117)

Shame

When I Googled "shame" a website for a therapist in Milwaukee, WI was one of the first entries. On his page he writes, "Shame is not the same as guilt. When we feel guilt, it's about something we did. When we feel shame, it's about who we are" (Schirtzinger, No date). I found this to be a very important key to understanding what shame is. Brown & Cehajic (2008) echo this sentiment saying "guilt the emphasis is mainly on the wrong-doing and its consequences ('I did this bad thing to someone, who suffered as a result'), whilst shame is indicated by a focus on the implications of that wrongdoing for one's self-concept ('I did this bad thing to someone, and therefore I am a bad person')" (p. 670). This internalization of feelings about something one has done and that it is a reflection of one's character is one theory about what motivates shame. A second view of shame emphasizes the importance of reputation. Shame, therefore, stems from

the way others view the perpetrator of wrong doing. “There is some consensus that empathy is more strongly correlated with guilt than with shame. A plausible reason for this is that guilt focuses more on the misdeeds and their consequences for the victim while shame is oriented more inwardly to the consequences of the actions for one’s self” (*Ibid*).

The acquisition of honor in honor/shame cultures can be achieved in two ways. One can either be born with honor via social class, ethnicity, family reputation, gender, etc., or they can earn it through deeds. Crook (2009) calls these ascribed and acquired honor respectively and defines an ‘honor culture’ as one where

“the seriousness with which the people who inhabit it protect their honor and fight to retrieve it if it has been lost. This phenomenon can exist only in concert with the perception that access to honor is limited. If there were enough honor to go around, losing a little here and there would carry no consequences. This is an important distinction to draw, for it is also what distinguishes honor and shame cultures from non-honor and shame cultures: a non-honor and shame culture might well know honor and shame, but it does not see honor as a limited good and thus does not contest it with the same intensity” (p. 593).

In clan based or collective societies, shame spreads on a larger scale, permeating family groups or communities. Tang, et al., (2008) call these cultures interdependent cultures. In their study, they suggest the “interdependent self culture is largely based on the relationship between individual and the others. The content of self does not only include one’s inner qualities but also others’ view of self, because when pursuing harmony with others individuals include others as part of their reality” (*Ibid*, p. 164). In these cultures, which are also called collective cultures, the opinions of others literally become defining points for who one is. The cultures of ethnic groups in the Balkans are examples of collective cultures. In these societies, people are more deeply connected and interdependent on one another and often experience events on a wide scale level. Public or private events affect the collective more broadly than they would in an individualistic culture. “Collective shame stems from perceiving that the actions of the ingroup confirm or reveal a flawed aspect of one’s social identity . . . (and) . . . implicate something about the very nature of who they are” Brown & Cehajic, 2008, p 671). Tang, et al. (2008), echo this sentiment saying, “pertaining to shame, individuals would experience ‘transferred shame’ which indicates that individuals experience the same emotion when a close other feels shame or is involved in shame provoking situation” (p. 165).

Albania, which remains extremely collectivist in mentality, has a strong tradition of honor and shame. In Albania, “family honour is a strong social force...; social values stipulate that the

family's image must be maintained – sometimes at all costs – in the eyes of the immediate community”. (Nixon, 2009, p. 108). An individual's value can be determined by the reputation of his/her family. Thus, maintaining the appearance of being from a good family (familje e mirë) is critical in Albania. So in this context shame can come from the projection of an individual's actions onto the extended family (fis, which follow the male bloodline), or it can reverberate from the actions of a member of the fis, resting on the individual. Familial shame is so intertwined and codependent it often becomes hard to distinguish a starting point. Nixon contends, “in the absence of any formal religious structures and with the weakening of existing state structures, people turned to the family as their main source of security. This strengthened the family as a social structure, and unfortunately also intensified its constriction by collective shame” (*Ibid.* p. 115).

The principles of honor and shame have been reinforced throughout Albania's history, first through the moral codes of the Kanun and then through the rhetoric of Hoxha's Communist government. The Kanun was the tradition Albanians lived their life by until Hoxha's regime. Under Hoxha, following the Kanun was forbidden, and its use was virtually erased. The Kanun survived only in the North where extreme geographical remoteness obstructed the reach of Hoxha.

Though Hoxha had banned the Kanun he was not above using imagery from it to advance his propaganda. He often evoked the image of family in his campaigns to the people, filling his speeches with the terms ‘father’, ‘mother’, ‘sister’, ‘brother’, etc. to describe the various aspects of his political party, the Albanian Labor Party (APL). The APL utilized the “legitimacy of a kind of authoritarian paternalism that was present in the kanun and that translates into patriarchal power. In this sense, the APL not only permitted the continuity of what we might term kanunic patriarchal ethics, while repressing its outer juridical manifestations” but also worked to give these principles more legitimacy (*Ibid.* p. 112).

The APL also capitalized on the Kanun's principles of honor and shame to control the people. It created paranoia amongst the people by using the existing familial structures created by the Kanun against the people. The party claimed to be making records of everyone's genealogy and keeping records of what they were doing. The APL emphasized the importance of being from a ‘good’ family as a means social control, which they determined through the genealogies. Families did not oppose the party were classified as good, and those that were in opposition were labeled as bad, or declassified. Families were declassified if a member of the family was or was suspected to support one of the opposition groups. This created a sense of fear where people not

only suspected their neighbors of spying on them but also family members. Part of the APL's means of control was to punish the whole family. Not only did the offending individual get punished but also his or her family, including the immediate family. Punishments could take the form of increased surveillance, restrictions on movement or access to certain household items, like refrigerators, a demotion or refused promotion at work, limited access to education, etc.

“The Enverist system practiced an extreme form of collective punishment for an individual's actions. When positioned in the context of a system of intense fear and collective punishment, the importance of maintaining a good family reputation was enormously heightened. Maintaining appearances – in this context, family appearances – became an essential strategy of everyday existence. Enormous emphasis was placed on the performance of the family as a stable, harmonious unit to the immediate community, and therefore through the Sigurimi³ to the Party. Problems within the family had to be hidden from public view, lest the state would intervene and ramifications would be felt.” (Nixon, 2009, p. 115)

This paranoia and mentality has seeped into the present day where family reputation is still of paramount importance. During the time of communism, shame was connected to criminal actions that would ruin the reputation of the family. Whereas now, familial shame connects to the private actions of people and are more often associated with issues of morality. Family reputation continues to hinge on the behaviors of members of the family. Any association with wrongdoing, be it an alternative lifestyle, legal troubles, divorce, trafficking, etc. brings shame to the family.

Nixon argues that shame and the discrimination of women are connected in Albania, posturing “we can see a qualitative alteration of collective familial shame in which it has become feminized and thereby contributes to the subordination of women through the policing of women's actions and restrictions on their behaviour” (*Ibid*, p 108). The standards of honorability for men and women are not equal. Traditionally in Balkan societies, “honour was intimately bound up with assertive, traditional forms of masculinity, and so was fundamentally related to female chastity, the source of such honour as women possessed and a crucial conduit through which men's honour was vulnerable” (Cairns, 2011, p 23). In the book *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Peristiany 1966), it is argued that “there exists a sex-linked, binary opposition in which honour is associated with men and shame with women” (quoted in Nixon, 2009, p. 109). Females are pressured to be a ‘good girl’ but there is not similar pressure placed on males. During Communism

³ Albanian Secret Police during Enver Hoxha's government.

“the bulk of actions resulting in collective shame were not clearly gendered. Yet there were some actions that had the potential to bring about collective shame in the eyes of the immediate community that were gendered, and these generally had to do with the policing of female sexuality. With the removal of communist ideological structures, and therefore the danger of incurring collective shame through ideological ‘crimes’, what was retained was the danger posed by female actions, and in particular female sexuality. In this sense, during Albania’s post-communist transition, familial shame began to be projected inwards more towards the female members of the family than towards the male. Although it is possible for a man’s actions to shame the family (for example, in the case of marrying a divorcee or having an extramarital affair), the response to these actions is generally far less dramatic than towards the actions of women. What is most significantly different is the degree of punishment accorded to women;...women’s actions are far more likely to incur a violent or more extreme response if they shame the family unit. From this perspective, it is argued here that the intensity of familial shame has been feminized. (*Ibid*, pp. 116-117)

To summarize, in collective cultures, the opinions of others are instrumental in defining who a person is and their self worth. Shame has permeated Albania’s history for centuries. It has been a powerful form of social control during the period of the Kanun and communism and continues to be one now. In Albania, shame is also connected with gender discrimination, as honor is associated with masculinity and shame is attached to the feminine. Shame can be seen at every level of society and as an important motivator of behavior in Albania.

III. Methodology

From case workers, program coordinators, executive directors and former project managers of international governmental organizations, I learned about the direct experiences of confronting stigma during the reintegration process. Approaching my research as a case study, I explored the stigmatization of victims of trafficking in Albania. I chose Albania because it remains extremely traditional in culture and mentality, despite efforts to modernize, due to a prolonged period of Communist isolation. This is widely felt by both foreigners and Albanians, as many of the participants of my study expressed how traditional Albania remains.

The purpose of this study was to explore how Albanian anti-trafficking workers have experienced the stigmatization of Albanian victims of trafficking during the reintegration process and to learn how they perceive the influences of their own culture on stigma. Additionally, this study seeks to be used as a tool to shape anti-stigma programming to better assist in the reintegration of returning victims of trafficking.

This study primarily sought to answer the question of what anti-trafficking professionals in Albania believe are the driving cultural factors behind the stigmatization of returning Albanian victims of trafficking. Additionally, this study aimed to learn what recommendations for future programming the anti-trafficking professionals could make given their direct experiences working against stigma. So a secondary question this study wanted to answer was if there was a response to the stigmatization of trafficking victims in Albania that was appropriate specifically within the Albanian context.

I framed my research as an exploratory and descriptive study, utilizing a case study approach for data gathering and analysis. I felt this approach was optimal since I was hoping to learn from the experiences of those already deep in the field of anti-trafficking and I wanted to learn about the greater phenomenon of stigmatizing victims of trafficking within tradition cultures. Initially I had defined a traditional culture as one that places high meaning on family honor, holds women at a lowered status, and has a strong code of moral behavior. My definition has since shifted significantly. For the purposes of my study, I am now defining a traditional culture as one in which its customs and norms are bound together by relationships, with the most significant influence in the culture being kin, clan or tribal relations. I still feel that many traditional cultures exhibit the aforementioned characteristics but are not bound within these traits alone.

My study of the stigmatization of victims and survivors of sex trafficking within traditional cultures served as an overview of this phenomenon within Albania. I sought to learn about the stigma victims of trafficking face in other traditional cultures and possible cultural factors that perpetuate stigmatization and how the experiences in these cultures relate to the situation in Albania. A specific case study of Albania has allowed me to have a much more in-depth analysis into the cultural factors that drive trafficking victim stigmatization in Albania and gain a greater understanding about what can be done to begin to address it.

I selected two main sites to use in my study: Different & Equal in Tirana and VATRA Center in Vlore. In total I interviewed 6 participants individually and six in a focus group from these two organizations. I additionally chose to interview a participant who formerly worked for IOM on the original task force to combat trafficking in Albania and eventually helped establish the NGO D&E in 2002 and a case worker with ShKBSH, an Albanian prison ministry NGO, who works closely with D&E. I chose these three groups because I felt they represented diverse experiences and perspectives both from the point of view of NGO and governmental workers. They also have diverse regional perspectives.

I selected these sites also because they represent the largest anti-trafficking presence within Albania. IOM has been a driving force in the anti-trafficking activities in Albania for over a decade and Different & Equal and VATRA center are two of the most well known and respected anti-trafficking organizations within the anti-trafficking community, both internationally and domestically (to Albania). ShKBSH often partners with D&E to provide services to women in prisons who have identified as VOTs but who have done so after incarceration. They are also piloting a project that would network professional and average citizens together to provide services to VOTs identified through informal mechanisms. I conducted the focus group at the D&E office in Tirana. Individual interviews were conducted at the D&E office, ShKBSH office, VATRA, and the office of the former IOM worker. Individual interview and focus group participation was solicited through an e-mail to each NGO and participants volunteered to take part in this study. The participants, who were not working for D&E and VATRA, learned of this study either through the Director of D&E, who forwarded my e-mail inviting participation in this study, or through direct e-mail solicitation from myself.

The eight participants and six focus group members of my study represent a spectrum of workers in the field of anti-trafficking in understanding the stigmatization of returning VOTs in Albania. They have all worked in various timeframes and capacities in the work of anti-trafficking. Participants B and A have both worked for an international governmental organization and have more than 10 years experience in the field. A is currently the Executive Director of one of the most prominent anti-trafficking organizations in Albania. Participants C and D are both program Coordinators at anti-trafficking NGOs and also have several years working in the field. Participant E does not work in an anti-trafficking organization, but her work in women's prisons has exposed her to victims of trafficking who have been falsely identified as prostitutes. Much of her work in the organization she works for now focuses on anti-trafficking and providing services to VOTs. Participants F, G, and H are all social workers in an anti-trafficking shelter. All participants in the focus group are social workers in an anti-trafficking shelter, except for one who is now a Coordinator at an anti-trafficking organization. The participants also vary widely in age with two being in their 50s, one being in her 40s, three being in their 30s, and the remaining 8 being in their 20s. Overall, all the participants incorporated a variety of perspectives from their varied amount of time in the field, their various positions within the anti-trafficking community and their own personal backgrounds.

I used individual interviews and a focus group to gather data. For each interview and the focus group, I voice recorded the session. I also noted any information, reactions, or statements that seemed of particular importance or interest during the session. I was the facilitator of the focus

group and individual interviews; a translator was available and present during any interview to assist with translation or clarification for either myself or the participant.

All information in the field was gathered by tape recording, note taking, and observations made while living in Albania. Observations occurred while I was living in Albania, while the tape recording of interviews and focus groups occurred six months later, when I returned to Albania for data collection after the approval of my human subjects review. A copy of my interview questions can be found in the Addendum section of my paper on page 39. These interview questions served as a guide for the interview process, but if additional questions or clarifications arose during interviews I asked additional questions. All recordings of the interviews and the focus group were transcribed within one week of their recording. After transcription, the recordings were destroyed.

The process of analysis began by, first, coding the transcriptions, and then, organizing the codes into themes. Additionally, I recorded any analytic consistencies that began to arise during the transcription process. For example, I noticed that in both individual interviews and the focus group, participants mentioned the importance of family acceptance in the reintegration process and how shame is a strong motivator of family acceptance. I analyzed the data by examining the underlying relationships between themes, as it became apparent that shame was a major motivator for nearly all themes that emerged. I also used the theoretical frameworks of the culture theory of individualism and collectivism and feminist theory as a lens through which to guide my analysis, which I will detail further in the Discussion portion of my paper.

I have ensured the trustworthiness of this study by following using multiple methods of data collection through individual interviews and a focus group to triangulate the data. This offers a balanced perspective on the subject I am presenting by cross verifying the data I have collected. Data collected from individual interviews and the focus group were examined for descriptive factors that demonstrated convergence and/or divergence. This data was then organized into ten specific themes: Shame, Opinion of Others, Legacy of the Past, Family Acceptance, Status of Women, Internalization, Lack of Understanding, Quality of Life, Social Status and Recommendations. It should be noted that upon examination of data from individual interviews and focus groups data correlated across all themes. Some individual differences are noticed between data given in individual interviews and the focus group. However, these statements were still found to relate to the previously mentioned themes. Finally, all participants in my study were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews and to make any

corrections or clarifications to the data I have presented, ensuring that I have given an accurate portrayal of our meeting together.

This study faced two methodological limitations. First there is a lack of male perspective. A man was contacted and interviewed from one of the NGOs, but the data collected was unusable since he only wanted to talk about a children's program he was currently working with. Regardless of the question I asked, he only spoke of the program he was currently working with and never spoke of anything relating to stigma or human trafficking in Albania. I had to consider his interview unusable. A male perspective could have been an important contribution to this study, as Albania remains firmly patriarchal. A second limitation is that the perspective of the researcher is one coming from a Western, individualist culture. My exposure to collectivist cultures has been relatively low and my recognition and themes and interpretation of the data will surely be a reflection of this.

In Albania, the topic of prostitution and sex trafficking is sensitive and sometimes controversial. Though all participants work in anti-trafficking, I want to ensure their safety by protecting their identities. Therefore, all participants will remain anonymous and will be assigned letters to represent them; only I will know their true identity.

IV. Findings

Because my study was not only seeking objective information on the stigmatization of VOTs in Albania but was intended to be used for building a knowledge base related to this specific phenomenon for the purpose of program recommendations, it affected the way I structured my interview guide. I had initial hunches that the status of women, the culture of shame in Albania, and Albania's communist past would be influential factors in the stigmatization of VOTs; I was also interested in program recommendations workers in the field could give as the majority of my time working in Albania was in program development. Therefore, I asked questions that would probe deeper into these areas. I also asked some general questions that would allow for a range of responses, such as 'how severe is stigma against victims of trafficking?'. The data generated from these questions makes up a great portion of the data collected and often times relates directly to the original ideas I originally intended to learn about.

During the process of coding, and even during the transcription of the data, it became apparent that I was looking at several recurring themes within the information. The themes emerged both as a consequence of specific questions I asked and organically from broad based questions I

posed. It is important to note that many of the themes, such as Status of Women and Shame, would have emerged even if I had not asked such specific questions about them, as issues related to these themes arose in the responses to many of the broad based questions. The ten themes that emerged were Opinions of Others, Quality of Life, which seems to be a sub theme of Opinions of Others, Status of Women, Family Acceptance, Internalization, Social Status, Legacy of the Past, Lack of Understanding, Shame and finally Recommendations.

Opinions of Others

When I grouped the codes into this theme, I looked at how the participants felt the opinions of others affected reintegration. This is either directly how the opinions of others from the society, direct community, businesses, health centers, vocational centers, or state institutions affects the VOT or how the opinions of these groups affect each other. A particular emphasis was placed on how the opinion of the community affects all of these groups, including VOTs.

All the participants agree that the opinions of others are big motivators of stigma. Participants B, C, F, D, and members of the focus group talked about stigma coming from potential employers. They all told of the difficulties finding reintegrating VOTs employment because of discrimination. The stigma they report stems from two places. First, the girls are discriminated against because, from the view of the typical Albanian, they were prostitutes. As Participant D explained, employers “don’t want those kind of people” working for them because “those people will ruin my company” (Interview D, lines 118-130). Members of the focus group relayed that many employers do not believe the VOT has truly stopped prostituting (Focus Group, lines 391-396). Participants C and D and the focus group members also reported the importance of keeping the details of the girls’ pasts hidden to potential employers. C and the focus group members even say that it is necessary tell employers that the girl is related to them or living with family in the city so they will hire her. The second component of this stigma is that the employers care how they are perceived by others. These participants expressed that the employers do not want to take a chance hiring a girl who has been a victim of trafficking because it will affect how the community perceives the business and they do not want this stigma or association attached to them or their business.

Participants B, F, C and the focus group members all highlighted stigma coming from health clinics and vocational institutions if they learn the client is a victim of trafficking. C noted that it was necessary to hire a private health center to work with beneficiaries so the service could be better and so they would not have to be around other people (Interview C, line 134). Participants B and E also noted that the primary reason for cooperation among state institutions, like the

national employment office, was because they were obligated to provide services to VOTs due to anti-discrimination laws (Interview B, lines 139-145; Interview E, lines 42-45).

All the participants in both the interviews and the focus group also spoke of the importance of the opinions coming from the society and the community. The opinions of the community can greatly impact the ability of VOTs to reintegrate. Participants E, B, and F explain that if the community accepts them or if the VOTs feel accepted by the community it greatly aids reintegration. Participant F even said that the absence or presence of stigma from the society will foresee whether a VOT will reintegrate successfully or not (Interview F, lines 5-6).

The opinions of the community also impact the state of mind of the VOT. In this case, the community is made up of the immediate members of the village. In some cases, particularly in urban settings, the community can refer to those within a social circle, like social service providers, business owners and customers, etc. Both B, C and the focus group members report this, with C feeling that many VOTs choose to reintegrate away from their city or village of origin because of the judgements they will receive upon returning.

The opinions of the community also perpetuate the stigma within the community and larger society. Participant C believes that since Albania is such a small country where people know each other so well the opinions of others affect people very deeply, a sentiment that participant D also echoes (Interview C, lines 109-115; Interview D, lines 257-258). She also believes that knowing so much of others' lives causes people to judge the behaviors of their neighbors (Ibid, line 118). Participant D feels that most people in the community do not accept VOTs back "not because of them, but because of the others" (Interview D, lines 274-275). Likewise, participant C reports that judgement from the neighbors is what influences the family to not accept the daughter back, a sentiment echoed in the focus group (Interview C, lines 17-18, Focus Group, lines 81-81). Participant H feels that prostitution will never be accepted in society and that this feeds the stigmatization of victims of trafficking (Interview H, line 34). Participant B feels that this outside judgement causes families to keep many things hidden. They do not want the community to know if the family has a problem or if there is a conflict because then they will be judged. (Interview B, lines 109-110, 113-114, and 116). Participant D mentions that a big concern for the family is what the extended family and surrounding community thinks (Interview D, lines 80-81).

The participants of this study also spoke about the effect changing mentalities can have on reintegration. Participant E spoke heavily about changing the way VOTs are seen not only in

society but also by workers in the field (Interview E, lines 61, 77, 83-89.) She feels that calling them ‘victims’ perpetuates a victim mentality and that they should be seen as and called survivors so they can begin to heal from the trauma of their experiences. Participant G feels that a good way to change mentality is to provide contact with the girls so they can be seen as victims of a crime (Interview G, lines 64-65), and participant D feels that right now going against the current mentality to stigmatize is seen as “weird” in Albanian society but that changing the mentality of the community will affect the larger society (Interview D, lines 280-281 and 235). Both G and D also feel that the mentality of stigma runs deeper than most would like to admit. Participant G feels that many people say they would accept VOTs but that they still have deep rooted stigma against them (Interview G, lines 39-43). Similarly, participant D points out that even workers in the field might have deep rooted stigma inside of them, wondering how many social workers or psychologists working with VOTs would allow their sons to date one (Interview D, lines 178-180).

Finally, participant A feels that even if a VOT provides a good example to the community by successfully reintegrating, they still suffer at the expense of the changing mentalities of community and family members (Interview A, lines 124-126).

Quality of Life

While the quality of life is an independent theme, it is heavily connected to the Opinions of Others because these opinions of others guide actions, which in turn affect the reintegration process. The most common ideas expressed were that the opinions of others makes it hard for VOTs to find or keep employment; VOTs are disadvantaged in reintegration because they have no money or jobs; VOTs experience higher amounts of violence than other vulnerable groups within Albania; rejection in society causes VOTs to be victimized twice; VOTs must face a lot by themselves; VOTs face discrimination from potential landlords (Interview E lines 15-16, 14; Interview A lines 51-53, Interview G line 12; Interview D lines 45, 137-140, 144-148, 51-58; Interview B, lines 47-48). Participant A also felt like reintegrating a VOT back to her former life was unfair because she was being placed back into the same situation she started from prior to the trafficking (which is often extreme poverty). Participant A feels that VOTs should be reintegrated into bigger cities to be given opportunities to have a new life without the influences of their past over shadowing them (Interview A, lines 114-116).

Status of Women

The participants of this study feel that the status of women in Albanian society contributes to the stigmatization of VOTs (Interview A, lines 8, 50, 92; Interview G, lines 14, 55; Focus Group,

lines 641-644). Participant D says there is a deep patriarchal mentality in Albania, and E says a big problem in Albania is that they “like to elevate more the culture of the man than culture of the women” (Interview D, line 200; Interview E, lines 201-202). Participant H feels that male acceptance will be pivotal in changing mentalities (Interview H, lines 67-68). Participant B says that all leaders in society are men (Interview B, lines 129-130). Participant D describes a society where men are apart from women and where men and women do not even socialize together casually (Interview D, lines 239, 247). In the focus group, participants expressed that men are the most important and have all the power; women have no decision making power, and even among “emancipated families” women are still below men (Focus Group, lines 772-773, 695, 213-219, 699-711). An emancipated family is one that appears to have an equal relationship on the surface between spouses, but in private remains traditional in mentality and division of labor.

The focus group had much to say about the status of women. During our discussion, participants revealed that in Albanian society when a man makes a mistake he is easily forgiven, but when a woman makes a mistake she is judged (*Ibid*, lines 325-328). If a woman divorces her husband, not only does she shame her family, she is also expected to leave the house, even if domestic violence is the cause of the separation (*Ibid*, lines 334-349, 353). Women are seen as inferior, and their role is to take care of the home and to have and raise children; they are allowed to work but only in socially acceptable jobs for women (*Ibid*, lines 654-657). Females must be ‘good girls’ otherwise they are stigmatized (line 526-528). An unmarried girl from a small town is not allowed to leave the house without a male family member; otherwise, she is considered immoral (*Ibid*, lines 659-674). In the North, girls finish high school, if they can but are then expected to get married (*Ibid*, lines 677-681). The marriage of a daughter is very important to the family. So, a returning VOT will often be matched with any man who is willing to take her, no matter what his situation is (*Ibid*, lines 766-770). The marriage of a VOT can restore the family’s reputation; this is why it is so important to the family (*Ibid*, lines 773-777).

As will be discussed later in the section on social status, many VOTs come from the rural north, where E says girls are forbidden from attending school so they can focus on preparing themselves for marriage and caring for the home (Interview E, lines 190-193). The sentiment she expresses is that these families feel: “we can’t invest in something that is going,” (*Ibid*, line 193). The meaning of this is that when a girl gets married she now belongs to her husband’s family; therefore, investing in the development of these girls is unimportant as they will no longer be considered part of the family of origin. D and H agree with participant E that in the rural areas gender discrimination is extremely high (Interview D, line 207; Interview H, line 56).

Participant B feels like people believe that trafficking is only a “woman’s problem” because only women make this mistake and only women work as prostitutes (Interview B, lines 131-135). Participants B and F report that the woman’s role is seen as being a housewife; participant H feels that because of discrimination women are extremely vulnerable but that they are the ones who do all the work (Interview B, lines 130-131; Interview F, lines 46- 48; Interview H, lines 54-55). G and B also feel that the gender discrimination has left women timid and unable to make decisions for their lives and fight for their rights (Interview B, lines 149-150; Interview G, lines 22-23). Women are seen as uneducated and unable to perform the same tasks as men, particularly professional capacities (Interview E, lines 165-172).

In the rural areas, participant E says that the belief is that a girl should only have one boyfriend/man and that if she has more than one boyfriend she is viewed as a prostitute (Interview E, lines 111-114). She also says that to even have a relationship with a man or to be seen with a boy will bring shame to the family (Ibid, lines 153, 157). E says that divorce also brings shame to women as well, but the situation is different for men because they can have as many girlfriends as they like (Ibid, lines 110, 154).

Some participants report that VOTs are seen as “bad girls” and that the trafficking is her own fault because she should have stayed with her parents (Interview E, lines 99-101, 103; Interview F, lines 51-52). Participants also talk about the connection gender has with honor in Albanian society. B and E both state that baby boys bring honor to the family (Interview B, line 151; Interview E, line 170). Participant E describes that a man honors his family by having a woman that obeys him and does not talk back; he also honors his family by having a lot of money, power and women. Women bring honor to their family, according to E, by staying with one man, dressing modestly, respecting her husband, having children (boys), doing her work and housework, and keeping her head down and not fighting for what she thinks. (Interview E, lines 135-144).

D describes two types of women in Albania: the ones who try to emancipate themselves and the ones who stay intimidated (Interview D, lines 208-210). She says that trying to emancipate, for Albanian women, is like a war (Ibid, line 213). Participant F agrees saying that women who try for independence are judged and seen as bad women (Interview F, lines 48-50). E says that it is shameful to try to find oneself as a woman (Interview E, line 153). As women fight for their independence, H believes that women need to first accept themselves (Interview H, lines 67-68, 70-72). Participant G believes that women are gaining independence, but Participant D feels this independence is superficial (Interview D, lines 211-213; Interview G, lines 20-22). Participant

A believes this schism comes from a disjointed view of Albanian women's abilities to make decisions. On the one hand, she says women are told they can take initiatives to do things but on the other they are seen as weak and unable to make decisions⁴. (Interview A, lines 44-46)

Family Acceptance

All the participants agree that family acceptance is one of the most, if not the most, important factors in successful reintegration. Participant H feels that it is the most important factor in reintegration and that many families do not understand that accepting their daughter back will set right what has happened to her (Interview H, lines 20-21a, 39-40). Participant D feels that family support is the one thing that can help VOTs get past the barriers they will face in reintegration (Interview D, lines 45-46). Participants G, H, D, and from the focus group also believe that the hardest stigma to overcome is that from the family, and they feel that families hold the key to successful reintegration in their hands (Interview G, lines 30-31; Interview H, lines 16-17; Interview D, lines 297-298; Focus Group, lines 446-454, 472-477).

Participants seem to agree that stigma coming from the families is overwhelming. Participants B, E, and F all feel that VOT stigmatization begins in the family, with F believing that this stigma then passes on to the rest of the community (Interview B, lines 197-199, 201; Interview E, lines 36-40; Interview F, lines 5 and 13). Participant C notes that strong family stigmatization comes also from the siblings (Interview C, line 40). As participants A, D, and B report, this stigma causes the families to reject the daughter when she attempts to reintegrate back to the home (Interview A, lines 56 and 60, Interview D, lines 50-51, 58, Interview B, line 43). In the focus group, participants described the power the extended family holds in the nuclear family's decision to accept or reject their daughter (Focus Group, line 518). Participant D describes two common feelings from parents. First, she says some accept their daughter but will not allow her to come home, and second, some reject their daughter so fiercely they feel it would be better for their daughter to be dead than to ever allow her home (Interview D, lines 62-63, 79).

Participants A, D, E, F, and H discussed the motivations behind family rejection. For A, families are motivated by shame and what others will think (Interview A, lines 61, 64-65). H also believes this, saying that when everyone knows of the situation, the family has a harder time accepting their daughter back (Interview H, line 88). E believes the family is afraid to accept them back because of judgement from the extended family (Interview E, lines 40-41). F believes family shame is a strong motivator and hinders the reintegration process (Interview F, lines

⁴ From my observations, in public life, women are encouraged to be equal and in private life they are expected to remain submissive.

65-66). D sees fear of what others will think to be a strong motivator as well. She believes that deep down, these families accept their daughters but reject them because of the opinions of others (Interview D, line 275). She even retells the story of one family so concerned with judgement from others that they moved to another city so they could not be associated with their daughter's case (Ibid, lines 89-90). Both of these sentiments were expressed in the focus group as well. Participants told me that in some cases, the families are so worried about the judgements coming from the community, they would prefer to break contact with them and relocate (Focus Group, lines 440-446). The focus group also revealed to me that many families blame their daughters for the trafficking because they made the choice to leave the family (Ibid, lines 759-760).

C strongly feels that community judgment influences family acceptance (Interview C, lines 15-16). D believes that the stigma from the community will also influence the VOTs decisions to try reintegrating back into the family (Interview D, line 65). Because of the judgements coming from extended family or the community many families try to keep the trafficking a secret, and if it becomes known--especially in the instances where litigation is involved, the family will reject their daughter (Interview A, lines 61-62; Interview D lines 70, 82-85, 88-89). Many times the family blames the daughter for the trafficking and can only regard her as a prostitute (Interview A, lines 57-59; Interview B, lines 44-45; interview C, lines 7-9).

Participants D and F note that there have been more cases lately where families are choosing to accept their daughters back despite the mentalities of the community (Interview D, line 279-280; Interview F, lines 66-69). D even reports that sometimes when the family gives full acceptance of their daughter it can change the mentality of the community (Interview D, lines 281-292).

Participant H observed that family acceptance is usually prompted by the father. She feels that fathers are more likely to accept their daughters and that it is the mother who receives the daughter more harshly. (Interview H, lines 42-45)

Internalization

The stigma VOTs face profoundly affects them. Often times, VOTs will internalize and adopt these stigmas, beginning to stigmatize themselves. Some common sentiments expressed were that when the girls feel stigmatized they suffer from depression and low self esteem; the girls self-stigmatize; it is important for the girls to believe they are a victim and survivor of something; when facing stigmatization VOTs have a lack of motivation to stay involved with the reintegration process; family rejection causes low self esteem; internal stigmatization is the worst

kind of stigma; VOTs blame themselves for the trafficking, and VOTs feel they are a shame (Interview A, lines 15-18; Interview C lines 41-42; Interview F, lines 31-35, 78-86; Interview G, lines 14-15; Interview H, line 68; Focus Group, lines 127-130, 197-204, 504-509). E feels strongly that using the term “victim” is just as detrimental to reintegration; she feels they should be called survivors instead so they will not adopt a victim mentality (Interview E, lines 77-78). A and B feel that it is important for VOTs to feel support so they do not feel failure, thinking that their only option in life is to prostitute (Interview A, lines 107-111, Interview B, lines 67-68).

Social Status

Social status in Albania encompasses so many things. It is gender, class, family reputation, and where you are from. As I have already discussed the stigma coming from gender and family reputation this section will focus mostly on class and where the VOT comes from. In Albania, most of the victims of trafficking come from the poor, rural areas (Interview C, line 14; Interview H, line 57). Participant H explains that poverty leaves the girls vulnerable to trafficking (Interview H, line 38). Participant E and the focus group participants feel that there are deeply rooted stigmas connected to where a person comes from, and that VOTs are additionally stigmatized because of where they come from (Interview E, lines 50-55; Focus Group, lines 423-428).

In addition, many of the participants feel that people in the rural areas stigmatize VOTs more than people in the urban areas (Interview C, lines 15, 116-117; Interview E, lines 188-189; Interview F, lines 15-17; Interview H, lines 84-85, 90). Participants C, F and H feel people in the rural areas stigmatize VOTs more because they know each other much more intimately (Interview C, line 115; Interview F, lines 15-17; Interview H, lines 85-86). Participant C also feels that stigma in the northern villages can be attributed to following the strict set of moral codes of the Kanun (Interview C, lines 100-102) because the Kanun has very explicit and severe codes of behavior for women and family honor.

Legacy of the Past

My observation of Albanian culture, during my time living there, is that it is a country that is still very firmly rooted in its past, through the influence of both more than 600 years of Turkish occupation and nearly 50 years of communist isolation. Both B and E feel that the Turkish occupation has had the biggest influence in giving women their status in society (Interview B, lines 158, 167-173; Interview D, lines 126-131). Participant C believes that living in isolation with a dictator has given Albanians an inferiority complex (Interview C, lines 9-11). Participants B and E also recognize the importance communist isolation has had on Albanian culture

(Interview B, lines 160-161, 164-167; Interview E, lines 120-124). B feels that communist isolation created a one ideology/one mind culture, which leads to uninformed prejudices. E feels that in communism the people were also isolated because they were unable to speak freely and had to meet strict standards. The focus group participants expressed that during communism, life was spent living for the good of the collective and individual needs were always secondary (Focus Group, lines 530-541).

Participants B and C believe that after communism ended people, especially those from rural areas, were unaware of the complexities of the rest of the world (Interview B, lines 162-163; Interview C, lines 13, 59-72). Similarly, the focus group participants believe that this new exposure to the outside, Western world has created a gap in mentalities and lifestyles between generations that often causes friction (Focus Group, lines 628-635, 811-820). Participant E recalls that when democracy came to Albania people were able to be free but were confused because there were no rules and many felt they could do whatever they wanted (Interview E, lines 124-126).

Participants A, C, and D feel that the older generation, who lived through communism has a very hard time changing their mentalities, including views on women, dating/marriage, and seeing VOTs as victims (Interview A, lines 87-90; Interview C, lines 96-97, 125-132, 157-158, 171; Interview D, lines 213-228). One of the reasons, according to participant A is the during communism people were, on the surface, viewed as equal (Interview A, lines 83-84, 86-87). Participant C explained that equality was truly a way to not be different because during communism being different could cause you and/or your family members to be jailed (Interview C, line 170). Opinions expressed in the focus group were that during communism it was important to appear to be the same as everyone because otherwise you would be judged (Focus Group, lines 544-561). This desire for sameness stemmed from constantly being watched and having an account of your family history being recorded by the APL (*Ibid*, lines 578-580). A negative assessment of one individual would negatively impact the whole, extended family (*Ibid*, line 582).

Participant A believes that part of the stigma against VOTs is connected to a lack of trust in the government (Interview A, lines 70-71). She explains that people do not trust the government because the proper structures are not in place (*Ibid*, lines 75-78). This then causes the people to believe they must care for themselves, which means that counter trafficking becomes a family responsibility; no one, she says has enough faith in the government to ask what its role is in counter trafficking (*Ibid*, line 72).

Both participant C and D expressed hope that the young generation, who has not lived with communism, can move away from these old mentalities (Interview C, lines 102-104; Interview D, lines 230-231).

Lack of Understanding

This theme generated because of the abundance of misunderstanding about the nuances of human trafficking and encompasses general ignorance to the problem of human trafficking to misinformed opinions about human trafficking and VOTs. All participants report a lack of knowledge around the issue of human trafficking in Albania. The most reported misunderstanding is blaming the VOT for being trafficked (Interview A, lines 14, 46-48; Interview B, lines 31, 90; Interview D, line 162; Interview E 23-25; Interview N, line 37; Focus Group, lines 276-280, 359-361). Participants E, D, B and participants in the focus group feel that there is some knowledge of exploitation and force but that people still judge the VOT and think she has chosen to prostitute freely (Interview B, lines 88-89; Interview D, lines 163-167; Interview E, lines 23-25; Focus Group, lines 282-290). Participant C feels that in some cases stigma on VOTs comes from not ever having heard of trafficking (Interview C, lines 97-98). Participant D also feels that in the case of a “boyfriend” tricking or forcing a VOT into prostitution most people feel she chose to prostitute (Interview D, lines 169-170). Participants A, B, E, G, H, and from the focus group report that VOTs are not seen as victims and only as prostitutes (Interview A, lines 9-10; Interview B, lines 52-53, 86, 90-91; Interview E, lines 22-23; Interview G, lines 12, 64; Interview H, line 33; Focus Group, lines 253-258).

Many in Albanian society simply do not understand what human trafficking is according to the participants. Participant A believes people do not understand that human trafficking exists by exploiting the vulnerability of others (Interview A, lines 26-28). Participant C believes that many people do not want to believe that human trafficking is even a real thing so they hold onto their mentalities (Interview C, lines 168-169). Participant B believes more education needs to be given to the younger generation because they are still stigmatizing VOTs (Interview B, line 120) She also believes more education is necessary because people only believe women are affected by human trafficking and do not know it is a very broad issue (Ibid, lines 91-98).

For those who do have a little knowledge about human trafficking and recognize it as a real phenomenon, the participants believe there is still a lack of information. Participant E reports that many do not see it as abuse; participant D says that these girls are seen as “different” and “not normal”; participant B feels that people are not really aware of what has happened to the

VOT (Interview B, lines 87-88; Interview D, lines 143-144; Interview E, line 22). A believes that people understand the recruitment methods traffickers use but fail to understand how their own vulnerability factors into the dynamics of human trafficking (Interview A, lines 29-39). She also believes that people need to understand that human trafficking is a human rights issue, saying only then will people feel called to action (Ibid, line 144).

Both A and D believe that a better understanding of human trafficking will lead to people seeing VOTs as victims and victims asserting their rights (Interview A, lines 102-104; Interview D, lines 172-173).

Shame

Shame can be seen as a major influence in the other themes presented, particularly in the theme of Opinion of Others. The difference between these two is that in the theme of Opinion of Others, shame often motivates behaviors and drives the need for acceptance, where as in the theme of Shame, shame is an independent concept that is both a feeling one can have and an action one does and is pervasive in many parts of Albanian culture. Shame works to dehumanize members of society where they cannot function at normal and appropriate levels within that society. Shame is the yardstick against which one measures his or her value in society, the community and the family. The question of shame, *turp* in Albanian, produced the most varied responses from the participants of my study. Participants A, B and E summed it up quite concisely, though. B told me that Albania has a long history of shaming and that no work is being done to address it (Interview B, lines 119-120). A told me that stigma is expected in Albania culture (Interview A, line 82). Finally, E told me that, in Albania, so many things are seen as shameful because a lot of value is placed on honor (Interview E, lines 135, 137).

Here are some of the things I was told about shame and stigma in Albanian culture:

Divorce is seen as shameful for the woman only (Interview B, line 112). It is shameful to leave a man, even if he beats you (Interview E, lines 158-159). Participant B believes that shame is associated with gender, to avoid shame, businesses refuse to work with VOTs, and conflicts are kept secret within families because of shame (Interview B, lines 68-69, 108, 115). In the rural villages, shame is placed on the family when one of its members does something that is seen as wrong (Interview H, line 86). The people of Albania live with these mentalities to keep things within the home (Interview D, lines 258-260). In the North, shaming the family can lead to the

death of the one who caused it (Interview B, lines 79-80). In Albania, some lifestyles are seen as shameful (Interview B, lines 185-191).

Because of shame, other Albanian women want to be seen as different or apart from VOTs (Interview F, lines 53-54). Because of shame, either from self or from the family or society, VOTs often feel they cannot return home and the reintegration process is hindered (Interview B, line 77; Interview F, line 89). Most of the families of VOTs feel shame (Interview D, line 273). Shame causes families of VOTs to fear meeting with social workers (Interview H, lines 21a-24). Because of shame, families of VOTs do not want others to know about their situation and will have no contact with the VOT (Interview D, line 48; Interview H, lines 24-25). Families of VOTs feel that if their daughter leaves the home it brings stigma to the family, and girls are stigmatized if they are unmarried and no longer living with their parents (Interview E, lines 50-55, 172; Focus Group, line 759). Shame is cast on VOTs because they have been warned about leaving the home and have been exploited into trafficking (Interview C, line 152-154). Prostitution is seen as shameful (Interview B, lines 45-46; Interview G, line 56). Pity for VOTs is not enough to erase the deep stigma people have against them (Interview D, lines 255-277).

Participant C believes that mentality is the biggest motivator for stigma (Interview C, line 167). Participant D believes that having such strong mentalities and stigma causes the shame to be so deep (Interview D, lines 277-278). She also believes that the consequences of these mentalities are negative social problems (Interview D, line 202).

Recommendations

One of my main goals in undertaking this study was to be able to offer recommendations to anti-trafficking NGOs for anti-stigma programs. In the individual interviews and the focus group I explicitly asked what programs participants would create to address stigma. Here I report on what participants offer as their recommendations and during the Discussion portion of my study I make my own programming recommendations and offer my analysis on how effectively the recommendations presented by participants will address the key areas raised in the other themes generated.

To tackle stigma, who better to offer recommendations than the people directly working in the face of this stigma everyday? The most common programs suggested by the participants were campaigns or trainings to be given for families or in communities. B, C, F, and H feel that campaigns and trainings need to be done in the village communities to raise awareness, though H does note that doing campaigns in the villages would be difficult (Interview B, lines 207-210;

Interview C, line 187; Interview F lines 36, 39, 76-77; Interview H, lines 60-61). Participants B and C feel that more programming targeting the affected families is necessary (Interview B, lines 197-199; Interview C, lines 158-160).

Participants A and E suggest changes to the legal system and putting more of an emphasis on the traffickers and solicitors, and A even suggests that all VOTs should receive a small compensation (Interview A, lines 127-129, 130; Interview E, line 62). Participant B feels that anti-stigma campaigns should be directed at the younger generation because the mentalities of the older generation are unlikely to change (Interview B, lines 200-201). Conversely, participant C feels that campaigns should target the older/parent generation in the affected trafficking zones as these are the ones chiefly responsible for accepting or rejecting the VOTs (Interview C, line 190).

A feels there should be a campaign showing examples of girls who have successfully reintegrated; she also would like to see a program targeted towards society and VOTs to create a better understanding of what trafficking truly is (Interview A, lines 98-100, 105-107). Participant E feels that terminology needs to be addressed within the anti-trafficking community to see VOTs as survivors and that this would begin to address stigma (Interview E, lines 83-89). H feels that a program working on changing the mentality of men would begin to dismantle stigma (Interview H, line 52). Participant E feels that women's issues need to be more openly discussed in society and that if women were given the opportunity to be good examples in society mentalities would begin to change (Interview E, lines 176-178). Participant H would like to make a movie showing the lives of two VOTs, one who has been rejected and one who has been accepted by their families. At the end of the movie, she would ask which situation would people choose if it were their daughter (Interview H, lines 115-120).

V. Discussion

Understanding where the stigmatization of VOTs in Albania comes from is an extremely complex task. The concepts of stigma, shame, and the influence of the past seem so intertwined that trying to separate and analyze them individually seems nearly impossible. Because of the interdependent nature of so many of the themes I have uncovered during my field work, I have chosen to group several themes together for analysis.

The themes of Opinion of Others, Quality of Life, Internalization, Family Acceptance, Social Status, Lack of Understanding and Shame will all be analyzed through the lens of Prevailing Mentalities of Collectivist Culture. Because of Albania's long history of living in collectives,

even prior to communism, the collective culture mentality is one of the biggest social forces in Albania. Of particular interest for this study is the notion of shame as a motivator and determinate of behavior.

The theme of Status of Women will be looked at on its own. Though the status of women does tie into many of the other themes, I feel it deserves an independent analysis because of the changing dynamics within Albania that cause the discrimination of women to be perpetuated. I am also choosing to analyze this theme separately because I feel exploring it on its own will provide a greater contribution to understanding the roots of the stigmatization of VOTs in Albania. Additionally, discrimination against women is not necessarily a byproduct of a collective culture and should not be treated as such. Through the lens of feminist theory, I will be assessing why the status of women factors into the stigmatization of victims of trafficking based upon the data I have collected. Finally, in Recommendations I look at the recommendations given by workers in the field of anti-trafficking for addressing stigma and compare it to the roots of stigma they have presented during their interviews and the two points of analysis I raise in this analysis.

Prevailing Mentalities of Collectivist Culture

Distant history in Albania reveals a country where cities and villages were structured around clans. Like many collectivist societies, Albanians emphasize the group over the individual. The individual in the collectivist culture routinely sacrifices personal desires for group success. Success in Albania for an individual is tied closely to having a favorable reputation among the collective. This is received by honoring your parents, honoring your spouse (for females), accumulating wealth (for males), producing male children, not being linked to any immoral behaviors, etc. In the case of returning victims of trafficking, the power of the collectivist mentality has been an obstacle to reintegration.

Most noteworthy is the idea of shame in Albanian culture. The pursuit of honor and avoidance of shame are the most influential aspects of the culture. In fact, it would seem that shame trumps everything as it appears to flow more freely than honor. Shame is present at every level within society. It dictates people's mentalities, actions, reactions, and quality of life. In many societies, religion is the measuring stick morality is held against. With the absence of any real devotion to or divisions amongst religious groups, the judgements of the collective have replaced this

functionality of religion⁵. Shame is the only theme that is connected to every other theme raised during the data collection, with the exception of the theme Recommendations.

There is a certain shame attached to the theme of *Legacy of the Past*. For some, speaking about the time of communism is uncomfortable at the least and taboo at the most. An undercurrent of shame is also connected to the time of Turkish occupation. Albanians are extremely proud of their national identity, but rarely has Albania actually been under the singular control of Albanians. Beginning in the 4th century, it was controlled first by the Byzantine Empire, then the Bulgarian Empire, then the Serbian Empire, then in the 14th century to the Ottoman Empire, a rule which lasted until 1912. After this period, there were also brief occupations by both the Germans and Italians during World War II. This history is important to Albanian national identity because it simultaneously creates an air of fierce nationalism and shame with their inability to freely govern themselves for so long. As Participant C stated in her interview, “we suffer from the complexity of inferiority” (lines 9-10). This underlying shame connected to the past is always driving people feel they have something to prove. In the case of VOTs, people have been trying to protect their reputation for so long, as family reputation is just about the only thing they have been able to control for centuries. Families feel like being involved or associated with human trafficking in anyway, because of the implications being involved in prostitution has, will tarnish their reputation and bring shame upon them. The preservation of pride and honor in the public opinion become more important than the restoration and reintegration of their daughters.

The theme of *Lack of Understanding* is most closely related to past legacies because the period of communist isolation caused very little awareness within Albania to the modern problems plaguing the rest of the world. However, this theme is also tied to collective shame because the collective mentality is so strong in Albania that very few of the older generation are willing to learn about these phenomena because of the shame associated with them, especially in the case of sex trafficking. There have been widespread public campaigns addressing the topic of human trafficking within Albania, attempting to educate the people about it. Despite these, people remain ignorant about the true nature of trafficking. Even if they understand that human trafficking involves these girls being forced or tricked by an exploiter, they fail to absolve her of any activities she is involved in after she leaves. In this case, it seems that there is a separation from empathy in the interest of self preservation.

⁵ As is echoed in the popular saying: “Feja e Shqiptarit është Shqiptaria!”
(The faith of Albanians is Albanism)

Collective shame is very closely connected to the themes of *Opinions of Others*, *Family Acceptance*, *Quality of Life*, and, *Internalization*. External shame is shame that is pressed upon one person from another to influence actions and behaviors. Internal shame is shame felt by the individual which guides actions and behaviors. In the themes of *Opinions of Others and Family Acceptance*, it is clear that the shame generated by the opinions of others is external shame. The opinion of the community or extended family is so important that it literally supersedes any desire the family might have to reunite with their daughter, in most cases. Likewise, family acceptance is often dictated by external shame. Families are so worried that their reputation will be harmed in this situation they reject their daughters. In collectivist societies, acceptance by the group is so important because it is a major part of a person's social identity. In collectivist cultures, Gouveia, de Albuquerque, Clemente, and Espinosa explain that "among the set of social human values, *belonging* and *tradition* were the most important to explain social identities" (2002, p. 333). Therefore, rejection by the collective causes a crisis of identity for the immediate families of VOTs, which is why in some cases the family chooses to leave their city and opt for anonymity.

The themes *Internalization* and *Quality of Life* are both examples of internal shame. Because VOTs have done something that they know is viewed as morally wrong, they often internalize the feelings of shame and rejection projected upon them by others. The anticipation of this shaming is also frequently so great, many do not even attempt to reunite with their families. Again, because acceptance by the in-group is so desired in collectivist cultures, VOTs deeply internalize all of the shame cast on them, even when they know what they have done was not their choice. Likewise, their quality of life is hampered by the shame they experience. The theme *Quality of Life* is also an example of external shame because the shaming they receive from others inhibits their chances for successful reintegration.

Collective shame is intertwined with the theme of *Social Status* by the projection of shame onto VOTs particularly because they come from certain strata within society. In Albania, the out-group are people from the North and the in-group is everyone else. This discrimination dates back to a history of friction between Albania's two main ethnic groups, the Ghegs and the Tosks. The Ghegs are from the North and are viewed by the rest of the country as being backwards, untrustworthy, and barbaric. Most of Albanian VOTs come directly from the north or are from a family that has emigrated from the North. This stigma is attached to these girls before they even become VOTs. To avoid being attached to a person such as this, many in the in-group avoid providing services to these girls. People can identify where someone comes from simply by knowing their name and will assess what an association with them could do to their reputation.

In an individualist culture, this would hardly be the case, where people are generally only known for themselves. In collectivist cultures, like Albania these assessments happen everyday.

Status of Women

The legacy of the past has certainly molded the way women are viewed in modern Albanian society. The low status of women contributes to the stigmatization of VOTs. One of the most fascinating points, to me, that was raised in the interviews is this notion that females have no decision making power except for when they are VOTs. Suddenly these girls and women, who are typically viewed as unfit to make decisions for their lives have made a decision to prostitute, even if it is widely known that she was tricked into leaving the family and forced by the trafficker.

Mentalities of the past are alive in Albania, but with growing exposure to more progressive cultures these mentalities are threatened. One of the best ways to reinforce their dominant position in society is for men to continue to subjugate women. Proponents of feminist theory argue that gender discrimination takes “many different forms, depending on the economic structure and social organization of a particular society and on the culture of any particular group within that society. Although we speak of gender inequality, it is usually women who are disadvantaged relative to similarly situated men” (Lorber, 2010, pp. 4-5). In the case of Albania, this is certainly the case. Women are routinely discriminated against in every aspect of society, both in the public and private sectors. In the case of the VOT, it is amplified since they face a sort of double discrimination, first as women and second as women involved in prostitution.

As a woman, the best way you can bring honor to your family is to yield a good marriage match. Without this, you have little use value, besides producing sons. This extreme devaluing of women reinforces power dynamics that keep women intimidated and subordinate to men. Since VOTs have an even lower status than the average woman in Albania, they have even less power over their lives. Suddenly women, who once had very little decision making power, now control an aspect of someone else’s life. Women are key to the reintegration of VOTs simply because it is often women who run the salons, teach the vocational courses, etc. and it is these women who in turn, use their newly elevated social status to suppress VOTs.

Recommendations

The recommendations made by workers in the field are for the most part awareness raising campaigns. This type of program has been in effect for the past ten years as anti-trafficking organizations, both local and international governmental organizations like IOM and the USAID

initiative CAAHT, have tried to assist the reintegration of VOTs through awareness raising. These programs have also served as a method of prevention. While they may have been effective at spreading awareness of human trafficking, they clearly have not made much progress in reducing stigma. They have also not been effective at painting a clear picture of what human trafficking is and the difference between a VOT and prostitute.

I believe there are some very good suggestions for programming that would address the causes of stigma. Because the opinion of the community and extended family is a critical part of a family's perceived ability to accept their daughter back, the idea of doing workshops in the villages with the older community members sounds like it would be difficult but could be quite effective. I also think that working with the youth, both in rural and urban areas, will be a key to having a sustained, widespread change in mentalities. I also believe that incorporating positive examples of reintegrated VOTs would be extremely beneficial because it would show how it is possible to overcome reigning mentalities. My experience in Albania showed me that the younger generation is definitely more progressive than their parents but that, as one participant said, they hold these deep rooted beliefs within them. More exposure to more progressive ideas could help change their mentalities, especially if they have the opportunity to speak openly about it with their peers, as we know that the opinions of peers is extremely important in Albanian culture.

I was really impressed with H's proposal of doing a movie depicting a VOT who is accepted and rejected by her family and the community. I think that most people are so hardened in their mentalities that they do not consider what happens to their daughter. It is too hard for them to imagine this. A movie like this could be very effective at making people confront the reality of rejecting these girls. My recommendation for this would be to have well respected public figure--actors, musicians, intellectuals, join with students in the University of Tirana to complete a project like this. They could even use well known Albanians from other countries to do this, if no local personalities were willing.

As for addressing the issues of collective shame and the status of women, I feel that more program development in these areas is still needed. Participant H stated in her interview that women need to first believe in themselves before anything will change (lines 70-72). I feel this statement is the most accurate I heard in any of the interviews. In that same interview, H also stated that many times it is the father who is more accepting of the daughter than the mother, and I cannot help but wonder if this is caused by the mother's subordinate status in Albania. It is possible that most women fear shaming their husband if they accept their daughter back without

his approval first. I also wonder if these mothers suffer any repercussions when the daughter leaves, since in many areas it brings shame to the family to have an unmarried daughter leave the home. Perhaps there is some bitterness if there were repercussions? But, this is only supposition. I strongly recommend further research in this area.

As H said, the VOTs must first accept themselves and reject the shaming of VOTs before real change will occur. When you look at almost any social movement in history, it is the unity of and the demand for change from the group that is discriminated against that initiates change. Of course, the participation and support of men would be pivotal to ending the stigmatization of VOTs, but I do not believe it will happen until VOTs and women demand change. There are plenty of men within Albania who sympathize with the plight of the VOTs, but they are comfortable in their position of privilege and will not be incited to act until a movement presents itself, as is often the case in social movements of this nature. My recommendation would be to develop a campaign showing VOTs who are proud of their ability to survive the trafficking experience and be successful in their reintegration. Partnering with other notable women from the country, this campaign could reach and empower many women to change the situation in Albania not only for VOTs but also for women in general.

Shame seems to be the most pervasive obstacle to the reintegration of VOTs. The organizations working directly with VOTs and those advocating for their successful reintegration into Albanian society need to devise of program that confronts this mentality of shame head-on. All the stories that I have heard, seem to show that once the social stigma is removed, the VOT is significantly more successful at reintegrating. It does not seem to make a difference if the removal of shame comes from the family or the community, it just matters that it is removed. I was told a story about a girl who returned to her family in a small village. All the conditions for shaming and stigmatization were present, but the family did not care. They were so happy the have their daughter home and were proud of her survival that the community followed suit. Her trafficking did not even affect her ability to marry a desirable match. Instead of rejecting their daughter, the family rejected shame, and everyone else in their lives followed suit. This story is powerful to me because it illustrates that if families and communities can be taught that it is not necessary to shame a VOT; that no reputation is harmed, the stigmatization of VOTs would decrease. My personal recommendation would be to develop programs targeting villages and families where the main topic is shame and deconstructing what is shameful and challenging *why* it is shameful.

Concluding Remarks

The communist period of Albania's history has influenced the pervasiveness of collective shame. As previously discussed in the article by Nixon (2009), the conditions under communism created severe paranoia, fostering an environment where people constantly feared that something they had done would be used against them. This history of constantly needing to meet the standards of others fuels the current situation with VOTs. The honor culture created by the Kanun only intensified with the added component of communist era paranoia because people had to be good. They never knew who was working for Hoxha's government or who might be watching them. This desire to remain pure in the public eye has carried on long past Hoxha's rule. So truly, a lot of stigma comes from the desire to protect one's own reputation and could have very little to do with the VOT herself.

The social and economic conditions in Albania provide fertile ground for traffickers. Low levels of education, poverty, disparities in mentality between generations, and the low status of women leave many young girls vulnerable. The culture of shame cultivated during the period of communism causes many families to reject their daughters, rather than work towards reintegration. Likewise, this culture of shame also drives the community, both the immediate community and the community of reintegration to reject the VOT both through shaming and through the perception of a damaged reputation by association. Coupled with the already lowered status of women, which serves to keep men in their traditional role of privilege and power, VOTs face extreme obstacles while trying to reintegrate back into society. It is my belief that the culture of shame needs to be addressed first hand through campaigns and programs working directly with the target population of stigmatizers. This programming should aim to question the need for shaming and help the target groups understand why they shame and have a perceived risk of shame. The goal is for these groups to realize that stigmatizing VOTs is both unnecessary and wrong. A second program I would recommend is aimed at decreasing shame and stigma among VOTs, while simultaneously increasing the exposure of the society to VOTs, who have made successful reintegration.

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VI. Addendum

Interview Guide for Individual Interviews and Focus Group

Q1: Tell me about your experience working with VOTs? When, how, why did you get started?

Q2: What has been your experience in the reintegration process with VOTs?

Q3: In your experience, how severe is the stigma against VOTs in Albania?

Q4: What types of stigmatization against VOTs have you witnessed in your work?

Q5: How does stigma affect the reintegration process?

Q6: Why do you think VOTs, given their status as victims, are stigmatized in Albania?

Q7: What are the traditional cultural beliefs towards women in Albania; in what way do they influence stigma against VOTs?

Q8: In what ways do you think 50 years of isolation & communism in Albania has influenced the stigmatization of VOTs?

Q9: What facets of Albanian culture, that are deeply rooted to Albania, hinder reintegration efforts for VOTs in Albania?

Q10: Given these things, what type of program would you advise to decrease the stigmatization of VOTs in Albania?

Q11: In what ways would this program differ to suit the regional/cultural needs of each area (north, Tirana, central, south) it was presented in?

Q12: What approach (program delivery method) would you advise is the most culturally appropriate to make an impact in reducing stigma against VOTs in Albania?

Q13: (time allowing) Given the acknowledgement of stigma against VOTs in Albania, why do you think there have not been any open discussions or previous writings about this issue in Albania?

Interview with A

1. Me: My first question is in your experience and your opinion how bad do you think stigma
2. against victims of trafficking is in Albania today?

3. A: How bad? Oh, it is bad in terms of, uh, you know identification, that, you know it's
4. something
5. very difficult to overpass when you do identification. uh because you, you're not able to
6. identify properly those people. its also bad regarding the integration because its really
7. something that uh has to do with the whole, the whole you know that whole attitude towards,
8. you know. but I also believe its part of discrimination against women. and its uh, it also about
9. associating trafficking with the prostitution, the immediate association that comes into
10. somebody's mind when they hear about trafficking, they immediately think about prostitution.
11. Although it's not true that it is necessarily so.

12. Me: mmm-hmm.

13. A: And, uh, there are other you know other thoughts that build this stigma. Regarding the
14. trafficking. oh you know, people blame the victims of trafficking, that it's their fault. Victims
15. themselves think that it's their fault. Oh, and that's bad too this kind of internalization of the
16. feeling of shame that the victims have. This is uh, this is worse than having somebody
17. disapproving of someone, of someone judging, of someone being judged. The thing is that the
18. victims themselves also judge themselves and think that they are guilty about what happened
19. to them. You know, that's a bad thing.

20. Me: Yea. You mentioned this idea of connecting trafficking with prostitution and always
21. seeing it as this thing. Do you think if there could be a distinction made between trafficking
22. and being a victim and a survivor of something and willing prostitution, if these things could
23. be separated, do you think stigma would decrease, and if so, how, how do we make this
24. connection in people's minds?

25.A: I think one part that is not really understood is that, uh, while you have in the definition of
26.trafficking that there is a recruiting; it is transporting and da-da-da, and that through means
27.such as force. The only thing that is not well understood is vulnerability that is involved
28.exploiting the others, using the others vulnerability. This is the thing that is not really
29.understood and people think that--people are still confused about this and they think that
30.either by force, you know, and giving or receiving money, you know is the matter of the
31.recruitment--the methods used...

32.Me: yea.

33. A: While the vulnerability is, uh, is something that is not understood. And as a matter of fact
34.there is such a vulnerability here and that it is really difficult to distinguish uh that if there
35.were good conditions and such and it would be people's choice, but people are vulnerable.
36. Not only they're poor, they have no education; they have no options. So this is the
37.vulnerability.

38. so it's really difficult to say, you know, it might be in other conditions, it might be easy to
39.distinguish, but in these conditions it's really something that's difficult to.

40.Me: Yea. You also mentioned a little bit about the position of women in society.

41.A: uh-huh.

42.Me: How do you think these traditional mentalities towards women contribute to stigma
43.against victims of trafficking?

44. A: Oh, you know the women, it's ambiguity regarding women taking decisions. in one part
45.women can not take initiatives and do things. You know, they are seen like weak people that
46. can not take initiatives. In the case of victims of trafficking all of a sudden people think that

47. have they're really able to take decisions and you know to i believe it's all to do with victims
48. in general. not only victims of trafficking but also victims of domestic violence. They are
49. blamed for the situation they are in so that's controversial. It's something that is really
50. difficult, but definitely this has to do with the, uh, discrimination of women. When we see
51. statistics and we compare statistics of our victims of trafficking with victims, other population
52. of victims of domestic violence, we see a lot of violence involved. Of course in the victims of
53. trafficking there's a lot much higher than in other population groups.

54. Me: Yea. How influential do you think the mentality of community and family relations is in
55. driving stigma against victims of trafficking?

56. A: Well it's so that the families do not accept the victims back. So that the families when
57. trafficking starts when they see that someone is cheating their own daughter. They you know,
58. instead of focusing on the criminal that does this they focus on and blame the girl, blame their
59. own daughter for what's happening or that she's been cheated or believing. After that the
60. family is of course when the trafficking happens and the girl is back they do not accept her in
61. the family. They are ashamed of what has happened. The other cases that we have seen is
62. that they do not reveal the fact, they do not talk openly about the experiences their daughter is
63. having even though they suspect. So that's something that makes them inactive. And they do
64. not act and respond positively to save their daughters but rather than hiding the fact or just
65. avoiding the presence. They do not discuss about it.

66. Me: why do you feel there is this, uh, it's so heavily focused on blaming the victim. Why is
67. this, in any situation where someone does something wrong there's always blaming the
68. victim. Or if something bad happens to someone they are always blamed for it. Where do
69. you think this comes from?

70. A: Well, I, first of all I believe that it has to with the confidence that we have for the state, for
71. the police, the judiciary system in general. In this kind of you know situation, people think

72.that they should take care of themselves because state is not expected to take care of such
73.situation you know so it all goes back to the family responsibility, the individual
74.responsibility and no one want to think about the responsibility of the state to, you know,
75. counter trafficking or to penalize the perpetrators. I believe that it has to do with the trust in
76.general, the concept of you know, and that's why I think that's why it happens in these kinds
77.of transitions, in poor countries and in countries where the structures, these structures are not
78.built properly or they are corrupted.

79. Me: what other parts of, in trying to understand what it is in albanian culture that holds so
80. strongly to this stigma. So I'm wondering what, what you think it is that you about this
81.culture that really drives the stigma against victims of trafficking.

82. A: Well it's expected. It's the role of, although, I don't know I'm a little bit confused about
83.this. Because you know it just 20 years ago that we have different concept about the women
84.and now the concepts have changed. 20 years ago the concept was that women should work
85. and they have the same power as man, and that they should you know be together and that
86.their responsibilities are shared. And the stigma, whatever, there was no such difference--at
87.least in appearance. But then things changed and now, we go back to the old, you know, kind
88.of tradition that women should submit to man and they should, their roles should be again
89.married early and men should do fair work or not work at all and you know these kind things
90.that have grown again. So these kind of things make me confused about why, why such
91.a...things have changed and still there is...but I believe again there is, it's again this kind of
92.disequality between men and women that women are to blame for things that go wrong for
93.not staying home, listening to their parents, and get married when their parents say and get a
94.good man take care of the family, while they don't have anything to eat or give their families.

95.Me: If you could propose a program that would address stigma, to decrease it, what would
96.this program look like?

97.A: Well, I would say some thoughts that I've had. First of all, there should be an
98. understanding, and overall understanding of what trafficking is. Because it looks like not only
99. the public but even people who do have some kind of position and even the victims
100. themselves do not know well what trafficking is. And then we have to deal with a victim of
101. crime and we should treat someone as a victim of crime, first of all. These things need to be
102. changed because if you have someone conscious about what trafficking is you have people
103. blaming the perpetrators, you have victims being more assertive of their rights, this is one
104. thing. The other thing is it's good to have good models of...to be able to tell the others that
105. although these things have happened, people, these people are survivors and they have moved
106. forward to continue and to build their own life back and to give so that they gain respect from
107. the others. So a lot of support should be given to victims of trafficking when they are
108. identified and they are back into communities so that they do not think of themselves as
109. being useless and not able to do anything else except for prostitution because there have
110. been cases of such. That people think the only thing i have done is prostitution and the only
111. chance I have is prostitution. So to give them good examples and this cannot be done
112. through small grants, because it's difficult to do. This is something that needs a long term
113. commitment because it takes time for someone to reintegrate. Financially it takes a lot,
114. especially in places like our country. The other thing is that we should not think of the
115. victims going back to their families, rebuild their lives, uh, and work on the terrain again and
116. do agricultural work and stuff like that. This for me is, honestly, I think this is not fair. It's
117. not something that needs to be done to have these kinds of false hopes. Because while we
118. are thinking the mentality will change and we are working with communities, mentalities
119. doesn't change as fast. It shouldn't be one victim. It shouldn't take one victim's life to
120. change the mentality. So I believe that rather than going back to their families in sometimes,
121. not sometimes, in most cases to the same kind of situation, in terms of poverty and education
122. opportunities and stuff like that, do create conditions for integrating into, I don't know, big
123. cities or such that the people can build their own life without being disturbed by past
124. histories or other people's stigma. So this kind of neutral approach, rather you know doing,
125. giving an example of this is a victim, because in the end it's going to be the victim that

126.suffers for that, even for being a good example to the community. So that's definitely
127.something. And again, it's, it should be, it should go with compensation for the damage that
128.'they have had. No project can give as much as someone needs to, for someone to
129. reintegrate or
130.to integrate, I believe the state should definitely provide for them and be engaged in long
131.terms. The other thing is also give good examples of penalization, giving the good examples
132.on penalization of traffickers because if traffickers are wrong, if you give this impression
133.that, you know, if someone traffics someone, you know, if the others see he's free now, it
134.means that he didn't do a very bad thing. It shouldn't be that bad since the person is free.
135.Besides the risk that the person puts on the victim it's also at risk for the society, it will
136.impede. It's also, you give a kind of you know have damaged what we trying to build
137.through awareness of what trafficking is.

138.Me: My last question is, right now it seems, it is all of the responsibility sort of falls of the
139.girl, the victim, how do we get the responsibility to be put on the trafficker or even in the
140.case of the family, if its the husband, the brother or father, how do we get the responsibility
141.of the conditions of the how girl was trafficked to switch from the girl to the appropriate
142.person?

143.A: I believe it's not a matter of switching who's fault it is and penalizing hte person at fault.
144.The thing is that everybody should understand that this is a crime and that nobody should
145.violate the law and violate the rights of the other one. You know thats, and immediately the
146.fault goes to where it belongs. so it's, and so if people do understand that trafficking is a
147.violation of human rights, it's a crime, and has this and this and this responsibilities, then
148.that's the only way that traffickers, you know if traffickers are put in jail and victims are
149.reintegrated, that's the only way that people will I believe, we will reduce the stigma.
150.Understanding what's, understanding that it's not a matter of how much educated you are or
151.how much, i don't know how much schooling you have or how rich you are and stuff like
152.that, it's something that it's still a crime. In fact, also affects, it will affect individuals, it

153.affects the society, affects the state,

154.whoever but its something that needs to...and not only for trafficking in general. That's the

155.way to do justice.

156. Me: Thank you for meeting with me and participating in my research. I really appreciate it.

157. A: Oh, sure!

Interview with B

1. Me: So my study is looking at what people working in the field of anti-trafficking is causing
2. the stigma behind victims of trafficking in Albania and also what types of programs you
3. would suggest would help reduce the stigma. So my first question is just to talk a little bit
4. about what your experience has been working with victims of trafficking when and how did
5. you get started, why did you get started in this field?

6.

7. B: Mmhhmm. Ok So i have started working this field since 2002 beginning in February. I
8. started firstly working with IOM as a case manager in reintegration center. And um, I started
9. working in this field because its us, I have studied before social work and my education
10. focused on working with vulnerable groups and as victims of trafficking are on of these
11. groups I found my self putted in this area. To compliment with my education and even my
12. previous work and experience was with woman like this. So it was good. Still i knew it
13. would be more challenging than others but not at all how much it is. So I decided to work in
14. this field and since then I have worked i three years as case manager and since 2004 as
15. Director of Different and Equal so...

16.

17. Me: Me in your experience how severe is the stigma against victims of trafficking in
18. Albania?

19.

20. B: I did not understand the full question?

21.

22. Me: How severe is stigma against victims of trafficking in Albania?

23.

24. B: Severe? What is severe?

25.

26. Me: How bad is it?

27.

28. B: Ah ha, ok. If, yea, if people knows for somebody is a victims of trafficking we see that

29. there are different behaviors towards this person and we see this discrimination very often
30. sometimes offenses towards this person so according to our work and experience we have
31. seen that it is harming them. Stigma and uh victim blaming it is an issue that should be taken
32. because victims are suffering from this and this if one of the challenges they are facing in the
33. reintegration. We have seen that they are stigmatized by their parents, families, the
34. community and what is bad even the professionals. But they should not do it. So we see that
35. it is bad because if stigma does not exist towards them many of them can live near their
36. families, many of them can be employed more easily. Or have their lives better. So this is
37. the reason that they try to keep it confidential the fact that they are victims of trafficking. So
38. we see from our experience that it is an issue to be...it is a problem.

39.

40. Me: And in what ways are victims of trafficking stigmatized? What have you seen in
41. working with these girls?

42.

43. B: Yea as I have already explained some of these are that they are rejected by family and the
44. thing is because they are blaming them and stigmatizing them and seeing them as a
45. prostitute as someone who has done a bad thing. And a shame, shame especially because it is
46. associated so much with shame. So one of the things is this. The other area as I have told I
47. find difficult is in employment. Sometimes even if they have rented an apartment and the
48. owner can hear that she has been a victim of trafficking they can do bad things towards her.
49. So it is affected, affecting their lives in different aspects. And we practical...when we started
50. our work we were trying to cooperate with business in the institutional way but then we saw
51. that this is not effective because they are not trying to accept this target group. They would
52. have the association with prostitution and they don't see them differently; don't see like
53. somebody that is a victim of crime, see just like and this affected them very much.

54.

55. Me: And how does stigma affect the ability of the girls to fully reintegrate back into society?
56.

57. B: Mmm you know one of the aspects that we have see, one of the compliments we have

58. seen that is important for empowerment and reintegration is even the fact that how much they
59. feel that they are accepted by society. So we do ask often if they do feel prejudices and
60. things like this. We see the effects, um, it is, it can be addressed. I can, you know, it's
61. important for example, that in empowerment that they should create, you know, socially and
62. should be employed and all these kind of things but it affects. I cannot see that it damage
63. totally reintegration because we have tried to find alternatives. If, uh, for example one of the
64. girls opened once a hair dressing shop in a city, that it was a small city, and everybody knew
65. it that she has been trafficking in western Europe, and when she opened this hairdressing
66. shop the family was supporting her they were very good, it is one of the rare examples of
67. when the family supports so much, but she saw that nobody was going to make appoint for
68. hair to her shop so she felt that she failed for making this business. And the people looks like
69. they were ashamed to go to one, as they call it, a prostitute to cut the hair or to do all these
70. kinds of activities. She tried to buy, you know, shampoos and all these things like this and to
71. make it like a beauty shop if people to not come to get their hair at least they will come to
72. buy it. But still she saw that it was so hard and she was going very well even with those
73. they the most, what is the most challenging is to empower by herself and she felt good. But
74. in that time we saw that she was falling in regress. She was like in most of depression
75. because she was shocked with all the attitude that the community had towards her. So we
76. saw that it affects, it can be addressed then differently as we tried with her or other cases to
77. do something else somewhere else but still they feel sometimes that they cannot turn back
78. anymore part of their life, you know so...It is an issue. And sometimes, for some cases
79. especially in some, in North, in some deep areas, they even can kill them you know because
80. the shame she brought to family. So it's harder.

81.

82. Me: Why do you think that victims of trafficking are not seen as victims of a crime in
83. Albania?

84.

85. B: I think and this is the reason that I have thought to work in a different direction that this
86. because I think that most of the people do association with prostitution. That they are seen

87. mostly as prostitute not as victims. Oh...many people are not so much aware really for what
88. has happened. Ok, they can know that somebody has exploited them but why, they judge
89. them badly. Why she left the home, and why she went with him and why, why why? So it
90. looks like they put all the blame to the person. but the most affecting them is this association
91. with prostitution as far as I see. So this is the reason that we see it is very important to
92. identify even victims that have been exploited even for other reasons, like labor, or forced
93. marriage or criminals and other kind of exploitation in order to see people to understand it
94. this issue broadly. Slavery is not like this, they just protect like this because you know. So
95. even the information should be transmitted more broad these people. The other issue is that
96. even the men can be trafficking and they should know this that this is not only a female
97. issue. Because people here are mostly stigmatized females by males you know and so even
98. this disparities in general.

99.

100.Me: Yea:

101.

102.B: Are affecting so... So it looks like there are some different factors but it is connected even
103. with education and human rights but people believe more in the case of this aspect.

104.

105.Me: Yea, how do the traditional cultural beliefs towards women influence the stigma against
106.victims of trafficking?

107.

108.B: Um, I think it influence, it influence because we have this culture of shame as you
109. mentioned by many years. Always it has been in Albania this issue that, uh, you know bad
110.things, we'll call bad things, to be kept inside the family. Inside yourself not to be, you
111.should be just good to others, you know, without new problems. So even um years ago even
112.to be divorced it was a shame. The females were stigmatized because they were divorced.
113. So it looks that it has been uh, always like this that the things should be kept and not to be
114.told, and that all the society should know only the good things not the bad things. You could
115.not talk to others if you had conflicts inside the family only that you have a problem because

116. they were ashamed. It was “eee this person...”...even children you know “eee” like this.

117. Even you know sometimes now it’s better the situation for example with disabled people.

118. They have been stigmatized so much huh, they see especially those that have a lot of

119. problems “eee...” it is foolish like this. It has been even as a history you know, it has been

120. worked not so much. And so even since youngers are not educated even so much that they

121. laugh is like this. Today I can be fallen or you can fall so we should not stigmatize or even

122. attack more somebody that it having a problem. But it is this kind of history and culture that

123. is created, and I think there is done some progress but not as to see the impact, good impact.

124.

125. Me: And, um, the views of women in society, how women are perceived in society

126. culturally, and throughout tradition. How does this, how do you think this influences, does it

127. have an influence against victims of trafficking?

128.

129. B: Yea, because it is ok, women are, have always been you know to be in that, the leader of

130. the family is a man. Usually even the leaders in society has been man. Woman focus more

131. to family and making housework and raising children and things like this. But the other is

132. that is has been seen as a women problem. Because only women work as prostitutes and

133. only this has done mistakes, etc. Um, the other is that many of the men uh do not join so

134. much in this issue you know, so it looks that more woman has done for woman to improve

135. the situation but not involving so much men. So there are some progresses lately even some

136. laws are approved in order to improve the issue and to take many measure and there are

137. some important steps that i think we see some small progress but that can influence more

138. later on. There are law for gender equality, law for fighting violence within family and for

139. anti-discrimination. And I think all these, especially the officials that work in state

140. institutions, there is a law that make them more obliged to do it, as a duty not as a because i

141. think every human being should do by themselves, this my work but if I see something wrong

142. somewhere else I cannot stay without saying, um, you know raising my voice at least. It

143. cannot influence with you but at least i did something. But we see that many people

144. especially those officials that work in state they see that if it’s a law and something that they

145. chiefs are ordering they can do it otherwise...so that's in general. So I see that this gender
146. inequality it influence for sure. It has influences even for the oldest females that have been,
147. fallen victims of trafficking because they were treated badly within in their families they did
148. not feel that finding themselves and they did not feel their values and things like this but they
149. have even been violated so much and they could not handle this ability to decide for
150. themselves and their lives so always has influence it. So it is a problem and many people
151. even in nowadays when child is born if it a girl they say why is it not a boy? So....
152.

153. Me: Um, in what way do you think the period and communism and being isolated for so
154. long has influenced or plays a role in the stigmatization of victims of trafficking?
155.

156. B: Oh um uh I think it's not just the period of communism because Albania has been under
157. Turkish regime for 500 yrs. And I see that there are so many influences from this orient part
158. even in the nowadays in Albanian society. I see many traditions that are typically from this
159. part that are...because 500 yrs it becomes like they are yours. And I see that *mostly* has
160. influenced that part. The communism has been influence because we were isolated and we
161. were believing in all people and one ideology that was transmitted by those that were
162. guiding the country so we...the people were not well informed and you know like
163. somebody that is isolated and not well informed and then when the democracy came, people
164. had many aspirations. And they thought that in any manner and any kind they can, their life
165. can be better abroad. So for sure many young girls were lied and they follow these things.
166. But this kinds of stigma and prejudiced I think are, are as effect of that part most on
167. Communism part. Even, even you know in family the leader was the man and even the
168. surname of the family was by man, still apparently the party was trying to tell that woman
169. were going equal with the man and trying to apparently to see that both are human beings
170. you know and not to make differences. But I think it has influence in most Turkey part
171. origins because they are so strong to us these kind of differences between men and women
172. and what roles has one and the other and how women should behave and all these things,
173. so....I think what has damaged most our society most is that part of the life of the country.

174.

175.Me: Do you think there are any other parts of Albanian culture that, um, that influence the
176.stigma?

177.B: In what, just explain?

178.

179.Me: Yea, I don't know any other, because I'm not Albanian so I don't know all the little parts
180.of the culture here so is there, is there something else that you can see in the culture that
181.encourages or reinforces the stigma or do you think it's mostly just tied to the um beliefs
182.towards women and the culture of shame and the Turkish influence? Or do you think there
183.is something else in there that might really reinforce it?

184.

185.B: Mmmm. Mmmhmm. Um, you know there are some behaviors that are not accepted. So
186.even that are not accepted by the society so that even prostitution is not accepted I think by
187.the society and I think if they can be to vote to have legalized or not I think most of the
188.people can vote to not legalize. And I don't think that they think so deeply why not them.
189. That it's a shame. It's mostly it's a shame. So mostly these are you know that some
190.behaviors are not accepted and some style of life are not yet accepted you know by people.
191. So these, I don't know other factors are affecting but is in general.

192.

193.Me: So given all these things, what type of program if you could create an anti-stigma
194.program, what type of program would you recommend that would decrease stigma?

195.

196.B: Um, you know what I think? That it's important programs. (laughs) It you know one
197.initiative can influence but i don't know if it can be enough you know the to development of
198.the families you know for in some other aspects through work directly with families i think
199.is important because we see that stigma is coming first by the families. So in educational
200.aspects you know is mostly an educational program its firstly that can support to educate
201.families for this issue but also for sure what is our hope now is that the young generation can
202.be changed because those that are old it is difficult to change, to change their attitude they

203.can maybe understand better. Because we have seen that if we work with the families of the
204.victims in order to accept them during mediation with them we see that when, that when
205.they talk with us and we explain them they feel like they understand better the program and
206.then they understand better. They are more clear what has happened that this is not to be
207.fault the girls and things like this. So I think it is important to work with the families. I don't
208.know how, how to work with because every family needs every mostly. So maybe through
209.this commune stuff or responsibility stuff with witness stuff at local level to collaborate with
210.them in order to do some meetings. Even together with the village or the city or I don't
211.know but even individually somehow. Campaigns are very important and even then to ok
212. make it to the professionals of lives, ok to educate them. But sometimes they are educated
213.but they think like to pass it so I think the professionals should be somehow as the law
214.should be respected, the rule of law, even so we have an anti-discrimination law. So they
215.should respect this law. Otherwise, there are measures to be taken, you know, so....
216.

217.Me: And then my last question is, so, people working in the field or even loosely tied to
218. working in the field, everyone seems to acknowledge that there is stigma against victims of
219.trafficking but it seems like, if like, when I'm doing research for this and I type it in there's
220.nothing written about it yet, and it seems like there's no discussion about it yet. It just sort
221.of seems like its something everyone knows exists and so, um, why do you think this is, that
222.like nobody has started talking about it yet.
223.

224.B: Um, no some, the fact that we have last year this law shows that there is a talk especially
225.because event he law came mostly from civil society. They recommended and prepared the
226.draft and sent it to Parliament. So it is a concern and there is discuss. But for what has been
227.discussed more and mostly and why they law came mostly it was from the homosexual
228.people and transgender and from this kind of category because uh and you know what
229.happened in Albania that sometimes priority to a law even to some laws that EU has put as
230.obligations for that country. So because there are many other issues and laws that civil
231.society has lobbied but not yet has passed but this was passed and I think that Albania and

232. governmenting though seriously was putted as an obligation especially for this category.

233. But this is a law that has a broad aspect. Not only this category but even discrimination of

234. woman, any kind of in job relationships, any kind of discrimination. So it is talked and after

235. the law came, was approved it has been started the preparations for training with

236. professionals on this law you know. There are not written books, I don't know in Albania

237. typically only for this issue, but within some there are articles or TV programs or within

238. group can be a part like this, but not for publication only for this issue to go in deep, no. So

239. it has started I think but needs to be done more I think and needs to addressed more openly.

240. Yea.

241.

242. Me: Well thank you for your time.

243.

244. B: Ok.

Interview with C

1. Me: First I would like to know in your experience, and your opinion how bad you think

2. stigma

3. is in Albania against victims of trafficking?

4.

5. C: Ok you know that we have 10 years of direct experience working with victims of

6. trafficking and um stigma was a big problem especially for the victims of trafficking. The

7. families in the first environment, that, in most of the cases blamed their children for what

8. they have done. So they don't treat their daughters as victims of trafficking but they blamed

9. them for what they have done. So the families...but to start, we in Albania, I think, we suffer

10. from the complexity of inferiority. (laughs) I think, it's my, I think it because, we come from

11. a dictator system so we have been so closed. So we have lived in collecting, in group. We

12. have been in extended family so we have lived in this manner before. So, now, we see

13. different phenomenon and trafficking is one of these. So i think the family because most of

14. the cases come from villages, from places that are very poor and that really have low

15. economic status, so they judge their daughters. And that, I, think the families are pushed from

16. community. The community is another, is not accept this phenomenon, the girls who are

17. trafficked or victims of trafficking. So the family are pushed more from the neighbors, the

18. neighborhood so they judge their daughters. We see that they don't accept their children and

19. that they don't want to turn back in their family. And this is why we try to reintegrate our

20. beneficiaries here in Tirana or because Tirana is different from other cities. Is different and

21. we try to reintegrate the beneficiaries here in Tirana.

22.

23. Me: So what other types of stigma have you noticed against victims of trafficking in your

24. work?

25.

26. C: Ok, besides the family and community problems we see difficulties in other

27. environments, so uh I mean in professional centers where the beneficiaries have to attend the

28. courses, the vocational trainings. So, uh, they are, most of them are judged by the teacher or

29. director of the professional center or in job placement. We try when we accompany girls to
30. find a job we don't say to them "she is a victim of trafficking" so in order not to be judged
31. and to have any doubt...so in the work place the employer didn't know about the girl. They
32. know only that she comes from a family...she has a family here in Tirana or she lives on her
33. aunt, things like that because it is the environment she will be judged for sure. So, also in a
34. health clinic, we have contracted a private clinic in order not to, not to be in long shifts but to
35. finish the visit more fast, not to be in a around, not to be with other people and to be, to make
36. the visit. So we try to reduce some...

37.

38. Me: And how does stigma affect the girls as they try to reintegrate?

39.

40. C: They feel it when they are judged by their families. Not only parents but also sisters,
41. brothers, they don't accept them and what they have done. They feel, they are not good
42. about this. So when they visit families in their city, they are judged by community and when
43. they turn back in shelter they are not so in good sense of humor. Are not so good. They
44. don't feel good. Yes, they are, most of them decide to be reintegrated here in Tirana. And
45. for in job placements, we can do a counseling with them in order not to tell in job
46. environment, not to tell their stories and the story of trafficking and the story of abuses. So
47. but they are people, they are as we are so we try to increase their self esteem and self
48. confidence. This is what has happened to them in the past so now we are to be working for
49. the future.

50.

51. Me: My understanding is that most people don't make connections between, um, trafficking
52. and forced prostitution. They understand that maybe the girl was tricked and that maybe she
53. didn't go with her, maybe she, they understand the taking part, but they don't understand that
54. the prostitution wasn't voluntary. So they don't connect it with seeing them as a victim or a
55. survivor of something. So I'm wondering if you think this connection could be made where
56. they see the prostitution as something they're a victim of, do you think this could affect
57. stigma in the country or and how, how do we make this connection in people's minds?

58.

59. C: This phenomenon has happened since in 1991 or 2 or 3, the first year or so of democracy
60. so the people saw that the girls were disappeared from their cities or their villages. So I think
61. the people know that the girls have been kidnapped, that the beginning they have been
62. kidnapped from different guys that were traffickers. And they know that most of the girls has
63. been deported with those traffickers in Italy because it was the speedboats time in that time.
64. So it was a big problem. Many people go to Italy with speedboats from the sea from
65. Vlore, from Durrresi, so I think the people know this phenomenon, know that many girls have
66. been trafficked in Italy and uh there they have been exploited for sexual purposes. But as I
67. said before we have been so closed and so we don't have see abroad how was the world out
68. of Albania, so especially the people that live in villages have been more deep in cooperative,
69. in extended families and all together in the house, their grandparent and their brother, their
70. sister, their parents, their children so we have...I don't know, I think the people know before
71. that was the trafficking process happened and the girls have been exploited for sexual
72. purpose. Well today maybe it's, we have to divide the cases of the girls that want to do this.
73. But I don't know, maybe, I don't know. I know only for the victims of trafficking. Those
74. that it is more difficult today because we see it is increased internally, trafficking that has
75. happened internally because of the border cross are forced and our law for the speedboat not
76. allow the speedboat to move in the sea. So the traffickers, um, in order not to finish their job
77. try to find another solution and they try to do, to exploit victims here in Albania. So we have
78. another way of the exploitation but that is internally. And it is difficult because, it is difficult
79. to identify the victims of trafficking that are exploited here internally inside Albania because
80. the hotels and motels are not registered yet and uh the police...Now we have some procedures
81. but the last year has been writed this procedures to identify the victims here in Albania, out of
82. Albania and in the border cross, so...

83.

84. Me: Can you talk a little more about, just, the time of isolation and communism and these
85. family groups and how influential the community is and how you feel this causes or
86. influences stigma a little bit more?

87.

88. C: In this dictator system?

89.

90. Me: Yea or now, like how the lasting impressions of that time, those mentalities have carried
91. on to today, and maybe how those mentalities influence stigma.

92.

93. C: I have been in 1991, I have been maybe 12, 13 years old, so I don't remember so much
94. from the communism because I was a child and it was a beautiful time for me because I was
95. a child, but my parents and other people are they that are living in this system--in democracy
96. system, so they, I think they have yet the mentality, this mentality created in that period. I
97. think now are a little bit open mind, but they have also some judgement and some because in
98. that time we don't have heard about the trafficking or different other, other different
99. phenomenon so. And are those people that are parents of our beneficiaries that have this
100. mentality. Um, or people that live in North for example that is actually is Kanun Leke
101. Dukagjini, I don't know if you have heard about, is a kanun, a law, with strange laws, there.
102. And they live so with this kanun based on this kanun. So I think are maybe in the
103. generations the, the young generations, and maybe our children or the children of our
104. children maybe will be more opened more but now are living yet people that have been lived
105. in this system so the mentality and judgements and stigmas is yet in our environment.

106.

107. Me: Why do you think, why is the opinion of the community so important to the family?

108.

109. C: We are only 3 million people in Albania. So we are small. We know each other very
110. better, better. I know my neighbor, we live with each other yet. Maybe today is another
111. period but we know for each other. We live with each other. We are learned to live in that
112. manner, so we, um, we are affected by the opinion of our neighbors so. Because we know
113. each other, we know each other very. We know what kind of job they do; we know for their
114. children; we know for their parents; we know for their cousins; we know, we know
115. everything for each other in community. Especially in village or in small towns because in

116. Tirana maybe is another, is another thing because is a big city and here have come more
117. people from north or from Sud (south) or are mixed people. But in other cities they know
118. each other very good...(laughs) in details. So we judge the behavior of the neighbor.

119.

120. Me: How do you think the traditional views on women influence stigma and reintegration
efforts?

121.

122. C: Tradition, hmm...(laughs) I think that the people in Tirana, but much more in other
123. cities the parents want that the girls to marry, to be married. And they want to pass through
124. some um links for example to be fianced before then to be married then to have children, so
125. this is a regular line to pass from. So, as I said before our parents and the people in general
126. has lived in that period so there are, they have lived with some rules, with those traditions.
127. But I think now are, is another epoch, another period and the girls are much more opened,
128. open minded and socialized and here is the contradiction between children and parents, so.
129. Tradition is another point yes, that the stigma is there yea, because they are learned to
130. respect some rules. Not only for the marriage but also for other things. Before uh the
131. children were learned to have only one boyfriend and with this boyfriend they have to be
132. married and to have children.

133.

134. Me: So the culture of shame in Albania, where someone else's behaviors bring shame to
135. other people, how do you think this effects stigma?

136.

137. C: The people that are shamed?

138.

139. Me: So there's this culture of shame, where if I do something wrong it affects my family; it
140. affects my community; it affects where I work. So I'm wondering maybe, where does this
141. come from and how influential do you think this culture of shame is in where the stigma
142. comes from?

143.

144. C: (thinks) Ok, you mean when the girls make a mistake?

145.

146.Me: Yea....

147.

148.C: The culture?

149.

150.Me: Yea...

151.

152.C: Because I think that uh the people have to be warned about this phenomenon and that

153.these girls have not make a mistake but they have been exploited. And they have been

154.victims, are victims of trafficking. As I said, the people, know that the girls have been

155. victims but it is too hard to, to accept this situation for us. So I don't know I think that the

156.people need to be warned and cautioned about this in order not to happen. But as I said the

157.people are, the people that have lived in this system so they will judge and they will

158.discriminate this target group yet. We need a lot of work, we have to work with community

159.and the family in order to accept and to uh and so to work and support this target group in

160.order to be reintegrated.

161.

162.Me: So what do you think is the biggest motivator or cause, where do you think deep down

163.stigma is coming from? What is really keeping it close to people's mentalities. Why, what

164.is really holding the stigma, do you think, in the culture? What part of the culture is really

165.holding onto the stigma?

166.

167.C: Mentality. Mentality is one think, and I don't know maybe they, the people think that

168.this is a big problem for us, for our country. So they don't want to accept this as a

169.phenomenon I think, the mentality. And because we have lived with rules, with strict rules

170.for a word that we have said before, we have been in jail so we are grow up with mentality

171.that we don't allow things like this. So the mentality is I think, we have to change the

172.mentality of our people.

173.

174.Me: My last question is if you could make a program and it could be anything that you could

175.imagine it to be that would target people's mentalities and reducing stigma what would you

176.do?

177.

178.C: I don't know. Maybe the stigma is not so in our program. We work very much with our

179.beneficiaries and with their families and the community where the beneficiaries live. We

180.work a lot we do a lot of job with them and their families. But a program specifically for

181.this, I don't know. It is a good idea but I don't know we need to write a project only for the

182.stigma, yea it is a good idea but... Yea, it is a good idea. It is not so I don't know about other

183.organizations if they have applied a project like this. I haven't heard, it is a good idea.

184.

185.Me: If you could make one what would you do?

186.

187.C: Uh, maybe the first that thing is. I don't know, to do trainings in community, in the

188.community about this phenomenon. We have had projects about prevention and we have

189.talked with people, with pupils, with students but maybe its to organize training with older

190.people in the age that they parents, the age that is parents of the beneficiaries. To organize

191.trainings in the community in different communities. Maybe in mostly in those zones that

192.the trafficking is more, has happened much more in north for example. So I don't

193.know...But it is a good idea.

194.

195.Me: Thank you very much for participating in my study.

196.

197.C: You are welcome.

198.

199.Me: I really appreciate it very much.

Interview D

1. Me: First I am wondering about your experience working with victims of trafficking. When

2. and why did you get started?

3.

4. D: Why did I get?

5.

6. Me: Yea..

7.

8. D: Ok first of all I am the, ok my position as a coordinator and leader of the social group.

9. Uh, I've started my work here since 2008. And why? Actually I have a background working

10. with human rights since '98, uh, and uh, actually when I got finished my college even though

11. I had another degree in literature in Albanian language I had inside of me a desire to help. So

12. since then, uh, I have the kind of, I don't know how to say, idea, desire inside of me to work

13. with people that others stigmatize them or look at them in a different eye, like the victims of

14. trafficking or the people that gets hurt. So this was my reason. And when I get started it was

15. one of the purposes in the VATRA center so I got involved here and it's I don't know if this

16. is clear.

17.

18. Me: Yea. In your experience and your opinion how bad is the stigma against victims of

19. trafficking in Albania?

20.

21. D: Uh, ok, as far as I understood your concern is about the stigma against the victims of

22. trafficking in the whole or after they get back to family for reintegration. Because let me

23. explain something. At the time where they get accommodation in the shelter they, um, get,

24. how do you call, the, by their will entering in our programs for rehabilitation and

25. reintegration, uh, which is within two years. After two years they gets back to their lives,

26. usually within their families. Part of them, a small amount of them go to their own life, to

27. live their own life. So I mean, or you, your concern is about this phase when they get back to

28. the family and what they face with or during the whole process?

29.

30. Me: The whole process.

31.

32. D: ok. Uh, the general situation of the victims of trafficking that are being accommodated

33. in our shelter...they've gone through that kind of situation that the police have brought them

34. to us and after we evaluate their situation the factors that made them enter into the

35. trafficking. When we evaluate together with the police that there's risk from their families,

36. because in such cases, I think you know about this, in such cases there will be in their

37. families that do not have a factor to enter in the process of trafficking. Uh, ok, after we

38. evaluate this and we find out that there's no risk from their families and because of in one of

39. our main goals is to give contact of the victims with their families because as far as we know

40. our mentality, Albanian mentality, is that we are very close with our families and let's say

41. because of the big factors of, let's say the life, the life that the Albanians can, or the

42. difficulties that the Albanians can face to get to, to get, or to, yea to get reintegrated into life,

43. it's very difficult. Because there are so many, many barriers. So one of the main supporters is

44. the families. This is how we see it. So after the victim gets accommodation in our shelter and

45. we evaluate no risk from their families we get contact between them. Ok there are situations

46. such as the situations because of their shame, you know, they don't want to get contact with

47. them. Of fears, you know. But in the most of the cases actually this has been in the

48. beginning the families didn't accept that. After they realized what they have done. Even that

49. it wasn't, let's say, by their will, that they were victimized you know or that they were

50. victims of trafficking. So in this process we call that they are victimize...going in the process

51. of victimizing...how do you call that?

52.

53. Me: Yea victimizing.

54.

55. D: Twice. You know from their family or the society. So in the beginning this has been the

56. situation. Most of the families didn't accept the girl, their own daughter. Uh, but during

57. their staying in our shelter and because of our shelter and because of, let's say, our consistent
58. work, together, with the family, by phone, by going and visiting the family, by you know
59. having meetings in here, the situation has become changed little by, actually, little little,
60. because actually changing mentality is very difficult. The family could accept the girl but
61. they could not accept her back at home. So in the beginning most of the cases have been like
62. that, so uh, they have been staying for a long time in our shelter. Just visiting their families
63. but not deciding to go back at the families because around there, in the community. Uh, I
64. don't know if you want cases actually this is, if this helps you. It comes in my mind. One of
65. the cases it happened in 2009, it's not that far, it's very recent. Um, she was victim of
66. trafficking internal. We call internal trafficking being exploited here in Vlore, she was from
67. Vlore. She has been caught by the police and police brought her here in our shelter because
68. she made denouncement for her traffickers who were from Vlore. Ok when her family heard
69. about that they didn't accept that at all. After they were, they were like very hard. The
70. family were very hard. And after many meetings, a lot of meetings, with them actually
71. personally I realized one of the reasons the girl escaped the family, and she got free. How do
72. you call free of the traffickers? The stories was that she got escaped from the family because
73. she did have conflicts. She was and teenager 17 years old and so then she went to her friends
74. house and then she got her friend to her boyfriend's house and that and it went the story. And
75. I realized that this was one of the reasons because the family were very tensions. How do
76. you call? They were very to keep her inside of the box. And they didn't accept that their
77. daughter were one, could be called as a prostitute. So, uh, I remember her mom said that
78. better her to be dead then to accept her in my home. And her concern, big concern were not
79. only the family, the close family but the big family, uh, and the community. Um, they were
80. coming very often here. They were pushing her very hard, uh, to, let's say to make the
81. denouncement. To make it up, how do you say? To break? To not make the suit? Because
82. of the denouncement, her denouncement she could go to the court, she would make the
83. testimony, and then she will become well known as a person like that. So that was you know
84. two sides of the bridge. We were encouraging her you know to not be afraid and to go the
85. end. But there were her family saying stop, don't do that. And, um, let's say, let's cover all

86. this. But they didn't have nothing to say about her back or about her reintegration. They
87. would say that no we are not taking her anymore. So And actually she didn't go back to her
88. home. Because of her case her family, went or moved from Vlore. They went to another
89. city. Not to get in touch not only with her but with her case. And so that the mentality of the
90. community close to her home not want get known about her case. So. It was one of my
91. cases, let's say, come in my mind. There were a lot of cases but I don't know if this helps
92. you.

93.

94. Me: Yea. What other types of discrimination have you witnessed in your work against
95. victims of trafficking...against them as they try to find jobs or services.

96.

97. D: Yea, yea. My role as the coordinator, I have been, or I have had the responsibility for
98. intim...how do you call it? Intimidation for their employment? And we have, how do you
99. call..cooperation agreement with state institutions and one of the let's say key, um,
100.institution, is the employment...the office of employment here in our city. Even that we
101.actually we work, let's give you the whole picture. After the girls, girls they ends their
102.programs and they gets back to their families, we continue in follow up, you know. So we,
103.we continue to, to follow up them in their families or where they live and we help them with
104.counseling or intermediation or with employment or even with vocational courses things that
105.they need you know or they are in need or when they are fixed with difficulties. So we don't
106.work only here in Vlore but we work all over Albania where they are. Any let's stop here.
107.Let me give you another case that I faced with last year. There were ok. We work with this
108.office of employment. We get offers so I gos to the companies and make agreements, kind
109.of you know. Anyway, and I always have been, I've always been aware or checking where
110.the place of work are you know. Knowing what are their needs and fulfilling their needs.
111.Because the offers from the office of employment are small. Anyway, and there was a
112.workshop and I went there and I got the contacts and after that after I go the contacts I went
113. to the enterprises or the companies. And one of the companies when I went there and you
114.know, it was kind of that company that had, wasn't well known and I didn't know that she

115.had, how do you call it, she had, free vacancies. Because she had already told me. When I
116.went there I gave my presentation. Who I who, yea my presentation where I was coming
117.from. At the time she was like no, no, no, no I am not working with that kind, those kind of
118.people. And I was like why? And she said no, no, no, no I don't want to ruin my company,
119.my business with these kind of people. And I tried to explain to her that these kind of
120.people, they are not people that you...we all shouldn't have that kind of thoughts. But she
121.was like "no, I can't afford them, I can't afford the fact that you know to make them, or
122.teach them how to work." And I said to them that I'm coming here with the names, with the
123.cases that they already has gone with through two years work. Not social work but they've
124.gone in vocational course, they've done like this vocational course, education, um,
125.practicing, how do call?, skills. Because we have the full package, you know, of program.
126.Uh, and they already has no risks. And they already are evaluated from our staff, the whole
127. staff that they are ready to get you know this kind of job. And she was like, "no, no don't
128.come in here anymore with these kind of requests. I can't." Actually it was that kind of case
129.that for me wasn't very good. I, um, I came here I talked with my director and we, let's say,
130.brought that up in our meetings with state institutions and with donors, you know. This kind
131.of, let's say um, stigma I face in other, let's say, in other cases with different enterprises.
132.I've seen actually, or I've seen the one side. The will to help them, you know compared to
133.other workers. But at the other side where something is happened in the enterprise,
134.something, let's say, I don't know, something that is normal you know to happen in the
135.enterprises. For example, I don't know if there is any conflict or there is any, I don't know
136.conflicts or if there is any guys that is coming around the enterprise and having, you know,
137.relationships with the girls so these girls were the first girls you know being attacked in
138.these kind of cases. And I can say yea, that in rare cases I have realized that they could be,
139.or they have been part of this. But in the most of the cases these girls haven't been part of
140.these conflicts. But I've seen you know, let's say, these people were in their minds, you
141.know, very aware that these girls are different. They are not part, or they are not normal as
142.the others. Or something else in the enterprises is that this has happened because of the
143.crisis, the economy crisis, when the, the, jobs cuts, these girls were the first ones, even

144.though they could be good performers. Or you know they could be good workers. The first
145.ones were these girls. They could say that go away, you are not anymore. So, I don't know
146.if this give you...

147.

148.Me: Yea. So something I have seen is that a lot of times these girls are sort of viewed as
149.people outside have a small understanding of trafficking but they don't quite understand that
150.the prostitution wasn't voluntary. They seem to think that maybe she was tricked to go but
151.that she agreed to prostitute.

152.

153.D: Yea.

154.

155.Me: So they don't see her as a victim or a survivor of something. So, I'm wondering, if, if
156.they could be seen as victims of something or a survivor of something that happened to them
157.would the stigma and the discrimination decrease? And how do you get people to understand
158.that they didn't volunteer to do this?

159.

160.D: Um, yea, you are right. Most of the people think that they have done this by their will. I,
161.for example, I have been, let's say for the first time when I faced with this reality I have
162.been talking with my relatives or um friends but you know what the relative what was with
163.these girls. And for I've got from them they were you know very, how you call?, pity? Pity
164.about these, these girls. But in one time they would say "oh they did this by their own, their
165.own will." Because, yea, they could say this, that it see only this piece of the big picture they
166.would see only the let's say the fact that these girls went, most of the cases were like that,
167.uh, they got a boyfriend, their boyfriend were traffickers and they fell, they fell in this
168.process. So they, they would see only this. And they would say that oh they wanted this.
169.SO that's why. So um, but, uh, it was actually this is hard. This is hard. It's hard to change
170.the mentality. I said that you know that I've I've told, I've tell, I have told them the stories
171.and for them were "wow, wow, they are victims! what a hard process, a hard process or
172.terrible life" But still let me say, ok, it was a question, it was a good question actually that

173.came not to me but to social work, I won't tell who is that kind, that social worker from the
174.psychologists, one of the psychologists that are coming here and working with the social
175.work staff. Saying if you would, she, she asked "do we have um children, and she said yea I
176.have two sons. If you're son would come one day and say this is my girlfriend, would you
177.accept her?" Do you know this is a good question. And social worker were a little (makes
178.face). And she said, "what about you?" Actually she asked with a question, "what about
179.you?" to the psychologist, so this is not ok I know, I know the psychologist and this wasn't
180.because of the, this wasn't because of the stigma. The social worker had because of the
181.whole process that she knew, let's say, many problems that are hidden in the, the roots of
182.their own lives not only you know the, the process of the trafficking itself. You know what I
183.mean? Um, let's go back to your question. It might be a key or and indicator of changing.
184.A little bit the mentality. But still, hmm, still is difficult. It's it it will require a big amount
185.of time.

186.

187.Me: Uh, can you talk a little bit about how women are viewed in society and how you think
188.this connects to the victims of trafficking, their ability to sort of move back into a normal life
189.in society?

190.

191.D: You mean the women as uh...

192.

193.Me: Yea the traditional views towards women in Albanian society. It seems, sort of seems
194.like different regions hold more to the traditional values than others. But I'm wondering
195.how you see it affecting here their ability to reintegrate. If you think it affects it.

196.

197.D: Mmmhmm. Ok um the position of women in Albania, I see the problem of this position,
198.I see hidden roots. Deep hidden roots of the patriarchal mentality in Albania. And if we'll
199.come back to the actual or the recent days, I could say that these hidden roots are still there.
200.Sometimes these roots or the consequences, or the branches of this tree, ok because I have
201.this kind of symbol, you know, the hidden roots. Sometimes that brings uh let's say that

202.kind of fruits that are not, that are negative social problems. Sometimes it gives, uh, another
203.kind of fruit because of let's say, the work that has been doing with the roots but still the
204.fruit it's not the positive or the fruit that we would like or would like to have for our society.
205.And that's why, I can say, that's why in some regions the position of the Albanian women is
206.very, let's say is very, (snaps)...So there are like two cases where women try to emancipate
207.and to show that they are really independent but there also are cases when womans are
208.underneath, let's say, so they don't show up; they are really intimidated and stuff. But even
209.the emancipated women they are not really emancipated. They are just trying to be, but they
210.still are intimidated. They are. Let's say they are not still, let's say completely. They are
211.trying but it's very, it's like a war. Let me give you an example. Because this is one of my
212.topics, let's say my family topics. I am married and um I come from the traditional families,
213.or we come, my husband and I come from traditional families with different backgrounds,
214.cultural, economic, social backgrounds. Anyway, but we have that kind of tradition, you
215.know that we have, I have my father and he has his father. Do you know? The big or let's
216.say the main...Ok we as people or a new generation we have that possibility or opportunity,
217.you know, to be open because of the 90's the time that of 90's but at the same time we have
218.been very exposed from American mentality because of our friendships we have a lot of
219.friendships or friends from America, almost from America and you know let's say, we took
220.the best from them. We tried you know to make it, to make it...to adopt it in our lives.
221.When we got married yea we said that we are going to do...or we are going to create
222.something new. As a model, you know for our families and the community and the Albanian
223.friends and so on. But, yea, the hidden problems, (laughs) became shown in our daily life.
224.Why and I saying hidden problems? Not hidden problems, hidden issues, because you know
225.i have that strong education from my family, you know, and this is deep and i got this
226.mentality that it's on top. So my daily life is you know a big fight for these two traditions or
227.these two perspective to become one. And this, and I'm pretty sure, but this will happen
228.during my entire life, you know. So that, let's say, the new generation, my daughter will,
229.won't face the same problems or won't face the same struggles. But different struggles but
230.still you know they say, you know what I mean, it's the same with my husband. Uh because,

231.ok, let's say it's not because of our new family only my families. We want....Ok we would
232.have the same struggles uh let's say, two different perspectives even that we would have
233.starting our lives out of Albania but there, here in Albania there is another issue, it's the
234.community itself. For example, let's say, I went out from your, your from your but I think
235.that this will help you. Let's say personal experience will help you more (laughs), um, uh
236.we have been facing with a community of friends, with coworkers when we face another
237.mentality that for them is foreign or is something new. For example, for my husband is like
238.let's say, we're very free to do the things, we trust each other, but once my husband come
239.and say no you won't come, he would come and say that ok you won't come with me you
240.know to go out and hang out because I will go with my friends. And I will say why? why?
241.what is this? what is this new thing that comes up? And he would say it's not because of me
242.it's because of my friends, they wouldn't accept you, you know in our friendship. They
243.were his coworkers, not our common friends, because we have common friends and let's say
244.different other group friends. And for, for me, what is this? But you know, going on let's
245.say I've realized that ok this is the mentality. Men they are apart of the women or something
246.ridiculous. Ok this is ridiculous. One my um, we were together with my husband and his
247.friend called him and said "yea how are you? where are you? I am close to you" and he said
248.come up, you know come up, we were in a bar kafe and come and join us. and he said "no,
249.no because you are with your wife." but for me it was what?? and my husband he will say
250.this is the, this is the majority of the husbands or men is like that. And I do you living in
251.this, this environment it's very hard to change it. And let's go back to the victims which is
252.that for them it would be hard for a person that has her normal life. So for me, even that
253.people here would, um, would have pity of them or would let's say, but that they would see
254.them with different eyes that they are victims still inside deep inside of these people they
255.would have that stigma. And on of the reasons, another reason, is because we still, we still
256.don't have indepenence. We are very realted to each other. We live (laughs) we live with
257.that kind of life that is what is behind your walls, what is going on behind your walls, in
258.your home. So it's still strong that kind of.
259.

260.Me: yea, so that sort of like, this culture of shame that's here if somebody does something
261.different or wrong it bring shame on the family. How influential do you think this is in the
262.stigma that trafficking victims face?

263.

264.D: You mean how do they feel about this?

265.

266.Me: That and also outside there's like this culture of shame so if this is my daughter and she
267.has been trafficked, she shames my family. So how deep does this culture of shame run and
268.do you, how big of an influence do you think it is, even though there is pity on the surface
269.there is stigma underneath.

270.

271.D: If I would, if I would, ok in the big picture most of the families would have that stigma,
272. shame. Or uh, abandons, let's say not accepting them, because not of them but because of
273.the others, not because of them but because of the others. Deep down inside they accept
274.them because they are their daughters and most of the actions from the families is because of
275.the others, and if this, if this mentality or this stigma wouldn't be that much this shame this
276.shame wouldn't be that. You know that deep. Would have that influence. So...(she takes a
277.long pause) But let me say something for these families or those families that have gone
278.against, and there were a few, against the mentality, what is the, the, the this is weird for our
279.society. Let me give you another case. It was a victim. She was 16. The family when
280.heard about that she immediately accept her she didn't let her in the shelter she accepted her,
281.she brought her in home and they were very in touch and they were from rural area, not
282.urban. Uh, and they were very let's say protective with her and they tried you know for,
283.they fought, they tried so much for her to start her new life. When, it was last year, when it
284.got back to the family the girl she got married they had a big wedding because most of these
285.girls they wouldn't have weddings, they would go to I don't know to relationships and go
286.with a man their family would find for her, for them, but for them they, they made a big
287.wedding, do you know, and a big ceremony. They were very proud of her uh and what I've
288.realized is the community, the small community because it was a small village they were

289.very, let's say, pointing at them, not in a negative sense but in a positive view like,
290.“Bravo!” (claps) Like Good for them, what they have done. Nobody or let's say a few
291.people would do this kind of thing, not everybody would do this kind of thing, you know.
292. And because of what they've done, even the mentality has changed their own view about
293.this girl. And she was very, it was this was one of the let's say very few girls, she was she
294. she was shown light from her heart. She has restarted her new life and she was very free
295.from her past. So with this case I would say that you know it is weird but yea its like your
296.choice is your hands and I'll say the choice is in your families hand even they would make
297.the revolution of the...

298.

299.Me: Yea, I guess my last question is it seems like, when you here when you go to find the
300.girls jobs you actually say who you are and who they are. It's not hidden....

301.

302.D: Actually ok, at the process when it's that phase of the program when they get employed,
303.or they its another phase that they get an apartment for rent starting the independent life,
304.they don't have anymore risks we don't call them victims. Actually we call them
305.beneficiaries. So when I go the enterprises or the institutions, yea I uh represent myself,
306.who I am, what I represent in that case and even what my responsibility is, do you know.
307.And even, uh ok, when I get in um let's say in relationship with administrator after they
308.confirm their job, I get more in relation with them to say what is the problem, not the
309. problem but the situation of these girls. Let's say, oh, there still, they will still have
310.problems even though they would go through the final phase of the program, but um, let's
311.say, mmm going in family or getting contact with the family or the family could come uh
312.and pick her up. Do you know this could cause in their own job because it's off. So I would
313.say, for example one girl smoke because let's say she would she she has had drugs in her
314.past, and the smoking its in that kind of or in special situations when she's anxious you

(314a) know, yea we've had these kind of cases. And I would say, you know that be sensitive
315.in this case. Or I don't know, it's like to give not the whole picture but to give or I get in relation
316.with them just to make, to make easier for beneficiaries to get in the process.

317.

318.Me: So what I'm wondering is, like in Tirana they still keep it very hidden, they give very
319.little information....

320.

321.D: Yes, but this is I'm sorry this is from the companies or the enterprises is between me and
322.the administrator. Not the...

323.

324.Me: Whole place...

325.D: No, no, no, no, no, no. And would say to the administrator, please! Even to the girls don't
326.say where you are coming from. You are one of the girls you know that are getting the job.
327.So this is between only me and the administrator.

328.

329.Me: Right, so I'm wondering what you think the difference is here and how maybe other
330.places could do this too. Because I know some of the work in Tirana if the administrator
331.finds out they fire them; they're gone. They, they have to keep it very hidden still so I'm
332.wondering what you have done here that has helped develop a better relationship where
333.people are more understanding, what you think the difference is here.

334.

335.D: Actually, I haven't, uh, I haven't faced with that kind of case, you know that the person
336.would have that kind of past or that or in her own past that story and then she would hide that
337.story and then the boss would find out and kick her out. And I'm not I haven't I haven't that
338.kind of cases. I've um, I'm very informed that this has happened through media or even in
339.our conversations with colleagues all over Albania but personally, I don't have experience.
340.Even that I don't...I, I think that trouble like this is wrong. This is wrong because if you're,
341.if the person or the boss sees the efficiency or the effectiveness...the results of the work from
342.this person this is not the issue to make difference between people. So, it's I don't know it's
343.not good. It's totally wrong. But I haven't compare these two different...(pauses) No
344.we've worked in another, another way as I've told you and I've been ok in this point, I've
345.been very close to the girls um talking with them about their problems in their places, work

346.places and when I would found out that there is a problem from the other side, I've gone you
347.know, and facing with the person let's say most of the cases have been with administrator
348.and saying that the girls have done or going through this problem and are faced with this
349.issue. So but uh, I've uh, I've faced with uh good will from them but at the same time, I've
350.'told you the first girls or the first people to be fired or would be kicked away are these girls,
351.so and this could go a little with this otherside this with the cases where these girls makes
352.the story hidden. I don't know, but I don't know if I've give you enough....

353.

354.

355.Me: Me, yea thank you very much! Thank you very much for taking the time to participate
356.in my study.

357.

358.D: Thank you! And I wish you success in your study.

Interview E

1. Me: So first can you tell me a little bit about your work with victims of trafficking? How did
2. you get started? Why did you get started working with victims of trafficking?

3.

4. E: Um, I have 3 years that I am doing this work. In beginning the reason, the reason why I
5. start working was because with prison. During my work in prison I saw that a lot of girls
6. they been used, abused. Sexually abused. Not just prostitute. You know the situation of our
7. work and what we do and all the other. So in prison, we saw girls, young girls that, uh, they
8. had this accused like prostitute but when you start speaking with them and hear their story
9. you will understand that they are victim of trafficking because they been abused, and the
10. money from their work goes to another pimp not for them. So. How it is to work with them?
11. (laughs) Hard. It's hard because what we are doing is helping them to reintegrate. But
12. reintegration is not a process that is for two or for three month or for a short period. It's a
13. process that has a long, takes a long time. So you need to work with their emotional state.
14. You have to work with the fact that they have no money and they have no job and here is
15. hard to find a job. It's hard for us that we have university degree and other skills not for
16. them but usually all the girls are with not too much school so they don't have univeristy or
17. high school, so it's hard.

18.

19. Me: In you experience, how bad to do you think the stigma against victims of trafficking is in
20. Albania?

21.

22. E: Is too bad because people do not use victim. Or they don't see this like abuse, but they
23. see like prostitutes and they don't care if the girl that is working in that restaraunt and she's
24. abused to do other work at night, she didn't choose to do this but there are other things
25. behind it... are stricting her to do...so...

26.

27. Me: Yea.

28.

29. E: Yea the stigma is too bad. I hear all that time what...Even from people that works in this
30. part they don't say...I joke "How are your prostitute go?" They are prostituted by others but
31. they...so but I can't express the right word in English, but you understand?

32.

33. Me: um-hmm. In working with these girls what types of stigmatization have you heard about
34. or seen? How have they been stigmatized; what have you seen?

35.

36. E: Where are they? It start in family because the family doesn't, uh, re...or...rejoin or re...

37.

38. Me: Accept?

39.

40. E: Reaccept them so it start there. And with cousin or family members, they refuse to talk or
41. have a relationship because they have the fear that they family will judge them. So start is in
42. family. And then in state. Because they have this attitude. Walking, or is like I have this
43. thing here from my profession...they have their sign. So people understand those sign and
44. they start to speak things like "prostitute". So, in work we usually try not to tell their story
45. but if they learn something, yes of course...They will start.

46.

47. Me: And how do you think stigma affects the ability for the girls to reintegrate back into
48. regular life?

49.

50. E: In our mentality, if you come to me and you are asking a job, I will ask you where are you
51. from? And if you are from north I have an such idea for you; if you are from south I have an
52. such idea that... and we do this stimatizing everything so...If they learn something more like
53. you are living by yourself and you are living in condition that you don't need your family
54. member, or if they learn other stuff, that you are from another city and that you live alone
55. here. Why? They start to doubt and...

56.

57. Me: Do you think, how do you think things would change if victims of trafficking of were
58. seen as victims instead of....Let me ask it another way. Do you think if victims of trafficking

59. were seen as victims there would be less stigma against them?

60.

61. E: If we see as victim, we don't help them to be like normal people, so...But if we see like

62. the pimps, or if we see pimps as victims or as guilty, everything, for not telling our stigma for

63. the girls that are abused but for the people that abuse them and for those people that goes and

64. they take service from those girls without caring if they are with (??). But I don't know, I

65. don't like to call them victims, even if I used in my work I don't like. So you had my

66. answer? (laughs)

67.

68. Me: Yea, well I guess because most people see them as just prostitutes and they don't see the

69. fact that they were forced to do something. So do you think, how do you think it would

70. change if they were seen as survivors of something that was done to them?

71.

72. E: Yea they are survivors, this is the right word. They are survivors. So. And I think like

73. this. I see like what is this? Post trauma?

74.

75. Me: Yea.

76.

77. E: I see them like survivor of a trauma and they need help. But if we use this victim, victim,

78. victim, they gonna think that they are victim. We gonna behave like they are victim. So...

79.

80. Me: Well do you think if people could see them as survivors, how it would their opinion of

81. them? Or do you think it would still be the same because of them being prostitutes?

82.

83. E: Umm starting with changing the way we express ourself. Even I catch myself all the time

84. speaking of victim of trafficking and writing report because some is asking to use this term

85. because it is more understood from all the collaborators. But starting changing the way that

86. we speak and if I say survivor, my mind will think another thing and if I say victim of

87. trafficking, I see her as victim of her mind. A victim of her choose. She choose. I be

88. confused if I call her victim. But if I speak to myself and allow that she is a survivor then

89. things are different. So...

90.

91. Me: Alright.

92.

93. E: We writing something but we do not...We've been used like victim, victim, victim, so it's

94. difficult with us to change this.

95.

96. Me: Ok so, the traditional beliefs towards women in Albania. How do you feel these

97. influence stigma against girls who've been trafficked?

98.

99. E: We have this stigma not only for the girls that...but even if you decide to go and to live by

100. yourself and to tell your family "stop I'm not going to do this hard work in village. I'm

101. going to live in city" We have this stigma. And we've put this name, like where is she

102. going, what is she doing? She will go to with boys and we have this stigma (laughs). And if

103. we learn that she has a problem, we say that it's her fault because she should stay with her

104. mother and her father. And no one is judging the way the parents are dealing with the

105. problems of a teenager. They say the girl has a guilt. The guilt is, I don't know if the

106. question was for this or...

107.

108. Me: Yea. Just the way like women are viewed in Albanian society...

109.

110. E: Yea, here a boy can have a girlfriend. And he can choose and he can find another one and

111. it's ok. But if a girl has a boyfriend...not in Tirana or in Durres or in big city because things

112. are different now, but in other parts, like deep north or deep south or other rural places, I

113. think that girl should go only with one man. And if she change the man, she is like doing a

114. prostitute. So...think now...

115.

116. Me: How do you think that so many years of isolation and the period of communism and the

117.influence of the Turkish culture has influenced Albanian culture to where...in the way that
118.they view victims of trafficking.

119.

120.E: Mmm-hmm. Everything that has to do with isolation has this... I can't find this word in
121.English...like you are alone. You are alone. You isolate yourself. And it has this bad effect
122.in people because they feel alone and they are alone. And they get isolated from telling the
123.things or doing what they think or what they want to do because they have to find some
124.standards. And this other period that we had was like open, but opening with out rules,
125. without structure, just opening and people been like confused and these organized to do
126. whatever they think, whatever they like. Was from one extreme to another. Umm Turkish
127.culture, yes, was, like a bad effect for us because before we didn't have such traditions like
128. the women should cover the face or wear in the way that they should cover all of the body.
129. Because it was from their faith, Turkish faith and we had some other customs from them
130.like man is the head of the house and he should tell what to do but he has to do nothing
131.(laughs). And so we had some mad customs from them from my opinion.

132.

133.Me: What about this culture of shame in Albania?

134.

135.E: We give a lot of value people that have honor. But honor is specified in if you are a girl
136. you are honored if you have just one man in your life. You are honored if you wear yourself
137.with I don't know the word...not to open, not to short, not too...

138.

139.Me: Modest?

140.

141.E: Modest way. If you respect your husband and his family, like mother, father, uncle, and all.
142.And uh you are respected woman if you have children and if you do your work and you do
143.the work of the house and you are like with the head down, walking and you don't fight for
144. the way that you think and the way that you see the things. But if you are a man, you are
145. honored if you have a woman that obey you and do not tell your, do not send your word

146.back...We have this expression. If he said something, it's done. And you are honored if you
147.have money, if you have power. It's ok if you have other (laughs) wives, not with documents
148.but if you have girlfriends. So...

149.

150.Me: And then how do you...What about the culture of shame? Do you know what I mean?

151.Things are seen as like shameful?

152.

153.E: Yea it's shame. It's shameful to have relationship with, to test yourself, to find yourself.

154.If you don't find yourself good in a relationship, its shame to change the destiny. You

155.choose and now this is your choose now and forever. Is a shame doing things like for the

156. women like I told you...to be patient and to obey and wear with modesty. So we have a

157.kind of, it's shame to do this...it's shame to do that...it's shame to go out with a boy and

158.everyone has seen you with him and even if he beats you or you have a big problem and you

159.leave him and find another one it's a shame so...

160.

161.Me: So given all these things, if you were going to create an anti-stigma program, what

162.would that look like for you? If you could create a program that would help reduce stigma,

163.what would it be?

164.

165.E: Uh, actually I didn't think that I can tell you a solution. I don't know. We have too many

166.women that are in university and they are educated well. If you see our university you are

167.gonna find more women than men, but you see more men in works, in good works than

168.women. So it's like if I am a girl and I'm good, it's ok they don't try me. But if they have a

169.man they don't see my CV but...it's kind of...if a family learned that the mother is pregnant

170.and they see that the baby is a baby boy, you are honored and it's so good. But if you have a

171. girl it's ok but...(laughs). I don't know. We are still patriarchal in this. We think women not

172.so educated to do things. I don't know how to express. We give more credit to mens.

173.

174.Me: So what kind of program do you think could start to change people's minds?

175.

176.E: Giving opportunity to that women to teach or to do something. And they learn. I don't
177.know, I don't know how but just to hear more about the women. You can see some women
178.in good position and doing good works that men can see and believe that women can do it.

179.

180.Me: Yea. And as far as different regions, do you think you would have to do different things
181.in the north than in Tirana or the south and what do you think that is? What does the north
182.need to change their mind that Tirana doesn't?

183.

184.E: For north?

185.

186.Me: For anywhere.

187.

188.E: Yea but if I say for Tirana, Tirana is different because it's, it's like the girl and they boys
189.or women and men are the same. They compete each other every day and usual works so.
190.But in North I see that girls are they aren't allowed to go in school. They are in house; they
191.are kept in house like wait to marry. And we don't need you to go to school and educate
192.yourself because you gonna, you are going to another house. To your husbands house, and
193.we can't invest in something that is going. And I'm from south and we have another...well
194.my grandfather is like "you are going to live in another house so you should be strong and
195.you should be educated because no one, you don't have to ask from anyone money for
196.buying yourself something. So we have these that has to do also with faith. Orthodox
197.people, they have another point of view. And Catholics have another point of view. And
198.Muslimans have some other traditional things where women are not worthy to invest or to
199.be, to invest to educate for them so. I don't know. All my friends from my city in south,
200.they are now in school, in good jobs...not all of them in good jobs, but they been educate
201.without problem. Had some problem like Albanian we are we like to elevate more the
202.culture of the man than culture of the women but I see that is not so strong. If I go to work
203. in the area of Tirana that is populate only with people from the north and mainly are from

204.village. They have girls, nice and beautiful girls and they don't know what is the bus, or

205.they didn't went at the main road. Just in house, doing work and it's crazy.

206.

207.Me: Well thank you for participating in my interview.

208.

209.E: It was a pleasure Dana.

210.

211.Me: No, it was a pleasure for me.

Interview F

1. Me: Um ok so in your experience working with victims of trafficking how bad do you feel
2. the stigma is against them in Albania?

3.

4. F: Actually I see it quite often, quite strong. It's really hard. I have seen it everywhere, in
5. the society in the family um around friends that actually somehow foresee the future if she
6. would be integrated or not and helps like if she will be integrated.

7.

8. Me: So can you talk a little bit more about how stigma effects reintegration? Can you speak a
9. little bit more about your experience?

10.

11. F: I have been working since 2002 with the girls and I have direct assisted to them. And the
12. problem because people see them like prostitutes and not like victims, from like families,
13. starting from the families and everybody else. So um that's why they are trying to work on
14. that stigma so they can be reintegrated. So they are facing a lot of problems with girls that
15. come from rural areas and its not just the family but even the extended family or their
16. relatives and they are trying to tell that she has done something bad and she like, like
17. prejudice or stuff from her extended family. Also there are a lot of difficulties they face with
18. the employers or in schools with education even in the like health services, especially with
19. employers they don't employ these kinds of girls because their reputation will go down and
20. people will think, "what kind of people do they employ?" It is sometimes even hard with the
21. girls to...so they will take like a health services of go to the hospital or doing some exams,
22. like especially for the sexual transmitted infections they think why, why do i have to do that
23. ? or just because I have been doing that they are thinking that "I have been doing something
24. wrong" So they also have to work with their self esteem or their stigma inside them.

25.

26. Me: I have also noticed this thing where they are not seen as victims they are only seen as
27. prostitutes. So I am wondering if you think they could be seen as victims or as survivors of a
28. crime, if this would reduce stigma and also how do you think we can start to get people to

29. understand that they are victims?

30.

31. F: Its a very important factor, even for the girls themselves if they see themselves like
32. victims that means that they did nothing wrong. So they were just hurt and they can go on
33. with their lives. But if they see themselves like stigma, or like they are stigmatized then they
34. see that they have done something wrong and they see that they are not good enough and so
35. that helps also how the others see them as a victim. So like if they would see like as a victim
36. or hurt they would be like reduced or something. We are trying to raise awareness. We are
37. not just working with girls, trafficking girls, but also with people in the community and we
38. are raising awareness, especially we are doing trainings and seminars with other people they
39. are in direct touch with, these girls. So we explain what's being trafficked and what's a
40. victims and what's stigma and everything so people can make a difference and they can see
41. what's actually true behind that.

42.

43. Me: How do you feel traditional mentalities towards women influence ability to reintegrate
44. for these girls?

45.

46. F: The way we see women usually in society or how men see or even women see other
47. woman is like a housewife who will take care of all the chores and make sure that everything
48. in the house is ok. And even the women who try to go beyond that or be independent they
49. would see it with that skeptic eye, so why are these women doing that, they are not like good
50. woman so they will even these kind of woman will be like, they will have some prejudice
51. about that or something. So and that also affects alot the way they see a girl who has been
52. trafficked. So they just try to see like something like a bad girl that's done like all these
53. things so and they try to distinguish the piece from them so "we are not like her, she is just
54. different, not like us."

55.

56. Me: How do you feel the culture of shame, where if someone in your family does something
57. bad it shames the family or the community, how influential is this in really pushing or driving

58. the stigma against victims of trafficking?

59.

60. F: Lately, there is a difference and people can make a difference between who is a victim and
61. who did it because they wanted to do it. So that also helps a lot with the mentality because if
62. they see a person like a victim, it means that it is easier to integrate because she did nothing
63. so I mean she was just a victim. But on the other side they see the girls that do that
64. themselves the stigma is higher. And like I mentioned before I think that the extended or
65. even the other people around really influence a lot. And if the family feel ashamed of the
66. girl or something that won't help in integrating her back in society. But also I emphasize that
67. lately I see the difference and people can make a difference and they tend to approach or to
68. accept the victims more than like before when everyone was treated like a prostitute no
69. matter how they went to that road.

70.

71. Me: Well I guess those are all my questions unless you have anything else you would like to
72. add?

73.

74. F: For the beginning when we started all this we had stigma towards us because people were
75. seeing us like oh what kind of people do you deal with why do you do this? but after some
76. years the community is like the thoughts have developed and people see it like its something
77. we need to deal with. There was a case that was really interesting. This girl was really, her
78. self esteem was really low and she was self blaming about all these types of things and
79. sometimes she was really just about to do crazy things against her life, and the case was that
80. she was trafficking in England in the UK and after she got back she sued really big network
81. of trafficking and strong one, but her family wouldn't accept her. Actually her parents
82. would meet her but her brother denied her. He was telling the family to make a choice
83. between her or him because he wouldn't accept her back in the home but as she was like
84. dealing with a really strong trafficking network she was like sent to America to live there.
85. And now she is in really good conditions of life and she has started a new life, let's say, but
86. her self esteem was really low and she was really blaming herself. There was another case

87. where they actually got engaged and she moved to Belgium and her fiancé obligated her to go
88. out on the street and do...uh...but she just in short period of time she goes to the police station
89. and she sees them and everything but she didn't want to come back to Albania even though
90. she wanted to meet her family and everything but she was really ashamed of herself and she
91. was really afraid that people would judge her for what she did even though she didn't want to
92. do it. And so like we worked a lot and some officers from the police from the Belgium
93. offices came here and we did a lot so she would come back and meet her family and
94. reintegrated. Stigma also affects a lot to the girls to their self esteem and everything so....
95.

96. Me: Thank you very much.

97.

98. F: It was a pleasure! And good luck!

Interview G

1. ME: So in your experience and through your work, how bad is the stigma against victims of
2. trafficking in Albania?

3.

4. G: My work is staying with the girls everyday in the shelter so I haven't faced the stigma a lot
5. but I have heard about it. But I have never faced it because I stay with the girls.

6.

7. Me: Ok, well what have you heard and what is your feeling about how bad it is?

8.

9. G: I think of course it's really bad because I work with these girls everyday and they go
10. through a phase where they face a lot by themselves. After that comes a time when they are
11. ready to go in the outdoors and face reality and they actually cannot because of the stigma.
12. That means its really bad because this makes them vulnerable and they don't want to fight
13. anymore because they face this reality and they don't want to go on with it.

14.

15. Me: How do you feel the traditional views about women in Albania, the traditional
16. mentalities affect their ability, the victims of trafficking, to reintegrate.

16.

17. G: We have like 15 years that we are speaking about the woman, about the women's
18. independence. They don't treat her like a thing anymore, but just to see a part of the society
19. and not just like I have this thing, now is yours, now is mine and just to see it like a person
20. who is equal with the men and the others. All these mentalities and all these judgements
21. towards women have made them (women) timid and they really didn't fight for their rights
22. before so but also all these judgement were sending some kinds of violence against them so
23. and all this stigma there is against them also has really affected their position.

24.

25. Me: How important is family acceptance and community acceptance in the reintegration
26. process?

27.

28. G: Integration of these girls in the community or society or their family is really important, it
29. is one of the most important things. But its a bit hard and what we have, we have to work a
30. lot to achieve that to integrate. But after hard work and goodwill you can achieve it and you
31. can see the girls are happy but hard work is needed to achieve it because it's not easy to
32. reintegrated in both society and the family.

33.

34. Me: What do you feel is motivating the stigma against victims of trafficking in society?

35. What causes it deep down?

36.

37. G: You will hear a lot of people that are saying right now everything is all right, we don't
38. have a lot of stigma and everything is well past and we are really open and open to accept
39. what was done before and to walk forward, but that's not true. People are still holding their
40. feelings deep inside them and they don't really accept what actually was done before and
41. they see as something bad was happening. But still something is developing. We are doing a
42. lot of campaigns to raise awareness about these issues and we have results.

43.

44. Me: So where do you think these deep feelings of stigma come from? What drives them?

45. You know?

46.

47. G: The main point I think is mentality and that's something really hard to change or it needs a
48. lot of time to change and there is where all the roots of stigma are, with mentality.

49.

50. Me: Do you think the mentality is; do you think the mentality comes from shame or because
51. they are women or something else?

52.

53. G: They are both things. The most important is being a woman I think and that's the reason
54. why it's so and also being ashamed of doing such things so that also...the both of them help
55. to work towards stigma.

56.

57. Me: Ok and my last question is how do you think that people can begin to see these girls as
58. victims instead of just prostitutes and do you think that would start to change the mentalities
59. a little bit if they understood really what happened to them instead of only seeing the thing
60. that they did.

61.

62. G: Not all people can understand actually that they are victims. Some can and those are the
63. people that are in contact with the girls and with the victims and they know what they have
64. been going through and they can also understand them better and you know categorize them
65. as victims. But a lot of other people who have maybe never met a girl or like let's say people
66. who don't really think deep about some other things they will every time categorize them as
67. a prostitute and they would never think more about it and they would never accept or they
68. would never maybe agree on these girls being victims. And its really hard to change their
69. mind about that. Because a lot of other institutions blame them somehow. Or see them like
70. not like good institutions for dealing with such girls so....

71.

72. Me: Ok. Thank you very much.

Interview H

1. Me: So can you tell me in your experience and your opinion, how bad do you think the stigma
2. is against victims of trafficking in Albania?

3.

4. H: It's still really really hard, but I also notice the difference now from before. It's getting
5. less and less. But still is high, even though we're trying to reduce it step by step. I first
6. started in 1997. We didn't have an office; we didn't have anything. We were just some
7. women that was going to the police stations and the prisons and meeting these girls and
8. speaking with them, trying to help them with what we had, like personally had, with our
9. belongings, because we didn't have anything, like funds. Just in 1999, the center, Vatra, we
10. created it from several different societies. And from 2002 I have been a social worker at the
11. center of rehabilitation. We have been working with girls, with their families, with society
12. and we have noticed how harsh the stigma has been and how much damage it causes.

13.

14. Me: What types of stigmatization have you noticed in your work?

15.

16. H: The hardest thing is the stigma from the families. The girls don't get accepted from their
17. families. It is the hardest things they face and even in the community. At the beginning of
18. our work, like 95 or 98%, of the girls who were victims of trafficking, they wouldn't be
19. accepted back from their families and that's really really hard. Even now nowadays it's
20. starting to change, it still exists. We are trying to work...especially on this, so the girls would
21. be accepted into families and society because we see it's the hardest thing and also the most
(93 a) important thing for the girls to be accepted back. We were well known as persons who
were

22. working with these victims so when we were going to the villages and meeting with the
23. families, they denied to even meet with us because the other people knew and so the other
24. people would know that a person from their family was trafficked. So they didn't want
25. others to know and they didn't want to meet with us and didn't want these girls to go back to
26. their families. Our priority is working with the families and getting these families to accept
27. these girls back.

28.

29. Me: How do you think that if society could see the girls as victims or as survivors of
30. trafficking there would be less stigma? And how do you think people could begin to
31. understand this?

32.

33. H: We have worked a lot, actually our main work was to let people see these girls like
34. victims of trafficking, but as our society never accepted prostitution and they every time
35. somehow saw it really in a negative way, and not like some other countries that maybe
36. thought that is was a profession or something, so like in this society it's really hard to accept
37. it. Even though they would think that they are just victims they will still be like judged or
38. something. The main problem is that these girls come from really poor families and they are
39. quite vulnerable and they don't really understand that accepting these girls like this is the
40. easiest way to get them everything right or make everything better and normal. But you
41. know, it's easier for them just not to accept at all and to think than to accept these girls. And
42. it's really strange that most of the cases that I have worked with, I have noticed that the male
43. parent, the father, was the one that was accepting the girls back. And the mothers usually
44. were quite strict and they really didn't want their girls to go back and they were really
45. ashamed of them. But the fathers in most of the cases that I have dealt with were the ones
46. that were more open and more accepting.

47.

48. Me: So, the traditional views of women in Albania, how influential do you think that is in
49. their ability to reintegrate and how important do you think the acceptance of men will be in
50. changing mentalities?

51.

52. H: Like if they would be seen differently, and not like they are seen right now, it would make
53. a difference of 50% how they are in trafficking. Like men and women are not equal. They
54. are every time seen as a vulnerable part of society and every time the one that will be really
55. doing all the work, you know the good work or being bad of the family (11:02) are the guys,
56. who are the father, who are the oldest son of the family. This happens mostly on the rural

57. area, but mostly the victims come from the rural area. Because in the cities usually, in the
58. urban areas, we work a lot with raising awareness, a lot of campaigns, meeting students and
59. going to schools and speaking about all these issues so they will understand better. So it was
60. really hard to us to do these campaigns in the really deep, far villages. And for these levels it
61. would really makes a difference in the rural areas if they could see women in a different way.
62.

63. Me: How important do you feel the acceptance of men will be in changing mentalities? OR
64. do you think women can make a change in mentalities without the acceptance of men and
65. eventually men will...?
66.

67. H: They are both quite important, not one more than the other. Like the male will accept the
68. women but also it's quite important that the women accept themselves. And I work with girls
69. that have been violence against them and victims, and the main thing that I work with is their
70. self esteem because it's really low. And first of all they have to accept themselves and they
71. have to think positively and to put themselves, to accept themselves first so they others will
72. accept them. In my work in the shelter, I have realized that first when the girls came they
73. were really, their self esteem was really low, they were every time having these negative
74. thoughts about themselves. They were even looking uglier and really depressed and
75. everything. But I have worked a lot on making them seeing the positive and the bright sides
76. of their life and like appreciating the fact that they are alive and appreciating all the good
77. things that they have in their life and after a while when their self esteem was getting higher,
78. they were even looking brighter and more beautiful.
79.

80. Me: How do you feel the culture of shame, where if someone in your family or your
81. community does something wrong, it shames everyone, how influential do you think this is
82. for treatment of returning victims of trafficking?
83.

84. H: There is a difference between the urban areas and the rural areas. Usually in the urban
85. areas it's not so high but in rural areas people know each other very well. They know
86. everything, their families and what members of their family have done. So in these areas

87. people feel really ashamed for having a person in their family that did something to actually
88. be ashamed of. So and that's why it's really even hard for them to be accepted because the
89. stigma is really high comparing to the urban areas, when the society is bigger and the
90. community and people don't know that well each other. Just recently we had a case, where
91. there was a girl from Durres. And we have been working for two years with her family to so
92. they would accept her but they denied every time until now. She actually has been accepted.
93. There's also a case in case in Vlore of a sixteen years old girl and she actually got accepted
94. back to her family and we have worked a lot with her mother but just yesterday she came and
95. me and her mother and the daughter had a coffee together. Even though the mother accepted
96. her she is still mentioning every time she is speaking about the fact, and she can not really
97. forget about it. And what I said to her if we want to leave everything behind we don't have
98. to speak anymore about it and just go on with our life. Actually the girl is now registered in
99. high school, in professional high school. And she is trying also to get in a job but still her
100. family cannot forget and cannot go through it, even though they accept it.

101.

102.Me: My last question would be, what do you think really could start to change mentalities.

103. If you could make a program that would really affect people's mentalities what would you
104.do?

105.

106.H: In my opinion?

107.

108.Me: Yes in your opinion.

109.

110.H: To change the mentality of the whole city or the whole society is really hard and is not
111.something easy. We are trying lately to work also with campaigns that will raise awareness
112.through people. Like at the beginning, we weren't just with women, now we are also with
113.men, with children, with going into schools with teenagers with all these young people to
114.raise awareness and to make them understand what is actually trafficking. But if it was for
115.me, I would do a movie, I would record a movie and when I will show two cases in the

116.movie. one will be a case when this victim of trafficking has been accepted from her family
117.and all these positive results after that and the other would be, part of the same movie, when
118.the family doesn't accept her and the negative results that happen or what will happen after
119.the rejections from her family. And I would just leave a rhetoric question at the end like if
120.you were the parents which case would you choose, which solution would you choose. But
121.it's hard to change mentalities. It's a long work.

122.

123.Me: Thank you very much.

124.

125.H: Asgje (It's nothing).

Focus Group

1. Me: How did you get started working with victims of trafficking and why? What are
2. the different reasons?
3. P1: Before starting with working with victims of trafficking, I was a social worker with
4. the street children. And at the time I was not so sensitized to the work because of many
5. reasons objective reasons and so and so and also subjective reasons. So it was a time
6. when I heard that a new project was going to open about the victims of trafficking and I
7. applied because I feel like I wanted at the time to work with the victims of trafficking
8. because I had heard a lot of histories and stories but I wanted to touch that problem. And
9. so I applied I won after a lot of examinations and interviews and things like that. But,
10. uh, it was so challenging to work in that kind of project but also it was difficult
11. because we did not have a lot of experience and as a social worker our working
12. directly with victims of trafficking was not so...because I told you of many reasons but
13. first because of lack of experience. But due to a lot of trainings workshops step by
14. step when we got used to that kind of work. If I compare the first years of working
15. with victims of trafficking to these years I will say that the cases were more difficult
16. than the cases now in different aspects. Lack of experience make it more difficult.
17. Cases were more difficult, so there were a lot of difficulties. But if you have a will
18. and if you want to support somebody you can overpass difficulties. And one of the
19. main reasons that I wanted to work in this context, I wanted to help people. And it was
20. really good when you met people like that with a lot of difficulties and you listened to
21. them. Because as they told us, nobody listened to them. And the problem started for
22. them...(it has not started to hurt them) it was a problem started within family so it was
23. a complex and in fact if I can speak about the program and the process of reintegration
24. I can say that it is a process. It is not only a stage of a process but it is a whole
25. process. And there are a lot of difficulties in this process. So we have done the best,
26. but, uh, with the other perhaps it would have been more easier to have these girls. So
27. if I can speak about the reintegration process or the program, maybe it's not so
28. necessary to speak about the program? It's based on three phases the first one was

29. meeting them in the shelter, then it was halfway houses, which means semi-
30. independent life, and then it was the third stage which means independent life. And
31. there are good cases where we have had examples, good stories, that they pass through
32. these three stages and we call them successful stories, but also we have had cases
33. where they couldn't finish also because of many reasons. Tell me if I can speak on
34. specific things? Maybe the others can add something?
35.

36. P2: It was almost the same thing for all of us. We have started to work in these
37. positions as social worker. Most of us have finished social work, that's why for us,
38. you know, the beginning when we choose...ok I will speak for myself. When I choose
39. social work, to study social work, my desire was to work with people, with people in
40. need and to support and to help them. And I think that in any organization or in any
41. other kind of work I couldn't had such a kind of experience or such kind of...I have
42. learned so much in this kind of work. Dealing everyday in the direct assistance with
43. victims of trafficking, supporting or learning or I don't know...a lot of things you have
44. to do when you work in this kind of field. And especially victims of trafficking are
45. one of the most difficult target groups to work with. Because especially when they are
46. accommodated in a center and there is a 24 hr staff working with this person. For
47. example, other organizations they deal with their clients during the day and after the
48. day they are free to have, let's say, their own life. But in our case we are always on in
49. the sense that if someone calls...someone has to answer to be there and support our
50. colleagues. That's why in this sense it's a very difficult, very difficult work because
51. there are a very difficult target group. But in any case as X mentioned speaking about
52. the reintegration process, it's a very long process and of course that's why we pay so
53. much attention to this, to the second and third phase of reintegration. To be as, um,
54. long, as much long in time as possible because we understand the difficulties they
55. have to pay everyday and they don't have the needed support. Of course they can
56. have turning back. They can be re...recycled, recycled in trafficking. That's why it
57. needs so much support and monitoring and follow up for the beneficiaries to go on.

58. You know our services so I don't think we have to mention...Ok.

59.

60. P3: Well, since I have not studied social work, I have graduated in faculty of law last
61. year and when this job was offered to me, for sure I had no idea what kind of
62. work...because I just knew that I had to be the lawyer and to assist these victims of
63. trafficking and I just, uh, when I thought about this opportunity I thought it was a
64. great opportunity to me and a new professional to learn more about this profession and
65. they are some kind of vulnerable group so they have very different and difficult cases.
66. And being in contact with them I have to deal everyday with them such as civil law,
67. penal law or follow up the cases because they are very different. Someone needs to
68. get divorced, someone needs to...to...to I don't know. Um, has procedure has to
69. follow up the case with the police or with judges or something like that. Uh but I
70. think this is a very good opportunity for me to learn more and to help people in need.
71.

72. Me: In your experiences how severe is the stigma against the victims of trafficking in
73. Albania?

74.

75. P2: I think its a lot of, in the sense that it's huge the stigma we have to face. Starting
76. from the family members sometimes not just the parents but even the
77. cousins...uncles...of the person

78.

79. P1: community... relatives...

80.

81. P2: And then is the community where the parents are living its another, lets say a huge
82. obstacle for their reintegration process they create of course. And then it's the whole
83. community. When they have to work they learn that she's a victim of trafficking. of
84. course, not only her colleagues but also the employer would see her different and
85. other days she goes to the health care and it happens to one our our nurses, one of our
86. nurse. She take one of the beneficiaries to the doctor and she presented herself like

87. you know like an organization dealing with person who have problems.

88.

89. P1: Social problems...

90.

91. P2: and only this term make them see you know see the beneficiary in a strange way.

92. They didn't want to touch her because she has nails, nails a little bit longer or things

93. like this or she was dressed with a short trousers? Trousers?

94.

95. P4: Shorts.

96.

97. P2: Short shorts. (laughs) I think like that. They are in any aspects in the life if people

98. in the community learn that they are victims of trafficking they are judged, they are

99. stigmatized just because they have this kind of experience in their life. They don't

100. need to understand why or what happened to them. Because in many cases have been

101. you know the fiance, or sold her or the husband or things like that. No. It's an ugly

102. fact that she has worked or she is forced to prostitution or other kinds of trafficking

103. to judge them or to make them feel bad about what happened in their life.

104.

105. P1: That's why we say that the reintegration is very difficult because as X mentioned

106. we tried...we considered the family as very uh great importance or...

107.

108. P2: Compliment...

109.

110. P1: Compliment to reintegration. But if we decide with the girl, the beneficiary to go

111. back to the family. There are cases when they accept their daughters back to the

112. family, very soon we see that the problems restarted again in their family because of

113. these reason as X mentioned because a family member or relative, next door

114. neighbor or community. And that's why she has to come back again to to Tirana for

115. example which is very difficult for her to adapt herself in Tirana because of her no

116.education because of her social relations. So that's a big problem. In those cases,
117.even when she goes back to her family, she makes all the services there. Nobody
118.helps her for example finding a job, or any training or something like that but even
119.when they are in Tirana they have another problem because Tirana is a very big town
120.and they have difficulties to orientate themselves. They have no education; they can
121.do so very, very low paid jobs like waitress, cleaners, which for them is very difficult
122.to keep up life here in Tirana. That's why we say that reintegration is very difficult
123.as a process.

124.

125.P2: It's more difficult for the cases who have children of course.

126.

127.P3: And except the factors that X and X mentioned I think that a big problem is that
128.the victims of trafficking themselves judge themselves. Because they thought they
129.are not in the higher...in the proper level for example to work in that place or to go
130.somewhere they feel...

131.

132.P1: Low self-esteem...

133.

134.P4: Low self confidence...

135.

136.P3: Uh, yes, this is the big problem. So today was the last example I was with one of
137.the girls that she is looking for a new job and everywhere we ask for a job she said
138."no I am not for that place". Why? "I don't know, maybe I am not so beautiful for
139.that uh, shop." So this is the big problem.

140.

141.P5: And it happens to us even yesterday. We have been with one beneficiary. We
142.have been looking for job for her. And it was the same thing. "No it's not for me;
143.it's just for VIP". And we were trying so hard X and me to make her feel confident.
144.It's ok and you can work here as well.

145.

146.P1: I remember in the first years, we accompany the beneficiaries to the job
147.placement. To the job place and we, as her neighbor or her aunt or her mother in law
148.and to represent--the introduce the beneficiaries, she is my niece, she is my daughter
149.or she is my relative and then we talk about to the job and things like that. And now
150.we try to learn them, to teach them to present themselves so to raise this low self
151.esteem so to present themselves, to present themselves so they are able as least to
152.communicate or to ask for job. Not being after us or behind us and somebody
153.speaking their name. But it needs time and it needs abilities and also...

154.

155.P3: To be empowered...

156.

157.P1: Yes.

158.

159.Me: Can you talk a little more about the types of stigmatization you have seen
160.throughout the course of working with victims trafficking?

161.

162.P2: Types?

163.

164.Me: Yea, well like what you were saying about going to the doctor and...

165.

166.P2: ok, ok...

167.

168.Me: In different ways that they are stigmatized.

169.

170.P2: Ok. The doctor (laughs). Medical centers, lets call them working place um when
171.we try to rent apartments for our beneficiaries also its very difficult you know, when
172.they see them dressed in a way they like to be dressed...

173.

174.P1: strange...

175.

176.P2: Not strange but they are young they are used in another way. And even we work

177.in this part, in the dressing code but anyway it needs time to for the thing to be

178.changed. And another place is when we go to rent apartments, in community, at

179.school.

180.

181.P5: Even when we are going in uh higher dresses, they don't accept to make to offer

182.

183.P2: To offer services for them. Or maybe even when they go alone it's more they

184.face.

185.

186.P5: Sometimes...It's happened to me and uh...

187.

188.P1: Sometimes it's their own problem I think. They..not maybe they don't want to

189.behave but they are so afraid and so scared and as X said that they felt so so different

190.from the others they felt that maybe they are not able to do that thing and maybe it

191.has shown in their face, in their communication, in their behavior and this is also

192.created that the others saw that in a different way because they cannot say they don't

193. know how to behave, how they present themselves I think its a problem. And then

194.the others say...

195.

196.P2: But this is of course linked with the culture where they come from. Their family

197.pattern, they are used with the other, most of them come from you know a rural

198.areas. And um, and not just rural areas but villages who are far away from the urban,

199.you know. It's very difficult for them and to be and it's very difficult from this kind

200.of place is where they can't go back after the trafficking experience to live in Tirana.

201.It's very difficult for even people who have even finished University who have a job

202.to live in such big city. And to turn them back its of course even difficult because

203.they have to live in a place where they are all the time haunted with the finger

204.(points) she has worked in this place and that place.

205.

206.P3: I have heard, I have heard some cases when even the body states even judge

207.them. Such as police, some in some cases the girls have told me that the policemen

208.that took the interview was angry or loud voice, I don't know but not a very good

209.attitude.

210.

211.P4: But if I be (???21:15) several times I

212.

213.P1: It is also another reason I said I think that if we go back to their families and

214.what kind of families they have grown up, nobody listened to them father or her big

215.brother, for example, was a boss and everything was done by their order. Then the

216.trafficking was another period, another difficult period where the pimps or the

217.traffickers or the receivers or the exploiters didn't allow them to speak out. So this a

218.very, this is so inside them so it's very difficult to be for them to be so free and so

219.open and to have a life.

220.

221.P4:To have control of their life. They're used to...

222.

223.P1: Because also you can listen from them that...I am giving a very simple example

224.when they did these kind of things and when I said to X how beautiful it is, and I say

225.well done and things like that she was so surprised about this about these kinds of

226.words because nobody say to them these kind....only work or did this or only orders.

227.That's why it's very difficult for them to be socialized or to be accepted into the

228.society. And things like that.

229.

230.P4: And sometimes it happens that the stigma comes also from people who are

231.employed in state institutions. For example to me it happens very often to take the

232.girls to the employment office. And one time for example there were two workers
233.there. They were asking to themselves from what place does this girl come. But I
234.also go with them and I didn't present anything that I work in anti-trafficking
235.program or anything like this, it never happens. But the knew the fact that I come
236.from an organization and I feel one time bad only for the fact that they were speaking
237. with each other and the girls were after me and they were speaking with each other.
238.“what place they come? Ah from that organization, from that...” and it sounds so bad
239.even for me and I was just the social work that was with them. And I imagine how
240.bad they, their girls feel for this thing. Of course they feel bad because they were
241.speaking about them. So even the state institutions aren't so kindly with them. The
242.municipality...the state instiuttions, the journalists, the media, has a lot of problem in
243.dealing with victims of trafficking. They can't make the difference between victim
244.of trafficking or a prostitute. They, you know, they have a trouble for them is the
245.same thing. If a girl was trafficked and was used by someone, the main title of the
246.newspaper is “ the prostitute was...” I don't know...It's so bad and it sounds so and of
247.course the media has effect to the whole community.

248.

249.Me: Yea, that is actually perfect for my next question. So why do you think victims
250.of trafficking, who are victims are stigmatized. Even though they are victims they
251.are still....

252.

253.P1: This is the reason. This is the reason! Because as X said because even the others
254.do not distinguish which is the victims and between the prostitutes. Cannot make. Is
255.the same thing.

256.

257.P3: General public...They don't make the difference. For them is the same thing if
258.she was used by someone one.

259.

260.P1: And very often in these trainings and workshops we organize for the others for

261.the municipality or university, please make the difference between the victim of
262.trafficking...They are victims of...the persons we are supporting are not prostitutes.

263.You have to make this difference because it's very important.

264.

265.P2: They didn't choose to make this kind of thing.

266.

267.Me: So, a lot of people I have talked to outside of this work seem to understand a
268.little bit about it, but why do you think they don't see them as victims. They
269.understand that they were made to be a prostitute but they don't make the connection
270.that it wasn't their choice, even though they know...Like they know it wasn't their
271.choice, but they aren't connecting it to the fact that they were a prostitute but it
272. wasn't their choice. They see them as two separate things. It wasn't their choice to
273.go and they were a prostitute. They don't see it as the same thing. Why do you think
274.that it?

275.

276.P2: (smiles) I would say lack of information but (laughs) I don't know. We have
277.worked too much in this direction but maybe we have to do much more. Of course
278.it's a funding issue. We don't have the funds to make this thing bigger. Maybe...They
279.are organizing a lot of trainings with professionals in a lot of directions. But maybe
280.it should be done more with the public.

281.

282.P1: Even with them it's not so easy to convince them that they are victims of
283.trafficking. While you are speaking about the program and these things and we are
284.having a coffee break " they are not victims of trafficking, they are prostitutes"
285.Please this, and we have this kind of experience working with them. They are
286.victims of trafficking because of this of this of this. "No they like to go there. That
287.why it's their choice." No it's not like that. That's why it's a lot to do in this
288.direction. To convince the whole community that they are victims of trafficking and
289.because of many reasons they are in this situation or have been forced to do that kind

290.of professional things like that...

291.

292.Me: Um, to sort of move in a different direction...What are the traditional, cultural

293.beliefs towards women in Albania and in what way do you think that influences

294.stigma against victims of trafficking. Or do you think it influences?

295.

296.P2: Of course it influences. For example, one of the main beliefs is that women

297.should be...

298.

299.Me: Submissive?

300.

301.P2: Mmmhmm. To the mans or to the husbands and its, the women all their lives

302.have to be...

303.

304.P1: under their orders things like that...and to be obedient

305.

306.P2: ...and starting from the father and then to the husband and older brother...

307.

308.P1: Older brother and then to the family and then to the father in law

309.

310.P2: And then to everyone else. And she is obliged to, to support anything because

311.she is the woman...

312.

313.P1: And if you talk to the women from the rural areas from the women in the villages

314.in the towns around. If the town is a big town, especially a big town this fact has

315.changed. Women are now strong now and they dare to talk at least. Or to raise their

316.voice against injustice. But in rural areas if you listen to them, they consider it as a

317.normal thing if her husband or their common in law or her big brother orders her to

318.do something or, I think the worst thing is to beat them if they have done something

319.wrong. And everyone can see that as a normal thing, even today in rural and more
320.remote areas. But in the big cities I think it is at least changing. But I hope it is
321.changing. When we at least listen maybe now with violence for example, I think it is
322.a big step forward because before they couldn't speak about the violence, domestic
323.violence. Now they could dare to speak about.

324.

325.P4: Um, another thing is that our society judge more women than men. And uh
326.forgive more men's things than womens. So if a woman, for example, cheats the
327.husband than she is a witch or something like that. But if the man does that, it's a
328.normal thing. No one judge him. Ok the man's can do that...

329.

330.P3: He is a man...

331.

332.P4: So

333.

334.P6: In the case where the women is a victim of domestic violence in the family even
335.if it is known in the community not only in the family but also by the community by
336.the relatives that she is violated by her husband, when the woman decided to go
337.back, to leave the house, she ask for protection order. It's the first step, although she
338.doesn't know the very first step to divorce, but in the first step is asking for this
339.defense order?

340.

341.Me: Restraining order?

342.

343.P6: Restrain? Maybe.

344.

345.Me: To keep them away?

346.

347.P6: Yes, yes. Even in these cases she is punished or judged....

348.

349.P3, P2: Judged, judged...

350.

351.P6: by the family by the community.

352.

353.P3: She, you destroyed the family is the term that is used in such cases.

354.

355.P1: Although she has escaped all this violence she is also judged by the others.

356.

357.P5: It is not judged the man who is you know...

358.

359.P6: For the victims of trafficking it is different because of the mentalities. People

360.think they choose to make this kind of work. Not only the community but also the

361.families judges these girls about this kind of...we don't say it but...this choice.

362.

363.P2: And if you listen to their family story. And for us we discuss with each other

364.sometime and we see that it's incredible how this girl is still alive or how this girl is

365.like she is. It's different with a lot of other...(trails off. Someone leaves from the

366.other office. Loses train of thought)

367.

368.Me: So given these beliefs about women in Albania how direct, how does that fall

369.onto victims of trafficking. Because I sort of see it as two strikes against them. Like,

370.you've done this thing *and* you're a woman so like now it's like twice as hard for

371.you.

372.

373.P2: I don't understand?

374.

375.Me: Sorry, sorry sorry....

376.

377.P1: Maybe it's at the point where...wait close the door.

378.

379.Me: Ok so I was asking since there are these views about women already. There's
380.already this hardship for women, now that they are victims of trafficking or seen as
381.prostitutes how much harder is it for them because of these two things?

382.

383.P2: Double, triple...(laughs) Of course it's more harder for them. They are not only
384. women in Albanian society but they are victims of trafficking and they are
385.prostitutes in the eyes of the public. So of course it's more harder for them. Um, if
386.we have to fight everyday to convince the people that are around us that we are not
387.just women but that we can also be good professionals or I don't know what can we
388.say, in their case we have to fight a lot of, much more to be accepted and to be I don't
389.know, to be evaluated by the society.

390.

391.P1: And they, it is very difficult for them to believe that they could change. Even
392. when we try to give them good examples that was known according to our known
393.experience, we still need to say to them listen, this kind of, this, this shop is opened
394.by a former victim of trafficking and has now her own business and it is hard for
395.them to understand how she has changed. And they couldn't believe themselves that
396.they are forced to change. Or when we saw some fails...I remember when years ago
397.there was a woman. She was around 60 years old she came to the shelter and she
398.spoke about her history. And she was 15 years old when she was dismissed by her
399.father. She was abused in the family and she was dismissed by her father and she
400.was in the street and then step by step she began a writer and something like that and
401.the girls were so astonished how she has changed. They didn't believe her. So it's
402.right there. Because they didn't believe in their own forces and abilities. That's why
403.so we have to work on this things that we have to say to them, yes, you are strong
404.enough and we have a fact that you are here and you have survived it's a big thing.
405.Because if you have suffered or if you have experienced this kind of bad thing it's

406.not because of your fault it's because of other's fault. And that's why you have
407.forces, you have abilities, you can change as all the other have. But it's not so easy.
408.

409.Me: Do you think that if these girls could be seen as victims there would be less
410.stigma?

411.

412.P4: Yes, I think so. Because no one of us is totally protected in their life. And such
413.things could happen to anyone of us. Each one of us can one day, unfortunately, find
414.herself as victim let's say. But this is not something that we have chosen so we do
415.not have to be judged for this.

416.

417.P1: I can also that this a cultural thing for the Albanian because you are not judged
418.only as a victim of trafficking, but you are judged as a person that has come from a
419.very small city in a capital.

420.

421.P4: Yea, sometimes.

422.

423.P1: But maybe these girls, and I remember when I moved from my small city and I
424.came to that building. And after sometime my neighbor said that we thought that
425.you are coming from Lezhe and Lezhe is a very very small town and the people are
426.not so well educated there. And very small things that I was saying how it possible.
427.They also were looking at me how I put my flowers on the front, these small things.
428.A lot of people, they (laughing), I think of that that is a kind of a...

429.

430.P4: Culture...

431.

432.P1: So if you are a victim trafficking, if you are a prostitute, then you are more
433.targeted.

434.

435.P5: Targeted, yes you are targeted.

436.

437.Me: Ok so how do you think Albanian culture affects the reintegration

438.of returning victims of trafficking in Albania?

439.

440.P2: Um, well due to the fact that many of the parents of these victims of trafficking

441.belong to, how can be said? Old mentality, we are really affected by, you know, the

442.concern or the thoughts of other people who are living in the same community. Uh,

443.very often, um, you know, um, forced them to, to abandon their children, their girls

444.because they are not accepted by the large community and in this sense um, they

445.prefer to lose the contacts and to be more, uh, to see the issue from an outside other

446.view. But, what we have seen is the fact that if these parents or the family

447.relationships are very strong or the parents are more supportive to the daughters, the

448.reintegration process is more successful. Very often during our work and during the

449.mediation we do with the families of these beneficiaries, we try to negotiate with

450.them and to explain them that the most important thing is their daughter, and all the

451.things that happened to her, and so, to encourage them to change the point of view

452.and to be more supportive and to accept their child as it is. It's not so easy but we

453.have had good results, with good percentage of parents. But of course, you know, the

454.impact or the role of mentalities is huge in this direction.

455.

456.P5: And not only the families of the beneficiaries but also the neighbors and the

457.community. Uh, they, in the most of the cases, they disapprove of the behavior of

458.those cases. And the family, the families of the cases are impacted by the

459.community.

460.

461.P1: Uh, the mentality is so strong sometimes, such as the families accept their

462.daughters but because of the mentality they moved from the place where they lived

463.before. And, uh, this is the mentality especially, not only in the rural areas but also in

464.the towns. Uh, according to our experience, we have met a lot of families, when we
465.have discussed directly to them, it is not so hard; it is hard for them, but they, as their
466.daughters have done something wrong, according to them, they, um, like a black
467.sheep in a white crowd in the village or the community. That's why they don't want
468.to accept their daughters. So they try to do another solution, and one of these
469.solution what comes in my mind now is they move from the town, from their town to
470.another place. And then their relationship started-restarted-and this is very good
471.because it less or it uh makes the reintegration process more easy for both parts. Not
472.only, we have also considered the family place an important role in the reintegration
473.of the victims of trafficking, and according to our experience, we have seen that
474.when the support of the family is strong, they are successful in their reintegration
475.process. When the family is not so strong, not only because they are not strong as a
476.family but also because of the mentality, and also because of the stigma and
477.discrimination, they fail. So they try to choose other ways and other solutions.
478.

479.P6: Um, the other thing is besides the families, stigma affects reintegration. Uh not
480.only in relationships with their families, in employment, in education, uh in building
481.relationships with others, even like friends colleagues, but even intimate
482.relationships. So it affects in total their reintegration. It affects even sometimes their
483.security because of the blaming them. It happens that it is associated with
484.prostitution, so, the reason is that wide understanding in Albania is that exploitation
485.happened only for prostitution, mostly, so this is the reason that they judge them.
486.And we have seen, and what I really would like, really, to improve first of all is that
487.at least professionals should not stigmatize them. At least professionals should
488.change their attitudes and respect their rights. Um, we see starting from law
489.enforcements, police, prosecutors, that um the manner how they communicate and
490.manner how they treat these cases are really discriminated in many cases. Beside
491.that we have seen too employment offices that is the same. Or too business, if she
492.says that is a former victim of trafficking it is the same. So it affects. This is even

493.connected, ok, with the culture, that is in general, culture of shame. Not only for
494.prostitution but if somebody dance on the road, is a shame. If somebody wear
495.something that is...

496.

497.P4: Different...

498.

499.P6: Different, is a shame. So it's uh, in general that culture of the country (laughs)

500.should be...

501.

502.P4: Developed.

503.

504.P6: uh yea, so and we see that in many cases they judge their self and stigmatize their

505.self. And this is really problematic. We have heard many cases saying that, "We are

506.different." "Uh, why you are different?" And they try to explain like they are

507.different really they try to explain how inferior they feel and um this stigmatization is

508.connected even then with their low self esteem and decision making, and many

509.aspects that are very important for their empowerment and reintegration.

510.

511.Me: Why is reputation so important in Albanian culture?

512.

513.P4: What's that?

514.

515.Group response: Reputation...

516.P3: Because it's always been the 'other'. The other person. We been lived in, times,

517.ago, in community all together with strong relationships in community and in towns,

518.and in a big city, like Tirana. Uh, family in Albania has a, has power. Has a

519.strong...we have strong relationships with our cousins, like....

520.

521.P1: Cousins...

522.

523.P3: Like not only with the first generation of the relatives but the second and the
524.third. We all know each other and we refer to them as 'cousin'. So, in a small town,
525.eventually know everyone and everyone knows you. Uh, we, you have to behave
526. well so you can be a 'good girl' or a 'good person' or a 'good guy'. If this doesn't
527. happen, rules of the society where you live, can um, can punish in a kind of way,
528.like judging, or discriminating or stigmatizing...I don't know...

529.

530.P6: And do you know, as communism and even as a philosophy or I can say, it has
531.been important to collective life than to individual. So everything is done for
532.collectivity or, how i can say, for the community, for the good, not for individual. So
533.the individuals have put his or herself in favor, or I can say, to the whole group. Not
534.to his self, first of all. So it is not the community or the society serving to the
535.individual but the individual is, should serve to them. So, it should be the same
536.values, the same behaviors that have been put on like this. So maybe even this has
537.influenced.

538.

539. P2: We have been used with these values since we have been child. Our parents
540.have transmitted this kind of information to us, and maybe tomorrow I will transmit
541.something to my daughter.

542.

543.P1: As Im the older in the group, I have somehow experience that time. And as X
544.said, yes, we try to be all the same. Not only in ideas or in opinion or in thoughts but
545.even in everyday life, or even in the house. Furnishing...everything was the same! If
546.I go to my neighbor, not to my cousins...absolutely the same with my cousins!...but
547.with the neighbors, not only my town also on different towns in different villages,
548.you, you, you can say that you are in the same place everywhere. And if you have
549.done something wrong you are...

550.

551.P1 & P6: Different...

552.

553.P1 & P6: Wrong...

554.

555.P1: Judged different...then it was something brought from abroad...I do not know

556.how...But there are also person who were used by the parties, I don't know how to

557.explain. At the time that, um, not jump on you in the sense that immediately they

558.saw that something is different then you were targeted. And that's why it's not so

559.easy to be like that. Um,

560.

561.P2: A lot of person have been to prison for this reason.

562.

563.P1: I remember...I remember somebody at that time...I was just mentioning that my

564.husband is an officer and when he wanted to get married with me, he had to ask for

565.everybody in my big family, not only within my own family. My uncle, my aunts,

566.from my mother side, from my father side, he to ask everywhere before giving my

567.word to me...or I had to give him my word to him. He had to ask everyone,

568.otherwise if somebody from my family was abroad or he has done something wrong

569.or was put in jail that he absolutely was not allowed by the part to marry me. And

570.this relation stop there.

571.

572.P6: I can show that even nowadays the problem is many things. I am coming from

573.North. I live in Tirana but without not telling to somebody that I am from Tropoja, I

574.gain their respect. When they ask me, where are you come from? I say, I come from

575.Tropoja.."Ah you are from Tropoja. You are highlander! You are..." It looks that

576.they start stigmatizing me and judging me. So it is really the total culture.

577.

578.P6: They paid so much attention in that communism time to the biographia of the

579.people. To the their integrity or I can so to be good. To be good according to the

580. standards of the regime but ...

581.

582.P4: And it affect for the whole family. And big family. Not only for the individual.

583.

584.P6: Yes, yes. So this is maybe one reason that everyone now is really...your

585. characteristics in every aspect. Even you are good, you behave good, you have an

586. bad experience before, even you mother or somebody, not directly you, you can be

587. judged. It's difficult to change. Should be really war to change that.

588.

589.P4: This is why we live with our families even if we are 40 or 30 we don't have this

590. kind of attitude to live alone. The girl or boy decide in 20s, in his 20s or in her 20s to

591. live alone? No. If you go to another, in Tirana maybe, you have to study, ok, you

592. can do that. But not for no reason

593.

594.P6: To be in the same town! (laughs)

595.

596.P4: And I think this comes from the communism when the family was so the stress,

597. the accent, was focused on the family. Not in the nuclear family but in the big

598. family. In community in the individual disappears in the community. He wasn't the

599. one. But he was one of the...

600.

601.P1: I don't want to justify what we experienced before, but even for my daughter, she

602. is 22 years old. And last week I talked to X, that last week I met a friend of mine

603. from Switzerland, and he asked me how old is Y. And I told him that she is 22 years

604. old and he asked me is she still living with you? Yes. Yes! My yes was, yes! how

605. are you asking me (everyone laughs). But when I think that, today on the TV in the

606. morning it was a program, yes, they were talking about living some young people

607. from America, I don't know where, coming to Albania for their studies. They started

608. to live here and to work here and one of the girls, one of the girls told them that yes,

609.the Albanians here, the students, here try to find the job according to their studies.

610.For example, you have study for psychology, and you, at any way you want to work

611.in your profession. And she tries to explain that it doesn't happen like this. In the

612.beginning, you can work in the shop, you can sell flowers and things like that. And it

613. was a shame...

614.

615.P3: to work as a cleaner or things like that...

616.

617.P1: And I was thinking for my daughter, and if I want my daughter to live along, she

618.has no conditions to live along. Because if we compare with, uh, another, in another

619.place, if my daughter has a good job and she is able to afford the rent of the house,

620.and the food, and everything, it's ok for me. Now in this stage.

621.

622.P4: But it's weird. My mother...

623.

624.P1: Yes, I am sure.

625.

626.P4: My mother...

627.

628.P1: And then he asked me, "Does she have any boyfriend?" And I told him, "No, as I

629.know she does not have!" (everyone is laughing) And then I try to justify saying,

630."Maybe she has, but I just don't know." And we have an expression in Albania that

631.the parents are the last one who knows something about their daughters. And then he

632.say to me that if it is like this, it's your fault then. And then i stopped. (everyone

633.laughs) Because I understand that it was my fault, if I didn't understand that my

634.daughter is in love or not.

635.

636.P5: In the past we have some laws, so tradition, the Kanun...

637.

638.Me: Yea, how much of an impact do you think it still has today on views on women
639.and things like this?

640.

641.P6: Yea, yea it really has impact. Negative impact. I can see in the lives of...ok, our
642.target group is women and especially when they are victims of trafficking. It has
643.because, because as we talk to it, it affects negatively their reintegration process and
644.their empowerments process. And to make it slow it make it challenge so it is really
645. hard to say and to do it. So it is so important to raise not only program of assistance
646.but to advocate more in different levels in how to improve this situation because we
647.talk for our target group but we see that even we as a woman are really we can say in
648. good conditions compared...we face so much challenges because of these kind of
649.culture and stigmatization so it needs really to do so much work. And to do it.

650.

651.Me: Ok, how else do you think views on the role of women in Albanian society, how
652.do you think that has affected the views of returning victims of trafficking?

653.

654.P4: I think the woman in Albania as seen as inferior to the man. Like, she has to do
655.the housework. She can be a housekeeper she can take care of the kids. She can
656.have a job, I mean the jobs that are suitable for the women, but not do those kind of
657.things that are against the rules, the society rules. And I think the girls, the
658.beneficiaries, have done some of these things that are not, let's say, uh, not accepted
659.for the society. It's not accepted for the society in the small towns to, to just to go for
660.a walk or to have a coffee, just to go our for a coffee. No. The man can do that but
661.not the girls. Or it can be just a kafe where the girls can go but not all the kafes in
662.that town. That's my experience.

663.

664.P6: You can be accompanied by a other or a fiance or someone...

665.

666.P4: Yes by someone...

667.

668.P1: Like a big brother...

669.

670.P6: But to go alone or to go two girls alone is like "Ooo these are...

671.

672.P4: Yes.

673.

674.P6: ...immoral woman!" (laughs)

675.

676.P4: I am talking about Albania but in Tirana things have changed, but only in Tirana

677.because talking for Albania everything is like we are saying now. And the best thing

678.is for her to finish high school, if she can, and then marry her. During the high

679.school, maybe engaging her, during the high school. And then, when she finish high

680.school, to marry her. I think this is the major of cases. Sure, there are different

681.cases, but this is how the woman is seen in our society. I think...

682.

683.P6: And then the others makes decisions for them. Even takes decisions for going to

684.school or not for going to work or not and to whom with she can be married, with

685.whom, and things like this so these, when the girls do not accept these kinds of

686.decisions, then uh they sometimes they do not any solutions, just to be away from

687.that situation and then they fall into another, sometimes worse situation, so it looks

688.that, if they tried to change sometimes was really...

689.

690.P4: Sometimes was really bad if they tried to change their situation. And bad things

691.happens in fact during the road because no one supports them.

692.

693.P5: And this comes from the past too because we see the patriarchal family.

694.

695.P4: Yes, when the woman has no power to decide what she can do, what she want to

696.do...

697.

698.P6: And the men are so dominant. Are so dominant not only in these kind of villages

699.or small towns...even men that are in these so called emancipated families we see

700.that the woman and the man are emancipated but when we hear stories, they are

701.really so dominant, so abusive, terrible persons. It's sometimes unbelievable how

702.they can be because they have lived in different conditions and they should be

703.different and they are not, so it's...it's a big problem in this.

704.

705.P2: For example, a few times ago, I heard a story, of a very emancipated woman. We

706.can see her many times of TV due to her position. And I heard that her husband

707.didn't let her take a servitude for the house because it's her job to take care of the

708. home. She was, she's really you know a lot of work to do all the time so engaged in

709.so many activities, but her husband didn't let her just to take a servitude. I thought it

710.was terrible to exist such a thing in an emancipated family. What we can expect in

711.others?

712.

713.P1: And this also increased in divorced family. If we compare the families in Tirana

714.there are strong women. They can raise their voice, they are so engaged in their daily

715.life but if we compare with other women, big city--small cities, it's not the same

716.because they are obliged to live in that in those conditions that their husbands force

717.them to. But in Tirana it happens sometimes that they do not agree and they decided

718.to get divorced. And then, the number of divorce family is increasing.

719.

720.P4: All over Albania I think. It's more common that a couple get divorce in

721.nowadays than in before.

722.

723.P1: Yes but in uh when I think about this emancipated families the woman is strong

724.enough to live alone but in some cities they are not that's why they are obliged to live

725.in these bad...not bad conditions but in hard conditions.

726.

727.P6: I think some others do not have choices...do not have...Do not create, do not have

728.that strong character to create choices...

729.

730.P4: And I've seen that most of the cases of the divorced cases, it's the woman that

731.leaves the home. The husband stays there. It's seen that the woman doesn't profit

732.anything. Even the home, the house, and uh she has to leave. If she wants to leave,

733.she can leave, but he stays there.

734.

735.P6: And you see there are some shelters for battered woman but not for abusive man.

736.(everyone laughs) Because better the woman should go together with five childrens

737.and he should stay...

738.

739.P4: Yes and yet he gets to stay home...And maybe marry again in a month, because

740.her family...his family can find a wife, or two, three...depends.

741.

742.P3: But this is related with other problems that our society is facing now. For

743.example, buildings that are not legalized for example. Especially in rural areas not in

744.Tirana, that are suburbs, are not uh legalized. And in this case, if they get divorced,

745.then the woman even she had contributed a lot in the building of that house, now she

746.don't profit nothing because that buildings not...

747.

748.P1: Registered...

749.

750.Something I was wondering when you guys were talking is do you think part of the

751.objection and rejection of these girls is that, is it because of what they have done or is

752.it because now they are seen as unsuitable or, like, damaged in a way, now they are

753.not marriageable?

754.

755.P6: Yea, yea.

756.

757.Me: Do you think one is more important than the other?

758.

759.P6: First of all, the families are blaming why for example they did an action, like left

760.family or why...they are blaming them for this. Secondly, they have heard that she's

761. prostituting, you are prostitute you have put a shame in our family...

762.

763.P4: The worst thing.

764.

765.P6: So do not come here etc. etc. The other thing is that, uh, I think that are

766.marriageable or not. We have seen that many of these returned cases, the family,

767.tried to find a husband and they have found, oh my God, what kind of husbands for

768.these girls. And said to them, you should marry at least its a husband! It's it can be

769.older than her with children, it can be a drug abuser, it can be anything but it's a

770.husband for her and she should be married and it's really this kind...

771.

772.P4: Thinking about this you can see how the man is important and how he has the

773.power. if you have a man...

774.

775.P6: Then you change the reputation for the...

776.

777.P4: Just to be married, to have someone to hang on and so your everything is ok.

778.

779.P6: Yea, yea if you build a family are married somehow it could be changed.

780.

781.P4: If you are alone, you don't have any power. You cannot decide anything; you

782.cannot live as good as you can with a man.

783.

784.P5: And when girls are 20 years old they are considered...

785.

786.P1: Old.

787.

788.P5: by the family that are very old. (laughing and start speaking in Albanian)

789.

790.P6: How can be translated in english? It's like, you are left in my door....Brother,

791.parents say you are left in my door, so how I can keep...(laughter, talking over one

792.another)

793.

794.P4: Nobody takes you as a wife. Not only for the girls who are exploited for our

795.target group but if you have a boyfriend and your neighbors know about this and you

796.break up with him, it's a shame and you cannot get married again, or maybe you can

797.find someone that doesn't know about this. (laughter)

798.

799.P5: Or a husband that has been married before.

800.

801.P4: Yea yea you can find someone that has been married before or that has kinds

802.because you are not good now.

803.

804.P1 and P6: You had the same experience. (laughter, more talking in Albanian)

805.

806.Me:Since Albania was isolated for so long, how do you think that isolation and the

807.mentality of communism have influence stigmatization....

808.

809.P2: That's a good question. Because it was something new for Albania. In the 19...

810.

811.P4: Many of the things that were in Albania probably and even nowadays were

812. considered as taboo or not usual things. In Europe or in the world are very normal
813. things and now that we are open society, we have the conflict is more big now
814. because we were a very conservative society and now we are seeing how the things
815. go in the world or in the Europe and such things. And there are some very big
816. problems, conflicts between the generations. For example, our parents were grown
817. up with a very deep thinks about the family. Or about the values, morals and I don't
818. know things like this. And the divorce for example was unacceptable in our society.
819. But at 90's we can see that many couples are now divorced because of different
820. problems. And in the world this is not a very big problem and things like this.
821.

822. P1: Or if I compare the young generation. I am 50 now and I have been...It was
823. possible for me to live both generations--that time and this time and it was as X said
824. that it was really like that. That family was the main unit and father was the big and
825. the top and the others and things like that. And woman was the one who has to do
826. everything at home. And besides that she was the most judged person in the family.
827. But when the changes in the society are with the movement of the Albanians to
828. Europe we see that the young generation have been there and they come to Albania
829. with open minded ideas and things like that and we see how they have created the
830. families. How the rapports are in the couple. How they behave toward the children.
831. But what I noticed is that I am very sure that when they are in Italy for example or in
832. Greece they are different persons. They are used, or not used but they have to adapt,
833. or obey all the laws there. They cannot throw this one like this but when they come
834. to Albania they did the same thing. And this what me personally are...it pains me. I
835. have noticed one time, I have mentioned my brother he have moved from Italy where
836. he lived for 15 years and when he came back, he became another person. It was
837. very noticeable to see in the family and everything. But what I noticed is that he has
838. not changed in the sense that he taken all these good values from Europe and he was
839. trying to practice here. And I think this is a good example because I saw him, i see
840. him doing like that and I like that kind of behavior and I want to do it to myself so

841.it's a good thing. What my sister in law lives in a flat and she is a five.. and she has
842.put in the stairs curtains and flowers everywhere and she cleans every day the steps
843.and the neighbors are like this, but it is a good thing and I have a good friend from
844.Switzerland and she said that if you entered to Albanians in the house, they are very
845.clean and everything is ok but after the door it change. So what I wanted to say is
846.this kind of culture that we need time to change. And even these persons who move
847.to Europe is trying to put this good things to the others. They have good values so
848. why not.

849.

850.P3: Something I would like to mention from that influence from communism in our
851.society is the fact that we used to work together a lot in cooperatives and everyone
852.knows each one's lives and everyone is allowed himself to judge others and to give
853.its own opinion about others lives and I think that families didn't have such much as
854.privacy as nowadays that now we have families in modern terms: father, mother and
855.the kids, lets say. But in that time families were more bigger and the members were
856.from different generations and give different opinions on such things. But how this
857.influences in stigmatizing victims of trafficking because we used to go to each other
858.neighbors and they used to speak about our lives and used to give opinions about us
859.and these opinions hurts members of the family and sometimes they are ready to
860.close the door to their girls face before they support all these bad opinions. I think
861.that we are very, a society that can't support some or we care so much about the
862.opinion what others opinion about us. I think we shouldn't because each one of us
863.have a life and has the right to live it in such a way he desires but this is what
864.happened because our families were used to live in that time. We related with this
865.thing more.

866.

867.P1: And related to what X is saying we very often ask the girls when they met their
868.families, we ask them how or what the neighbors or the relatives know where you
869.are. And their families do not say to them to their neighbors that their girl is in an

870. organization. But she is have a study somewhere she is having a course or she is...

871.

872. Several participants: married...

873.

874.P1: of these type only because of these mentalities or these kind of judges.

875.

876.Me: Ok so what type of program would you, if you could put together a program to
877. decrease stigmatization of victims of trafficking what would the program look like?

878.P2: I think that this kind of program should start at the elementary school.

879.

880.P1: Awareness raising campaigns, campaigns starting in school.

881.

882.P2: Yes, because that the difference should be made or the most good results should
883. be expected by the young generation. I believe it's very difficult to change the
884. mentality of the older generation. But if we can work with the, you know, with the
885. teenagers, with the youth...

886.

887.P1: Older women, girls...

888.

889.P2: I think this should make the difference.

890.

891.P1: Because they do not know what a victim is. They do not know what a trafficking
892. is. If you go to the villages or sometimes it has happened that X had been in Italy
893. and she is well dressed and so they do not know what has happened to her but they
894. try to do the same thing in that way. So they are at risk for being trafficked because
895. they do not know...they do not have this information about what has happened. The
896. girl does not speak in the community about what has happened to her because of this
897. mentality and because of her family and threats of this kind of thing. That's why it
898. can influence the others to do the same thing even if they do not have information.

899.

900.Me: Do you think, is there would this program be different for each region of

901.Albania or do you think it could be the same for every region? Are there different

902.needs for different parts of Albania.

903.

904.P5: No, is the same.

905.

906.P2: I think it's the same, it's the same.

907.

908.P1: Because the victims are from the whole of Albania so we cannot decide that this

909.part Albania is more touched you know.

910.

911.P2: I think is the same.

912.

913.P1: Rural areas. They have also cases from the urban areas.

914.

915.Me: And is there a way to present the program that would be the most impactful for

916.Albanian culture? Is there a specific way that would recall make sense in Albania for

917. Albanian culture. That if i were to do a program in the US it wouldn't make sense

918.here, you know what I mean?

919.

920.P4: We mentioned that the people that works directly with the victims of trafficking

921.in Albania they know and have a clear idea of what's a prostitute and what's a

922.victims of trafficking. I think that it needs more capacity building here in Albania

923.with the people the offer services for the victims of trafficking to be trained and to

924.be raising their capacities how to work with the victims of trafficking since they are a

925.very delicate target group. So this is specific for Albania for all the factors that we

926. mentioned before.

927.

928.Me: Ok and my last question is...Well one of the things that M and I have talked
929. about is there is really no discussion within Albania, well everybody seems to
930.acknowledge that there is stigma against victims of trafficking. But there hasn't been
931.any formal discussions or like formal writings about it. Like if you were to try to
932.find a paper coming from here or a study you can't find it. So why do you think
933.there haven't been these types of things yet?

934.

935.P4: To write about this topic?

936.

937.Me: Yea.

938.

939.P4: Or to talk about this topic...

940.

941.Me: Yea to talk about it. Because I know that if you ask someone about it, like a
942.regular person they'll says yes. There is stigma, and everyone here acknowledges
943.that there is stigma but if you try to find something on the internet about stigma in
944.Albania against victims of trafficking no one has a section on their webpage, no
945. one's written a report about it. This is more like a, I'm curious to know, it's my
946.person question (laughs).

947.

948.P2: Maybe because I think that it's sometimes inner heart of people. Maybe they
949.stigmatize the victims of trafficking or they don't...

950.

951.P4: Accept...

952.

953.P2: If you make a questionnaire, or like an interview with different professionals or
954.even with persons of the general public they didn't...

955.

956.P4: They don't accept that they stigmatize.

957.

958.P2: They will tell you “no...I feel bad for them!”

959.

960.P4: If they are victims, they are victims.

961.

962.P2: “I will support them.” You will hear such things because they don’t want the
963.other people to know that in fact they stigmatize or they judge this kind of target
964.group. That’s why maybe one of the reasons. And the other reason is that in Albania
965.there are a few organizations that can make this kind of study. And in our case, we
966.have applied but we never get some funds to do such kinds of things. But we really
967.would love to make some big ones. Because here we are in touch with different
968.people or family maybe we can use this kind of connection to do something like that
969.but we didn’t get the funds. If you can find them somehow....(laughter)Me:

970.Hopefully...(more laughs)

971.

972.P1: I think this is the reason that you are here! (laughter)

973.

974.Me: We’ll see...(more laughter as the focus group ends)