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CLOSING GAPS IN ANTI-SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EFFORTS

VIA MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATION

by

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Abstract

CLOSING GAPS IN ANTI-SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EFFORTS

VIA MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATION

Stephanie D. Odom

This qualitative phenomenological study examines the perspectives of stakeholders across sectors of society working with and on behalf of individuals with lived experiences of sexual exploitation. Anti-sexual exploitation efforts can be understood on a Continuum of Care, along which strategic points of intersection offer opportunities for collaboration in prevention, intervention, restoration, and reintegration. Research indicates that multi-sector collaboration can effectively address gaps in services.

Participants (n = 25) represented key sectors and stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region. A subset of participants offered their perspectives as survivors of sexual trauma (assault, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking). Study interviews addressed positive and negative aspects of the collaborative process. Some barriers to effective collaboration were identified and discussed. Both formal and informal criteria were recommended to facilitate the formation and depth of collaborative relationships. Suggestions were made for improving collaboration long-term. Implications for researchers, practitioners, community members, interventionists, and policymakers are included.

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Key Terminology

Continuum of Care

The field of anti-sexual exploitation has adopted terminology to describe the process of holistic and sustainable care throughout the lifecycle of vulnerable and exploited individuals with complex trauma (see Clawson, Dutch, Solomon & Grace, 2009). Federal policies and guidance have identified the focal points and set goals for stakeholders in the anti-exploitation realm (see United States Department of State [US DOS], 2000, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2004). For the purposes of this qualitative phenomenological study, these concepts have been combined to paint the picture of the potential missing links or gaps in available, accessible, effective, or desired services, and the strategic points throughout an individual's lifecycle where multi-sector collaboration might help to fill those gaps. The primary investigator created a model of a *Continuum of Care*, consolidating the types of services described by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (US HHS) (see Clawson et al., 2009) into four interconnected yet progressing stages -- prevention, intervention, restoration, and reintegration – to help the reader visualize this complex concept. An individual's movement along the Continuum can also be understood as a concurrent movement from one functional demographic category to another, based on the impact of the services received at each corresponding stage.

This Continuum of Care functions as a model for conceptualizing a complex phenomenon, encompassing neither the totality of the anti-exploitation efforts nor the nuanced experiences of individuals within and between each identified stage. However, there do exist many points along the Continuum where Prevention, Intervention,

Restoration, and Reintegration efforts can take place. While conceptualized as forward progress along the Continuum, it must be understood that an individual's journey is unique and lifelong. The experience of growth and wellbeing will likely not be linear, and reintegration does not guarantee the removal of all vulnerabilities, especially those systemic and societal. It should also be noted that while successful services at the Prevention Stage would ideally protect an individual from victimization, the reality of compounding vulnerabilities might not be resolved with preventative measures alone. Progress along the Continuum may be iterative, if an individual abandons the process or experiences a lack of adequate services at any stage.

Figure 1. Continuum of Care

Figure 1. Continuum of Care

Prevention:

Addressing systemic vulnerabilities, ACEs, etc. that increase risk of exploitation and/or trafficking; Educating community to improve identification of at-risk populations.

Intervention:

Identifying and providing support services to at-risk and victimized populations; Recovering victims from situations of exploitation/trafficking; Prosecuting responsible parties.

Restoration:

Providing trauma-informed, survivor-focused services to victims or survivors; Meeting needs for long-term shelter, therapy, education, etc.

Reintegration:

Equipping survivors to re-enter society with confidence and a decreased risk of re-exploitation; Ongoing support, job readiness training, etc.; Providing opportunities for "sustained survivors" to participate in anti-exploitation/trafficking efforts.

The following terms and definitions were compiled from a range of sources. The researcher sought to advance the collective understanding by offering more comprehensive terminology than a single source could provide. Scholarly discourse on the process of solidifying terminology across disciplines supports such an effort.

L. Gerassi (2015) highlights the "confusion and controversy within the academic, legal, and popular literature as well as among researchers and social service providers" (p.2) that accompany variations in individually defined terminology. The impact of contentious theoretical perspectives on defining specific concepts or phenomena has contributed to much of the confusion in the research. Gerassi's (2015) efforts to provide definitions that acknowledge the complexities of individual experiences informed the researcher's own pursuit.

> Numerous overlapping yet contrasting terms such as sex trafficking, prostitution, survival sex, sexual exploitation, and sex work provide much confusion and many challenges in victim identification, in large part because of the theoretical and philosophical perspectives influencing these concepts (Gerassi, 2015, p.1) [T]he trafficking literature in its scholarly and public policy manifestations expose a wide variety of theoretical perspectives and epistemic leanings […] Indeed, trafficking scholars and advocates from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), identify with theoretical perspectives ranging from abolitionism and neo-abolitionism, to those that view trafficking on a continuum of migration, as a human rights issue, within a pro-sex work/labor framework, and an extension of religious/faith-based beliefs […]. Whereas the scholarly literature has explored etiology, governmental and nongovernmental reports have overwhelmingly

positioned trafficking within a framework of crime control and prevention […]

(Musto, 2009, p.281).

Sexual Exploitation

Exploitation for short. This is an umbrella term to include any and all demographics

that find themselves in a situation of sex trafficking or survival sex, forced or coerced

experiences of commercial sex (i.e. stripping, pornography or prostitution), sexual abuse,

or sexual assault. Elements of exploitation include existing micro, mezzo, or macro

vulnerabilities that place an individual or a demographic of individuals at-risk; coercive

push or pull factors leading to an individual's introduction to sex as transactional; the

taking advantage of adverse childhood experiences; undesirable working or living

conditions; barriers or obstacles to exit; and limited access to social services (see

Callahan, 2016; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Gardner, Northall & Brewster,

2020; Gerassi, 2015; Kotrla, 2010; Lopez & Minassians, 2018; Marcus, Horning, Curtis,

Sanson, & Thompson, 2014; Musto, 2009).

This overarching term involves the action of an individual taking advantage of an

existing vulnerability (systemic or situational) in another individual's life, for the

former's own personal gain. Each of the following terms describes either increasingly

more focused layers or tangential phenomena.

Sexual exploitation broadly refers to 'any actual or attempted abuse of a position of

vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not

limited to profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation.' [...]

Although scholars and prominent world organizations, including the United Nations,

currently utilize the term 'sexual exploitation' to refer to sexualized, exploitative

gender-based crimes against women and girls exclusively, U.S. law has used the term

only to refer to treatment of minors. (Gerassi, 2015, p.2)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE): Where an exchange of monetary or trade

value is made, conditional upon the provision of sexual services. Also requires taking

advantage of an individual's existing vulnerability. (see Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin,

2014)

Sex Trafficking: A form of CSE where force, fraud or coercion is involved; or where

the individual being taken advantage of is under 18 years of age (US DOS, 2000).

Sexual Abuse: A form of exploitation of a vulnerability involving repeated, uninvited

sexual encounters, especially by someone close to the victim. No exchange of monetary

or trade value is made. (see Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014)

Sexual Assault: A form of exploitation of a vulnerability involving an incidental,

uninvited sexual encounter, especially by someone the victim does not know personally.

No exchange of monetary or trade value is made. (see Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin,

2014)

Sexual Labor

Also referred to as Sex Work. This term will include any instances where the

individual selling their body for sex has not been pressured into doing so, either by

another individual or their own circumstances, currently or in the past, and where there

does not exist any vulnerability (systemic or situational) that would act as a push or pull

factor towards the sex trade. In other words, such an individual could perceive and

identify viable alternatives, but freely chose to enter the sex trade, being fully

knowledgeable of the working conditions and other risks associated with selling sex (see Marcus et al., 2014).

By this designation, the only demographic of individuals that would not fit under the umbrella of *exploitation* would be individuals who have entered the sex trade of their own free will, having complete agency, and not for lack of viable options, or in the presence of coercion or pimp pressure or adverse childhood experiences or trauma that would make them vulnerable or susceptible to potential grooming (see Gerassi, 2015; Perdue, Prior, Williamson & Sherman, 2012). These individuals would have complete ownership of their income, as well as complete freedom to come and go as they please, and to leave the sex trade entirely at any moment with no existing barriers to exit (see Farley, 2006).

It is of note that some research does contextualize sexual labor under less extreme levels of influence (i.e. mutual recruitment, some non-violent pimp involvement) as an expression of an individual's agency (see Marcus et al., 2014).

One should understand the ongoing controversy between neo-abolitionist (see Farley, 2006) and neo-liberal (see Marcus et al., 2014) theorists regarding whether or not there exist inherent gender-based inequalities and patriarchal oppression within all areas of the commercial sex industry (see Callahan, 2016; Lopez & Minassians, 2018).

Gerassi (2015) notes that:

The concept of choice and freedom of expression among sex workers is continually debated in academic and legal writings. While some academic literature refers to sex workers as people who exchange sex for money voluntarily, that is, free of coercion or control, much debate still arises as to the concept of choice and lack of someone

else controlling these sexual exchanges (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012; Miller et al., 2011).

(p.4)

While this research project focuses primarily on efforts and services related to Sexual Exploitation, there is some overlap of what information and support exist and can be made available and accessible to any individual within the sex industry (i.e. medical services, trauma-therapy, exit assistance, drug detox assistance).

Sectors

In an analysis of 150 organizations worldwide, Foot (2016) identified nine sectors participating in anti-trafficking efforts (businesses; governments; individuals; labour unions; nongovernmental organizations; professional associations; United Nations organizations; other non-U.N. intergovernmental organizations; and universities/research institutes), along with eight forms of anti-trafficking work (awareness raising; enforcement of anti-trafficking laws/policies; equipping others to counter trafficking; intervention in trafficking; policy advocacy and development; prevention; rehabilitation of trafficked persons; and research on trafficking) to explore which activities are prioritized within each sector (Foot, 2016).

This qualitative phenomenological study seeks to consolidate the sectors to six broader categories that encompass similar stakeholders in anti-exploitation efforts. Starting from the three basic sectors of civil society -- Private/Corporate, Public/Government, Non-Profit/Non-Government -- this research delineates sub-sectors within each of the three, based on their functions related to anti-exploitation efforts. Additionally, each of the sectors chosen for this qualitative phenomenological study participates to some extent in one or more of the original three objectives described in the

United Nation's Palermo Protocol (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2004) and the United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) (United States Department of State [US DOS], 2000) -- Prevention, Prosecution, and Protection, and the later addition of a focus on Partnership -- in achieving these objectives. The Palermo Protocol describes the responsibility of governing authorities, in this case specific to the concept of information exchange and training:

> States Parties shall provide or strengthen training for law enforcement, immigration and other relevant officials in the prevention of trafficking in persons. The training should focus on methods used in preventing such trafficking, prosecuting the traffickers and protecting the rights of the victims, including protecting the victims from the traffickers. The training should also take into account the need to consider human rights and child- and gender-sensitive issues and it should encourage cooperation with non-governmental organizations, other relevant organizations and other elements of civil society (UNODC, 2004).

Below are the six sector categories included in this research and a brief exploration of each sector-based role or function in anti-exploitation efforts:

Government: Establishes legislative policies and federal, state, or local initiatives, sets standards for anti-exploitation efforts, and authorizes funding for stakeholders, among other foci. This sector is involved at every stage along the Continuum of Care, wherever existing policies fall short or socio-economic factors outside of an individual's control act as push- or pull- factors toward sexual exploitation (see Gardner et al., 2020; Kenny, Helpingstine, Long & Harrington, 2020; Kotrla, 2010; Lopez & Minassians, 2018; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015).

Law Enforcement: Carrying out justice-based training for officials, and the apprehension and prosecution of individuals responsible for the exploitation of vulnerable populations (UNODC, 2004; US DOS, 2000; US DOJ, US HHS, and Homeland Security, 2014). Efforts within this sector are primarily focused on the Prevention and Intervention stages along the Continuum of Care.

Non-Profit: Including several types of non-governmental organizations, often operating in the public-private partnership space, for the purpose of efforts like client advocacy, policy reform, awareness education, therapeutic services. May offer short-term or long-term services, specialized or wrap-around holistic care, goods and/or services (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015)

Private: Maintaining corporate social responsibility by adhering to best practices for ethically managed supply chains, working conditions, and labor rights, to eliminate the exploitation of vulnerabilities (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Gardner et al., 2020). Efforts within this sector are primarily focused on the Prevention stage along the Continuum of Care but may also involve the ongoing support of individuals seeking to Reintegrate into society through intentional hiring and training for job readiness (see United States Department of Justice [US DOJ], United States Department of Health and Human Services [US HHS], and Homeland Security, 2014).

Academia/Research: A sector focused on equipping student and professional researchers to generate rigorous research to support the implementation of evidence-based practices, including publishing scholarly studies, methodologically-sound research design, and ongoing data collection and analysis to contribute to both qualitative and quantitative understanding of sexual exploitation and related topics. Additional roles of

stakeholders in academia relate to providing ongoing support for students and others in the campus community who may be at-risk/vulnerable to or have experienced exploitation, as well as survivors pursuing further education in order to reintegrate into society (see Preble, Cook & Fults, 2018). This sector contributes most directly to the Prevention, Intervention and Reintegration stages along the Continuum of Care, although research efforts and resulting recommendations have the potential to inform best practices along the entire Continuum.

Community/Individuals: A unique sector of anti-exploitation efforts, wherein individual community members participate in addressing underlying vulnerabilities at the local level, through advocacy, prevention and awareness education, volunteer support for service providers, and long-term care as individuals reintegrate into various social and community spheres. Such efforts also include changing consumer behavior in light of uncovered exploitation (see Gardner et al., 2020). This sector has a role to play at every stage along the Continuum of Care.

Stakeholders

In the context of this research, *stakeholders* will refer to the specific organizations, agencies, departments, community groups, individuals, coalitions, task forces that contribute to anti-exploitation efforts (United States Department of State [US DOS], n.d.). Each stakeholder may be associated with one or more of the Palermo Protocol initiatives (Prevention, Prosecution, Protection), as well as one or more additional qualifiers, relative to its participation on the Continuum of Care (prevention, intervention, restoration, reintegration). Stakeholder efforts along the Continuum of Care might consist

of awareness/education, identification, service provision, prosecution, and policy/advocacy, among others.

Multi-Sector Collaboration

Keyton, Ford, and Smith (2008) offer a definition of what they call "interorganizational collaboration," describing "the set of communicative processes in which individuals representing multiple organizations or stakeholders engage when working interdependently to address problems outside the spheres of individuals or organizations working in isolation" (p. 381). This qualitative phenomenological study expands the definition to incorporate not only the collaborative processes of individual stakeholders or organizations, but of entire sectors of society that have a role in anti-exploitation efforts. Therefore, multi-sector collaboration is a form of interorganizational collaboration that involves two or more sectors.

The United States Department of Justice (US DOJ or DOJ) Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center describes critical components to multi-sector collaboration:

> Nationwide, human trafficking task forces are multidisciplinary teams established with the goal of providing the broadest range of services and resources for victims and the most diverse range of investigation and prosecution options […] in pursuit of the most comprehensive response to the crime of human trafficking. This multidisciplinary task force response model (i.e., of agencies from various disciplines working together) is encouraged by the U.S. Department of Justice, and is considered worldwide as a 'best practice' in the response to human trafficking (United States Department of Justice [US DOJ], 2011, par. 2).

Levels of Collaboration

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2016) describes four main levels of collaboration.

The chart below, taken from SAMHSA's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies, is titled "Prevention Collaboration in Action." (SAMHSA, 2016). This gradient perspective on collaborative relationships served as a benchmark resource for this qualitative phenomenological study. Each of the four levels listed below are further described in Table 1. Levels of Collaboration:

Networking: "Partners share information and talk with one another for their mutual benefit" (SAMHSA, 2016).

Cooperation: "Partners support one another's prevention activities but have no formal agreement in place" (SAMHSA, 2016).

Coordination: "Partners are engaged in mutual projects and initiatives, modifying their own activities to benefit the whole" (SAMHSA, 2016).

Full Collaboration: "With a formal agreement in place, partners work toward developing enhanced capacity to achieve a shared vision" (SAMHSA, 2016).

Table 1. Levels of Collaboration

	Networking	Cooperation	Coordination	Full Collaboration
What is it?	Partners share information and talk with one another for their mutual benefit.	Partners support one another's prevention activities but have no formal agreement in place.	Partners are engaged in mutual projects and initiatives, modifying their own activities to benefit the whole.	With a formal agreement in place, partners work toward developing enhanced capacity to achieve a shared vision.
Key Features	• Loosely defined roles • Loose/flexible relationships • Informal communication • Minimal decision-making • No risk	• Somewhat defined roles • Informal and supportive relationships • More frequent communication • Limited decision-making • Little to no risk	• Defined roles • Formalized links, but each group retains autonomy • Regular communication • Shared decision-making around joint work • Low to moderate risk • Share some resources	• Formalized roles • Formal links, which are written in an agreement • Frequent communication • Equally shared ideas and decision-making • High risk but also high trust • Pooled resources
What Does It Look Like?	• Partners share what they are doing to address common community issues at interagency meetings. • Partners discuss existing programs, activities, or services with other organizations.	• Partners publicize one another's programs and services. • Partners write letters of support for one another's grant applications. • Partners co-sponsor trainings or professional development activities. • Partners exchange resources, such as technology expertise or meeting space. • Partners attend one another's meetings and events.	• Partners serve together on event planning committees and community boards. • Partners implement programs and services together. • Partners care about the same issues.	• Partners sign a memorandum of understanding with each other. • Partners develop common data collection systems. • Partners participate in joint fundraising efforts. • Partners pool fiscal or human resources. • Partners create common workforce training systems.

PREVENTION SOLUTIONS@EDC

This qualitative phenomenological study consolidates the previous definitions, identifying characteristics specific to multi-sector collaboration in anti-sexual exploitation efforts, as the process of various stakeholders coming together, with the expressed intention of cooperating to increase both the collective understanding of the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and the effectiveness in addressing it. Stakeholders and sectors participate in various forms and levels of such collaboration, based on individual actors' needs, resources and values, the missions of the organizations, and any external mandates or requirements from authoritative bodies. Important elements to consider include the origin, purpose and duration of the collaborative relationship (i.e. single event or ongoing; short-term or long-term; formal or informal/organic) as well as the depth of the collaborative relationship (i.e. networking, cooperation, coordination, full collaboration) (see Callahan, 2016; Frey, Lohmeier, Lee & Tollefson, 2006; Straus, 2002).

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)

The TVPA is one of the leading federal policies for human trafficking and offers guidance for anti-exploitation efforts. It is not universally accepted as the gold standard, however, even among stakeholders in the field, due to the policy's perceived bias toward the abolitionist theoretical perspective and its historical focus on prosecution and criminalization (see Gerassi, 2015; Jordan, Patel & Rapp, 2013; Marcus et al., 2014; Musto, 2009; Weitzer, 2007).

Palermo Protocol/TVPA Initiatives

Prosecution: The process of apprehending and penalizing those perpetrating the exploitation of others. This objective involves stakeholders in the public sector, including government agencies, law enforcement and criminal justice:

> Under the frameworks set forth in both the Palermo Protocol and the TVPA, effective law enforcement action is an indispensable element of government efforts to fight human trafficking. […] Governments should hold criminally accountable all perpetrators of human trafficking, including intermediaries aware of the intended exploitation, and should not impose suspended sentences, fines, or administrative penalties in place of prison sentences. Ideally, and consistent with the Palermo Protocol, a victim-centered legal framework should also authorize court-ordered restitution or compensation to victims in conjunction with the successful conviction of traffickers (US DOS, n.d., par. 2-3).

Protection: The process of ensuring no further harm is done to individuals that have been recovered from a situation of exploitation. This objective involves stakeholders in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, government agencies, law enforcement, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and a host of other service providers, policy advocates, and community members.

> Effective victim protection entails identifying victims, providing referrals for a comprehensive array of services, directly providing or funding NGOs to provide those services, and supporting these individuals as they rebuild their lives. Identifying victims is a critical first step in ensuring their ability to receive the support and resources they need. […] After identification, governments should

prioritize the rights and needs of victims to ensure that protection efforts are provided in ways that treat victims with dignity and provide them each the opportunity to return to a life of their choosing (US DOS, n.d., par. 6-7).

Prevention: The process of ensuring those at risk of or vulnerable to exploitation have access to necessary resources to avoid those situations and addressing structural and systemic factors that allow for individuals to exploit others without consequence. This objective involves stakeholders in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, government agencies, law enforcement, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and a host of other service providers, policy advocates, and community members.

> Effective prevention efforts address the tactics of human traffickers head on. […] Strategic intervention programs can reach at-risk populations before they are faced with the deceitful recruitment practices of those bent on exploiting them for labor or commercial sex. […] Prevention efforts should also encapsulate cross-cutting endeavors, such as amending labor laws so they do not omit certain classes of workers from coverage; robustly enforcing labor laws, particularly in sectors where trafficking is most typically found; implementing measures, such as birth registration, that reduce vulnerabilities to trafficking; developing and monitoring labor recruitment programs to protect workers from exploitation; strengthening partnerships among law enforcement, government, and NGOs; emphasizing effective policy implementation with stronger enforcement, better reporting, and government-endorsed business standards; monitoring supply chains

to address forced labor, including through government procurement policies; and working to reduce demand for commercial sex. (US DOS, n.d., par. 11-13).

Partnership: The focus on partnership was added later to guidance from the TVPA as a strategy for achieving the primary goals of Prevention, Prosecution and Protection. This objective involves stakeholders in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors including businesses, government agencies, law enforcement, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and a host of other service providers, policy advocates, and community members.

> The TIP Office works with its interagency and law enforcement partners within the U.S. government, as well as with NGOs and international organizations around the world, to assist other governments with drafting and implementing comprehensive anti-trafficking laws and vigorously prosecuting traffickers (US DOS, n.d., par. 5).

> Adequate victim protection requires effective partnerships between law enforcement and service providers not only immediately after identification, but also throughout a victim's participation in criminal justice or civil proceedings" (US DOS, n.d., par. 9).

> Meaningful partnerships between public and private sectors and civil society can expand awareness, leverage expertise, and facilitate creative solutions (US DOS, n.d., par. 11).

Trauma-Informed, Survivor-Centered, & Survivor-Informed

Understanding the impact of experiences of exploitation characterized by complex trauma and trauma bonding, as well as the ability to provide services like trauma therapy,

specifically related to sexual exploitation and the unique needs of that population. May refer to individual practitioners, methods, program structures, or organizational, agency or community standards (see United States Department of Health and Human Services [US HHS] & Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014).

Survivor-Centered: "[…T]he belief that survivors […] are experts of their own lives and have the capacity to be the leader in their path of recovery […]" (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014, p. 528).

Survivor-Informed. These describe a stakeholder (individual, organization) whose mission and objectives are defined primarily by the interests and wellbeing of survivors (see Bath et al., 2020; Bryant & Landman, 2020; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). Such a stakeholder (individual, organization) holds a perspective and/or provides services that have been shaped by the explicit, and ongoing, input of survivors (see Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Twis & Shelton, 2018).

Introduction

The exploitation of individuals is a global phenomenon that has existed throughout history. Widescale focus, from a public policy perspective, emerged around the turn of the 20th century. Over the past two decades, this issue has moved to the forefront of much social research and policy discourse. Key stakeholders in various sectors of society have contributed to the development of increased legislation and social awareness regarding the issue. One particular iteration of exploitation, namely, human trafficking, stems from socio-historical practices of slavery, exploitation, and oppression of vulnerable people and groups throughout history. Some have used the terms *modern day slavery* or *new slavery*, to characterize this current wave of human exploitation (Bales, 1999; UNODC, 2004; US DOS, 2000) and to encapsulate the various forms of exploitation and forced labor that exist around the world. The terms *trafficking in persons*, *human trafficking*, and *modern day slavery* have all been used, as public understanding of the issue has evolved, although scholars have questioned the interchangeability of such terms (Harrison, 2018; Leary, 2016; Musto, 2009).

An official, prevailing definition of human trafficking, which has informed prosecutorial proceedings, policy advocacy, and ongoing social service provision, was developed during the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which took place in Palermo, Italy in 2000. According to this collective,

> (a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits

to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the
purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation
of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or
services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of
organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation
set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the
means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for
the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if
this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

(UNODC, 2004)

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), global anti-trafficking goals were set as a response to the international establishment of the Palermo *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (UNODC, 2004). The goals were intended to inform legislation change at national levels. These goals, also referred to as the 3P Paradigm, address the range of anti-exploitation efforts under the categories of Prevention, Prosecution and Protection, in respect to the international trafficking in persons (US DOS, n.d.). Prevention measures specifically include ongoing research, multilateral cooperation, awareness campaigns and legislation intended to address economic and social vulnerabilities that put people at risk for exploitation. The prevention measures were also intended to diminish the demand for

exploitation. Prosecution measures include the criminalization of individuals that organize, participate in, and/or attempt to profit from the exploitation of another person. Law enforcement, legislators and court officials largely carry out the prosecution arm of anti-trafficking efforts. Protection measures encapsulate a broader range of actors and efforts, not limited to maintaining victims' privacy, as well as addressing housing, education, medical services, and other supports to help ensure the physical safety of victims (UNODC, 2004).

The current movement to end human trafficking and exploitation in the United States officially began in response to the Palermo Protocol, with the passing of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, under which the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is one of three divisions expounded upon within the legislation. The TVPA, remaining a federal legislation through each subsequent administration, albeit with some amending, reauthorizing and renaming, established both the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office), as well as the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (US DOS, 2000). Each of these entities function to fulfill the goals laid out in the Palermo Protocol (UNODC, 2004). Additionally, the TIP Office created an evaluative tool, called the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, to annually assess anti-trafficking efforts internationally and to hold foreign governments accountable for upholding the Palermo Protocol (United States Department of State [US DOS], 2001-2021). The TIP Report ranks participating countries using a tiered system based on 1) improvements made over the previous year in each of the focus areas of anti-trafficking efforts -- Prevention, Prosecution and Protection (UNODC, 2004), and 2) the "minimum standards

for the elimination of trafficking," as described in the TVPA (2000). Later, in the 2010 report, the TIP Office added the United States to the list of those nations under review due to increasingly identified cases of domestic trafficking of U.S. citizens (US DOS, 2001-2021). The creation of the TIP Report, in conjunction with the Palermo Protocol and TVPA, is largely viewed as the start of the collaborative movement to end human exploitation as it is understood today. Over the past two decades, social service providers, government officials, economists and academic researchers, among other stakeholders, have taken steps, individually and collectively, toward that end, both globally and domestically.

It is important to note that there does exist a dispute in the discourse regarding the utility of the TVPA and related pieces of legislation, due to the more neo-abolitionist leanings of those who drafted it (see Marcus et al., 2014). The depiction asserted by the TVPA of all minors involved in the sex trade being defined as victims of human trafficking is disputed, by researchers and by youth self-identifying as sex workers (see Marcus et al., 2014). This ongoing ideological debate lies primarily between the Abolitionist/Neo-Abolitionist, and Radical Feminist schools of thought (see Farley, 2006; Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, Cooper & Yuille, 2007; Raphael, Reichert, & Powers, 2010) and the Neoliberalist and Liberal Feminist schools of thought (see Marcus et al., 2014; Weitzer, 2012).

Despite increasing awareness of the phenomenon, and the expectation that national agendas include anti-exploitation efforts (see UNODC, 2004; Trafficking in Persons Report, 2001-2020), the human trafficking industry continues to grow in prevalence and profitability in the global marketplace. It has been labeled as the second-fastest-growing

illicit trade, surpassing the trade in weapons, and approaching the level of profit achieved in the drug trafficking industry (Jordan et al., 2013). While the body of scholarship surrounding the phenomenon of human trafficking and exploitation has increased over the past 20 years, cumulative achievements from the existing research, available services, and accessible funding have thus far been ineffective in eliminating exploitation or its risk factors, embedded within systems and sectors such as law enforcement, criminal justice, housing/homelessness, foster care and other social institutions, employment/unemployment, education, medical services, and family development (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Cole & Sprang, 2020; Gardner et al., 2020; Gerassi, 2015; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Kenny et al., 2020; Kotrla, 2010; Liles, Blacker, Landini & Urquiza, 2016; Lopez & Minassians, 2018; Perdue et al., 2012). To combat human exploitation and the associated economic and societal impact, efforts must reach a wider population and address the lived experience of the individuals that suffer on account of this industry.

One specific opportunity for growth in anti-exploitation efforts is in the area of partnership and collaboration. Partnership has been identified as a critical component to the success of the goals prescribed in the Palermo Protocol, namely, Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution (Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). Individual stakeholders possess varying degrees of knowledge, expertise, and resources to allocate toward improving their offerings (whether service or goods) to vulnerable populations. In order to avoid reinventing the wheel, or simply to obtain the services necessary for ongoing restorative care, anti-exploitation stakeholders commonly understand the importance of collaboration within and across sectors (Foot, 2016). However, the execution and

experiences of collaborative processes in the anti-exploitation realm have been negatively impacted for myriad reasons (Foot, 2016). It is this concept of collaboration across sectors of society and among individual stakeholders in anti-exploitation efforts that will be further explored in the research project.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to analyze the concept of collaboration as it applies to existing efforts to combat human exploitation, specifically, sex trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation. Against the backdrop of existing multidisciplinary research and practice, this project explores one method for countering exploitation at the societal, systemic, and situational levels, namely multi-sector Collaboration. By accumulating understanding on partnership and collaborative problem-solving from the business sector, alongside individual expertise from stakeholders in anti-exploitation efforts and their personal experiences of collaboration, the researcher seeks to offer insight and suggestions for improving both the experience of collaboration for participating partners, and the effectiveness of collaboration in serving vulnerable populations and advancing collective knowledge and efficacy surrounding the issue of sexual exploitation.

Strategic Use of Terminology

Significant to the development of such a research project is the process of identifying the terminology to be operationalized and the nuances therein. The following sections describe both disstinctions and commonalities in terminology used throughout the discourse.

Distinct terminology: Demographic categories and capacities.

Not all sectors of anti-exploitation work, nor scholars participating in the discourse on sex as a commodity, use the same or even similar terminology, which disrupts the ease of communication along the Continuum of Care (see Gerassi, 2015; Jordan et al., 2013; Reid, 2010). Some terminology is specific to a school of thought or theoretical framework (see Kennedy et al., 2007; Marcus et al., 2014; Musto, 2009; Raphael et al., 2010) Often, distinct sectors within the anti-exploitation environment will use different terminology to refer to the same group of people or concept. For example, adolescents involved in the sex trade have been identified as *victims*, *survivors*, *juvenile delinquents*, or *child or teenage prostitutes*, based on which sector is providing the information and the prevailing ideology therein (see Marcus et al., 2014). The reverse is also true. Commonly used terminology may carry slightly different meanings or interpretations within the context of each sector or across state lines. For example, although the official *age of consent* to sexual activity is defined by individual state legislation, the federal legislation on sexual exploitation makes provisions for anyone under the age of 18, identifying all minors as *victims*, regardless of consent (see Jordan et al., 2013; US DOS, 2000). The discourse surrounding concepts of adolescent *agency*, perceived and expressed, when participating in sex for trade is full of complexity and is often polarizing among researchers, government agencies, and service providers (see Alvarez & Alessi, 2012; Marcus et al., 2014; Miller & Lyman, 2017; Musto, 2009). Researchers emphasize the importance of establishing best practices in defining terminology and the use of common terminology to improve anti-exploitation work (see Jordan et al., 2013; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015). This is especially important amid the

collaborative process of addressing exploitation, so that confusion might not arise in response to inconsistencies in how the terminology is used (see Callahan, 2016; Gardner et al., 2020; Gerassi, 2015; Jordan et al., 2013; Reid, 2010). This thesis is an attempt to contribute to such a feat, to avoid conflating necessarily distinct terminology while also constructing workable, universal definitions compiled from various sectors and interdisciplinary studies, with the intent to serve the needs of the wider collective. A more in-depth exploration of the terminology chosen for this qualitative phenomenological study can be found within the preliminary pages under the Key Terminology section heading.

With the wide array of perspectives prevalent in the sexual exploitation and sex trafficking discourse, and that of the sex industry in general (Farley, 2017; Lutnick, 2016; Marcus et al., 2014; Weitzer, 2012), it is essential to situate readers with the key terminology selected for this particular study. Key terms and phrases were carefully selected to accurately describe and honor individuals who shared their personal experiences, while also making sense of collective research and expertise. Additionally, because the focus of this research is interdisciplinary in nature, scope, and methodology, a few choice phrases have been borrowed from other sectors of social services, law enforcement, and the for-profit business sector that have not been widely used in relation to sexual exploitation. The following are key terminology defined for the purposes of this qualitative phenomenological study.

Shared terminology: A Continuum of Care.

The phrase *Continuum of Care* was borrowed from the medical field, to refer to the process of providing support and services to individuals over the course of their life experience (see Tinker, ten Hoope-Bender, Azfar, Bustreo, & Bell, 2005; Graham & Varghese, 2012). Anti-exploitation stakeholders are now using it more frequently to describe a holistic approach to serving particularly vulnerable populations (see US HHS & SAMHSA, 2014). Four stages of anti-exploitation work along a Continuum of Care are identified in this qualitative phenomenological study (i.e. *prevention*, *intervention*, *restoration, reintegration*), with various efforts having particular significance at each stage (i.e. *awareness*, *education*, *identification*, *service provision*, *advocacy*). Such efforts are established to serve vulnerable individuals identified within specific demographic categories (i.e. *at-risk*, *victim*, *survivor*, *sustained survivor*).

Each of these stages reflects the individual and combined efforts of one or more identified *sectors* of anti-exploitation work (i.e. government, law enforcement, non-profit, private sector, academia, and community groups/individuals), in which various *stakeholders* are the primary actors (i.e. government offices, agencies, non-government organizations, task forces, coalitions, community groups, faith communities, survivors & vulnerable individuals, etc.).

A continuum spanning the life of a trafficked or exploited individual, requires specific terminology to describe the consecutive stages therein. Each stage in the continuum might be considered in alignment with one or more of the three main goals of the Palermo Protocol – Prevention, Prosecution, and Protection (US DOS, n.d.). The first stage, *Prevention*, includes efforts such as awareness and education, emphasizing the

growing awareness in society, and within the family unit, of force, fraud or coercion, which, if overlooked, may lead to adverse childhood experiences and eventually, instances of exploitation (see Clawson et al., 2009; US DOJ et al, 2014). Efforts in identification may overlap the stages of Prevention and *Intervention*, as it is necessary to both pinpoint those demographics which are particularly at-risk or vulnerable to exploitation, prior to an initial entry into the commercial sex industry, as well as to locate individuals that may already be experiencing exploitation or victimization (see Clawson et al., 2009; US DOJ et al., 2014). Likewise, during the stages of Prevention and Intervention, efforts in service provision can be implemented, in which an individual experiencing *at-risk vulnerabilities* or *identified exploitation*, who may or may not identify themselves as a *victim*, can be intentionally given access to a range of services. For example, access to counseling, medical care and legal services is important during these stages. The *Intervention* stage is also where law enforcement and prosecution efforts take place on behalf of identified *victims* who are seeking escape or have recently been removed from an exploitative situation (see Clawson et al., 2009; US DOJ et al., 2014). This is closely linked to the *Restoration* stage, in which an individual, identified as a *survivor*, is actively seeking long-term services and personal healing through legitimate means. Efforts in advocacy, legal services, prosecution, medical services, and trauma therapy/counseling are all critical during the Restoration stage. Individuals identifying as survivors of exploitation may also seek restorative care programs that provide safe housing, in addition to case management, to acquire these and other services (see Clawson et al., 2009; US DOJ et al., 2014).

A final stage identified along the Continuum of Care is *Reintegration*. This stage includes efforts focused toward supporting what the researcher calls the *sustained survivor*, who has received sufficient services to begin the process of entering back into society without a high risk of falling victim to re-exploitation. Such an individual would eventually demonstrate some measure of personal resilience, community engagement, and socio-economic stability (see Clawson et al., 2009; US DOJ et al., 2014). Previous research has labeled this demographic as "thriver," (see Perdue et al., 2012) or "survivor advocate" (see Bath et al., 2020; Liles et al., 2016; Preble et al., 2018). However, this is another example of existing terminology lacking inclusivity, at least for the purposes of this qualitative phenomenological study. After having moved through each of these stages, an individual may choose to become a *survivor-leader* and to participate in ongoing anti-exploitation efforts. This is not always the case, however, and is usually dependent upon the depth of individual trauma recovery and resiliency in the presence of potentially triggering environments (see Gardner et al., 2020; Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). Entering into the reintegration stage of the continuum does not assume that an individual would no longer require or desire access to available services and support (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Gerassi & Nichols, 2018; Jordan et al., 2013; McIntyre, 2014), nor does it guarantee the elimination of all risks of re-exploitation, personal recidivism or the abuse of an experience of survivorship in anti-exploitation efforts (see Bath et al., 2020; Gerassi & Nichols, 2018; Kotrla, 2010; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015). The term s*ustained survivor* is the researcher's attempt to encapsulate the demographic, without downplaying the difficulties of reintegration or assuming future involvement in anti-trafficking efforts. It is important to note that some of these demographic categories along the Continuum of

Care (at-risk, victim, survivor, sustained survivor) may overlap, as lived experiences rarely follow linear progressions (see Gardner et al., 2020; Gerassi & Nichols, 2018; Kenny et al., 2020; McIntyre, 2014).

Conceptualizing exploitation.

Sexual exploitation or *Exploitation* is used in this research study as an umbrella term to include both experiences of *Commercial Sexual Exploitation* as well as *Survival Sex*, acknowledging the presence of situational, systemic, and societal vulnerabilities that help facilitate instances of both (see Gerassi, 2015; Marcus et al., 2014; Musto, 2009). The term *Sex-Trafficking* is used in line with the above definition outlined in the Palermo Protocol. *Sexual Abuse* and *Sexual Assault*, while not involving the commercial trade element, are also characterized by the exploitation of existing vulnerabilities for sexual purposes. Experiences of sexual abuse or assault, whether in childhood or adulthood can act as additional risk factors that increase an individual's vulnerability to other forms of exploitation (Kenny et al., 2020; Kotrla, 2010; Lopez & Minassians, 2018). The related term of *Sexual Labor* or *Sex Trade* will refer to instances where agency or choice is both perceived and expressed by the individual offering sex for trade (see Marcus et al., 2014), and the individual expressing consent is at least 18 years of age, per the existing legislation on sexual exploitation (US DOS, 2000).

Literature Review

The researcher explored the existing literature related to discourse on service provision and interorganizational collaboration to address sexual exploitation and sexual trauma. Sources were gathered from several disciplines and incorporated sociological, anthropological, historical, judicial, medical, and business perspectives.

Quantity and quality of research and data collection.

The difficulty of developing robust research methods and collecting sufficient data presents one of the major setbacks to anti-exploitation efforts. Despite substantial research over the past two decades, the illicit nature of the industry and difficulty identifying individuals who have had associated experiences lends to the inability of researchers to study representative samples and thus provide substantiated estimates of the prevalence data and scope of the phenomenon (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Fedina, 2014; Gardner et al., 2020; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Jordan et al., 2013; Gerassi, 2015; Musto, 2009; Twis & Shelton, 2018). Many researchers have attempted to do so, in spite of the obstacles, yet some of the initial and often-cited studies (for example, see Bales, 1999; Estes and Weiner, 2001; U.S. State Department, 2001-2007) have been described as putting forth problematic estimates that were determined via problematic methodology (see Fedina, 2014; Kotrla, 2010; McGaha and Evans, 2009; Twis & Shelton, 2018; Weitzer, 2012). Sources citing such estimates as true statistics also claimed that the observably reported cases of exploitation provide merely a baseline in determining prevalence and must be an underestimation of the total numbers of people impacted (see Fedina, 2014). Estimates that have been published or stated in official reports have often been exponentially greater than any confirmed cases of exploitation (see Fedina, 2014; Weitzer, 2012). While difficulties in obtaining truly representative samples of such an underground industry and hidden population are to be expected, many scholars have decried the citing of estimates as true quantities and the focus on ideologically driven data as lacking in rigor and damaging to the credibility of

exploitation research on the whole (see Farrell et al., 2009; Fedina, 2014; Twis & Shelton, 2018; Weitzer, 2012).

Much of the existing data used in policy creation and legislation are estimates (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Fedina, 2014; Hodge, 2014; Twis & Shelton, 2018). Verifiable data is only available through access to identified victims of exploitation or those receiving victim and/or survivor services (see Fedina, 2014). This data population may not be truly representative of the phenomenon on local, regional, national, or global scales, as it includes only those with access to such services, the ability and willingness to self-identify as a victim, and an existing level of trust in key stakeholders like law enforcement or service providers (see Fedina, 2014; Hodge, 2014).

The portion of the exploited population that can often be overlooked in prevalence data includes those who have yet to self-identify as being victimized, who may not interact with service providers on a regular basis, or who do not perceive safety or trust in those stakeholders with whom they do come into contact. More often, it is when an individual exits *the life*, after they have received some level of services, that they may come to a self-acknowledgement of victimization (see Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Marcus et al., 2014). Self-identification as a *victim* or *survivor* of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation is not common among those actively involved in *the life* (see Kenny et al., 2020). Initial entrance into the sex trade is not always through a direct recruitment by a pimp or sex worker. More often, economic, familial, or societal hardships or pressures pave the way for sex work to become a viable option for an individual (see Farley, 2006; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Hodge, 2014). In some cases, individuals will seek out a pimp or other third-party for added protection, facilitation, and

credibility within the industry (see Marcus et al., 2014). Not all those involved in the commercial sex trade are actively seeking to exit. Reasons for this are varied, ranging from the fear of an oppressive or abusive pimp to a lack of desirable alternatives to an actual affinity towards *the life* (see Hodge, 2014; Marcus et al., 2014). One study observed a potential increase in the level of individual agency within the sex trade, compared to that within previous circumstances (foster care, abusive family, poverty, homelessness). It also conveyed, overall, little to no pimp-imposed barriers to exit, focusing more on the economic barriers instead (Marcus et al., 2014). Researchers identify the danger in taking estimated data out of context or citing it as conclusive (see Callahan, 2016; Fedina, 2014; Gerassi, Edmond & Nichols, 2016; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Jordan et al., 2013; Twis & Shelton, 2018).

Another shortcoming of the leading research and existing policies is a focus on cisgender women and children as the primary victims of sexual exploitation (see Kenny et al., 2020; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015). Certain demographics of exploited individuals (i.e. those identifying as cisgender men, LGBTQI+ individuals, or individuals who both sell sex and act as a third party facilitator for the sale of others for sex) tend to be disproportionally underrepresented in prevalence and other key demographic data (see Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Hayes & Unwin, 2016; Jordan et al., 2013; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015). This is due, in part, to the layered complexities associated with entry into trading sex, the failure to accurately identify instances of sexual exploitation, and reluctance to self-disclose for fear of penalization from law enforcement and the criminal justice system (see Cole & Sprang, 2020; Greenbaum & Crawford-

Jakubiak, 2015; Hayes & Unwin, 2016; Kotrla, 2010; Liles et al., 2016; Marcus et al., 2014).

Differences in research methodologies often fail to reinforce or corroborate the findings of previous research conducted in other sectors (see Musto, 2009). Policy makers and legislators have historically relied heavily on research surrounding prosecution (i.e. criminal justice and law enforcement) for example, often overlooking the contributions from other stages in the Continuum of Care (see Callahan, 2016; Foot, 2016; Musto, 2009; US DOS, 2000). Collaborative efforts between sectors of anti-exploitation work could begin to resolve the existing gaps that result from such narrow foci (see Foot 2016; Jordan et al., 2013; Callahan, 2016; Gerassi et al., 2016; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015).

Making referrals along the Continuum of Care.

When a victim or survivor needs services that one organization is not equipped to provide, a method of referral is used to connect the individual with another organization that can provide the service. Unfortunately, stakeholders are not always aware of the existence of other credible resources or service providers outside of their own service sector, or are ill-equipped to vet potential referrals based on accurate and reliable evaluation criteria (see Gardner et al., 2020; Hayes & Unwin, 2016), further complicating the process. A lengthy process of validating the quality of care and coordinating the logistics to refer other clients to a vetted organization can lead to a delay in receiving services. The wait times associated with making referrals, among other challenges can become barriers to exit or to sustained survivorship, leading potential clients to seek out more easily accessible resources or stop seeking altogether and become vulnerable to re-

exploitation or recidivism (see Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015). Having the knowledge and confidence to refer survivors to continuing services is essential at all stages of anti-exploitation work, as very few stakeholders possess the funding or capacity on their own to provide holistic care along the entire continuum. Although it is essential to be knowledgeable of every stage in the Continuum of Care, even stakeholders that span several stages tend to have one central focus of anti-exploitation work as expressed through a primary mission statement (see Callahan, 2016). Often, quality of care suffers when individual stakeholders attempt to meet every need along the continuum. Confidence in making referrals to specialized service providers along the Continuum of Care is necessary to ensure a survivor is receiving quality care and is not left to their own devices to find available services (see Wirsing, 2012).

Developing a trauma-informed approach.

The importance of a trauma-informed approach to addressing sexual exploitation has been emphasized across various disciplines and sectors (see Clawson et al., 2009; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Hayes & Unwin, 2016; Hodge, 2014; Kenny et al., 2020; Lopez & Minassians, 2018; Marquez, Deblinger and Dovi, 2019; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015; Perdue et al., 2012; Wirsing, 2012). Experiences of sexual exploitation have been shown to often involve complex, compounded trauma, along with a form of trauma-bonding to one's abuser (see Gerassi, 2015; Gerassi & Nichols, 2018; Liles et al., 2016; Sanchez, Speck & Patrician, 2019). The label of *trauma-informed* has been applied to individual practitioners, methods or program structures, and even entire organizations or agencies, based on the extent to which trauma training and standards of trauma-related care are prioritized. Such a label, especially when self-assigned, is not a

guarantee that every individual within the organization has been sufficiently trained in trauma nor that each procedure or program is sufficiently impacted thus (see Clawson et al., 2009; SAMHSA, 2014). Stakeholders in the anti-exploitation field have experienced a deficiency in current levels of trauma training to adequately equip them with a holistic understanding of trauma, to address the unique needs of the population being served. As a result, the potential for residual harm to occur when addressing complex trauma is striking (see Clawson et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2013; Kenny, Vazquez, Long & Thompson, 2017; SAMHSA, 2014; Sanchez et al., 2019).

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, along with individuals who have personal experiences of trauma, have also identified discrepancies and nuances in meaning when addressing trauma and guidelines for trauma-informed care. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) distilled several varying definitions and offers one succinct concept, describing individual trauma as the result of:

> …an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (US HHS & SAMHSA, 2014, p.7).

SAMHSA also established a collaborative body at the federal level to develop best practices for identifying trauma and promoting trauma-informed care. The Interagency Task Force on Trauma-Informed Care (TIC Task Force) was established in 2018 and is scheduled to produce a final report of findings and recommendations in 2023 (see Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2021).

While SAMHSA has provided guidance for a collective understanding, there does not appear to be a process of accreditation or other means of identifying and legitimizing those stakeholders that, while not licensed trauma therapy practitioners, have attained to the basic standards and best practices set forth for trauma-informed care. The establishment of a standardized accreditation might allow states and communities to equip a range of stakeholders, from individual community members to service providers to government officials (see Kenny et al., 2017; Perdue et al., 2012; SAMHSA, 2014; US DOJ, US HHS and Homeland Security, 2014). Identifying oneself or one's organization as *trauma-informed*, with proof of accreditation, would then communicate the competency necessary to facilitate confident referrals and provide individuals seeking care with a guarantee of a holistic, healing-centered approach.

Risk of re-traumatization.

Failure to understand the psychological and physiological complexities of trauma has led stakeholders to unintentionally subject exploited individuals to experiences of re-traumatization (see Jordan et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2019; SAMHSA, 2014). For example, much of the existing legislation as well as the requirements of funding made available to anti-exploitation stakeholders disproportionately emphasize the need for prosecution and the efforts of law enforcement and the courts in recovering the victim and convicting the perpetrator (see Jordan et al., 2013; Liles et al., 2016; Musto, 2009) over addressing the systemic and social determinants that contribute to an environment where exploitation can subsist and expand (see Gardner et al., 2020; Lopez & Minassians, 2018). The TVPA is one example of legislation drafted on the premise of

pursuing prosecution as the primary method to counter human trafficking, with

prevention and protection efforts being secondary (see Jordan et al., 2013; Musto, 2009).

The emphasis, in policy and in government initiatives, on prosecution often works to

the detriment of the exploited individual, especially if the individual already has a history

in the criminal justice system and their victimization has not been identified or

acknowledged (see Cole & Sprang, 2020; Hayes & Unwin, 2016; Kotrla, 2010; Liles et

al., 2016; Lopez & Minassians, 2018). Even those who are accurately identified as

victims of exploitation are often forced to undergo intrusive forensic exams and recount

their testimony to the point of re-traumatization during the process of investigation and in

preparation for court (see Jordan et al., 2013; Liles et al., 2016). The experience of

testifying in court, especially in the presence of the perpetrator, is often overwhelming for

a survivor who has not received sufficient trauma-informed care prior to the court date

(see Jordan et al., 2013). Research suggests altering the legislation to make concessions

for traumatic experiences as well as developing trauma-informed approaches to

investigations and court trials (see Cole & Sprang, 2020; Jordan et al., 2013; Liles et al.,

2016). One source suggests the installment of specialized courts that could incorporate

the perspectives of trauma-informed professionals during the pre-court preparations,

along with inviting service providers and advocates to the court proceedings to offer

recommendations for treatments or therapy (Liles et al., 2016).

Often, service providers invite clients who are further along in their recovery process

to contribute to the organization's work. This could include recounting their story and the

success of the services they have received, to raise much-needed funding for the

organization, or to bring awareness to the issue. Additional contributions might include

acting as a consultant for program development or mentoring new or peer clients (see Clawson et al., 2009). However, without a holistic understanding of the complexities of trauma, this process also has the potential to trigger or re-traumatize a survivor, even one so far along on the Continuum of Care (see Jordan et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2019). If survivors are pressured into giving back (i.e. through added incentives, bribes, or access to additional services in exchange for their story), the service provider has the potential to re-exploit the very people they are trying to help (see Jordan et al., 2013).

Survivor-informed and survivor-led service provision.

Survivors of exploitation can easily fall through the cracks in the Continuum of Care when their own perspectives and lived experiences are ignored or devalued in favor of professional stakeholder expertise (see Twis & Shelton, 2018). Many sectors of anti-exploitation work have been established, and continue to be organized and operated, by expert researchers or practitioners without personal experiences of sexual abuse or exploitation (see Gardner et al., 2020; Twis & Shelton, 2018). Only in recent years have stakeholders begun to grasp the value of survivor expertise in the design and development of the various programs and services offered (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Perdue et al., 2012). Survivor-informed service provision indicates that existing services, research, and awareness efforts have been verified as necessary and helpful by the survivors themselves, and that those services requested by survivors have been taken seriously and implemented along the Continuum of Care (see Perdue et al., 2012; Wirsing, 2012). One method of promoting survivor-informed care and service provision would be to include survivors on the executive boards and focus groups within anti-exploitation organizations, and to give them authority in decision-making processes and

influence in creation of services, legislation, policy, and evaluation (see Bryant &
Landman, 2020; Gardner et al., 2020). It remains essential that an individual who
presents in the early stages of the Continuum of Care and is still experiencing trauma
bonding or life-threatening medical issues be advised by experts concerning available
services and suggested treatments (see Jordan et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2019).
However, the goal of a survivor-informed approach is to restore agency and
empowerment to individuals that have been deprived of those very things, with the
conviction that the survivor is ultimately the expert on themselves (see Twis & Shelton,
2018; Wirsing, 2012). In collaboration with experts in the various sectors, survivors of
sexual exploitation hold a critical role in developing the most effective plan for their
individual recovery. Their unique preferences, lived experiences, and expressed needs
should significantly shape decisions made on their behalf by stakeholders along the
continuum (see Twis & Shelton, 2018; Wirsing, 2012). Additionally, survivor-leaders,
who have received quality, trauma-informed services throughout the Continuum of Care
and have successfully reintegrated into society are in a unique position to hold key
consultant and decision-making positions within organizations (see Perdue et al., 2012).
Survivor-leaders, with their firsthand experience and ability to truly empathize with
exploited individuals, are often the most effective in outreach efforts to communicate the
realities of the sex trade and of trauma-bonding to those that have yet to identify their
personal experience of exploitation or to seek an exit (see Liles et al., 2016; Perdue et al.,
2012).

One example of a successfully implemented survivor-informed effort is the initiative
of the Polaris Project (see Jordan et al., 2013). The concept, proposed by a survivor of sex

trafficking, was to imprint the nationally recognized helpline phone number on the wrappers of bars of soap and, in partnership with hotels and motels, strategically place these bars of soap in the rooms where potential victims seeking assistance might find them (Jordan et al., 2013). By taking this survivor's suggestion seriously and carrying it to fruition, the Polaris Project demonstrated support of survivors as the experts in recommending resources that would be most beneficial to themselves and to other exploited individuals at each stage in the Continuum of Care.

Access to resources and funding.

The literature on available funding varies. Some research indicates that, for non-profit organizations at least, funding is limited, resulting in a higher dependence on donors and an unpaid volunteer labor force. Stakeholders may not have access to the funding, labor, or public platform necessary to extend the reach of their services (see Callahan, 2016; Gardner et al., 2020). Full-time employees often work unpaid overtime and cover additional costs personally, to serve a greater number of exploited individuals (Foot, 2016). Other sources indicate that government funding has increased, especially after the passing of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Clawson et al., 2009).

While funding has increased significantly, so too has the demand for funding. An increasing quantity of anti-exploitation stakeholders must compete for the available resources, leaving many without access to the necessary workforce, location or equipment to implement would-be programs and services (see Callahan, 2016). Alternatively, the grant stipulations and political expectations attached to most government funding sources may restrict the pool of applicants to those stakeholders that

can easily make accommodations to meet those requirements, effectively decreasing the funding available to others that cannot do so (see Callahan, 2016).

Department of Justice (DOJ) funding for task forces.

One particular – and quite possibly, the original – formalized source of funding for anti-exploitation efforts is the United States Department of Justice (US DOJ or DOJ). The DOJ encapsulates several components that participate in efforts both internationally and domestically. The major entities given oversight in these efforts include the Civil Rights Division, Criminal Division, United States Attorney's Offices, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Justice Programs, and the Office for Access to Justice. The DOJ has been providing funding to Human Trafficking Task Forces since 2004. According to the DOJ, every U.S. state receives some form of support, leadership, or participation from the DOJ in a Task Force or working group setting (United States Department of Justice [US DOJ], 2017). Examples of DOJ involvement include the Enhanced Collaborative Model Human Trafficking Program (funded through OVC & BJA), FBI Human Trafficking Task Forces (funded through FBI), Child Exploitation Task Forces (funded through FBI & other Law Enforcement agencies), Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces (funded through DOJ), Anti-Trafficking Coordination (ACTeam) Initiative (DOJ, Homeland Security, Labor & FBI), and the Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide (developed by OVC & BJA) (US DOJ, 2017).

Starting in 2004, the DOJ, together with its connected entities, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), provided funds to anti-exploitation stakeholders. With the associated stipulation of forming a multidisciplinary task force to advance anti-exploitation efforts, monies were granted initially to law

enforcement agencies, and by 2010 to their victim services provider partners, in an effort to foster enhanced collaboration and a more holistic approach to the anti-exploitation effort (Foot, 2016; US DOJ, 2011). Research describes the success of such task forces as tenuous and intangible, however, as accountability and evaluation processes have not been universally established or verified by the DOJ, despite the grant requirement that prevalence and program data be provided. Consequently, stakeholder commitment to continued collaboration and innovation to prove efficacy have waned. Focus has shifted to a form of self-preservation, wherein grantees may exaggerate success or prevalence to maintain funding (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Callahan, 2016; Gardner et al., 2020; Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). DOJ funding for multi-sector task forces has ultimately decreased, from a high of forty-two U.S. cities receiving funding to thirteen by 2014 (see Foot, 2016; Jordan et al., 2013).

Evaluation of anti-exploitation efforts – Determining effectiveness of existing policies, programs, and practices.

Tools and procedures for evaluating anti-exploitation efforts have historically been lacking both in prevalence and in rigor. Those that do exist do not provide a clear understanding of the true impact of anti-exploitation efforts, having a greater focus on the quantity of programs or services provided than on the quality and efficacy of services received by vulnerable populations (see Bryant & Landman, 2020). Many barriers to rigorous evaluation exist, including internal funding/staffing limitations, funding stipulations dependent upon positive results, and limited analysis expertise from internal evaluations (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Gardner et al., 2020). Still, the significance of

conducting accurate and accessible evaluations is understood as a great benefit to ongoing and future efforts in anti-exploitation (Foot, 2016).

Anti-exploitation efforts developed through collaboration.

The contemporary anti-exploitation movement emerged in the U.S. through collaboration (Hertzke, 2004; Foot, 2016). Since the passing of the TVPA in the U.S. in 2000, federal partnerships have been formalized among several government departments and other stakeholders, including the Office of Trafficking in Persons (OTIP), grantees (Look Beneath the Surface Campaign), private sectors organizations (Public-Private Partnerships), cross-departmental initiatives (HHS Task Force to Prevent and End Human Trafficking), the executive branch (President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (PITF)), and other government departmental agencies (Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Justice, National Governors Association, Attorney General, National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the U.S.). The federal government continues to set forth the issue of exploitation as a primary one, notably through a five-year *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States, 2013-2017*, initiated in 2012 and officially released in 2014, detailing a plan for future collaboration between several federal agencies and various sectors and stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. The four overarching goals of this plan were to 1) Align Efforts, 2) Improve Understanding, 3) Expand Access to Services, and 4) Improve Outcomes (Foot, 2016; US DOJ, US HHS & Homeland Security, 2014).

The importance of a collaborative effort.

Social science researchers have recommended multi-sector collaboration for expanding the reach and increasing the impact of the anti-exploitation movement (see Callahan, 2016; Foot, 2016; Hayes & Unwin, 2016; Jones & Lutze, 2016; Lopez & Minassians, 2018; Preble, Nichols & Owens, 2021). Two of the main objectives of the *Strategic Action Plan (SAP)* (US DOJ, US HHS & Homeland Security, 2014) are to "coordinate victim services effectively through collaboration across multiple service sectors" (p.15) and to "foster collaborations and partnerships to enhance the community response to human trafficking" (p.39). The *SAP* is itself a product of collaboration among over fifteen federal agencies.

This qualitative phenomenological study highlights some of the experienced and anticipated benefits of engaging in collaborative relationships at various stages along the Continuum of Care and between sectors of anti-exploitation work. Such partnerships, to provide more holistic care to vulnerable populations, must be initiated and equipped proactively instead of reactively (see Hayes & Unwin, 2016; Liles et al., 2016; Wirsing, 2012). Additionally, establishing a means of evaluating the success of various collaborative efforts is an ongoing area needing improvement (Clawson et al., 2009).

Multi-sector collaboration has the potential to provide an answer to each of the gaps in research and services described earlier. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (US HHS) highlights the role of collaboration in anti-exploitation efforts:

> The value of a collaborative approach to meeting the needs of victims of human trafficking is supported by the development of HHS anti-trafficking community coalitions, OVC's comprehensive service initiatives, and multidisciplinary anti-

trafficking task forces across the country that require collaboration among

Federal, State, and local law enforcement, attorneys, other government agencies

(e.g., Department of Labor, social service agencies), NGOs, and victim service

providers (Clawson et al., 2009, p.22).

By partnering on a deeper level with larger, well-established organizations, there are

opportunities for resource-starved stakeholders to access additional funding, a greater

volunteer base, and a larger public platform (see Callahan, 2016). Additionally,

collaboration leads to a more survivor-informed approach because it esteems the survivor

as a significant stakeholder and partner, providing opportunities for survivor input and

leadership throughout the Continuum of Care (see Bryant & Landman, 2020; Foot, 2016;

Gardner et al., 2020; Perdue et al., 2012; US DOJ, US HHS & Homeland Security, 2014;

Wirsing, 2012). Collaboration reduces the risk of re-traumatization through the

establishment of trauma-informed policies and procedures (see Jordan et al., 2013; US

DOJ, US HHS & Homeland Security, 2014). Incorporating trauma therapy at every stage

along the Continuum of Care would greatly benefit the exploited individual, while

collaborative training in a trauma-informed approach would improve the quality of care

provided among all sectors of anti-exploitation work (see Jordan et al., 2013; Liles et al.,

2016; US DOJ, US HHS & Homeland Security, 2014).

Understanding the impact of stakeholder collaboration in establishing and reinforcing

an interdisciplinary standard of trauma-informed care holds both practical and policy

implications for victim services, government, law enforcement, and other social service

sectors. Collaborative efforts to improve the referral system might lead to some form of

accreditation process, by which quality service providers could easily be identified and

held accountable to some universal standard of care (see Perdue et al., 2012; US DOJ, US HHS & Homeland Security, 2014; Wirsing, 2012).

Partnering to compile a database of credible stakeholders would allow service providers to refer survivors to their partner organizations with confidence (see US DOJ, US HHS & Homeland Security, 2014; Wirsing, 2012). All sectors of anti-exploitation work might take part in forming a collective body of terminology (see Callahan, 2016; Jordan, 2002). Intentional collaboration would provide the platform for debate over controversial terms used in certain sectors, as well as the opportunity for new concepts to be introduced to the discourse (see Jordan, 2002). Finally, to continue developing the collective body of research surrounding the phenomenon, connections might be made between sectors to develop more interdisciplinary research strategies and produce findings applicable to all stages and sectors of anti-exploitation work (see Gerassi et al., 2016; Hayes & Unwin, 2016; Miller & Lyman, 2017). Collaborative relationships among researchers, practitioners, community groups, and survivors would lead to more relevant research questions and methodologies, and more robust data (see Fedina, 2014; Gerassi et al., 2016; Miller & Lyman, 2017).

Existing collaborative bodies.

Kirsten Foot (2016) argues a case for expanding the understanding of collaboration in anti-trafficking efforts to include other stakeholders and sectors not included in the prevailing guidance. She identifies potential shortcomings of resources like the Department of Justice's *Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide*, first published in 2011. This living document provides guidance in formalizing collaborative relationships, primarily between law enforcement and victim services sectors. Foot describes both the

strengths and the weaknesses of this guidance, offering suggestions for improvement to the discourse on collaboration, such as incorporating a range of stakeholder perspectives beyond merely law enforcement and victim service providers, identifying the underlying systemic tensions that impact dynamics of a collaborative relationship, and unpacking compounding complexities within the collaborative space.

To expound upon the research, this qualitative phenomenological study explores the various forms and levels of collaboration on a spectrum and distinguishes them from one another for the sake of clarifying expectations for depth of participation and evaluating the success of the relationship. The DOJ's e-Guide "refers to all multidisciplinary, collaborative, anti-human trafficking efforts as 'task forces.'" (US DOJ, 2011). However, the term *task force* was originally more specific, describing a "*temporary grouping under one leader for the purpose of accomplishing a definite objective*" (US DOJ, 2011, emphasis in the original). These descriptions do not account for the myriad existing and opportune efforts in collaboration that are ongoing, informal, not task-oriented, conducted without funding, or involving other stakeholders besides law enforcement and victim service providers (see Callahan, 2016). Existing collaborative bodies have been identified as Child Advocacy Networks/Centers, Fusion Centers, Coalitions, Task Forces, Symposia/Think Tanks, Campaigns, Advisory Committees, and Specialized Courts, among others, each representing degrees of partnership in anti-sexual exploitation efforts (see Liles et al., 2016; Perdue et al., 2012; US DOJ, 2011).

The following sections set forth the focus of this research thesis, namely, the potential impact of multi-sector collaboration in anti-sexual exploitation efforts throughout the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

Statement of Research

How can existing sectors and stakeholders involved in anti-sexual exploitation efforts in the Mid-Atlantic region use more collaborative efforts to extend the reach of their resources and influence in order to assist a greater quantity of exploited individuals with a greater quality of services? What impact might collaboration across anti-exploitation entities and sectors have on addressing existing gaps in research and practice? If collaborative work is valued in anti-exploitation efforts, how can the process of collaboration be improved for those involved? How can the outcomes of collaboration be improved for those being served? What are the obstacles and challenges facing anti-sexual exploitation agencies in this region?

The researcher sought to address these concepts to contribute to a collective understanding of multi-sector collaboration and its potential to enhance anti-exploitation efforts. A secondary objective of the research was to offer useful tools to assess potential collaborative partnerships and determine the optimal level of mutual commitment within a partnership or collaborative experience.

Multi-sector collaboration necessitates the involvement of all proponents, from the education of society and protection of at-risk youth and adults, to the reintegration of a survivor of exploitation into society. There are several stakeholders that play a role in the Continuum of Care. It is likely that those at the same stage in the continuum, within the same sector, will collaborate. However, might the greatest impact result from collaborative efforts along stages and between sectors of anti-exploitation work? A shift in priority towards multi-sector collaboration could potentially extend the reach of the resources that each sector might have access to, while also improving the quality and

accuracy of the existing exploitation research to inform policy change, enhance service provision and shed light on the experience of a survivor of sexual exploitation (see Fedina, 2014; Gerassi et al., 2016; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Jordan et al., 2013).

Understanding the various obstacles to collaboration is essential in determining whether collaborative efforts would be beneficial or even possible between otherwise unlikely partners. Such obstacles include the distribution of power or influence, as determined by access to funding or the size of the organization, points of contention over mission statements or differing priorities of the potential partners, or existing prejudices against specific sectors of anti-exploitation work (see Austin, 2000; Callahan, 2016; Foot, 2016). These obstacles do not necessarily disqualify a potential partnership. However, they must be considered when setting the parameters of the relationship. If collaboration is deemed worthwhile, participating stakeholders must then determine what level of collaboration would be appropriate and most effective in achieving anti-exploitation goals. Varying levels of collaboration might include – from least to greatest – *Networking*, *Cooperation*, *Coordination*, and *Full Collaboration* (SAMHSA, 2016). Collaborative efforts must be effective in providing quality services to and pursuing justice for both survivors and those who may be at-risk or especially vulnerable to exploitation (Foot, 2016). Several studies exist describing tools created for improving collaboration within the corporate business and medical services settings (see Austin, 2000; Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Hardy, Hudson & Waddington, 2003; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Straus, 2002). These studies were

considered as guidance on how to apply the benefits of collaboration to the context of anti-exploitation work.

Assisting individuals who have experienced a level of exploitation to move through the Continuum of Care, at their own pace, is the goal of anti-exploitation stakeholders. The reality, however, is that these individuals fail to receive the help they need to its full extent, and instead fall through the cracks in the continuum and back into a life of exploitation (see Gerassi & Nichols, 2018). An additional aim of this research effort is to identify the points along the Continuum of Care where anti-exploitation efforts fall short in meeting the needs of individuals who have been sexually exploited in order to determine if a case can be built for the continued and improved development of multi-sector collaboration along the continuum. Through the process of data collection and analysis, the research provides examples of collaborative relationships within the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States and suggests how various evaluative tools and perspectives can be applied to foster more extensive and holistic collaboration within one specific regional context.

Thesis statement.

Ongoing collaboration and information/resource-sharing across sectors of impact in anti-sexual exploitation efforts can provide a more robust understanding of the issue, leading to more at-risk- and survivor-informed best practices in prevention, intervention, restoration, and reintegration. If done well, a multi-sector collaborative approach has the potential to effectively address sexual exploitation as a phenomenon and equip vulnerable and exploited individuals with all the tools and access needed to improve wellbeing and avoid recidivism.

Relevant theoretical lenses.

There exist two main theories of thought within the discourse surrounding commercialized sex (see Gerassi & Nichols, 2018; Lopez & Minassians, 2018). One school of thought, known as Neoliberal or Liberal Feminism, highlights the agency of individuals in choosing to enter into selling sex as a legitimate form of labor (see Chapkis, 1997; Marcus et al., 2014; Weitzer, 2007; Weitzer, 2012). This perspective has also informed various approaches to policy reform, namely the decriminalization or legalization of the sex trade, and the focus of resources and service provision toward establishing protections and regulations within the industry for the wellbeing of those selling sex (see Gerassi & Nichols, 2018; Marcus et al., 2014; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015).

The competing schools of thought include Neo-abolitionism and Radical Feminism, which posit that all forms of commercialized sex are inherently an issue of gendered oppression and an imbalance of power (see Dworkin, 1997; Moran & Farley, 2019; Kennedy et al., 2007; Raphael et al., 2010). These perspectives have informed the currently dominant approach to policy reform, namely the criminalization of the sex trade (see Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015), along with a more recent approach known as the Nordic model – wherein, the individual selling sex is not criminalized, but the buyer and other third parties benefitting from the sale would be criminalized (see Ekberg, 2004; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015). Each policy approach toward prostitution and the commercial sex trade (legalization, decriminalization, criminalization and the Nordic model) has been implemented in various regions around the world, with varying degrees of success (see Farrell & Fahy, 2009; Orme & Ross-Sheriff, 2015). Seemingly, the end

goal for each of these approaches is the increased protection and well-being of those individuals selling sex. The environment of potential risk in which commercial sex takes place, in its current forms, is acknowledged on all sides of the discourse (see Greenbaum & Crawford-Jakubiak, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2007; Liles et al., 2016; Lopez & Minassians, 2018; Perdue et al., 2012; Wirsing, 2012). The disparity lies in determining the best way to serve those individuals who are at risk. Differences in theoretical frameworks affect the terminology used, solutions offered, and criteria applied to evaluate the success of services. Should the sex trade be regulated to the extent that effective safeguards and workers' rights can be established? Should all regulations be removed to allow a free market for the sale of sex? Or will the entire sex trade need to be abolished in order to truly protect individuals currently selling sex? Who decides whether sex is a legitimate form of labor? Can an individual truly make a fully informed and uncoerced decision to enter the commercial sex industry? Should the primary focus of social service providers be the identification, exit, restoration and reintegration of impacted populations, or should the focus be on concurrent services and workplace safety for individuals within the commercial sex industry? These questions and more consistently arise in the discourse, as the different schools of thought seek to offer insight.

Another theoretical lens proves helpful at the onset of this discussion. Understanding the best practices for collaborative relationships within various sectors of society can provide guidance as to how effective collaboration can be fostered among apparently disparate sectors and stakeholders in the anti-sexual exploitation realm.

David Straus (2002) offers some insight into the process of collaboration, from an inter-organizational perspective. Inherent in the pursuit of a collaborative relationship, he notes, is an acknowledgement of the "dignity and value of every human being, and each person's right to be included in decisions that affect his or her life" (p. xvi). Straus refers to the process of working together to solve problems and arrive at a place of decision-making as "collaborative action" or "collaborative problem-solving" (p. 5), wherein a group's collective commitment, capability, and aligned direction both set the stage for ongoing and future collaboration and provide a benefit for the group members themselves.

Straus describes five principles of collaboration – 1) Involve the Relevant Stakeholders; 2) Build Consensus Phase by Phase; 3) Design a Process Map; 4) Designate a Process Facilitator; and 5) Harness the Power of Group Memory. By utilizing this process, Straus has facilitated several points of intersection to teach organizations how to navigate conflicting perspectives, various power dynamics, and time-sensitive problem solving in a manner that preserves, if not enhances, relationship between invested and impacted parties.

Underlying assumptions.

Qualitative researchers are inevitably at risk of carrying a priori assumptions into the process of developing a study. To minimize this risk, the researcher carefully scrutinized personal biases throughout the process, allowing the extant research and relevant theoretical perspectives to inform the research question and study protocol. By selecting a particular methodological approach, the researcher sought to allow participants' responses and meanings to shape the understanding developed throughout this qualitative

phenomenological study. The researcher has participated in various anti-exploitation efforts, including trainings for laypersons, conferences/symposia, coalition meetings, along with individual research since 2010. Personal assumptions and biases at the onset of this qualitative phenomenological study were addressed accordingly. For the sake of transparency, below are the underlying assumptions held by the researcher at the time of the research project:

- The phenomenon of anti-exploitation work is only partially understood by researchers, policy makers, and practitioners.

- Current best practices in prevention, identification, intervention, prosecution, service provision and reintegration, can and should be altered to become more informed by the expressed needs of at-risk and exploited populations.

- Any individual that is at-risk of experiencing, or has experienced, some level of trauma, abuse, or exploitation of vulnerability in the use or sale of their body for sex, should be able to access services. A clear and holistic path out of commercial sex should be made available to anyone seeking an exit, regardless of how much agency was either perceived or truly present when they entered.

- Survivor-informed care is crucial to the effectiveness of anti-trafficking organizations.

- Survivor/at-risk population insight is as important as research and practitioner expert knowledge.

- The benefits and necessity of collaboration to adequately address all aspects of anti-exploitation efforts outweighs the potential costs and interpersonal challenges.

- Obstacles and difficulties associated with the collaborative process exist and can limit the potential for increased effectiveness and accessibility of the resources and services provided to at-risk, vulnerable, or exploited individuals.

Methodology

The following sections describe the method of designing and conducting the research. Borrowing from the expertise of John W. Creswell (2009) in designing qualitative research studies, along with the work of Kirsten Foot (2016) on collaboration in the human trafficking realm and of David Straus (2002) on collaboration in the business realm, the researcher developed a qualitative methodology for the present study. The reader will find details on the chosen research approach, study procedures and protocols, demographic information for recruited participants, as well as the data collection and analysis process.

Research design.

Creswell (2009) composites a list from several sources to include the following characteristics and assumptions inherent in qualitative inquiry: Observation of participants' in their natural setting; Collection of data by the researcher themselves; Accumulation of multiple sources of data; Analysis of data through an inductive process; Pursuit of the study participants' meanings and perspectives; Flexibility in the research process to allow for an emergent design; Use of a theoretical lens to situate this qualitative phenomenological study; Impact of individual interpretation (of the researchers, participants, and readers) in extracting meaning; and Development of a complex, holistic understanding of the issue being studied. Various traditional strategies of inquiry also exist in qualitative research, including but not limited to narrative,

ethnography, grounded theory, case study, participatory action research (PAR), discourse analysis, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2009). For the purposes of this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher employed the methods of phenomenology, which focuses on understanding meaning through the perspectives of study participants to make connections and extrapolate some overarching thematic conclusions on a particular phenomenon. This approach involves the setting aside of the researcher's own experiences for the sake of communicating the lived experiences of the study participants (see Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Morse, 1999; Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenological schools of thought, as they are understood today, have their origins in the work of 19th-20th century German philosophers Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) (Cohen, 2000). Recent understanding has been shaped by the work of Gadamer (1989), especially regarding the design of phenomenological research. Phenomenological studies can be found across social science disciplines (see Moustakas, 1994; Cohen, 2000).

This strategy offered the most poignant opportunity to address the phenomenon of sexual exploitation from the perspectives of individuals engaged in efforts to counter its effects. It also supports the assumption that to fully understand this phenomenon, the perspectives of those directly impacted must govern the research inductively. Throughout the process of designing the study methods, the researcher employed a phenomenological lens in developing the research questions, the recruitment and data collection procedures, and the framework for data analysis. Creswell and Poth (2018) provide procedures based on Moustakas (1994) for conducting phenomenological research.

For the purposes of this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher limited the scope of research to those stakeholders that operate within the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, to include New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington DC, Virginia, and West Virginia. In the area of service provision, limiting the research to a regional scope highlights existing strengths and weaknesses along the Continuum of Care and referral systems established to provide greater accessibility of services for survivors across state lines.

Qualitative protocol & procedures.

Interview questions were designed to highlight participants' lived experiences and personal interpretations of collaboration amongst stakeholders, along with direct suggestions for improving the process of collaborating to achieve anti-exploitation efforts. The interview protocol included twelve questions pertaining to every participant, along with six additional questions specific to the experiences of participants who offered to respond from the perspective of a survivor of sexual violence (see Appendix D for a list of interview questions). If a participant requested for a question to be rephrased, the researcher did so, making an effort to maintain the essence of the original question. At times, the researcher requested elaboration from the participant, if the question asked was not fully answered, or if the participant appeared to have more to share. Additionally, if a participant shared information that was not pertinent to the scope of this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher took this into account when analyzing participant's intended meanings.

This project borrows methodologically from the model of Kirsten Foot in *Collaborating Against Human Trafficking: Cross Sector Challenges and Practices*

(2016), and the resources she provides regarding collaboration within and between organizations to inform the set of interview questions. Foot identifies several challenges in the process of collaboration among sectors, and concludes that despite the points of relational conflict, the time commitment, and the potential expense to individual stakeholders, it is paramount to the success of anti-exploitation efforts. Her international study provided a foundation for this graduate researcher's project, which has a domestic, regional scope. In addition to Foot's work, this qualitative phenomenological study incorporated an existing model for assessing collaboration (see Table 1: Levels of Collaboration) into the methodology.

As a basis of understanding, the researcher identified concepts and questions raised through personal volunteer experience with various stakeholders, as well as through attending symposia, conferences, and coalition meetings. The research study employs a qualitative analysis, using a phenomenological approach as the basis for data collection. A preliminary review of existing stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region was conducted, and a list of potential participants was compiled, including known stakeholder websites, member lists from identified collaborative bodies, an online database of non-profit organizations, and contacts made previously.

By limiting the scope of research to the Mid-Atlantic region, the researcher had greater opportunities to conduct in-person interviews in the research process. Study criteria included a requirement that the participant was a stakeholder with either a sole focus or a sub-focus on the issue of anti-exploitation work. As this project focuses on efforts to combat sex-trafficking and sexual exploitation, each of the qualifying stakeholders was involved in anti-sexual exploitation work, although they may have

supported survivors of other forms of exploitation as well (i.e. labor trafficking, domestic servitude).

The research consisted of a preliminary analysis of the websites of existing stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S., to determine currently available resources and efforts based on the expressed goals of that specific stakeholder. Identification of potential gatekeepers and representatives for interviews was also included in the preliminary stages of research. In addition to compiling a list of government entities operating throughout this region, the researcher utilized GuideStar (www.guidestar.org), a directory for non-profit organizations registered with the IRS, which provides a profile of the organization with information regarding its mission statement, reputation, financial reports, and existing programs. By searching the terms *trafficking, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking,* and filtering the results geographically, a working list was compiled, including anti-exploitation stakeholders in the focus region. Another research method used to compile this list was to conduct a search for anti-trafficking coalitions that exist locally and statewide, and to record their lists of participating members. This process allowed for the inclusion of those stakeholders involved in anti-exploitation work that would not be considered as non-profit organizations, and thus would not be identified in GuideStar's database. Identifying existing coalitions also served to highlight those stakeholders that are already participating in some level of collaborative effort in the anti-exploitation movement. Purposive sampling techniques were used to secure the perspectives of stakeholders from each of the key sectors identified in each Mid-Atlantic state (Government, Law Enforcement, Non-Profit, Private Sector, Academia, and Community

Groups/Individuals), with a particular emphasis on obtaining perspectives representing vulnerable populations and those potentially overlooked in anti-exploitation efforts and research (i.e. Community Leaders, Survivors of Sexual Violence). This research project limited the sample of participants to adults that hold a formal affiliation with an established sector of anti-exploitation efforts. An effort was also made to ensure an equitable selection of participants, bearing in mind the necessity of interviewing a representative who is knowledgeable about past and current collaborative efforts. Participant recruitment began with an initial correspondence, requiring interested stakeholders to opt in as potential participants in this qualitative phenomenological study.

Preliminary focus groups, as well as conference presentations and discussions, support the topic of multi-sector collaboration as one of significant interest and importance to the growth of the anti-exploitation movement. Initial understanding accumulated from these anticipated the impact of collaborative efforts to include increased access to knowledge and resources, a better-integrated referral system for service provision, and efforts that are better informed by the expressed and uncovered needs of at-risk youth and adults, participants in the sex trade and commercial sex industry, and survivors of sexual exploitation or sex-trafficking.

Data collection.

After an initial online search for prospective participants within the focus region, an e-mail correspondence was sent to 253 individuals determined to be the best point of contact, based on position/title, or focus areas described on their websites. Additional prospects were contacted later through the recommendations of current participants. A total of 25 individuals participated in the research study (see Creswell & Poth, 2018),

Three participants shared their perspectives from more than one sector. The participants

represented the anti-exploitation efforts taking place within the Mid-Atlantic Region,

which included New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington

D.C., Virginia, and West Virginia. Participants were recruited from various sectors of

society, categorized in this qualitative phenomenological study as Government, Law

Enforcement, Non-Profit, Private, Academia, and Community Groups/Individuals. A

subset of participants graciously offered their perspectives as survivors of either sexual

assault, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or sex trafficking.

Data Collection took place in the form of qualitative interviewing. An initial

recruitment e-mail was sent to either an organization general e-mail address or to the

determined gatekeeper for dissemination. If the organization was not solely an anti-sexual

exploitation stakeholder, the e-mail was sent to an individual determined to hold the most

relevant position. Upon receiving a participant's interest and informed consent (see

Appendix B), an in-person or over-the-phone interview was scheduled. Audio recordings

were obtained during the interviews and used to transcribe the data for analysis.

The researcher used purposive sampling to recruit participants (n=25) representing

key sectors and stakeholders in anti-sexual exploitation efforts (see Gerassi et al., 2016).

Purposive sampling ensured that study participants met basic criteria for participation in

the study, that the individual was formally engaged in anti-exploitation efforts. At the

point of identification and initial contact, prospective participants were asked to self-

evaluate based on more specific criteria -- whether they had experience in collaborating

with other sectors/stakeholders -- and opt in by first reading and signing an online

informed consent survey, and then scheduling an interview with the primary investigator

The researcher sent an initial contact e-mail to 253 stakeholders and followed up with reminder e-mails. Originally, individuals who responded expressing interest in this qualitative phenomenological study were provided a link to schedule an in-person interview during which, signed consent was to be obtained prior to collecting any data. The process of obtaining consent was moved to an online platform early on during the recruitment process, as this provided a more secure method of obtaining consent prior to the interview and allowed the flexibility for the researcher and participants to conduct the interview over the phone as an alternative to in person.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with participants to record each stakeholder's experience with the process of collaboration and what they perceive as the benefits and challenges of pursuing multi-sector partnerships. Participants also expressed their opinions regarding the potential impact of collaborative efforts on improving current practices and addressing the existing gaps in the continuum of anti-exploitation work. Particular consideration was given to include the participation of stakeholders often overlooked in the discourse (i.e. at-risk communities, survivors, and survivor-leaders). Each potential participant voluntarily consented to participation in this qualitative phenomenological study, after reviewing the provided informed consent document, which was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the researcher's university (See Appendix A).

Criteria for inclusion in the research study consisted of formal affiliation with a sector or stakeholder involved in anti-sexual exploitation efforts and personal experience(s) of collaboration within that realm. The final sample size was n=25, representing seven out of eight of the identified states in the Mid-Atlantic region (Delaware was not

represented), all six of the identified sectors of anti-exploitation efforts, and various roles as stakeholders in anti-sexual exploitation efforts. A few participants offered insight from the multiple roles or sectors in which they hold experience. Semi structured interviews, guided by a set of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix D), were collected, either in person or over the phone, ranging from 30-90 minutes in length. Audio recordings were made and later transcribed verbatim as textual data. Demographic information, along with the interview transcriptions were coded and organized for data analysis.

Participant information.

During each participant's interview, some demographical data points were collected as well (see Appendix C). The visual representations below depict these, along with a table describing the participants and their pertinent roles in anti-exploitation work. Intentional measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of participants' responses and to de-identify any personally identifiable information from the demographic and interview data. Additional measures were taken place to protect the four participants who answered interview questions specific to an experience of exploitation. Quotation data from these responses have not been associated with the participant's sector or professional role as an added precaution to minimize the risk for participants in a smaller, regional sample.

Figure 2. Participant Demographics: Sectors of Society

The following pie chart depicts the sectors of society in which participant stakeholders

operated. In some cases, participants represented more than one sector.
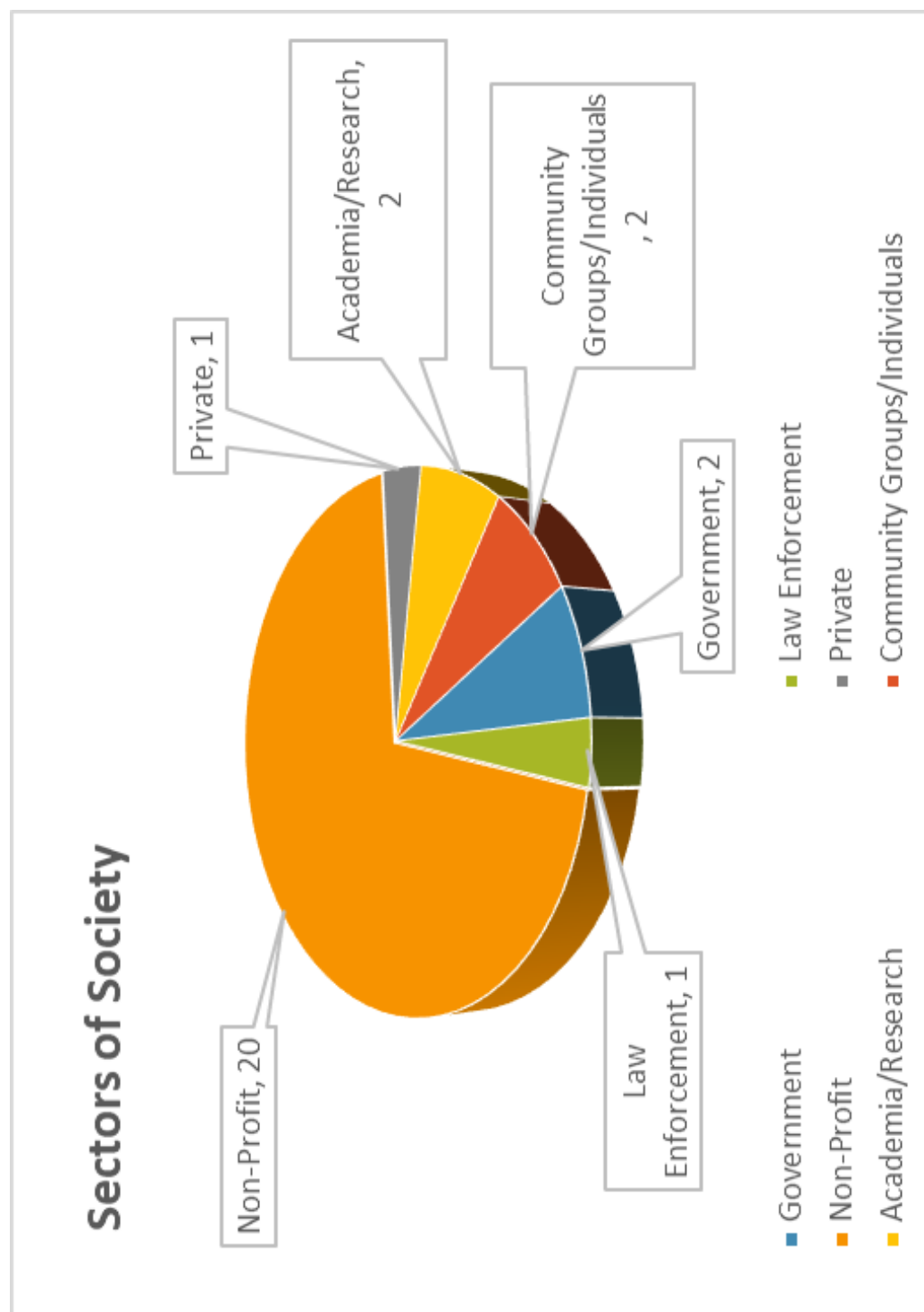
Figure 3. Participant Demographics: Mid-Atlantic Region

The following pie chart depicts the specific states or provinces where participants held their primary bases of operation. No participants responded from the state of Delaware, although it was included in the focus region.
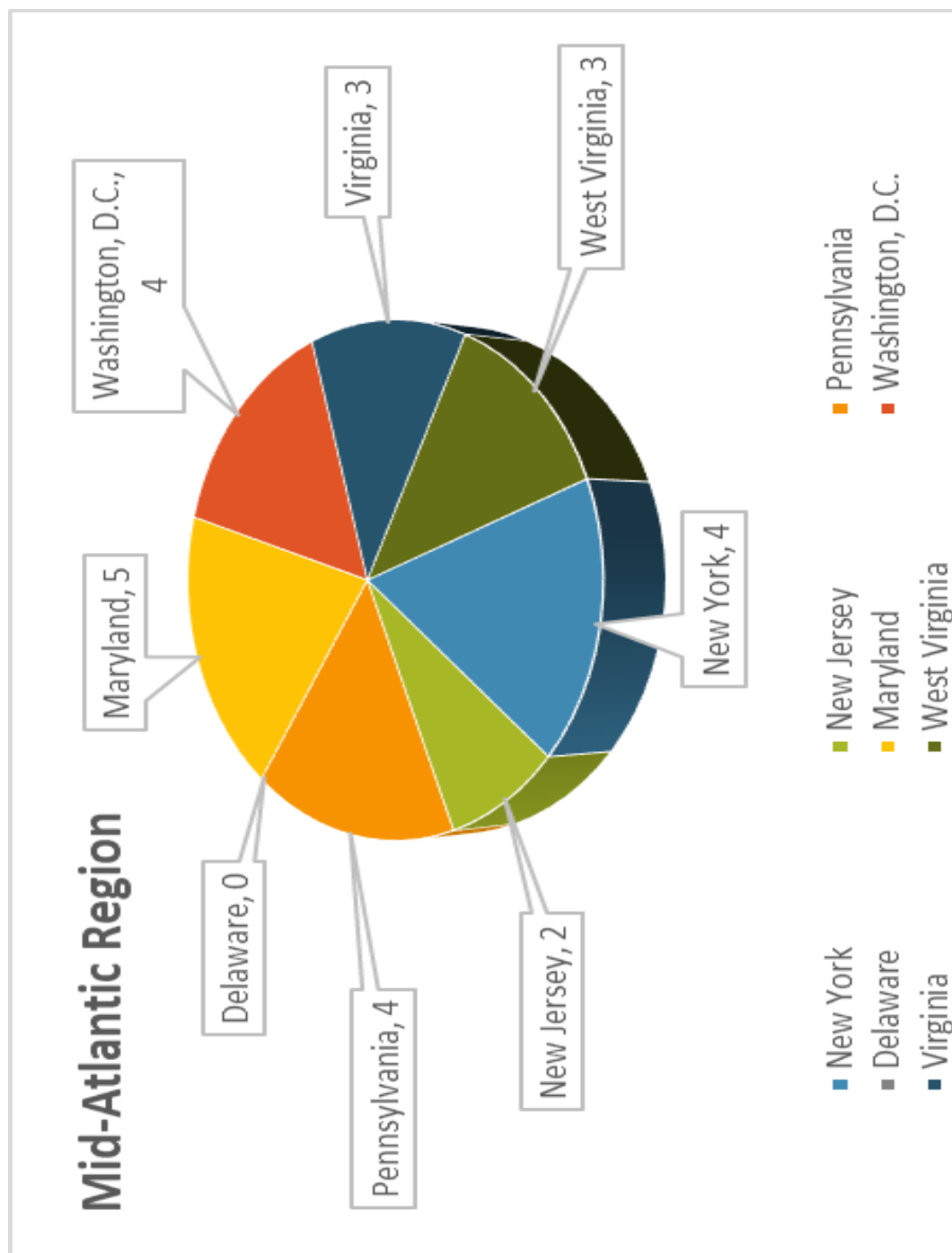
Figure 4. Participant Demographics: Years in the Field

The following pie chart depicts the quantity of years that participant stakeholders have worked in their field, as of the date of the interview.
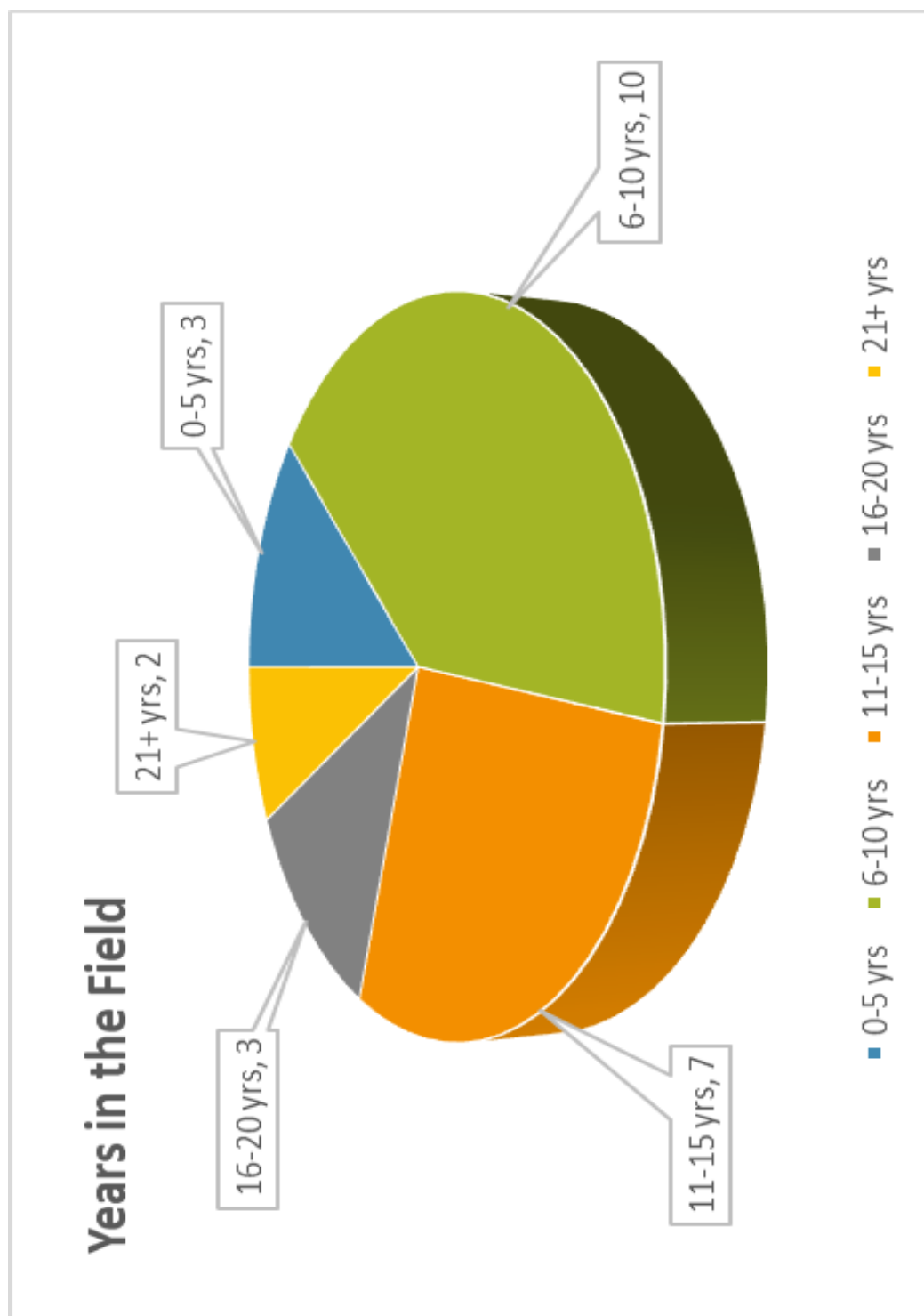
Figure 5. Participant Demographics: Ethnic Identity

The following pie chart depicts the self-identified ethnicities of participant stakeholders. In some cases, participants selected more than one ethnicity to describe themselves.

Ethnic Identity

- His, Lat, or Span Origin
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or AfAm
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

American Indian or Alaska Native, 1

Asian, 1

Black or AfAm, 5

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 0

His, Lat, or Span Origin, 2

Other, 1

White, 18
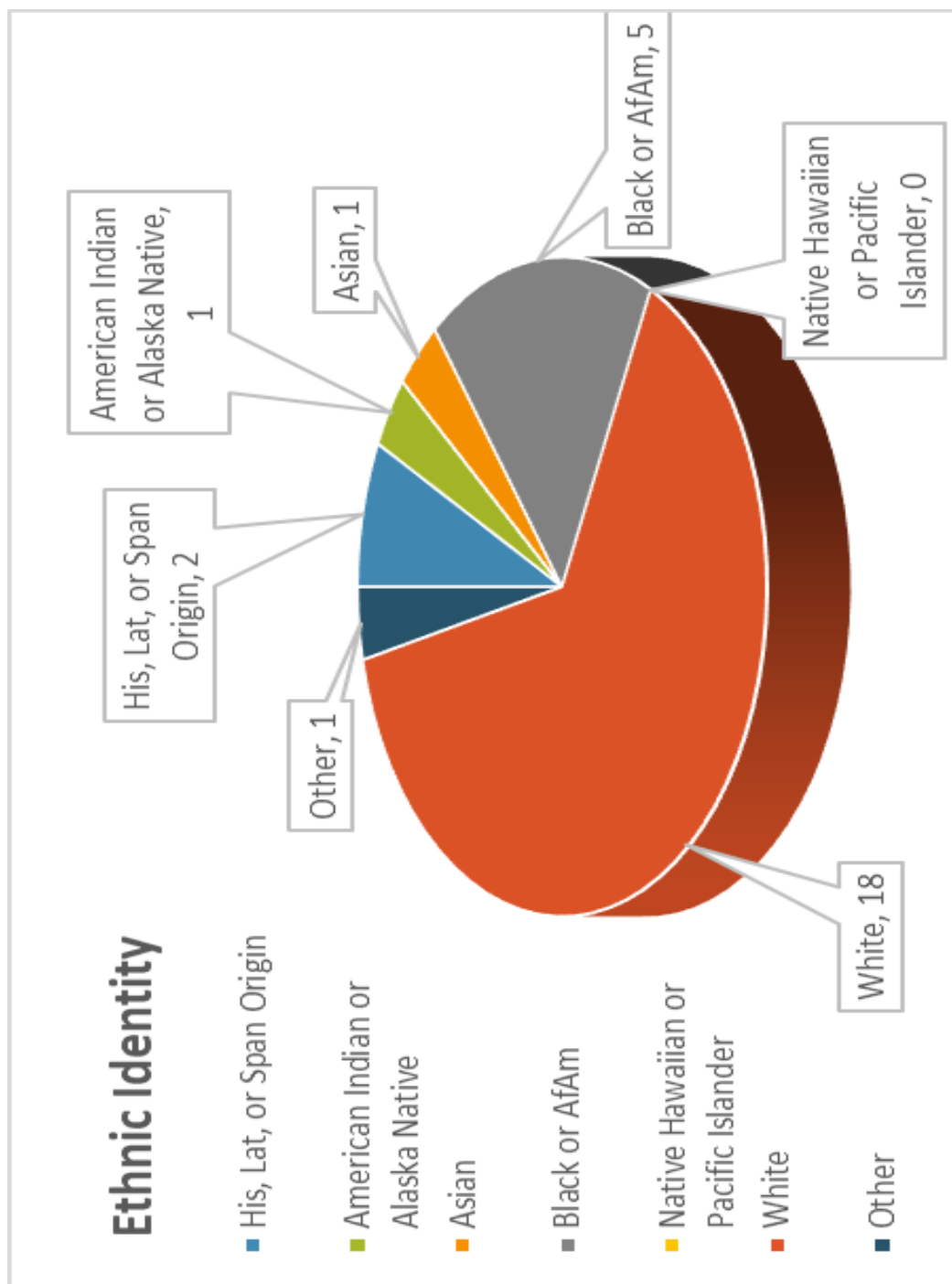
Figure 6. Participant Demographics: Gender Identity

The following pie chart depicts the expressed gender identities of participant

stakeholders.
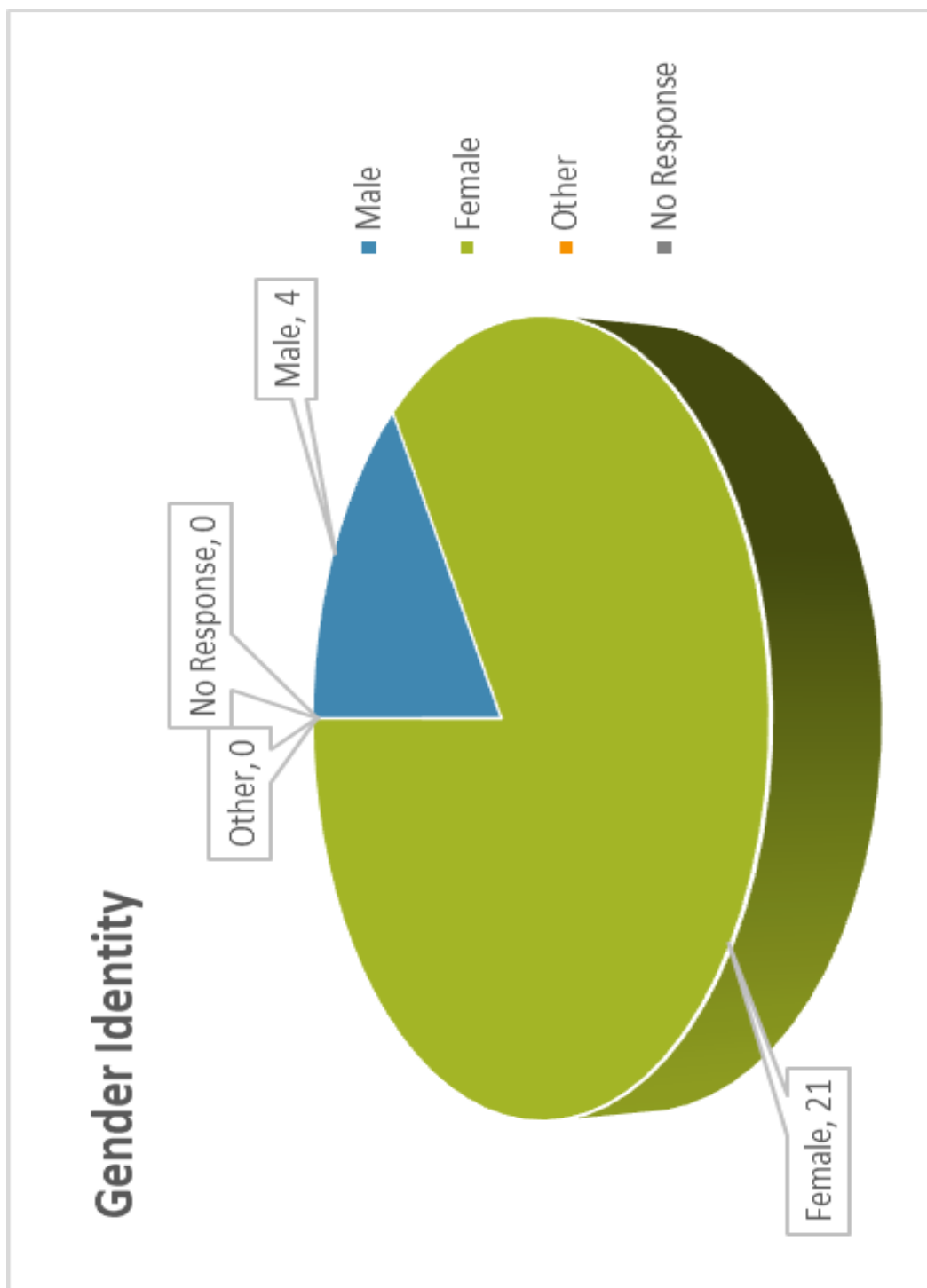
Table 2. Identifying Participant Sectors and Roles

The following table lists individual participants without attaching personally identifiable information. Each participant was assigned an identifier code, based on the sector(s) in which they operate. Additional descriptors provide insight into their primary anti-exploitation efforts, along with the participant's primary role(s).

PARTICIPANT IDENTIFIER	SECTOR OF SOCIETY	STAKEHOLDER EFFORTS	PARTICIPANT ROLE
NP1	Non-Profit	Policy; Advocacy	Executive Director
NP2	Non-Profit	Survivor Services; Awareness	Founder
GT1	Government	Coalition; Prevention	Coordinator
AR1	Academia/Research	Research; Education	Professor
NP3	Non-Profit	Survivor Services	Coordinator
NP4	Non-Profit	Survivor Services; Therapeutic Services	Founder
PR1, CI1	Community Groups/Individuals	Survivor Services; Awareness	Representative
PR1, CI1 (cont.)	Private	Consulting; Community Development	Author; Speaker

PARTICIPANT IDENTIFIER	SECTOR OF SOCIETY	STAKEHOLDER EFFORTS	PARTICIPANT ROLE
NP5	Non-Profit	Sex Worker/Survivor Services; Criminal Justice Reform	Director
NP6	Non-Profit	Survivor Services; Long-Term Restorative Care; Education	Founder; Executive Director
NP7	Non-Profit	Legal Advocacy; Policy Advocacy	Vice President
NP8	Non-Profit	Prevention; Education	Director
NP9	Non-Profit	Prevention; Intervention; Survivor Services	Director
NP10, LE1	Non-Profit	Education; Prevention; Intervention	Founder; Executive Director
NP10, LE1 (cont.)	Law Enforcement	Intervention; Prosecution	Officer; Investigator; Prosecutor
NP11	Non-Profit	Awareness; Survivor Services; Aftercare	Coordinator
NP12	Non-Profit	Coalition; Survivor Services	Coordinator
NP13	Non-Profit	Survivor Services; Therapeutic Services	Social Worker

PARTICIPANT IDENTIFIER	SECTOR OF SOCIETY	STAKEHOLDER EFFORTS	PARTICIPANT ROLE
GT2, NP14	Non-Profit	Task Force; Coalition	Founder
GT2, NP14 (cont.)	Government	Prosecution; Education	Attorney
CI2	Community Groups/Individuals	Advocacy; Awareness; Education; Medical Care	Representative
AR2	Academia/Research	Research; Education; Policy; Advocacy	Professor; Specialist
NP15	Non-Profit	Survivor Services; Long-Term Restorative Care	Co-Founder; CEO
NP16	Non-Profit	Prevention; Education	Director
NP17	Non-Profit	Survivor Services; Legal Advocacy; Education	Coordinator
NP18	Non-Profit	Therapeutic Services; Advocacy; Education; Awareness	Executive Director
NP19	Non-Profit	Survivor Services; Therapeutic Services; Advocacy; Education	Director
NP20	Non-Profit	Therapeutic Services; Survivor Services	Founder; Executive Director

Data Analysis.

Creswell (2009) provides guidance for the qualitative data analysis process, by preparing the data through coding, conducting deep analyses, and identifying emerging themes. The recursive element of the analysis is what allows increasingly deeper meaning to be uncovered. Phenomenological method impacts the analytic strategy as well, by focusing on "significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of what Moustakas (1994) calls an essence description" (Creswell, 2009, p.184). Creswell also highlights significant procedures of qualitative data analysis that maintain a forward movement toward making substantive interpretations, while also leaving space for repetition and iteration as new meaning comes to light. Below are six stages of qualitative data analysis:

Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis

Step 2: Read through all the data to get a general sense

Step 3: Use a coding process to organize and segment the data

Step 4: Generate descriptions of categories or themes and make connections between emerging themes

Step 5: Determine how to represent and discuss descriptions and themes within the narrative

Step 6: Make an interpretation, guided by meaning derived from the intersection of previous understanding found in the literature and new understanding extrapolated from the data analysis process.

Data Analysis consisted of a thorough editing of the auto-generated verbatim interview transcriptions to correct typographical errors, which were later sent to the

corresponding participant for their review and approval. Each participant was given the opportunity to make their own edits, additions, or retractions to the transcription before sending their confirmation to the researcher. In four instances, participants were no longer employed at the organization, and were thus, unreachable. These transcriptions were included in the research as is. By following a recursive process, greater accuracy was obtained in the data set, along with a continued relationship between the researcher and the research participants. Because these edits were allowed, the transcriptions reflect interpretive edits from both the researcher and the participants to clarify meaning, instead of a verbatim rendering of the audio recordings.

Using a qualitative data analysis software (NVivo12), the transcriptions were coded to extrapolate demographic data as well as emerging themes throughout. Coded themes included repeated ideas as well as unique perspectives that tend to be underrepresented in the existing literature. Textual data was initially treated by assigning thematic categories, or nodes, based on participant responses to the interview questions, followed by a process of narrowing down these responses to the major themes that were emerging from the transcriptions. Each of these themes was categorized into overarching designations to support a logical flow of ideas in the results section of this qualitative phenomenological study.

The researcher employed various strategies to assess the accuracy of the data and to enhance the validity of the findings. Emerging themes were confirmed through triangulation of different sources. Several participants offered similar perspectives, which added validity to the themes as they emerged during analysis. Repeated or corroborated ideas became primary themes. Later participants offered responses to the researcher's

initial findings from earlier interviews. This served to further develop themes and concepts, either through corroboration or by revealing some conflicting or discrepant findings. The researcher examined the range of perspectives offered about any given theme.

The following section provides several representative quotes from participant interviews as evidence for the themes that emerged throughout the analysis of the data. Personally identifiable information was removed to protect participant confidentiality. Additionally, filler words that drew attention away from the essence of the participants' meaning were omitted. All omissions are indicated by an ellipsis within the quote itself.

Results

Findings resulting from the data analysis have been divided according to the following categories (Sector-Specific Differential Understanding, Alignment with Extant Literature, New Insights, Participant Experiences, and Suggestions for Future Collaboration). Where appropriate, direct quotes from participants have been consolidated or tidied up to ensure participant confidentiality, grammatical integrity, and to remove filler or hesitation words, in an effort to clarify the point being made, while maintaining the authenticity of the speaker's words.

The table below details the categories to be discussed throughout the remainder of this qualitative phenomenological study, highlighting each of the major themes uncovered through the data analysis process.

Table 3. Results: Emerging Themes Matrix

SECTOR-SPECIFIC DIFFERENTIAL UNDERSTANDING	ALIGNMENT WITH EXTANT LITERATURE	NEW INSIGHTS	PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION
Gaps Along the Continuum of Care	Collaboration is Effective and Beneficial	Collaboration is Detrimental at Times	Survivor Perspectives	Addressing Discrepancies in Data Estimates
Differences in Understanding/Terminology	Collaboration May Be Less Efficient	Formal and Informal Ways to Collaborate	Examples of Positive / Beneficial Collaboration	Involving a Third-Party Facilitator
Individual Depth of Involvement in Anti-Exp Efforts	Collaboration Falls Short at Times	DOJ Funding is Not the Norm	Examples of Negative / Detrimental Collaboration	Creating a Clearinghouse or Hub to Collaborate Across and Among Sectors
Perceived Representation of Sectors in Anti-Exp Efforts	Varying Levels of Collaboration	Available vs. Accessible Funding	Criteria for Choosing Partners and Depth of Collaboration	Improvements to Funding
Conceptualizing Collaboration	Resistance to Collaboration	Stipulations Associated with Funding		Streamlining Eligibility Requirements for Access to Services
	Difficulty Collaborating across Ideological Differences	Larger-Scale, Regional Collaboration is Limited		Best Practices in Collaboration
	Power Dynamics Within Collaborative Relationships			Suggestions for Future Study

Sector-specific differential understanding.

The following sections illuminate distinctions between the foci of various sectors of anti-exploitation. Participants highlighted perceived weak points in policy and practice, differences in terminology used within certain sectors, and ways of conceptualizing the collaborative efforts of themselves and of fellow stakeholders.

Gaps along the Continuum of Care.

Study participants described the gaps they and others have identified along the Continuum of Care, points at which at-risk or exploited individuals do not consistently have access to necessary or desired services or resources. One participant described the impact of limitations in training and trauma sensitivity on the quality of care being provided to vulnerable individuals.

> *"[...T]his population needs services, probably, for a longer amount of time based on their complex trauma. [...T]here is a lack of therapists who are familiar with this population, that, also, take medical assistance [...] Therapists are needed who have a really good grip on trauma work" (AR2).*

> *"I don't see that we do enough information sharing with the other agencies. One of them provided a training about secondary trauma, which was somewhat useful. But, other than that, nothing to speak of. [...T]he majority of them do not [...] offer a training to people who come in from the outside. It's a very ad hoc world. [...I]f there is a handbook on [...] how to train someone to be trauma informed [...] I don't know about it. [...] And it's [...] striking how much I see this as a gap, or have experienced it as a gap, in the whole structure" (NP20).*

Participants also highlighted some of the gaps experienced by individuals who have been exploited, related to systemic and societal pressures, as well as existing policies or laws that may not serve survivors. One of the gaps identified was the lingering stigma for individuals that have been exploited, and an insensitivity to their lived experiences, even from stakeholders in anti-exploitation efforts:

> *"[...L]etting someone share their story without judgement is critical if we are going to invite people in for healing. [...] So we really need to [...] recognize that people's stories are sacred, and to eliminate judgement. [...A]cross all organizations, [that is] critical for us if we're going to move and really dismantle this whole system" (NP2).*

> *"[...T]hey're dealing with a lot of prejudice. They're dealing with [...] should they hide the fact that they were exploited [...] so that they can [...] blend into society? What are the triggers that are there? [...] And, she was also arrested for prostitution, even though, she was being trafficked. [...S]he's working on [...] getting her record expunged [...N]ow, the [...] laws are more [...] dependent on the state [...] leaning towards victims, as opposed to traffickers" (NP18).*

Various socio-economic, structural, and systemic factors were identified as contributors to gaps along the Continuum of Care. Some of the systems where participants observed shortcomings included the welfare system, law enforcement and the juvenile justice system. Policy and policy makers were also problematic for many participants:

> *"[...T]here's a huge gap in housing. [...] We don't have a livable wage. There's not [...] free childcare. [...I]f somebody has a criminal record, sometimes it can*

be expunged or sealed, sometimes not. [...H]aving a criminal record makes it hard for you to get a job. [...I]f you don't have those things it [...] keeps you in the cycle of vulnerability, where [...] sometimes some of our clients are like, 'The only thing I can do is sex work.' Which, of course, opens them up to [...] more criminal charges, which repeats the cycle [...]" (NP5).

"[...T]here are gaps and cracks because we know that the Child Welfare System isn't doing what they need to do for adolescents to prevent them from trafficking. We also know the Child Welfare System exits kids to homelessness from care when they age out. That should be illegal. Child Welfare System should not be allowed to do that. So that's a gap. [...] And then the same for housing. One of the most depressing things a young person said to me is, 'I was on a waitlist to enter a housing program [...], and that's when I met my trafficker. [...] He didn't have a waitlist.' And she was in 4 years in a horrific situation" (NP1).

"[The] Juvenile Justice System can do a much better job on Prevention and Response, because they lock up a lot of victims [...] as perpetrators of some other crime, and they don't realize that they were perpetrating crimes as a result of being victimized, which is very problematic. And then, that's where I think the value of community-based organizations, like runaway and homeless youth programs, or any type of community-based youth serving organization come into play, because they're not the system, and a lot of young people in crises are not running to any system for housing. They're not running to Child Welfare, Law Enforcement, Juvenile Justice" (NP1).

"If I look at the Police Department, [...] even going into that system, you're not going to get the resources that you need, because of how we view sexual exploitation. It's sort of a victim-blaming or survivor-blaming system. [...V]ery few police departments [...] handle sexual exploitation well" (NP2).

"[...S]everal years ago, I got into a conflict with a local law enforcement officer, who charged a juvenile with prostitution, which shouldn't happen. It's not helpful. It's not a victim-centered response. It's not the response that any of our groups advocate, that our task force says that they stand for. It doesn't follow any of those priorities. [...] While the state law defines the child as a victim of trafficking, there is still the ability for them to be charged with prostitution, which is inexcusable" (AR2).

"[...O]ne of the biggest linchpins is, which law enforcement agency initially gets that complaint, or initially handles the allegation. Because, that can either [...] totally destroy your rapport and the trust you can build with a victim, before it starts, or, it can set things on a really solid footing. So, it really varies, agency to agency. [...F]or some reason, these individuals feel they're capable of taking these complex sexual assault investigations, and they do tremendous harm with them [...] And, there's, just, a lack of flexibility. There's lack of understanding how what they're doing is totally wrong, even when you try to tactfully break that down to them" (GT2, NP14).

"[...M]y issue has generally been begging and pleading with them [law enforcement] to do something, and to take cases that need to be put forward. And, typically, because, '[...] the victim has this past' or, 'the victim has these issues,'

[...] things like that tend to [...] make prosecutors a little more skittish than they should be, [...] if they were to fairly evaluate the evidence and [...] put together the expert testimony to combat those types of victim-oriented challenges, when it gets to trial" (GT2, NP14).

"[...M]ost law enforcement professionals don't want to be involved on immigration status [...], they want to fight crime and they want to be able to have victims [...] come forward and cooperate with law enforcement. [...] I think [...there is] that hostile environment with immigration, with the individuals that often don't have status. And then, you put on top of that, children that often come here alone, you have a real threat with vulnerability. And, [...] a lot of these issues aren't addressed now, with policy, where, a lot of policy is looking at U.S. citizens and trafficking and [...] not addressing it with foreign nationals, because of the climate and the fear [...]" (NP7).

One participant offered some insight into a gap in communication between policymakers and those stakeholders who work directly with individuals seeking care. As a result of certain policy implementation, discrepancies in the collective understanding of the issue might come to fruition.

"Sometimes, the people making the policy have never worked with anyone on the ground. And, so, [...] they are making policies for things that they've never been involved in. But, at the same time, the people who are working on the ground have no idea what policies are even in place, or what policies they should be supporting or asking for" (CI2).

According to participants, gaps in services exist at every point along the Continuum of Care. From prevention to intervention to restoration to reintegration, several areas of improvement were identified. Obstacles to individuals moving through the Continuum of Care produce a disconnect between services available and services received.

One of the gaps several participants addressed was the issue of identifying individuals who are vulnerable to or currently experiencing sexual exploitation. This was emphasized when the services being offered were accessible by a range of populations, not only those referred through a previous identification process. Not only were individuals seeking care hesitant to identify themselves, but existing procedures for client intake and other care assessments were not identifying the signs of exploitation in the lives of those being served:

> *"[...T]here are kids at risk and there are kids that you know it's happening to, and adults also. And they are being served by certain things, but they're not necessarily identified" (PR1, CI1).*

> *"[...P]eople were coming into our emergency shelter as domestic violence survivors and there were suspicion[s] that they might be human trafficking-related crimes or circumstances within domestic abuse and that wasn't being addressed. [...T]he agency is [...] taking a look at how there might be human trafficking survivors coming into our work that we're getting in contact with that aren't necessarily being recognized as such. So, they changed the intake questions to be able to address or pick up on that population as well, and have then realized that there actually are a lot of human trafficking survivors that are coming to our shelter services that weren't being screened as such" (NP3).*

"[...T]hey may never get on the continuum of care, because, they don't see what's happening to them as abuse or as exploitation. It's hard to access resources, if you don't see yourself as needing resources" (AR2).

"[...] I've even personally met people in this area, who, after talking to them, realize that they themselves have been victims of sexual exploitation, and they've never had the terminology for it. [...N]o one has stepped into their lives and acknowledged that, either. And, because of that, they haven't received adequate services, and now [...] it's been thirty years [...] of that kind of exploitation. [...A] lot of that trauma has never been really addressed in their lives" (NP11).

"[...I]t's frequently six months to a year before that individual will ever even understand that they were trafficked. [...] They're not identifying. [...] You need individuals to come alongside, that have [...a] long view [...Y]ou have FBI or police, Law enforcement, on one hand, wanting to [...] have the evidence for a trial. But, you have an individual that doesn't even believe they're a victim, and so [...] your case managers, your victim services workers, agencies, nonprofit and government, need to be trained of, the priority here is the survivor, it's not whether or not this individual goes to trial" (NP9).

One participant highlighted a gap in reporting, specifically for suspected cases of adult sexual exploitation, where reporting is not necessarily mandatory:

"[...O]ur domestic violence shelters are seeing significant levels of trafficking, and they're interacting with it quite a bit. But there's a disconnect between that and law enforcement, and, [...] the system-based providers have different reporting obligations. [...] For adult victims of exploitation, they're not required

to report, and, so, they won't, unless that's something the victim is interested in

doing. And, that's sort of the minority of cases. [...Y]ou have a ton of these cases

that exist, that aren't really getting to law enforcement. [...T]hat's probably the

biggest issue, in terms of sector collaborations. […T]here's a gulf between the

trafficking that we know exists and the trafficking that we're actually going after,

from a law enforcement perspective" (GT2, NP14).

Participants also expressed different perspectives regarding the need for a better

understanding of client intake processes to tailor general services toward the unique

needs of sexually exploited populations:

"[...F]rom a practitioner level, from a case manager level, […] there are some

questions you can ask to really identify if someone has been trafficked. And then,

there are also some specialized services that you can provide […] within your

program, because a lot of what trafficked young people need is very similar to

what a homeless youth needs. The levels of trauma are very similar. So there is

some nuance and some practices that should be tweaked and some services that

should be offered, but by and large, it's a very similar service model, because

both populations need access to employment, they need trauma informed care,

positive youth development, connections to caring adults, safe housing, case

management, […] individualized therapy" (NP1).

"I would say there's gaps with the individuals that they're encountering, where

they're receiving services. [...T]o go through a short training in trafficking, for a

social worker who's also working with a population of individuals that are not

victims of sexual exploitation or trafficking, is a difficult load to carry. [...A] gap

that I see, is that individuals that are victims are [...] very often, alongside

individuals that are not victims, and [...] their services are lacking because of

that. And, they're not identified" (NP9).

When an individual is moving along the Continuum of Care, one roadblock might be enough to encourage recidivism. Participants described their experiences serving clients who did not continue to seek out services on the continuum:

"[...O]ur agency [is] mostly involved in that crisis phase, in terms of [...]

emergency shelter. And I don't know how far we have been able to reach,

traditionally, past that victim stage to becoming a survivor, because of how

frequent[ly] our clients have returned to 'the life' after being at our emergency

shelter, sometimes for a couple of months. [...R]elapsing back into 'the life' is

[...] a really common situation that happens. So, [...] we're really involved in that

[beginning stage]. And so is law enforcement, because most of our survivors,

we're getting through law enforcement. That's [...] probably our primary

channel, if not referrals from other agencies" (NP3).

"There are always gaps. [...S]ometimes these girls will go back 9 to 13 times [...]

I think, as a service provider, everybody's still trying to figure out [...] best ways

to do this [...], intense trauma counseling, helping them figure out their life goals,

[...] transitional housing, [...] We want to see them pour back into the

organization [...] that helped them get to where they are. [...Y]ou need to, really,

work on you, before you can pour back into others [...I]t's all about [...]

empowering the women and [...] hoping that they recover enough [...] and

believe [...] that they do have purpose, so that they don't go back into exploitation [...]" (NP15).

Another major gap identified by participants was in the available services for reintegration into society after moving through prevention, intervention and restoration, along the Continuum of Care. Areas of concern for participants included housing, employment opportunities and job-readiness, affordable legal services, and ongoing counseling or therapy, should an individual be seeking continued support after reintegration:

> *"[...T]here's clearly a need for case management from the beginning. For an individual to be thinking through the therapeutic piece [...] the housing piece, the family reunification piece [...] and the resources needed to make those different transitions successful" (NP9).*

> *"[...] There isn't really anything for once they're fully recovered. We would hope that they don't need any services anymore. The problem is [...] there's such a high dropout rate, that we don't often see them get there either" (NP4).*

> *"[...T]here is a big question mark about what the next step is, in terms of, what's accessible transitional housing to people that are not ready to live independently, yet. There is [...] a lack of employment readiness type of programs [available] to people that might not have the skill set that is transferable in obtaining [...] a more formalized source of income or employment. [...In] that next phase, there is just a lack of resources or understanding, even among stakeholders about what that next step looks like, post crisis care" (NP3).*

"[W]e know trafficking survivors need housing, because often their housing was provided by their trafficker. […] And we really believe that most young people, if given the opportunity to heal and reconnect with education and employment services, then they can achieve their potential and eventually go on to be self-sufficient. So, our perspective is very different than the adult homelessness perspective, which is [...] they're going to be in that subsidized apartment till they die. That is what some young people need, especially if they are suffering with some type of disability, or we find that more with our young moms, with a few kids. It is much more difficult for them to raise their kids and work and pay all their bills on their own, without any type of assistance. So, if anybody needs assistance for life, yes, let's sign you up. But we will not assume that because you've had certain life circumstances and you're 16 and 17, that you can't heal. Your brain is still very malleable, so there's a pretty big capacity for healing" (NP1).

"[...T]he gap, sometimes, occurs when they are discharged from one program to another […] especially for the ones who are in residential, going back into, what we call, the community […], the regular world. Because, even though [...] they're discharged with funds in place, it's no longer so easy [...to] access that service. [...Y]ou step out of your apartment, and […] you're starting all over. [...] Sometimes, programs really over promise when it comes to this population, and can't meet all the promises that we make [...A]ftercare services for this population is the biggest gap [...]" (NP19).

"[...] I've seen [...] a slew of legal issues that follow, as someone has been trafficked, and then, gets out and wants to reintegrate back into society. So, we have worked with survivors, in the past, where they needed to get [...] divorces, as a result of their trafficking experience. [...I]t can be tough to find pro bono lawyers, that are willing to help with things. [...A]lot of those shelters and homes [...], they say long-term, but, it's really [...] a year or two. Whereas, long-term, [...] in the recovery of human trafficking is significantly longer than that [...] or, it can be [...]. I would say that a really difficult one is finding the right counselor of fit for them, that is willing to be pro bono. [...T]hey're not, necessarily, looking to pay for services. [...T]o go from that [situation], to having to pay for counseling, having to pay for housing, having to pay for everything. It's all about [...] finding something that is cheap to free. And, finding the right counselor for a person, especially, someone who is adequately trained enough to take on a survivor of human trafficking, is also a challenge" (NP16).

"[...] I have a few friends that have been trafficked, and [...] I see that there's still areas where they're struggling, and, there isn't, necessarily, a lot of support groups for people that have come out of trafficking [...] several years ago. But, they still have [...] impact from it" (CI2).

"[...O]nce survivors do come to a place of healing, and they're ready to give back, [...] I wouldn't say our community is, at this point, fully equipped to help them on the road to becoming citizens who give back, and are employed [...] Our organization is survivor-informed, and we hope that [...] we'll be even able to have survivors give back by working within our nonprofit. But, right now, there's

such a huge gap, [...] and they haven't received the proper services. So, it would

be way too much to expect them to turn around and start [...] a healthy lifestyle

and be in a position where they're able to serve in that way, or to give back in that

way" (NP11).

One participant highlighted the need for distinct services and resources, based on the

individual's self-identification, as either a survivor of exploitation or a consensual sex

worker. The participant also identified existing gaps in the services provided to both

populations, emphasizing a larger gap in available resources for consensual sex workers

due to existing policies that do not legitimize sex as a form of labor. When discussing the

accessibility of these available resources, however, the participant acknowledged a

greater obstacle for individuals without the freedom or ease of movement.

"For survivors, you would need therapy, services towards finding new

employment, getting out of abusive situation, shelters, things of that nature.

Whereas, [...] for consensual sex workers, you need to provide space where they

can vet their potential clients, provide them [...] safe, legal frameworks where

they can work and have some sort of labor protection [...]" (AR1).

"[...B]oth populations are severely underserved, in terms of being able to access

services that would help their self-care. I think the survivors of trafficking have a

bit more available to them, as that fits within the current political and moral

framing of sex work, that people would never choose to do that unless they were

forced into it. [...I]t's easier to get government resources approved to those

survivors because they fit into what we morally conceive of as victims or

survivors [...]. [...H]owever, obviously if you are in a traffick[ing] situation,

you're going to have trouble accessing services, depending on your situation [...].

On the other hand, [...] sex workers have a bit more freedom in being able to

access the services they need. I just don't think the government or current

administration policies would be friendly towards providing sex workers services

that legitimize their labor" (AR1).

"[...T]he current law that was recently passed is [...] problematic –[...] by

conflating consensual sex work with trafficking. I think those are two different

things. And the policies that are being implemented, both domestically and

internationally, [...] lump those two populations together, even though they need

different kinds of resources and they have different agendas and they have

different needs. [...T]here is a perception that all sex work is forced and that there

can't be a form of consensual sex work, which I think is [...] based on these

kind[s] of moralistic understanding of [...] what is recognized as legitimate forms

of labor" (AR1).

One participant discusses the role that trauma might play in determining an

individual's sense of agency or decision to seek out what services might be available

to them. They emphasize the importance of survivor expertise and experiential

understanding of the systems and structures at work.

"[...T]he expert on that is going to be someone who's going through that system.

[...] I would say that from the beginning and throughout the process, survivors do

not have what they need in terms of the support that they want immediately. Many

survivors who I've talked to have wanted compassionate, non-judgmental

conversations and discernment as a way of beginning the process of healing, and

that rarely happens. [...A]t the same time, because people are being ripped from a situation of such trauma, that's traumatizing in itself. [...] There's a really good system in place, but for people who have been so severely traumatized, I think it can be extremely difficult for them to take full advantage of what's there. [...A]t the same time, many people find their [...] previous life reaching into their current situation to try to draw them back into it. [...S]ometimes that's a choice that people make, or even often, that's a choice because the alternative is just kind of a blank[...], just a sense that [...] what is there may not be anything that's desirable in [the] longer run. [...T] he idea that people would have a little bit of a respite from all the trauma and be able to start to discern [...t]hat doesn't always happen for folks, due to a variety of reasons. And when it doesn't, then it makes that hold on a new life much more tenuous" (GT1).

One participant highlights a lack of services and resources directed toward especially underserved demographics within an already vulnerable population.

"[...N]otable issues of racism, as it interfaces with who ends up trafficked, are very pronounced. [...T]he likelihood of [...] a young woman of color [...] to find herself in these circumstances is a direct link to the racism that she endures. And, specific things that [...] have been studied [...] like the school to prison pipeline, where young girls of color [...are] over-represented, and issues of poverty, [...] are [...] very identifiable. [...] I think what's also notable, is that the male population receives less services, they seek them less[...]. And, out of the many agencies that we've worked for, [...] only one agency [...] provided services for males as well as females" (NP20).

"[…F]rom the very beginning, […] every single need that you can think about, is what a survivor in the United States has little access to […] If you're a survivor from another country, and, you're rescued in the United States, then, there's a whole host of issues that you have. […I]f you don't speak fluent English, there's […] a disconnect, and so many resources that you don't have […] as opposed to someone that's a U.S. born citizen, that is going through the same process. […] So, even though there's […] a lot of resources out there […] survivor services, in regards to the […] anti-human trafficking sector […], a lot of times, we're not communicating, and we're not collaborating. […I]t leaves a survivor at a disadvantage, because, all the resources aren't available to them […]" (NP18).

"[…T]here was a time when there wasn't enough focus on U.S. citizens. […T]he original focus was international and foreign. […] But, I now see it tilting, because of the immigration atmosphere. […T]he most sympathetic issue, in some ways, you can work on, is trafficking. And what gets more sympathetic than U.S. citizens or U.S. citizen children? But, I worry that […] that's become [a] disproportionate focus" (NP7).

"The other area that always frustrated me, when I did this work on trafficking, specifically, was the lack of attention to boys and men. I think there's a lot of folks with a lot of sympathy for […] issues on women, and a lot of […] policy talking about women and girls, but very little that addresses men and boys" (NP7).

"[…] LGBT youth are overrepresented among homeless youth and also among trafficked youth who are experiencing homelessness. But, another strategy and tactic that we've had […]is for all homeless youth providers to be welcoming and

affirming, no matter sexual orientation or gender identity. And so, training,

resources, practices on that. […] I'm trying to make federal policy requirements –

if you get federal dollars, you can't discriminate, and you need to make sure

you're providing culturally competent services. Because not discriminating is

very different than being welcoming and affirming of one's sexual orientation and

gender identity" (NP1).

Participants emphasized the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that can create

an added level of vulnerability for individuals at an early age and can impact wellbeing

throughout the lifespan. A lack of truly trauma-informed care present in available

services was also discussed:

"I think [gaps] exist [...] from birth, for so many people, because of

homelessness, poverty, drug addiction, incarceration, gender identity, […]

immigration status. All of those things play […] a role in the vulnerability.

[...F]rom birth to death, [...] the idea of being [...] trauma-informed is missed"

(NP17).

"They're targeted. [...I]f we are look at say [ages] 10-14, especially for children

who have been in Foster Care, who have suffered some sort of abuse, who have

dealt with Domestic Violence at home. There are all of these little markers, that

when we look back, they have experienced one or more […] of them. [...T]here

are ways that we can pass this information on, so that we can collaborate a little

bit better. So I think that's a big missing link" (NP2).

"Probably, the biggest thing is, just, [...] general awareness of it, being able to

spot indicators, the lack of familial support systems […P]erpetrator[s...] would

definitely be targeting individuals that had either no, or very poor, familial

support. [...T]here's a lack of those standard resources, that come with a [...]

tight-knit communal group, that, just don't exist, for the vast majority of victims

[...]. [...T]he other individuals around them not knowing how to spot it,

misinterpreting their behaviors" (GT2, NP14).

"[...W]e know young people are extremely vulnerable to trafficking, if they lack

basic life necessities. It's like kids in the foster care system, kids in the juvenile

justice system [...]are extremely likely to become homeless. And young people

who never encounter those systems, but come from very dysfunctional families,

very poor neighborhoods, they are also very likely to experience homelessness

and be targeted. [...] Prevention [...] needs to be targeted to the most vulnerable

and the most at-risk young people. And those are the systems-involved youth, and

that's what the data tells us. It's the systems-involved youth and it's the youth that

are at-risk of and experiencing homelessness, because [...] if they lack a place to

stay or food to eat, and they're offered a job or they're shown a way they can

make some money, then they will do it when they're desperate. Or they can be

kind of coerced into doing it. [...W]e know lots of minors who will exchange sex

for a place to stay, and that's trafficking, because they are a minor" (NP1).

"I think traffickers look to the path of least resistance, people that are most

vulnerable. So, unaccompanied children, runaway homeless youth, [...] they're an

easy target. Particularly now, [...] immigrant communities have been driven

underground and don't want any connection with law enforcement, because of the

new climate. And, that's going to lead to [...] more exploitation of immigrants, and particularly immigrant children" (NP7).

"[W]e certainly hear of young people who don't have spending money to go to the movies or to buy clothes they want, and they want to fit in like the other young people. And so that makes them susceptible to traffickers, and traffickers know who to target. And the same with young people who are hanging out on the streets, bouncing from place to place. They are homeless. They lack stable caring adults. And they're targeted. And so for us, the Child Welfare System can definitely do a better job" (NP1).

"You'll find that anything that has to do with sex in general is a difficult thing for churches to talk about [...I]t's so difficult for us to talk about sex period, let alone some sort of exploitation, because, if you're Christian, there is this [...] mentality that you should sort of just move to victory, [...] ignoring that it exists, and wanting people to rush past the healing process [...]. And so, for churches, really an awareness that this exists, a commitment to doing the work, opening your churches, starting support groups for victims, I think is critical for them" (NP2).

"I don't think a lot of [...] therapists understand [...] how trauma is attached to the body, and I don't think there's a lot of body work being done in therapy [...]. [...W]e have to be able to provide [...] survivors with the ability to [...] first process the trauma, in order to actually [...] work through it. I don't think that's happening often enough" (NP8).

One significant gap identified by participants was the difficulty associated with securing funding for stakeholders to provide helpful services to individuals seeking care

along the continuum. This applied to both the resources made available through various policy grants and private funding sources, as well as the ease of access – or lack thereof – in obtaining and retaining the funding:

> *"For Government, we need more resources [...] to provide states and cities with funding for, say, afterschool care, before school care, to make some adjustments in our Foster Care system [...] educating teachers [...] on what to notice, the differences to notice, the signs when young folks are being exploited in any way"* *(NP2).*

> *"[...W]e know that there's not enough resources, either Federal, State, or Local, to do the outreach and connection to basic life needs for all the at-risk and vulnerable youth in the U.S., because it's just not a priority. There hasn't been enough resources dedicated to that. [...] I wasn't successful at getting billions of federal dollars to go to communities so maybe this program could have gotten increased resources [...]"* *(NP1).*

One participant suggested that a lack of awareness of other stakeholder involvement and resources produces a gap in funneling those resources to individuals vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation.

> *"I do think everybody should know what everybody else is doing [...] what the other one is capable of. [...I]f you don't know that the police force is capable of running these tags, knowing these numbers, looking this person up, seeing their history, then you're not even giving them the opportunity to help you find somebody"* *(CI2).*

"I worked with some individuals, recently, that were […] confused on how the system works in general, and the different people that get involved, whenever a crime of human trafficking or sexual exploitation is reported. People get very lost in that process, and sometimes the process itself can be very traumatizing for individuals, more than the crime itself. And, so, also having a strong partnership and understanding and cross training with law enforcement is […] important. […] As much as law enforcement, sometimes, need[s] the training around trauma-informed services, for their officers to be effective on their end, I think, also, for us as service providers to have a clear understanding of how law enforcement works at different levels, is very important […]. […T]he education around [...] immigration needs and immigration remedies that are available to people, is very important, as well" (NP13).

A lack of awareness does not stop with fellow service providers but impacts the community's understanding of exploitation as well.

"I definitely think they need more education in school. [...P]arents aren't aware that even […] middle income students can be trafficked, and, it's not just the poor, just the foster kids. So, helping them be aware of what it looks like, […] as far as, [...] the control, the giving money and gifts, […] that they can start to recognize [...]" (CI2).

"One of my bigger concerns is, in the educational sector, […] they're seeing a lot of it, but they don't have the training to respond to it. […Y]ou have teachers coming forward and disclosing these things […] that are clearly trafficking. […] Teachers are seeing that it's there, but they're not really understanding how to

respond to it. So, that's another weakness [...] in collaboration, and in the state

[...]" (GT2, NP14).

"I think there's a huge gap in education, particularly prevention education. It's

not something that is readily accepted by educational institutions across the

country, right now [...]. I think that, with that education, comes the knowledge of

how to access resources. But I think that, for the victim, the survivor, and the

sustained survivor, that there are very limited resources, as it pertains to [...] a

trafficked person. [...] There are some pretty unique dynamics that play into the

trafficking scenario, itself, and a lot of complex poly-victimization, that most

mental health care providers and social workers have not been properly trained

on" (NP10, LE1).

The level of training received by various stakeholders was a gap addressed by multiple
participants.

"[...] I'm not sure some of the other responders have had the support and training

[...] on this issue that the service folks have had. [...]I don't know that the legal

services are as trained and responsive, for example. [...] And, I don't know that

our medical facilities have been as trained [...] to respond. I think everyone would

respond as best they can, but in terms of having perfectly trained, seamless

systems, [...] those would be some [gaps] that I would identify" (NP12).

"[...] I think about the trauma trainings I've been through, and how much more I

need to learn. [...] I've taken two graduate, master level classes on trauma. I have

a psychology undergrad. I have a theology graduate degree. I've been to multiple

all-day trauma trainings. And, I would say, I still [need] significant[ly] more

training. And some people [...] in the state are receiving three hours of training"

(NP9).

"It's a system wrought with deficiency, [...] you have the state, and they're [...]

trying to do a really good job in training all those clinicians [...] but, [...] you

could be sick, you could miss a training, be having a bad day and not be paying

attention. So, [...] maybe you [...can say], 'Yes, I'm trained in trauma training.

Yes, I'm trained in anti-trafficking work,' but, it's not your specialty" (NP9).

"[...I]f you're [...] linking trafficking survivors up with those resources, but

individuals serving them are not properly trained and equipped to actually handle

working with them, in a positive way, we're not really helping them. [...T]hat's

[...] an issue that still needs to be addressed. [...A] lot of people [...] hear the

word 'trauma,' 'trauma- informed,' [...]I don't think people really understand it.

[...T]hey know that it's important. It sounds important. But [...] I think they just

utilize it to [...] give them better standing [...]" (NP8).

The model offered by this participant addresses strategic points of intervention along a

Continuum of Care, where individuals are often experiencing gaps in available services

and other resources:

"[...W]e have a model that [...] lays out that continuum. At the very front end, we

believe that the first point of contact are those entities that are doing, what you

would call [...] club outreach [...or] street outreach. It's where people who are

looking to intervene are going to the frontlines. [...] That phase, largely [...] is

meant to disrupt the lie that nobody cares about you. [...] Then the next phase is

emergency care. So, that would be your category of safe house. Largely, those are

affiliated with law enforcement efforts, and the majority of them are undisclosed

locations [...] usually a 72-hour stay at max, and the whole objective there is to

just buy time [...] for law enforcement, because law enforcement can't hold you

unless they charge you" (NP6).

"[...A]fter that, we have what you might categorize as short-term care.

[...N]ationally, it's usually around 30 days, but we're seeing more that are getting

into the 90 days space. [...T]his short- term care is basic needs [...] a lot of

information and referral [...] trying to figure out, what does the victim need now?

[...L]argely, what the short-term programs are meant to do is to figure out what

is the survivor's next best move? Does she need long-term care? Can she

repatriate? Is going home an option? Does she belong here? [...T]his is [...] the

beginning of the role for social work" (NP6).

"Then, you have restorative care, [...P]eople make the mistake that 'shelter' is

this [...] all-encompassing term, when it really has these gradations to it.

Restorative care is where the individual is to get services, so that they change.

[...I]t really boils down to that [...] And in what ways do they change? It's not all

the same. [...] So, restorative programs are meant to change the person. And

that's why they tend to be the long-term care programs. Graduate care is [...] post

care [...] meant for emphasis on social re-entry, but without a loss of community.

Because [for] the majority of the individuals that we have served [...] this

becomes your family. [...] after two years of being here [...]. [...T]he survivor will

have a job, they'll pay their bills, but they have great accountability back to

someone, and they're not estranged from connecting with the community. [...I]t's

an opportunity for them to stay where they are, finish their degree […], then

decide what their long- term move is" (NP6).

Participants described what the ideal Continuum of Care might look like, if all gaps in services and resources were identified and filled by competent stakeholders.

"[...C]ertain kids are already at risk the day they are born […]. But, in my perfect world, there would be a guidance counselor [...]head start programs […]someone looking out for ACES, [...] signs of trauma, or [...]terrible strife. [...] There would be partners for that mom giving birth. [...]And then in school, there would be people […] looking out for ACES. [...A]nd there would be more proactive stuff. Classes that don't look like classes for parenting kids, for people [...] who […] want to do something different [and...] do right by their families. [...T]here'd be more in the social services. [...T]here wouldn't be a social worker who has 60 kids in a caseload […Y]ou can't even visit [...] that many in a day. […] There's more support for kids who are marginalized, LGBTQ youth. […]Are there good residential programs? Are there good non-residential programs? [...I]s the community still being educated? [...A]re we still working like communities? [...O]ne really important part of this continuum […] is, you can't just be reintegrated into family [or] society [...]. Until there is a way for former victims, survivors […]to make adequate money, jobs, there's no difference than [...] saying to a bird who's been in a cage for 18 years, 'Be free.' What are they going to do? [...] There's not a single place I can think of that there's enough education or enough resources to address what needs to be addressed" (PR1, CI1).

"Our task force lead, the human trafficking advocate, has done a really good job

of making sure that all the holes are filled, and […] we have separate committees

for each level, each type of need. [...S]he's done a really good job of coordinating

the resources, and we have protocols in place for each type of care that the

person might need [...a]s long as they continue to be in contact with the people

that are offering them assistance" (NP4).

According to one participant, it is possible to introduce certain elements too soon

along the Continuum of Care. For them, it is important to understand at which point an

individual enters the continuum and to carefully gauge their intention to either participate

in a program or to seek out services more sporadically. Additional insight described the

reality of recidivism and recommended that stakeholders have an open-handed approach

to service provision.

"[...P]ushing this counseling, for example, in those first early phases, in our

experience, is a fantastic waste of time. Because, she is completely steeped in

symptomology, and right now, […] if she's still actively working, she's telling you

whatever she needs to either get what she needs from you or get you to go away.

Right? So, it's not a genuine relationship. There's been no rapport building or

anything like that. In the emergency, […] safe house context, that is not the time

to bring in a therapist. She's a caged animal. [...L]aw enforcement is holding her,

and all she's thinking about is, 'How do I get out of here?' So, she's not thinking

about her well-being, her trauma. [...A]ll of that […] is premature. [...W]e

recognize that when she has reached a place where she perceives safety, then the

door will open, gradually. But, [not] until her perception of safety is held by her,

not what we say. [...F]rankly, we don't see, what we would call, deep trauma work even manifest [...] in necessity, until 9 to 12 months in" (NP6).

"[...O]ur programs are voluntary, so some young people will come in after having been in a Law Enforcement situation, and they'll leave. And so, Law Enforcement needs to be okay with that, because that's part of the process for that survivor. [...P]eople have different perspectives on that – like, we need to lock them up for their own safety and well-being—but that's not our perspective. We think that is re-traumatizing, and it certainly doesn't help the young people have agency and make their own choices. So for us, we'd really like an open-door policy" (NP1).

"[...I]f survivors [...] were receiving the level of support that they deserve [...], their situation would be more stable, and therefore, our work would be able to take them much further. We can never predict from week to week if we're going to see the same face [...] again, because their living circumstances are so unstable. So, there is an intrinsic instability. [...M]y great frustration with the work that we do, is that, we don't know that we can do any ongoing work with anybody [...] with the exception of the two residential agencies that we work for, which house only [...] a tiny handful of people. But, the vast majority of people live in homeless shelters, [...] in family hotels, they are homeless, [...] on people's couches [...] or worse, or in foster care [...] or in emergency housing [...]" (NP20).

Differences in understanding/terminology.

Participants discussed discrepancies among several terms and concepts and the impact on like-mindedness in the collaborative space. According to their responses, such differing definitions and interpretations impact what issues receive priority focus within coalitions and for funding purposes, as well as how willingly or cautiously particular stakeholders might partner with one another.

Several participants expressed frustration with a perceived lack of clarity surrounding the concept of trauma-informed care, and what efforts qualify a stakeholder or sector to identify as trauma-informed. As one participant put it:

> *"Somebody has to define what 'trauma-informed' means. Even SAMSHA […]does not […] define it. They offer guidelines, and the guidelines are optional. The problem is that everybody else is running around going, 'We're trauma-informed,' and nobody knows what it means. [...I]t is grossly overused and misunderstood. […] I think it is important for anyone that's going to intersect with a traumatized population, to understand, as best they can, […]what some of those experiences may have been, and why a person would behave in a particular way, in light of trauma. […] And I think what would be wisdom, would be for an agency to, much like some agencies articulate their values or their care philosophy, to articulate what trauma-informed means to them [...a]nd how it's practiced for them" (NP6).*

The same participant highlighted a couple examples of how understanding the myriad ways trauma might present for exploited individuals can equip stakeholders to serve the population more effectively.

"[…S]he has been taught to lie her whole life. So, for us to [...] take great offense to it, means we are not trauma-informed, and we are not informed by the fact that lying does not hold the same judgment for us as it does for her. […]I have to move very [...] carefully, when I'm talking to a gal, and she seems slow in her cognitive processing […]because, such a high percentage of our population is probably suffering from […] traumatic brain injury. [...T]his could be a physical condition that is disrupting her ability to answer my question. Maybe she doesn't have a learning disability. Maybe she's not being belligerent. […] But it doesn't necessarily mean that I jump to a conclusion, that means I might have to hold a lot of things in balance until we get more data. But, I have to know that about the experience of being exploited, in order to […] suspend judgment" (NP6).

"[...P]olice officers who are doing arrests need to understand that this woman has been trained to give him an answer. That answer is bullcrap. […] And certain police interrogation behaviors are very reminiscent of pimp behaviors. So, that's why police are trained in trauma-informed interrogation, because they have to understand oppressive behaviors" (NP6).

"Caregivers need to understand different things, like [...] how effective and skilled this population is at manipulating to achieve an objective. And I don't mean that in a nefarious way, but their entire life of prostitution is, 'if with this client, I have to be a baby girl, and this [one], I have to be a vixen, and this one I have to be masculine [...],' she changes on a dime. [...] We have some women who were told that their transactions could be no more than eight minutes. [...B]eing trauma informed, you have to say, then, within the span of a 15-minute

window, she may have to change persona, in order to achieve the objective. [...]

So, when she's sitting with me, and she, what we would call, 'switches up,'

[...t]hat is possibly not multiple personality, but learned behavior [...b]ecause

she's trying to figure out [...] 'What do you want? How do I satisfy you?' That's

trauma-informed" (NP6).

According to one participant, the lack of one unified definition for 'trauma-informed care' has led to various stakeholders experiencing conflict in the collaborative space when the concept is being discussed.

"[...T]here is a clash in the field because we don't have a shared definition.

[...O]ne of our trauma-informed principles is, we are trying to get you as much to

real life as possible. And if that means that certain behaviors have to be forced,

until they become natural [...] It's like anything you practice. [...] In our view,

what we've come to realize over 10 years, is that there is no money management

skill whatsoever. They are so used to everything being disposable, that they buy

clothes to throw them away. There is nothing that is retained, because they don't

believe that they own anything. And so, everything is get what you can now.

[...W]hat we're doing is, frankly, what a parent would do, [...] We're controlling

her ability to make a decision, and giving her the choice to make not just short-

term decisions, but long-term decisions. And that is a developed skill. It has to be

practiced [...] It requires structure. [...S]he makes up her own budget, with some

coaching [...]" (NP6).

Another participant highlighted a perceived lack of education and available training for service providers and other stakeholders working with vulnerable populations experiencing trauma.

> *"[...T]here is still this very big misconception and miseducation, around what sexual exploitation is and what human trafficking is, and what it can look like, especially here, in the US and, [...] specifically, in this Tri State area. [...] When people are not aware of the red flags, people can misconstrue some of the things that they actually see out there. [...We are] really having to break it down to some of the service providers that are working with these families, for them to understand us. [...I]nstead of talking about a child being promiscuous, this is a child's response to trauma" (NP13).*

One ongoing conflict surrounding differing perspectives and definitions of concepts reaches to the level of ideology, particularly perspectives regarding the level of legitimacy associated with the sex trade and other forms of labor. A couple participants' responses highlights this tension:

> *"[...I]t's important to think about forced labor, not just of a sexual nature, but [...] forced labor situations in a lot of different arenas, [...]and how [...] certain types of labor are not considered legitimate and not considered worthy of regulation and recognition [...]. And not just sex work but [...] migrant farm labor or domestic workers [...] situations where people live in largely slave like conditions [...]" (AR1).*

> *"[...T]here has been a long-term debate in feminism about, 'Is sex work or pornography inherently exploitative of women?' [...T]here are some feminist*

scholars who argue that all sexual relationships with men are exploitative. So, even defining what is exploitative [...] in a sense [...], even sex work that is consensual can be exploitative. [...T]hinking about things like pornography, [...w]e're accepting of that kind of sexual labor and that's [...] totally legitimate and legal. But if it takes place off camera within these [...] compact confines of hotel rooms, situations like that [...], then it's problematic" (AR1).

"[...W]e are living [...] in a time and place where there is [...] this cultural double-edged sword, [...] this [...] false dichotomy [...Y]ou're either a sex worker or you are a victim of trafficking. And, what it looks like to be a sex worker versus what it looks like to be a victim of trafficking are two totally separate things. And if you're a sex worker, it's [...] this really edgy, empowered, cool thing [...]" (NP17).

"[...D]isproportionately, it affects girls and females, [...] indicative of a larger issue. [...] I've had ten- year-olds be called promiscuous. [...S]omehow, the dynamic of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation that create a set of circumstances where someone, [...] in survival mode, tries to respond and navigate the situation, results in everyone else pointing to them and saying, [...] 'You're the problem. You're promiscuous. You're manipulative. You're a slut [...],' [...] I hate [those words], because they're used against my clients and weaponized, [...] not just by their pimps and their traffickers, or their parents who exploited them, or the gangs that exploited them, but by service providers and stakeholders, too. [...] And that is [...] one of the biggest factors that also prevents people from getting the care that they need" (NP17).

"[...I]s it really their choice? [...T]rafficking is the exploitation of vulnerability, right? [...] You have all these people [...] they're vulnerable, [...t]hey've been so brainwashed and they're so afraid to leave their pimp [...], you have Stockholm Syndrome and trauma bonding [...] they're now feeling loyal to their captor and their abuser. [...] Are they even going to try to leave, if they [...] did have the resource[s]?" (NP15).

One area of difficulty within the anti-exploitation field relates to the predicament of requiring statistics and quantitative research to secure funding and policy support, alongside the inherent inability to fully quantify an illicit phenomenon like sexual exploitation.

"[...T]he reality is that, from [...] a government standpoint, [...] human trafficking is still very new, and our understanding of it is very new [...], so, there [aren't] a lot of, 'evidence based programs' that are out there, because there just hasn't been the time to get the evidence" (NP10, LE1).

Participants also highlighted the importance of understanding anti-exploitation services along the continuum of an individual's journey.

"[...] I think many people don't understand [...] that, once somebody's been exploited through trafficking, it really is a lifelong recovery process. [...] And, so, having those support networks in place [...o]ngoing mental health care, [...] life skills training, as well. [...] I think legal services should be involved from the victim stage, the survivor stage, and the sustained survivor [stage...]" (NP10, LE1).

"[...C]onsidering every survivor experience and pathway to restoration is different, what might not be [...] beneficial for the survivors you're partnering with, [...] some other organization, even being survivor-informed and trauma-informed, might come to a different conclusion [that ...] the survivors that they're partnering with might be ready [...]. [... S]ometimes, that collaboration is the same survivor, in both cases. And, [...] that [...] is a barrier, but [...] that's not insurmountable. I have seen that effect partnerships. But, I've also seen healthy conversations come from that [...]" (NP9).

One participant identified potentially problematic language commonly used in the anti-exploitation field, while highlighting the importance of understanding and employing terminology appropriate to the setting.

"None of our young people think that they have been 'rescued.' They don't use that terminology at all. [...T]here are certain things we have to say because it's policy terminology, but we know that young people are not going around saying, 'I've been trafficked.' They're 'in the life,' they're 'doing what they need to survive,' they're 'helping out their boyfriend or their daddy,' [...W]e don't tell our service providers to go around educating youth about trafficking. [...T] here's a different [...] policy lingo, as opposed to [...] how we're training practitioners to talk to their young people. I think we need to know both. You need to know what the policy says, the words and the definitions and the bylaws [...]. But then, they also need to know the best way to connect [with] and identify young people [...] and then provide appropriate services" (NP1).

Other participants emphasized the significance of using intentionally positive language when serving this population. Disagreements in the use of specific terminology may impact the collaborative relationship.

> *"[...A]s a social worker, [...] we're trained and educated in certain [...] recovery-focused language and empowerment approaches, [...] which sometimes, other professionals aren't. [...W]e're dealing with the different agencies, different people. And when you're dealing with survivors, [...] the language needs be positive [...A] lot of people like to use certain language [...] that's not really the best approach [...] like 'rescue,' [...] and 'restore' [...] Which is not a negative thing, but, sometimes, to a survivor, it can feel like [...] that kind of language [...] holds the power away from them, when we really should be giving power back, because the power's been taken from them for so long" (NP8).*

> *"[...T]here might even be language used at a training, for example, that is [...] not language we would use when talking about survivors. [It's...] victim language, rescue language, which is not language that survivors appreciate, that's what we've been told. [...I]t's not our role to tell people how to speak, but, it affects collaboration" (NP9).*

Individual depth of involvement in anti-exploitation efforts.

When asked about existing or potential collaborative relationships within their local area, state and across the Mid-Atlantic region, participants expressed varying levels of partnership, usually contingent upon the type of service being provided. Law enforcement representatives expressed the need to collaborate across borders when a case involved the transport of an individual being exploited. Simultaneously, frustrations were

expressed regarding the lack of collaboration that might hinder investigations within state borders. One participant made the distinction between the types of collaborative relationships their organization might participate in at various levels:

> *"[...W]hen we're in the realm of direct services, that's local [collaboration]. When we're talking about referrals, that's national. We do very little to cultivate referrals locally. They don't do well. [...W]e are big advocates that she has to get out of her cesspool in order to heal. It increases her safety, literally, and more importantly, her perception of safety"* (NP6).

One example of both statewide and local collaboration is that of formalized gatherings (conferences, coalitions, task forces, etc.). Several participants highlighted their participation in or knowledge of existing groups such as these. There are varying degrees of governance, ranging from state-run, to county initiatives, to more independent focus groups:

> *"We've helped start several [task forces] in this area, but not all of them still exist. [...F]or example, in [one local county], it's under the Office of Human Rights. They have a very committed leader. And, so, theirs is one of the more robust task forces in the area. [Another local county]'s has been through the county executive's office, and so that depends on who's county executive. They're on the uptick, though, because they're really taking this problem seriously. They've added another vice officer. So, there's a great deal of variance. [A third local county] is very active, but they don't have a formal task force"* (NP6).

Perceived representation of sectors in anti-exploitation efforts.

Participants described their perceptions of other stakeholders' involvement in anti-exploitation efforts. One individual expressed an appreciation for the influence that government can have on advancing anti-exploitation measures and policy:

> *"[...A]wareness is huge, because they can help reach into areas of importance, and [...] compel awareness. So, for example, if [the county] were to say, 'All schoolteachers [...] have to have an HT101.' They have the authority and they can make that happen. Whereas, as just a nonprofit, we can't compel teachers to have that training" (NP6).*

However, according to the same individual, the impact of a larger governing influence over a collaborative team may also lead to a lack of clarity in defining the objectives of import, and thus a limited impact in the action steps taken thereafter:

> *"[...] My comment on task forces, though, is I think, what is critical, is that they're clear about their task. [...W]hen they're clear what they're trying to accomplish, I think that they can be extraordinarily effective, because then they can measure whether or not they had an impact. [...] Where I think they lose efficacy, is when they meet to meet. And they just meet to find purpose" (NP6).*

Some participants expressed concern over what they perceived to be limited involvement and understanding within the government sector regarding the impact of current policies and the significance of future policy for those being exploited:

> *"[...A] constant battle, [...] something that [...] every state has to be relentless on, is making sure that we're protecting and serving the victim, first, and, not the perpetrator [...]" (NP18).*

"[…] I think that the challenge is probably getting that level of responsiveness to be mirrored on the local level […] or that level of collaboration around the issue. […] I mean, it's wonderful that I know the protocol, but I'm not a first responder, so that doesn't help too many people" (NP12).

One participant compared how collaboration might differ on the local level to that among a wider geographical region:

"We are […] really invested, both as a coalition and as a state, in collaboration, not just on this issue, but on […] multiple issues. […] In some areas of larger populations or huge geographical areas, I could see where that collaboration might need to be adapted, or more narrowly defined. But, for us, there is such value in having all of the key partners collaborating. And, if you have good communications for your respective disciplines, on the local level, then, you will always be able to keep them updated and networked. And, I can see where that could be […] invaluable to both intervention and prevention efforts around trafficking" (NP12).

Participants largely emphasized the importance of including a diverse range of stakeholders and sectors in the collaboration process. Much praise was given to the potential for collaborative bodies to bring together previously disparate or differing perspectives under a unified goal of providing holistic services. Simultaneously, some participants expressed caution in determining the best balance between involving all relevant parties and maintaining a small enough group that all members could be heard, and tasks could be effectively executed. Particular focus was given to the intentional inclusion of survivor representatives.

"When I started in human trafficking, there were a lot of cleavages and divides between labor and sex, between adults and children, between foreign nationals and U.S. citizens. And, I think [...] the coalition [...] really did a great job of fostering collaboration and bringing a holistic view to human trafficking" (NP7).

"[...] I think that collaboration can be extraordinarily powerful. You got to make sure that you have the right kind of folks, and you don't try to go too broad, [...] because you can have, as I say, subtraction by addition, where you have too many groups, too many folks" (NP7).

"[...H]opefully you have survivors. [...] I've seen it work better when there's like a local survivor, a support group that has some type of organization or role outside of some type of community collaboration or task force. [...I]f they have some type of like structure, then it seems as if they are given a more prominent role to provide insight and direction to the community collaboration" (NP1).

"[..A]nother benefit [is] being able to see the different perspectives, [...] giving you a more comprehensive view of the problem. It fuels creativity. You're seeing different ways people are approaching the problem, so, it inspires you to do things a little differently, or think of ways that you could optimize what you're doing" (GT2, NP14).

"[...W]hen you're talking about collaboration, you're talking about collaboration on so many different levels with so many different types of agencies, federal and nonprofit [...f]aith-based partners and community-based partners that are not faith-based. And the benefit [...] is that difference in perspective and just the energy that all those different systems bring when it comes together [...]" (GT1).

"[…T]here's always so much we can learn from each other. To me that's the thing

to do. Get [to] the place that looks most disparate from where you are situated.

And ask them what they are doing, and even run scenarios that you have that are

difficult past them and allow them to do likewise. I think that kind of sharing can

bring forward knowledge that isn't obtainable any other way" (GT1).

Conceptualizing collaboration.

By and large, study participants felt that collaboration was essential to the success of

existing and ongoing efforts in anti-sexual exploitation. The reasons for this were varied.

Some expressed the importance of the intersection between specialized sectors to

establish holistic, wrap around services for individuals seeking care. Others emphasized

the unique capacity for collaborative spaces to create opportunities for conflict and

resistance to be overcome for the benefit of those being served. The intentional inclusion

of varied perspectives in forming shared definitions and understanding, to close existing

gaps, was another prevailing idea among participants. Participants proposed that

collaboration among a diversity of stakeholders is a greater benefit to vulnerable or

exploited individuals than a singular stakeholder taking charge of the entire Continuum of

Care for an individual.

"I don't think you can know if a community is hitting all the buckets of the

continuum of care that's needed, unless you have the diversity of stakeholders at

the table" (NP1).

"[...F]rom the standpoint of [...] what happens to a person after they've been

exploited […], isolation and trauma bonding, and all of that […] building a

network of people who you can trust outside of the life and outside of the industry

is so important. [...] Instead of [...] doing it all in-house, because that also creates [...] a growth dependency [...]"(NP17).

"[...W]hat we hope to accomplish [...] is really coming together and looking at the issue, looking at support for survivors in the most holistic way possible with as many perspectives as we can possibly fit into one meeting one room because, if we miss the perspective of anyone, we haven't really completely looked at the issue in the way that it should be looked at, which is making sure that any possible resource, any possible angle on the problem is identified and covered so victims [and] survivors have as much support as possible" (GT1).

"[...W]orking collaboratively and holistically can create [...] a culture change and [...] a general societal system, in which we're able to more actively prevent and respond to situations of exploitation, or situations where people are at risk of exploitation [...]. I think that [...] without it, we're not going to make changes and we're not going to be able to make a dent in this huge, huge problem that exists" (NP17).

"[...T]he people who we're trying to help, either proactively or reactively, are multifaceted people, who interact with so many different systems and stakeholders throughout the course of their lives. And, so, collaborating between and amongst the stakeholders is really, in my opinion, [...] the only way to holistically help people, regardless of [...] what part of that continuum they fall on. [...I]t's really imperative. [...T]he only way forward is through collaboration" (NP17).

"I think collaboration is really important at the community level […]. Because otherwise, you're not going to be able to identify where the gaps are, and then work to fill the gaps. […] The point is to start doing something" (NP1).

"[…] I think [collaboration…] needs to happen, in order for us to be able to start really meeting the needs, because there are so many gaps. […T]he only way to fix this is by finding more ways to collaborate, with more agencies and people in general" (NP8).

"[…W]hen you perceive that those interpersonal factors are in play, like respect, open dialogue, pre-emptive notice, […] that to me is collaborative. […] Instead of […] the case manager […] responsible for everything related to her care, we have a care team.[…S]omebody might represent what they're doing academically, therapeutically, domestically, familial, […a]nd we meet every week, and we go through every person. […] I think that's what's made this program effective for the women, because, we are always looking at that person in that multidimensional way. […] To me, that's collaboration, and it invites people who are internal and external" (NP6).

"[…T]he absence of multidisciplinary dialogue will get us in trouble. […T]he public health people don't understand that, sometimes, something over in criminal justice is forcing a condition. Or something over in medical care is forcing a condition. […H]ere's a decision that gets made over in this industry, that has implications for public health. If we're in dialogue with each other, if we are thinking of this multidisciplinary approach, I think we have a better opportunity to say, 'What is the cause and effect relationship there?' […I]t's also so much our

philosophy as an agency, that we [...] try to talk to everybody. [...W]e need to be

more intentional and force ourselves out of those silos of thought. [...W]e have to,

with intention, say, 'What don't I know about this?' [...] We have to collaborate

because success depends on it" (NP6).

One participant describes the "collaborative" approach needed to sustain sexual

exploitation and contrasts that to the siloed approach that anti-exploitation efforts have

historically attempted:

"[...T]rafficking is a complex, knitted into society, industry. It does not happen in

a vertical and isolated way. [...I]f I'm 'running' [trafficking] girls [...], I've got

hotels, I've got websites, I've got taxi drivers, I've got hotel concierge [...] I have

a whole network of other industries, that are knowingly or unknowingly complicit.

Why would we be siloed and vertical in trying to approach something that is this

entangled?" (NP6).

Despite the emphasis on collaboration being essential, participants did highlight the

need for discernment in how collaborative efforts are undertaken:

"[...T]rafficking survivors might not necessarily trust developing a relationship

with all these different agencies, [...] and we don't want to re-victimize anybody

by having to retell stories over and over again. But in the time that it takes to

connect somebody, you don't want to lose [...] a second of trust that you might

have gained with a survivor. [...B]eing mindful of [...] that time sensitivity in how

urgent it is to connect effectively, considering that there might be a window that's

closing, in terms of their willingness" (NP3).

"[...] I just want us as agencies to be mindful about re-victimizing our survivors. Often, to get the work done, there's a lot of intake paperwork that needs to happen. And at each intersection, the last thing that we'd want to do is re-victimize and have somebody tell their story [...] over and over again [...Be] mindful that trauma manifests in different ways, so you might be getting snippets of the stories that are coming to mind in that moment. And it's really difficult to piece them together if we're not collaborating" (NP3).

One participant highlighted the importance of early and ongoing collaboration among stakeholders along the Continuum of Care, for the sake of an individual receiving services, to provide holistic care. Other responses homed in on specific factors of holistic care, including trauma-informed services:

"[...O]n a micro level, for each individual client, family case [...] that I have, every single person has a variety of systems and stakeholders involved in their lives, whether they want it or not. [...It's] important, from as early on as possible, to [...] start having conversations with the ACF worker, with the immigration attorney, with the criminal attorney, with the teacher, with the shelter worker, with the foster mother [...], everyone who's involved [...] to understand what is happening, [...] so that [...] everyone's working from the same perspective and vantage points" (NP17).

"[...U]nderstanding how trauma affects the brain and health and learning and parenting [...], let's work together, [...] so that, we're not ever [...] re-traumatizing the person, or forcing them into [...] anything that they don't feel comfortable with, to really support them to [...] build a net of support, but also, to

[…] be positive factors outside of 'the life' and outside of the industry and outside of their exploitation, that help move their life forward [...W]hatever point at which they're experiencing systems in their life when I meet them, is when I try to collaborate with those stakeholders, to make changes in that person's life"
(NP17).

"I think, trafficking cases are unique, in how many different systems are involved. So, if I have a kid, who's in child welfare, [...] they're involved in the [Local] legal system, [...] they also have a juvenile delinquency, [...] they're also a victim in a criminal case against the traffickers, [...] and, they're a foreign national, so, there's immigration. [...Y]ou could have a kid that has four different attorneys, and, all these different systems. So, I think collaboration is absolutely key. We have to work together" (AR2).

"[...Involving survivors is] instrumental, but not at the expense of re-victimizing the survivor, when they're not there in their journey to do that [...n]ot in a way that's exhausting to them [...]. And then, also just being mindful about not putting forward what the ideal client or survivor looks like, but really understanding the way that trauma is so central to people's journey […]" (NP3).

Many participants emphasized how essential the collaborative process was to current and future success in understanding, preventing, and responding to gaps along the Continuum of Care and to individual's experiences of vulnerability, exploitation, or abuse.

"[...C]ollaboration is key to putting an end to sex trafficking and providing full care for survivors of sex trafficking. [...F]uture collaboration […] is essential.

[…] Any gaps in service that exist […] make it so that, for every one step forward,

there's two steps back. And, so, the elimination of any gaps is crucial" (NP16).

"Collaboration in anti-trafficking efforts is the joining together of all of the care

providers that do provide different services, […] to provide […] as seamless of an

experience as possible, for the survivor. [...T]here is no one service provider that

provides everything […] so, there needs to be that collaboration, so that the

survivor doesn't feel the gaps, but, rather, feels like it is one team coming

alongside them and providing all the things that they need" (NP16).

The need for collaboration was described as significant enough to overlook or

reconcile differences among partners sharing a collaborative space.

"[Collaboration is...] really everybody coming to the table to fill in all the gaps

[…] for the same purpose, not for any kind of self-promotion, but […] because we

all want to provide for the needs of the population […]"(NP4).

"This should be a team effort, no matter what […] your part of the solution is.

[…] We all have the same goal in mind, and that is, to see these women, children,

men […] get out of 'the life' and be restored. […] It's alright to have your own

opinion. You can disagree here and there. But, ultimately, we all have the same

goal in mind. And that's to see these […] victims rescued and restored" (NP15).

"Collaboration is the only way to wipe this out. [...] Individuals do not end abuse.

Communities do. Individual agencies don't end abuse. Communities do. […] I do

believe we can" (GT2, NP14).

"[...A] collaborative team that know what's going on […] creates some positive

pressure, because, [...prosecutors are] being pressured by the defense attorney,

and in a lot of these cases, the victim is noncompliant. [...] The judge can often

[...] provide pressures [...] to be efficient versus just. And, so, having that

collaborative team [...] saying the opposite, [...] can be very important" (GT2,

NP14).

One participant expressed the pertinence of collaborative relationships, especially in

sharing knowledge among sectors to better equip individual stakeholders:

"[...P]artnerships are essential, because, I don't think we would be nearly as

effective, moving into [another region], without having a partner organization

that could explain, 'This is how we do things here. And, this is how this message

needs to be communicated.' [...] We can start to establish best practices, as long

as we're open to share with each other [...] and also having an honest

conversation about what our failures or weaknesses are" (NP10, LE1).

Alignment with extant research.

In some instances, participants offered insights that emphasized findings from the

existing literature. The primary investigator identified consistent themes including the

effectiveness of collaboration, the potential for collaborative relationships to result in

inefficiencies and compromises, and various obstacles presented to stakeholders.

Collaboration is effective and beneficial.

All study participants expressed an overall appreciation for the collaborative process

and the results it can produce, when done well. The most frequently stated benefit of

collaboration was the opportunity for comprehensive services to be provided to

vulnerable populations, through the sharing of unique expertise, knowledge and support

among stakeholders:

"The victim gets validation, which is part of the healing process. [...] The benefits to victim service providers and advocates is that [...] they have more access to resources to better serve their client, to better serve the victim. They have a better understanding of the safety concerns, and they also have access to that law enforcement officer. [...] And, so, if that collaborative relationship exists, that happens much more efficiently and quickly than it would if there was not a collaborative relationship in place. And, overall, everybody understands the problem better, everybody's working together, everybody is leaning on each other and expressing frustration [...]" (NP10, LE1).

"[...I]f the collaboration is victim-centered, which ours is, [it] helps to ensure that the victims receive the best possible services with trained providers. [...] When we had multiple task forces going on, you saw how difficult it was to have any kind of standardized response in the state, or make the progress [...] that we certainly have made, now [...]. And, you can pool your resources, [...which is] great. It also provides the opportunity for you to get insight into what your partners are doing, and what resources they have available" (NP12).

"[...The] benefits to collaboration are that victims interact with so many different systems, and when we collaborate and communicate, I think, we can decrease the amount of confusion and how overwhelming this process is for survivors. [...I]f we collaborate, and there is a single point person, then, the victim doesn't have to talk to five different agencies about something. We can find resources more effectively. When people collaborate, I think, you're more likely to have good

outcomes, like, stability for victims, healing for victims. I think, you're more likely

to have convictions of traffickers" (AR2).

Participants thought that offering holistic services was more attainable through a collaborative relationship than an individual stakeholder or sector. What seemed important to participants was the ability to cooperate under a unified goal, streamlining what can be, while acknowledging the specialized skill sets that individual stakeholders and sectors bring to the table:

"[...T]he benefits to collaboration are huge [...j]ust because it casts a wider net.

We all [...] reach people differently. We communicate differently. [...] I may not

be the best person to get the word through to the 80-year old man, that it is time

that he stops buying sex. He may hear it from a 65- year old man a whole lot

better. So, the best thing I can do is become friends with a 65-year old man"

(PR1, CI1).

"[...B]enefits are the shared resources, shared information, access in some cases,

because if you're connected to the police department, then you have access to a

certain level of support that you will not have with your nonprofit or church"

(NP2).

"Collaboration also helps you avoid reinventing the wheel. [...I]f we're sharing

resources, then, we're not wasting money. But, if everyone wants to do their entire

thing, all by themselves, then we end up [...] duplicating trainings and awareness

materials and administrative work, and this wastes money that should go to

victims" (AR2).

"The benefits are definitely that, [...] no one organization can fill in all the gaps, so you have all these existing organizations, and being able to collaborate helps you fill in all the needs of the population, instead of trying to get it all done under one roof, which is just unrealistic and expensive" (NP4).

"[...W]e bring a certain set of resources that other organizations may not have [...] So, when we bring our platform to the table and collaborate with other nonprofits, they have the benefit of our resources, [...a]nd, then, we have the benefit of their resources [...]" (NP18).

This pooling of resources and a shared knowledge base provided the opportunity to better meet the needs of clients that would otherwise remain a gap along the continuum. Those who commented on this issue offered suggestions for varying types and degrees of resource-sharing:

"Benefits [are] shared resources, shared knowledge. And when I talk about resources, not just the folks that are in the organization, but even volunteers. [...] If we collaborate right, you can funnel volunteers where they're needed. [...I]f you funneled them to a different organization, more work could be done" (NP2).

"One of the main benefits is resource sharing. [...E]ven though, everyone is very interested in trafficking, and helping youth who've been trafficked, the resources are still extremely limited. And, when I say resources, I don't just mean of the financial kind. I mean, resources, in terms of experience and training" (NP19).

One participant explained the benefit of sharing in successes and the resulting metrics to include in future grant proposals or evidence-based reporting:

"Each of the nonprofits gets to [...] track that success, and able to report that.

[...] There doesn't, necessarily, have to be a turf war [...E]veryone can win, in a

collaborative effort, [...] everyone can show that their services are effective, and

they are making progress in helping the survivor" (NP16).

Other potential benefits to stakeholders included a more cooperative prosecution

process and the comradery and mutuality among stakeholders in sharing the burden of

secondary trauma or compassion fatigue:

"The benefits to collaboration are [...] a stronger case, a much higher

probability for a successful prosecution and/or conviction. It is less frustrating for

law enforcement, intel gathering, where law enforcement is able to understand

the problem better, because they're getting more information. For the victim, the

benefits are that [...] there is a higher likelihood that the majority of your needs

will be met, because you have multiple resources that are [...] able to be

pooled[...] to create [...] a holistic package for the victim" (NP10, LE1).

"[...F]undamentally, it gives you hope, that you have [...] other people working

on these things. And it's not just you. You're part of a bigger picture and a bigger

movement. [...] It helps with [...] secondary victimization or traumatization,

also" (GT2, NP14).

"[...E]verybody's [...] on the same page. And, [...] you get to know everybody

who's doing similar work in the same space. [...I]f you have clients in common, it

makes it easy to talk to each other" (NP5).

"[...Y]ou have a lot of really good people working extremely hard in isolation, a

lot of times, needlessly. [...] A lot of times, you're reinventing the wheel. [...]I

think […] there's a resiliency factor here. It's a lot easier to work on these in

partnership with others. [...W]hen you're just on the frontlines by yourself, you

get really tired, really quickly" (GT2, NP14).

Participants pointed out the potential for collaboration among stakeholders to create an

environment of stability and sensitivity for an individual seeking care:

"[...S]urvivors have lived a reality, in which, they have to move from place to

place, and deal with instability, and deal with uncertainty, as a result of their

trafficking experience. And, so, collaboration, when done seamlessly and done

well, provides a system in which, they don't have to be moving around, again. […]

They don't have to be dealing with that uncertainty, that inconsistency, that

they've had to live with, again. [...I]t's going to provide the best possible care for

them, because, when there is a lack of collaboration, there's inconsistency, and

[…] that's going to draw out a traumatic response from them. That's going to

draw out PTSD. That is counterproductive to what they're attempting to receive

[...] from their service provider [...]. [...T]he major benefit [...] for collaboration

[…] is that, it's not going to re-traumatize a person" (NP16).

"[...T]he benefits would be, [...] being more effective at what we do. Survivors are

engaging at different points with different agencies, whether that's runaway youth

that might be engaging with CPS, or whether it's people accessing [...] local

attorneys, or law enforcement picking up people in stings [...]. [...T]he best part

of collaboration is being effective, and how we're engaging with survivors

[...b]eing survivor-centered, being trauma-informed, and [...] doing the work that

we're doing in an empowering way that's not really victimizing. [...F]irst and

foremost, putting the survivors needs ahead of the work that we're doing and

making sure that we're [...] on the same page about that" (NP3).

"The benefits are what we have been able to live. [...W]e could not do our work

without the setting provided by the anti-trafficking agencies. [...O]ur work would

not be as effective, if survivors were not receiving basic life supports of all the

other kinds, like housing, childcare, education, legal help, etc" (NP20).

Collaboration may be less efficient.

While collaboration was widely recommended and valued among participants, the difficulties associated with collaborative processes were not overlooked. The bureaucracy and limitations observed within some partnerships proved especially difficult and frustrating for many participants.

"[...E]ven though a client might seem inclined to go there [to transitional

housing], going through the whole process of doing a referral and getting in

contact with the other agency, [...] trafficking survivors are people that might

change their mind in the time that it takes to get bureaucratic things done" (NP3).

One participant highlighted the inefficiencies that might arise when a particular sector or stakeholder experiences a high turnover rate, and connections must be established with each new partner.

"[...T]he main drawback [...] is that, sometimes, [...] there's a fair amount of

turnover in this work. So, the only drawback I would foresee, is, when you

develop those resources, and having to redo it [...] over and over again" (NP19).

One particular inefficiency that several participants associated with the collaborative process related to the concept of information sharing and the existing tension between the

constraints placed on some stakeholders to maintain client confidentiality and the potential benefits of free-flowing information among stakeholders in order to provide seamless and holistic service to vulnerable individuals.

> *"[...T]he drawback is that, [...] survivors do need to go from place to place, and do need to [...] keep moving, unfortunately. [...U]ntil a system has totally been figured out, [...] nonprofits [...] need to report numbers, and they need to report progress [...]. But, every agency has their confidentiality laws. And, so, a difficulty can be other agencies, not knowing, exactly, what progress has been made at other agencies. [...T]hat can create some of those gaps, where they can't provide [...] the most beneficially tailored service for survivors, because different agencies can't share everything with other agencies" (NP16).*

> *"[...F]our agencies are collaborating to provide wrap-around services. That often means young people have to travel to four different locations to get four different things. It's just an example. That is not ideal for young people without money, without a place to stay, who experience high levels of trauma, and they're already transient. A lot of them just want stability, and being bounced from agency to agency for the sake of collaboration does not feel like stability to them. And it also, depending on how it's done, can mean that young people have to keep telling their story, and it's re-traumatizing. Often, it has to do with the program requirements for them to be eligible. [...] Because every program has their requirements, and they have paper requirements they have to comply with, for the state, the city or the feds. Service providers aren't trying to be bad and re-*

traumatize young people, but they don't keep getting the money, if they don't do

what they need to do" (NP1).

"[…I]f you're working with somebody that doesn't understand your mission, or

doesn't understand your limitations, or the legal ramifications of certain things,

then it can […] create problems. But, I think that's […] easy enough to overcome,

if these entities are willing to sit down at the table, to talk to each other, to […]

lay out policies, and […] talk about how they handle cases. [...O]nce everybody's

on the same page, then collaboration runs a lot smoother" (NP10, LE1).

Participants explained the dilemma of involving too many perspectives and the

potential for resulting paralysis of the group that would lead to ineffective or inefficient

collaboration:

"[…] I think, sometimes, if you have too much input, then nothing gets done. So,

you have […] so many ideas, that you are not able to focus on anything.

[...H]aving too many people, and too much input, can cause you to overload, and,

then, get overwhelmed and do nothing" (CI2).

"[…Y]ou can spend your time collaborating, and not getting some of the specifics

done, [...and] this could have no end, if you don't put some parameters around it"

(NP12).

"[…] If you can keep things moving forward, collaboration is the way to go.

There are times where you just […] have to do it, yourself [...] for efficiency.

There can be a lack of efficiency in collaboration, just with all the different

actors. Getting ahold of all the different individuals involved can be tricky.

Getting them on […] the same page, in terms of agenda" (GT2, NP14).

"[...A]re there going to be too many cooks in the kitchen, too soon? [...W]e should flesh out this problem [...]. And if there are [...] other issues that come to the surface, we can figure out [...] if now is really the time to deal with that other issue. Because sometimes, there can be like a lot of things to tackle. And if you have [...] too many people bringing in too many things, then [...] it can start to [...] detract from what you're trying to accomplish. Even if it's [...] equally important [...], it just makes it easier to [...] figure out [...] what to tackle first, and then if other folks think something else is more important, [...] they can start a collaboration and go through [...] basically the same thing" (NP5).

The concept of losing sight of one's own role or mission as a stakeholder or experiencing perceived or actual pressure to take on that of another stakeholder, was presented by a few participants.

"The downside of collaboration is that, while sometimes it can move things along more quickly, sometimes it can make things seem a little more slow. And, it also can [...] create what I would call 'lane violations,' in terms of staying in your lane" (NP12).

"[...I]t can be easy to lose sight [...] of your mission, when you're collaborating with different people. [...Y]ou're only one person [...] only one organization. You can only do so much, and you want to make sure that your mission is focused, so you can do it well. But, when people make you aware of other [...] needs, then it's easy to want to do that, too [...] [...T]hat's one drawback of having other partners, is [...] feeling like you need to be doing the same work that they're doing, when that's not what you're called to" (NP11).

Participants identified inefficiencies associated with recreating systems and structures that might already exist in some capacity but have yet to be made available to a wider community of stakeholders through the process of collaboration:

> *"Our providers have been serving trafficked youth for decades [...]There are 400 programs already serving these young people across the country, if you really want to make an impact on trafficking among young people, beefing up these agencies and their capacity to provide services, [...]it's going to take less time than, like, funding a separate and new trafficking system" (NP1).*

Ultimately, the collaborative process might be less efficient simply due to the need for the intentional protection of the autonomy of the individual seeking care. As one participant puts it:

> *"[...A] major part of our role as a victim service agency, is [...] offering dignity, a safe place to tell your story, and somebody, a community, that will help you reimagine a different future. [...It takes] a very, very long time. And, [...] that is both, why we need collaboration, and it's also a huge detriment to why it's not happening. […] I think there's a human instinct that thinks, 'This should be quicker' [...]" (NP9).*

Collaboration falls short at times.

Although by and large the necessity of collaboration among sectors and stakeholders was emphasized, some participants offered the caveat that collaboration for collaboration's sake was not sufficient. Without defining structures for vision casting, leadership and task management among partners, these participants did not see the collaborative process as altogether impactful on a larger scale.

"I think, we have some tremendous challenges. [...I]t seems rare that you have

people thinking big picture [...] as opposed to, just, plugging holes. [...E]ven

when we have these collaborate discussions, and you have a productive group,

you're, sort of, troubleshooting [...] which is good. But, [...] I think there needs to

be more of a higher-level strategy […] a game plan […] battle plan, if you'd even

call it that, on how you really wipe this out. And, so, I think that's what [...] most

groups and most collaborators, at least, that I'm involved with, are missing"

(GT2, NP14).

"[...T]he ones that don't go so well are when [...] there's not [...] a clear leader

who can make sure that things keep getting done. Or where, [...] people will say

yes to things that they don't actually have the time to work on. So, even if you're

trying to collaborate, [...] things just kind of fizzle out" (NP5).

Additionally, differing priorities in the face of limited resources among

collaborative partners, including funding, time, and personnel, might result in

disappointment for some:

"[…W]e're going to start a social enterprise program, where they will be able to

sell things that they've made and learn about business and marketing. This is only

two people I have the capacity to do it with [...T]here's only so far that they will

consider expanding our program, because they have such more pressing needs to

address for survivors" (NP20).

"[…T]hese organizations are only being able to support survivors [...] reactively

[…i]nstead of creating a situation that truly provides a 360-degree response to

how […] detrimental trafficking has been to their lives [...Some of] the crime

victims' assistance programs [...] do very comprehensive work to help people rebuild lives, when they're victims of a crime. Let's say, trafficking was considered that terrible of a crime against a person, that they were given a free ride in university, they were given a great place to live, they could get as much therapy as they needed, [...] it really, truly stabilized their lives. Then, I would say [our organization] should be something they should have access to every day of the week" (NP20).

"[...T]here's been a lot of talk about forming a human trafficking task force in our area. And, it's been recognized as a need from many different stakeholders, including law enforcement. But, nothing has been developed, yet. So, there [have] been meetings about it, and conversation about it, and people recognize that it's important and it's needed, but we haven't solidified or officially formed anything, yet. [...] The conversation has been started, but we're still, just, slowly starting to take steps, and even figure out how to take steps, in that direction" (NP11).

"[...] I think time is one of the biggest barriers to collaboration. [...F]or example, two executive directors through two organizations that really want to partner [...have been] trying to get together for over a year. [...] That collaboration is a positive thing and it's potentially a really good thing for the survivors in both organizations. It's just hard [...]" (NP9).

Varying levels of collaboration.

Successful collaboration among stakeholders does not have to take a uniform approach, according to participants. The depth or level of collaboration among chosen partners was described as an important factor to consider:

"[...T]here's different levels of partnerships. There's the smaller, local nonprofits that we talk to and collaborate with on a monthly basis, that are specifically for anti-sex trafficking. And, then there's other local agencies, that are not necessarily in the anti-trafficking field, but their work, in one way or another, overlaps with us, whether they're a counseling service, or [...] they serve homeless people. [...] And, then, there's the larger ones, [...] I don't know if they would consider us a partner, but we certainly have benefited from [...] learning from them [...]. So, it's [...] three different tiers, in my head, of the different partnerships" (NP11).

One participant described the characteristics of potential collaborators at varying levels of partnership:

"[...Y]ou can have common cause with an organization on policy, but [...] their messaging, their communications, their tactics may be out of sync. [...T]here's groups that you can [...] sign on to a letter here and there. But, I think what the depth is, you're looking for alignment and cohesion on policy, and also, how [...] they are working to change that policy with their profile of the organization, the communication, the tactics" (NP7).

One participant highlighted the importance of distinguishing the depth and duration of collaboration in practice:

"[...I]t's very important to distinguish the objective of the collaboration. If it is operational, it's largely going to reside within the responsibility of the entity, because we should know what we need. [...] If it is more expansive, in the awareness, anti-trafficking, advocacy arena [...], for example [...]they host a

human trafficking awareness day, and they invite us there as a speaker [...]. I

don't see that as a collaboration [...] other than momentary. [...] We're providing

them something, so that they can go do what they do. But it's not an ongoing

relationship. [...] Maybe that is episodic collaboration, or single-event

collaboration, as opposed to sustained. [...S]ometimes, it's just to achieve this

objective. [...I]t's not a relationship" (NP6).

While some participants maintained that separation and autonomy of partner

stakeholders was important, others conceived of the collaborative experience as a

merging of individual stakeholders into a larger unified body:

"[...Y]ou're really bringing people together with very different perspectives and

roles and missions, so you need to look at what is the mission of the Local Police

Dept? What is the mission of all of these organizations? So, what is their interest

in this, and how can they see their interests in this as being in line with their

mission? And unless you have the buy in from all the different partners at that

level, you're not going to sustain their involvement [...]" (NP1).

"[...W]e have a very refined set of skills, and a certain area that we wish to

affect. And, we're not here to [...] take over any other organization or any other

role or responsibility. [...W]e're here to work collectively, collaboratively, [and]

to enhance each other's ability to positively impact the issue of trafficking"

(NP10, LE1).

"[...C]ollaboration is community, [...] It's not, just, separate entities coming

together for the greater good. It's, actually, not looking at each other as separate

entities, and [...] looking at each other as extensions of the same work, [...W]e

have to [...] be more open to sharing resources and thinking of ourselves as one

single unit, moving to support each survivor [...]. [...W]e have to start looking at

each other as [...] a community and a family, in supporting this survivorship and

this journey. And, I think that, in that way, we become better. In that way, we

become less disconnected and more collaborative" (NP18).

Resistance to collaboration.

The concept of resistance or hesitancy, both to enter a collaborative space and to maintain the relationship in the face of tension, proved a particularly sensitive area of discussion for many participants. Some expressed frustrations related to the resistance they had experienced when attempting to foster a collaborative environment. One participant identified hostility within what was intended to be a collaborative space.

"It's usually in the lack of communication, and a lack of collaboration, and the

lack of understanding of exploitation and trauma, that creates further problems

and traumatization. And [...] more difficulty, also, in that initial collaboration,

because it's coming from a place, immediately, of [...] contention. [...S]o often, I

come to the table, [...] ready to go to war with people for clients. And [...] less

and less I have to do that, but, sometimes, [...] I, very often, have had to [...] yell,

report people, complain, and [...] go to battle with people, to get them to [...]

either listen or chill out or back off or work collaboratively or [...] get a new

person within the agency to work, who is not going to be [...] antagonistic or

judgmental of the set of circumstances" (NP17).

Participants expressed frustrations with the resistance they experience when attempting to collaborate on anti-exploitation efforts. Several stakeholders and sectors,

including therapeutic service providers, medical practitioners, law enforcement, academia, faith communities, government agencies, and those with competing ideology regarding the nature of trading sex, were identified as being particularly resistant or hesitant to collaboration for various reasons:

"I have found counselors and therapists to be very difficult to work with [...], unnecessarily difficult, and I think, to the point of being detrimental to the care of the individual. Now, because I don't come from that field, [...] I can't speak to what their professional preparation is, and some of their professional constraints. But, we don't share the same constraints, and I think that's where there's a clash. [...T]hat clash is most evident [...] in not respecting that we each have a piece of her care. We need mutual respect. [...T]oo often, we have encountered people in the counseling arena, who keep that 50 minutes so [...] closely guarded, so private, so impenetrable, that there's no collaboration at all. [...] And I think that that's at the detriment, because, if we have somebody who is going in [...] and they will talk to the therapist. And [...] I'm not asking for full disclosure. But, I think there has to be some understanding, going into the relationship [...] So, that's been an area [...] absent, I think, the level of collaboration that would be helpful" (NP6).

"It's not too hard to [...] talk to police [...] to solve the sex trafficking of children. But then, [...] as soon as people turn eighteen, [...] they're viewed as adults, and, 'This is all their fault and they're just [...] these terrible people that are [...] selling themselves on the street.' So, [...] it can get harder to talk to police about why they shouldn't be arresting people" (NP5).

"[...A] lot of the time [...], police don't want to be at the general body meeting, and of course victim services people want to talk about case-related things, and [...] where people are falling through the cracks or [...] what an officer did. And [...] officers don't really want to hear it. [...Our state] Human Trafficking Task Force [...] can't really take any positions on anything, and general body meetings [...] don't really respond to requests for, 'Could we change the dynamic of these meetings and have productive conversations about things that aren't working?'" (NP5).

"Local law enforcement, especially, has been not very helpful. [...] They have the mindset of everybody who's a criminal is a criminal, and that's why we're treating them as criminals. And, so, trying to get them to see people [...] who maybe were prostituting themselves, as victims, has been very difficult [...]" (NP4).

"[...N]othing would happen for months. And you'd send text, after text, after text, and call supervisors [...], harass with emails and phone calls, and, you just couldn't get anything to happen. [...T]hat's a problem. I think there's a lack of accountability with law enforcement, at least [...] in [this state...]" (GT2, NP14).

"[...] I think law enforcement is still resistant to collaboration. I think there's a significant number of human trafficking organizations that are still resistant to collaboration [...]even outside of the victim services realm. [...O]ther anti-trafficking organizations that may be working in the education-awareness space don't want to collaborate, either. They [...] want to have their [...] little strong hold on things. [...] I'm opposed to that, because, [...] we might be able to combine forces and make [...] the best program, versus these other programs [...]

that don't have the full resources of both organizations. So, I'm a big believer in coalitions and [...] joining forces" (NP10, LE1).

"I think it's still pretty polarized that the victim and social service providers don't want to work with law enforcement, and law enforcement doesn't necessarily see the value of working with victims/social services. [...T]here is this gap, that actually ends up hurting everybody involved. [...F]rom the law enforcement side, [...] the mindset is to protect the integrity of the case itself. On the victim services side, the mindset is to protect the victim. [...T] his lack of willingness to work collaboratively negatively impacts all three. It negatively impacts law enforcement, because ultimately, the victim is not in a good place to be able to cooperate with the investigation, and so investigators become frustrated, and at times drop the case altogether. I don't believe that this approach aids victim service providers because they need law enforcement to help with the protection piece, and security and safety planning. And, I don't think that it helps with the victim, because the victim doesn't receive the justice that they deserve, they don't receive the validation [...] from a person in authority, like a law enforcement officer, to say that they're a victim. [...U]ltimately, I think [...] they would have less access to services, because they don't have [...] that certification from law enforcement that they're a victim of human trafficking" (NP10, LE1).

"[...L]aw enforcement's the big one. But at one point, it had been [...] the faith community and churches that was almost as resistant, maybe even more [...] than law enforcement. At least, eventually, I got law enforcement, but churches often

still in many cases don't want to talk about it […]. Those are probably the biggest

two" (NP2).

"[…T]he abortion clinics are resistant […]probably, because, they know I'm pro-

life […] I am able to connect with the […] nurses that are there. I'm just not able

to […] get the high-level people to want to do presentations […]. […T]alking to

the staff is working, as far as them knowing the signs and symptoms […]. They

have been very receptive and want to know more. […E]ven though, that may not

be the way that I would serve women, they are there because they care about

women, and […]if they think they're being trafficked, they want to help them"

(CI2).

"The academic world is very interested to have me do talks, but when I suggest to

them I could lead workshops, so that […] students in the arts or in the creative

arts therapy could learn about working with survivors of trafficking, they have

never been able to take that step with me, so I would call that resistance" (NP20).

"Child Welfare definitely is very resistant, because they already have so many

mandates […], and so they don't really want to take on more, because they're not

really managing well what they already are responsible for. So, we have found

them to be very resistant to doing things differently, to thinking outside the box, to

providing specialized services" (NP1).

Additionally, competition among stakeholders, notably over available grant

funding and the associated requirements for reporting data, has contributed to increased

resistance toward collaboration, according to participants:

"[...S]ome agencies I know, in the past, have had issues with collaboration, because, they are grant funded, and [...t]hey are, basically, fighting over clients, [...] which can impact the collaborative relationship" (NP19).

"[...T]here's limited funding, too. [...P]eople want the same pots of money, which I think sort of gets in the way as well" (NP5).

"[...T]he biggest drawback is, [...] we all have jobs to do and the [...] way that success in our specific role or field is measured is different. But, a lot of times, that creates [...] competing interests. [...] I don't think that the interests are, or should be, competing, but they get perceived that way. [...T]he fractured system, and [...] the competition around, like, funding or grants or ideology or [...] numbers [...] so often, gets in the way of really good collaboration" (NP17).

"[...T]he other challenge of collaboration [...]is that you are all competing for funding, you are all submitting grant applications or funding applications to the same places, competing for the same amount of money, so you don't really want to share your secret sauce, [...]this evidence-based practice, because then they could steal it and maybe take your funding [...]" (NP1).

Some participants expressed navigating not an outright resistance or refusal to collaborate, but a reluctance or hesitation from potential partners for myriad reasons, including perceived hostility from current members of the collaborative body, a limited sense of ownership of the problem, divided responsibilities, requirements regarding client confidentiality, or a scarcity of the resources and training necessary to facilitate such partnerships.

"[…] I very often am […] infuriated when I have to collaborate with ACS or with Foster Care agencies, because, notoriously, it's […] the most difficult. But […] they are also, notoriously […] super underpaid, super underfunded, have the highest caseload, have really hard jobs to do […]. And, that gets in the way of […] positive collaboration, so often" (NP17).

"[…] I don't ever want to generalize, but, I would say that men, in general, are harder to reach in the overall community than women. More females show up. I've asked a couple of men why. And I've gotten just a couple of reasons. One is that it is viewed as a female issue. But a couple of them have sat me down and said, '[...H]ave you ever been in a room to hear about what men, primarily, are doing to girls? […] Have you ever felt shame, just, utter shame, because of something you've never done, but you know your kind does that.' […T]hey have indicated it's almost unbearable. So […] that's where we think about different ways of communicating […]" (PR1, CI1).

"[...P]eople think that they have […] or do have […] such different agendas, […] and think that they cannot veer from whatever role that they have […] that has a competing interest with someone else's […] and are so used to the status quo, that very often, people [...and] systems are not willing to be flexible and to work collaboratively. […T]hat mentality of […] not wanting to share resources, not wanting to share information, not wanting to share numbers or funding […] really inhibits people from sitting down, having conversations […] around how to help, best practices, what the problem looks like, what people are seeing" (NP17).

"[...U]ncooperative and resistant are two different things. [...M]ost often I get calls from foster care agencies and [ACF] workers [who...] want to do the work. But, because of their caseload, because of the systems that are in place, and that aren't in place to support them and train them [...], working within the system of foster care or [ACF] is the most difficult, because, it's [...] a drop and go thing, which is the nature of their job. But, they'll [...] drop the case on your lap, and then, [...]if you can get in touch with the worker again, it's like a miracle. [...W]orking collaboratively is really difficult [...a]nd they are notoriously punitive [...]" (NP17).

"Medical professionals, [...] when they learn the reality of trafficking, are totally on board. But, [...] they're involved in so many other sectors, that they are [...] stretched thin. So, even though they've also been mandated to receive training, not all of them have. [...W]hen it comes to actually getting the proper referrals from medical professionals, who [...] identify survivors, it's [...] lacking. [...] And, so, there's a real need [...] to train those medical professionals. And, there hasn't been a [...] concentrated effort to ensure that they are prepared on every front. [...] There has been a legal mandate for medical professionals to be trained. It's just the implementation that needs to be [...] worked out. Because, in a lot of cases, it's turned into [...] a handout that they just need to sign. And, that's [...] not enough" (NP16).

"[...W]e live in a world, in our work, of being more collaborative on a day to day basis, because of what we do. And, it may not be as natural for the criminal justice system folks" (NP12).

"[...] Law Enforcement [...], they are involved in so many other sectors. And, while, in [this state], they've been mandated to receive training in human trafficking identification, the reality is that, most law enforcement officers have not received that training. [...T]hat can make it difficult [...] for survivors to actually go through interviewing with law enforcement. It can lead to survivors not properly being identified [...] survivors falling through the cracks" (NP16).

Another participant provided some insight into how collaboration might be easier at the grassroots level than among top decision makers.

"[...] It's bad collaboration at the top, but, good down at the bottom. [...] It would make sense to do it at the top, and, that, organizations across the nation would do it [...] Because I can't go to every single abortion clinic in the country. [...] But, [...] there's, like, three here, so I will go to those. And, we'll work on it from there [...], both, with the pregnancy centers and with the abortion clinics" (CI2).

Participants highlighted the possibility that resistance to certain collaborative relationships might be necessary and in the best interest of the individual being served. For example, if tensions between service providers are affecting the client's sense of security or well-being, or if a particular partner decides to no longer serve an individual client who is still being served by other stakeholders within the collaborative body. In such a case, participants suggested that severing ties with a partner may provide a better opportunity to serve the survivor:

"We tried to partner with an organization for a few years who's in the youth homelessness space but has no desire to be connected to folks on the ground and/or to learn. [...T] hey weren't true partners, they weren't really interested in

collaborating, because they weren't interested in sharing information or opportunities or intel, they just wanted to take. So, we had to break that, because it became clear that they were just working with us to kind of use us [...]. Because, for collaboration, it needs to be two-way, and that's the challenge. If there isn't that kind of openness and sharing of intel [...], then you're not really going to be able to truly collaborate" (NP1).

"[...Y]ou have to know your lane and you have to know [...] these are the guidelines, as an organization, that we have discerned. [...T]here have been thoughtful processes, and they have been survivor-informed processes. They've been [...] trauma-informed processes. They've been expert informed. [...I]t doesn't mean we're right about everything [...b]ut, those are boundaries we have [...T]hat's where collaboration can be difficult, because other people have come to different conclusions. [...O]ur purpose [... is] to keep the survivor at the center, [...] so, we will continue to seek collaborations, because that's the best for the survivor. But we will also continue to [...] know that those are [...] not going to be always easy" (NP9).

"[...T]here are some factions in the county who tend to [...] go at it. And one in particular has made it very clear that the others shouldn't be around. And by doing that [...] they've made it very conducive for others to work together. So, they'll say, '[...W]e're not inviting you,' [and...] that's okay. We can hold another program [...a]nd five or six organizations will collaborate to do that. [...S]o you eventually learn what you can do and what you can't do. And you learn who you can work with and who you can't" (PR1, CI1).

"You talk about serving any population at any time, there's egos involved. There's egos involved for us. [...T]here's one [faith based] agency that is not even a part of the task force [...] for really good reason. So, there's an agency out there serving survivors, that's really siloed, and not receiving any collaboration. And, I'm sure that's hard for them. [...A]s a task force, [...] the things that they're asked to change aren't changing. And, so there's a good need for those boundaries" (NP9).

Ultimately, participants stated that despite the conflict, collaboration is still beneficial as a whole. A lack of collaboration may ostracize the very individuals and demographics that stakeholders and sectors are attempting to serve:

"[...] Survivors tend to show up to the more collaborative, or the collaboration-oriented, entities [...].[...T]he outcomes [...] generally tend to be more survivor oriented [...]. The really [...] anti-survivor outcomes tend to be where you see a lack of collaboration [...]" (GT2, NP14).

"When you collaborate [...] together, several different entities or people [...] you're always going to have some differences, [...] I don't look at that as [...] a negative. I look at it as a positive, because, we're learning from each other [...S]ometimes, there are growing pains in that process. I think that's to be expected, and I look at it as a positive. Once you come out the other side of a project, [...] you're stronger as an organization, and stronger as a partnership, because of your differences" (NP18).

Difficulty collaborating across ideological differences.

Participants highlighted ideological differences as one of the greatest obstacles to collaboration. Whether such tensions should be disregarded or addressed head on within collaborative relationships was discussed. Alternatively, the potential for ideological differences to warrant a lack of collaboration was also acknowledged by a few participants. The points of difference were varied, from the neoliberal-abolitionist debate, to political stances, to philosophies for service provision.

One participant identified underlying political agendas as a contributor to conflict within collaborative relationships.

> *"[...Y]ou have a lot of Type A personalities in this field. [...I]t can be extremely political. There's [...] a lot of well-meaning people [...] that work in this realm. I mean, this is not the place to make money. So, most people that are in it are doing it for good reasons. But, you still do have [...] some secondary political motives and things like that, that can be difficult to navigate" (GT2, NP14).*

Another expressed that those selling sex on their own may resist collaborating with the anti-trafficking community, based on a fundamental difference in ideology:

> *"[...A]nti-trafficking work should really stay in its lane of anti-trafficking. [...S]ometimes it spills out into like anti-prostitution or anti-sex work, but prostitution and sex trafficking are not the same thing. [...] I think sex worker communities, adults involved in consensual sex work, who are doing it willingly [...as] their livelihood [...] have a really hard time with some of the things that anti-trafficking groups do. Because, many anti-trafficking efforts further criminalize prostitution, and can actually have a really negative effect on the sex*

worker community. So, I don't think they usually want to collaborate with the

anti-trafficking groups, but, sometimes for good reason" (AR2).

The tension can be felt from the other side as well, as one participant described the

reason for an unsuccessful attempt at collaboration, saying:

"[...T]he other agency turned out to be an agency that was [...] fully pro-sex

work, and was [...] totally different, ideologically" (NP17).

Participants did express frustration with the current resistance to collaborate for these

reasons, noting that there are opportunities to seek common ground despite the

philosophical tension:

"[...I]f there is a sex worker rights meeting, [...] they're not necessarily inviting

the anti-trafficking people and the anti-trafficking people aren't necessarily

inviting them. And I think that's because there's such a long history of [...]

contention and hurt feelings, especially if people have all been in the same area

for a long time, and it's gotten kind of [...] personal. And to their credit, [...]

sometimes in meetings […] it's harder to be productive, if there is [...] a lot of

emotion in the room. So, sometimes one-on-one meetings work better. [...I]t'd be

nice if everybody could be at the same table" (NP5).

"[...N]onprofits, [...] because of collaboration, [...] have an idea of where other

nonprofits stand. So, they're just like, 'I'm not going to talk to you at all, because

[...] you want to decriminalize the purchase of [...] consensual sex, [...W]e feel

like that's still part of this sexual exploitation cycle, so we don't want to talk to

you about anything.' As opposed to [...] coming together on [...] smaller issues"

(NP5).

A particular focus of discussion arose from several participants, regarding the role of the faith community in anti-trafficking efforts, especially how this community has both positively and negatively impacted survivors and other at-risk demographics. On the one hand, some pointed out that the faith community has been present at the forefront of anti-exploitation efforts since the beginning. Others found some within this demographic to be slow to acknowledge the realities of exploitation or to mobilize resources and/or personnel to participate in ongoing efforts. Still others expressed negative experiences associated with involving the faith community in certain initiatives (i.e. unhelpful scriptural platitudes, perceived or intended judgement toward survivors, required indoctrination associated with provided services or resources):

> *"I certainly do speak to groups who maybe have very different political views than I do, who feel [...] differently about certain social issues. And sometimes I do have to do a lot of educating people [...], to be that bridge [...] I speak to religious groups all the time. They are so open to hearing about it and wanting to help. [...] They want to know if the work we are doing will promote Christianity. And our policy [...] is non-proselytizing. [...T]o tell a woman what she's going to believe or to hold resources over her head as a carrot [...] for her to think, there is no difference between that and a pimp, except maybe one less black eye. [...T]hat's not what this is all about. This is the freedom to believe what you [...] believe, and to discover that. So, I explained that, and so far, in all the years, there's only been one group [...] maybe two [...] who did not want to work with us because of that"* (PR1, CI1).

"I do think that another thing that's missing, is when we talk about collaboration between faith-based and not overtly faith-based partners, that we aren't casting a wide enough net. And I know for us, we're specifically looking for relationships with [...] folks who are from other religious backgrounds, and who may express their helping toward this population in ways that we haven't thought of. [...] I think that sometimes those of us who identify as Christian in particular, can be somewhat limiting that it has to be this particular iteration [...] or is not really a faith-based response. And so, just thinking about ourselves as spiritual beings and not limiting ourselves to one particular way or a mainstream way [...] of thinking about how to do outreach [...], that's ideal. [...O]pening ourselves up to different faiths and not being afraid to ask the tough questions to have those hard conversations and to see ways in which, sadly, religious approaches have not been in the highest service to victims, [...] historically" (GT1).

"[...A]nti-trafficking work brings together [...] people that are victim advocates, or people that work with homeless and runaway youth, LGBTQ youth, and also a lot of people who work on issues of violence against women [...], with the faith community which has really been involved in anti-trafficking work. And, so, you're bringing together groups of people that don't usually work together. And, that can have pluses and minuses" (AR2).

"[...] It think, the hardest thing [...] with collaboration, is, taking people that would not normally get along, and [...] bringing them together. Case in point, [...] work with the faith-based communities. [...A]nything could, just, fracture that coalition, pretty easily. [...] You have to be very careful and very tactful in how

you approach certain issues. I mean, you just think about the issue of […] foster care mobilization, with faith communities, […] you get to an issue like, say, gay adoption. Half your churches are out at that point […] depending on how you present it. […] Because, you shouldn't write them off, […] I don't think that's effective. […] So, you try to keep them at the table, […] but, then, being able to manage those very different beliefs in a way that […] doesn't harm survivors […] is difficult, in and of itself. Sometimes, you just have beliefs that are incompatible with […] serving survivors" (GT2, NP14).

"The most harm I've seen done, in our state, to survivors, has been done in the name of God […], where there's certain places where Bible study [or other faith practices] would be mandatory for a survivor […W]hen you're working with a population whose choice has been removed from them, that's such a violation. […] Frequently, they don't know that […] they have volition and choice. […M]any survivors want to grow spiritually, and, of course, we're going to provide that, but […] we would want to do no further harm. […] I've seen […] spiritual harm done, which creates other types of harm. […I]t has affected our partnership with those organizations, where we have known that that's been a practice […] in the past. […] I wouldn't say it cut off our collaboration, but it would have caused for a boundary" (NP9).

Power dynamics within collaborative relationships.

One theme emerged from participants' responses, regarding other forms of tension within a collaborative relationship. The idea of navigating power dynamics was, for some, an expected part of collaborating with other stakeholders, but for others, was described as a hindrance to true collaboration:

> *"[...W]hen I think of the collaborations I know specifically around that, I think of the Task Forces, that were funded by DOJ, because I've been to a few of those meetings around the country. I found it interesting because it definitely brings together a diversity of stakeholders. [...T]he meeting I went to [...] was led by Law Enforcement, which always makes me uncomfortable, when Law Enforcement's leading anything that has to do with survivors [...], but it was good that there were survivors in the room, and service providers. I just wasn't sure that they were considered equal collaborators" (NP1).*

One participant mentioned the potential difficulties associated with conflicting egos and maintaining the autonomy of stakeholders even within collaborative relationships.

> *"[...Y]ou're both serving the same client, and it's a vulnerable [...] trauma population. [...] In some of those cases, they might have over-attachment with individuals. [...] So, there's a need for collaboration, but there's also a need for boundaries. [...] There have been difficulties [...] because of those very things, in some communication. In the case of one individual, that was no longer allowed to receive services with one of our partner agencies, where we really wanted to [and did] continue our services [...] It was hard for [the survivor], but [... also] for that agency [...]" (NP9).*

One participant described the potential for a conflict of egos to arise within intended collaborative spaces, based on perceived knowledge or expertise resulting from varied levels of formal education:

> *"Just because somebody here might not have initials after their name, they have knowledge. And they might have a greater intimacy of knowledge in an area that would be useful to the person with initials. [...M]utual respect would be very important" (NP6).*

Several participants expressed concern over power dynamics and competing stakeholder interests within a collaborative experience.

> *"[...] I think that one of the biggest hindrances to building the coalitions and doing the work collaboratively, is people being territorial about [...] PowerPoints or information or referrals or numbers [...]" (NP17).*

> *"[...S]ometimes, the aims and priorities of different stakeholders are different. [...F]or example, independent victim advocates [...] aim is to keep the victim at the center of what's happening, and keep the victim's priorities as priorities in the case, and protect their rights. That, sometimes, is in conflict with what the prosecutors want, which is, to get a conviction, and, with what law enforcement wants, which is, to do a really good investigation, that would lead to conviction. So, sometimes, all of those things line up, and our goals are the same. And, sometimes, they do not" (AR2).*

> *"[...I]t goes back, unfortunately, to Child Protective Services [...] with some of the workers there. [...] I understand what their obligations are, [...]. They are the people that have to respond to these bigger institutions and organizations. So,*

[…] their pressure becomes […] their demands to us [...]. [...M]aybe it comes off as a power struggle […T]hey may be reaching out to us every so often, like 'Oh, I need this from you. I need a report from you. You need to tell me what's going on with the client.' And, again, because we are trauma-informed and because we're people-centered, if a client is telling us, [...] 'I don't want you to share this information,' we are not going to share that information [...] So, then it becomes this back and forth [...], we're respecting HIPAA laws, we're respecting our client's rights [...]. I think, that that's where I've experienced some of that power struggle […] or what seems to be a power struggle, created by […] these bigger institutions, unfortunately" (NP13).

"[...S]ometimes we just don't like working with another person. Stick four alpha females in a room […] I don't mean to sound sexist, but I'm thinking of [...] things that I've seen. [...I]t's not going to be a happy meeting. It can be toxic" (PR1, CI1).

"[...F]or some reason, when two different organizations are doing the same work, you have to fight against the mentality that we're in competition to each other […]. [...] But, there have been small instances, [where] it seems like another organization is almost trying to prove that they're better than us, in a certain way, instead of coming together and helping each other be better" (NP11).

Participants highlighted that the stipulations associated with funding from some grants may lead potential collaborators to become competitors instead, fighting over clients to retain their own funding. One participant highlights the impact of stakeholder power in obtaining available funding sources:

[…Y]ou have […] groups that are much larger and better resourced […], they have more staff, better staff. […T]hat's part of, I think, really effective coalition management, […] is being able to navigate that. […I]t's not to say that you're naturally going to put everyone on equal footing, if one organization is more powerful than the other, but it is based on […] what the need is […] for victims. And […] you have to […] work to make sure that the policy is addressing the need. So, there's definitely a disparity in power between groups and resources" (NP7).

"[…T]here's a fair amount of turnover in this work. So, the only drawback I would foresee, is, when you develop those resources, and having to redo it […] over and over again. […S]ome agencies I know, in the past, have had issues with collaboration, because, they are grant funded, and […t]hey are, basically, fighting over clients, […] which can impact the collaborative relationship" (NP19).

"[…T]o sustain the type of long-term collaboration that you want, it needs to be crystal clear, even as there's changes in leadership. Because, that's where I often see community collaborations fall apart is whenever there's a change in leadership of one of the key partners. So, when there's a change in who's in power, you know, political appointments, chief of police changes, then what that community was doing can change. And it can be for the good or for the bad, right? And so, it really just depends on your perspective" (NP1).

"[…T]hese organizations are […] distinct from one another, and there is actually a fair amount of […] competition for the same funding dollars, and […] therefore,

they do not exchange information, they do not share events. There is a rare event which invites the whole anti-trafficking community, and, other than that, I don't see collaboration taking place. I think there is [...] a relatively benign feeling between them. But, I've also experienced extreme competition [...] from the head of one of the agencies, who was very threatened by the fact that we would be having success with her clients, and also [...] looking for the same funding dollars that she is after" (NP20).

"[...T]he outcomes or [...] the way that success in our specific role or field is measured is different. [...A] lot of times, that creates [...] competing interests. [...] I don't think that the interests are, or should be, competing, but they get perceived that way. [...S]omehow, along the way, because of the fractured system, and because of the competition around [...] funding or grants or ideology [...] or numbers [...] that stuff, somehow, so often, gets in the way of really good collaboration" (NP17).

One participant communicated the potential for a power struggle or competitive approach in relating to other stakeholders to have a negative impact on individuals and communities being served:

"[...O]rganizations look at each other as competition and not as community, [...a]nd there becomes [...] this breakdown in communication, and this breakdown in being able to support one another [...] which equates to a breakdown in being able to support the survivors that we all serve [...]" (NP18).

"Collaboration, for me, is also [...] a release of ego, so that [...] our job is survivor-focused, as well as system-focused, [...] if we approach it together from that perspective [...]" (NP2).

New insights.

In some instances, participants offered fresh insights that the primary investigator had not found in the existing literature. Examples of such themes include the potential for additional harm to result from attempts at collaboration, a deeper nuance to the degrees of formality of a collaborative experience, and the complications associated with varied sources of funding.

Collaboration is detrimental at times.

Some of the study participants addressed the difficulties associated with collaboration among stakeholders, even suggesting that in some instances, more harm can be done in the name of collaboration. One such detriment was the potential for certain entities that are not true stakeholders to gain access to the collaborative space, and perhaps to influence stakeholders or interact with clients in a way that could be re-exploitative.

"The drawbacks can be that sometimes, [...] people are not there to help, they're there to promote themselves and try to drum up business, or at the worst case, we actually had somebody trying to exploit the people we're trying to serve" (NP4).

"[...S]ome organizations that purport to be against human trafficking are actually involved in ways that would be shocking to discuss. [...M]any people know a lot of different names in the field, and they see them all as [...] knights in shining armor, or they see them as helpers, and [...] there's those internal inconsistencies in agencies that purport to be one thing, that are actually something else" (GT1).

"Sometimes collaboration, though, happens with partners who are not like-minded, and partners who are in it for reasons other than collaboration on behalf of victims. And that's very stressful" (GT1).

Additionally, participants suggested that a misunderstanding between stakeholders regarding what collaboration looks like, may lead to expectations not being met and certain actors subverting the collaborative relationship to achieve their particular goals. At times, the collaborative space is not a safe place for stakeholders, including survivors leaders, to express concerns, according to some:

"[…W]e know some Law Enforcement folks have abused their relationships and they'll just come into a drop-in center and look to see if any of the young people there have an outstanding warrant. […T]hat can make that not a safe place for young people […] to come into services and then start building those relationships. […] And it can be hard for youth providers to feel like they can say no, because they're working with the chief of police on this task force, so as a good partner in the community [...]" (NP1).

"[...N]ot everyone is as they appear. [...P]eople just have to be very discerning and [...] look for the subtle cues. [...M]ake sure that there are venues available for survivors to talk about their experience, not in front of the organizations that are purporting to help them, because that's the only way folks are going to know what's going on, for good or for ill. And most of the time, […] mistakes and errors that we make are very well-intended. But [...] that isn't universally true. And so, we need to be careful, because sadly, this topic brings forward not the best in certain people" (GT1).

One participant highlighted how poor collaboration might result in a loss for participating stakeholders:

"[...A]nother area of deficit, otherwise known as competition [...] or poor collaboration [...] was being asked a couple of times to run [...] programs, and then, they figured out how to steal my written material, and not engage me after all, and do it on their own. [...] I've seen [...] things that I've written on their websites. [...T]hey like my ideas, but they don't want to get the support directly to me" (NP20).

Several participants made a distinction between necessary information sharing among partners and the over-sharing of information, which could risk harm to the individual seeking care.

"[...P]rotecting client confidentiality [...] is really important. But to this population, it can often [...] make the difference [...] between life and death [...i]f you are not covering all bases and you're sharing a picture or demographic information or address of a trafficked youth, [...] with someone who shouldn't have that information [...] that could be a real problem" (NP19).

A lack of trauma-informed training represented within a collaborative body can result in further harm to an individual seeking services, as one participant emphasizes.

"[...A] lot of service providers, sometimes, don't take the time to understand why somebody will not leave the house, or why somebody does not have a job. [...T]here's a lot of miscommunication that happens, and that can really hurt the client" (NP13).

"[...F]or example, law enforcement [...] might not have an understanding of the [...] incredible length of the [...] restorative process. [...T]hey might be fully aware, but [...] it can be a detriment to collaboration, when you have an individual or an organization, that, maybe, has one piece of the pie, and doesn't get the whole thing, or they just [...]want a quick fix. [...T]he church, unfortunately, is big on quick fixes [...]thinking, "Healing [...] happens overnight." Well, an initial healing might, but the true healing of the soul and transformation, every one of us walking on this planet knows, it doesn't happen overnight" (NP9).

"I think that the other challenge with collaborating [...] with Law Enforcement is they really want young people to testify, and from the provider perspective, it might not be the best thing for the young person to do that, in terms of a trauma perspective and a healing perspective" (NP1).

One participant pointed out that collaborative bodies, that do not understand the inherent obstacles experienced by the population being served, can cause further harm and re-traumatization.

"The issue with collaboration from a service provision model perspective [...] to provide wrap-around services [...t]hat often means young people have to travel to 4 different locations to get 4 different things. [...] That is not ideal for young people without money, without a place to stay, who experience high levels of trauma, and they're already transient. [...B]eing bounced from agency to agency for the sake of collaboration does not feel like stability to them. And it also [...] can mean that young people have to keep telling their story, and it's re-

traumatizing. [...E]very program has their requirements, and they have paper requirements they have to comply with, for the state, the city or the feds. Service providers aren't trying to […] re-traumatize young people, but they don't keep getting the money, if they don't do what they need to do" (NP1).

Formal and informal ways to collaborate.

One interesting aspect of collaboration that several participants highlighted was the importance of distinguishing between formalized collaborative relationships and more informal collaborations. Other distinctions were made regarding the nature(s) of collaborative relationships, as participants described ongoing, temporary, grant-determined, educational/informative, and needs-based partnerships, each of which is either informal or formal based on the goals of the stakeholders and the needs of the population being served. As described, these approaches provide parameters for the formation and duration of a collaborative relationship, the criteria for inclusion as partners or members, and the methods for determining group focus areas and calls to action:

"[...] I don't want to make the assumption that the task force is the agent by which collaboration happens, because none of those task forces find us a dentist. [...I]f the task is awareness, then we can collaborate, because we have content, and they have the population. [...] So, there we both bring our gifting together, to accomplish a task. [...] When it comes to collaboration on how we do the mission of this organization, that's largely us initiating the people with whom we need. [...F]or example, right now, we've got a girl who's seven months pregnant. We need to find her maternity home. That's us seeking out a collaborative

relationship, based on a need. But a task force would have nothing to do with

that" (NP6).

Participants described their approaches to establishing collaborative relationships,

through certain mindsets and tools that work to enhance collaboration between partners,

and respectively, a holistic approach to survivor care. One individual describes an

instrument created to formalize a collaborative relationship based on the client's needs. A

second participant explained how informal collaboration is beneficial, if the relationship

with other stakeholders and with the individual(s) seeking care is maintained over the

longer term:

> *"[…O]nce a quarter, all the staff who interact with a resident more than [...] 30*
>
> *percent of your time [...], we fill out […] a supervisors' observation. It's just an*
>
> *instrument we created. […T]hat therapist will get a packet from, maybe, eight*
>
> *different supervisors, and they say, '[...] I'm the overnight supervisor. This is what*
>
> *I see in her behavior. These are the patterns that I see,' […]. […W]hether or not*
>
> *they read it is up to that other person. [...] So, we're trying to open up those*
>
> *portals of communication" (NP6).*
>
> *"[...M]y first step towards every new agency that I form a relationship with, is*
>
> *collaborative. I acknowledge all of their services [...] We cannot do what we do*
>
> *unless these organizations do what they're doing. […W]e are in that*
>
> *collaboration, because it belongs […] to the whole effort. The collaboration, in*
>
> *specific, with [our organization] and each of the agencies, […] generally finds*
>
> *the format, because [...t]hey support our work by being present in the room. […]*
>
> *We have […] caseworker or staff feedback that we request […] three or four times*

a year. [...W]e also request of them any insight -- if somebody was released from

prison the day before, or has been through a recent trauma -- [...] any [...]

informed position that we can then better tend to that person or those people"

(NP20).

One participant paints a picture of their ideal example of ongoing, formalized

collaboration:

"[...C]ollaboration would look like basically everybody [...] from law

enforcement to [...] social service providers, whether they're anti-trafficking

focused or sex worker rights focused. And then probably [...] agency heads, like

Department of Human Services, and [...] the Department of Behavioral Health,

and [...] other [...] government agencies, [...] each jurisdiction [...] getting

together on a regular basis to [...] talk about what's happening,[...] what gaps

there are, and [...] who the right person is to fix them. [...W]hat's currently

happening is that[...] the victim services people meet separately, law enforcement

meet separately. Sometimes there's a general body meeting where everybody's

invited" (NP5).

Oftentimes, informal collaborations can result from formal ones. One participant

describes the need to share important information with stakeholders that may not be

represented in the formal gatherings.

"[...A] lot of the time [...], maybe we got invited to something. [...W]e can suggest

other people, if we see that they're not there, but at the same time, [...] it's not our

house. And so, [...] we're not gonna [...] make a scene if not everybody's there.

We might just [...] pass on some information to people who we think should be

there. [...] But [...], it's more organic [...I]f I see an issue, I basically [...] have an

automatic list that comes to mind of [...] who should be involved" (NP5).

According to one participant, a shared mission and mutuality are major determinants

of whether to formalize an existing informal relationship. Shared benefit for stakeholders

could include greater access to funding, visibility for less prominent organizations, and

ongoing support in developing services and policy advocacy.

"[..W]hat is someone's mission? [...I]t's understanding everyone's role. [...] What

is their goal? What would they get out of a relationship or a partnership that

would be mutually beneficial? [...I]t is understanding that this whole community

is this intertwined system, [...] we've got to connect every little circle and every

human by understanding what each one needs and what each one wants and [...]

what can we all do together? [...I]f everyone gives what they have, what they can

give for free, you eventually end up with everything you need" (PR1, CI1).

"[...W]e are always happy to go in for grants with other agencies, because, that

only strengthens our [...] ability to get the grant and our partnership with them

[...]" (NP19).

One participant preferred a more informal, organic approach to collaboration, stating

that a stakeholder can maintain more autonomy in choosing its partners than is available

in more formalized collaboration processes. Another described the impact of such

autonomy in knowing one's partner stakeholders on a deeper level:

"[...E]ven though [...] on paper, somebody could look like they'd be great to

collaborate with, [...] when you actually try to work with them, [...] they don't

have the right mindset. They're not really invested in the population. [...O]rganic

collaborations are better. [...T]hen you also develop personal relationships, so

that you can facilitate the process more, and better" (NP4).

"[...I]t's really important to know individuals as people, in addition to knowing

what resources they have. Because without that knowledge of people as folks we

can connect with on that human level as well as a professional level, there is a

lack of trust and understanding [...]" (GT1).

There seemed to be a distinction being made within more formalized collaboration, regarding how a collaborative relationship was formed, whether through some external requirement or through existing connections deepening. One participant emphasized the benefits of having existing comradery among your chosen partners.

"[...C]ollaboration works best within these efforts, when you make personal

connections with other professionals. It's not, just, a matter of [...] a list of

referral sources [...I]t really works [...] well, when we all know each other, and

build personal relationships amongst ourselves, because, frankly, that's what also

helps in mitigating some of the burnout that can happen with working in such a

difficult field. [...M]ore and more service providers, I have realized, in the last

year, are pushing for meetings, where we're not, just, talking about how difficult

and terrible everything is, but [...] planning for, how can we do this work better

and how can we better support each other [...a]nd, then, leaving meetings [...]

with concrete follow up [...]" (NP19).

Participants explained that if a collaborative body has been ongoing for a length of time, the sense of comradery has the opportunity to grow, based on the commitment levels of the participating stakeholders, even if they were virtually strangers at the outset.

"[...W]e have a task force that's been around for over a decade. [...I]t's pretty well-established, and, there's a lot of buy in from the stakeholders. We have, I would say, for the most part, the people that we need at the table. And, I think, people are respectful of one another. And, I think, that there's a lot of communication. [...] I think, there are the same kind of conflicts that there are, in pretty much every state, which is usually around privacy and confidentiality. There's also often conflict around criminalization of a victim [...] charging victims with prostitution, or other charges [...]. And, I think, for the most part [...] the work together is respectful" (AR2).

The formal collaborative experience, such as a task force or coalition, is often utilized to address the high-level systemic issues, one participant described:

"[...W]e really try to approach it from a variety of vantage points. [...W]e try to build coalitions as this [...] nebulous, preventive thing, working with law enforcement and with ACF, and with doctors and teachers, and a whole bunch of different stakeholders, to work on [...] advocacy legislatively. [...] So, we've been working really strongly on a variety of coalitions with different stakeholders on the more [...] macro things" (NP17).

One participant emphasized the importance of identifying stakeholder's strengths and weaknesses in order to assign appropriate roles within a collaborative relationship. Additionally, the discovery of a gap in expertise or resources can be an indication to include more stakeholders that would bring the needed diversity of perspectives.

"[...A]ll of us can't do the same thing, and so I think that's the challenge [...]. So, collaboration, for me, says [...] that each of us identifies our strengths and once

we're able to put all of that on the table, now, where are there weaknesses and

how can this particular weakness be supported by your organization so we can

get the work done? [...] Once we identify that we still have a weakness and none

of us can fill this, then we've got to go out as a partner to try and figure out who

can fill that weakness [...]" (NP2).

One particular role was described as a benefit to some formalized collaborative

relationships, particularly ones receiving external funding:

"I think the upside with the funders support [...] was that you had actual staff

[whose] primary charge was to run the coalition [...] day to day and [...]

administratively [...], operationally, in a policy coordination role and leadership.

[...Y]ou used to just have common cause, collectively, with the organizations that

collaborated. And then, a couple of years ago, they finally got someone that was a

director of the coalition [...] that [...] gets the resources for coalitions" (NP7).

DOJ funding is not the norm.

The interview data indicates that the Department of Justice (DOJ) is not a widespread

or primary source of funding for many anti-exploitation stakeholders. A significant

number of established collaborative bodies are not funded through the DOJ or any other

federal funding. These rely on state, local, or private funding and fundraising processes,

instead. Many individual stakeholders are also seeking state or local funding in order to

continue or advance their anti-exploitation work. Participants offered their perspectives

regarding DOJ funding, its accompanying stipulations, and their reasons for or against

seeking out this particular source of funding:

"[...T]here's a lot of money that comes with being a funded task force, but, there's also a lot more leg work and reporting requirement , It's hard to be as flexible or as responsive, because you have to go through all the DOJ regulations" (AR2).

"[...W]e had to negotiate between them to get agreement on certain funding within the Department of Justice. And we were able to, after a lot of negotiation, work that out and find [...] a breakdown between U.S. citizen and foreign national funding that was acceptable to all" (NP7).

"[...A]nytime there's money involved, [...] that's when the knives come out. [...E]verybody wants their piece of the pie, and then, when they get it, they want to protect it. [...I]t is difficult, because, there are limited resources [...]. And then [...] you have an administration like this administration, a lot of funding dries up from the federal side. Some groups don't accept federal funding, because there's an inherent [...] tension there with doing policy and being muddled and conflicted by having federal funding"" (NP7).

Available vs. accessible funding.

Funding has been set aside through anti-exploitation policy on the local, state, and federal levels. However, several participants expressed frustration with the amount of available funding compared to the number of stakeholders in need of financial resources. A second frustration described an existing gap between the funding available for anti-exploitation efforts and the accessibility of such funding, due in part to the slow process of applying for grant monies and the various hurdles to qualification facing stakeholders seeking additional resources:

"[...T]here is still, in my opinion, a huge lack of funding, both on [...] the private and public side. Particularly, state governments are not investing the proper amount of money. The federal government tends to throw a little bit of money here and there, but it's really not guided very well, in my opinion. [...] I think more money and resources need to be allocated, but, I think that they need to be smartly allocated" (NP10, LE1).

"[...T]here does have to be an effort to get more government funding, [...] in the direction of [...] service provision. Because, when all of it goes to law enforcement, it doesn't really solve the problems of [...] no housing, no work, no childcare, no education" (NP5).

Participants discussed the difficulties associated with working through government requirements for funding and collaboration:

"[...I]n terms of government, I didn't find resistance, I just found difficulty navigating the system to get what you need. [...N]ow, I'm walking through a maze alone" (NP2).

"I know the government has money, and programs, and funding. I think, it may not always be directed to the right groups that need to use it or know about it. So, probably, they need a little bit more direction, as to, what would work or how it could work" (CI2).

"If there was something that organizations could use, [...] a roadmap as to [...] best practices for working with [...] government [...] I think that would be helpful. [...W]e just need help navigating the system. [...] If you don't know how to navigate their system, it's going to the very difficult for you to really have any sort of collaborative efforts. [...] I think it has to be so important to them [government] that they support

us, that they are willing to now make adjustments in how we gain access to resources,

to information, to people, to platforms" (NP2).

There does appear to be some level of funding that is less restrictive and better

equipped to meet the needs prioritized by the grantee stakeholder. One participant noted:

"[...W]e advocate hard for runaway and homeless youth act funding, because it's

flexible, and communities can apply for it, and they can do street outreach, or drop-

in, short-term housing, long-term housing, all of those different type[s] of things. And

so, it's a multi-pronged way to try to connect with young people" (NP1).

Another difficulty that participants described was when a greater demand for than

supply of limited funding leads to the emergence of competition between would-be

partners. The requirements for reporting funding allocation and service provision metrics

can also be impacted by a sense of competition. Additionally, frustrations were expressed

over the desire of some stakeholders to maintain existing grants, despite not having the

capacity to make use of the funding. As one participant shared:

"[...M]y organization can do so much more, if we had [...] $100 thousand of your

dollars, [...] because you can't do it. [...W]e really have to figure out a way to share

finances. Because the money is there, it's just that it's sitting in places where people

aren't doing some of the work that needs to be done" (NP2).

"I think the other challenge of collaboration from like a macro level is that you are

all competing for funding, you are all submitting grant applications or funding

applications to the same places, competing for the same amount of money, so you

don't really want to share your secret sauce, like, 'I'm doing this or this evidence-

based practice,' because then they could steal it and maybe take your funding [...].

And that's just the reality [...] of trying to keep your organization going [...]" (NP1).

"[...] I have found that when a particular pot of money is perceived as being finite

[...i]t's not easy to raise funds [...]. For instance, on the county level. When people's

territory is the same place, where they're helping and drawing from the same donor

base, when there is a perception that there is not enough to go around, collaboration

really breaks down" (PR1, CI1).

One statement regarding funding described the impact of decreasing funding for collaborative bodies such as task forces. According to one participant, the practice of granting temporary funding can be detrimental in the long run.

"[...] I think, the federal government, or state government [...] could allocate

additional financial resources and guidance and make those task forces stronger. I

think regional task forces have a lot of value, but they are grossly underfunded. And, I

would almost argue, in some cases, that the Enhanced Collaborative Models task

forces, in theory, are great. But, the amount of funding allocated for them actually

does more harm than it does good, because it [...] gets the ball rolling, but it does not

do anything to get the buy-in for sustainability [...T]he majority of them are either

[...] not active at all, or [...] much less active [...] because the funding just wasn't

sufficient to get the proper infrastructure in place, so that it would be sustainable

after the funding ended" (NP10, LE1).

Collaboration among sectors and stakeholders was offered as a possible solution to this dilemma. The process of collaborating to identify relevant grant requirements and

establish policies that would improve stakeholder access to available funding was

described by one participant:

> "[...T]here needs to be [...] collaboration between people [that] provide direct care
>
> services and people who are doing research on these topics and [...] members of
>
> local governments that can [...] enact legislation or different policies that provide
>
> funding for these kinds of services or research [...]" (AR1).

Stipulations associated with funding.

The issue of funding for anti-exploitation efforts, especially those of non-profit

organizations was an important consideration for a majority of the study participants.

Since so few stakeholders and collaborative bodies receive funding through the

Department of Justice, fundraising has become a primary responsibility of individual

stakeholders or of the group of stakeholder partners working to address gaps in services.

Oftentimes, grant funding is accompanied by a range of stipulations for the use of the

monies, reporting of statistics regarding the quantities of individuals served as a result of

funding, along with requirements for participation in collaborative efforts. While some

participants described the requirement for collaboration as a positive aspect, others

explained potential shortcomings of such a universal mandate. One participant discussed

a grant requirement for partnership with predetermined stakeholders, assigned by the

grant writers, not the partners themselves.

> "[...W]e've had MOU's with people in the past. [...T]his grant that we have now, we
>
> had to have MOU partners, and, the people who wrote that grant [...] decided on who
>
> the MOU partners were, [...] and, quite frankly, [...] it did not go well. One of the

agencies [...] because of capacity, [...] couldn't be a meaningful partner for [...] the

work" (NP17).

"Trafficking doesn't know boundaries [...s]o we shouldn't either. But, the reality is

that [...p]articularly with social service agencies, anything that's funded by a county

[...] has a particular mission or donor designation that's not allowed to leave this

county. [...S]o you eventually learn what you can do and what you can't do" (PR1,

CI1).

There did appear to be some agency in how funding is utilized. Sources of funding

may not hold major sway over the primary functions of the recipient stakeholder. The

same participant offered some insight regarding usage of federal funding from the U.S.

Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women:

"[...W]e have OVW funding [...] in different pockets. But, my specific program,

[...] for the time being, is 100 percent funded by the DOJ or OVW. [...W]e're not

a government agency. I'm not beholden to them, and [...] they don't make the

rules for us. [...] It just means that there are certain [...] grant requirements"

(NP17).

One participant highlighted the difficulties for newly established stakeholders in

obtaining funding. The stipulations associated with one particular grant were, from their

perspective, functionally providing greater benefit to stakeholders with existing

infrastructure and a larger pool of resources at their disposal.

"[...T]here are limitations on some of the federal grants, and probably rightfully

so. Some of the requests that they expect you to be able to provide, to access the

monies, are extremely restrictive. One [...] for child victims, for example

[...requires you] to commit to providing [...] wraparound services, [...] medical

care and dental care and legal services. [...] I'm sure there are some agencies

already doing that work that would qualify. But, [...] it's almost like you have to

already have the infrastructure in place, to be eligible, [...] and what our folks

would need more of, would be the money to create that infrastructure" (NP12).

Larger-scale, regional collaboration is limited.

One theme that emerged from the research is the lack of multi-sector collaboration

across the Mid-Atlantic region or even a structured regional approach to collaboration. A

majority of the interviewees expressed participation in some collaborative relationship

either locally or nationally, but not regionally. Local collaboration focused on anti-

exploitation efforts within a locale, whether delineated by law enforcement jurisdiction or

by state governance. National collaboration tended to exist among those within a specific

sector or among like stakeholders (i.e. service provider partnerships):

"[...] I wasn't sure [...] if there were some regional pieces that I missed, or how

you landed on looking at a region, rather than a particular state" (NP12).

"[...A]t least for us, it's [...] easier to find out what other organizations are doing

within about [...] a two- or three- hour driving radius from us. But, it's more

difficult to know what's going on beyond that" (NP11).

Participant experiences.

The following results represent personal experiences shared by study participants. Responses include both positive and negative examples of intersections along the Continuum of Care, from the perspectives of individuals with lived experiences of sexual trauma. Additional insights were offered by stakeholders with lived experiences of collaborative efforts along the Continuum.

Perspective of a survivor (of sexual assault, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking).

Four out of the twenty-five participants in this research project self-identified as having experienced some form of sexual trauma (sexual assault, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking). These individuals offered their expertise and perspectives, both as survivors and as professional stakeholders in anti-exploitation work with experience in collaboration. Additional measures were taken place to protect the four participants who answered interview questions specific to an experience of exploitation. Quotation data from these particular responses have not been associated with the participant's sector or professional role as an added precaution to minimize the risk for participants in a smaller, regional sample.

When asked about their experience of sexual trauma or exploitation, participants described gaps in the available services and information accessible to them. Additional frustration was expressed due to a felt lack of acknowledgement and support from their community, which some described as ill-equipped to provide what they needed. A level of trauma awareness and trauma training was largely missing, even among therapeutic and counseling service providers:

"[...R]eferring to sexual abuse, [...t]here absolutely were gaps. [...M]y mom didn't know how to navigate the mental health system, so she didn't know what I needed. She didn't even know to put me in therapy after it happened. And so, I was [...] without any help for a long time until it got to the point where I was suicidal. And then, when I was put in the hospital, [...] the hospital I went to was also ill-equipped to help me. They really didn't understand what was going on. They didn't identify PTSD, ignored what was actually the problem, and focused on other things. Clearly [they] didn't have trauma training, [...a]nd I left there with no help. So, I really didn't get any help [...] through my adolescence and as a teenager and all the way through college. Because [...] the people that I saw really didn't know enough about it. [...] I think that part of it was lack of education. I also didn't know about [...] the legal action I could have taken. [...] I [...] had to figure it all out myself. And, [...] I did end up finding a good therapist, but that was as an adult. I'm working through my trauma, [...] I looked for the person and found her myself. But it was somebody specialized in trauma when I finally found the right therapist" (Survivor Perspective).

"They [services] were all things that I sought out. There was no program or anything of that nature that was offered to me. The care that I received [...], when I encountered a good therapist, [...t]he work that I've done in acupuncture and alternative healthcare, [...] body work [...]. And, not so terribly many years after the incident, [...] there was [...] this woman's self-defense course, which I took, which was particularly helpful to me. [...T]he format that it was offered in [...] gave me a place and a space to [...] physicalize the strength that I had found.

[…E] ntering this work in the anti-trafficking world has brought a lot of perspective. [...] I'm still on my healing journey, even all these decades later" (Survivor Perspective).

"There were definitely gaps. The first being the social gap, which, the 'Me Too' movement has responded to in its own way, recently. But for […] nearly 40 years, it was […] very much stigmatized. If I ever divulged to anybody that this was part of my history, that […] was really problematic for everybody […]. In my own personal experience, I had a family gap in services. I was not supported, particularly, except by […] one or two family members. Otherwise, I was ostracized and treated [...] like it was an illness, rather than an assault. […] I was raped in [a different country], so the treatment that I got from the police and the […] health care workers […] was terrible" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...] I was ostracized, I was treated like […] I had it coming to me and had invited it. […T]he therapeutic care that I received was […] inadequate. Now that I know so much more about people who are dealing with this particular trauma, I think it was just ridiculous, the way I was managed by the therapist that I was working with. […I]t probably prolonged the great number of years that I spent in therapy. If I'd gotten really good help early on, I might not have suffered so much [...]" (Survivor Perspective).

"[…] I didn't know that I could or should let someone know that someone had hurt me. So that was just a breakdown from the beginning. My mother didn't know this until I was thirty-five, so she could never step in with resources. But I do think that there were behaviors that I began to exhibit as a young teen, […] my

mother was just unaware, completely clueless that, 'Perhaps these behaviors stemmed from some sort of experience that she's had.' Teachers [...] look at children as 'wild children,' [...b]ut they're not looking back to what could have possibly moved them to this direction. [...T]wenty years ago, thirty years ago, it was really difficult to get sensitive counselors who could help you go inward and dig through all of whatever pain and stuff that you needed to go through, so I think that there was a gap for me after the event, [...]I think that there are some things I could have skipped had I had some support early on. [...] I really sought out support. I did research, [...] but I didn't get support then [...], because of the victim blaming that I found around me. Also, [...] trying to deal with it, and not really having language for it" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...B]y the time I was in my 20's, I started to feel like I had more access. [...] I think I understood much more of what was happening in various organizations, and how they could step in and support and help. [...] I felt I had resources from churches, because it was something that I talked about and I would have data to force them to see that it did exist. Once we got them to see that it did exist, they were then able to provide counseling and resources for that. [...]There was for me [...] a little more access and resources in schools. [...] The gap stopped for me in the police department because I met a police officer at our church who was committed to eradicating sexual exploitation. [...] But if I didn't have her, I don't know that I would be able to get the police to come out to events, to communities to speak to children. [...] And so, we started to get resources. But, [...] if you don't know somebody, you're not going to get that type of support. [...] I don't

know if the Federal Government has anything [...]. I got support from Non-Profits just because I started to recognize that there were organizations out there, who [...] were sensitive to your needs" (Survivor Perspective).

"I had no idea how to handle it. I grew up in an extremely conservative subculture, where I did not feel comfortable disclosing to anybody. [...A]nything I would have disclosed, certainly would've been conflated and [...] that's something that terrified me. And, it's one of the reasons [...] why I never did disclose, until much, much later. [...] I perceived that [support] would not have been there, so, I didn't try to get it. And, [...] educationally, [...] you could not have been more uninformed or ignorant on the issue than I was [...], than my community was [...]" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...I] encountered a professor, who was extremely supportive, very educated on the issue, [...] a sex crimes prosecutor for 15 plus years, very compassionate. [...] That was, sort of, the moment where I [...] jumped into it, on the advocacy side. [...] And, he's maintained a mentoring role. [...] He's not a therapist, but, he [...] played that therapeutic role" (Survivor Perspective).

"There were [...] familial barriers, but, other than that, [...b]y the time I would have been willing to talk about it, [the primary perpetrator] actually was, and is still, in a federal prison. So, I didn't see the need to initiate additional proceedings [...] So, I didn't have any interaction with the justice system. [...F]rom a healing perspective, there were [...] various familial barriers, and [...] cultural barriers [...]" (Survivor Perspective).

As these survivor leaders moved along the Continuum of Care, they eventually received helpful services to address some of the gaps, as described. At the time of this research project, each of these four individuals is also a stakeholder who is actively participating in anti-exploitation efforts. When asked how much of an impact their experience of sexual trauma has on their professional collaborative processes and relationships, participants shared:

> *"I don't tell a lot of people about [the abuse], to be perfectly honest. [...T]he people that I work with more closely know. But, [...p]eople tend to assume that you haven't done the work you need to do on yourself, when you tell them that. [...T]here've been times [...] when people say, '[...W]e don't want to do this because it might harm survivors.' And I'd say, '[...] I think that's actually pretty empowering to do that,' [...]. [...] And that's a case where I would say, 'Speaking as a survivor, [...].'" (Survivor Perspective).*

> *"There was [...] an elected official, who I was seeking to connect [to…] make her knowledgeable of our work. [...] I've dealt with hundreds of care providers and thousands of people who understand and accept my work […] She's the only person who didn't take me seriously because I don't have a Ph.D. [...] I felt it was very striking, though, that someone on that level, who could bring substantial support to an organization like mine would rule me out based on that. [...] I can't remember where I read it, but the majority of people who start nonprofits because they have a passion to see some good happen, [...] do not hold college degrees. [...] We know how to do what we do, and we do it well, but [...] we've not gone to the academic world" (Survivor Perspective).*

"[...I]t's of interest to my colleagues that I survived a rape. [...T]hey are aware that I pursued a therapeutic approach to managing that trauma, and that I present with a level of knowledge and experience and know how in this work. That is extremely reassuring to my colleagues [...] because, [...] I do not have a Ph.D. I don't have a B.A. So, [...] something about what I say and communicate is very important, because it comes from a place of experience" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...E]ntering into the LGBTQ space, and hearing from those with whom I collaborate who identify [...] helped my language [...] adjusted how I enter into the space, making me more sensitive to others [...] to think that I could [...] hinder access, healing for someone because maybe I'm speaking in binaries, and they don't identify with either binary [...]" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...T]here are a lot of men who want to do this work and perhaps were just ignorant before, [...] fathers and brothers and friends. That has [...] been [...] valuable for me as well" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...] I don't think that people are shying away from my perspective, or that it doesn't have an impact. I believe that in every space I've entered, that my perspective does something in that atmosphere [...] to change folks" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...I]n current collaborations, I've tended to keep it [...] under the radar, just because [...] I've become fairly visible, [...] I've been more cautious in who I tell that to [...]. Those who know are appreciative of it, and [...] it tends to give me a greater credibility. [...] In government sectors, it gives me greater credibility. In

faith based communities […] I'm not very public about it […] but, a lot of times,

you can, sort of, be […] written off as, '[...Y]ou're biased. You have an axe to

grind,' things like that. So, it depends on the sector. And the stakeholder"

(Survivor Perspective).

Participants emphasized the significance of having a diversity of stakeholders within a collaborative body, not only regarding the sectors represented, but also at the level of demographics:

"[...] Dealing with […] primarily white organizations, there is some bias. There

is some reluctance to have me at the table, so it really depends on the community

and the stakeholders that are participating in that discussion, in that

collaborative effort. Because in communities of color, and I would venture to say

[…] any non-white community, I have pretty much been accepted at the table and

allowed a voice. Even though [...] we're always fighting patriarchy and sexism

[...] But in some of the prevalently white spaces, it is still a struggle [...] I've had

to deal with that [...] stereotype that [...] we're not in pain […] all of the stuff that

we say about specifically black women, that we're more sexually charged and

sexually active [...]. So when we're at the table talking about sexual exploitation,

[...] it's really been sort of separate worlds in a sense, dealing with a non-white

and a primarily white organization, or leadership [...]" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...] I've done some presentations, as a survivor. […] The majority of my public

speaking, though, has been [...] in collaboration with survivors. […] I would

present content on human trafficking awareness, sexual abuse dynamics, barriers

to reporting, things like that. And, then, as part of that presentation, we would

have survivors tell their story. We would always open up with law enforcement.

They would state their commitment to addressing things, to taking it seriously. We

also would have CPS present. We would have [...] Bikers Against Child Abuse

[...] that huge spectrum of individuals. [...T]here was such a diversity [...]

amongst all of us who were there. So, people naturally gravitated to different

parts of it" (Survivor Perspective).

Additionally, participants shared that their expertise as a survivor has equipped them to offer support and hope to individuals being served who are experiencing similar trauma.

"I think that I can provide the perspective. [...] People always think they know

what we're going through but, when you've been through it, then you do know

[...]. It certainly helps me in my job, too, when I have somebody with PTSD I'm

working with, and I can tell them, '[...] I really do understand what you're going

through and I can also tell you it gets better'" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...O]ddly enough, with survivors of trafficking […] I don't divulge this […]

detail of my own history, very often.[…] But if […] it becomes known to a

survivor, that I've been through this, then it gives me street cred with them, which

I don't have until they know that about me. […] The only situation where I would

actually verbalize this to the survivor is, if it was very specific to a conversation,

[…]. Without […] my experience, I would not have had a clue how to work with

survivors of trafficking. And I feel that I have [...] a sense of […] their healing

process, which is very intuitive, but it's something that has become a part of our

[…]training. [...T]he things that I communicate to them are of great value to

them in their […] learning process, and in their[…] work with survivors"

(Survivor Perspective).

"[...] I think that people have always seen me as normal. [...] They don't recognize that there are people who are right under their noses [...]. [...M]y authenticity as well has just helped people [...] be more open to hearing people's stories without judgement. [...] I have no problem sharing my full life with people, and it is not very pretty in some places, but it really helps them [...] I think that's just been probably the most valuable piece for me. And then, […] from those with whom I collaborate [...] I didn't have to feel like I was alone trying to do the work. [...T]here are other passionate people out there, and that you don't have to fight this thing by yourself" (Survivor Perspective).

One participant expressed concerns regarding trauma-informed care that stopped short of building resiliency within individuals. As an individual moves along the Continuum of Care, trauma-informed approaches may shift to a focus on guided preparation for reintegration.

"[…] I've seen really, really thoughtful work around the trauma-informed piece. I think my only concern about it is, that sometimes, the expectations on survivors are low. And, specifically, the […] survivor youth population, who have [...a] GED or trying to finish high school or get into college. And [...] decide to get pregnant and figure out how to stay in public housing that way, instead of trying to move ahead in their lives" (Survivor Perspective).

Lastly, survivor-leaders highlighted the importance of trauma-informed and survivor-focused leadership within collaborative bodies or relationships.

"[...T]he person at the head of our task force is trauma-informed and survivor-focused, and she guides everybody else. I think that it's really important that the person leading the group [...] really knows what the population needs" (Survivor Perspective).

"[...] I just don't know that folks examine trauma in the way that it should be examined. Like, we don't acknowledge the impact that traumatic experiences have on people, [...] I think there still *are some places where we have not placed a survivor as our main [focus...] Our objective is to heal, to support, to get you out [...T]here are some places where survivors still don't feel welcome, because at the end of the day, it doesn't support them in the way that they need to be supported. Which is why you have to have survivors involved in all of your planning, and some of these organizations have yet to have survivors in places of leadership, sitting at the table, so that the way they operate is sort of disconnected from something that needs to take place" (Survivor Perspective).*

Examples of beneficial collaboration.

Participants provided personal examples of successful attempts at collaborative efforts that benefitted both the individual or groups being served, as well as the partner stakeholders. The ability for vulnerable individuals to experience consistent interaction with long-term service providers came to the forefront of the discussion on what makes for a successful collaboration. Participants also described successful collaboration in the provision of therapeutic care and wrap-around services addressing clients' needs holistically:

"[…] I was there when they met. [...Y]ou can tell there [was] a human connection made. And, it was a powerful connection. Well, anyway, that individual came to us as being 'at risk,' but had clearly been trafficked. And, that relationship grew [...] between that mentor and mentee [...who] kept returning to 'the life.' And, that mentor had such a relationship with that mentee, that she collaborated with law enforcement. [...T]he relationship was so strong and the language [...] skills were so strong, [...] that mentor became a collaborative unit with the family, and [...] was involved in every family meeting. [...S]he is part of the team of restorative care, right alongside her case manager, her social worker, [...] the departmental head of the home where she was staying. [...] That's really, organizationally, how we were designed to be that part of that [...] continuum of care and that collaborative effort" (NP9).

"[...O]ur relationship with the dentist has been a [...] really good one, for that reason, that he listens to what we know about her, so that he can adjust his care, and then he loops back and tells us, 'OK. Here's how she should respond. If you see this [...].' And so, it is [...a] mutually supportive relationship. [...W]e don't go in and tell him how to be a dentist, and he doesn't come in and tell us how to do this. [...T]hat's a model of what really works. If you take the principles of that and apply it, [...] there is a success framework at least" (NP6).

"When we have events […] I will request that some of the survivors contribute art to an art show. […] I have actually mounted a couple of one-woman art shows in survivor art. And this engages the agency to, not only come to the event, but to support the survivor through this process […], fund for art supplies, or whatever

[…] ancillary needs there might be. […O]n a couple of occasions, these survivors

have sold the art, which is a big feather in the cap for the survivors, but […] also

[…i]t casts the agency, where they were getting services, in a very good light,

because […] something has pushed out into the world, has made the public more

aware, and has benefited the survivor. And, we've done it with such expertise, that

the survivor is not overexposed, or put in a situation that they are compromised in

any way, or […] put in a situation of danger because of publicity [...]" (NP20).

"[…O]ne of our survivors […] had been trafficked, and […] they were young.

[…B]y the time they got out, they were in high school, […] getting ready for

college age […]. And, there was a need for counseling. There was a need for some

of those basic necessities […]. […] We had one partner that was providing job

readiness and college prep courses. And, so, […] we went along with the

survivor, […] introduced her to them, […] she shared with them […] what she was

looking for in the program. And, they […] helped her to, […] get ready for college

[…]. She was also going through counseling. And, through that, we had brought

in another one of our partners, who does pro bono counseling. And, they were

providing counseling for her. […] We had worked with […] the [State] Coalition

Against Human Trafficking […] their legal advocate […] as she was testifying in

court [...]. And, so, as a result of all of that, we started seeing immense growth in

[…] her emotional and mental well-being, through the counseling. She ended up

getting into a college with significant scholarship. And, she ended up […]

assisting in the arrest of her trafficker, through those legal advocates. […] Also,

they provided counseling for her family, as well, as they were processing through

her being gone and returning" (NP16).

Another experience highlighted by some of the participants related to the mutual

support in making referrals to other service providers. These participants identified

success in collaboration as the ease of access and flow of communication between

potential partners:

"[...W]e were able to connect this person with another organization providing

case management services. Before we became TVAP-approved, they were

providing TVAP services to this client. [...T]he response and the collaboration,

particularly with this person from the other agency, was extremely helpful.

[...When] we have been able to realize that the focus is the client and the person

who is coming to us for need, I think everything else gets overlooked. [...T]here's

no [...] power struggle. [...T]his person [...] has these immediate needs, and we

need to make it happen as soon as possible. [...S]o, it's been very helpful, when it

comes to communication. It's been very helpful for the client, themselves, because,

they see it. [...] She can tell that we're in contact and collaborating, in a positive

way" (NP13).

"One of my tasks [...] was to form a collaboration so that we could streamline

access to care for both addictions and mental health services for survivors.

[...T]he second person I reached out to [was...] another rehab. [...U]nfortunately,

the rehab ended up closing, but while they were still open, they were super

helpful. [...O]ur point of contact was available 24 hours a day, and our human

trafficking advocate could just call her up and she would find a bed. And if they

didn't have any beds in her rehab, she would find a bed somewhere else. Which was fantastic" (NP4).

"[...A]nother youth that I worked with [...] was actually a boy, and, upon his discharge, he was connected with a CPS worker [...]. So, we all collaborated, constantly, in terms of [...] making sure that he was enrolled in school, that he was going past the school program. And ,when he got his girlfriend pregnant, we also transitioned to making sure that [...] they had whatever they needed [...] in order for their family to be okay [...d]espite the challenges that they were facing, because of their own histories of trauma [...], because they did not come from families that were very supportive. [...] So, it worked really well with this agency, because, there were times when [...] someone at [our organization] couldn't be available, if an emergency arose. But, they had a [...] 24/7 setup, so that [...] they could respond. [...T]here was no point where this child felt that they [...] would not have someone to reach out to if they needed. If we didn't have that collaboration, what it would have, likely, turned into is, [...]'leave a voicemail, and, then, we'll get back to you as soon as we check it' [... or] someone really pushing to work after hours, and clutching a cell phone 24/7, just in case someone calls" (NP19).

"[...] I was working with a victim [...] who was 19, but, she had been found [...] with a 17 year old. And, then, they both had a trafficker. [...] So, I was able to see her [the adult victim], that night, in the police station. [...B]ecause they know me, and they had my cell phone number [...], our response was able to be quicker. And, then, I was able to talk to the prosecutor, who was going to work on that

case, who was also involved. [...W]e were, with some advocacy, able to keep the

adult from being charged with prostitution, which, I think is a really good thing.

Because, obviously, criminalization of victims does not help anything. And, I

thought it was important, that her going forward, as a victim and a witness in this

case against her trafficker, which went federal, that she had her own attorney. So,

I referred her to a group out of [Partner State], that provides pro bono victim

rights attorneys. [...I]t created additional hoops [...], but it was in an effort to

protect the survivor's rights. [...]I thought she needed some extra protection and

some extra advocacy, I think it worked out pretty well" (AR2).

Participants also described success in mitigating the risk of re-traumatization, through

comprehensive intake assessments and ongoing advocacy on behalf of vulnerable or

exploited individuals:

"We have these Child Advocacy Centers, that are really good about [...]

conducting these sound, indefensible, forensic interviews, that are very non-

threatening [...] done in a context that's not an intimidating police department or

anything like that. And, I do think law enforcement tend to make pretty good use

of them [...] at least, with minors [...T]he CACs did a really good job in

providing linkage to therapy services and medical services, to the extent medical

services existed"(GT2, NP14).

"We had a case involving a 14-year-old girl, who had been trafficked by an adult

male. [...] She was pretty traumatized by the whole thing, and I brought in a

victim service provider, very early on, to establish a relationship and to establish

rapport with her, too, which they did. [...] So, we would lean very heavily on the

victim service provider to [...] provide that emotional support, and to be able to let us know [...] what her needs were and things like that. Well, when it came to the day of trial, [...] the victim was so upset that [...] she refused to take the stand. And, it was really problematic, because, [...] the prosecutor had to be in the courtroom. [...W]e were focused on the trial piece, and [...] were not in a position and didn't have the resources and ability to provide [...] the victim support piece to work her through that. So, because the victim service provider clearly understood the importance of her testifying, [...]they were able to work with her and get her eventually on the stand that day and provide the support [...] that she needed during the course of that trial [...I]f we did not have the service provider there and we had not been working with them through that entire process, we would have lost that case, because the judge would have thrown it out, because we [...] never would have been able to get her on the stand" (NP10, LE1).

In reference to group collaborative settings, like a coalition or task force meeting, participants identified those qualities that were of benefit to them and, as a result, to the populations they are serving. These settings were also described as opportunities to make long-term connections with other stakeholder members for future partnerships:

"[...A] really important collaboration that is super helpful to have [are] those conversations [with] our local task forces. The coordinator leads a lot of work on [...] sensitizing her community and brings different presenters to come in to speak at our task force meetings, and that's a way or entry point to meet other people that might be doing like-minded work" (NP3).

"[...A] lot of different service providers were in that room, and I met a really wonderful case manager [whose] non-profit or agency deal[s] specifically with people that are foreign nationals from Asia, particularly the Pacific. And so, I remembered that, I reached out to them, and it was thankfully still during business hours, and she referred me to one of their case managers who's Mandarin-speaking. And I felt [...] a level of comfort, knowing that we both share spaces, in terms of understanding the importance of being trauma-informed and sensitive in this intake process. And she was incredible. She stayed on the phone with me for [...] almost two hours. We did the intake together on the phone. Also, she shared her information with the client in case she wanted further case management. [...I] definitely felt confident with [...] how that went in terms of translation and accessing her needs. [...T]hat makes such a difference [...] especially on a personal level, to know confidently who I'm referring survivors to, because [...]I don't want to refer someone to just anybody. I know [...] if you ask me a question that I can tell you confidently what that space looks like, what the people are like, [...] and what their services are, as much as possible" (NP3).

"[...T]he conference was successful in bringing these different stakeholders together and having them in a space at once, where they could [...] discuss the various issues facing [...] more collaborative work in terms of local stakeholders and how they deal with survivors from these different forced labor situations" (AR1).

"It took a little while before we really understood each other's perspectives. [...I]t's just a matter of us getting to know each other. And then amazing things

happen on behalf of victims. Amazing prosecutions happened that garnered

traffickers a long time in federal custody, and amazing services were rendered

[…] for many of us coming together in different ways to make sure that the victim

and the survivor then had a very client-centered, survivor-focused experience and

survivor-driven" (GT1).

Participants highlighted the benefit of ongoing professional trainings being developed and offered through collaborative means:

"[…T]he information sharing happens at one agency, […] which provides […]

community partnership training […] It's a requirement through that agency that

everyone attend […] such a training, which explains about commercial sexual

exploitation of children and follows the trajectory of what a survivor has been

through, describes how someone may […] enter and exit 'the life,' as they call it,

numerous times, before they […] have moved on, ultimately. So, we are the

beneficiary of that training, because […] as many of my teaching artists as

possible go through that training. And it also includes a background check, which

is paid for by that agency. So, that's a […] default benefit that we get" (NP20).

"[…T]he [State] Child Advocacy Network […] is the best collaborative

organization I've ever encountered. […] C.A.N. does some really good

collaborative trainings […] with your multidisciplinary teams, to help get them on

the same page. And, that's really helpful, because, you do have a lot of

dysfunctional multidisciplinary teams, just because of the […] stress of the

workload, and the urgency of what you're doing, and, then, the disparate

personalities, and power struggles, and the politics" (GT2, NP14).

"[…] All of our centers are regionalized, and so, [...r]ather than everyone trying to figure things out independently, we do things collaboratively. [...T] hey were willing to take on the role of being the point of service, if we would take on the role of figuring out the training piece. [...] Some of the state funders are actually part of that statewide collaboration, too, and recognize and support the need. So, we were able to secure funding to do a series of trainings. [...O]ne of our strengths, as a state, because we have limited resources, is the amazing level of collaboration we have" (NP12).

One participant indicated higher success in collaborative efforts for which one can choose one's partners:

"[...T]he very successful collaborations have actually been the people [...] that I've chosen to be my teaching artists, and I've trained them and support them and nurture them and pay them and make sure they're happy. And they are providing the ethos and the [...] essence of what I believe and my vision. [...] They are true to it" (NP20).

One major benefit addressed by most participants was the ability of strategic collaboration to intentionally bring in perspectives of those who might be historically overlooked in decision-making processes, namely, those of survivors of sexual exploitation:

"[...A] really successful collaboration, was when we worked with [...] several organizations, [...] we did a short film, interviewing survivors, and, then, we had our mentoring program to do post-production and [...] production of this. So, we had teen activists, and filmmakers, and artists all working on this campaign.

[...W]e stayed in close contact with all the organizations. And, many of the survivors that we interviewed [...] were, actually, advocates and employees of the organizations that they were serviced by, initially. [...T]hey got degrees, [...] throughout their survivorship, [and] they ended up coming back to the organizations and working for them [...I]t was [...] an amazing experience to work with all these different organizations, [...] to have our youth that we're mentoring and working with [...]interviewing these survivors" " (NP18).

"On that project, we worked with [...] seven or eight different nonprofits, that all came together. And, then, we had to [...] make sure everything was approved [...], all the nonprofits were happy with it, and, then, had this final product, that went out with post-production by our students, that culminated in this amazing campaign, that was shared throughout [our state...]. [...T]hat was a collaboration that, on every level, was very successful. We worked with the [...state] public school system. We worked with [...] five or six different nonprofits, that were in rescue, recovery, survivor services [...]" (NP18).

"[...T]here was law enforcement, [...] people who had been rescued, there were people that had homeless ministries, and social workers, and nurses, and people that worked in abortion clinics, and all kinds of different religious leaders, foster parents. [...] It was, literally, the first time that I had been a part of hearing everybody's perspective[...]" (CI2).

"[...] From the collaborative standpoint, we had, basically, a resource table fair at it, from all the different stakeholders [...]. [...]I know it was an encouragement, certainly, to local advocates, just to see the type of success and visibility we could

get. [...W]e did a panel of survivors [that] went phenomenally well [...]. One of them was a youth services [state government department] worker. One was the prosecutor's wife, who works in probation. [...A] couple others [have] standard day jobs, but very vocal and excellent speakers. [...T]he second panel was more law enforcement oriented, on the issue of trafficking, specifically. [...] We talked a bit about online safety, just, the threats through the dark web, child pornography, things of that nature. We had a therapist [and] a foster care trainer on the panel. So, that went really well, also" (GT2, NP14).

Examples of negative collaboration.

Participants then proceeded to share personal experiences of collaboration gone bad, that was unsuccessful in providing the necessary services or resources to those seeking care. Others shared examples of the impact of a negative or hostile collaborative environment on the group dynamic among stakeholders as well as the quality of care provided. Various reasons were given for ultimately ineffective attempts at collaboration, which have been introduced previously, including staffing limitations or turnover, competition among stakeholders, and the delayed provision of desired services:

"[...O]ne of our mentors had a very, very negative experience at a group home. We met with their staff, [but] we all viewed this situation differently. It didn't end really well, and [...] the most unfortunate thing about that was for the survivor. [...] Forget all of us, and all of our egos, [...]and all of our perspectives that we bring to the table. It's not healthy for her [...]" (NP9).

"I made a very big effort to work with kids in group foster care [...] and it failed. [...W]e couldn't even get through the first step. I asked for staff support. They

were relatively unwilling to offer it. I asked for some reassurances about questions of insurance, and they were unwilling to provide that. […W]e couldn't get over all the bureaucratic problems, to get our services to these kids in foster care […]" (NP20).

"[…] I worked with one youth, who did really well in the program. […] She processed her sexual trauma, she did everything she needed. Service providers did everything that they needed to do, to make sure that she was successfully discharged. But, once she was out in the community, the program that she was supposed to be seeing to meet her mental health and other case management needs, had severe staffing blocks. […T]he caseworkers that she was supposed to be going to go see were no longer there. […R]elationships are key, not only amongst the stakeholders, but also for these children. […S]he'd been introduced to particular people, and felt safe that she was being handed off to people she was familiar with. That was not going to be the case anymore. So, she would not attend […] therapy. And, because of that, […] some of the other case management things that needed to happen, fell by the wayside. […W]hat should have taken a very short amount of time for her to be well on her way to a sustained survivor, ended up taking a couple of years. So, that's an example of when collaboration […] falls apart […] because they were in such flux, they had very limited resources" (NP19).

"Of course, we've had disappointments, and breakdowns of communication, and partnerships that weren't equally […] yoked […] that didn't become […] a positive thing for us. […] You start out thinking that you all have the same goal.

[…] In every single organization, we've donated every single workshop series, every single mentoring program, every single campaign. We have never asked for a dollar. And, […] sometimes, they want more, and they're not appreciative [...]. That's not an organization we can partner with again. [...It's] not healthy or beneficial, for us, to work with people that can't be appreciative, and collaborative, and helpful [...]" (NP18).

Participants acknowledged the difficulties associated with slow-moving, inundated systems in getting the proper care to individuals in need:

"[...In] trying to get a client to transitional housing [...] this particular transitional house would only accept referrals through DSS [Department of Social Services]. The survivor was 18, […] and was not associated to DSS here [...In] the process of connecting her, she lost interest, […] and I just felt like it would've been so much easier if I could do a direct referral, as opposed to going through the added layer of DSS. […] I was frustrated, and I could tell that the client was […] super frustrated at how long the process was taking. We ended up not being able to do it. […I]t just went around in circles. [...]I went to DSS several times and made trips, and it's difficult catching the right person who knows that exact situation" (NP3).

"[...W]e've worked, recently, with two survivors […] one that is […]still in the process of recovery and reintegration [...S] he found herself in a […] unsafe living situation with her partner […] being triggered [...], but still not having resources [...S]he was placed in a […] group home [...and] had caseworkers from different organizations that she was working with, but, they weren't

communicating. [...] I tried to connect a caseworker from one organization to a caseworker from another organization, to get her some resources and some help. And, it took two weeks of me [...] emailing and calling, [...] and they never [...] got on a phone call. And, I also feel that they were taking advantage of her, because, they felt that she wasn't important or valued [...T]hey have so many other survivors that they're working with. So many get lost [...] in the cracks [...]" (NP18).

Other participants described the potential re-traumatization that poor collaboration among stakeholders can inflict on individuals seeking support, as it relates to the gaps along the Continuum of Care inherent within the existing systems and structures of the social services sector:

"I started working with a [...] mother and her two really young children. And, they're immigrants, they're undocumented, and all three of them were trafficked together. They were sexually exploited together. [...W]hen they got to this country, [...] everyone was having trauma responses, and it was impacting their lives [...] on top of all the trauma that they had already experienced before being trafficked [...B]etween the first and second session I ever had with mom [...] she experienced [...] some suicidal thoughts and was really scared, and she was also having very intense flashbacks, as a result of her trauma. And so, she went to the shelter and [...] the next thing that I know, she was [...] hospitalized in a psych unit. The shelter had [...] her kids removed from her custody, because they said that she was a danger to her children. [...T]he shelter also evicted her, because it was a family shelter, and she was no longer a family, because they got her kids

taken away from her. [...A]lso, the kids got abused in the first foster placement

that they got put into. [...I]t was, just, layer on layer on layer. And, I, essentially,

from there, had to [...] go and advocate with the psych unit at the hospital

[...]with [ACF] and with the foster agency [...]with her court appointed lawyer

and social worker, to make sure that people spoke her language and understood

the trauma history. [...S]omething that we have here is respite care, [...] for

exactly these types of circumstances, where, if someone has [...] a medical

emergency, up to 30 days, you can go to a respite home and the kids can be taken

care of [...]without possibility of being taken away from the parent. But, the

shelter specifically didn't do that, which was [...] punitive already of her trauma

symptoms. [...I]t took six months for her kids to be returned to her custody. [...]

Once we were able to [...] have these conversations to work collaboratively

around [...] naming the problem for what it is, and [...] naming the trauma and

the family's experience for what it was, [...] everyone very quickly rallied and [...]

it was a great experience of [...] collaboration [...]working the way it should. [...]

But, [...] this should have never happened in the first place" (NP17).

"[...T]he survivor [...] came out of trafficking [...] with a sex addiction. And, also,

as a result of all the trauma and everything, [...] needed a divorce, because, it

was harming the family that she was a part of [...] and, needed shelter, as well.

And, as we collaborated with others, we tried to set up a variety of counselors,

but, none of them seemed to [...] fit her needs. [...S]he ended up [...] bouncing

from counselor to counselor [...] which [...] was, obviously, not going to be

conducive to healing. [...]Essentially, it was re-traumatizing, bouncing from

counselor to counselor. [...] In terms of the need of the divorce, we found legal

advocates, but they weren't, necessarily, able to help. [...I]n terms of the shelter,

[...] every once in a while, she would end up living in her car. [...] The shelters

[...] weren't working out. [...] She would go missing for a couple of days. The

shelter would process her out of their system. She would return, and, she wouldn't

be able to go back in [...]" (NP16).

As one participant described, a lack of commitment to a collaborative relationship can place a strain on the dynamic of trust among partners, as well as make inefficient use of limited resources.

"[...] When we first started doing the work, before we had the connection in the

[...] police department, we went through everyone we needed to go through, and

we thought we had support. [...] They told us they had a speaker, and we were

ready. [...T]he church that we were supposed to have it at [...]didn't do a good

job in [...] advertising it to let folks know. [...W]hen it came time for the day, the

speaker from the police department didn't show up until the end. [...] So, then we

had to push someone else up. [...] It didn't work the way I knew it could have if

everyone took it as serious [...]. [...] Now we are a little better in [...] hounding

you until we know that you are committed to do this with us" (NP2).

Sometimes, a lack of clarity surrounding the roles of collaborative partners is a barrier to providing adequate care, as one participant detailed:

"[...W]e had a case involving a 16 year old, that was in an E.R., who was

identified as a victim of sex trafficking. And, I probably had three or four people,

all calling me and texting me about the same case. [...] Instead of this flurry of

texting and calling from five different agencies, we needed help organizing people

and clarifying their roles [...] so that, we can share information properly and

know who is supposed to be doing what. [...S]ometimes, it's a lack of protocol.

[...] It was unclear who had custody of the child, and who should decide if she

had a medical exam first or went to placement first. There was confusion about

her legal jurisdiction which determines which agency must provider her shelter"

(AR2).

A lack of a trauma-informed approach, especially among members of the faith

community resulted in a collaborative event gone wrong, according to one participant's

experience:

"My goal with that was, hopefully, to have [...] a unified front, across various

faith traditions, speaking on the issue of abuse. I thought that would be a very

helpful thing [...] particularly for survivors to see. [...] I moderated all these

panels [and] talked to all these people in advance. [...A]ll the biggest churches in

the area were on this panel [...b]ut some of what they said was really harmful.

[...N]one of them said anything horrifying during the interview. [...] But, then,

[...] there's that pastoral instinct, that, when they see someone working through

something, they just have to preach. They just can't help it. [...I]n the middle,

some pastor decided to lecture the survivors on the importance of forgiveness.

[...] And, it was not in response to my question. [...] He [...] gave a [...] three-

word answer to my question, that he had answered pretty well [...] when I talked

to him. But, then, he goes off on [...] the importance of forgiveness and all that.

[...Y]ou could just see [the survivors...] They were done. [...] And, one of them,

you could tell, dissociated. [...] So, that bit of it was really negative. [...I]t wasn't [...] this horrible, malicious statement, and it was intended to be helpful. [...I]t wasn't done out of avarice or anything, but, [...he] didn't have a relationship with them" (GT2, NP14).

As some participants explained, resistance to collaboration, even when thought to be in the interest of protecting the individual being served, can result in further harm done:

"We recovered a victim of labor trafficking, who was also [...] an undocumented foreign national. [...W]e contacted the victim service organization, we arranged to meet with them, we handed her off for them to provide some support [...] And, then, we said, 'Listen, [...] we need to interview her. We're not going to do it today. [...W]e know this is really traumatic for her. [...S]he was just removed from the situation. We want her to get stable, [...]' So, two days later, we contacted the victim services organization and said, '[...W]e would like to come interview them.' And, they refused. [...T]hey said, 'We are not going to give you access to the client. We don't believe that she should be speaking to law enforcement. [...T]his is what we believe is in the best interest of [...] our client, at this point.' [...W]e tried to explain and [...t]hey continued to refuse to provide us access. Well, as a result, because we weren't involved, Immigration found out, ended up arresting our victim and deporting her. Whereas, if we were involved, we would have been able to stop that. So, [...]it didn't benefit law enforcement. It certainly didn't benefit the victim. And, [...] ultimately, the victim service provider was not able to do what they set out to do" (NP10, LE1).

Criteria for choosing partners and depth of collaboration.

Participants offered their insight regarding the process of vetting and choosing partners. Perspectives shared included the formal and informal criteria they use to determine with which stakeholders to enter into a collaborative relationship. Additional thoughts were shared regarding the depth of such partnerships and the criteria for determining how closely to link the efforts of one stakeholder to those of another:

> *"[...] One of the ways of measuring collaboration is the Wilder Survey. [...I]t measures collaboration amongst different stakeholders. [...] I think, there are the same kind of conflicts that there are, in pretty much every state, which is usually around privacy and confidentiality [...]criminalization of a victim [...] charging victims with prostitution, or other charges [...]"(AR2).*

One participant describes the levels of ever deepening collaboration experienced between the organization and its various partners:

> *"[...Collaboration is] on a spectrum [...], from the [...] least collaboration, which is volunteers. [..T]he community comes and they [...] have these spurts of help. [...T] hey're not wholly invested in your mission. [...A]s we move that along, we get to those individuals who become invested in the mission of what you're doing, and they offer what they do. [...W]e are collaborators, because, not only are they providing a service, but we talk back and forth [...] in the best interest of the individual. [...I]n further, is where we would have [...] an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] relationship with an organization. [...E]verybody at the reception desk knows us. They have stopped asking certain questions. [...A]nd we go over there and do training. So, it becomes a reciprocal*

relationship, where they're doing their service, we're doing ours, but we

understand each other. […] And then, I think at the further end, is when you're

actually in a contractual relationship, and you have said, 'We are hiring your

services to be a part of our program.' […W]e have a counseling firm that has

therapists, and we have articulated certain things that we want. […W] e are

philosophically in alignment. But there are things that they do that we're not privy

to, because of their client privilege. […] So, I'd say that's […] the spectrum of

engagement with community partners" (NP6).

"[…] The line is going to be drawn, depending on […] how much they display

they intend to work with survivors. So, if they are looking to, simply, provide a

one-off service and go on, we're, obviously, not going to […] align our mission

statements […]. We'll maintain a partnership with them, because […] anything

provided for a survivor […] is better than nothing. But, if it's […], for example,

someone who is providing regular care for survivors […] regular housing,

regular food, shelter, […] then, those are the people that we come alongside to

say, […] 'Let's, really put our organizations together, to ensure that all of this is

done smoothly, seeing as how, they're going to be with both of us for a while.'

[…T]hat's going to be the deciding factor. […H]ow equipped are they? How well

have they've been trained? […H]ow much are they going to be interacting with us

and with the survivors?" (NP16).

"[…] I'm willing to go as deep as makes sense for both organizations […] Any

materials that we provide are co-branded materials, and we basically leave […] a

thumb drive and [say], 'OK. Here's access to our materials. […H]ere's our […]

general understanding as to how those are going to be used. And, we're here to support you, as you go out and use these to fulfill your mission.' [...] We believe more in the mission, than we do in [...] being closed-minded or safeguarding those materials" (NP10, LE1).

Which collaborative partner one engages with, and the extent to which one reaches out is based on the issue at hand and the specific needs of the individual or groups being served, as one participant states:

"[...D]epending on what the issue is, [...] we can have a deeper partnership with some people than others. [...S]ince we're sort of split between [...] victim services and criminal justice reform, [...] there are some people I'd call for some things and not others [...]. [...S]ometimes [...] it's best for us to [...] seek out people in the domestic violence community, because we want to [...] address confidentiality [...]. Or, [...i]f there's a legislative issue involving [...] re-entry from jail, then [...] I'll probably go the public defender service and [...] other criminal justice people before I go to the domestic violence people" (NP5).

"[...T]hey have to match what I need, or what the client needs, or whatever the project needs. So the first question is, 'What is needed?' [...] If it's a matter of resources, 'Who has not been badgered recently?', so that I don't end up with donor fatigue or partner fatigue. '[...I]s there a certain length of time? What is their willingness? What is their interest? Are they looking for bigger things to do? To what extent have they helped in the past? [...]That's an art. That's not a science, I think" (PR1, CI1).

Proof of comprehensive training is a major criterion for vetting potential partners, according to several participants.

> *"[...] There are criteria. I need to know, [...] if you're working with our clients, [...i]f you're doing anything with psychology or whatever, you have to [...] have all the proper credentials. You have to be trauma- and trafficking- and drug-informed. [...] I've had counselors come to me and say, 'I'd be happy to counsel these, and I've dealt with 365 women who were raped.' That is not the same thing"* (PR1, CI1).

> *"[...T]hey need to have been trained in human trafficking [...] more than just [...] a sheet that they signed. [...] So, whether that is us training them, or, [...] they've attended seminars [...] they've attended separate trainings [...] they've worked with survivors, and, so, have that hands-on experience. They need to have been trained, in some way, [...] to an extensive level"* (NP16).

> *"[...] I would want people that were educated and aware. [...] I would want the very best of everyone in their field, those who are seasoned and [...] can give the very best. [...] If you've never counseled [survivors], you've never rescued them, you've never done a sting, [...] I don't really want you on this task force"* (CI2).

The process of establishing criteria for determining collaborative partners can also be formal or informal. Some participants described an evaluation form they complete for every potential stakeholder partner. Others prefer a more organic approach, vetting stakeholders while developing relationships with them.

> *"I don't think that there is a formalized [...] partnership agreement [...]. It's more [...] meeting each other's needs where we can and seeing how [and] where we*

intersect. [...T]hey have a referral form and all of that, but [...] we work so closely with them, [...] they will work and be in communication about [...]how best we can serve that specific client, in terms of both of our resources. So, there isn't [...] a firm agreement beforehand. It's just [...] developing those relationships of knowing what agencies do what, and ways that we can support each other [...]" (NP3).

"[...] I encounter them, I have conversations with them, I determine what I think their [...] capacities are [...] and then, proceed from there. And the conversation unfolds to reveal that they [...] have a very passing interest, [...] or that they [...] have a deep sense of commitment to social justice and are going to show up consistently. And, [...] a certain amount is just intuitive and instinctive [...]" (NP20).

"[...W]e'll accept referrals, essentially, from anyone, as long as they're appropriate, safe referrals for our program, and as long as we have capacity for it. [...] I am very, very intentional and thoughtful about who I make referrals to. [...A]t this point [...], because I've been doing this for so long [...], I have the people at places that I trust, and more often than not, it's because I trust individual people vs. [...] the systems within which they work" (NP17).

"It's pretty rare that I'll have the same individual involved in collaborative efforts, everywhere. [...] I'm pretty careful about who I deploy where and why and when. [...T]here's some people that I need to shake things up, that are more useful for that. And, those are not the same people [...] that I'll invite to the table,

when I'm trying to launch a partnership [...]. So, it, just, varies on the needs, the

[...] contexts" (GT2, NP14).

One example of a more formal approach to forming collaborative relationships and environments was described below:

"We actually have a [...] partnership collaboration evaluation form. I think it's

just like 10 or 11 criteria. [...] Are they in our space? [...D]o they share our

values and approaches, and do we trust them? [...W]e have the criteria and then

we rank 1-5 [...] and then we add up the number. [...S]ome folks [...] are in your

space, and you don't have a choice but to work with them, even if they score like a

0. But how you work with them is important to know. [...T]his allows [...] a more

systemic way to assess [...] ongoing partnerships" (NP1).

Those who prefer more organic collaboration building also mentioned how it is a more client-focused approach than having formal criteria would be:

"I [prefer] organic development. [...O]ne thing that I particularly love about the

approach so far, of the way that collaborations have existed, is that it's always the

client first before the paperwork. I wouldn't want that to change. [...W]hen we're

firming up our processes and protocols and streamlining the processes, I don't

want that to get lost [...]" (NP3).

One participant described their experience of initiating contact with and between potential collaborators.

"[...] I reach out to organizations that I don't know very much about [...] and

everyone so far has been super receptive about meeting each other [...], learning

about what we do versus what they do, and [...] cultivating a personal

relationship. [...] We share space quite often and I think that's super helpful and something that I'd [...] like to see more of [...]amplifying [...] the connections that we're [...] making with one another, and really being aware of who else is [...] serving this population and in what ways" (NP3).

For many participants, determining mutuality between the ideologies and fundamental missions of potential partners is important in order to enter into an effective collaborative space:

"[...] I personally would not want to collaborate with a[n] organization [that...] lumps consensual work in with [...] forced labor. I would definitely want to find a group that is supportive of both consensual and nonconsensual sex workers [...] that supports their different struggles. I wouldn't want to work with a group that [...] judged people who are engaging in it consensually" (AR1).

"[Based on t]heir mission statement, and how they treat survivors, and [...] how they talk about survival, and what kind of services they offer to people [...]. And, in terms of academic collaboration, it would have to be with someone who [...] recognizes once again the [...] complexities of sexual labor" (AR1).

"[...O]ur main criteria is, that we don't all have to agree, but we have to have the same basic goals in mind, which is ending child sexual exploitation [...] in a way that does not continue to exploit kids [...S]o-called stakeholders [...] will do that, and [...] you'll see all these pictures of clients, and constant storytelling about clients, and trotting them out, and not caring about [...] safety and confidentiality, [...] allegedly, in their quest to save and to rescue" (NP19).

"[...S]ince this whole [decriminalization] thing really got moving [...], there's been [...] a big split, [...] ideologically, between stakeholders who believe in fully decriminalizing the sex industry, versus those who believe in the asymmetrical Nordic model. So, that's been [...] a big factor that's made collaboration hard. [...S]takeholders that we historically had worked with and have sat on coalitions with us, now are adopting [...] a totally, totally different approach, ideologically, to one that we have. So, that's caused some fractures [...] within the community in [our state]. But, [...] on the macro level, basically, [...] anyone who wants to do the work is welcome [...]. And we will collaborate with pretty much anyone. [...W]e work with survivor leaders, we work with all those different stakeholders [...W]e don't really turn people away, unless they're [...] actively saying something that's totally opposite or [...] harmful to what we believe and [...] what our clients need [...]" (NP17).

"[...P]artnering with other like-minded organizations who are faith-based [...] is a big factor for us [...] We have people from all different walks come in and volunteer [...] In most cases, volunteers will not be working directly with our women. [...A]s long as [...] there's no harm being done [...] you're more than welcome to come and help" (NP15).

Aside from ideological differences, one participant emphasized the importance of recognizing ill or ulterior motives of a would-be stakeholder and partner:

"[...I]f you're just doing it [...] for some sort of recognition, I wouldn't want to be part of that [...] I don't even think I would, necessarily, want to be on a paid task force, [...I]n general, if it's some kind of monetary gain for you, I don't really

think that it would be a great idea for us to be partnering. [...] I think, it's more so

the motive of the partner" (CI2).

"[...W]hat we look for [are] individuals that have a shared mission, that have a

history of success. And, one of the things that's really important for me in judging

success, is that [...] their results are not overinflated. There are a couple of anti-

trafficking organizations out there that make claims to some of the work that

they're doing, that, in my opinion, [are] absolutely ridiculous and impossible [...]

for them to accomplish what they say they're accomplishing. And, so, I look for

very grounded organizations. [...T]here [are] organizations that are just sucking

up private money and not actually doing anything. So, I really look at, what are

the results? Are they measurable results? Before I partner with an organization, I

usually [...] do a deep dive into their background and what they're doing before

we decide that we're going to partner with them" (NP10, LE1).

One criterion depicted as helpful for identifying and vetting potential partners is the

recommendation of survivors within the collaborative. Such individuals may have

existing relationships with stakeholders not currently present. Reputable partners were

also identified as a viable source of recommendations:

"[...I]f each jurisdiction looks at the group of people [...] that typically is

responding to crisis, is involved with human rights, [...] care of children, care of

vulnerable elderly [...a]nd the typical response systems, like police and

firefighting, educators [...] who comprises civil society. I think that's a great

place to start. [...G]et representatives from all these organizations, and then over

time, [...t]he gaps will become obvious, and survivors will tell us [...], 'You need

to invite this person, this type of agency, this type of service,' and they'll have sometimes fairly biting critiques of what is happening and then that can be the opportunity for dialogue" (GT1).

"I determine the stakeholders based on their reputation amongst [...] the colleagues in the anti-trafficking world. [...] I determine my interest in engaging with them based on what they're communicating in their [...] social media and their website. [...] I ask amongst survivors if they have any experience. [...] Then, next step, as I reach out to them, I see how they respond to me and [...] what their level of interest is and [...] their visceral response to our work. [...] And I think strategically, as best I can. I try to work with [...] really respected agencies and try to avoid the ones that are known to be really inefficient and [...] not able to provide really strong services" (NP20).

"[...I]t really starts with a referral [...] so that we can be more trauma informed, and [...] open to [...] collaborations that are [...] referred to us by the survivor advocates that we really respect. [...I]t has to go through all of our board members, as well, and we [...] vote on it. [...] How do we feel they'll approach collaboration and support what we do? [...] We never bring less than 100 percent of our all, to every project, because, in the back of our minds, we have all of those survivors that are [...] relying on us to [...] tell their story, support their recovery [...] or empower them [...] But, we have to see the intent and the willingness to [...] jump into a project, [...] and carry weight in a project. That, sometimes, takes weeks or months of conversations. [...T]hat's how our most successful projects have turned out. [...T]he longer that we've had those types of

conversations, and [...] ideation sessions, [...] the more committed an

organization [...] And, that's our process of vetting, as well" (NP18).

Not only was the initial vetting process important to participants, but some expressed the need for ongoing evaluation of one's current collaborative partners, as individual areas of focus can shift over time, along with the resources allocated to the goals of the collaborative relationship. Such periodic evaluations can also provide the opportunity to assess whether any of the group's goals need to be altered in order to better serve the population:

"Every day is an opportunity for new evaluation. [...D]oing that on a more formal

basis, whether it's an annual review or some other kind of forced tool [...] is

really good, and then you get all those partners talking about where they see the

gaps [...] or responding to that somehow, whether it's a survey, or calls, or in

person, or online [...]" (GT1).

"[...W]e have [...] our evaluation tool to see if you did what you said you were

going to do for the event. [...] How much [did] you participate? Do we reach out

to you again? [...W]e've learned that there are some organizations that [...] we

can't work with them. Because you [...] said you had 50 volunteers and you only

brought 10. [...W]e give evaluation forms [...] to everyone who attends any event

that we have. And for those who are at the table, we rate ourselves in terms of

how effective we have been, based on the evaluations of those who have

participated. And that [...] informs us as to how we should move forward with

partnerships [...]" (NP2).

"[...W]e try to partner with people who are, either, already working with victims, or have the potential to work with victims, because of their roles. So, training E.R. staff is a really big priority because emergency rooms are an important area for identification. [...] We have some standards of care, as a task force, about remaining trauma-informed, protecting the rights of victims, so if you are going to partner or be part of the task force, your agency has to sign those standards and commit to implementing them. And, it doesn't happen very often, but, if there are organizations that [...] are not complying with the standards and they're causing more harm than good, then they, usually, won't be too closely [...] involved [...]" (AR2).

When the depth of collaboration with one's chosen partners is great, participants described a sense of accountability to the group and the group's mission, even when considering separate partnerships as an individual stakeholder. A formalized standard or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was suggested as an evaluation tool in vetting future potential collaborative relationships:

"We don't have an evaluative tool. What we do have is a [...] commercial sexual exploitation of children council, and, we meet at least once a month, and are constantly in contact, when partnership questions [...] arise, and discuss it amongst ourselves. For example, [...] I was recently asked if I wanted to join a movement [...] against decriminalizing prostitution in [our state], because of the impact that could potentially have on children who've been trafficked. And, so, right now, the council, we're in discussions about whether [...] how they're

approaching this is [...] in line with what we would want to do, and how we can

help" (NP19).

"[...] I have to communicate to the board why we are partnering with some

organizations and why we're not partnering with others. [...] I'm hoping this kind

of objective criteria, with my additional commentary will just help them to know"

(NP1).

One participant seemed to make a distinction between *collaboration* as the more

organic, informal meeting space to share ideas and information, and *partnership* as the

more structured, formal process of exchanging specific resources and expertise. These

relationships do not appear to be mutually exclusive, however, as the context might

determine the depth and format of the relationship, and one can transition into the other

with the changing needs of the stakeholders and the clients being served. The selection of

collaborative partners was also portrayed from a needs-based approach, contingent upon

the existing stakeholders that share in the provision of services for a particular individual

or demographic:

"There are some partners we approach immediately, with them in mind, that, yes,

we do need an MOU, because, there's a certain service that we're looking to

provide, that we [...] want to partner with someone else who would spearhead.

There are also other partnerships that start out [...] as a collaboration, where we

are [...] meeting together to discuss [...] what we're all doing, and to gain

feedback [...] so that, we can do better service delivery. Then, something comes

up, where the partnership needs to evolve to more than just that [...]" (NP19).

"[…I]f someone has […] ten different systems or people in their lives, […] I'll talk to all ten of them. […I]t's really a case by case basis, either based on […] what a person is already coming with, or what needs they have and what could be […] fulfilled by different stakeholders […]" (NP17).

"[…O]ne of our other grants […] funds a multidisciplinary team. So […] we decided to work with stakeholders who have created a data sharing MOU, because they're sharing information on cases. We decided that those people needed that level of collaboration, because they were working on individual cases, and need to share that amount of information. […T]he child trafficking collaborative […] don't get together as frequently […] and, we don't have an information sharing MOU, because we're not sharing private information about specific cases, we're talking about policy and protocols. So, it […] depends on the goal of the group. […I]f the goal is to, really, work with a specific victim, then you need to collaborate really closely and there have to be more protections in place" (AR2).

"[…W]e are in collaboration and partnership with this particular agency […] they receive OVC [Office of Victims of a Crime] funding, just like us. […U]nder OVC, we […] will provide the therapeutic services, maybe some case management, if needed, and then, we will utilize services through this agency for […] legal services, specifically. And, then, we create these MOU's with them, as well" (NP13).

Often, participants described forming collaborative relationships, starting with existing partners and then branching out to fill identified gaps in perspective or demographic representation.

> *"[...] I never expected, for instance, to have some of the partnerships that we do now, because [...] if you just read our missions on paper, you wouldn't [...] see the overlap. But we've realized how essential it is to be [...] partners with other organizations, that might come into contact with the same people as we do. [...S]ince there are so many vulnerabilities that traffickers target, [...] I think, every year, we realize new people who we haven't even thought of before, as people we should talk to"* (NP11).

> *"[...] I really reach out to folks who have specialties in other areas [...a]nd that helps to identify who we need at the table. So even from the beginning, I do not decide who comes to the table in a vacuum. [...] Also, once we [...] outline who's going to be at the table, I look to see who is obviously missing. [...] I start to go through and see how people identify -- he identifies as a straight black man, he identifies as a straight white man, [...] she's Christian, she's Buddhist, he's atheist. [...] I've often found that the folks that were missing, 90% of the time, was really the LGBT community [...]. And so, now that doesn't happen, because I bring folks in from the start, [...] reaching out to all the networks. [...] And then allowing everybody equal voice in that place"* (NP2).

> *"[...S]ome of the best people, fiercest advocates, you'll meet, are not going to have an Ivy League education. [...] They're going to come from different walks of life. And, [...] that's a strength, that you're different. [...T]hat's why I think*

[we've] been so successful, because, […] every walk of life, from three-piece suit

to biker leather […] informed the approach" (GT2, NP14).

"[...O]nce an individual has been identified as being trafficked, we do have an

assessment we use [...to] identify what areas we need to address, and what […]

other agencies we need to call upon" (NP8).

Sometimes, according to one participant, the decision of which stakeholder to collaborate with is as simple as determining which region needs the greatest resources mobilized. Geographic proximity was also expressed as a given criterion in pursuing collaborative relationships:

"[…P]art of our mission was to serve jurisdictions, where there's a lot of

trafficking cases. [...] [One local area] has a lot of trafficking cases but does not

have as many resources as [another local area]. So, for us, the decision […] to

partner with [an organization] who was going to establish services in that area

[…] was easy, because it was based on geographic need" (AR2).

"I don't think we have any written criteria or anything like that. [...W]e're just

really excited whenever we find out of another anti-trafficking organization that's

in close proximity to us, and it […] seems like a natural, automatic partnership,

because we're both in this work together. And, it's rare to come across another

organization with the same mission, who's flourishing and doing well, within [...]

a couple hours of you" (NP11).

One major criterion mentioned was whether the potential partnership is sustainable, based on the resources available to each stakeholder:

"[...] I think we're really careful as an organization, to [...] not take on more than our staff can currently [sustain]. So, there are current collaborations that we could be pursuing more, that would be really beneficial for survivors, but we don't have the staff capacity, currently. [...] I think having the metrics and a partnership document would be a great next step, as an organization. [...] As far as I'm aware, we don't have any formalized documents [...]. It's been incredibly organic. I could see that changing in the future [...] because it might be the best thing for the survivors we serve [...]" (NP9).

"We tend to start out with smaller projects, things that we're not necessarily getting money for and they're not necessarily getting money for. We just agree and are driving towards the same thing, so you [...] join efforts. Which is [...] what happened with [one partner], we're just wanting the same things, and that has grown into us doing joint projects that are funded together. [...] And we trust each other exclusively" (NP1).

Participant suggestions for future collaboration.

During the interviews, participants were asked to share their perspectives on how collaborative experiences could be enhanced to effectively address gaps along the Continuum of Care. The following results include recommendations for researchers, service providers, sources of funding, government representatives, and other stakeholder communities.

Addressing discrepancies in data estimates.

Participants expressed differing views regarding the reliance on estimates for anti-exploitation prevalence and service evaluation data. A persistent lack of clarity was identified, regarding how to meet the goals of the prevailing policies, without the guidance of more explicit requirements for reporting. Faults in the existing methods for tracking prevalence were addressed as well:

> *"We need to know what are the outcomes we're trying to get to, and, how are we going to measure those things. And, I think, if you don't have that, you don't know how well you're doing. [...M]ost task forces struggle with how to evaluate their work. And, I think, probably, the [funded] DOJ groups [...] do a better job, because they have to report on outcomes" (AR2).*

> *"[...W]e still haven't come up with a good way to fully track the number of cases that are being identified [...] I can give you information about child trafficking cases, because it's a mandatory reporting situation. But, all the data is very siloed. This data doesn't include labor trafficking victims or adult sex trafficking victims. [...W]e can't tell you how many victims were served, because people can't share the level of information that's needed to de-duplicate victims. So, we would get an over count, if everybody [...] served some of the same people" (AR2).*

Ultimately, this participant concluded that at this time, the risk to the individual(s) being served was too great to pursue the level of information sharing across stakeholders that would be necessary to move away from a reliance on estimates:

> *"Really good data would be great. But, I think, privacy and confidentiality are more important. So, right now, we're, just, gonna have to go with estimates. And,*

I think, that's an issue that other fields have come across [...] domestic violence,

sexual assault. Anytime you're working with vulnerable or victim populations that

have a lot of protections around their information, you're going to run into that,

which, I think is [...] the nature of [...] working with those populations and

ensuring we're following privacy and confidentiality laws" (AR2).

One participant offered the suggestion that improving collaborative relationships and

processes might provide the opportunity to gather quantifiable and verifiable data instead

of relying primarily on estimates:

"[...There is] an area of exploring or improving, I think, when it comes to data

collection [...] given how all of this happens, and how some of these statistics are

[...] all over the place around this issue. [...C]reating some type of data

collection, through these collaborations and partnerships might be helpful, as

well, in the long run" (NP13).

Third-party facilitator.

Several participants emphasized the significance of a third-party facilitator in

organizing collaborative spaces and ensuring that all perspectives were represented at the

table and all members' or partners' voices were heard. The reasons given in favor of this

additional partner (i.e. potential for objectivity, greater structure to meetings, better

equipped and resourced to promulgate the efforts of the group) far outweighed potential

cautions, which were primarily conditional (i.e. if this third party has limited knowledge

on or investment in the issue; undue influence from the source of funding for the

position). Some individuals suggested that this role should be distinct from all other

partners and paid exclusively to do the work of facilitation. Ideas for funding this role

included the payment of member fees (to support an equal representation) or via

government or foundation resources (to avoid undue influence from within the

collaboration).

"[...E]ven though I felt like there was a lot that our agency had to share and that

others had to share, there wasn't an opportunity necessarily to do that on a

consistent basis. [...T]here needs to be some role that's somewhat dispassionate in

each jurisdiction, so that that person or those people can help do the organizing

that's missing otherwise [...]" (GT1).

"[...H]ave some project manager, someone who is able to work with every

organization. And they are not doing the work, really they are just sort of a

messenger in a sense, so the information keeper, bringing all the facts and all of

the work together" (NP2).

"[...S]omeone who has expertise in 1) this particular issue, period, but also 2) in

networking and communication, so that they're able to do this work. [...] It

couldn't be just one person. It would need to be a team. And they would need to

be accountable to all organizations. [...I]t's sort of a project manager, too [...]

somebody who is not necessarily attached to any of [...] the organizations. [...] If

you have [a] fee, and everyone's able to pay the fee, [...] then everybody's on

equal ground. [...] Because even me assessing what organizations can bring to

the table, it's really still biased, because [...] there are probably some other

entities out there that can do a great job, that [...] I'm unaware of [...] So having

that person, having that group, I think it's critical. [...W]hen it comes time for

evaluating effectiveness, those who had participated in whatever the [...] work at hand is, would have a more objective view" (NP2).

"[...Community collaboration] is unlikely to happen unless there's someone who's paid for that to be their job. So if it's a local task force or whatever, there's going to be monthly meetings, there's going to need to be subgroups, working to improve specific things, and if there isn't at least one person who's driving that [...], then I just don't think it's going to happen, because all the people you need at the table to collaborate, their jobs are already much bigger than they are paid for or they have the hours in the day for. So I just think it's unrealistic to expect otherwise. I think the strategy question all comes down to who is the coordinator, who is paid? [...I]s it a government person, who's maybe making grants or is under a specific political philosophy, and whenever the mayor changes, so do their priorities for that community collaboration? [...Y]ou have to look at the interests of who's housing the person and who's funding it and who do they answer to" (NP1).

"You'd kind of be an arbiter [...] among all the groups [...] a staffer for the Coalition, not for any one organization. You worked for the foundation, which brought a lot of leverage to this funding. [...Y]ou really need someone that's neutral and detached and can be objective and fair [...] to work to kind of negotiate [...] and make sure that it's holistic and [...] all-encompassing, when you're looking at budgets, you [...] have a role there, to make sure that it's addressing all aspects of human trafficking" (NP7).

"[...W]hat I think is key, is that there's someone who is paid to do it, because if

you think you're just going to add it on to five different people's job descriptions

at five different agencies, and it's going to get done, it just isn't. Unless, they

happen to have a richly funded social services sector in that community, and not a

high volume or not a high need, which is rare. […] I think communities need to

work out for themselves where that position sits, who they answer to, who are they

accountable to, because you don't, as an entity, want to spend all of your time

governing this position. […] I think ideally, you'd have a government agency, or

a foundation make a long-term investment in the position or positions that would

be needed, and that they would have the level of autonomy needed. That they

would be outside of political and organizational biases, and perspectives" (NP1).

Clearinghouse or hub to collaborate across and among sectors.

One suggestion that surfaced repeatedly during the interviews was to develop new or improve existing avenues of virtual collaboration, that wasn't dependent upon in-person meetings or geographic proximity. Variations on some form of internet hub or clearinghouse were suggested for the benefit of making referrals to vetted service providers, transmission of best practices and training opportunities, and internal support among stakeholders with shared experiences. The process of development described by participants was also inherently collaborative:

"[... A] collaborate that we have been a part of for a while [...] is a web-based

search for shelters. [...] It's a very useful tool […] to see which shelters are

available […] DV [domestic violence] shelters, for the most part, and shelters

where people could take in human trafficking victims […]. And, I think, that's one

of the positive things about an effective collaboration with different partners, is

getting some of these clients' needs met at a quicker rate" (NP13).

"[...A] streamlined process of understanding who does what, would be the first

[...] big thing that comes to mind. [...B]ecause anti-trafficking work is relatively

new, and we're moving past that first phase of 'It does happen here,' [...] and

sensitizing our populations and communities [...] improving our screening

processes and understanding [...] that you might be engaging with trafficking

survivors at some point in different agencies' work. [...H]aving a streamlined

process of how we do referrals to one another [...o]nce we recognize who does

what [...] then how to work with one another in a way that's [...] super effective

and streamlined" (NP3).

"Collaboration needs to move from just in person. We all, as stakeholders, need

to do a better job of building [...] an online database, where we share

information. I don't know what that would look like. I don't think a message board

would work, because, eventually, it would be [...] too much, and people tune out.

[...W]e don't do enough information sharing, enough collaboration, and [...] we

don't utilize the Internet enough, in that sense" (NP19).

"[...I]t would be a website of some kind, that's searchable. And, with [...] chat

features [...] So, then, it's not being lost in a database, and it's building off the

personal connection" (NP19).

"[...I]t's harder to build partnerships with people who are not in [our state...].

But, that would be a lot easier, if we had a place to all meet and share, outside of

[...] going to conferences once a year, in some random state, and then, going

back to our offices and working with the people who are around us all the time"

(NP19).

"[...P]eople are trying to come up with databases of all the different shelters in

the nation. And, it just seems like a lot of the information is outdated or limited.

And, since there are so many new organizations popping up, and since this is such

a hot topic, right now, we're not really sure of who's doing what and where. [...]

There [are…] some resources out there [...] who are trying to pull those lists

together and come up with one easy […] reference [...]" (NP11).

Improvements to funding.

Study participants also offered suggestions on ways to improve the gaps associated

with funding stipulations and the availability and accessibility of funding for anti-

exploitation sectors and stakeholders. One individual described a voting process to

determine where the coalition would allocate the available funding during a budget

season:

"[...E]ssentially, [...] there's this whole voting process for [...the] policy issues

the Coalition is going to support. [...T]here's already [...] a pre-determined

platform every budget season to [...] talk to the mayor and the council about, so

that it's [...] a united front. [...C]ollaborations like that are nice, so that [...] you

can't just pick apart [...] housing and public safety, because these things go hand-

in-hand. [...E]verybody votes on [...] the five or so issues that were brought to the

table for each group, so that we end up with [...] a mixture of priorities from each

issue group" (NP5).

A number of participants discussed the idea of sharing financial resources to lower individual costs and sustain smaller stakeholders who may not generate sufficient funding on their own. Competing perspectives arose during data analysis, providing a more holistic understanding of the benefits and potential harms of such an endeavor.

> *"[...P]eople have thrown around the idea of, [...] nonprofits [...] not just working together more on independent issues, but [...] also lowering their overhead costs by sharing space [...] I'm not necessarily a fan of that, in part, because [...of] client confidentiality, and, [...] some clients have had good experiences and bad experiences with some organizations. So, if you're all [...] in the same building, [...] they start to relate [...] to you guys [as...] the same. And, of course, there are issues of [...] confidentiality [...], who has access to [...] our servers or [...] files? And [...] who is seeing our clients [...] walk in? [...T]hen again, it'd be cool, if we could all share resources" (NP5).*

> *"[...T]he big this for me is identifying a way to share resources, specifically financial resources, across organizations, across sectors. [...] You can't do the work without having a team of people who act as the in-betweens to ensure that everything is flowing the way it needs to flow" (NP2).*

> *"[...] One of things we did [...], is we had equal funding for each coalition member. It wasn't always like that [...W]hen I started there was [...] difference in funding, but we made sure that the funding later was equal. I think that helps level the playing field. [...M]y role is more about [...] being objective, inclusive, and also, making sure the policy reflected [...] the need with victims and law enforcement and survivor aftercare [...]" (NP7).*

One participant described the potential benefit of a single overarching funding source for all services:

> *"[...I]f I could rewrite the whole story, [...] there would be one major funding agency [...]. And you set up the services, [...] they'll fund you. This is [...] a pipedream, but [...] anyone who is trafficked, in any which way, is always engaging with the same agency [...] the same umbrella [...] and can experience an open door policy, wherever they go" (NP20).*

Streamlining eligibility requirements for access to services.

Participants illuminated the difficulty of imposing stipulations on potential clients to gain access to available services. For some, this was a necessary step to ensure that vulnerable individuals received the most effective care. For others, the idea of requiring anything of would-be clients seemed to resemble the restriction of agency that so many were seeking to escape. Additional discussion took place regarding the necessity of certain stipulations, based on requirements for eligibility metrics placed on stakeholders by their various sources of funding. Suggestions were made for how to improve the process of assessing client eligibility and efficacy of provided services, to minimize potential harm.

> *"[...I]n the best of worlds, survivors should not have to make a choice between agencies. They should experience an [...] open door policy, wherever they go. And, they might tailor their experience to what locations or agencies provide the specifics that they need, but they are relegated to caseworker relationships, often mandated by the trafficking court [...], and are required to spend X number of hours with a caseworker" (NP20).*

"[…S]ome agencies are much more well-equipped than others, […] to be culturally sensitive, age sensitive, and on down the list […] therefore, survivors get what they get. […I]f we can turn the corner, and all of the agencies start to have the funding they need, so they're not understaffed, overworked, and really underprepared to deal with a shifting population, […] then it should be an open door policy" (NP20).

"[…Y]oung people have to keep telling their story, and it's re-traumatizing. Often, it has to do with the program requirements for them to be eligible. So it could be streamlined where if different agencies have agreements, and maybe they have a uniform intake assessment, where a young person only has to answer questions and tell their story once, and they would be deemed eligible for all four programs […]. Because every program has their [own] requirements, and they have […] requirements they have to comply with, for the state, the city, or the feds. Service providers aren't trying to […] re-traumatize young people, but they don't keep getting the money, if they don't do what they need to do" (NP1).

Best practices in collaboration.

The following quotes expound on participant suggestions, particularly regarding best practices in establishing, maintaining, and navigating collaborative relationships. One participant described a process of creating a document intended to foster more efficient and more effective partnership between disparate stakeholders:

"We came around the table, and […] said, 'We're at odds with each other, because, police want one thing out of the victim, service providers want another.' […] So, we wrote a publication on how law enforcement and residential service

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providers can work better together. [...S]ome of the contentions were, 'If I'm an

investigator, [...] or I'm a detective, and I place a girl here. And then, you, as the

service provider, don't give me access to her, you're impeding my investigation.'

[...] Now, you as a service partner are, like, 'I don't want to traumatize her. She

doesn't want to see you.' So, we're coming at it from a different perspective. We

have to respect, that detective has a job to do. We have a job to do. And how can

we meet some middle ground?" (NP6).

Participants also offered suggestions for best practices for defining and evaluating

stakeholder capacities and collaborative efforts. These included conducting more

intensive assessments of one's own organization to solidify the individual contribution to

collaborative efforts. More intentional evaluations of potential partners were also

recommended, as well as a clearer definition of individual and collaborative goals:

"I think every organization, every sector needs to [...] do our own SWAT Analysis

to see where our strengths and weaknesses are, [...] what we bring to the table,

and [...] refine our vision based on what we know we're capable of doing.

[...T]hat way, when people are reaching out to you, they're reaching out with a

better understanding of what you can bring to the table. There's nothing worse

than calling an organization, having them sign up to do something, and that not

be something that they do well. So just as individuals, [...] part of our

collaborative efforts, is to really figure out what it is that we do and can bring to

the table" (NP2).

"[...P]erhaps we still all do our self-evaluations, [...H]ow effective were we

throughout the process? [...H]ow easy are we to work with? Because it could be

two organizations who are pretty much the same in terms of their effectiveness, in

the work they do, but [one is] very difficult. [...T]his is a partnership, and if you

don't have that, I don't really care how effective you were, you made it very

difficult for everyone else to be effective, because you didn't partner with us well.

[...] I think it also takes our eye off of the survivor. [...] A piece of us is not there,

and that piece is really critical for providing the survivor with all the support, the

resources, the ear, the love, the compassion, the opportunity" (NP2).

"[...] I think, being really honest about where our goals overlap, and where they

don't. And coming up with a way to deal with conflict, rather than pretending that

we don't have or won't have conflict. It's better for us to say 'If we have an issue,

this is how we're going to bring it to the table, and, this is how we're going to

address it,' rather than, pretending that our goals are all the same" (AR2).

The idea of collaborating to establish best practices in sharing information and

maintaining client confidentiality within the collaborative space was discussed:

"It would be a great opportunity, I think, for residential service providers to sit

down with people in that arena and say, 'What do you need? What do we need?

Where can we find some common ground?' And if it means that the client in

common signs a particular document that says, 'Yes, you two can talk about that,'

so be it. Our women sign a lot of releases, when they come here, but we take care

of everything about them" (NP6).

Participants also emphasized the importance of best practices in training of anti-

exploitation stakeholders and the education of potential partners. Collaboration was

proposed for the improvement and unification of training curriculums and standards for certification criteria:

> *"[...M]oving forward, one thing that I would love to see is, our efforts being more unified, [...] not just in the [...] smaller community, but across regions and across state lines, so that we aren't in competition with each other, or [...] five different organizations are spending the time and energy and resources to come up with five different prevention and education curriculums, when, maybe we can come together and do one really well [...], finding ways to simplify and unify the process [...]" (NP11).*

> *"[...O]ne thing that we could really [...] focus some resources on better, is establishing those regional task forces. And, also establishing [...] a standard. [...L]aw enforcement training that is given by one organization, could be grossly different from law enforcement training given [...] by a different organization. [...] I think there needs to be some sort of training standards that are established, to make sure that [...] those that are out there on the frontlines, regardless of what the profession is, have [...] something to work off of" (NP10, LE1).*

> *"[...R]ecommendations are going to be that [...] law enforcement and medical professionals, [who] see more survivors of sex trafficking than any other field [...] are trained, and more effectively collaborate with actual anti-trafficking organizations" (NP16).*

The sector of academia was described as a unique intersection where collaborative efforts could have a major impact on setting best practices in developing evidence-based research that is relevant and practical for all stakeholders and sectors along the

Continuum of Care. Specific focus was given to the ongoing need to amplify voices of
impacted individuals:

"[...T]he academic community could have better opportunities. [...I]f somebody in
their first year of graduate school would just call, and say, 'What would be
meaningful? I'd like to study this topic. What would be important?' Instead of,
'Here's what I want to study.' [...T]hat'd be a game changer. [...] I know, my
colleagues would be all over that. And, I think, ultimately, we would make it
easier to do the research, because if we were bought into the study, we would
open up our knowledge and resources. [...] Great opportunity for collaboration,
and I hope [...] your research speaks to, where we could, with some earlier
conversations, [...] have better collaboration" (NP6).

"[...C]entering the voices of both survivors of sexual exploitation and [...]
consensual sex workers, and focusing on what they need is, I think, key towards
moving forward. [...A] lot of consensual [...] sex workers have been organizing
against the current law [...] that limits these websites [...] as being dangerous for
them [...]. Instead of preventing trafficking, it's actually putting more consensual
sex workers at risk by taking away their vetting mechanisms for finding [...] safe
clients [...]. [...] I think it's really important to actually talk to the survivors and
the consensual sex workers, to address what they need, because in a lot of ways,
[...] this legislation was passed as an anti-trafficking measure, which in theory
sounds great, but has these unintended consequences for consensual sex workers
that are not trafficked. [...W]e need to listen to the people on the ground, as
researchers especially, and present that to stakeholders, especially government

officials who are way further away from the topic. It's up to people who provide

services to the survivors of sexual exploitation. They know that population's needs

very intimately" (AR1).

Suggestions for future study.

One participant expressed a strong desire for academic research, especially that which is focused on social systems and structural reform, to be more informed by the expressed needs of stakeholders within the field under study, than by the extant research on the topic. There are several topics of interest and import to practitioners and policymakers that would offer opportunity for collaboration between the nonprofit, government, and academic sectors. A few suggestions for more relevant research topics are included below:

> *"What would be helpful would be, principles of effective collaboration. What*
>
> *principles should I be looking for in that relationship? [...What] should they be*
>
> *asking of me in that relationship? [...I]s this advocacy/awareness? Or is this*
>
> *direct service? [It is m]uch more important, that you get those principles right.*
>
> *[...P]rinciples of collaboration, like, [...] what does trust look like for you? What*
>
> *does mutual respect [look like]? [...] What are the intellectual assets that you*
>
> *bring to this relationship? Where are your restrictions? What paperwork do you*
>
> *have? What paperwork do you need to have? [...W]hat would be helpful would be*
>
> *[...] for on the ground agencies to have fewer mistakes made [...] negotiating*
>
> *those relationships and knowing what goes into them and making them effective"*
>
> *(NP6).*

"I would love to see this field make more intentional agreements to collaborate with the university. So, if your department wanted to take on human trafficking as a topic, then, let's meet with your IRB people. Let's meet with the overseeing professor, so that they better understand our conditions, our constraints, [and] what's important to us. Where I think that it is absent collaboration, is [...] I just get terrible research proposals. Terrible, in the sense that, they are either intrusive, bordering on offensive, presumptuous that you have access to something that [...] is frankly, none of your business. [...] But somebody approved it, because it had all of the prefacing documents that said, 'Yes, that's a worthy study.' [...] And then, there's some that I just think are unhelpful [...] I'm not throwing the whole thing out. I'm saying, if you understood, in the beginning, that your question, your hypothesis [...] is erroneously formed, could we collaborate on telling the academic community, 'If you want to study this subject, here's ten topics we would love to have you study. [...]'" (NP6).

"I would love to have somebody study the relationship of trafficking survivors to their mothers. It is an every single day, constant drama. It doesn't matter if their dad, their uncle, their brother, their nephew all raped them as children. They are mad at their mother. They are more hurt by the passive, than the active. People don't study that. [...T]hey assume these girls must hate men. That's not true" (NP6).

"Somebody needs to study their relationship to power, and how they understand power, both intrinsic power and external power, because [...] they have no sense of personal power. So, it isn't her self-image. It isn't self-esteem. It's efficacy. She

does not perceive power. [...T]herefore, she can't be an agent acting out of

power" (NP6).

"Nobody studies the effects on the parents or the family members of the girl that's

being trafficked. I have a litany of moms [...] having a meltdown, because her

daughter's out there somewhere, and she can't find her. Or, she bubbles up on an

arrest record, or she shows up on the news, [...a]nd there is no support for the

parent of a trafficked person. I think that's a great thing to step into, and say,

'What social structure needs to be in place, Al-Anon equivalent?'" (NP6).

This participant was not to only one to express this missed opportunity:

"[...T]here needs to be [...] collaboration between people [that] provide direct

care services and people who are doing research on these topics and [...]

members of local governments that can [...] enact legislation or different policies

that provide funding for these kinds of services or research […]" (AR1).

The researcher discusses these rich findings in the following section and makes interpretations based on the understanding of participants lived experiences, perspectives and areas of expressed import described above. A focus on maintaining the intended meaning of each individual participant, along with the collective meaning developed through the data analysis process, guided the discussion. Implications for research and practice are discussed herein as well.

Discussion

Throughout this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher analyzed the impact of past and present collaborative efforts on success in the field of anti-sexual exploitation, ultimately to offer insights and suggestions for future efforts. The interpretive framework of phenomenology places particular importance on the lived experiences of study participants and their own assigned meanings as a result of self-reflection. At the onset, the researcher presented her thesis: Ongoing collaboration and information/resource-sharing across sectors of impact in anti-sexual exploitation efforts can provide a more robust understanding of the issue, leading to more at-risk- and survivor-informed best practices in prevention, intervention, restoration, and reintegration. If done well, a multi-sector collaborative approach has the potential to effectively address sexual exploitation as a phenomenon and equip vulnerable and exploited individuals with all the tools and access needed to improve wellbeing and avoid recidivism.

Stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region can apply greater collaboration to develop more robust tools for evaluating the impact of programs and policies. One method of achieving such a goal is by establishing pathways to increased funding for stakeholders, beginning at inception, that would equip them to lay a foundation for generating evidence-based metrics. The voices of individuals being served, at each point along the Continuum of Care, as well as those of survivor leaders in the field, must be amplified in collaborative spaces, to accurately assess the felt impact of both gaps in services and available services. Their input is equally as valuable to inform research and practice, and to the development of new and improvement of existing services.

Because collaborative work is widely valued by anti-exploitation stakeholders, improving such experiences begins with an acknowledgement of certain obstacles and resistance from both an interpersonal and a logistical perspective. There is an opportunity cost associated with navigating these complications. Individual stakeholders must decide where the greater value lies, for their own entities and for the people they are serving. Considering the concept of gradient levels of partnership might offer greater opportunities for stakeholders that would not do so otherwise, to share a collaborative space.

The following discussion addresses the original research questions by interpreting the findings from participant responses. Connections are made between themes to convey the larger landscape of the phenomenon under study. Finally, participant suggestions for improvement and best practices in multi-sector collaboration are explored more deeply.

Gaps along the Continuum of Care.

Areas in need of improvement were identified by participants at every stage along the Continuum of Care. An existing gap signifies a point where either availability of or access to quality services is lacking. Participants also suggested that some gaps resulted from poor or nonexistent training for stakeholders. While the various sectors tended to focus on the gaps prevalent within their corresponding stage, most participants did identify gaps at various other stages as well.

Differences in understanding/terminology.

One such gap identified by study participants was the issue of incongruent, or at least individualized terminology based on sector and stakeholder. The term, *trauma-informed*, for example, means something different to a therapeutic counselor than it does to law enforcement or other frontline responders. To the one, calling oneself *trauma-informed* could mean that some level of training in trauma has been obtained, in order to recognize when an exploited individual is reacting to a trigger of trauma, whether during an initial intake assessment, or during a court trial. To another, the term incorporates an in-depth knowledge and practice of mental health and psychological care, and how PTSD and trauma impact the brain development and cognitive behavior of individuals that have experienced varying levels of trauma. A persistent inability to establish common terminology across all anti-exploitation stakeholders will continue to stunt the potential for improved collaboration and the bridging of existing gaps along the Continuum of Care.

Perspective of a survivor (of sexual assault, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking).

This qualitative phenomenological study design, data collection and analysis maintain the underlying assumption that individuals who hold personal experiences of sexual trauma and/or exploitation are themselves the experts on the essence of meaning they have assigned to the phenomenon. Understanding that the journeys of exploited and vulnerable populations are unique can offer some insight on the extent to which trauma may have an impact on interpretation or meaning. It remains important to provide services that individuals, based on self-perceived needs, are truly seeking at every stage along the Continuum of Care.

The participants that offered their perspectives as survivors of some form of sexual trauma were also involved professionally as stakeholders and collaborators in anti-sexual exploitation efforts. The experiences and insight they shared during the interviews can be qualified as coming from the perspectives of not only sustained survivors, but active survivor leaders. What was such a traumatic event or period of time, became the catalyst for each participant's movement along the Continuum of Care and later involvement in this field. It is also this depth of understanding that makes survivor leaders essential to the identification of gaps and the development of desired services and resources.

Collaboration is effective and beneficial.

Stakeholders have been participating in collaborative efforts to combat sexual exploitation long enough to understand the benefit, and many would say the necessity, of this multi-sectored, multi-disciplinary approach. Myriad benefits have been discovered, including the exponential increase in collective knowledge and understanding of the interconnected field of anti-exploitation, less re-traumatizing experiences for those who find themselves on the Continuum of Care, cohesive and comprehensive service provision, more substantive training materials and accreditation processes, more relevant research supporting frontline stakeholders, more defined criteria for funding proposals and qualifications, broader perspectives within previously singularly-focused sectors, identification of local and regional stakeholders for referrals, sharing of resources (financial, personnel, knowledge, clientele), diminishing sense of a siloed existence.

Collaboration may be less efficient.

At the start of a collaborative relationship, efforts are inherently less efficient than those of a long-established collaboration. A period of getting acquainted with the various members is necessary, in order to paint a clear picture of the range of organizational missions, priorities, sources of funding and non-financial support, as well as to understand the dynamics of power and influence within the group. For example, in a newly formed coalition, much of the early days are focused on understanding what skills, resources, and knowledge each member brings to the table, determining the overlapping duties and initiatives, and forming sub-committees in order to streamline the combined efforts. Another focus during these early stages of collaboration is to discover the missing pieces within the group, whether that be a demographic that is not represented among the members, a resource that is lacking, or a gap in the collective knowledge or skills present within the existing group. Communicating the purpose of the group is essential from the start, as it will inform which efforts are prioritized, and whether the discovered gaps must be filled by the introduction of new members, the ongoing equipping of existing members, or be left outside the scope of a particular collaboration.

An initial period of inefficiency for the sake of long-term effectiveness and clarity of vision might be worthwhile. It does, however, require the slowing down or reevaluation of individual stakeholder efforts, in order to allocate time and resources to collaboration, a process which, in the short-term, may reduce the services available to at-risk, victim, and survivor demographics. Straus (2002) submits that "[…] the effectiveness of a collaborative problem-solving process is measured not by how quickly you can *generate* a solution, but by how quickly you can *implement* it" (p. 42). Such frustration with the

hesitancy or barriers to implementing collaborative action on behalf of certain demographics (i.e. individuals in Foster Care, undocumented immigrants) was expressed by several study participants. Some shared experiences of the delay in response from specific stakeholders and the impact on the survivor's willingness to continue seeking services.

Ultimately, when a partnership can move past that initial phase of inefficiency and make use of the strengths of each member stakeholder, the result has the potential to be farther-reaching and far more effective than any of the siloed efforts of the individual members.

Collaboration falls short at times.

There are times when collaboration is encouraged, even funded, but the deliverables and initiatives that result from collaboration fall short, or, fail to achieve the shared mission of the group. For instance, because government departments and offices are tasked with overseeing a range of federal, state, and local objectives, it is oftentimes difficult to obtain the in-depth involvement of invested government officials in collaborative efforts to address sexual exploitation. For stakeholders for whom anti-exploitation is their main organizational objective, participation in collaborative relationships may be a given. However, difficulties are presented when the various partners are invested in the issue to varying degrees. When stakeholders are meeting together for the sake of "collaboration" by name only, and failing to take well-informed, actionable, and measurable steps toward addressing gaps along the Continuum of Care, then collaboration is falling short of its overarching purpose.

Resistance to collaboration

True resistance is rare, usually reserved for those stakeholders that maintain an approach of competition, or an attitude of superiority to other stakeholders. A complete disregard for another's contribution or the need for collective efforts would result in resistance to collaboration itself.

Hesitance is more common, and can stem from a range of experiences, expectations, and cautionary tales. Sometimes, there are stakeholders willing and ready to collaborate that remain hesitant to associate with a particular stakeholder or sector, until a mutual trust or understanding is established. Hesitance can eventually become resistance, though, if a stakeholder determines that a potential collaborator is either untrustworthy or uncooperative.

Still more common, is the resistance to an increasing depth of collaboration. When individual partners are not on the same page regarding the expected level of exposure or information sharing, sharing of resources, and merging of priorities, tensions can rise. One stakeholder's abundance of caution, in an effort to protect a victim or survivor client, might be perceived by its partners as resistance to collaborate fully, thus limiting the effectiveness of the services provided on behalf of either that particular client or the demographic as a whole.

Potential collaborators might also be hesitant to partner with stakeholders whom they know to hold values or mission statements contrary to or conflicting with their own.

While in some cases, one stakeholder may refuse outright to enter a collaborative relationship with another, more often, study participants experienced a sense of resistance among those who were, at least initially, willingly taking part in collaboration. As

communicated by several participants, such resistance existed within the collaborative space for varying reasons (a power imbalance or power struggle, differences in organizational missions and priorities, client confidentiality, etc.). Straus sheds some light on this aspect of collaborative problem solving, writing that "[o]ften someone who is seen as difficult or disruptive has a concern or point of view that he or she feels the larger community has not heard or legitimized" (43).

Difficulty collaborating across ideological differences.

One of the more contentious concepts discussed by participants was the conflict surrounding differing ideologies. This is not surprising, however, as it addresses the range of fundamental assumptions inherent to the human experience. While some participants insisted that a point of contention of this magnitude necessitates a lack of collaboration between the disparate parties. Others expressed the desire that seemingly hostile groups or individuals might set aside their differences for the sake of collaboration. In the case of the latter, the assumption is that whatever task or initiative is prioritized in the collaborative relationship would not require a shared ideological approach.

This could be especially difficult if, say, the group was collaborating to develop a program for individuals currently in the commercial sex industry. Ideologically, some partners may wish to focus on exit strategies, prosecuting a perpetrator, and resourcing safe house and recovery facilities, while others may emphasize the need for readily available services and resources for sex workers with no intention of exiting "the life." If neither is willing to compromise or accept the other perspective, collaboration can become ineffective, and potentially detrimental, if the relationship is severed as a result.

Of note was the oft-expressed distrust of faith-based organizations, specifically those that require religious practice or participation in order to receive services. Additional frustrations were expressed by participants regarding an overemphasis of FBOs on spiritual healing over and above the physical or psychological. An insistence on prioritizing a singular perspective has the potential to harm existing stakeholder relationships. The ability to collaborate without merging entities is important in this case, so that individual stakeholders can maintain their own mission statements as well.

Collaboration is detrimental at times.

When tensions rise among members in a collaborative relationship, the realities of group power dynamics and competition can usurp/overshadow/eclipse the benefits of effective collaboration. This is especially true in partnerships established for the sole purpose of coordinating an event or accomplishing a project, where there may not exist the deeper level of trust among partners that comes with a long-term relationship. In such instances, if the major goals and expectations of the relationship are not made clear initially, the whole effort might be ineffective or even detrimental. Conversely, even within long-term collaborative relationships, the dynamics of influence and ego are a reality that will need to be addressed eventually. For example, if multiple stakeholders are collaborating to provide wrap-around services to survivors, they will need to navigate conflicting ideas surrounding case management, best practices, information sharing, advocacy, and referrals to their shared clients.

When the depth of collaboration is varied among partners within the group, an imbalance of power can result. For example, two orgs that work closely together outside of the collaborative group space (perhaps they share clientele, or they provide related

services), and are thus partnered together at a deeper level than either is with the larger group, may hold more sway over collaborative decisions. This is especially true if the members of that sub-group represent the majority (in personnel, funding, or influence) of the larger group. As a result, the remaining stakeholders in the group may feel ostracized or overlooked/unheard, and they very well may be out of the loop on much of the knowledge and/or resources shared by the two close partners.

A collaborative relationship may become detrimental, to both the individuals being served and to the stakeholders providing services, if egos or agendas begin to take precedent over a collective commitment to the shared mission of serving the survivor. In extreme cases, partners that refuse to adhere to the shared mission, and are not held accountable, can cause serious damage to a survivor's health and progress, sometimes even re-traumatization or re-exploitation.

Depth of involvement in anti-exploitation efforts.

Sectors and stakeholders are invested in the anti-exploitation field to varying degrees. As evidenced in the interest in participation in this research project, and in the accessibility of potential participants, certain stakeholders, whose main objective is anti-exploitation work (i.e. Non-Profits, Community Groups/Individuals), are far more invested than stakeholders that have included anti-exploitation as one of many objectives (i.e. Government, Academia, Law Enforcement, Private Sector). A stakeholder's level of investment in anti-exploitation efforts determines its level of commitment to collaboration (financially, timewise, personnel-wise), especially in navigating the difficult relational elements of collaboration. It will also determine the level of accountability or responsibility that stakeholder assumes outside of the dedicated

collaborative space. For example, a government agency that balances multiple rotating priorities internally, may not be willing, or able, to restructure those priorities to follow through on tasks assigned to it during a task force meeting. The resulting delay often placed on collaborative efforts is frustrating at best, and detrimental at worst, for other stakeholders that are more deeply invested in the success of various collaborative initiatives or programs.

Formal and informal ways to collaborate.

Collaboration and collaborative relationships take on many different forms. Formalized collaborative relationships often can emerge from certain stipulations associated with grant funding or political initiatives or commissions. Task forces are one example of such formalized collaboration. If not resulting from funding requirements, collaborative relationships can be formalized through Memorandums of Understanding among partners or a collective commitment to shared goals and expectations. A formal collaborative experience can be either short-term (i.e. conducting a co-sponsored training session for service providers) or long-term (i.e. development and implementation of a training curriculum for first responders), project- or task-driven (i.e. locating a specific service for a survivor referral) or relationship-driven (i.e. establishing a network of stakeholders within a particular region or sector), exclusive (i.e. members that are selected through a vetting process) or inclusive (i.e. a think tank or focus group welcoming input from the wider community), all based on the expressed purpose of that particular collaborative expression. Generally, formal collaboration requires some allocation of resources, both logistically and financially, to initiate and sustain its

functionality (i.e. external meeting locations, planning and preparation, speaker fees, member dues, dissemination of meeting minutes)

The other side of collaboration consists of informal relationships and experiences. These are the collaborative experiences that take place through the normal execution of stakeholder roles and responsibilities (i.e. the unstructured conversations taking place within an organization, sharing of ongoing research, connections made with like-minded stakeholders at a conference). Informal collaboration tends to take place on the level of the individual, rather than the organization, since the representation of an organization requires some formality be introduced into the relationship. This type of collaboration is almost entirely relationship-driven and does not require much allocation of resources, besides the time spent collaborating. Informal collaboration often becomes more formalized, as short-term connections grow into long-term relationships, and collective goals and expectations are made clear. The introduction of grant funding and possible co-application also formalizes a previously informal collaborative relationship.

Varying levels of collaboration.

Depth of collaboration can be determined using several criteria (Congruence of individual mission statements; Alignment of priorities; Shared clientele; Comparability of services provided; Stipulations associated with funding; Sharing of funding; Length of existing relationship; Memorandum of Understanding). No one level of collaboration is preferable over the others. The determined level is based on the purpose and expectations of the group. There are both formal and informal criteria used to determine the formation and depth of collaborative relationships. The collaborative experience can look vastly different with each iteration. Some partnerships are formed as a single event planning

committee, while others are formed with the intent for long-term relationship and mutual

support. Some partnerships are formally orchestrated, whether because of funding

requirements or the necessity of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding between

stakeholders serving the same clients. Others are much more informal and organic in

nature, connections made at conferences or task force meetings and kept on reserve for

referral purposes or ongoing mutual support. Depth of involvement in collaboration also

appears to be contingent upon stakeholder's needs, resources, and organizational mission

foci.

Straus offers guidance on incorporating collaborative processes at various stages of

involvement. Referring to these stages as "rings of involvement," Straus describes

collaboration on a gradient scale, with each new level involving a lesser commitment and

responsibility from the stakeholder (Straus, 2002). This is comparable to the Levels of

Collaboration tool provided by SAMHSA (2016) (see Table 1: Levels of Collaboration).

Available vs. accessible funding.

Throughout the research, the conversation surrounding availability vs accessibility of

funding was addressed. For many stakeholders, the landscape of funding is such that,

even in the abundance of available resources, the application process has become so

convoluted and inefficient, with ever-increasing restrictions and requirements to

obtaining a portion of funding. There is a unique irony to the increasing allocation of

funding to anti-exploitation efforts and the simultaneously increasing boundaries and

logistical red tape to qualify for or obtain available funding. Participants expressed their

frustrations regarding the non-existent or limited resources available to assist

stakeholders in making the necessary changes to qualify for funding. Some perceived an

inequitable distribution of funding, such that those stakeholders that already receive funding are better equipped to meet requirements and provide evidence-based results, opening the door for additional funding.

What funding is available and accessible to start-up organizations? What structures are in place for accountability in the utilization of funding by those who continue to receive it? These questions are posed as suggestions for future research about funding and funding requirements for anti-exploitation efforts.

With so much competition for a limited designation of funding, the focus on collaboration may lean in one of two directions. On one hand, the competitive grant application process generates resentment and adversarial tendencies among stakeholders, effectively hindering collaboration. On the other hand, stakeholders may understand the limited pool of resources as a mandate for collaboration and creative initiatives to emerge, as many stakeholders choose to apply jointly for the available funding and allocate grant money toward collective efforts.

Collaborative relationships are positioned to address the issue of available and accessible funding. Some participants emphasized the importance of sharing funding amongst partners. This may include co-applying for grant monies, either as a collaborative entity or through establishing Memoranda of Understanding between individual stakeholder partners. If more securely established stakeholders partner with start-up organizations to secure funding, there may be a greater chance to equip newer stakeholders to become self-sustaining and potentially qualify for individual funding in the future.

The issue of evaluating the efficacy of initiatives made possible through funding is also an area for continued research. There remains a need for some level of regulation to ensure effective and efficient use of resources. However, assigning certain stipulations to grant eligibility requirements may prevent stakeholders from accessing the very funding necessary to establish reporting protocols and program assessments. Perhaps there could be one pool of funding available to new stakeholders, designated for the development of infrastructure to support anti-exploitation efforts. An evaluation of use of funds for such a grant may not need to be as stringent as reporting quantity of programs implemented or individuals served. After the initial grant expires, another tier of funding might include a requirement to implement some of the basic reporting best practices.

Collaboration might play a significant role in this process as well, providing a unique opportunity for leaders in the field of anti-exploitation. Is it possible for a mentality of mentorship and advising to replace the existing mentality of competition among stakeholders, relative to funding and other available resources (i.e. volunteer base)? Established, well-funded stakeholders that consistently meet or exceed the requirements for funding, could adopt a newer, less-developed stakeholder as a mentee for a time. The purpose of this would be to better equip the mentee stakeholder to eventually qualify for funding on its own. Over the course of this mentorship relationship, the mentee might receive the benefit of a portion of the mentor's resource stream, and other resources, like a volunteer base, with an established MOU detailing the intended use of resources, determined through a collaborative process. In addition to funding, the mentee might be coached in best practices for program development and evaluation and receive ongoing training.

The inevitable question arises, how could stakeholders avoid competition for available funding once the mentee is able to apply on its own? Perhaps one solution is to funnel all available funding through collaborative bodies or partner initiatives, determined by the collaborators themselves in lieu of funding sources that may be far removed from the practicalities of anti-exploitation work. Based on the tasks assigned to individual stakeholders, a portion of the funding might be allocated, collaboratively, to each. A process like this could effectively support multiple organizations at once while maintaining partnership as the primary avenue for innovation and practical application in anti-exploitation efforts.

Stipulations associated with funding.

Funding sources will often attach eligibility and/or usage requirements or stipulations to the receipt of the funds being offered. Theoretically, this guarantees that the funds awarded will be allocated effectively, efficiently, and toward those items most important to the funder. The impact of such stipulations on those stakeholders in search of funding, however, is twofold. First, the eligibility requirements associated with funding assume that those meriting the funding are already eligible or have the capacity to become eligible. This is not the case for many of the stakeholders that could most benefit from such funding. Second, the stipulations associated with allocation of funds, while communicating the intentions of the funder, also serve to limit the scope of anti-exploitation efforts. These could also disqualify a stakeholder that does not possess the expertise or capacity to excel in whatever focus area the funder has determined, even if that same stakeholder has demonstrated strength and effectiveness in another area. If the funder is not themselves deeply knowledgeable of the existing gaps along the Continuum

of Care in anti-exploitation efforts, imposing certain stipulations on recipients of their funding could result in an over-allocation of resources to one area, while simultaneously neglecting an area that needs more funding in order to adequately address the gaps.

Additional stipulations include expectations for which specific partners or sectors are represented in collaborative relationships, which initiatives funding recipients are to focus on, or which specific demographics are intended to be served through the funding source. Study participants highlighted how certain expectations might impede the effectiveness of stakeholders, while others do, in fact, protect the interests of especially overlooked demographics. The determinant of this seemed to be how well-educated the funders were on the issue of sexual exploitation and its many complexities and intersections.

DOJ funding is not the norm.

One previously discussed method of formalized (or structured) formation of a collaborative relationship is through Task Forces funded through the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). DOJ-funded Task Forces are made up of representatives from various sectors, strategically selected, for an expressed purpose. There are specific requirements related to use of funding, reporting standards, and partnership expectations that govern the collaborative efforts and decisions of such Task Forces according to the DOJ priorities.

It appears however, that, since the initial policy implications of the TVPA and the formation of several new entities, the quantity of still active DOJ-funded Task Forces has gradually dwindled, despite the stated increase of funding amounts over time. Few interview participants could confidently identify an active DOJ-funded Task Force in

their primary city of operation, or even within their state. Is this because there are none established, or due to a lack of communication among stakeholders within the locale? Perhaps the DOJ's selectiveness, or exclusivity, has not afforded certain stakeholders the opportunity to claim DOJ funding, even if they are willing to comply with the accompanying restrictions on its uses. One topic for further research, then, is whether the increase in available grant monies is due to a greater allocation of government funding to anti-exploitation efforts, or due to a smaller pool of eligible applicants for DOJ funding. What percentage of anti-exploitation stakeholders are eligible for these funds and are there clear processes in place to assist stakeholders in becoming eligible?

Overall, participants received much of their funding through other non-governmental avenues, such as private donations or fundraising efforts. Some have been successful in co-applying for grants with other well-established stakeholders. Most expressed a need for more funding than they are currently able to acquire, to adequately provide the services sought by the populations they serve.

Larger-scale, regional collaboration is limited.

Participants neither expressed personal experience with specifically Mid-Atlantic collaborative efforts, nor identified an existing collaborative body that focused on anti-exploitation efforts across the Mid-Atlantic region. It is unclear whether this was due to varied degrees of stakeholder knowledge of such an entity, or to its non-existence. Difficulties in establishing one may arise from discrepancies in state legislation and judicial priorities, stakeholder willingness and ability to collaborate on investigations, information-sharing, or service coordination, or complications with funding sources. Formalized collaborations in the Mid-Atlantic region may exist on more of an

education/awareness level instead of the level of practice and service coordination. However, participants more often described the connections they formed outside of their state of operation as informal and inconsistent.

Best practices in collaboration.

Looking forward to future opportunities for collaboration, study participants shared a number of recommended changes in best practices. Repeated recommendations served to emphasize areas of priority for stakeholders. Discussed below are the concepts of 1) Involving a third-party facilitator in the collaborative space, 2) Establishing a clearinghouse to support referrals across sectors, and 3) Streamlining eligibility requirements for access to services.

Straus (2002) describes the importance of the role of an unbiased third party in navigating spaces for problem-solving. By incorporating one in the problem-solving process, organizations have found that communication and comprehension can be improved, effectively neutralizing potential hostilities and the resulting resistance to compromise that can so often permeate a task-oriented group setting. The need for such a go-between seems especially significant for the field of anti-sexual exploitation, where stakeholders can have such emotional and personal ties to the work that they do on behalf of those they serve. Particularly relevant for multi-sector collaboration is having a facilitator with knowledge of the nuances in shared and sector-specific terminology. An added benefit of incorporating a third-party facilitator is the opportunity to ensure an equitable distribution of any group funding. If this individual or team is not affiliated with any of the member partners, there is an expectation that no preferential treatment of members will take place. An independent facilitator is uniquely positioned to identify

potential gaps in the collective knowledge or skill set of the group and can therefore offer poignant suggestions for new resources and perspectives (i.e. members, trainings, focus areas). Finally, if their participation were compensated, either through external funding or member dues, this facilitator would be able to dedicate the time and effort necessary to develop and sustain a robust collaborative experience, allowing the other partner members to participate meaningfully without having to neglect their other duties within their specific entities.

Another suggested best practice was the formation of an official clearinghouse or hub to facilitate collaborative efforts across sectors. Having one central online platform where all anti-sexual exploitation stakeholders could be registered, verified, and categorized could prove especially helpful in the process of making referrals to clients. One level of verification might confirm a specific stakeholder is currently in operation, along with retrieving a link to their individual website and up to date contact information from a database. A deeper search might reveal what specific services are currently available with that stakeholder (i.e. open beds at a safe house, space in a class or group, licensed trauma therapy vs counseling, faith-based programs). Should a universal standard be established, this search might also confirm what level of certification in trauma-informed care the stakeholder has achieved. A platform like this could also serve as a space for the academic/research sector to connect with other sectors, to identify those focus areas for evidence-based studies most desired by policymakers and practitioners. Such an endeavor would require constant collaboration, along with a site administrator to ensure that information stays current and site functions are operating smoothly. The benefits may

outweigh the costs, however, if by streamlining the referral process, stakeholders are more efficiently and effectively able to serve their client populations.

Lastly, increased collaboration could help to consolidate eligibility requirements for at-risk or exploited individuals to access services. Participants expressed frustration with the current intake process where new clients must complete identical or similar paperwork at every new intersection with a stakeholder. Grant requirements for specific funding sources may also add to an already cumbersome amount of caseload paperwork. This experience, while often necessary to meet standards, can be negative for both the stakeholder and for the client, as it uses scarce resources and slows down the delivery of services. Additionally, the potential for triggering a trauma response is heightened with repeated procedures and the retelling of an experience of exploitation, especially if a particular stakeholder is not well trained in trauma. In this case, there is a unique opportunity for collaboration in the development of some standardized client intake assessment tool, with which multiple stakeholders could meet their various data requirements simultaneously, while also protecting client confidentiality. While not a simple feat, it may be possible to retain a sort of common application for a client. Access to the file could be restricted to the individual themselves and perhaps a case manager, who would only release the file with the client's permission to the relevant stakeholders. A process like this might also offer a more holistic approach, as the client could collaborate with a team of stakeholders to coordinate care.

Conclusion

Throughout this qualtitative research study, the primary investigator used the phenomenological method to uncover knowledge and meaning from those stakeholders actively involved in collaborative efforts in anti-exploitation. These final sections include an explanation of the limitations of the study and informed suggestions for furthering the discourse.

Limitations and suggestions for future research.

The recruitment process involved limitations that affected the overall quality of the data collected. Interested responses from potential participants was highly skewed toward one sector, namely, the Non-Profit Sector. A few possible reasons for the limited response from other sectors come to mind. Restrictions and stipulations set on the depth or content of information an individual can share may have influenced the hesitation of certain stakeholders and sectors to participate. Another possible reason is the fact that many of the other sectors hold broader agendas, with human trafficking likely being one of many organizational priorities. Perhaps, no representative could be designated for the hour-long interview, or the interest e-mail simply wasn't disseminated or given top priority. In contrast, most, if not all, of the Non-Profit organizations contacted have a sole or primary focus on human trafficking or sexual exploitation.

The researcher also experienced some difficulty converting indicated interest in the research into participation through an interview. There were five instances identified, where a potential participant signed and submitted the informed consent but failed to schedule either an in-person or an over-the-phone interview. There was also at least one instance, where a potential participant scheduled an interview, but after rescheduling

multiple times, decided not to participate after all. In every instance, attempts were made to contact the potential participants and offer assistance or further information about the research, to no avail.

Further on in the data collection process, as these limitations began to rise to the surface, hard targeting was taken under consideration as one option for diversifying the pool of respondents. Ultimately, the researcher decided to move forward in the project with the existing pool of participants. This decision was made due to time constraints involved in the timeline of the research project. Hard targeting should be heavily considered in any future related research that seeks to expound on the findings herein.

The researcher's database of potential participants was compiled, starting from an existing online database of Non-Profit organizations (GuideStar). Stakeholders were added from other sectors, based on less extensive collections. Therefore, the researcher's database is, ultimately, not a comprehensive one. In fact, no single comprehensive database exists, that would encapsulate all anti-human trafficking and anti-sexual exploitation stakeholders and sectors. This could also help explain the disproportionate quantity of responses received from Non-Profit stakeholders, as these likely comprised a higher percentage of the researcher's database. Additionally, the method used of initial contact being made via an e-mail, effectively limited the database to only stakeholders that 1) owned and operated a website, and/or 2) provided a contact e-mail address.

Finally, participant recruitment and data collection ended due to limited time and resources for this qualitative phenomenological study, not because every existing stakeholder had been identified and contacted. In other words, the data pool of potential participants was not fully saturated. Potentially missing stakeholders and sectors that

have been identified include: Government (Public Transit, Public School System,

Criminal Justice, Judicial Courts, Legislative Bodies); Law Enforcement (State, County,

Detective, Vice Unit); Non-Profit (Medical Institutions); Private Sector (Hospitality,

Airlines, RideShare); Academia/Research (Colleges, Researchers);

Community/Individuals (Faith Communities, Sex Worker Community Activists). A

future research design incorporating a recruitment method of hard targeting should seek

to include these stakeholders.

A possible future study might narrow the scope of the research even further to ensure

a more diverse pool of participants. Perhaps there could be a focus within a single state,

to study how collaboration is conducted within state borders under one umbrella of

governance. The distribution of the sectors that were represented could include a greater

percentage of government stakeholders and law-enforcement stakeholders as well as

stakeholders in the private sector, in the medical field, and in education or academia.

Limitations existed in the Data Collection and Analysis process, as well. Validity of

the research findings could be improved by iteratively presenting developed themes and

interpretations to participants for feedback, in addition to the initial participant approval

of their interview transcription. Additionally, the validity of the coding and data analysis

strategies could be improved by triangulation among a research team, rather than an

individual researcher. Another possible limitation to the consistency of the data is

whether there were underlying factors outside the control of the researcher, that

potentially influenced the response of the participants (i.e. participant energy or focus

level, quality of the recording for phone interviews, how length of participant's responses

affected the pace of the interview, etc.)

The clarity of the audio recordings varied due to several factors. In-person interviews were clearer than over-the-phone interviews, except when the participant chose a location with substantial background noise for their in-person interview. Upon listening to the recordings, there were some phrases that were undecipherable, which were marked thus in the written transcription. The other limitation related to the accuracy of the software used for the initial transcription of the interview audio recordings. In several cases, the initial transcription generated by the software required extensive edits, which were done manually, by the researcher, while listening to the audio files of the interviews.

Although each participant was contacted with the e-mail on file, four (4) of the participants were no longer in the same position, and thus could no longer be contacted by the researcher. These participants did not have the opportunity to review and approve their transcriptions. Because this action was taken as a courtesy to the participants, and not as a requirement of this qualitative phenomenological study, the unapproved transcriptions are still included in the data set.

Additional recommendations for future research include a more extensive demographic survey. Participants might be asked explicitly to characterize themselves and their organizations in response to the following:

- Under which sector(s) would you place yourself and/or your organization/agency?

- Which of the following items best describe the work you/your organization does?

- With which sector(s) have you/your organization collaborated, in the past or currently? (partnerships within the state of operation; outside the state but still within the Mid-Atlantic region; outside of the Mid-Atlantic region.)

- At what level have you/your organization collaborated in anti-human trafficking/anti-exploitation efforts (networking, cooperation, coordination, or full collaboration)?

Some provided this information in their interviews. Some of the websites characterized the organizations. However, it would be helpful to receive this information at the beginning of the research process, in order to situate participants more definitively based on their self-descriptions, as well as to inform the process of purposive sampling for a more well-rounded pool of participants. In this case, succinct categories for sectors, stakeholders, and anti-exploitation efforts were being inductively developed throughout this qualitative phenomenological study and were thus not readily identifiable at the beginning of the process. Ultimately, participants were categorized into one or more of the following categories, based on the researcher's observations from preliminary website searches and the descriptive data gathered in the participants' interviews: 3 P's (prevention, prosecution, protection), and Continuum of Care (awareness/education, identification, service provision, intervention, advocacy, restoration, reintegration). Many of the participants were placed in multiple categories, as they are active along the continuum of anti-exploitation efforts.

Based on suggestions from study participants, as well as new questions that arose during and in response to the process, the researcher recommends the following topics for future study related to collaboration in anti-sexual exploitation efforts:

- Duplicate research in other regions

- Focus on members of formalized collaborative settings (i.e. task forces, coalitions, councils, think tanks, symposiums, conferences);

- Compile examples of collaborative evaluation tools

- Address existing barriers to effective collaboration (i.e. funding/resource constraints, resistance from key stakeholders, relational conflict and power dynamics, information sharing vs client confidentiality)

- Explore participant suggestions for improving collaboration:

  a. Unaffiliated third party to coordinate collaborative experiences

  b. Mechanism for sharing funding & resources; More accessible funding for start-up stakeholders

  c. Central hub or database for locating potential partners, referrals, and opportunities for relevant research

  d. Address discrepancies in data estimates

  e. Streamlining eligibility requirements for access to services

- Partner anti-exploitation stakeholders and sectors with academic institutions to generate relevant research.

- Explore impacts of COVID-19, social distancing, quarantine, cancellations, teleworking on anti-exploitation efforts and collaboration among stakeholders within and across state borders

End goal of collaboration.

The anti-exploitation field, comprised of interdependent, yet specialized sectors, is most effectively resourced to strategically confront the prevailing phenomenon of sexual exploitation through a united effort. Such an effort must be holistic in nature, addressing individual stories at every stage along the Continuum of Care, and closing every existing gap in research, service provision, and community preparedness. This may seem to be an

insurmountable feat, yet there is strength in numbers. An increase in both the quantity of stakeholders involved and the amount of funding invested can offer a more secure foundation for anti-exploitation efforts to evolve and extend. Through intentional and respectful collaboration between every sector of anti-exploitation work, across jurisdictions and amidst the complexities of partner relationships, stakeholders will be better equipped to address the real needs of vulnerable and exploited populations within local communities, the United States, and throughout the globe.

Appendix A: IRB Approval & Renewal

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**Office of Sponsored
Programs & Research**
8000 York Road
Towson, MD 21252-0001

PROTOCOL NUMBER 1804034289

TO	Stephanie Odom
FROM	Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants, Elizabeth Katz, Chair
DATE	June 9, 2021
SUBJECT	**Approval of Research Involving the Use of Human Participants**
CC	**Bethany WillisHepp**

Thank you for submitting an application for approval of research involving the use of human participants to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants (IRB) at Towson University. The IRB hereby approves your proposal, titled:

Multi-Sector Collaboration: Closing Gaps in Anti-"Sexploitation" Efforts

Please note that this approval is granted on the condition that you provide the IRB with the following information and/or documentation:

N/A

If you should encounter any new risks, reactions, or injuries while conducting your research, please notify the IRB. Should your research extend beyond one year in duration, or should there be substantive changes in your research protocol, you will need to submit another application for approval at that time.

We wish you every success in your research project. If you have any questions, please call the IRB at 410-704-2236.

Appendix A: IRB Approval & Renewal (continued)

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Office of Sponsored
Programs & Research
8000 York Road
Towson, MD 21252-0001

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

TO Stephanie Odom

DEPARTMENT Family Studies & Community Development

DATE June 9, 2021

PROJECT TITLE Multi-Sector Collaboration: Closing Gaps in At-Risk...

SPONSORING AGENCY N/A

PROTOCOL NUMBER **1804034289**

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants (IRB) has approved the project described above. Approval was based on the descriptive material and procedures you submitted for review. Should any changes be made in your procedures, or if you should encounter any new risks, reactions, injuries, or deaths of persons as participants, you should notify the IRB.
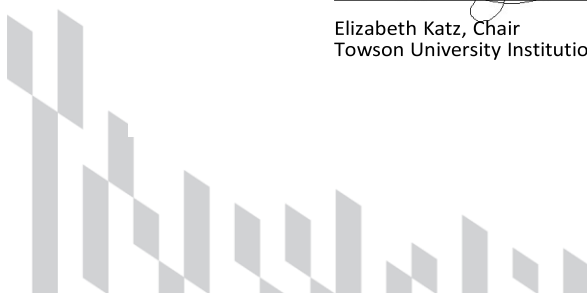
A consent form ☒ is required of each participant
☐ is not required

An assent form ☐ is required of each participant
☒ is not required

This protocol was first approved on 4/26/2018

This research will be reviewed **every year** from the date of first approval.

Elizabeth Katz, Chair
Towson University Institutional Review Board, IRB

Appendix A: IRB Approval & Renewal (continued)

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Office of Sponsored
Programs & Research
8000 York Road
Towson, MD 21252-0001

PROTOCOL NUMBER 1804034289

TO	Stephanie Odom
FROM	Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants, Elizabeth Katz, Chair
DATE	June 9, 2021
SUBJECT	**Renewed Approval of Research Involving the Use of Human Participants**
CC	**N/A**

Thank you for completing the Annual Renewal for projects involving human participants for the protocol, titled:

Multi-Sector Collaboration: Closing Gaps in Anti-"Sexploitation" Efforts

Please note that this approval is granted on Since you have indicated that your research is still active, the IRB is granting you a renewal of your approval.

The new expiration date for this renewal is 4/26/2020.

If you should encounter any new risks, reactions, or injuries while conducting your research, please notify the IRB. Should your research extend beyond one year in duration, or should there be substantive changes in your research protocol, you will need to submit another application for approval at that time.

We wish you every success in your research project. If you have any questions, please call the IRB at 410-704-2236.

Elizabeth Katz, Chair
Towson University Institutional Review Board, IRB

Appendix A: IRB Approval & Renewal (continued)

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Office of Sponsored
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8000 York Road
Towson, MD 21252-0001

PROTOCOL NUMBER 1804034289

TO	Stephanie Odom
FROM	Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants, Elizabeth Katz, Chair
DATE	June 9, 2021
SUBJECT	**Renewed Approval of Research Involving the Use of Human Participants**
CC	**N/A**

Thank you for completing the Annual Renewal for projects involving human participants for the protocol, titled:

Multi-Sector Collaboration: Closing Gaps in Anti-"Sexploitation" Efforts

Please note that this approval is granted on Since you have indicated that your research is still active, the IRB is granting you a renewal of your approval.

The new expiration date for this renewal is 4/26/2021 .

If you should encounter any new risks, reactions, or injuries while conducting your research, please notify the IRB. Should your research extend beyond one year in duration, or should there be substantive changes in your research protocol, you will need to submit another application for approval at that time.

We wish you every success in your research project. If you have any questions, please call the IRB at 410-704-2236.

Elizabeth Katz, Chair
Towson University Institutional Review Board, IRB

Appendix A: IRB Approval & Renewal (continued)

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The new expiration date for this renewal is 4/26/2022.

If you should encounter any new risks, reactions, or injuries while conducting your research, please notify the IRB. Should your research extend beyond one year in duration, or should there be substantive changes in your research protocol, you will need to submit another application for approval at that time.

We wish you every success in your research project. If you have any questions, please call the IRB at 410-704-2236.

Elizabeth Katz, Chair
Towson University Institutional Review Board, IRB

o 410.704.2236
irb@towson.edu
towson.edu/irb

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment & Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form for Research Project Titled:

Multi-Sector Collaboration: Closing Gaps in Anti-Sexual Exploitation Efforts

Primary Investigator: Stephanie Dawn Odom

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is to understand the impact of collaboration between

and among stakeholders within the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States that are

working to combat sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Research will uncover how

strategic collaborative efforts might help to address existing gaps along the continuum

of care, including increasing vulnerability, support for survivors, and a collective

framework for understanding sexual exploitation. The current research study will also

explore the perceptions of individual and group representatives of said stakeholders

(organizations, agencies, community groups, institutions, task forces, coalitions, etc.),

regarding the benefits and challenges of pursuing multi-sector collaboration. Sectors of

anti-sexual exploitation to be explored include Government, Law Enforcement, Non-

Profit, Private Sector, and Academia.

Procedures:

Potential participants are recruited by identifying stakeholders in the anti-sexual

exploitation movement that exist within the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

Stakeholders were contacted and provided with this information sheet, which also serves

as evidence of informed consent to participate in the study, after being signed and

returned to the primary investigator.

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to take part in an audio- recorded, in-person interview with the primary investigator (alternative phone interview can be arranged, if necessary). Interviews will be conducted on site at the organization or in an external meeting space reserved for research purposes. Interviews will occur at a day, time, and location that is preferred by the participant. This interview will consist of a series of questions related to your personal and professional perspective and experiences of collaboration on anti-sexual exploitation efforts. Additional questions are specific to the experiences of survivors of sexual exploitation, related to their involvement in multi-sector collaboration. The interview should last between 30-45 minutes. After the interview, you may be contacted for a 10-15 minute follow-up conversation to help clarify important points made in the interview. This study may include up to 50 participants, representing each of the anti-sexual exploitation sectors from the following U.S. locales: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington D.C., Virginia, and West Virginia.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:

In order to participate in this study, you must be a legal adult (18 years of age or older) and be formally affiliated with at least one sector that contributes to anti-sexual exploitation efforts (i.e. Government, Law Enforcement, Non-Profit, Private Sector, and Academia) in the Mid-Atlantic region. You must be designated as a representative who is knowledgeable about past and current collaborative efforts.

While it is not a prerequisite to participate, the research study does require particular representation from survivor-advocates. Survivors of sexual abuse, exploitation, or trafficking may participate in this study if they are formally

affiliated with an established anti-sexual exploitation stakeholder (organization,

agency, community group, institution, task force, coalition, etc.).

Consent to participate in this study includes consent to be audio-recorded for the

duration of the interview.

Risks/Discomfort:

The primary investigator will collect personally identifiable information, including the

full name, occupation (position/title), and professional contact details for each

participant, along with the sector of anti-exploitation work represented. To maintain

confidentiality, this information, along with data from audio-recordings will be coded

and de-identified.

Additional interview questions for survivor-advocates are designed to limit intrusion

into a survivor's story; however, due to the sensitive nature of the research topic, there is

a risk of emotional distress. During the interview process, any question can be skipped

for any reason given by the participant. You may discontinue the study at any time

without penalty. If you are experiencing distress for any reason, you are encouraged to

see your own mental health provider or contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

24/7 at 1 (800) 273-8255.

Benefits:

As an individual, you are not expected to benefit directly from participating in this

study. However, you may benefit from the findings of this study. Benefits of this study

will be equally accessible to all stakeholders and sectors involved in anti-exploitation

efforts. The anticipated benefits are as follows:

- Establishing a collective understanding of multi-sector collaboration and its potential to further the anti-exploitation movement (i.e. more individuals served; more survivor-informed, trauma-informed services; clearing house of research and resources; universal terminology, and shared funding).

- Identifying the factors of (and obstacles to) fruitful collaboration.

- Developing useful tools to assess potential collaborative partnerships and determine the optimal level of mutual commitment within a partnership or collaborative experience.

- Proposing a more strategic and mindfully holistic approach to anti-exploitation efforts through ongoing collaboration across and within sectors.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw or discontinue your involvement in the study at any time. There is neither cost nor compensation associated with your participation in this research study. Your participation will under no circumstances be terminated by the primary investigator.

Confidentiality:

This research study is confidential, but NOT anonymous. Procedures have been established to maintain the confidentiality of information collected during interviews. Interview audio-recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer; transcriptions of the interviews will be transcribed without identifying information and will also be stored electronically on a password-protected computer. Hard copies of transcriptions will be de-identified as well, and stored separately from signed consent forms. Consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. All data will be maintained for three years following completion of the study, after which time they will be destroyed.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant please contact the Institutional

Review Board Chairperson, Dr. Elizabeth Katz, Office of University Research Services, 8000 York Road, Towson University, Towson, Maryland 21252; phone (410) 704-2236. If you have questions about the study or if you wish to withdraw your consent, please contact the Primary Investigator, Stephanie Odom at sodom@towson.edu. Any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the primary investigator may be directed to her Faculty Advisor, Dr. Bethany Willis Hepp at bwillishepp@towson.edu.

Disclosures (To Be Signed: a) upon meeting in person with the primary investigator, or b) via a secure online platform for phone or video interviews):

By signing this consent form, I am indicating my understanding that (a) I am participating in a research study; (b) my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty; and (c) I do not have to answer any questions I do not want to answer.

_____ I have read and understood the information on this form and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction

_____ _____

Participant Name   Date

_____ _____

Participant Signature   Date

_____ _____

Primary Investigator Signature   Date

Appendix C: Demographics Questionnaire

Multi-Sector Collaboration: Closing Gaps in Anti-Sexual Exploitation Efforts

Demographic Information

What is your age? _____

How would you describe yourself? (Select as many as apply)

Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

o   Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

Other _____

To which gender identity do you most identify?

Male

o   Female

Other _____

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

Less than a high school diploma

High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)

Some college, no degree

Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)

o   Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)

Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)

Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)

Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

Other _____

What is your annual Household Income? _____

How many years have you been active in your field of work? _____

How many years have you been active in your current position? _____

Will you be interviewing today as a Survivor of Sexual Exploitation or Sex Trafficking?

(Additional questions may extend the interview about 15 minutes)

Yes

No

If yes, please answer the following related to your experience of sexual exploitation:

Age at your first experience? _____

Duration of experience? _____

Frequency of experiences during this time? _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Below are the initial, formal questions asked of participants during the interview. Questions marked *SP* were only asked of participants who indicated they wished to respond from the perspective of a survivor of sexual trauma (assault, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking). Clarifying and follow-up questions were inserted as needed, at the discretion of the Primary Investigator, to follow the movement of the conversation.

(General / *Survivor Perspective***):**

- Could you describe the work that you (your organization) does in relation to combatting sexual exploitation and/or sex trafficking? According to your most recent evaluation, how many individuals do you serve on an annual basis, as it pertains to sexual exploitation?

- Describe, as you see it, the "continuum" of anti-exploitation efforts and each of the stakeholders involved in this work.

- At which point(s) along this continuum might an individual find themselves without access to necessary or desired resources or information? Where are the gaps in services or broken links along the continuum?

- SP - Prior to, during, and after your personal experience of sexual exploitation, were there gaps in the access you had to necessary or desired resources or information? Can you identify those gaps?

- SP - Can you identify any points along your journey where you did have full access to the resources and information you needed and/or desired? Which sectors of anti-exploitation work were involved in providing those resources?

- How would you define collaboration in anti-exploitation and anti-sex trafficking efforts?

- Have you in the past (or are you currently) engaged in collaborative efforts to combat sexual exploitation? How many partnerships and with which sectors or stakeholders? Within your state of operation / Within the Mid-Atlantic Region?

- SP - In what capacity have you participated (advised, testified, voted, etc.) in collaboration across sectors of anti-exploitation work?

- Does your primary city of operation have an active, Department of Justice-funded task force? Is your organization (agency, community, etc.) a member of this task force?

- What are the benefits to collaboration? What are the drawbacks to collaboration?

- SP - What do you personally perceive is the value of your perspective as a survivor in the collaborative efforts to fight sexual exploitation and sex-trafficking? What value has been placed on your perspective by those with whom you are collaborating?

- Which sector(s) of anti-exploitation or anti-trafficking work have you found to be the most uncooperative or resistant to collaboration?

- Could you describe a personal experience of multi-sector collaboration that was beneficial? Detrimental?

- SP - Do you feel as though the decisions made as a result of collaborative partnerships have been survivor-focused and trauma-informed? Why or why not?

- SP - Have you ever experienced prejudice or been intentionally excluded from discussions concerning anti-exploitation efforts?

- What criteria (measurements, tools, etc.) are used to determine which stakeholders and which sectors of anti-exploitation work to collaborate with?

- What criteria are used to determine the level (depth, extent) of collaboration with your chosen partners?

- In your view, how might future collaboration impact the success of anti-exploitation

efforts? What improvements would you suggest be made to existing efforts in multi-

sector collaboration?

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Curriculum Vitae

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